



## American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

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TO: Motor Vehicle Operators  
Tractor Trailer Operators  
Clerk Vehicle Dispatchers

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

The USPS and the APWU signed a Memorandum of Understanding on January 15, 2009, creating a pilot program that will experiment with alternative scheduling for Postal Vehicle Service drivers at a nationally agreed upon number of installations. During the pilot program, management will be prohibited from eliminating PVS operations at participating facilities.

This MOU was established with the intention of exploring options to preserve PVS operations. The USPS decision to condense dispatch windows and subcontract work has made it difficult to find eight hours of continuous work for drivers in some, but not all installations. In addition, postal managers have made it clear that they would like to convert a number of PVS operations to HCR throughout the country.

**The decision on whether to take part in the program is up to the individual locals. Locals that do not wish to participate will not be forced to do so; unfortunately their only other option will possibly be to go through mode conversion and the grievance process. We cannot emphasize enough however; that given the opportunity, the USPS will eliminate all PVS jobs in an installation.**

The pilot program will be used to determine the feasibility of modifying work rules concerning drivers' schedules. The basic provisions are:

- The parties at the national level will decide how many facilities participate in the pilot. (Item #1)
- The pilot program will continue at each location for a period of six months, unless the union and management at the national level agree to extend the timeframe. (Item #1)
- The schedules will be subject to local bidding procedures and awarded by seniority. PVS drivers that are not successful bidders shall be assigned to a schedule by management, by juniority. (Item #2)

- The MOU permits schedules to be extended up to 12 hours to accrue 8 hours of work. (Item #3)
- All pilot schedules and sites will be agreed upon by the national parties, not local management. (Item #3)
- Work also may be combined with other crafts to create an 8-hour assignment.
- No conversion of PVS operations to Highway Contract Routes (“mode conversions”) will occur at the pilot sites during the duration of the program. (Item #4)
- The national parties will continue discussions about the expansion of the pilot to offices where mode conversions are under consideration, and such conversions will not be undertaken until these discussions have been concluded. (Item #4)
- When establishing extended schedules, consideration will be given, upon the expiration of Highway Contract Route contracts in the facility, to returning work that has been subcontracted. (Item #7)

## **Harsh Realities**

The union agreed to the MOU because the economic realities and low mail volumes have created unique challenges in various locations.

If you need proof, take a look around your PVS operation: You probably will see people on standby or on operation 614 (or whatever operation is used to indicate that employees are not performing productive work). There are installations with as many as 2,200 hours of standby time per week.

The work hours of Part-Time Flexibles are being reduced from more than 40 per week to less than 30; the assignments of Full-Time Regulars are being abolished, and there are an unprecedented number of unassigned regulars without assignments on a daily basis.

Keep in mind that in two consecutive five-year plans, the Postal Service cited the reduction or elimination of PVS as one of its objectives. A number of PVS operations have already been shuttered. Conversions have taken place in Stockton, Pasadena, Fresno, California; and in Fairbanks, AK.

The union recently won an arbitration case challenging the elimination of PVS in Tacoma, WA, and management was ordered to reopen the facility due to violations of Article 12 principles of seniority, posting and reassignments. This was an important victory, but it was an uphill fight, and the Article 32 subcontracting issues were not upheld by the arbitrator, meaning only the excessing was improper. Postal managers are weighing their options: Whether to attempt to have the decision “set aside” in federal court, or return the operation to Tacoma, with the possibility of excessing the employees properly the next time around.

## **Tough Decision**

Despite these harsh realities, this was a tough decision.

It was made with extensive input from MVS Craft Directors and activists from around the country: When we convened for the MVS Craft Conference at the National Convention in August 2008, the biggest concern was the conversion of PVS to HCR.

MVS local craft officers gathered in Washington DC in October 2008, to discuss a possible MOU. This meeting included the 17 members of the APWU's Transportation Committee, along with the following MVS, NBAs: **Joseph LaCapria (Northeast Region), Merlie Bell (Central Region) Russell Knepp (Eastern Region) D.D. Johnson (Southwest Region), and Bruce Bailey (Western Region)**. The committee met for several days, engaged in vigorous debate over drafts of a similar MOU, and made recommendations for improving it. Unfortunately, no agreement was reached with the Postal Service. This MOU addressed the issue of staffing by relaxing the part-time ratio by attrition.

Weeks later, the current MOU emerged. Upon receipt of the MOU, we immediately provided a copy to the MVS NBAs and held a teleconference to discuss it. All the NBAs participated, and although they expressed concerns about some aspects of the program, there was unanimous agreement that the pilot program would not be detrimental to the Motor Vehicle Craft and that it had potential to save craft jobs.

A benefit of the MOU is that no conversions of PVS operations to Highway Contract Routes will occur at the pilot sites. If your PVS operation is identified for conversion, the national parties will initiate discussions to place your installation in the pilot program. This would place a moratorium on the conversion; if your installation has been identified for mode conversion and does **not** participate in the pilot program, the proposed conversion to HCR will continue.

Some local union MVS directors have said they would rather see the operation contracted out than participate in the pilot program. The MVS national officers respect that position, but we think that many drivers would rather stay in their homes and deal with an extended workday or crossing crafts than uproot their families and try to sell their houses in a depressed nationwide market.

Hopefully, we can convince the USPS to return subcontracted work to PVS, in accordance with Item #7. This also will be an uphill struggle, as the USPS has been unwilling to give work to the PVS even when it could be done with existing standby hours. Even when no new work-hours would be needed, the USPS has been unwilling to assign the work to postal drivers.

Of course, we do not know how successful the pilot will be or if there is willingness for field participation.

Motor Vehicle Operators, Tractor Trailer Operators and Clerk Vehicle Dispatchers

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Re: Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) Amended Work Rules Pilot

Let us assure you that we will do everything in our power to make sure that the Motor Vehicle Craft survives. We may have to make some politically unpopular decisions, but we will not allow the lights to be turned off on PVS. We will not stand by and watch management pick off one installation after another without looking at alternative ways to preserve our members' jobs.

Yours In Union Solidarity,



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Encl: MOU, Subject: Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) Amended Work Rules Pilot