



Little things mean a lot

Recently I received a letter from retired letter carrier Richard Hollman, a proud member of St. Marys, Ohio Branch 1002, who urged me to write an article about why letter carriers should check vacant address mail boxes to avoid mail being unreasonably delayed. I responded to Brother Hollman by indicating in part: “The *M-41* contains [language about] processing mail left in mailboxes for vacant addresses [and] does provide instructions to enter vacant addresses on PS Form 3982, Changes of Address [card].”

Many years ago, a young NALC arbitration advocate proffered the argument in arbitration that, “for a rule to exist, there had to be a reason for the rule to exist.” What that means is that even if there is a rule that tells you to perform an act in a certain circumstance, but it doesn’t specifically state how the person performing the act should be aware of that requirement or the reason for performing the act, there must be another rule that either spells out

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those things or relies on a reasonable person to answer those questions for himself.

In the vacancy circumstance, however, the *M-41* does provide additional assistance on this subject:

241.311 Form 3982 provides a quick reference for carriers unfamiliar with customer removals from the route so the mail for these customers can be withdrawn from the case and bundled for forwarding by the CFS. (Exception: In a Delivery Point Sequence environment where customer removals may first be identified while performing street duties, they must be withdrawn and returned to the office for processing.) Use of a PS Form 3982 or a locally developed policy to identify removals while performing street duties will be used.

241.312 Form 3982 may be used for entering special instructions such as building vacant, temporary

absence—hold, etc. Enter temporary changes of address in the same way, but include inclusive dates. Hold mail held at carrier case should be verified once each week to insure that no mail designated by mailer is kept beyond its retention period. Such mail shall be endorsed, “Temporarily Away.”

In today’s postal environment, it becomes even more important for a letter carrier unfamiliar with the route or the most recent entries on PS Form 3982 to review the Forms 3982. Vacancies, potentially dangerous animals, hold mail, as well as changes of address, are all valid entries on PS Forms 3982. Form 3982 assists the letter carrier in becoming aware of where dangerous animals are located, what forwards exist, which residents have their mail on hold, and even what firm holdouts exist on that route.

Form 1564-B has a similar role in assisting a letter carrier unfamiliar with the route:

244.31 Review Form 1564-B is for names and addresses of callers, box holders, or customers for whom there are special instructions. If not familiar with box section or other special orders on file, place a colored dot or other symbol on case label at address separation involved so that Form 1564-B can be checked.

The Postal Service has been testing a concept called the Premium Forwarding Service (PFS). For a fee, patrons may have their mail temporarily forwarded to them once a week during a specified time period that they are not at home. This is only available to residential customers at the present time. This concept is out of the test phase and is perceived to be a permanent service. Guess where the letter carrier enters which customer is soliciting this service? That’s right, PS Form 3982.

Providing the maximum service to postal customers is inherent to the proud heritage of the letter carrier. Using these forms in the manner intended positively assists in maintaining the integrity of the word *service* in Postal Service.

Thanks to Brother Hollman for his reminder. ☒