

THE ANNUAL RITE OF 2080/2240 PROJECTIONS

Every year in the spring, managers dust off their broken record spiels and begin warning regular rural carriers whose workhours are projected to exceed 2,080 by the end of the guarantee year in November, that special measures might have to be taken. Typical of the written warnings, where written warnings are given, is the following:

Dear Problem Carrier:

The attached printout is an indication of possible problems with your year-end carrier hours staying within the 2080 hours and/or 2240 hours. It is early yet, but this official notification is to give you clear notice that your hours are such that indicate a problem. I am required to manage all routes to stay within these limits. At the very least, the printout is to alert us both to the fact that you are using more hours a week than your evaluation. Your weekly hours must stay at or below your evaluation, or you will continue to have problems. As stated before, it is my obligation to review all aspects of your work methods and delivery area. If you wish an adjustment or have any ideas that will result in more efficient casing and delivery, please feel free to speak to your Supervisor.

(Signed)

Postmaster U. May Cringe

Hard Times Post Office

Hard Times WA 98246

Some of you may have already been approached by your managers regarding potential 2080 and/or 2240 problems. I feel it is a bit too early to start worrying about these figures since the heavier Christmas volumes still account for a disproportionate number of the recorded workhours.

Managers hope to eliminate the possibility of any rural carrier exceeding the annual work hour guarantee, and the "Rural Carrier Projected Annual Work Hours" report is being closely monitored. Each pay period, managers must review this report to be certain that the rural carrier in question has a sufficient leave balance to keep from exceeding 2080 and/or 2240 hours. Furthermore, it is typical for postmasters' bosses to apply extra pressure. For example, I once managed to obtain an email from a Manager of Post Office Operations (MPOO) to all of his postmasters which stated the following:

"Your office has one or more rural carriers that are in danger of exceeding 2080/2240 workhours in the current guarantee period. Action plans and guarantees that the carriers will not exceed these maximums are no longer adequate. You are instructed that these routes must be cut in evaluation, now. Contact me immediately with the date that this will be accomplished."

The report that causes management's annual 2080/2240 hyperactivity is titled "Rural Carrier Projected Annual Work Hours Report." In my opinion, the underlined language in the part of this report copied below just isn't accurate. In fact, a Washington Rural Carrier filed a grievance against the Postal Service for under compensating him after he exceeded 2,240 workhours in a guarantee year. That grievance was appealed to Step 3 and is currently awaiting a hearing at Step 4. Without re-arguing the grievance in the confines of this article, suffice it to say that the following language from the "Rural Carrier Projected Annual Work Hours Report" represents the Postal Service's viewpoint:

"2080: FLSA B carriers must be paid overtime for any actual hours that exceed 2080 for the guarantee year. Since Xmas Overtime, FLSA overtime, and DACA Code 5 hours are paid at the overtime rate in the pay period in which they are worked, these hours are not included in the calculation toward 2080. For example, if a carrier works 2090 hours in a guarantee year, but he/she worked 12 hours of Christmas overtime in December, the carrier's total hours toward the 2080 limit would be 2078.

If a regular rural carrier exceeds 2080, all hours worked in excess of 2080 must be paid at the overtime rate.

2240: Regular rural carriers who are FLSA Code B are paid evaluated hours for working their route. All actual hours worked, regardless of the rate at which they are paid, are counted toward the 2240 limit. Any carrier who works in excess of 2240 hours in a guarantee year is no longer under the evaluated system and must convert retroactively to FLSA Code A (hourly rate) for the entire guarantee year.

If a regular carrier exceeds 2240, all of the carrier's pay for the entire guarantee year must be recomputed and paid on an hourly basis, instead of an evaluated basis.

The viewpoint represented in the grievance referenced above is that when a rural carrier works his/her relief day for 150% of the daily evaluation of the route, those hours **should** count toward 2080 since they are not bona fide FLSA overtime hours, like Christmas overtime. Furthermore, if a rural carrier's total workhours do happen to exceed 2,240 in the guarantee year, then that carrier should be paid a sum of money, **in addition** to what he/she was already paid, representing the total of all hours exceeding 40 in any week in the guarantee year times the FLSA overtime rate for the total of those hours in excess of 40.

It is possible for a regular rural carrier to be projected to exceed 2240 hours, but not exceed 2080 hours. There are different criteria that apply to each work hour limit. For example, if a regular rural carrier works 50 hours of Christmas overtime, all of those hours count toward 2240, but none of them would count toward 2080.

The Postal Service believes that it is also possible for a rural carrier to end up owing money if he/she exceeds 2240, because it is the Postal Service's position that every week you work under 40 hours, you will have to pay back the built-in overtime amount represented by the evaluation hours in excess of 40, plus the straight-time hours equal

to the number of hours actually worked that were less than 40. As stated above, the Union position in the grievance awaiting Step 4 is that the Postal Service owes overtime in addition to the salary already paid for every hour of every week that a carrier's workhours exceeded 40.

Reports that are run early in the guarantee year will be less accurate, because there are fewer weeks on which to base the estimates, and because most rural carriers will have used little or no leave. Also, reports that are run early in the year include the Christmas period, which is typically a high work hour usage, and these reports do not include the summer months, which traditionally have less mail and fewer work hours.

At the end of each count, every rural carrier has the opportunity to sign on the Form 4241 that sufficient leave will be taken to keep from exceeding 2080. Annual leave should be taken into consideration, and if 2080 danger occurs toward the end of the year, then leave without pay is an option. At no time, however, can the Postal Service **require** a rural carrier to take LWOP in order to stay under 2080.

Everyone should ensure that his/her Form 4240-Trip Sheet is completely filled out, listing the number of hours used by the regular rural carrier and the number of hours used by the leave replacement. These figures should help us keep track of our hours, especially if baselines are provided for each Accounting Period (AP). As I have often said to managers, rural carriers are usually more than willing to help monitor their own work hours if they are provided with the necessary data. Far too often, when I visit a rural office, I find that the top of the Form 4240 is either completely blank or will only have the name and route of the rural carrier.

Some uninformed managers think that they have the right to require rural carriers to schedule their annual leave early in the year or at any time the Christmas-weighted projections indicate a potential problem. Rural carriers cannot be forced to use leave without pay or forced to pre-schedule their annual leave far in advance of any certainty of being in 2080 trouble.

What are the potential consequences of going over 2080 or 2240? One of the first options the manager has is to adjust the route, and most of us would not want this to happen. Carriers who have elected the high option (more money, but less time off) are likely to see that option reduced to low option (less money, but more time off.) Managers may also give auxiliary assistance, but with the on-going budget problems, it is difficult to believe that managers will use this option. Managers may also require that we use sufficient annual leave to stay under 2080, but they cannot force us to use annual leave early in the year just in case 2080 may become a problem.

Good luck in staying under 2080 and 2240. As you can see, this is extremely important to your manager, and in the long run, important to us as rural carriers. With decreased mail count standards, higher percentages of DPS, red-lined "R" time, and in some cases, adjusted or rebuilt routes, it is easy to argue that we continue to do more and more work for any given evaluation. Rural carriers who were previously close to exceeding 2080 or 2240 could easily find it more difficult to stay under these important benchmarks.