



# FSS is here

**T**he Flat Sequencing System (FSS), the automated delivery point sequencing of flats, will change the way we deliver mail in portions of the country where mail recipients receive above-average amounts of flat mail. The Postal Service hopes to have 90 percent of the flat mail that is addressed to delivery units serviced by FSS machines sorted automatically by those machines in delivery point sequence order. Phase I of FSS entails the construction of 100 FSS machines throughout the country, the deployment schedule of which has been provided to your national business agent, and runs through October 2010.

An FSS machine is over 100 yards long and is purported to have the following attributes:

- Processes flats 17 hours per day
- Processes 285,500 flats per day
- Capable of processing up to 30,000 delivery points per each sort plan
- Capable of processing 125,000 delivery points over 17 hours
- Takes approximately two hours for one sort scheme
- Accommodates six to eight sort plans per day

FSS flats will arrive at the delivery unit in 12 tray casters in a four-row configuration, with three trays per row. Each caster will have trays for one or more routes. Each caster will have a posted manifest designating which tray on the caster goes to which route, an FSS machine-generated tag that will indicate which route it goes to, and either the tray's sequence order of trays for the route and the total trays for the route (3/5 would mean a third tray of five trays) or the tray's sequence order of trays for the route and, when appropriate, a designation that the tray is the last in the sequence for that route.

**The Third Bundle National Settlement required the development of a joint work group to "examine the various methods of mail delivery on park and loop and foot deliveries" and "develop safe and efficient delivery methods for handling three bundles of addressed and/or unaddressed mail on routes with these types of deliveries."** The agreed-upon

term of the joint work group has expired without any conclusions reached on its tasks. However, those tasks have been turned over to the Joint FSS Task Force.

The FSS Task Force is tasked to "jointly examine methods and procedures related to handling DPS flats" and "attempt to reach agreement on necessary studies and potential work method changes, as well as implementation and operating procedures."

The FSS Task Force has been meeting regularly and, at the time of my writing this article, is very close to consummating an agreed-upon method of testing different aspects of carrying FSS on park-and-loop or foot routes and a method of testing various alternative types of mail carrying equipment on foot or park-and-loop routes.

**The first full-sized FSS machine was turned on in the Dulles Mail Processing Center in Northern Virginia in the last week of November.** The first delivery unit to experience FSS mail from that machine was to be Reston, Virginia, in early to mid-December 2007. A Fairfax, Virginia, delivery unit was scheduled to receive FSS mail in late December.

A joint NALC/USPS standup was provided to the letter carriers in Reston in late November. It was emphasized that since they would be the first carriers to experience FSS mail processed from a full-capacity machine, they needed to communicate any suggestions of improving any facet of FSS staging, delivering and quality control to both the Postal Service and the NALC representatives who would be observing this initial operation. If there are people who are "experts in carrying FSS mail," those NALC Branch 3520 letter carriers will be the first.

The NALC is hopeful that any problems that surface in Reston can be identified and resolved quickly, and that letter carrier suggestions will be considered promptly and applied when applicable so that letter carriers in other delivery units who will receive FSS mail in the future will not have to experience similar problems. ☒