

New career orientation and MDD-TR updates



**Christopher
Jackson**

First, I want to wish you and your families a belated merry Christmas and a happy new year. I truly hope this month's edition finds you in good health.

As 2023 closed, I held several discussions with the Postal Service regarding orientation for newly converted career letter carriers. I've found that many of our newly converted carriers are not receiving the benefit of this important orientation. I want to touch on this topic and share details on the latest update to the Mobile Delivery Device-Technical Refresh (MDD-TR).

It's important to clear up any confusion about letter carrier orientation. Newly hired letter carriers take part in

a training program consisting of five phases: orientation, driver training, shadow day, Carrier Academy and on-the-job training. This orientation introduces the Postal Service to its new hires. The Postal Service often schedules newly hired career letter carriers, such as part-time flexible carriers (PTFs), to attend this same initial hiring orientation with newly hired non-career letter carriers, such as city carrier assistants (CCAs). The orientation is composed of eight chapters, or "modules," and covers many subjects, such as postal history, employee conduct, safety and employee resources.

The eighth and final module of the orientation focuses on career employee benefits. Because non-career carriers are not entitled to the same benefits as career carriers, the Postal Service will temporarily excuse non-career carriers at the end of Module 7 and continue their discussion with career carriers in Module 8. Non-career carriers are allowed to resume the orientation for a Q&A session after career employee benefits have been reviewed.

Chapter 7 of the Postal Service's *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)* covers training and development. Section 715.2 states:

Postal Orientation

An orientation program is required at all levels for new career employees on their first day of official duty.

Since non-career employees are not permitted to review career employee benefits when they attend their initial hiring orientation, it is vital that they attend the orientation required by *ELM* Section 715.2 on the first day of their official duty as a career carrier. It is during this orientation that they can review all of the new benefits they are now eligible for with the Postal Service, including annual leave, the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program, Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), Federal

Employee Group Life Insurance (FGLI) and flexible spending accounts (FSAs). Enrollment in these programs can be time sensitive, which adds to the importance of participation in the orientation on the first day of a carrier's career appointment.

If you have recently been converted to a career carrier position and local management failed to provide you with an orientation on the first day of your career appointment, request to speak with your shop steward or branch officer and request that a grievance be filed on your behalf.

MDD-TR software version 7.85

In November, the Postal Service shared the latest update to the MDD-TR, release 7.85. The update includes several enhancements affecting city carriers.

One enhancement to the MDD-TR focuses on the delivery of 3811 Return Receipts or "green cards" associated with some Certified Mail items. USPS states that many of these items are mishandled, resulting in excessive refunds for failure to provide the requested service.

With the latest update, the MDD-TR now displays a "Return Receipt Pending" or "RR Pend" icon informing a carrier when they have 3811 Return Receipts for delivery. The icon lists the total number of 3811s the carrier has for the day and, as pieces are delivered or attempted, the remaining total changes to reflect the amount left pending. A geofence alert from the MDD-TR notifies carriers as they approach a delivery point for a 3811. A new "Return Receipt Incomplete" or "RR Incomp" icon will appear on the scanner once the geofence for the delivery point has been broken. This icon lists the number of 3811s for the address and will remain until a delivery attempt has been completed.

This update also includes a "Return Receipt Lookahead" feature, which displays the list of addresses receiving return receipts for the route assignment.

Another feature of release 7.85 is an enhancement to the existing eArrow Lock application. The eArrow Lock application is active only on some MDD-TR devices across the country. The application is specifically used to operate and open eArrow Locks that have been installed on mail receptacles in certain areas. USPS states that the eArrow Locks are an added measure of protection against mail theft. The eArrow lock application is updated to provide a user interface (UI) that feature illustrations to notify the user when each step of the process in opening an eArrow Lock has been completed. The new illustrations work together with audible chimes previously included in the application. USPS states that the new interface will be especially beneficial to carriers with hearing disabilities.

I will continue to provide information on these important topics to the membership. Be sure to read my column each month and visit nal.org for the latest updates. I want to thank all letter carriers for the hard work and excellent service you provided to our customers through another tough peak season.