

Flats Sequencing System Work Methods Joint Task Force Report

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The following report is submitted by the Joint Flats Sequencing System (FSS) Task Force in accordance with the September 11, 2007 Memorandum of Understanding, Re: *FSS Work Methods*.

Background

The Task Force is composed of five members from each party. Postal Service members included Alan Moore, Phil Knoll, Don Ryalls, Bob McLean, and Robert Raines. National Association of Letter Carrier (NALC) members included Dale Hart, Brian Hellman, Ernie Kirkland, Al Apfelbaum, and Dave Miller. Members of the Task Force held meetings at Postal Service Headquarters, NALC Headquarters, Hyattsville, Maryland Post Office, Reston, Virginia Post Office Annex, and the Fairfax, Virginia Main Post Office. The Task Force also visited the Dulles Processing and Distribution Center to observe the FSS in operation.

At the direction of the task force testing was conducted on 20 park and loop routes located in two ZIP Codes, 20782 and 20784 in the Hyattsville, Maryland Post Office between January and April 2008. Data was collected by a team of eight data collectors, with an even number of representatives from union and management.

Initially, the following three basic office methods were tested: merging cased residual mail with a single or multiple sets of sequenced mail during pull down, merging cased residual mail with FSS during pull down, and casing sequenced mail with residual mail and pulling it down as a bundle. Mail was merged at three different locations—in the office, at the back of the vehicle in the parking lot, and at the back of the vehicle at each park location. These three methods were expanded to include casing into a single 124-D case with two deliveries per one inch separation.

The Task Force met over several days to evaluate test data and information from live FSS sites in Virginia (Reston and Fairfax). Areas of agreement by the Task Force are outlined in section titled Conclusion.

With the exception of satchel testing in Fairfax, Virginia, this report concludes the term of the FSS Task Force. Any changes to work methods not adopted through this report must be consistent with the terms of the National Agreement, including, if appropriate, notice and procedural requirements.


Conclusion


Pursuant to the September 11, 2007 Memorandum of Understanding, Re: *FSS Work Methods*, the Joint Task Force has agreed to the following concerning handling mail in an FSS environment.

- City letter carriers serving park and loop or foot deliveries will not be required to carry more than three bundles.
- In order to maintain three bundles on pre-sequenced mail days, letter carriers serving park and loop or foot deliveries may only be assigned to either:
 - case residual mail, then collate with FSS mail while in the office (the pre-sequenced bundle must meet the definition of a third bundle under the Interpretive Step agreement for case Q98N-4Q-C 00189552) or,
 - case residual mail, then collate with the pre-sequenced addressed mail during pull down while in the office
- There is no change to current work methods for other types of deliveries.
- When a simplified mailing is carried as a third bundle by city letter carriers serving park and loop or foot deliveries, the simplified mailing will be placed on the bottom of the appropriate bundle. In order to maintain three bundles in this circumstance, residual mail and any pre-sequenced mail delivered that day will be collated with the FSS mail.
- City carrier case configurations will be consistent with requirements in Methods Handbooks M-39 and M-41. City carriers working in an FSS environment will be consulted before case configuration changes are implemented.

The national parties contemplate that the local parties may jointly formulate a new work method and conduct a limited test of the method on one or a few routes. If the test is successful, the local parties may apply to the national joint body for approval of the method.

The parties further agree that the task force will continue to function for the sole purpose of satchel testing at the Fairfax, Virginia Main Post Office. The task force will submit a supplemental report after evaluating results of the satchel test.


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Date: 8/18/2008

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The Flats Sequencing System [FSS] Task Force agreed to prepare a joint report, reflecting the consensus of both the United States Postal Service [USPS] and the National Association of Letter Carriers [AFL-CIO] [NALC] members on the Task Force, which outlines the agreed to findings, work methods and recommendations achieved through numerous committee meetings, work method studies performed, and a visit to the prototype FSS machine, located near the Dulles International Airport in Northern Virginia. The Task Force also agreed to have respectively the NALC and USPS Task Force Members write separate reports on this matter. This report discusses the separate findings, issues and recommendations supported by the NALC members of the Task Force.

On September 11, 2007, the NALC membership ratified a negotiated National Agreement between the USPS and the NALC. Included in that Agreement was a settlement of a National dispute and a National Memorandum of Understanding [NMOU], worth mentioning here. The settlement dealt with the "Third Bundle" dispute, which reads, in part,

"1. In accordance with the recognitions cited in the above paragraph, effective with the signing of this agreement the parties agree that city letter carriers on park and loop or foot deliveries who currently carry three bundles will continue to carry as a third bundle, within weight restrictions, Enhanced Carrier Route (ECR) and Periodicals walk sequenced letter or flat mailings (WSS) that have either 90% or more coverage of the total active residential addresses, or 75% or more coverage of the total number of active deliveries on a route.

