

Standards

Linear Measurement, DUVRS, Reference Volume, Demonstrated Performance, POST, DOIS, etc. Over the years experienced letter carriers have heard all these terms. All these programs are variants of the same basic idea—management tools to assess letter carriers' daily workload. Of course, management does have a right to develop whatever tools it wants for its own purposes. However, none of these tools has any contractual significance since there are no daily standards for evaluating letter carrier performance. None of these programs may be used as a basis for discipline or as a shortcut to avoid using the established M-39 procedures for evaluating and adjusting routes.

Some managers seem to have the mistaken notion that the rules have changed since the POST and DOIS programs are "computerized," more "modern," more "accurate," or whatever. We all know that the quantitative data in the DOIS and POST programs is often wildly inaccurate and fails to take into account many of the most significant factors affecting office and street times. But usually this argument is pointless and unnecessary since, in fact, the rules have not changed. Perhaps some supervisors need to be reminded.

The so-called office standards of 18 per minute for letters and eight per minute for flats have one purpose only. They are two of the many factors that the M-39 requires management to use in order to calculate "standard office time" during a route inspection. The office time allowance for a route is established as the lesser of the carrier's average office time during the inspection period, or the average standard office time.

Standard office time is based on the totality of a letter carrier's office performance. It may not be broken down into sub-components—for example, by determining only how long it takes a letter carrier to case a known number of letters. Even when conducting a special one-day mail count under the provisions of M-39 Section 141.2, management must use and fully complete a Form 1838-C.

Simple failure to meet office standards is never just cause for discipline. Under the terms of a September 3, 1976 Memorandum of Understanding, the M-39 Handbook was modified to underscore this point. Section 242.332 now provides that:

No carrier shall be disciplined for failure to meet standards, except in cases of unsatisfactory effort which must be based on documented, unacceptable conduct that led to the carrier's failure to meet standards.

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This principle was further reinforced in the July 11, 1977 Step 4 Settlement M-00386 which states:

Management may not charge or impose discipline upon a carrier merely for failing to meet the 18 and 8 casing standards. Any such charge is insufficient. Under the Memorandum of Understanding of September 3, 1976 [now M-39 § 242.332] the only proper charge for disciplining a carrier is "unsatisfactory effort." Such a charge must be based on documented, unacceptable conduct which led to the carrier's failure to meet the 18 and 8 criteria. In such circumstances, *management has the burden of proving* that the carrier was making an "unsatisfactory effort" to establish just cause for any discipline imposed (emphasis added).

In summary, do what letter carriers have always done. Give your best effort every day, follow the rules and do not engage in "unacceptable conduct." As long as you remember these simple guidelines, you shouldn't have to worry about being disciplined for failure to make casing standards. ☒

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