

NEW EQUIPMENT DEPLOYMENT AND CRAFT DETERMINATION

TOM RUTHER, NATIONAL CAD REPRESENTATIVE



The USPS over the last 5 years has begun to develop new equipment to process parcels. With the Delivery for America 10-year plan comes the need for new machinery, and with the new equipment comes the craft determinations on how to work them.

The purpose of this article is to clarify the work assignments for each machine, whether it's a Parcel Induction Linear Sorter (PILS), a Singular Induction Parcel Sorter (SIPS) or the mammoth Matrix Regional Sorter (MaRS). It is important that, as inventories are developed, the work is being assigned consistent with applicable national determinations, which in most instances have awarded the work to the Mail Handler craft. The assignment of work to the MH craft has been true even on equipment such as the Small Delivery Unit Sorter (SDUS), which are being used in the new S&DCs.

Let's start with the newest machine deployed throughout the network, the PILS. The PILS debuted in the Dulles PDC last year and is now being assembled in dozens of locations. The USPS announced that the PILS will be replacing the majority of the antiquated APBS machines. With the PILS, given that there is no need to face or key mail, no work falls within the jurisdiction of the Clerk craft.

This was confirmed by the recent National Determination Letter where the USPS assigned all work for the PILS — from loading the parcels, to grooming the mail onto the conveyor belts, to sweeping the machine — to the MH craft. While the APWU has filed a dispute through the RI-399 process, the work according to the tri-partite Update MOU remains with the MH craft until the dispute is resolved, and to be clear, the NPMHU expects to prevail in this case.

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The SIPS began being deployed in 2021 to handle smaller parcels being sorted to other facilities. There are now over a hundred of these machines throughout the country. The National Determination Letter was a little more complicated and has led to some confusion when staffing. The USPS



declared that retrieving the mail from the “Swim Lanes”, which is simply the staging area, and singulating the parcels, which is the act of making sure the parcels are face up on the conveyor leading into the machine, belonged to the Clerk craft. The USPS awarded all other functions on the SIPS to the Mail Handler craft. The important part of this determination letter is that, because there is no repetitive motion, there was no need for ergonomic rotation as we have seen in other machines. That means that only Mail Handlers should be sweeping the SIPS. The APWU didn’t dispute this determination and has agreed to all the assignments within it. The NPMHU disputed the singulating portion as the need to face up the mail no longer exists since USPS has begun using scanners that can read the label no matter how it is placed on the belt. But again the work according to the Update MOU, remains as assigned in the Determination Letter while the dispute is processed.

Along with the SIPS being deployed in 2021 the USPS began deploying the SDUS, which is identical in look to the SIPS but sorts mail being sorted for the Carrier to take right to the street for delivery. The SDUS is found in Carrier stations and the new Sorting and Delivery Centers, S&DCs. The USPS National Determination Letter assigned the work on the SDUS similar to the SIPS except for the sweeping of containers. With the SDUS, the pulling of the containers from the machine belongs to the Clerk craft, but transporting those containers to the Carriers still belongs to the MH craft. We often hear from the Clerk Craft that mail processing work in S&DCs belongs to the Clerk craft. While the APWU might repeat this claim, their repetition does not make it true. The

USPS has assigned Mail Handlers to many work assignments within S&DCs, including the Spreading of Mail, working Presorts and now the allied duties associated with the SDUS. Over the last few years, the NPMHU has been working very hard to make sure we are assigned to the work in the S&DCs that rightfully belongs to our craft. While it hasn’t been easy, we are making gains in many of the new facilities. Our work will continue until all work that belongs to the Mail Handler craft is properly assigned to our craft.

The final new piece of equipment that has been deployed are the Matrix sorters, including the MaRs, the Matrix East West Sorter, MEWS, and the Multiple Induction Matrix Sorter, MIMS. These extremely large machines are being deployed into some regional Processing and Distribution Centers and Regional Transfer Hubs. They sort over 60,000 pieces of mail per hour and are staffed with hundreds of Mail Handlers. While we await the National Determination letters dealing with the Matrix Sorters, at this time, the Postal Service has assigned *all* work on this equipment to the Mail Handler craft. Our Local leaders have been working hard at their level to make sure the Craft inventories at each of these buildings assign all the work to our craft.

The USPS continues to develop new and inventive ways to process the growing number of parcels. The NPMHU will continue to work hard to make sure that the duties on the new equipment that the Postal Service has activated are performed by the Mail Handler craft. It is important that we all fight to make sure the work is being done properly. If you see another craft being assigned to our work, speak up, ask for a Steward and file a grievance.