

Date: December 20, 2005

MANAGERS, OPERATIONS SUPPORT (AREA)
MANAGERS, DELIVERY PROGRAMS SUPPORT (AREA)
DISTRICT MANAGERS
MANAGERS, OPERATIONS PROGRAMS SUPPORT (DISTRICT)

Subject: Clarification of Rural Delivery Standardization Procedures (RD SOP)

Following the initial implementation of RD SOP, it has become evident that some clarification of these procedures is in order, as detailed below.

1. RD SOP review procedures require that managers evaluate rural carrier performance when actual workhours vary an average of 3 hours or more above or below the evaluated hours for the route over the course of a full quarter. Actual time *can be expected to vary* from daily or weekly evaluations due to cyclical changes in mail volume, changes in mail arrival, etc. The intent of the review process is to determine what changes can be made to improve overall efficiency.
2. While the goal outlined in RD SOP is to have a maximum of 3 pieces of casing equipment for all rural routes, *there are exceptions that may warrant more than 3 pieces of equipment*: routes with more than 700 deliveries and routes with exceptionally high volume are cases in point. Managers may vary the size of the separations and the number of deliveries per separation on specific routes depending upon the volume and characteristics of mail normally received by those routes. The desired outcome to any change in casing equipment is an efficient case layout
3. Centralized deliveries (CBU's, apartment buildings, etc.) require the same case separations as non-centralized deliveries. In rural delivery, there is no option that will allow "jackpotting" of central deliveries on the carrier case.
4. Any management decision to require that DPS mail be taken directly to the street by regular or replacement carriers without casing must be based on *route-specific conditions* that require efficiency and scheduling remedies to be attempted first. If these attempts fail to provide a more consistent leaving and delivery time, management should consider having the rural carrier take DPS directly to the street. However, management may direct rural carriers, compensated for actual work hours (i.e., regular carriers compensated at FLSA Section 7A and leave replacements exceeding 40 hours a week) instead of evaluated compensation, to take DPS mail directly to the street, if the carrier will likely increase workhours by casing DPS mail.
5. Rural carrier schedules should be determined by each route's evaluation. By using the time of day that approximately 80% of the mail is available for casing as the starting time, along with the route's evaluation (Office and Route), a reasonable schedule can be produced. An Excel-based "Rural Route Scheduling Tool" for this purpose can be found on the Rural Delivery Web page at: http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/rural/mailcount/top_page.htm
6. The relief day formula, which provides for the assignment of "non-Saturday" relief days to "K" routes, cannot be implemented until three requirements are met:
 - a. There must be a shortage of leave replacements
 - b. Regular carriers are working their relief days on a more than infrequent basis
 - c. Office is unsuccessful in hiring efforts

NOTE: For complete information, go to:

http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/rural/relief_day_formula.htm

7. An effective hiring and retention program must be in place and reasonable efforts to hire RCA/TRC employees must be an ongoing program that is managed by Performance Cluster leadership. Offices must continue with hiring efforts regardless of any relief day formula implementation or PTF positions that may have been created. Successful best practices for improving retention include:
 - a. Require potential hires to view the video "A Day in the Life of a Rural Carrier," possibly as a part of the interview process
 - b. New hires participate in a "shadow day" (working with a regular carrier in the office and on the street) as soon as possible to ensure that these individuals are fully informed and agreeable to the requirements of the RCA/TRC position.
 - c. Ensure systematic training during the 24 hours of On-The-Job Training, to include casing, route familiarization, and otherwise "mentoring" the new employee through the initial stages of rural carrier employment.

NOTE: A strong retention process will help to improve the percent to standard performance, since auxiliary assistance for training currently accounts for over 25% of all overages to standard hours.

8. Prior to implementing "H" routes to address the chronic problems associated with the inability to hire and retain replacement employees, *relief day formula implementation and creating PTF employees, where appropriate, should occur*. It is important that these efforts be employed prior to any decision to adjust routes to "H" status.
9. Carriers should not be permitted or otherwise encouraged to work "off the clock." All carrier time worked **MUST** be recorded on the PS Form 4240.
10. While it is important to manage all carriers to maintain efficiency, replacement carriers (RCA, TRC, and PTF) account for approximately 80% of all overages to standard hours. It is important that managers maintain a priority focus on controlling workhours for replacement carriers as outlined in the standardization documents.

Finally, to ensure a consistent application of RD SOP procedures, we strongly recommend that all unit managers (Postmasters and Managers, Customer Service) with rural routes receive training that is based on the standardization documents. All of these documents can be found on the Rural Delivery Web site at: http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/rural/rural_delivery_sop.htm.

We would appreciate your assistance in disseminating this information and monitoring compliance as we strive to enhance effectiveness in managing rural delivery operations. Please continue to communicate to Area Delivery Programs or Headquarters Rural Delivery as appropriate with any questions, comments, or concerns you have relative to the RD SOP process.

Patrick S. Conrad
Manager, Rural Delivery

cc: Mr. Burgoyne
Mr. Phelan
Mr. Daigneault
Mr. Ryalls
Mr. West
Ms. Perron