

May 2008 Ruralinfo Newsletter

Hello fellow rurals,

There has been a lot going on lately and I am hearing there are a lot of changes in the USPS to come. There will be rough times for all of us ahead having to live our lives under the confines of our new evaluations. We MUST know our rights and be prepared to defend ourselves.

We will have to deal with the increased pressure from the new evaluations along with new duties being added with the rural reach program and such. We also have FSS coming down the road and we are hearing that they are close to an MOU on [FSS buffer](#). Lots of new things coming up. And, as the saying goes, "This is not your daddy's postal service anymore"

With all of the new stuff coming, we as a craft must be prepared to defend ourselves. We must learn to defend ourselves in a new way. We must be able to see what is coming down the road and protect ourselves before it happens. Take an interest in your craft. We are all pieces of the wheel and it will take all of us to make this thing roll.

Whether it be going to union meetings or reading on the Internet. Either way, information is what will save us.

Be aware, be informed and most of all be READY!!

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1. Mail Count

The USPS released a memo concerning route adjustments following the 2008 Mail Count. It is a Q & A of how routes that lost time in the recent mail count will be handled. You can see that [HERE](#)

The latest info I am hearing on the 2008 mail count is that across the country, the loss was **154,378** evaluated hours for 76,707 routes. That averages out to 2.01 hours per route. I had heard an earlier estimate of 200,000 evaluated hours. Either way, this has been devastating to our craft.

There has been some news of individual offices and routes getting the count thrown out. These have been routes with documented problems that occurred during the count.

Be sure you know your rights after this count. I know there are a lot of us out there that have lost big time in this thing and there is nothing good about that, but there are things you can do to help ease the pain.

Check out this page for information.

[Click here](#)

And, check out this story from Las Vegas where some rural carriers got media attention on the mail count.

[Pissed at the Post Office](#)

2. EMA

As I write this, gas in my part of the country is \$3.55 a gallon.

And from what I am hearing, that is on the lower side. Those of us providing vehicles to deliver the mail are hurting out here big time. With gas prices as volatile as they are, we need to try to get EMA adjustments monthly instead of quarterly.

The CPI for the next EMA adjustment will be released on June 13th, 2008. We can only hope for a little relief then.

One bit of good news that was in the National Magazine in case you missed it, is that there has been a legislative effort started to try and get rebates for rural carriers on gasoline taxes.

We can only hope this will move forward. Rest assured, if it does, I will let you know and we will need to take action on this with

our representatives.

3. General Wage increase back pay

The general wage increase back pay should have been included in your May 2nd, 2008 paycheck. This was a retroactive payment from Nov 2006. This should be our last payment from our time without a contract.

There have been some questions as to what the MISC deduction means on the May 2nd paycheck. Here is a link that might help explain it some.

[CLICK HERE](#)

4. Rural Reach and Carrier Pick up

I told you in my last newsletter about the new "Rural Reach" program, and I am sure you have all seen the information in the national magazine.

Remember that this program was agreed to in an MOU by our national officers and then imposed by an arbitrator. There will be no extra pay for this program. It has been said that most rural carriers do not use their "20 minutes" of stamp stock time per week and therefore the duties associated with the the "Rural Reach" program will be included in the stamp stock time.

While, I will concede that the USPS needs to find new ways to to generate revenue, I will not concede that I do not use my 20 minutes of stamp stock. That is approx. 3.5 minutes per day. I spend more time than that counting out the pennies people leave in their mail box for stamps.

This new "Rural Reach" program also goes hand in hand with carrier pickup. They want us to sell "carrier pickup" among other USPS on-line services in this new program. Considering we will no longer be paid "extra" for carrier pickup duties after April 26th, 2008, then how are we to be paid for the new carrier pickups created out of the "rural reach" program?

Sure if you had some carrier pickups during count, you have that time included in your evaluation. What about those that did not have a single carrier pickup during count?

Are we to do this for free? How about that ebayer out there that starts a new daily carrier pick up that sends out 50 or 75 parcels a day or more?

Was this not considered during the negotiating of this MOU? I understand that sometimes you have more or less mail after a count, but this is insane.

This is something that could affect carrier's ability to make dispatch, it will add to "2080" problems along with the new evaluations, and it is working for free.

