



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS: 1101 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. • Suite 500 • Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 833-9095



John F. Hegarty
National President



Mark A. Gardner
Secretary-Treasurer

CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS EXTEND BEYOND DEADLINE

Ongoing efforts by representatives of the NPMHU and the U.S. Postal Service to reach a settlement on the terms of the 2011 National Agreement have been extended through Wednesday, December 7, 2011. In the days leading up to the November 20th contract deadline, both bargaining teams engaged in exhaustive discussions on a host of important issues, and have made substantial progress toward an overall deal. At the same time, crucial differences between the parties remain, relating to both non-economic work rules and the basic economic terms of a tentative agreement. National President John Hegarty and USPS officials therefore have agreed to stop-the-clock, allowing the bargaining representatives to recharge their batteries over the Thanksgiving holiday, to delve even deeper into the topics that have been discussed, and to then return to the bargaining table. "The negotiations process has thus far been productive, and has included discussion and analysis on a wide spectrum of ideas and possible solutions," said President Hegarty. "The NPMHU looks forward to jump-starting this process next week, and to making a concerted effort



to reach a tentative agreement for consideration and vote of the membership." Also next week, a pre-scheduled meeting of the Local Union Presidents will occur in Washington, DC on Thursday, December 1, 2011. During that meeting, President Hegarty and the National Negotiations Team will report on whatever progress has been made in negotiations, and will discuss the prospects for reaching a tentative agreement. As information becomes available, it also

will be shared with all NPMHU representatives and with the entire membership through the publication and distribution of additional Contract Updates. Be sure to visit the NPMHU website at www.npmhu.org to find the latest information on our collective bargaining process. During this Thanksgiving season, the National Negotiations Team is grateful for the continued support of all Mail Handlers. We wish you and your families a joyous holiday season.

OPEN SEASON OPPORTUNITIES

The month of November presents several financial opportunities for all mail handlers.

FIRST, the Federal Benefits Open Season provides an opportunity for mail handlers to make any necessary changes to their health insurance coverage through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP). During this open season, employees may make any one, or a combination of, the following changes to their health insurance: enroll if not enrolled; cancel enrollment; change from one plan to another or from one option to another; and change from Self to Self and Family, or from Self and Family to Self. Again this year, special attention should be paid by individuals seeking to ensure their children have coverage until age 26 under the new 2010 health reform law. All of these open season changes may be made using PostalEASE, which may be accessed online at www.liteblue.usps.gov or by calling 1-877-487-3273. **The FEHBP Open Season period is scheduled for November 14 through December 13, 2011 at 5 p.m. (central time).**

Also currently available to all mail handlers, as well as all other federal and postal employees, are supplemental dental and vision insurance programs offered through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). These plans are optional, with all premiums paid by the employee without any subsidy from the Postal Service. Questions can be addressed to the customer service representatives at 1-877-888-3337, or you can find more information, including enrollment details, at www.benefeds.com. The FEDVIP Open Season period expires on December 12.

Supplemental dental and vision plans also are sponsored by the Mail Handlers Benefit Plan (MHBP) and Coventry, and may be used by mail handlers who are members of the NPMHU even if they do not enroll in health insurance sponsored by the MHBP. More information on the MHBP supplemental plans is available at the MHBP website, www.mbbp.com, or at 1-800-254-0227.

SECOND, similar but lengthier open season dates (November 7, 2011 through December 25, 2011 at 5:00 pm (central time)) are applicable for mail handlers who seek to participate during 2012 in one or both Flexible Spending Accounts. FSAs allow employees to set aside a portion of their pre-tax earnings for certain types of out-of-pocket health care expenses and dependent care expenses that may be incurred during the next year.

FSAs are an excellent opportunity for all mail handlers to save money for health care and dependent care, and all members are urged to investigate this program if you expect to have eligible expenses in these areas.

If you don't have an FSA, perhaps this is the year to try. Start small, if you like. But you can put up to \$5,000 into a Health Care FSA and/or up to another \$5,000 per family into a Dependent Care FSA. Using the FSA Program can give you significant tax savings. In basic terms, the FSA gives you a percentage discount (depending on your tax rate) on all of your out-of-pocket health care costs, such as braces, eyeglasses, hearing aids, deductibles, co-payments, prescription drugs, and other expenses not covered by health insurance. The same is true for your dependent care costs, which can include day care at a center or from a private sitter, late pickup fees from child care, nursery school, and summer day camp, or adult day care for an elderly parent.

The amount of money you put into an FSA is entirely up to you. Be advised, however, that you must utilize all of the funds in your FSA, or you lose that money under rules adopted by the Internal Revenue Service. Also remember that you have additional time after December 31 of each year (until March 15 of the following year) before any unspent money in an FSA would be lost. Complete your enrollment through PostalEASE by visiting www.liteblue.usps.gov or by calling 1-877-487-3273; questions should be directed to the FSA Customer Service Center at 1-800-842-2026. **Again, the FSA Open Season runs from November 7, 2011 through December 25, 2011 at 5:00 pm (central time).**

THIRD, eligible employees may use the Annual Leave Exchange Option to receive a lump-sum payment in their paychecks in early January 2012 in exchange for a portion of the annual leave that otherwise would be advanced to them at the beginning of the 2012 leave year. To be eligible, mail handlers must have an annual leave balance of 440 hours at the end of the 2011 leave year and have used less than 75 hours of sick leave during the 2011 leave year. **Mail handlers who meet the eligibility criteria and want to exercise this option under the Annual Leave Exchange Option must use PostalEASE to make elections no later than December 15, 2011 at 11:59 pm (central time).**

If you would like additional information about any of these programs, please use the resources listed in this article.

APPLICATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR POSITIONS IN THE CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

The NPMHU is in the process of restructuring its Contract Administration Department (CAD), and may be looking to add full-time CAD representatives in its Washington, DC office in the coming months and years. To ensure that there are qualified and available applicants to choose from to fill any positions, the NPMHU is asking any interested Union representatives or members to send in a "statement of interest" to the National Office. Applicants must be willing to relocate to the Washington, DC area. Any statement of interest should include a listing of qualifications, a description of experience in contractual matters, positions held within the Union, any special projects or duties assigned to, training programs attended, education/degrees, and any other pertinent information. This can be in the form of a simple letter describing said qualifications, or as formal as a resume. All correspondence should be sent to:

**William J. Flynn, Jr., Manager,
NPMHU Contract Administration Department
1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036.**

All submissions will be retained here in the National Office, and will be referred to as job openings occur. It will be important, therefore, to include your current mailing address, telephone number, and any other contact information that you may wish to provide. In addition, the National Office will ensure that all submissions will remain confidential. Anyone who has applied within the last two years need not apply again, but is encouraged to submit a letter indicating continued interest, and to confirm their willingness to relocate to Washington, DC.

Please Post!!

November 2011