

# PART TIME FLEXIBLE HANDBOOK

The PTF Handbook is presented as a basic primer for newly hired Letter Carriers to make them familiar with the Postal Service, their responsibilities and their Union, the National Association of Letter Carriers. Any questions about the contents of this handbook or areas not covered should be directed to the installation Shop Steward or Branch Office. When in doubt on any issue related to your employment with the Postal Service contact your NALC Representative.

**WHAT IS A UNION?** – A Union is a voluntary organization of employees who have joined together to promote and protect their mutual interests. It is based upon the understanding that people working together have greater bargaining power than people working separately. Our Union is the NALC.

**WHAT IS A SHOP STEWARD?** – The Shop Steward is a Letter Carrier who has been trained and certified by the NALC as the on site representative of all Carriers within an installation. Stewards are empowered by the National agreement to investigate, present and adjust grievances in behalf of Letter carriers and the Union. If a problem or issue arises the Steward should be notified immediately.

**MAY PROBATIONARY EMPLOYEES JOIN THE NALC?** – Yes. It is in the best interest of the new employee and the Union that the relationship begins as early as possible. We understand if you would like to wait until after the probationary period. The joining of the Union will have no effect on successfully completing the probationary period.

**WHAT IS PROBATION?** – Article 12 of the National Agreement defines as follows;

**“ The probationary period for a new employee shall be ninety (90) calendar days. The employer shall have the right to separate from its employ any probationary employee at any time during the probationary period and these probationary employees shall not be permitted access to the grievance procedure in relation thereto”.**

The Union can rarely interfere with management’s right to separate a probationary employee. The Union may always act to protect the contractual provisions relating to working conditions, safety, wages and hours. Probation is the period where the new employee demonstrates the ability to perform the duties of a Letter Carrier. Upon successful completion of the 90 day probation the PTF is fully covered and protected by the terms and conditions of the National Agreement.

**WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LETTER CARRIER?** – This is a term applied to a Letter Carrier who carries their assignment deliberately and conscientiously, observing all applicable regulations while maintaining a high level of service.

**WHAT DOES SANCTITY OF THE MAIL MEAN?** – It means that all employees must make every effort to protect the mail entrusted to them.

**ARE PTF EMPLOYEES GUARANTEED A CERTAIN NUMBER OF HOURS?** – No. PTF’s are not guaranteed a fixed number of hours unless they have bid and been awarded a hold-down assignment.

**WHAT IS OPTING/BIDDING?** – PTF’s may bid/opt for assignments with an expected vacancy of five (5) or more days. Seniority determines the successful bidder when there is more than one. When awarded a bid/opt assignment the PTF assumes the duty hours and non-scheduled day of the assignment as if he or she was the regular Carrier. All regular assignments/routes will be for a minimum of forty (40) hours per week.

CAN PTF'S BE "ON CALL"? – No. There is no contractual provision nor is it intended that PTF's be required to remain at home or call the Post Office to ascertain whether their services are needed. If a PTF is told that they must remain available for work, they are entitled to four (4) hours of pay.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BE CONVERTED TO FULL TIME? – The length of time varies widely and no one can predict how long it will take. It depends on a number of factors which are determined by the specific installation. Consult with the Shop Steward for further explanation.

WHAT IS A STEP INCREASE? – A Step Increase is a pay level/rate increase, that is given to employees at established intervals. Every time there is a change of pay level/grade a PS Form 50 will be mailed to the employee. It is recommended that all documents received be kept and stored in a safe place.

WHAT IS A COLA? – The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is a periodic increase of pay based on the rate of inflation. The COLA is a benefit gained by the NALC in collective bargaining.

DO PTF'S GET PAID HOLIDAYS? – Not directly, however the hourly rate for PTF's includes extra pay to compensate for the 10 paid holidays during a year. Read Article 11, Section 7 of the National Agreement for more detailed explanation.

WHAT IS ANNUAL LEAVE? – Annual leave is paid vacation. PTF's are credited with AL as it is earned. They do not begin earning annual leave until after the 90 day probationary period. Employees with 0-3 years of employment earn 2 hours of AL per 40 hour week. The earning rate increases with years of employment. Typically, a PTF without military service time would earn 13 days of AL the first three years with the Postal Service. Read Articles 9, 10 & 11 of NA for more details.

WHAT IS EMERGENCY ANNUAL LEAVE? – Emergency annual leave may be requested when an emergency prevents an employee from working as scheduled.

WHAT IS SICK LEAVE? – This is paid leave that is earned separately from annual for use when the employee is unable to work due to illness, medical appointments and treatments. All employees earn 104 hours a year of sick leave and it may be accumulated without limit. It is a benefit gained by the NALC at collective bargaining. Essentially is a disability insurance benefit if used properly. If an employee did not use any sick leave for 20 years he would have 2080 hours in the bank or the equivalent of 1 years full pay should a serious accident, injury or illness prevent him/her from working. The subject of sick leave is extensive and detailed in Article 10 of the National Agreement.

WHAT IS A JOB DISCUSSION? - Discussions are talks conducted in private between a supervisor and an employee. They are not discipline. They are meant to inform an employee of deficiencies or problems that need to be corrected. The Shop Steward is not required to be present for a discussion unless the supervisor advises that discipline might result. In that case it would not be a discussion but a PDI (Pre-Disciplinary Interview). If in doubt as to the nature of the discussion ask the supervisor to identify it as either a discussion or a PDI.

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE? – Discipline is action taken by management against a Carrier for violations of rules and regulations. Article 16 covers the types of discipline and Article 15 explains the discipline procedure. The topic is very broad and the Shop Steward should be immediately notified of any situation involving the possibility of discipline being issued. The National Agreement provides that discipline must be issued according to specific rules and circumstances. Each case is unique and the Shop Steward is best equipped to for dealing with discipline matters.

WHAT ARE MY WEINGARTEN RIGHTS? – Weingarten guarantees that an employee is entitled to Union representation when involved in a disciplinary matter. When questioned about anything that could lead to discipline the employee MUST request representation before proceeding. Management is under no obligation to provide representation if it is not requested. Once requested it must be provided before further questioning continues. If the request is denied you may refuse (strongly recommended) to respond to any questions until given an opportunity to consult with your Union representative.

WHAT ARE POSTAL INSPECTORS? – They are a law enforcement branch of the Postal Service. You are contractually guaranteed the right to be represented by a Shop Steward or a Union Officer if ever questioned by a Postal Inspector. The right of representation while being questioned by police is also constitutionally guaranteed. Always exercise the right to representation, DO NOT WAIVE IT.

HOW DO I GET HELP ON A ROUTE? – If you feel that you cannot deliver all the mail in eight hours an employee must inform their supervisor. As a new employee it is a good rule to immediately discuss with the supervisor any questions or problems you may encounter and to follow whatever instructions are given. In the office, ask the supervisor for a PS form 3996 if you estimate being unable to complete the assignment in the time allowed. If delays or problems arise on the road be sure to call the office as soon as you are aware that you are running late and follow the instructions given. Under no circumstances should you take action that is unsafe to complete an assignment. If there is a problem, notify management and let them make all decisions. Delivery proficiency improves with time and experience. Develop good work methods from the start.

*This document does not cover all situations you will encounter as a new Letter Carrier it is only intended to provide answers to some of the more common questions new employees have. Topics or issues not mentioned should be asked of the Shop Steward, Branch Office or management. Most importantly, make every effort to work safely and to follow instructions.*

*The National Association of Letter Carriers is here to serve and represent you. Your joining the NALC makes us stronger, if you have not done so already, please ask your Shop Steward for the enrollment form.*