"2. The parties will establish a joint work group to examine the various methods of mail delivery on park and loop and foot deliveries. The objective of the work group will be to develop safe and efficient delivery methods for handling three bundles of addressed and/or unaddressed mail on routes with these types of deliveries. The work group will develop appropriate methods in the current DPS letter environment and it will complete its mission within sixty days of this agreement. After that sixty day period all city carriers on park and loop and walking deliveries will be required to carry three bundles using methods from the work group, unless management determines that fewer than three bundles will be used. If the work group does not reach agreement within sixty days, all city carriers on park and loop and walking deliveries will, unless otherwise determined by management, be required to carry three bundles, but the individual city carrier will determine whether he/she carries the third bundle on the arm or in the satchel. Regardless of the work method, the third bundle must meet the requirements of paragraph 1 above.

"3. The parties agree that under no circumstances will city letter carriers on park and loop or foot deliveries be required to carry more than three bundles."

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The NMOU, also incorporated into the ratified National Agreement, was on FSS Work Methods, which states, in part:

“... Understanding that the parties' respective interests are best served through a cooperative effort, the United States Postal Service (USPS) and National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) agree to jointly examine methods and procedures related to handling DPS flats. Effective with the signing of this Memorandum, a Joint Task Force comprised of four members from the NALC and four from the Postal Service will be established to explore alternative work methods necessary for handling mail in an FSS environment. The Task Force will attempt to reach agreement on necessary studies and potential work method changes, as well as implementation and operating procedures. The Task Force will submit a final report outlining findings and recommendations to the NALC President and the Postal Service Vice President, Labor Relations no later than February 18, 2008.

“In the event the Task Force is unable to reach agreement on any or all issues involved with handling mail in an FSS environment, the Postal Service may implement FSS work methods by providing the union with written notification. The parties agree that city letter carriers on park and loop or foot deliveries will not be required to carry more than three bundles. If the union believes that any management initiated work method is not fair, reasonable, or equitable the union may, within twenty-one days of notice, initiate a national-level dispute. Such dispute will be scheduled for arbitration on a priority basis; beginning no later than March 25, 2008, with a final award rendered no later than July 15, 2008. The scope of the national-level dispute is limited to whether the disputed work method(s) is fair, reasonable, or equitable.

“The parties agree that the above is the sole and exclusive process for establishing methods for handling mail in an FSS environment by city letter carriers and that no other procedural requirements (e.g., Article 34, Article 19) are necessary or relevant. This agreement is without prejudice or precedent and may only be cited by either party to enforce its terms.”

The Third Bundle Work Group tenure expired with no results agreed to and their task was combined into the FSS Task Force.

At the first committee meeting, the NALC expressed an interest in achieving a new level of cooperation working with the Postal Service during the implementation of FSS. The NALC recognizes FSS is an inevitable next step and its success or failure will have a longstanding impact on the future viability of the Service. The NALC Task Force members were particularly concerned with the Service achieving a return on its investment and maintaining quality service to customers while minimizing any negative

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impacts on letter carriers. They believed that this can only be achieved through cooperative and pro-active efforts.

Differing Opinions

From the beginning of the Task Force, there existed disagreements regarding the scope of the committee's purpose and the intent of the following language contained within the FSS Work Method NMOU: *"The Task Force will attempt to reach agreement on necessary studies and potential work method changes, as well as implementation and operating procedures..."*

The Postal Service side of the Task Force took the position that the primary focus of the committee was to determine the best work method(s) of merging mail when required on park and loop and foot routes, when four or more bundles of mail are required to be reduced into three bundles.

