

## A fair day's work for a fair day's pay



**Paul  
Barner**

**O**n a daily basis, nearly every letter carrier must go through the process of evaluating the workload of their assigned duties and estimate the time associated with completing those duties. When a letter carrier believes that the route they were assigned to carry has more work than they can complete within eight hours, or they believe they cannot complete all of the work assigned to them for the day within their scheduled time, the letter carrier is responsible for notifying management. Likewise, management is required to inform the letter carrier of what to do. Many times, the resulting evaluations culminate in disagreements.

**Contractually enforceable provisions addressed in Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services; Handbook M-41, City Carriers Duties and Responsibilities; and several national-level settlements have defined a process that both letter carriers and managers are required to follow when a letter carrier determines they will be unable to complete their daily assignment within their normally scheduled time frame. Additionally, specific information on the Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS); PS Form 3996, Carrier-Auxiliary Control; and PS Form 1571, Undelivered Mail Report can be found beginning on page 85 of the 2019 NALC Letter Carrier Resource Guide and are also available in the "Resources" section of the NALC website under "Workplace Issues." Here is some advice on how to handle these situations.**

- 1. Verbally inform management:** Section 131.41 of *Handbook M-41* requires the letter carrier to verbally inform management when they are of the opinion that they will be unable to case all mail distributed to the route, perform other required duties, and leave on schedule or when they will be unable to complete delivery of all mail.
- 2. Request PS Form 3996:** Section 122.33 of *Handbook M-39* requires management to provide, upon request by the employee, a PS Form 3996, after the supervisor has been verbally informed as to the reason for the request. The employee shall not be denied the form, and upon request, a duplicate of the completed form will be provided to the employee.

Remember, you must request the PS Form 3996 and verbally inform the supervisor of the reason for the request. If management refuses to provide a PS Form 3996, immediately request to see your steward.

- 3. Fill out the PS Form 3996 completely:** Instructions for completing the form can be found on the back of the PS Form 3996. In the "Reason For Use of Auxiliary" section of the form, identify why you believe you cannot complete your assignment in eight hours. Fully explain the reasons for your request. Provide as much specificity as possible in lieu of using more general comments such as "heavy volume" or "route overburdened." Supervisors may deny your request using DOIS projections as their justification. Multiple national-level settlements (e.g., M-01664 and M-01769) have held that these time projections cannot be used as the sole determinant of daily workload. Keep in mind, you are the professional letter carrier tasked with performing the duties of the assignment, and nothing can replace your estimate of how long that will take.
- 4. Keep your cool:** While being challenged can be frustrating and demeaning, there is no benefit to getting angry. The best course of action is to remain calm and professional while following the process outlined. If your manager denies the request, advise them you will do the best you can. In a professional manner, ask the manager for instructions as to what to do in the event you are unable to complete the assignment in the approved allotted time frame.
- 5. Don't argue:** There is no reason to argue with your manager at this point. Request a copy of the PS Form 3996 and continue with your assigned duties. Always work professionally and safely. You should never skip breaks or lunch to complete your assignment.
- 6. Don't make decisions:** Management is obligated to make decisions in accordance with contractual provisions. Once you realize that you will not be able to complete your assigned duties within the time frame approved by management, you should place the decision-making burden back on them by notifying management and requesting further instructions in accordance with any local directives. If no local directives exist, try contacting management two hours prior to the expiration of the approved time, or as soon as reasonably possible after confirming your

*(continued on page next page)*

## United we stand



**James D. Henry**

**T**here is nothing fairer than workers having unions for their mutual benefit. The history of the labor movement needs to be taught in every school in the United States of America. This country is living testimony to what free men and women, organized in free democratic trade unions, can do to make a better life.

**Where there is unity, there is always victory.** All things are relative; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves. All is really one. Every branch number is preceded by the acronym of NALC. No matter our geography, background or ethnicity, we're all brothers and

sisters of the same union, with one common cause: the advancement and security of letter carriers.

Henry Ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." The NALC is currently at a pivotal moment that will determine the standard of living and quality of work life for current and future letter carriers. To achieve a living wage commensurate with the worth of letter carriers' labor, to obtain a respectful work environment, and to ensure stability and security, we must rally around one another for the greater good. In unity there is strength!

Our union advocates to keep us safer, healthier and able to enjoy a higher quality of life. All letter carriers should expect a better workplace and for their union to negotiate for them wages and benefits they deserve. A fair day's wage for a fair day's work! Growth is never by mere chance. It is the result of forces working together.

We must continue to demonstrate that we are a strong union, we must give our membership what they



deserve, we must raise the income of all letter carriers—whether career or city carrier assistant—and we must continue to provide benefits, security and affordable health insurance. Moreover, we must give letter carriers a voice when it comes to negotiating and enforcing our contract. Failure is not an option! Too much is at stake. We must persevere!

**Union represents togetherness, not sameness.** It does not mean we're divided if we disagree or have a different opinion. Democracy isn't just when you agree with it. Rather, we must strive to remain together in our pursuit of our common causes. A union is only as strong, effective and powerful as the members who participate in its activities. Only by binding together as a single force will we remain strong and unconquerable.

Togetherness is essential for us to reach our goals, whether big or small. By coming together and pooling our efforts, we can tackle bigger tasks and overcome any obstacle. When we come together as union brothers and sisters, we can achieve more than any of us could on our own.

*United we stand; empowered we thrive!*

## A fair day's work for a fair day's pay (continued)

*(continued from previous page)*

inability to complete the assignment within the allotted time. Notify management of your location and estimated time to complete the assignment. Again, ask management for further instructions and follow the instructions that management gives you.

**If management refuses to tell you what to do, or if you can't finish your assigned duties in the amount of time initially specified by management, you should return to the office in the allotted time and ask for further instructions. Once again, you should follow whatever instructions management gives you.**