

# The Ruralinfo.net guide for Rural Carriers

**Alert!** A lot of this is subject to change due to the implementation of RRECS. When we get updates on it, I will update this page.

This is a guide to help you deal with your new status of being a regular rural carrier. There will be a lot of new things you will have to learn and this is just an effort to help you get a head start and learn some of the new things you will encounter as a regular rural carrier. Of course this list is not all inclusive, and should any problems arise, be sure to contact your steward.

Table of Evaluated Hours

This chart shows the size of your route and its classification [Click Here](#)

## Manuals and Documents you will need

## Updating and Maintaining the Edit Book

You will have to start updating your edit book/red book and mapping your route. Every route has one, and it will become your responsibility to keep up with additions, deletions and extensions on your route. The new RRECS guidelines call for updating your edit book and mapping your route once a month.

[Click here](#) for more Edit Book Information

## X Days and the Relief Day Work List (RDWL)

The relief day work list at each delivery unit shall be established twice during each guarantee period. Each time the new relief day work list is established it shall supersede the previous list. All regular carriers, regardless of route classification, desiring to work their relief days shall place their names on the relief day work list.

The first opportunity to sign the relief day work list will be two weeks prior to the new guarantee period. The second opportunity to sign the relief day work list will be two weeks prior to the beginning of the first full pay period in May.

## COMPENSATION FOR WORKING RELIEF DAY

All regular rural carriers, not on the relief day work list, who work the relief day will receive compensation at 50% of the carrier's daily rate of pay, in addition to receiving an X day within twelve (12) weeks as scheduled by the Employer.

Regular rural carriers on the relief day work list who work the relief day will select one of the following options:

1. An X day to be immediately scheduled by mutual agreement between the carrier and the Employer. The scheduled X day must be within the next twelve (12) weeks.
2. Compensation at 50% of the carrier's daily rate of pay, in addition to receiving an X day within twelve (12) weeks as scheduled by the Employer.
3. Compensation at 150% of the carrier's daily rate of pay. The carrier will not receive an X day.

The regular rural carrier must make his or her election of the above options, no later than the day of the worked relief day.

One point to add to this, I hear a lot of instances where the USPS is trying to cut down on their overtime by "discouraging" carriers from taking #3 listed above. If you have signed the RDWL, do not be intimidated. This is written in black and white! Local managers do NOT supersede a national contract! If they continue to "discourage" the use of option #3 and you know you are entitled to it, call the union and get a steward involved!

[Click here](#) for more information

PS 3971- The leave slip

When you want to take any kind of leave you will have to fill out a [3971 leave slip](#)

[Click here](#) to see USPS Leave regulations in the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)

## The Guarantee Year/Period

In pursuance of an agreement made as a result of collective bargaining by representatives of employees certified as bona fide by the NLRB, which provides that during a specified period of fifty-two consecutive weeks the employee shall be employed not more than 2240 hours and shall be guaranteed not less than 1840 hours and not more than 2080 hours of employment for which he shall receive compensation for all hours guaranteed or worked at rates not less than those applicable under the agreement to the work performed and for all hours in excess of the guarantee which are also in excess of the maximum workweek applicable to such employee under subsection (a) or 2080 in such period at rates not less than one and one-half times the regular rate at which he is employed.

This is the legal basis for the rural compensation system. The basic requirements as applied to rural carriers, are as follows:

1. Employee shall be employed on an annual basis at a guaranteed annual wage.
2. The guarantee must be a minimum of 1840 and a maximum of 2080 hours.
3. The employee shall receive overtime compensation for all hours actually worked in excess of:  
(a) 12 hours in one day; (b) 56 hours in one week; (c) 2080 hours in one year.
4. The employee may not actually work more than 2240 hours during the 52-week guarantee period..

A couple of points here: A carrier cannot be made to take LWOP to stay under 2080 hours. [click here](#)

Every year in the spring , managers 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. Your local management has to respond to their managers on why rural carriers in their office are projected to exceed their 2080 hours. There are many reasons their excitement may be premature. [Click here for a detailed explanation.](#)

## Free Saturdays

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.