Although the NALC side of the Task Force was concerned with identifying the best work methods for merging mail in the afore stated situations, they were equally interested in fulfilling all of their responsibilities that were commissioned the Task Force by the FSS Work Method NMOU and the Third Bundle Settlement. The latter tasked the Work Group and then the FSS Task Force with finding the safest and most efficient work method[s] for park and loop and foot routes in an FSS environment. The NMOU on FSS Work Methods clearly charges the Task Force to discuss and try to agree on all implementation and operating procedures pertaining to and affecting letter carriers working in an FSS work environment. The NALC regarded implementation and operating procedures to be pertinent to the following:

1. Delivery Unit

- a. Changing of Letter Carriers Schedules versus earlier transportation of mail to a delivery unit.
- b. Impact to Different Types of Deliveries in FSS Environment (mounted, business, park and loop, walking, apartments, NDCBU)
- c. Staging DPS and FSS mail in an FSS Environment
- d. Procedures Utilized in pulling mail down, loading the vehicles and delivery on different types of routes (mounted, business, park and loop, foot, apartments, NDCBU) in an FSS environment.
- e. Withholding Plans and TE usage due to FSS Implementation
- f. Augmenting Structure of CASTR's and FSS yellow tubs
- g. Retrofitting of Vehicles in an FSS environment
- h. Staffing and Complement of Letter Carriers in an FSS Delivery Unit
- i. Augmentation of Casing Equipment in FSS Delivery Unit
- j. Analysis of and Adjustment of Routes in an FSS Delivery Unit.

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- k. Initial quality checks by route where FSS is cased. (NALC recommends FSS to be cased until 98% accuracy is achieved.)
- l. Methods for maintaining station inputs through carriers and supervisors to achieve higher quality and accuracy with FSS and DPS mail.
- m. Means for testing work methods at the local level, purposefully to determine best methods throughout implementation.
- n. Means for testing work methods at the local level due to future changes in delivery product, fluctuating mail volumes or other unique and/or unforeseen circumstances.
- o. Joint review of locally developed and tested work methods.
- p. Joint recommendation and approval of methods in subsequent FSS implementation.
- q. Joint review of best satchel designs and/or other delivery products that aid in safe and efficient mail delivery in an FSS environment.

Joint Work Method Study – Hyattsville, Md.

The committee jointly agreed to test different work methods in the Hyattsville Study. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of which work methods best accomplish the task of merging mail down to three bundles for Park and Loop and Foot routes in an FSS environment. While the NALC was a willing participant in the Hyattsville study, the NALC Task Force members were concerned with the integrity of the test since it would be conducted under simulated conditions.

The information obtained through the interviews with the carriers and managers involved in the Hyattsville study were the FSS committee's most reliable resource in forming any joint recommendations. Letter Carriers unanimously preferred the work method involving the casing of Residual mail into an existing Vertical Flat Case and merging the Residual mail into the FSS mail in the office on days when a fourth bundle existed, pre-sequenced address mail, for example. On a park and loop route, normally three bundles consisting of DPS, FSS and Residual mail would be carried. On days where a pre-sequenced addressed mailing existed, the Residual Mail was merged into the FSS mail, in the office and at the carrier's case.

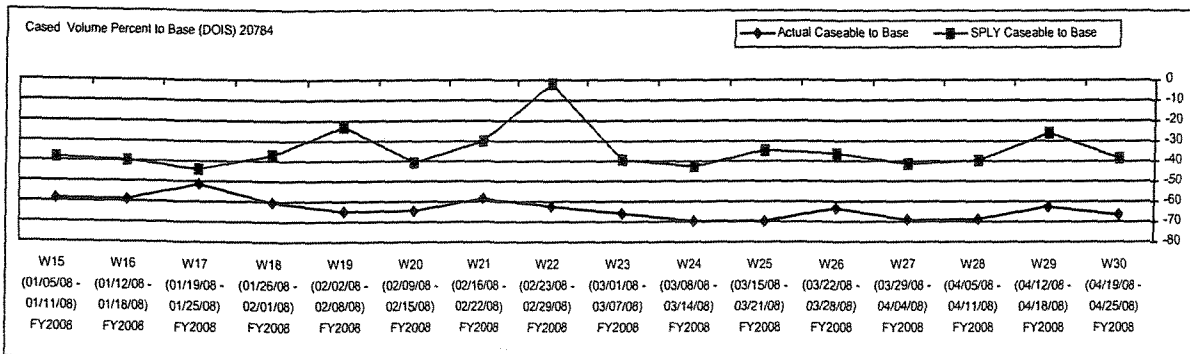
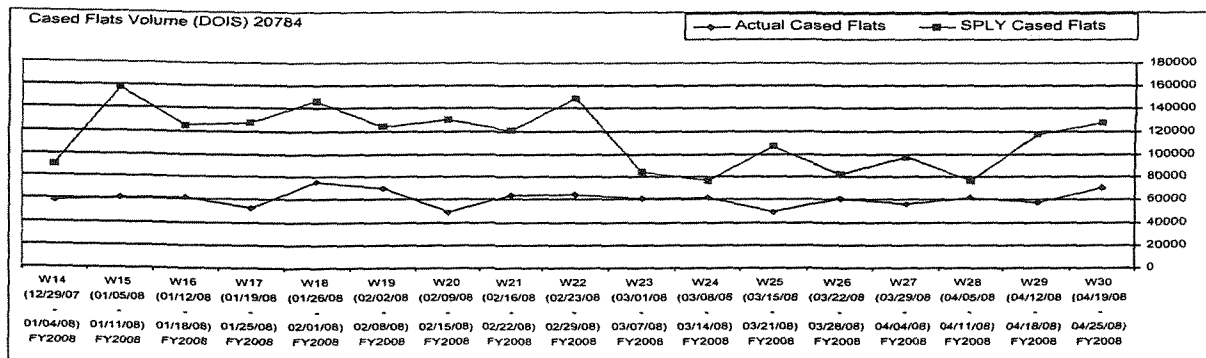
After a thorough review of the actual time and volume data, the NALC side of the Task Force concluded that the volume and time data was only useful for the purpose of devising meaningful future studies of FSS work methods.

