

National Business Agent's Report
Mike Weir
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The next phase of the national joint alternate route adjustment process (JARAP) has been rolled out into the field. It maintains most of the provisions of the previous process, but it does not call for reviewing every route twice during 2010. Instead, only those routes/offices selected by each member of the district lead teams will be evaluated and adjusted over the course of the year. Also, there is a stronger emphasis on making all the participants aware of their respective responsibilities to make the process proceed as smoothly and fairly as possible. The fact that mail volume has stabilized somewhat from the free fall we were experiencing over the past couple of years gave the parties the opportunity to provide relief for those who were feeling "adjustment fatigue" after three rounds of reviews over eighteen months. On the other hand, those whose routes are out of adjustment, whether over or under eight hours, can still have their concerns addressed. And, of course, both management and the union can choose to review routes where they feel it is warranted or necessary. All four of Region 5's district lead team members from MIARAP will be overseeing this process as well. Given the level of experience and expertise that they bring to the table, I feel very confident that letter carriers and the process will be well served.

While conducting a joint intervention at an installation in the Hawkeye District, my management counterpart and I discovered a relatively simple solution to what had appeared to be a complex problem. From a distance, the issues seemed too overwhelming to be effectively addressed. This is often the case when things have deteriorated to the point that an intervention becomes inevitable. The labor/management relationship is strained, workroom atmospheres are oppressive, the contract is treated as if it is little more than a guideline and everyone hates to come to work. In this case, the climate surveys painted a very different picture. Although there were a few offices where all of the above were prevalent, most of the stations had not degraded to that point. And there was a common theme driving the issues throughout the installation: the excessive use of mandatory overtime. Certainly, understaffing is one of the culprits as is the arbitrary usage of a dispatch of value at each of the offices. But while my management partner and I can, and do, have legitimate differences of opinion on these issues, we both agreed that the major obstacle to addressing their problems was the improper application of Article 8. Non-ODL carriers were being mandated to work overtime on a daily basis while ODL carriers were not being fully utilized on their non-scheduled days or even on their scheduled ones for that matter.

Unfortunately, the district would rather worship at the altar of the DOIS gods than recognize the reality of how much money they could save by simply assigning the overtime to the carriers who want it.

Of course, the fact that the Area acknowledges the error inherent in this behavior does not immediately, or even necessarily, translate into the district embracing the message. The devil is always in the details; and convincing the district to reevaluate its understanding of those details will, by no means, be a simple task. Still, we have taken a step forward and opened the door a crack. In the coming months, we will continue to press for a reasonable approach to resolving this issue.

Over the past few weeks, we have been following up with the branches to gather data on the withholding and excessing throughout the region. The other regional offices are doing the same. This is an extremely important undertaking. It is also very difficult given the large number of excessing events with overlapping radiuses that extend across state and regional lines. The goal is to develop a national tracking system to hold management accountable for the number of assignments they are withholding. If we can demonstrate that they have fulfilled their projected numbers for any of the numerous withholdings across the country, we can insist that they convert PTFs to regular in the affected offices. Additionally, we have been contacting local offices regarding the assignment of new deliveries. Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the assignment of city delivery, 1.4 million new addresses have been added across the country. Given the provisions of that MOU, the overwhelming majority of that new development should have gone to city delivery. Up to this point, it has not. We simply want to enforce the terms of that MOU so that we receive the full benefit from the agreement. The additional deliveries would certainly help to offset the loss of routes due to declining mail volumes. This is the message we are delivering to the local branches. It is just one more component of the overall strategy we are employing to enhance our job security and strengthen our position relative to the rest of our fellow stakeholders as we work toward reshaping the Postal Service into a vibrant and viable entity in an ever-changing marketplace.

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