[MORE INFO](#) on Free Saturdays

## Partial Trip Served

When a regular carrier becomes ill or cannot finish the route while on duty, either in the office or on the route, and is unable to complete service for the day, she/he is granted sick or annual leave for the entire day. The salary payment for the trip will be made to the replacement carrier and will include equipment maintenance. The regular carrier will not be entitled to equipment maintenance while on sick/annual leave. When the regular carrier does not complete a trip due to unexpected circumstances for reasons other than personal illness or injury, she/he will be charged annual leave for the entire day. The salary payment will be made to the replacement in the same manner as above.

Your Pay Stub

The check stubs are sometimes hard to decipher. Check our Knowledgebase below to see a few links that might help you.

[Click Here](#)

## Step Increases

You will now earn general step increases.

Once you hit the top step, you have topped out and the only increases you will receive are if there are wage increases included in a contract or you receive a Cost of living adjustment.

The Step increase waiting periods are as follows:

The Step progression for career rural carriers hired on or after 11/21/2010 will be 52 weeks for each Step between Steps 1-15

1-2= 52 WEEKS  
2-3= 52 WEEKS  
3-4= 52 WEEKS  
4-5= 52 WEEKS  
5-6= 52 WEEKS  
6-7= 52 WEEKS  
7-8= 52 WEEKS  
8-9= 52 WEEKS  
9-10= 52 WEEKS  
10-11= 52 WEEKS  
11-12= 52 WEEKS  
12-13= 52 WEEKS  
13-14= 52 WEEKS  
14-15= 52 WEEKS

Step progression for career rural carriers hired before 11/21/2010 will be the progression shown below.

A-B= 96 WEEKS  
B-C= 96 WEEKS  
C-1= 44 WEEKS  
1-2= 44 WEEKS  
2-3= 44 WEEKS  
3-4= 44 WEEKS  
4-5= 44 WEEKS  
5-6= 44 WEEKS  
6-7= 44 WEEKS  
7-8= 34 WEEKS  
8-9= 34 WEEKS  
9-10= 26 WEEKS  
10-11= 26 WEEKS  
11-12= 24 WEEKS

## High/Low Option

### Article 9 Section 2.C.7. Classification Options and Reviews

a. Any rural carrier whose route may be classified in more than one evaluated classification may elect the higher route classification if the following requirements are met:

(1) It must be demonstrated that the rural carrier's actual work hours will not exceed 2,080 during the guarantee period. Christmas overtime hours, if any, will increase this benchmark, provided that the hours in excess of 2,080 occur in the last pay period of the guarantee period. Such determination should be based on, but not limited to, the rural carriers performance during the previous year;

(2) The rural carrier agrees in writing to use sufficient annual leave to assure that the total actual hours worked, with appropriate consideration of Christmas overtime, will not exceed the 2,080 annual guarantee;

**(3) A regular carrier must have a minimum of ten years from his or her retirement computation date to be eligible to elect the high option.**

b. Reviews (1) National Count, Interim Adjustment, or Special Count

At the time of the national count, interim adjustment, special count, or just prior to the beginning of the guarantee period the postmaster must arrange a meeting with each eligible rural carrier to discuss requirements for election of a higher classification for which the rural carrier may qualify.

The commitment to use sufficient annual leave in order to qualify for a higher classification must be made in writing to give the postmaster assurance that the actual work hours will not exceed 2,080 hours during the guarantee period. The written commitment must be submitted with the appropriate forms at the time of a national count, interim adjustment, special count, or high option election.