We have got to get proactive on these kind of deals and see what could possibly come out of these situations. This will create headaches and harassment for many carriers in the future. In my mind, this is a new duty added after a mail count and we should be compensated..

Will our union back us up on this? If there has been something worked out on this situation, please let me know. It will save me a concussion from beating my head against the wall.

5. Handbook F-21 Revision- Rural Replacement Carrier training pay procedures

In our new contract, there are a couple of new provisions for relief carriers. One is that a relief carrier will be paid actual time or evaluated time, whichever is greater when assigned to a route they have not carried in a 12 month period. (for 1 day)

The second provision is for newly hired relief carriers to get paid actual or evaluated, whichever is greater, for the first 5 pay periods of employment. It didn't take the USPS long to figure out how to slant this provision to their benefit.

I have already been in contact with a few new hires, where their training is being held up after their initial hire date. So, in essence, there is no chance for them to receive "actual time" while running the route. For example, one carrier I spoke with was hired on 2/15 and did not get to start training on their assigned route until 5/2. Their 5 PP was up before they began being trained on the route. Surely, this is not what was intended, but it is happening. Did we not see this one coming also?

General practice for the USPS is if it can be manipulated, it will be.

Again, we have got to start being PROACTIVE!! I knew this would happen when this was presented in the contract vote. So in essence, what was intended to be a "benefit" for our relief carriers has turned into an easily manipulated "benefit" for the USPS.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE F-21 REVISION](#)

6. 2nd Attempts for Express Mail Eliminated

On May 12th, 2008, the USPS will eliminate automatic 2nd attempts on Express Mail. They are revising the 3849 to remove the notation that it will be redelivered. For the life of me, I cant figure out why they would do this. For someone that preaches customer service, and is scrambling for new revenue, now they are going to offer "less" service.

If I was a conspiracy theory kind of gal, I would say they were doing it to keep rural carriers from getting "double" credit for an express mail piece. But, that would be "egocentric" of me wouldn't it?

Who knows what their reasons are.

You can see the notice on the 3849 revision [HERE](#)

7. CDS Update

CDS routes of still of the utmost importance to rural carriers.

In February, the Congressional research Service released its report on CDS. You can read that [HERE](#)

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is expected to release its report in June/July 2008

We need to continue to contact our legislators to support both House Res. 282 and Bill S. 1457.

You can find info on these on my [contracting page](#).

8. New features on ruralinfo.net

I have added a couple of new features to ruralinfo.

First, there is a Resolution and Constitution and Bylaw changes brainstorming page. You can submit your idea and offer comments on other ideas that have been submitted.

[Click here](#)

And, I have started an NRLCA Candidates Forum. If you or anyone you know is running for national office, please ask them to submit their platform [HERE](#)

It is my hope to get some involvement on this and run some polls to get the general feeling of rural carriers on the candidates.

I also welcome the current national officers who are running for a different national office. Rural carriers on-line would love to hear your thoughts and ideas for this association.

9. National Delegates candidates: Please submit your platform

National Delegates, please come and post your delegate platform

on my Delegate Awareness site. You can reach rural carriers in your state and state your views. Please come and submit your platform.

[Click here](#)

10. Editorial

[A serious disconnect between NRLCA officers/stewards and Rural Carrier Craft Employees](#)

by John Amtsfeld

You can find more editorials by John and others on my [Editorial Page](#)

Seeing both sides of an issue can foster discussion and ideas.

All opinions on all sides of the issues should be freely distributed and discussed.

I encourage you to feel free to join the discussion!

If you would like to respond to any of the editorials on my page, please [contact me](#).

11. FSS Update

There are some new articles on FSS on my [FSS PAGE](#)

Also, here is an article from the NALC Postal Record concerning FSS. [Click here](#)

And, NALC members lobby Congress concerning contracting out [Click here](#)

And, I have been wondering about the CDS task force that the NALC and USPS created concerning contracting out of delivery routes.

It was my understanding that some of our officers were supposed to have a seat at that task force. Anybody know or hear of anything about our union's efforts on this task force. I am sure members would like to know what if any progress has been made.

UNTIL NEXT MONTH

BE SAFE, PT