The reliance on the data collected in the Hyattsville study is highly suspect, due to the unexpected low volumes of Flats and caseable mail volume during the

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testing period and the methodology that was used in comparing the different methods. Although these factors were no one's fault and neither side's fault, it should provide valuable insight in planning any future tests, should they occur.

Refer to the following weekly volumes throughout the testing period.



The NALC Task Force members was concerned with the differences in simulated FSS percentages and actual volumes from one scenario to another and from one day to the next. In order to analytically compare one collating methodology with

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another, the ratio and volume of DPS, FSS, Sequence and Residual mail should have been of a relative equal mix for a realistic comparative study to be made. All methods would have had to have been tested concurrently in order to determine which methods worked best under like daily conditions. That did not happen.

Additionally, it became apparent that carriers became more proficient in handling the FSS bundle towards the end of the study. A carrier who was relatively new to carrying the FSS bundle at the beginning of the test would become more skilled in the FSS environment weeks later, during the final stage. Also, the fact that carriers didn't experience a "real" FSS environment needs to be considered. During the study, carriers had the responsibility of creating the simulated FSS bundle in addition to the actual testing of collating mail and carrying mail in an FSS environment. A third factor to consider is that in a true FSS environment where the routes are adjusted to consider the loss of office time, they would arguably have additional street deliveries on their route. That could cause the need for additional delivery slots in the Verticle Flat Case and a longer street time, factors that could not be replicated in Hyattsville.

The previous are just some examples of why the present data cannot be relied upon in arriving at any final conclusions. As a result of what was learned from Hyattsville, subsequent studies should consider the following recommendations and concerns:

1. All scenarios need to be conducted concurrently in order to account for each day's unique set of variables, i.e. Volume, DPS & FSS percentages, weather conditions, Sequenced mail coverage percentage and volumes, Mail Profile, etc.
2. An employee should first attain a reasonable level of proficiency working in an FSS environment and with a particular work method before using that method in any scenario.
3. Future tests should be conducted in a "live" FSS site. This will eliminate any time keeping inaccuracies. Working actual FSS mail will provide the ability to study the actual ergonomics of working in an FSS environment.
4. Interviews with employees in future FSS studies should be continued.

The NALC Task Force members are concerned that when mail volume returns to its previous levels, the data collected in Hyattsville will be of no use. There is also a deep

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concern of these members that should the Postal Service make route adjustments based on the current lower volumes without any consideration given to the expense involved with re-inspecting and adjusting routes back to eight hours when volumes return, coupled with the disruptive effect that such poor planning would have on letter carriers and the service to the American public, the Postal Service would be making a huge strategic error.

Also, the committee has since learned of problems occurring with business routes particularly (High-Rise) deliveries at the Reston, Virginia Post Office, where the first actual FSS mail was generated from the Dulles FSS machine. When multi-office buildings have mail processed through the FSS machine and such mail is not broken down by office number, the mail has to be sorted somewhere. In Reston, carriers were told they could not sort the mail in the office and had no alternative but to sort the mail for such buildings in their vehicles. This is an example of shortsightedness of Postal management. The solution to this problem would have been either to take the building out of the sort plan or to develop a revision within the sort plan to allow the sortation of the multiple offices in delivery order. The overwhelming input that the Task Force received from the letter carriers and craft and management data collectors in Hyattsville was that collating mail on the street made the least sense, from a safety, weather, and efficiency standpoint. No work method studies were jointly created for these single address, multi-office types of deliveries. Continuous dialogue with the Postal Service needs to occur to attempt to resolve this problem on business routes.