[Click here for more information on High/Low Options](#)

## PS Form 8127 – Rural Carrier Supplemental Pay

This form was designed to fulfill the requirements of Article 9.2.N. Although no exact definition exists, functions that are proper for the supplemental payment should meet the following criteria:

### CRITERIA:

1. An action or task that is not directly related to normal daily work functions (casing and delivering the mail).
2. An action or task that does not occur on a daily or weekly basis (If it did, theoretically, it should have been computed into the routes evaluation under Column 17 – Other Time, during a mail count.) SEE PO-603, 535.12 Column 17 Other suitable allowance: (1) A reasonable time allowance may be claimed for unusual conditions, or for other services rendered on a daily or weekly basis, that are not accounted for under normal work functions.
3. An action or task for which no time has been allotted in the rural route standards.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE 8127](#)

## Benefits

### Leave

Annual LeaveSick leaveHoliday leave

### Insurance and more

PSHBFSAFERSFEGLIDental/Vision

**NOTE** – The Postal Service Reform Act of 2022 (PSRA) was signed into law in April 2022. Since then, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in conjunction with the Postal Service, has been working to implement a new [Postal Service Health Benefits \(PSHB\) Program](#), as required under the new law. PSHB is a new, separate program within the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program and will be administered by OPM. Coverage under the PSHB Program will be effective January 1, 2025.

[Postal Service Health Benefits. \(PSHB\)](#)

You can sign up within 30 days of becoming a regular; otherwise you will have to wait until open season (generally from 2nd week in November to 2nd week in December).

Coverage is available for Self Only and Self & Family.

Several plans available; some union-sponsored plans require membership in the union.

Can change plans during open season or with qualifying life changes (marriage, birth of child, etc.)

Pre-existing conditions are covered by all plans.

Flexible Spending Account [\(FSA\)](#)

Provides pre-tax dollars to covered non-reimbursed health care expenses or child care.

Maximum contributions per year is **\$3,300**.

Must re-enroll each year.

For health care, you can file for reimbursement even if not enough funds in your account.

Child care account must have money in account to be reimbursed.

Health care can be used to cover co-pays, deductibles, and non-covered expenses but not premiums.

If you are a union member, you can find more info on the union website. The USPS FSA is different from other federal FSA, mostly on filing a claim.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE'S RETIREMENT SYSTEM [\(FERS\)](#).

This is the retirement system that all new career employees are covered under. It is a 3-tier system.

ELIGIBILITY FOR RETIREMENT

Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) with 30 years service. MRA is based on your year of birth.

Age 60 with 20 years of service.

Age 62 with 5 years of service.

There are other reduced retirements available. For more information, visit [www.opm.gov](#).

The 3 parts of FERS are;

1. USPS annuity of approximately 1% per year X no. years of career service, based on your high-3 salary.
2. A special Social Security supplement until you reach age 62.
3. [Thrift Savings Plan \(TSP\)](#)

Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance [\(FEGLI\)](#)

Must sign up within 30 days of going regular.

Different coverages available for self and family.

You can find more information about FEGLI & FEHBP at [www.opm.gov](#)

The Federal Employee Dental & Vision Insurance Program [\(FEDVIP\)](#) allows dental insurance and vision insurance to be purchased on a group basis which means competitive premiums and no pre-existing condition limitations. Eligible Pre-career employees can now enroll in FEDVIP.

### PRIOR MILITARY SERVICE

If you have prior military service, you can use your years of service to increase your leave category. All you need is a copy of your DD-214.

And you can also buy back your military time (called a deposit) to add to your total postal service time. You have 3 years to do that before interest is added, and it can be done on an allotment basis.

Read more about Prior Military service at [this link](#)

### UNION

Make sure you bookmark the National union website at [NRLCA.org](#). You will need it and you will visit that website often. And be sure you know who your State level Union Representatives are and how to get in touch with them!

Please read our [disclaimer](#) and please do not rely on this website for any grievance. A grievance can only be pursued through official channels of the union.

## RURALINFO.NET

### THE RURALINFO.NET NETWORKNEWSLETTERS

Ruralinfo.net sends out a monthly rural carrier newsletter. It is filled with all of the latest and hottest news in the Rural Carrier world. Dont be left out and sign up to receive our newsletter today!

[CLICK HERE](#)

### DAILY NEWS BLAST

Are you a news junkie that wants all the news all the time? This is the newsletter for you. Our Daily News Blast collects all the latest Postal and Rural News and sends it to you in a nice neat package every day.

[CLICK HERE](#)

### I hope this guide has been helpful to you!