The Top Ten
Ways that USPS Screws Rural Carriers

By John Amtsfield,

1) On overburdened routes, carries are contractually due auxiliary assistance for all time that exceeds 48 hours in five days or 57:36 in six days up to the route evaluation. When USPS does not provide assistance, they are in effect requiring carriers to work without compensation in violation of the contract and to the possible detriment of their 2080 guarantee.

2) When USPS unilaterally orders carriers to work delayed mail from a relief day or a day of leave without additional compensation. This violation should be grieved each and every time it happens. Carriers who are required to work mail left over from a relief or leave day did not receive a full relief day or day of leave and are therefore being forced to do work someone else was either paid to do or should have been paid to do.

3) Failure to hire sufficient relief employees. It is the postmaster's job to hire, promote, transfer, assign and retain employees. When they don't do it, they are not doing their job and if they can't do it, then they can't do their job.

4) On DPS and sector-segmented routes, when carriers have to wait an inordinate amount of time for automated mail and where changes in starting time cannot be made an issue, USPS is not operating properly. If carriers have to wait for lengthy periods of time for automated mail, no time is being saved by automation since the carriers could have sorted it in the time they were waiting. As long as changing the starting times is not an issue, carriers facing long waits may be entitled to extra compensation for the waiting time.

5) When Route adjustments are implemented, USPS must make a serious effort to redirect the mail from the portion of the route taken off to the new route. If USPS is going to rely on carriers to perform major hand-offs of mail indefinitely, the practical effect is that the carrier is still handling the mail without the compensation. Depending on how lackadaisical USPS has done the adjustments and scheme changes, carriers may be entitled to additional compensation. In DPS offices this should be a non-issue since adjustments would m mandate scheme changes at least for the automated mail.

6) Forcing carriers to take LWOP (Leave without Pay) to avoid exceeding 2080 hours, particularly if little or no auxiliary assistance was provided on overburdened routes or relief vacancy problems required carriers to work relief days.

7) Requiring rural carriers to work their evaluated times. Evaluated time is supposed to be an average wherein carriers on routes that are not overburdened would normally work over and under the evaluated times throughout the year. Under no circumstances can carriers be required to do "busy" work to complete their daily evaluated time.

8) Requiring carriers to do extra duties without compensation because they are under their evaluated times or any other reason. Any and all extra duties, assignments, jobs must be compensated over and above the evaluated time. Carrier's actual time is irrelevant. Even if a supplemental payment form is submitted and denied, it may take a grievance to get the payment.

9) When carriers are injured on duty, USPS has a legal obligation to assist the carrier in filling out the proper forms for Workmen's Compensation and to do so in a timely manner. Too often and in almost every single case, USPS assumes an adversarial role with tragic and unnecessary consequences for the injured carriers. **Nearly every time a carrier is injured on the job and incapacitated, USPS seems to do everything possible ensure that it becomes a nightmare for the carrier.**

10) Failure and/or refusal to return leave slips (Forms 3971) within a reasonable time and/or denying leave arbitrarily.

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1) Failure and/or refusal to take parcels and/or accountable mail to the door to attempt delivery. Carriers are credited with additional time for these requirements, carriers are paid for door delivery and senders expect that these items will be taken to a customer's door.
2) Delivering time sensitive mail before or after the scheduled delivery dates. Most conscientious carriers take great pride in delivering all available mail; but, scheduled mail delivered early is a huge problem for senders that are timing advertising campaigns with mail delivery. Early delivery of time sensitive mail hurts business and must cease.
3) Failure and/or refusal to properly record delivery of priority mail or special services mail pieces We are competing for this business and delivery employees are sabotaging efforts to compete by knowingly and/or unknowingly failing to properly handle these pieces. Leaving pieces for signature or signing for pieces as agent is a very, very dangerous practice to circumvent the amount of time and effort to properly deliver special service mail pieces.
4) Failure to record and subtract boxes vacant over 90 days. Under the regulations, these boxes are no longer current deliveries and must be removed. There is little or no effect on a carrier's route evaluation unless there are enough vacant boxes to trigger a two hour adjustment. There have been instances where carriers have been charged with fraud for not recording vacant boxes and in some cases notices of removal were issued charging an attempt to defraud.
5) In correct handling of mail that is addressed "or current resident" or endorsed mail "address correction requested", etc. In these cases the sender has requested and is liable for extra postage for the services. Carriers must adhere to the endorsements and when someone moves, mail addressed "or current resident" is delivered to the new resident if known.
6) Inaccurately recording times on PS Form 4240 (Trip Report). USPS is legally required to maintain an accurate record of actual carrier work-time, whether it is recorded accurately by the carrier or not. USPS, by law, cannot overlook inaccurate times in order to escape possible payment of overtime and can be held liable by "suffering and permitting" the off-the-clock work. It is unconscionable that in many instances managers and carriers have conspired to falsify actual work times so that USPS can escape proper payment of overtime and carriers can escape potential route ad adjustments. It is even worse that in many instances, carriers and postmasters are not ashamed to publicize, brag about and otherwise flaunt this patently illegal behavior. USPS is still responsible for violating the law and all the attendant penalties, whether they sanction it or not, whether they know about it or not just be simply not stopping it effectively and demonstratively.
7) Improper recording and or Failure to record route changes, address changes, etc on PS Form 3982 or PS Form 1564. This prevents relief employees from being aware of changes and be able to review those changes as necessary.
8) Failure and/or refusal to maintain a stamp stock, to sell stamps to customers on the route the same day they are ordered, or to affix stamps to a reasonable number of letters once in a while. Whether or not a carrier philosophically agrees with the principle of stamp credits as they were handled in the past, the fact remains that every route is now credited with time for stamp sales. Carriers are being paid to do this and it is a job responsibility.
9) Each and every time a carrier is rude or nasty to a customer, USPS is savaged. An employee's actions or responses are long remembered even though the original incident is easily forgotten. This applies especially for employee's driving USPS vehicles and driving etiquette. Every employee is an ambassador for USPS every time they come into contact with each customer or members of the public. People will judge USPS by how they are treated by USPS employees. Flipping someone the bird as you cut them off in traffic is not only not very smart, but it will leave a lasting negative impression on the steaming person that was cut off. Since we are an organization that sells service, public relations is important at every opportunity.
10) When carriers make special requests, seek special favors or extra considerations that are not available to other employees from unscrupulous managers attempting to manipulate employees by currying favor with some and punishing others; in every case, eventually employee morale will suffer and a hostile, stressful

work environment will evolve that affects everyone in the office. Self-centered, self-absorbed people may gain short term, but long term everyone suffers and it is a lousy way to manage.

Carriers who accept special considerations knowing they are not available to other employees are screwing USPS and the NRLCA and often times with a change in managers, they are the first ones to complain when the shoe ends up on the other foot. That kind of selfish attitude always poisons a work environment.

The entire point of these top ten lists is not who is screwing who, but let's get together and eliminate all of these situations. If you recognize yourself as the screwer or the screwed, don't shoot the messenger, but do something positive!

John Amtsfield [Initially these were written circa 1992 and updated circa 1997. I made some changes since two of the original things USPS could not do, they now can do contractually such as unilaterally changing a carrier's relief day and requiring second trips]