Every office will have routes that present new challenges unique to the various types of routes. In the opinion of the NALC Task Force members, constant dialogue needs to take place, regarding these problems from the Local Parties to the National Parties, and the latitude of Local Parties to be able to test possible solutions to these and other problems at the local level. A jointly devised system to accommodate such makes the most sense, in order to identify and resolve such problems and to minimize the disruption to letter carriers and service to our customers, while maximizing the potential for success in an FSS environment. The Postal Service would be missing a golden opportunity if they did not buy into that type of endeavor. Without the means for continuing local work method studies, coupled with a procedure to accommodate dialogue between the local and national parties on best solutions for these and other problems, FSS will not achieve the maximum success for all types of routes.

Despite the wishes of the NALC, the USPS was not interested in any continued joint work method studies at the National level, with the exception of the satchel testing still being conducted in Fairfax, Va. The reason given, the Postal Service does not have the additional money or time associated with conducting further studies. The irrational aspect of this reasoning is that the Postal Service is committed to spending billions of dollars on FSS equipment, but either cannot or will not expend additional funds to insure

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that troubleshooting is a top priority and eradicating problems is a necessity. Even during the term of the Task Force, whenever the NALC members expressed a desire to expand the testing to a larger amount of routes and more cities or to conduct additional testing in an actual FSS environment, the Postal Service side of the Task Force expressed either a lack of resources and/or a limited budget.

Safety – Location of Merging Mail

The letter carriers and the data collectors at the Hyattsville test agreed that merging mail in the office is the best method. When interviewed, the letter carriers and data collectors [both managers and letter carriers] expressed the following comments regarding merging mail from the back of the Postal Vehicle:

- Bad on your back!
- Weather - No Protection for mail!
- In the parking lot there is a concern that someone will get injured because too many people are working out of the back of their vehicle at the same time and someone will get hit.
- Why do it in the parking lot when it can be done inside in a better, safer environment?
- LLV's are too narrow – Hard to organize your mail – Not enough room to maneuver.
- Whenever you merge from the park point you have to stay alert of your surroundings, due to dogs, traffic, people, etc. Attention has to be focused on safety instead of full attention on merging the mail.
- Whenever you merge from park point to park point there is a break in momentum.
- Grab and go on the street is the simplest. 100% of the carriers interviewed and agreed mail is easier to carry when it is prepared for delivery in the office.

On Park and Loop Routes the Carriers involved in the study expressed their desire to have mail ready to go for each relay, rather than collating mail for the next relay on the street, immediately before that loop. In the carrier's own words they prefer the mail to

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be ready to "Grab and Go". The M-39 Section 125.1 supports the idea of this preference:

"125.1 ... On park and loop routes, trayed letters and flats must be placed in a sequential order so that the carrier can quickly identify the mail for each loop. After loading the carrier must take empty equipment and parcels missorted to the route to a location designated by the delivery unit manager."

In conclusion, merging mail in the parking lot or at the park point is neither efficient nor is it safe according to the opinions of the letter carriers and data collectors involved in the Hyattsville, Md. FSS study.

Casing Equipment

From the Task Force's first meeting the Postal Service has expressed the desire to reduce the real estate required for delivery units in an FSS environment. This desire was based on the premise that in a high percentage DPS/FSS environment a carrier will have very little residual mail left to case, thus requiring less casing equipment which ultimately equates to less square feet of floor space needed in delivery units. While it is true that high DPS/FSS percentages will lead to less caseable mail volume, the NALC is concerned the Service will attempt to reduce casing equipment beyond what is practicable. As noted earlier, in an FSS environment, possible deliveries on a route will increase, which will necessitate, with current case requirements, more separations, not less. Although it is conceivable that, due to the decrease of caseable mail, lessening of case separation widths may be a viable option, our concern is that the Postal Service may decide on a "one size fits all" determination, without consideration for caseable mail volume on a route and the amount of mail that cannot be automated in delivery order. We believe that because of these concerns, the Postal Service should conduct joint tests on alternative casing equipment with the NALC as FSS begins to progress and is able to automate a higher percentage of flat mail.

