



**NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE**

**NATIONAL JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE**

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**ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**  
**February 28, 2007**

The NJSC held the monthly Quality of Work Life/Employee Involvement meeting at the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) Headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. All NJSC members were present. Butch Parker retired in February, and the NJSC is in the process of filling that position on the committee. Additionally, NJSC coordinator, Sandy Savoie, is rotating off the committee, and Jackie Hessian will temporarily assume the coordinator duties.

The meeting began at 9 a.m. with an open discussion period and a prioritization and finalization of the agenda. Because of contract negotiations and the ratification process, this was the first meeting since the national meeting held in October.

**CALENDAR**—The following is the schedule for the NJSC:

March 27—Rotation dinner for Sandy Savoie and Butch Parker

March 28—NJSC meeting at USPS HQ

April 24-27—NAJSC co-chair meeting and NJSC meeting in Hartford, Connecticut

May 1-3—PAJSC co-chair meeting and NJSC meeting in Sacramento, California

September 12-14—GLAJSC co-chair meeting and NJSC meeting in Oak Brook, Illinois

**NAME CHANGE**

The NJSC approved the Central Area Joint Steering Committee's request to change their name to the Great Lakes AJSC (GLAJSC), as that is the only area they represent.

**MAILBOX WARNING DEVICE**

The NJSC discussed a recent situation concerning a mailbox warning device. A rural carrier delivering mail near Annapolis, Maryland, opened a curbside box and saw a small transmitter inside. When a red light on the device illuminated, the carrier—thinking it was a bomb—retreated and alerted his supervisor.

The device was not an explosive; it was a transmitter that alerts customers inside their homes that the day's mail has arrived. The USPS has not approved the product that frightened the Annapolis rural carrier. In fact, the USPS hasn't approved any electronic signaling devices that emit sounds or turns on lights inside a curbside box.

The Postal Service has approved a product called "MailMinder," manufactured by the Step2 Company. MailMinder uses a transmitter inside the curbside box to alert residents inside their homes when mail has been delivered. However, the transmitter does not set off sounds or lights inside a curbside box when someone opens it.

Any rural carrier who encounters a suspicious device or item in a mailbox should immediately contact his/her supervisor, and the supervisor should notify the United States Postal Service Inspection Service and other appropriate authorities.

Also discussed were recent suspicious package incidents that have occurred in several parts of the country. Carriers are reminded to be diligent in observing what has been left for them at customer mailboxes. Everyone is reminded of the proper procedures to follow when suspicious packages or devices are found in the mailbox. If a carrier is unsure of what to do, ask the postmaster to go over the latest security advisory information with them.

### **HIRING/RETENTION**

The chart below reflects the latest hiring and retention rates. Retention rates have been improved in many areas, in part from the efforts of AJSCs, DJSCs, and workteams. Workteam projects that measure leave replacement retention should be using these national reports for their specific district.

<b><u>Retention Area Name</u></b>	<b><u>Total Hired</u></b>	<b><u>Still Rural</u></b>	<b><u>% Rate</u></b>	<b><u>Non Rural</u></b>	<b><u>Resignation</u></b>	<b><u>Termination</u></b>	<b><u>Re- moval</u></b>	<b><u>Other</u></b>
Capital Metro	2,733	1,822	66.7%	131	596	179	4	1
Eastern	3,466	2,465	71.1%	145	630	222	4	0
Great Lakes	3,358	2,450	73.0%	113	598	192	4	1
Northeast	1,734	1,222	70.5%	124	290	97	1	0
NY Metro	612	391	63.9%	56	120	44	1	0
Pacific	1,570	953	60.7%	128	367	121	1	0
Southeast	5,228	3,687	70.5%	230	995	302	12	2
Southwest	3,438	2,384	69.3%	187	653	212	2	0
Western	4,607	3,009	65.3%	246	982	367	2	1
<b>National</b>	<b>26,746</b>	<b>18,383</b>	<b>68.7%</b>	<b>1,360</b>	<b>5,231</b>	<b>1,736</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5</b>

### **SAFETY AND HEALTH**

Bob Kunkel, program manager, Safety and Environmental Performance Management, was a guest at our meeting and presented information on safety. He reviewed the Serious Accident Report for the current year. To date, the Postal Service has recorded five motor vehicle fatalities of which two were rural letter carriers.

