



THE BRANCH 324 BUZZ

December 2019



In the office

This month's Buzz will highlight some of the handbook provisions related to city carrier office duties. Letter carriers are required to perform certain tasks in the morning, before leaving for the route, and in the afternoon, upon returning to the office. During the route inspection and adjustment process, these tasks are given office time credit on the PS Form 1838-C, Carrier's Count Mail - Letter Carrier Routes Worksheet, and are included in the office time evaluation for each route. This article will explain some of the handbook provisions relating to office activities letter carriers should perform while clocked on office time.

Vehicle inspections - Letter carriers should ensure they inspect their delivery vehicle according to USPS Notice 76, Expanded Vehicle Safety Check every day before operating the vehicle. Vehicle inspections should be performed as soon as possible after clocking in to allow letter carriers to promptly report vehicle deficiencies to management. These requirements are found in Sections 832 and 842.1 of Handbook M-41, City Carriers Duties and Responsibilities.

832 Inspecting Vehicle - 832.1 Inspect vehicle as described on Notice 76, Expanded Vehicle Safety Check (see exhibit 832.1) for deficiencies, body damage, or inoperable items. See section 842 for reporting defects.

842.1 Reporting Defects - Driver must (a) report all mechanical defects or failures and major body damage on Form 4565, Vehicle Repair Tag (see exhibit 842.1) as soon as noted, and (b) immediately turn in the completed form to a dispatcher or manager. Minor body damage can sometimes await repair until the next regular inspection and need not be reported more than once.

Time Allowances for Carrier Office Work

19 Vehicle inspection

922.51f. Base minimum allowance is 3 minutes. As indicated in section 922.51, this inspection should be performed as part of morning office duties and should receive office time credit accordingly. Notice 76 specifies letter carriers should perform Items 16 and 17 on the list with assistance from another person if possible. Vehicle inspections are an important part of maintaining letter carrier safety and should not be overlooked.

Hold mail - Letter carriers have certain responsibilities when it comes to processing hold mail. Mail may be held for many reasons, including customers temporarily away or a 10-day hold in anticipation of processing a change of address. The procedures for processing hold mail vary based on the type of mail and the reasons for the hold. These procedures are explained in depth in Chapter 2 of Handbook M-41. Whatever the reason mail is being held, letter carriers should process this mail on office time. Handbook provisions instruct management to have letter carriers retain hold mail at the carrier case. This language is found in section 117 of Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services:

117.1 Workroom Floor Layout

k. Hold Mail. Instruct the carrier to place hold mail in a central location **only** when space is not available at the carrier's case.

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Accountable items/special services mail

Accountable items are keys, postage due, customs duty and special services mail. Letter carriers receive these items in the morning from the accountable clerk. These items are handled in accordance with Section 261 of Handbook M-41.

2 Office Time - Preparation

261 Accountability Procedures

261.1 Acquiring Accountable Items

261.11 Accountable items are keys, postage due, customs duty, and special services mail.

261.12 Generally, carriers are required to call at the finance cage for accountable items. They may be called in groups by call of route numbers or by passing a paddle (see glossary for paddle system). At some offices, the items are delivered to the carrier at his/her case.

During route inspections, carriers receive office time credit for processing accountable/special services mail. Section 922.51 of Handbook M-41 discusses time credit for these items:

922.51 Actual Time Entries

a. Line 14, Registered, Certified, COD, Customs, Express Mail, and Postage Due; Keys; Form 3868; Signing For, Returning Funds and Receipts. Record the combined time (1) to travel from the carrier case to the place within the work unit where registered, certified, postage due, COD, and customs mail is obtained — unless these articles are brought to you; (2) to sign for these items and make returns of receipts or funds; and (3) to return to the carrier case or (where local conditions warrant) to return to the vehicle from this location. If the locations where these various kinds of mail are processed are widely separated, total the time

time required at each location and record on line 14. Also include in the total on this line the time for obtaining and returning keys. If accountable mail is delivered at the carrier case, record the time used to accept and sign for the articles. If accountable mail is identified while performing street duties, whether it is delivered or returned, the carrier will receive the actual time for clearance of the piece.

This handbook language makes it clear that the processing of these items should be credited to office time. Letter carriers should ensure that they are on office time when handling accountable items, whether in the morning before leaving for the route or in the afternoon upon returning.

Rest breaks - City letter carriers are entitled to two paid 10-minute rest breaks during each eight-hour workday. One of these rest breaks may be taken in the office on office time if your local branch has chosen this option. The negotiated two 10-minute break periods are the required minimum. Longer breaks may be established by past practice or by the local memorandum of understanding (LMOU). Letter carriers are required to take the negotiated breaks.

The Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM) on page 41-28 explains this requirement as follows: National Arbitrator Britton ruled that the Postal Service must ensure that all employees stop working during an office break. Contractual breaks must be observed and cannot be waived by employees (H4N-3D-C 9419, Dec. 22, 1988, C-08555).

We hope that this has helped. We will continue this discussion in January. If you have questions, please contact your steward for additional information.