Letter carriers at the Hyattsville test were unanimous in their dislike for tests involving the casing of mail directly into the "Sculch" trays as well as the Low Volume Cases. The apprehension is that the various types of reduced casing equipment would not be effective in working unexpected high volumes of residual mail, especially in the event of any automation failure. Of equal concern is that any Carrier who is unfamiliar with a route will experience great difficulty in learning and delivering routes with limited casing equipment. This concern arises because the Sculch Tray and the Low Volume Case break the routes down by segment and do not mirror the routes by each individual address. Imagine trying to sort mail in delivery order on a route that is unfamiliar to the letter carrier without a case that has labels depicting the proper delivery order.

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The NALC believes a balance can be achieved where casing equipment is reduced, which is the chief concern of the Service. A practical amount of casing equipment on a case by case, route by route basis, can be determined that addresses the valid service concerns involving automation failures, volume spikes and unfamiliar carriers servicing a route. In doing so the NALC makes the following suggestions:

- Casing equipment should never be reduced to a level that inhibits or obstructs the efficient casing of residual mail.
- Increased delivery points need to be accounted for when configuring cases in the FSS environment.
- Further research, preferably by a Joint Test, could be conducted in considering reducing the cell size in different sections of a case from 1 inch to $\frac{3}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ inch per cell.
- The local Union and the carrier must be notified and advised before making any changes to casing equipment for FSS. By doing so, managers lose nothing from their managerial discretion and might gain from that input that could prevent a poor decision on restructuring a case that would lead to unwanted results.

Loading Vehicles, Mounted:

While carriers on mounted routes have no limit in the number of bundles they are required to take to the street, any bundles being actively worked should be located on the vehicle's working shelf. Therefore, the NALC submitted the idea of a joint study on methods of loading of mail on mounted routes in an FSS environment. When the NALC attempted dialogue on this subject, the Postal Service claimed, without merit, that the NALC side previously expressed no interest in studying the delivery of mail on mounted routes in an FSS environment. The committee did not come to agreement on this issue. However, Section 125 of the M-39 Handbook reads as follows:

125 Carrier Work Methods — Street

125.1 Loading Carrier Vehicles

The carrier should take all mail for delivery to the vehicle at the same time using a hamper or other assigned conveyance. Avoid extra trips to the vehicle unless they are absolutely necessary due to the quantity of mail. After clocking onto street time, carriers should proceed directly to their vehicles and load the mail in an **orderly fashion**. When loading the vehicle, parcels must be

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arranged in delivery sequence where they will be convenient to the carrier. **On curblane routes, the working trays of letter and flat mail should be placed on the vehicle's working shelf with the addresses faced so the carrier can easily read them. Flat mail is placed to the right of the letter mail.**

Section 812.5 of the M-41 Handbook reads as follows:

812.5 Arrange letter mail, flat mail, and small parcels in the work tray provided on the ledge behind the windshield so as not to obstruct vision or use of the vehicle controls. Trays must not be piled on top of other trays on the ledge behind the windshield.

Final Recommendations:

While the opinions of all employees have proven valuable during the Hyattsville study, the committee should not restrict carriers to limited choices in work methods, especially during the implementation phase of FSS. The most reasonable course of action should be to encourage continued exploration of alternative methods at the local levels.

The NALC has equal interest in the success of FSS for the long-term financial stability of the Postal Service, better service to the customer and the protection of City Letter Carrier positions nationwide. The Postal Service has no better partner than the NALC in assisting with the successful implementation of this most important program.

A unilateral "my way or the highway" approach by the Postal Service in implementing work methods and operating procedures related to FSS will likely result in additional financial burdens, particularly related to the re-inspection and re-adjustment of city routes across the country. The failure of FSS will result in unpredictable costs and loss of confidence in service by the public which would be devastating.

Only through an ongoing dialogue between the parties can the myriad of operational issues that are undoubtedly forthcoming, be cost effectively and reasonably handled. In order to work through these issues, as they arise, the NALC recommends a standing FSS committee be maintained at the Headquarters level for the purpose of achieving efficient and cost effective implementation of FSS throughout the country. The Committee could effectively work on the following issues during the implementation of FSS:

1. Act as a Clearing House to resolve any local disputes over methodologies.
2. Oversee future work studies.

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3. Act as a clearinghouse for data collected from local work method studies.
4. Make joint recommendations and approvals of work methods.
5. Joint Quality assurance efforts – Station inputs, DSMART.
6. Joint emphasis on importance of proper Edit Book maintenance.
7. Realistic quality checks similar to the DPS implementation checks. FSS should be cased until 98% accuracy is verified over three days. Quality and sort plan problems could be eliminated before FSS becomes fully operational.
8. Staging locations for most efficient retrieval of DPS and FSS.
9. Resolve local work method issues.
10. Troubleshoot problem offices where FSS is implemented.
11. Determining a realistic model for projecting Mail Volumes and the maximum number of Delivery Points per specific territories, in order to better adjust routes the first time during FSS.
12. Minimize waiting time. Mail arrival and start times are jointly reviewed to determine optimum start times and work methods for local offices.
13. FSS Safety Issues
14. New equipment, satchels, straps, etc.
15. Development of new casing equipment.