The NJSC reviewed the Safety Tracking Report. The committee made some minor changes in this year's tracking procedures that will identify the following for each of the seven criteria:

- Potentially hazardous conditions
- Potentially hazardous conditions that can be corrected
- Potentially hazardous conditions that cannot be corrected
- Potentially hazardous conditions corrected YTD
- Potentially hazardous conditions still requiring correction YTD

Sam Pulcrano, director, Safety and Environmental Performance Management, notified the NJSC that the Rural Route Tracking System (RRTS) for FY 07 is being improved. The goal is to enable route inspectors to identify potentially hazardous conditions and track corrections of these conditions where correction is possible. An explanation of the revised data fields was provided.

Motor vehicle accidents and OSHA reports through Quarter II, FY 07 were reviewed. A new Safe Driver Program has been updated and is being rolled out in addition to the new Driver Safety Instructor position that has been authorized.

Spokane, Washington, is the pilot site for left-hand drive (LHD) training. In conjunction with Safety, the Spokane DJSC will participate in the development of new training that will teach new hires how to operate LHD vehicles while delivering to curbside mail receptacles. The NJSC is seeking information from AJSCs that may have developed video or other programs that teach LHD delivery. Please send your information to the NJSC coordinator if you have such a program.

There was discussion about seat belt extensions, convex mirrors, and a back up light bulb that beeps when the vehicle is in reverse. There was consensus about promoting the use of these three items. A seat belt extender allows rural carriers to wear a seat belt when driving a LHD vehicle while not seated directly behind the steering wheel. The NJSC also likes the idea of rural carriers using convex mirrors on a corner of the side-view mirror on their personal vehicle. We believe the convex mirror, if used in addition to the side-view mirror and a glance over his/her shoulder, will provide one more opportunity to see an approaching vehicle. The third device discussed is a light bulb that will cost less than \$20. It replaces the backup light on the carrier's vehicle and illuminates and beeps when the vehicle is in reverse. The NJSC encourages AJSCs, DJSCs, and workteams to acquire these items for rural carrier route vehicles.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

The NJSC was asked for guidance on a standardized 30-day DPS review procedure. Issues concerning the 30-day DPS review were addressed by Arbitrator Bloch at National Arbitration. Additional issues are pending at the national level in the grievance arbitration procedure. As a result, it is no longer appropriate for the NJSC to address these contractual matters. Notwithstanding, it remains the responsibility of the DJSC to provide oversight of automation implementation in accordance with the QWL/EI National Guidelines.

The NJSC received a copy of "Reap What You Sow." This excellent video by the SAJSC was shown at the National Meeting in October 2006.

The NJSC is still receiving questions on rural carriers being required to take DPS mail directly to the street. This issue was first addressed in the April 26, 1999, NJSC minutes and most recently in the December 15, 2005, NJSC minutes, which read:

The Postal Service established its policy on the casing of DPS mail in the DPS Implementation Guidelines published on March 31, 1994. In those guidelines it states:

Rural carriers, at their option, may case and strap out DPS mail with other mail in accordance with Part 150, Schedules, in Handbook PO-603, *Rural Carrier Duties and Responsibilities*. Carrier casing of DPS mail will not change mail count procedures or time standards applied to DPS mail.

In 1999, the QWL/EI National Joint Steering Committee minutes also addressed this issue. The NJSC stated:

More and more carriers are being requested to take DPS to the street and not case this mail. The NJSC still supports the carrier's right to case DPS mail in accordance with Part 150 of handbook PO-603. The carrier may leave late, but not so significantly as to cause delays in the customer anticipated delivery window. In addition, carriers who cannot return to the office as scheduled or cannot, on a consistent basis, meet the overall evaluation of the route may be required to take their DPS directly to the street without casing.

