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LABOR RELATIONS



August 21, 2000

MANAGERS, LABOR RELATIONS (AREA)

SUBJECT: AFSM 100 Mail Preparation

As we have gone through the initial deployment of the Automated Flat Sorting Machine (AFSM) 100, questions have arisen in a number of facilities regarding the staffing of the mail preparation operations for the machine.

The primary craft for preparation of mail for the AFSM 100 is the mail handler craft. Therefore, such work should be assigned to mail handlers, with the following limited exceptions, which should not occur in most facilities:


1. Clerks should be assigned if AFSM 100 mail preparation will be incorporated into an existing flat preparation operation which is properly assigned to clerks in accordance with the April 1992 Memorandum of Understanding (Re: Dispute Resolution Procedures) and the facility inventory. In most facilities, however, a separate mail preparation operation is being established for the AFSM 100, which should be staffed with mail handlers.
2. Clerks can perform mail preparation work if it is an integral part of the distribution function, meaning that it cannot be efficiently separated. Mail preparation may properly be performed by the mail processors responsible for feeding the machine, if they are able to prepare the mail during that process. Indications from the machine tests and the early deployment sites are that the five mail processors operating the machine generally do not have time to perform mail preparation work while feeding or sweeping the machine.

One common misunderstanding is that if the preparation operation is located near the machine, it can properly be staffed by clerks. This is not the case. It is the nature of the work, not the location of the operation, which determines craft jurisdiction.

Another practice which has been tried in a number of locations is increasing the number of mail processors above the usual five in order to rotate them into the mail preparation operation. This is a violation of RI-399 unless the mail preparation work is truly "an integral part of the distribution function." Again, the indication from test sites and early deployment sites is that the two functions – operating the machine and preparing mail for the machine – are generally separate and distinct functions, each of which must be performed by the appropriate craft.

Please ensure that those responsible for making craft assignments for the AFSM 100 understand and apply these principles.

If there are any questions, please contact Dan Magazu at (202) 268-3825.


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