

Mail carriers disciplined

By: Andrew Perlot, **Record-Journal** staff 10/03/2008

MERIDEN - Mail carriers are being singled out by the Meriden Post Office for disciplinary action because they can't finish their expanded routes in the allotted eight hours.

Several carriers, unable to officially comment because of contractual restrictions, said their colleagues are receiving letters of reprimand from post office management. Some of these carriers have been delivering mail without problems for decades, said Paul Daniels, president of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Connecticut Merged Branch 20, which represents them.

He believes the letters, the first stage in a discipline process that ends with dismissal, are being issued to carriers who have signaled a desire for an outside review of their routes. If a route is shown by a review to take more than eight hours to complete, then that route has to be shortened, Daniels said.

When they receive the letters, a sort of black mark is put on the carriers' records, which may be taken into consideration when officials decide on the propriety of a review, Daniels said.

"It's a ruse," he said. "It's a new tactic to prevent us from getting the special inspections and showing the routes are over eight hours. They're making up phony charges."

The post office reduced the number of carrier routes in the city in early August by eight, from 56 to 48, as part of a plan to improve efficiency and lower costs. Administrators warned of several days of delays, but two months later residents and businesses are still getting mail late into the evening. Some report not receiving mail for several days in a row.

Sean Moore, president of the Greater Meriden Chamber of Commerce, said a number of business owners are grumbling over their mail service since the route changes were made. Businesses need the mail to pay bills, get checks and sign contracts, Moore said. When the mail carrier comes at 6:30 p.m. and the business has already closed for the day, "It's not a good way to do business," he said.

Maureen Marion, a U.S. Postal Service spokeswoman, said she could not comment on the disciplinary letters.

"We really don't talk about personnel matters publicly," she said. "It would violate our labor agreement."

The post office restored one route on Sept. 27, in part to address the problem of business deliveries, and will continue to tweak the routes for greater efficiency, Marion said.

"We're going to do the right thing by the customers in Meriden," she said.

But Daniels said not to expect a solution anytime soon unless residents start to seriously protest. He believes that three or four additional routes need to be returned to get the mail delivered on time.

When similar changes were made in Middletown, Daniels said, it took nine months before the post office conceded that the changes weren't working and restored the old routes.

His union is filing for arbitration, he said, but that is a long, drawn-out process that will not end anytime soon.

"They don't want to work with the union," he said. "They're using the cost, that they're losing money, for an excuse to abuse the public and the carriers. It's wrong."

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[Murphy Presses USPS for Answers Regarding Meriden Route Changes](#)

Press release 9/13/08

Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) released a letter he sent to Frank Marshall, Acting District Manager for the United States Postal Service to get answers for Meriden residents about how the Postal Service is going to resolve the mail delivery delays in the city caused by the recent elimination of eight routes.

"Individuals and businesses rely on the United States Postal Service; they expect to receive their bills, paychecks, and other important packages in a timely manner. The Postal Service's sudden change in service begs not only explanation, but a solution," said Murphy.

Murphy has received calls into his office about the situation. Many of those affected by the route changes are senior citizens, who are waiting until the late evening for their mail to arrive.

Minor adjustments to the routes have not remedied the delays. As a result, Murphy has asked the United States Postal Service detail how the routes are being improved to provide better customer service.

"I don't think it's too much to ask that the Postal Service deliver for their customers, the residents of Meriden, before they go to bed every night," said Murphy.

Late mail deliveries upset residents, challenge post office

By: Andrew Perlot , Record-Journal staff 08/12/2008

MERIDEN - Fred Richardson has been awaiting the restoration of his mail delivery to a more normal hour. He used see his mail carrier's truck before noon, but since Aug. 2, when the U.S. Postal Service imposed major route changes on Meriden, he hasn't seen it before 6 p.m.

Richardson, 64, said he knows people who don't get their mail until after 9 p.m., and he worries about elderly residents going out to their mailboxes in the dark.

The postal service reduced the number of carrier routes in the city by eight, from 56 to 48, in an effort to save on gas and personnel costs.

