

## **National Business Agent's Report**

***Mike Weir***

**May 2009**

NALC and the Postal Service have reached agreement on the next phase of the Interim Alternate Route Adjustment Process. As mail volume continues to decline in response to recessionary pressures in the private sector, we have agreed to utilize this modified approach to evaluating and adjusting routes during 2009. There are provisions for revisiting the adjustments from the initial process as well as time-lines and guidelines for addressing delivery units that were by-passed the first time around. Again, this is a joint process, with the union and management serving as equal partners to ensure fair and equitable adjustments to make the routes as close to eight hours as possible. This will likely result in additions for many routes although some routes will experience cuts. The National parties have also agreed to continue to pursue a more permanent adjustment process involving data review over longer periods of time. Such a process would be viable in a more stable mail volume environment, which we hope to achieve when the economy begins to recover. Until then, this Modified Interim Process, in conjunction with our legislative efforts, Customer Connect leads and other cost-cutting initiatives (particularly in management personnel!), will, hopefully, help us weather the current economic storm.

A very important component of the implementation of this process is ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the data. This is absolutely essential toward achieving proper route adjustments. The district and local teams are tasked with reviewing the data to "root out" any anomalies. The letter carrier's input is extremely important as well. We have already uncovered incidents of supervisors inputting improper operational codes to alter the evaluation of routes. We have also recently encountered more insidious attempts by management to make routes look like less than eight hours on paper; including, under-reporting daily volumes, not reporting delayed and/or curtailed mail, intimidating PTFs and TEs to run off routes, etc. As usual, the Hawkeye District is leading the charge when it comes to such underhanded tactics; but they are occurring in other locations as well. I strongly encourage everyone to be alert to such "anomalies" in the data. Additionally, it is more important than ever that we, as letter carriers, perform our duties as the true

professionals that we are. This includes completing 3996s and 1571s on a daily basis, as needed, and requesting and retaining copies. This information could be crucial toward ensuring that the route evaluations and adjustments are as accurate and fair as possible.

The National parties have also reached agreement on additional questions and answers regarding Transitional Employees. These have helped to resolve disputes over TE career employment opportunities, working in installations other than where the TE was hired, Article 16 rights, assigning TEs rather than career employees to full-time residual vacancies when an office is not under withholding, rights to Federal Employees Health Benefits, etc. See Executive Vice-President Fred Rolando's article in the April edition of the Postal Record for further clarification on these issues. With the finalization of these questions and answers, the parties will soon be sending the updated version of the JCAM into the field.

At the regional office, we have been monitoring some disturbing trends regarding Transitional Employees. Management, in their typical heavy-handed manner, has been intimidating TEs, using them as whipping boys (& girls) to "make their numbers." They have threatened TEs with removal or release for lack of work if they do not conform to management's DOIS-inspired standards. Given how understaffed we are in most offices and the overtime that is being generated as a result, it is a heavy lift for management to claim they do not have enough work to retain TEs. In fact, we have been very successful at getting TEs back to work under those circumstances. Still, we need to be more vigilant about protecting TEs from harassing behavior. They are an important part of the letter carrier workforce; and, for the most part, fellow brother and sister union members. We want them to have a positive work experience now; and we want them to be career employees in the future when the economy recovers, our financial situation stabilizes and we begin a normal hiring process, once again.

We are beginning to receive notification from the appropriate Area office regarding the potential excessing of carriers due to the loss of assignments in particular installations. However, prior to actually excessing a full-time letter carrier, management must ensure that they do not have sufficient work to retain them. In my discussions with local branch

officers from the affected offices, I discovered that, for the most part, there really wasn't a basis for excessing these carriers. Obviously, these determinations must be made on a case-by-case basis; and, certainly, I expect that some excessing will be legitimate. Nonetheless, it is incumbent upon us to enforce the provisions of Article 12 and minimize any adverse impact on full-time carriers who lose their assignments due to route adjustments, FSS implementation, etc. Please notify the regional office immediately if an excessing situation arises in your office so that we have an opportunity to review the matter during the 60 day notification period prior to the actual excessing event.

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