Vehicle modifications

The Postal Service is testing a prototype LLV that is enhanced with different internal devices to be used in an FSS environment. Although Postal management on the FSS Task Force did not believe that this test should be covered by the Task Force, the Postal Service and the NALC are still checking on this test to see if letter carriers and local managers find one of the prototypes useful in an FSS environment. Such testing is occurring in Reston, Va. and Fairfax, Va.

Mail Processing Concerns

A prime concern that the NALC side of the Task Force raised with the Postal Service side of the Task Force pertains to the processing of mail and the transportation of that mail to the delivery unit. Historically, the Plants normally have beat to the tune of their own drummer without concern for the needs of delivery units or service to Postal patrons. When a problem existed where plants could not get residual or DPS mail to delivery units early enough for letter carriers to come in at the normal starting times, the starting times of letter carriers were moved later. Later delivery and a disservice to Postal customers was the result. When we began testing in Hyattsville the inability of

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the Plant servicing the Hyattsville delivery unit to process the mail and provide it to the delivery unit in a prompt manner was a problem. Through the discussions of the Task Force and the ability of the Management side of the Task Force to have the Plant improve, the mail began arriving at an earlier time so that the letter carriers dramatically reduced their waiting for mail time. The Task Force jointly discussed this problem and there was an agreement by all that Postal management must constantly maintain a diligent watch on the processing and transportation of residual and DPS mail from the Plant. Although we could not agree that this must be done in writing, it was gratifying to have that reaction from the management side of the Task Force. We can only hope that Postal management nationwide reacts in a similar manner.

Another concern dealt with the processing of mail from the FSS machine by the Dulles Airport. The engineers from Grumman Corporation have been insuring that the FSS machine is all that it is cracked up to be. Early observations would lead one to believe that the FSS mail quality is extremely good. The NALC's concern is that once the engineers leave and Postal Management is left responsible for the care and oversight of the FSS machines, will they insure that the staffing necessary to operate, troubleshoot, and run those machines, are maintained at a sufficient level to provide proper and timely service to delivery units throughout the country.

For FSS to be a success, from the standpoint of quality and customer satisfaction, the NALC believes that it is imperative to provide station inputs on an ongoing and continuous basis and to maintain the accuracy of the sort plan for FSS and DPS. Although the management side of the Task Force agreed with this concept, we were unable to reach an agreement with them to include this necessity in our joint report. The successful accomplishment of this important facet of automated production of mail into DPS order can only be done with the important prioritization of dialogue on mail quality between the letter carrier and the supervisor on the workroom floor. If higher level management does not make it a priority, it won't happen. How the importance of this is communicated to craft and management on the workroom floor will go a long way to either enhancing automated mail quality or diminishing it.

It is a given that everyone on the Joint Task Force wants to see FSS become a success. The future of the Postal Service relies heavily on this. Unfortunately, during the term of the Task Force we saw signs that caused us concern. Let's call it the cart before the horse syndrome. Postal management has purchased the FSS machines and predicted the savings. They then move into a mindset that dictates that the results meet their predictions, despite the fact that nobody in the world has attempted the processing of such large amounts of mail into delivery point sequenced order. In one unit that we visited that had FSS, the managers were obviously being pressured to get less office time and less street time, yet the only thing they could fall back on was to tell carriers to improve their times. There was no rational and objective appraisal of what those

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managers considered to be insufficient time. They never asked objectively whether it was the letter carrier's fault, the FSS environment's fault, delivery methodology's result in an FSS environment, or where their base time data and/or predictions of savings were not real. If this attitude prevails throughout the country there will be numerous problems with making FSS reach its full potential. The irony is that the NALC is willing to work jointly with managers at all levels to proactively and objectively deal with these issues. The question that lingers, is Postal management ready to take that step.