Any management decision, based on service, to require that DPS be taken directly to the street by regular or replacement carrier without casing must be based on route-specific conditions that require efficiency and scheduling remedies to be considered or attempted before requiring the rural carrier to take DPS mail directly to the street. However, management may direct rural carriers; compensated for actual work hours (i.e., regular carriers compensated at FLSA Section 7A and leave replacements exceeding 40 hours a week) instead of evaluated compensation and regular rural carriers that may exceed FLSA limits of actual hours worked in a day/week/year, to take DPS mail directly to the street, if the carrier will likely increase workhours by casing DPS mail.

## **THE PROCESS**

NJSC minutes from our October 2006 meeting with the AJSCs were reviewed. There were many ideas to change the Process, including workteams. We requested that the AJSCs formulate their ideas by identifying specific problems and possible solutions. We expect workteams and DJSCs to provide input to improving the Process. We hope to begin receiving your suggestions soon.

## **AJSC MINUTES**

**Eastern** (November/January)—The NJSC is pleased to see the Richmond District Manager was at your meeting. One particular project being developed as a part of the Richmond DJSCs overall FY 07 goals is to formulate and submit a budget to help cover training and project expenses. If the EASJC receives more information on this, please forward to the NJSC. Your minutes reflect that the leave replacement retention rate for the Richmond District continues to improve. While we want to congratulate the DJSC for its success, we also want emphasize that everyone should be using the national report to measure retention success. We noted that you referenced driver training revised by the Central PADJSC and providing tips for driving in the middle of the seat. Also, new hires are being encouraged to bring their vehicles to driver safety for inspection by the driver trainer. We hope to have a national training program for driving LHD vehicles as noted earlier. We like the way the Central PADJSC is measuring their return on investment. A sign-in sheet is utilized for each team meeting which is to be completed and sent to the DJSC coordinator with each set of minutes. This is utilized to track QWL/EI time to document hours used for the year and as a check and balance against “O” time.

**Great Lakes** (August/December)—The GLAJSC continues to set and track goals. This year’s goals are related to Safety, Improving Workplace Environment, and Improving Service. We wish the GLASJC much success. It is great to see your DJSCs continue their contact with their district managers. It is also a good idea to keep close contact with the senior plant manager as noted in your minutes, as plant managers can be a great asset if automation problems develop.

**Northern** (September/January)—We are pleased to see that some of your DJSCs are stressing the importance of “checking your stripes at the door” as we discussed in Atlanta. We are also pleased to see that work teams are sharing projects and videos acquired through the national conference.

**Pacific** (November/December/January)—The NJSC appreciated the comments provided by the PAJSC concerning the national conference held in Atlanta, Georgia. We also like the theme you selected for your 2007 co-chair meeting in May. It is good to see that DJSCs like San Diego are sharing the best projects from the national conference.

**Southern** (January/February)—Thank you for emphasizing the procedure for accessing the NJSC Website on lite blue. We hope to keep the site up-to-date with information concerning QWL/EI and the NJSC. It was good to see the Arkansas DJSC sharing projects and information obtained from the QWL/EI National Meeting in Atlanta.

**Western** (September/November)—The NJSC is pleased to see the work being done by the Arizona DJSC. Awards at your conference for service, hiring and retention, safety, revenue, work place environment, and stamp sales are all important categories. Hawkeye DJSC continues its work on safety. We noted the praise you provided the Hawkeye DJSC concerning the “Defensive Driving” article on their front page of their minutes. We recall that Hawkeye and Portland DJSCs were recognized at the national

meeting for safety-related projects. Great job! You correctly warned the Salt Lake City DJSC that there may be some resistance to doing training on LHD vehicles. However, you may be pleased to learn that the Spokane DJSC is currently involved in testing LHD drivers training. The NJSC plans to review the results of those tests to consider standard training for new leave replacements delivering mail from LHD vehicles.

Adjourn at 3:15 p.m.