Maureen Marion, a postal service spokeswoman, had predicted that delays would be fixed within a few days. But more than a week after the changes took place, residents across the city say their mail is still not coming at a reasonable hour. On Tuesday, Marion said she couldn't say when the situation would be remedied.

"I don't think I know," she said. "But every day we're getting better. It is definitely a project we are taking from start to finish." Managers are working with mail carriers to get them more familiar with the route changes and helping them to become more efficient, she said.

The union representing the mail carriers had told the post office that the route changes, originally planned using a computer program, would wreak havoc on delivery time, said Paul Daniels, president of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Connecticut Merged Branch 20, but it was ignored.

Union members have been working on route alterations that would fix many of the problems, but the postal service has ignored them, Daniels said.

"At this point we've had no direct contact," he said. "They're pigheaded and that's the problem with the management style we have at that post office today."

The USPS's strategy is to make minor tweaks to the computer-generated routes, but that's not going to return delivery to a more normal schedule, Daniels said.

"They're down there trying to tweak it and save a few minutes here and there," he said. "That's not going to be enough. It's going to go on until we get special inspections (of all of the postal routes to check for efficiency) or they come to their senses and the community rises up."



Johnathon Henninger / Record-Journal

Marion agreed that the postal service still has work to do.

"To be honest," she said, "there's still definitely a learning curve out there."

(Earlier article on the Meriden Post Office continued on below)

Meriden postal routes cut

By: Andrew Perlot, Staff *Record-Journal*, Meriden, CT (8/4/2008)

MERIDEN - Dave Swedock, president of the Council of Neighborhoods, was waiting for his mail Saturday afternoon. It normally comes around 2 p.m., but 5 p.m. had come and gone and it wasn't there, he said.

Finally, a mail carrier showed up a little before 7 p.m., explaining to Swedock that route cuts had been made and the carriers were trying to adapt.

"That's ridiculous," Swedock said Monday. "It's ridiculous for the carriers too. I'm all for efficiency, but at the same time, if it ain't broke don't fix it."

The change was implemented Saturday and aims to reduce the number of carrier routes by eight, from 56 to 48, said Maureen Marion, a United States Postal Service spokeswoman for the region.

The changes have been disruptive to service so far, but the final goal is to save the postal service money in gas and employee time, which ultimately saves users money in postage fees, she said. The service is facing declining mail usage as bills and other communications shift to the Internet, she said.

Mail sorting technology is also improving, greatly reducing the amount of time it takes for carriers to sort mail. More advances in sorting will come in the future and the postal service needs to be ready, she said.

The changes are not specific to Meriden, but are part of a regular review process of routes that all communities go through, she said.

"We're making modifications now based on trends we see coming," Marion said. "It's a time of change. We're hoping to do it in a way that gives our customers the best possible service. We've got a little bit of work to get it all right."

The changes are intended to shave at least a small percentage off the 21,631 miles driven in Meriden last month, Marion said. The postal service did not immediately have an estimate for gas saving, and won't know until the monthly report is issued in September how many miles were reduced.

No full-time employees will be laid off because of the reductions, she said, though some positions will be eliminated through retirements and others will be transferred.

Residents might start seeing delivery times fall into more normal hours within the next few days, she said.

The union representing the mail carriers, however, disagrees with Marion's assessment of the changes. The route changes were made unilaterally by management without consulting the mail carriers who walk and drive the routes, said Paul Daniels, president of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Connecticut merged Branch 20.

A recent assessment of Meriden's routes by the postal service estimated that 30 hours of worker time could be cut out of the daily routes for efficiency, Daniels said. He sees 30 hours as a reasonable cut, but the post office ignored that assessment and decided to use a computer program that cut 96 hours out of the delivery schedule, he said.

Daniels said he expects the service disruptions will last for months. Similar route changes made by a computer program in Middletown took almost nine months to be ironed out, he said.

