LABOR RELATIONS

UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE

February 8, 2006

Mr. John F. Hegarty
President
National Postal Mail Handlers
Union, LIUNA
1101 Connecticut Avenue
Washington, DC 20036-4304

Certified Mail
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Dear John:

This letter is in regard to the staffing of the Automated Flats Sorting Machine 100 (AFSM-100) with the recent enhancements of the Automated Induction (AI) system and the Automatic Tray Handling System 100 (ATHS).

The AI system automates the ledge loading task for the AFSM-100 and also brings the flats preparation operation into close proximity to the AFSM-100. The system includes new ergonomic work stations where the flat mail is prepared and loaded into standardized tubs called Automation Compatible Trays (ACTs), and entered into the system. The ACTs are transported by the AI to the feeder where they are automatically unloaded to the AFSM feeder and then returned to the system for reuse. The feeder enhancements of the AI system allow mail staged in ACTs to be automatically removed, stacked on the feeder ledge, and inducted into the feeder for sortation by the AFSM-100. The ATHS-100 system automatically exchanges full mail trays with empty ones, and a label on the outbound trays. ATHS will identify double-labeled trays and prevent these trays from entering the mail stream. Of the 534 AFSM-100's currently in operation, it is anticipated that a total of 350 AFSM-100's will receive the ATHS enhancement. Of the 350 AFSM-100's that will receive the ATHS enhancement, it is anticipated that 206 AFSM-100's will also receive the AI enhancement. Therefore, it is anticipated that there will be 206 AFSM-100's with both AI and ATHS, 144 AFSM-100's that will be non-AI with ATHS, leaving 184 AFSM-100's without AI and without ATHS.

Staffing on the AI involves three (3) different work stations. The first, whereby one employee at the Load Station is required to load bundles or flats trays, with the assistance of a container tilter, onto a conveyor belt. The employee sets up the workstation and stages the support equipment and containers, loads the containers into the tilter and operates the tilting controls, retrieves and loads the bundled or tray mail onto the Bundle Conveyor Subsystem, processes culled, non-machinable mail pieces into flat mail trays under the conveyor, processes loose mail pieces into ACTs at the Half Prep Station, maintains a continuous flow of mail on the conveyor, clears any jams on the bundle conveyor, and positions the trays on the work table for processing.

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The second work station, where up to four employees work at four workstations called Prep Stations. Each Prep Station is equipped with a Bundle Accumulation Chute, work table, Package Recovery System (PRS) vacuum chute, operator control panel, and an ACT induction system referred to as the "takeaway." These employees set up the workstation and stage support equipment and containers, prepare and process bundled mail, flat mail trays, and loose mailpieces by using the work table to prepare and orient mailpieces to be placed in the ACT, dispose of bundled waste, plastic wrap, and banding using a vacuum chute, cull any out-of-spec or damaged mailpieces, clear any jams on the Bundle Accumulation Chute, prepare and load mail volume from bundles and flat mail trays into ACTs, induct full ACTs into the ACT buffer.

The third work station, where one employee is working at the Feeder Subsystem, who sets up workstation and stages support equipment and containers, tends mail on the feeder ledge to help prevent jams, clears basic jams that occur at the Feeder or transport subsystems of the machine, and culls out-of-spec or damaged mailpieces. The operator is required to tend the mail on the feeder ledge, which involves making sure the mail is positioned flush against the back wall of the feeder ledge, to ensure the mail has a neat and orderly induction into the feeder, and must pay particular attention to mail tending functions when the mail volume has a variety of mailpiece sizes, all of which helps to reduce the risk of a feeder jam. In addition, the operator must clear any jams occurring at the feeders or the AFSM-100 Transport Subsystems. In the event that the AI system becomes inoperable, but the AFSM-100 continues to function properly, the machine is switched to contingency operation mode and the operator directly inducts mailpieces into the AFSM-100.

The work of removing full trays of mail from the AFSM-100, and replacing the full trays with empty trays has been replaced by operation of the ATHS-100 enhancement. Staffing on the ATHS requires the operator to load empty trays and clear jams. In performing the loading duties, the employee retrieves empty flat mail trays from the staging area near the ATHS-100. A stack of empty flat mail trays from the staging area is loaded onto the Stack Accumulation Conveyor, by tilting the tray stack and placing it horizontally onto the conveyor, until the stack accumulation conveyor is full. The employee who stages and load empty flat mail trays for the operation of the ATHS-100 must ensure that flat mail trays are not made of cardboard. In addition, as much as possible, the employee should ensure that flat mail trays are clean and free of debris, tray labels are removed, and the seams and handles of the trays are intact and the bottom of the tray is flat. The employee must also make sure that the stackers are continuously full of empty trays.

The sweeping duties on the ATHS-100 include removing full flat mail trays from the discharge conveyors of the AFSM-100 if no tray takeaway system is present, sorting the full trays into dispatch equipment for processing in subsequent operations or for dispatch, removing rejected empty flat mail trays from the discharge conveyors of the AFSM-100 or ATHS-100 reject conveyors, removing old labels from rejected trays, watching the AFSM-100 Message Display Board for messages and alerts, observing the stack lights and responding to their alerts, listening for audio and horn which signal jams,

clearing ATHS-100 jams, changing the Label Roll as necessary, monitoring the number of trays on all discharge or reject conveyors to prevent them from becoming full, and removing the rejected empty flat mail trays from the discharge or reject conveyors.

After reviewing the equipment operation, carefully considering the input from the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, and applying the principles of RI-399, the Postal Service has determined that on the AFSM-100 with AI, the duties performed at the feed station are similar to the duties currently performed by a mail processing clerk. The duties performed at the load station and prep station are similar to the duties currently performed by a Mail Handler. On the AFSM-100 with ATHS, the duties performed by the employee working on the ATHS are similar to the duties currently performed by a Mail Handler.

Accordingly, on the AFSM-100 with AI, the primary jurisdiction of the Feed station is the clerk craft. The primary jurisdiction of the Load station is the mailhandler craft. The primary jurisdiction of the Prep station is the mailhandler craft. The primary jurisdiction of the employee operating the ATHS is the mailhandler craft.

On the non-AI AFSM 100's with ATHS, staffing will be 4 clerks (3 clerks manually inducting mail and 1 clerk operating the ATHS), because of the rotation pattern of clerks on the non-AI AFSM 100's, which allows for ergonomic relief.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Patrick Devine at (202) 268-5421.

Sincerely,

John W. Dockins
Manager
Contract Administration (APWU)