

New tests for city carriers



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As the summer months progress, the COVID-19 pandemic is unrelenting in many areas of the country, despite efforts to control the spread of the virus. Regardless of the increased risks, letter carriers and other postal employees continue to courageously provide a public service that is essential to our nation. This ongoing pandemic, however, has created many challenges for letter carriers, both new and experienced.

One of the challenges for the Postal Service is how to conduct safe, socially distanced driver training for new letter carriers. Recently, NALC has received notification that USPS plans to test a Long Life Vehicle

(LLV) barrier solution for new driver training conducted during the pandemic. For the test, the Postal Service will develop a barrier that will divide the LLV into two sections. Under current procedures, put in place during the pandemic, instructors are required to follow the new driver in a separate vehicle. The goal is to test the ability to allow the instructor to train a new employee in the same vehicle, while minimizing driver and instructor contact and decreasing the risk of spreading the virus. The Postal Service has selected Vehicle Maintenance Facility (VMF) locations in four districts to test this barrier solution—Capital Heights, MD; Albany, NY; Royal Oak, MI; and Baton Rouge, LA.

In a letter dated June 11, USPS notified NALC of its plans to conduct a proof of concept (POC) test of new electronic Arrow key lockers. The Postal Service states that it has recently experienced an increase in lost Arrow keys. According to USPS, lost keys can create the potential for security issues related to mail theft and customer identity fraud.

During calendar year 2019, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) published multiple reports in which it identifies issues with proper Arrow key security in numerous delivery units. In response to these reports, USPS indicates that the Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) has been working to identify ways to enhance employee awareness of this issue.

To address this situation, USPS plans to test alternate ways to increase Arrow key security, create higher levels of employee accountability related to Arrow keys, and reduce the costs and fees associated with investigating and replacing lost Arrow keys and locks. During this test, several methods will be utilized to access the locker units to retrieve the Arrow keys. Access methods include the

use of individual personal identification numbers (PINs) or the use of employee badge barcodes to retrieve Arrow keys. The test began in July and will last for approximately six months in three locations—Annandale and Arlington, VA; and Alameda, CA.

On a positive note, USPS has begun deployment of Mercedes Metris, a commercially made right-hand drive delivery vehicle, in several locations throughout the country. The Metris is intended to replace aging LLVs on routes that are primarily park-and-loop or foot routes with a limited amount of curblane delivery.

While replacement of aging LLV vehicles is good news, I want to caution letter carriers about a potential safety hazard that has been reported related to the new Metris vehicles. My office has received several pieces of correspondence regarding an inability to lock the sliding side door when it is in the open position. Some carriers have reported concerns that the door will not latch open and could bounce back, potentially injuring the operator. If you have safety concerns with the sliding door on the Metris, or with any other vehicle safety issue, be sure to submit the PS Form 1767, Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice to your supervisor. Supervisors have the responsibility of correcting safety hazards and must address the situation promptly. For more information on submitting a PS Form 1767 and management's responsibilities when a safety hazard has been reported, read the Contract Talk article in this edition of *The Postal Record*.

The safety of letter carriers continues to be the top priority for NALC. If management fails to address your safety concerns according to manual and handbook provisions, contact your shop steward or branch officer immediately. As always, thank you for your service, be well and stay safe.



The Mercedes Metris vans, which will begin to replace aging vehicles on certain routes