In the back of the union's office at 200 E. Main St., four members were scrutinizing a list of the new routes Monday and systematically noting their flaws, which they intend to show the USPS. Union Vice President John Daniels pointed out how the computer program had completely eliminated transit time between routes, accounting for hours of cuts that aren't really feasible, he said.

The changes also damage the USPS's relationships with businesses, Paul Daniels said.

Mail carriers recognize the need to sell their services to keep their organization solvent, he said, and they do that by getting to businesses before noon so as to give them good service.

Their routes had previously been arranged so that businesses were serviced first, but the new routes often have them arriving at stores after they're closed for the day.

"You don't want to alienate the public," he said.

Marion, the USPS spokeswoman, agreed that the cuts were on the high side and that they may have to be scaled back. In regard to the business problem, she said it was too soon for her to have a comment.

"Efficient and effective go together," she said. "If we have some tweaks we need to make, we may have to revisit those."

Source: www.MyRecordJournal.com

Reader's Comments

- **Well Matthew...** sounds like you are perhaps a disgruntled ex-postal worker who probably was fired for being too lazy?? If not, the Post Office always hires people in the summer time. Maybe then you can see how hard they work - 10 to 12 hours per day. Many people have seen carriers walking around and delivering mail thinking it was easy too. Many of those have quit due to the amount of work the job actually entails. John, Meriden, CT Added: Tuesday August 05, 2008
- **Easy, you say?** If it's soooooo easy, why aren't YOU doing it? OOPS! First you must pass an Exam. 80 will fail to get a score high enough to make the register. Of the 20 left, they need to pass a drug test and pass a Physical (Say goodbye to another five for a drivers license background check-any moving violations- BUHBYE! Then a criminal background -check any felonies-BUHBYE! Then 90-days of grueling hell. One accident-GONE. Late for work-GONE. Call in sick-GONE. Customer complaint-GONE. They don't like the way you look-GONE. The fact is: 96% Army Volunteers will get in and pass their "90-days" but just 15% of Carrier applicants do. THEN, you get to walk 6-10 miles everyday in the bad weather, traffic and dogs before you can retire. LIKE IT? "EASY"? I'll ask again: Why aren't YOU doing it if it's so easy? 23-Year Letter Carrier Added: Tuesday August 05, 2008
- **Been there!** ... the postal service does this throughout the country, using a computer program to decide how long it takes to deliver the mail, how much mail should be carried at one time, how many deliveries should be made every time a postal truck stops and a letter carrier makes a delivery. It doesn't consider weather, type of mail, age of the carrier, traffic congestion or common sense. By the way, any letter carrier input on how to do the job efficiently is ignored. Postal man, Buffalo n.y. Added: Tuesday August 05, 2008
- **postal workers ...**I was amazed to see my postman at 7:30 pm last night delivering the mail. I think they are overworked and underpaid! Has anyone thought of discontinuing Saturday's mail to cut costs? Sue, Meriden CT Added: Tuesday August 05, 2008
- **Postal Worker's.** The postal worker's should be applauded for a job well done...it is back breaking work and they have to put up with dogs that are loose...hot hot days ...days to where they get soaked and then the days to where people don't shovel at all and get upset because their mail wasn't delivered...to me they are under paid ...when someone complains tell them to trade places and see if they can do a better job...now with the change it is going to be worse...the carriers are working longer days and remember they also get tired....they have to walk to deliver your mail...yes they do have their mail trucks and sometimes their own carsgive them more credittheir job to me is an important one and without them we all would have to go to the post office to get our mail and no one wants to do that...I also don't like the later delivery time but who's the boss-not them!...just had to vent. Marge, Meriden
- **Disgruntled...**The carriers and the union are complaining only because they are now expected to earn their inflated hourly wage. For the longest time USPS management allowed its lazy workers to behave any way they wanted to and they always gave in to the NALC on any issue. The typical postal worker should not be earning well over \$20/hour for a job that requires no skill, no education and no experience. Hopefully, management can actually police its workers and get a fair amount of work accomplished for the return of superior pay and benefits. I wish the NALC would die just like most of the other unions. Matthew, Meriden,