

# J Routes Rule!

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Ok, mail count is over, my evaluation is back and I have gone from a K route to a J route. Wa, wa, wa, so are most other carriers. Now is the time to think positively about our situation and maximize usage of the language in our contract, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the F-21, Time and Attendance, Chapter 5 that provides direction on filling out rural carrier time cards.

When I first started carrying mail in 1973, I was assigned to a 38H route. It was 38 hours and 20 minutes per week, about 6 and one-half hours per day. When I finally made regular in 1977, the route was a 43H. Over a short period of time, it went to a J route and finally a K around 1980 and I have retained the K status since up until May 4, 2002.

Remembering back on the good old days of being a J route, I remembered a little quirk that is in our contract and the FLSA that benefits carriers working 11 days per pay period. You see, under the FLSA, you cannot be charged with more than 40 hours, a standard workweek, for leave. J route carriers taking leave during their six day workweek end up with the Saturday taken as annual leave but not charged to their leave balance. They are only charged with five days leave.

Refer to our contract Article 10.4, Saturday Leave. It states:

- A. The approved absence on a Saturday of a regular rural carrier, substitute, or rural carrier associate in a leave earning capacity, which occurs within or at the beginning or end of a period of annual or sick leave, shall be without charge to such leave or loss of compensation provided the appropriate leave balance on the Form 1223 (Earnings Statement) reflects at least 6 days of leave and the following conditions were met:
  - 1. There are more than 5 days of annual or sick leave within the period; or
  - 2. There are more than 4 days of annual or sick leave plus a holiday (see Article 11) within the period. If a holiday falls on Saturday, which is a scheduled workday, absence on the preceding Friday shall be without charge to leave. If the leave period is 4 days or less, absence on Friday shall be charged to leave.
  - 3. Interruption during the approved period of annual or sick leave by court leave due to circumstances beyond the employee's control shall not disqualify the carrier for coverage as provided in 1. or 2. above.
- B. Upon request, a rural carrier shall be granted annual leave or leave without pay on Saturday, at the carrier's option, provided a leave replacement is available.

What does it all mean? Let us do a couple scenarios on the free Saturday. Saturday is the J day.

Sat	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
J	A	A	A	A	A
A					

In this situation, the regular carrier took annual leave from Saturday to Saturday. The first Saturday is the relief day; Monday through Friday is charged as annual leave. Remember, annual leave is charged in full day increments equaling 8 hours per day. Therefore, the Monday through Friday equates 40 hours of annual leave making the Saturday at the end of the week the free one. The carrier is off for a total of 9 days (there are 2 non-scheduled Sundays) and is charged with 5 days of leave.

Sat	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
A	A	A	A	A	A
J					

This scenario is like the first one only the relief day is the beginning of the second pay week. In this case, the same number of days is off with the first Saturday being the free one. The carrier is still charged with 5 days of leave.

Sat	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
A	J	A	A	A	A
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This scenario shows the carrier's relief day is the first Monday of the pay period. It is the same application as situation 1 above with the carrier receiving the second Saturday as the free one. The carrier is off for 9 days and charged with 5 days of leave.

Sat	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
A	A	A	A	A	A
A	J				

This scenario also shows the carrier's relief day on Monday, but it is the second Monday of the pay period. Here the situation is slightly different with the carrier off 10 days and is charged with 6 days of annual leave. The first Saturday is free and the second Saturday is charged to annual leave.

Sat	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
A	A	A	A	A	A
A					

If you are an H route you do not get any relief days per pay period. In this scenario, you are on annual leave from Saturday through the following Saturday. You have 9 days off and are charged for 5. Each of the Saturdays is free.

Also, please note above paragraph B from the contract. Carriers who were K route and are now J routes may exercise their contractual right to get Saturdays off as Leave Without Pay (LWOP), *provided a leave replacement is available*. Should you exercise this option, you will lose 1 day of annual leave for every 11 days you are on LWOP through the year. Annual leave is granted to us at the beginning of the leave year. If you take LWOP equaling a full pay period, the pay system automatically deducts the day of annual leave from your available balance.

With our rights diminishing more all the time, take full advantage of what is contractually granted to us as H and J carriers. With nothing free, who want to be a K route anyway?