The second concern that we witnessed during the task force is that whenever a Postal manager is conducting their business in a manner that either Postal Management or the NALC side of the Task Force could agree that wasn't in the best interest of making FSS a success, that manager was never instructed to do it the right way. Instead an attempt was made to "convince" that manager that he had to do something differently, and then allow him the discretion of following that advice or not. What other business would allow a manager the discretion in decision making that could cause the company to fail?

In conclusion FSS has tremendous potential to be successful. That potential is reliant on the question as to whether or not the Postal Service sees the NALC as a Joint and equal partner. In our opinion, that is the defining question.

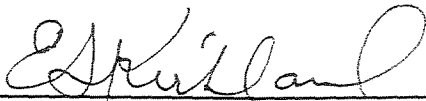
Respectfully Submitted,



DALE P. HART
Director of City Delivery



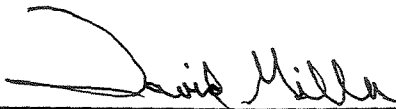
BRIAN E. HELLMAN
Director of Safety and Health



ERNEST KIRKLAND
Director of Retired Members



ALAN J. APFELBAUM
Member, Contract Administration Unit



DAVID M. MILLER
NALC Branch #39

FSS Work Methods Management Supplemental Report

Initial FSS Work Methods

In the spirit of cooperation, the Joint FSS Task Force has agreed to FSS work methods for city letter carriers serving park and loop and foot deliveries. Several other methods were tested, including work methods employing a high FSS percentage and horizontally casing mail by relay in a 124-D case.

The agreed to methods include casing residual mail into an existing VFC case, then collating residual mail with FSS or a pre-sequenced addressed mailing during pull down. Even though the agreement expressly limits city letter carriers serving park and loop and foot deliveries to no more than three bundles, the NALC Task Force insisted on including in the FSS Task Force Final Report, specific references to simplified mail. It is noted that the Hyattsville, Maryland study site did not receive simplified mail during the test period.

On days when a simplified mailing is received, there are three work methods available:

1. Carrying the simplified mail as a third bundle and collating residual and pre-sequenced mail with FSS.
2. Collating pre-sequenced and simplified mail with residual during pull down.
3. Or merging residual with FSS during pull down and collating pre-sequenced and simplified mail together in a single bundle.

Management will decide which work method is most efficient and where to perform the merge/collate based on such factors as office layout, residual volumes, route structure, case configurations and FSS and DPS percentages. This decision is a basic management right and needs to be maintained in selecting FSS work methods, particularly since individual office/carrier case layout may make one work method more efficient and effective than another.

Note: There continues to be no limit on the number or makeup of bundles for other types of deliveries, including deliveries made with a satchel cart (i.e. there is no bundle restriction for these types of deliveries).

Future Opportunities

Based on the joint study, the Postal Service believes further opportunities to improve work methods will be available in an automation environment where DPS and FSS percentages are at very high levels and residual volumes are very low. We anticipate that such opportunities may make appropriate a scaled down version of current city letter carrier cases and the possible use of a portable sorting unit where mail is cased and sequenced on the street instead of in the office. As the Joint FSS Task Force has concluded its mission (except for the Fairfax, Virginia equipment testing), it is recognized that future work method changes must be made consistent with any procedural mandates of the collective bargaining agreement.

It is noted that the NALC Task Force members were vehemently opposed to any FSS

work method that requires a carrier to perform traditional office work on the street, particularly if working from the back of the vehicle. The NALC Task Force members argued that working from the back of the vehicle on the street is inherently unsafe due to exposure to other vehicles and that they would not consider any FSS work method that required carriers to merge residual mail on the street from the back of the vehicle. The NALC Task Force members also claimed working residual mail on the street is unsafe because it may cause the carrier to be distracted and, hence, may lead to additional dog attacks, increased exposure to traffic, make it more likely that the carrier will be the victim of crime, etc. Finally, the NALC Task Force members pointed to the possibility of inclement weather negatively impacting the city letter carrier and the mail. Postal Service task force members took exception to these assertions and the NALC Task Force members presented no conclusive evidence to support them.

Conclusion

The FSS work methods endorsed by the Joint FSS Task Force provides an agreed upon process for park and loop and foot deliveries which will help capture FSS savings in the current environment. However, as technology improves and mail flows and critical entry times are adjusted, we anticipate that the amount of flat mail finalized in delivery point sequence will increase. We expect that these improvements will provide additional opportunities to reduce the percentage of cased mail and will continue to reduce or eliminate the need for manual casing in the office. As noted above, we understand that such future changes must be consistent with any applicable requirements of the collective bargaining agreement.