



# MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

**NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION**

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Paul V. Hogrogian  
National President

## NPMHU AND USPS ANNOUNCE SETTLEMENT ON TERMS OF 2016 NATIONAL AGREEMENT

**TENTATIVE AGREEMENT PROVIDES 3 WAGE INCREASES AND 7 COLA PAYMENTS  
NO-LAYOFF PROTECTION CONTINUES**

**MAIL HANDLER ASSISTANTS RECEIVE EXTRA ADJUSTMENTS**

**OTHER WORK RULES IMPROVED**



Mark A. Gardner  
Secretary-Treasurer

On December 16, 2016, the NPMHU and the Postal Service announced that they had reached a tentative agreement to establish the terms of their 2016 National Agreement. The agreement is subject to ratification by a majority vote of the Union's membership. The balloting process will begin no later than early January, with a 30-day period for return of ballots.

The contract will cover a period of three years and four months. At its core, the tentative agreement will continue to protect the jobs and living standards of all career mail handlers employed by the Postal Service, both now and in the future. The agreement also has substantial improvements for more than 5,000 Mail Handler Assistants (MHAs).

Starting immediately, and continuing through September 2019, the agreement continues the historic pattern of annual general wage increases and semi-annual cost-of-living adjustments for all career mail handlers. In particular, the agreement contains three general wage increases for all career employees – 1.2% in November 2016, 1.3% in November 2017, and 1.3% in November 2018. In addition, the agreement includes seven potential COLAs or cost of living adjustments, based on inflation, to be paid from September 2016 through September 2019.

For MHAs, although they do not receive COLA, they will receive general wage increases in November 2016, 2017 and 2018 that are 1% higher per year, at 2.2%, 2.3%, and 2.3%. In addition, they will receive another 9 cents per hour in November 2016, 20 cents per hour in May 2018, and 21 cents per hour in May 2019. The Level 4 rate for MHA, which started in 2013 at \$13.75, and is now \$14.71, will immediately go to \$15.12 per hour effective this month. The Level 5 rate for MHA will be \$15.94 per hour immediately. In 2019, the Level 4 rate will be at \$16.21, and the Level 5 rate over \$17 per hour.

The agreement also continues the pattern, starting in 2018, of increasing employee contributions toward health insurance by 1% per year (with no increase in 2017, but a 2% increase in 2018); and it includes, effective immediately, clothing allowance and a small upward adjustment in night shift differential (of 4 cents per hour) for MHAs and first-year career employees. The agreement also provides full no-layoff protection, consistent with prior practice, for career mail handlers.

With regard to workforce structure, there are two significant changes from the current contract. First, the tentative agreement includes a one-time conversion of MHAs into full-time career employees, which will take place 60 days after ratification. At that time, any MHA with 2.5 or more years as an MHA will automatically be converted to career status, and the Union expects that there will be hundreds of MHAs who will benefit from this provision. The National parties also will meet one year later to discuss the possibility of another one-time conversion in early 2018.

Second, the agreement will reduce the percentage of casual employees from 5% to 3% by Installation, and in return will increase MHAs by 3.5%. This will mean approximately 1,400 additional members of the NPMHU bargaining unit.

“Notwithstanding the expected increase in health care costs, this contract will provide all mail handlers, both career and MHAs, with substantial wage improvements over the next three years,” said National

President Paul Hogrogian. “It once again confirms the pattern of general wage increases and full cost-of-living adjustments, and continues no-layoff protections for all career mail handlers.”

The tentative agreement also contains a long list of contract improvements, covering a host of subjects found throughout the National Agreement. In no particular order, here are some of the most noteworthy changes:

- MHAs will receive holiday leave pay for six holidays per year: New Year's, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Also, if MHAs work on a holiday, they will be able to choose annual leave rather than additional pay.
- MHAs who are converted to career with at least one year of service will not have to serve an additional probationary period as a career employee.
- Substantial improvements in Article 12 will mean that (a) management decisions not to revert vacancies and instead to post vacancies must all occur within 28 days; (b) senior career mail handlers who face reassignment to another installation will be given preference to stay in their installation in another craft; (c) employees assigned to the mail handler craft from another craft and installation will not be able to bid on jobs until mail handlers reassigned to the gaining installation are able to bid; and (d) local management will be required, if and when it learns that an installation is released from withholding, in whole or in part, to notify the union.
- A revised MOU on Filling Residual Vacancies will continue, so that the number of MHA conversions to career will continue with increased promptness, while also allowing part-time mail handlers and impacted mail handlers to convert or transfer into available jobs.
- A new MOU ensuring that regulations and policies would include MHAs in the recently adopted program for wounded warrior leave, covering eligible veterans with a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more; as recently revised, this program now covers all eligible mail handlers for one year, starting on November 5, 2017.
- An amendment to Article 8 will clarify that casuals, MHAs, and PTFs must be worked on overtime before any career employee is forced to work overtime.
- The definition of parent for purposes of the MOU on bereavement leave, which covers both career employees and MHAs, has been expanded to include mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law.
- Another purge of Letters of Warning has been negotiated, also applicable to both career employees and MHAs.

The complete details of the tentative agreement, including all language changes, will be included in the ratification brochure that will be circulated with ballots in late December or early January.

We thank the entire NPMHU membership for its continuous patience and support during the past eight months of negotiations.

*Happy Holidays*



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