



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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NPMHU AND USPS ANNOUNCE SETTLEMENT ON TERMS OF 2022 NATIONAL AGREEMENT

3 YEARS, 3 WAGE INCREASES, AND 6 COLA PAYMENTS

STEP BB ELIMINATED

STEP WAITING PERIODS DECREASED TO 48 WEEKS

MHAS GET NEW STEP AND RAISE



Michael J. Hora
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On December 15, 2022, the NPMHU and the Postal Service announced that they had reached a tentative deal on the terms of their 2022 National Agreement. After more than six months of bargaining (including a three-month extension of the 2019 agreement), both parties are happy to bring this long process to a close. The contract will last three years and expire on September 20, 2025. However, before it becomes an official covenant with the Postal Service, it is first subject to ratification by a majority vote of the NPMHU membership. All members therefore are encouraged to read this update carefully, as well as the information that will soon be arriving at your last-known home address with your ballot package.

At its core, the tentative agreement looks to improve the working life of all members of the mail handler bargaining unit, from the newest MHA to the long-time career employee. The goal of this contract, as with every contract, is to protect the jobs of mail handlers, improve the quality of their workplace, and improve their standard of living and compensation. This well-crafted tentative agreement certainly meets those goals.

Starting immediately, and continuing through September 2025, the agreement continues the traditional pattern of general wage increases. Per the provisions of this tentative agreement, all mail handlers will receive three general increases — 1.3% on November 19, 2022 (applied retroactively), 1.3% on November 18, 2023, and 1.3% on November 16, 2024. In addition to the general wage increases, all career mail handler employees will be eligible for six semi-annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs), based on inflation.

Although MHAs do not receive COLAs, they will receive the same three 1.3% increases as career mail handlers in each November, supplemented by an extra 1.0% at the same time. Effective November 19, 2022, the current MHA rate for Grade 4 and Grade 5 will also be increased by \$0.50. Finally, no later than the first full pay period 180 days after the contract is ratified, the MHA wage scale will be altered to include a second Step B, which will be an additional \$0.50 higher than Step A. After six months in Step A, MHAs will reach Step B and be entitled to the extra \$0.50 based on their length of service.

Significantly, the tentative agreement provides an extra 1% pay adjustment for all mail handlers at Steps BB, AA, and A, also effective retroactively to November 19, 2022. Then, no later than six months after union ratification, Step BB will be eliminated from the career pay scale. Employees in Step BB will be advanced to AA and will restart their step waiting period.

Along with the elimination of Step BB, waiting periods in each step will be reduced. No later than the first full pay period 180 days after ratification, the step waiting period for all career steps will be reduced from 52 to 48 weeks. As of that date, any career mail handler with at least 48 weeks in step will advance to the next step and have their time reset. The reduction of time in each waiting period combined with the elimination of Step BB means that mail handlers will reach the top of the pay scale 116 weeks or more than 2 years faster.

Another major change in the contract will protect all MHAs from prolonged delays in conversion to career status. A new provision will automatically convert any MHA who reaches 24 months of relative standing in a 200 man year installation to career status as a full-time flexible (FTF) employee, without any new probationary period. This conversion will give any MHA reaching 24 months full career benefits, a salary slightly below

Step AA for up to 48 weeks. Upon conversion to full-time regular or after 48 weeks as an FTF, these employees will move to Step AA and continue through the pay scale like any full-time employee.

FTFs will be considered part of the “regular work force,” but will have flexible reporting times, flexible non-scheduled days, and flexible reporting locations within their installation. If and when an FTF transitions into an FTR by successfully bidding on an FTR duty assignment, or being placed in a residual vacancy, the FTF will be slotted into the FTR pay step commensurate with their number of weeks as FTF and retain in-step credit.

In addition to these changes, the tentative agreement also contains many contract improvements covering a host of subjects in the National Agreement. In no particular order, here are some of the most noteworthy changes:

- An extension of the Article 6 No Layoff clause, covering all career employees as of September 20, 2022.
- A change to Article 11 to include Juneteenth National Independence Day as a holiday for career employees.
- Expansion of bereavement leave for the passing of grandchildren, and a more inclusive definition of in-laws.
- A new MOU has been added about Dignity and Respect in the Workplace, in which the parties commit to improving workplace relationships and to treating each and every individual employee with dignity and respect.
- Under Article 8, in postal installations with 200 or more man years of employment, career employees shall have consecutive scheduled days off. And, for MHAs and PTFs, there will be a guaranteed nonscheduled day each service week.
- For MHAs, after completion of an initial 360-day term as an MHA and immediately upon reappointment to any subsequent appointments, MHAs will be advanced 40 hours of annual leave. PTFs will also be advanced their forty hours of annual leave. Additionally, MHAs with a minimum of 90 days of continuous service as an MHA prior to conversion into career status will be exempt from the 90-day qualifying period for use of annual leave.
- A new MOU was negotiated concerning 204(b) temporary supervisors, which provides that the Postal Service is in the process of developing alternate approaches to recruiting, staffing, and filling temporary supervisor positions, including the possibility of creating EAS positions to do so. To the extent that the Postal Service implements an alternative program, the parties at the National Level agreed to meet to discuss the status of the current 204(b) program.
- Another purge of Letters of Warning applicable to career employees and MHAs.

All the contractual changes of the tentative agreement will be included in the ratification brochure that will be circulated with ballots in January.

We thank the entire NPMHU membership for its continuous patience and support during these six-months of negotiations.

Happy holidays to all.



Please Post!!

December 2022