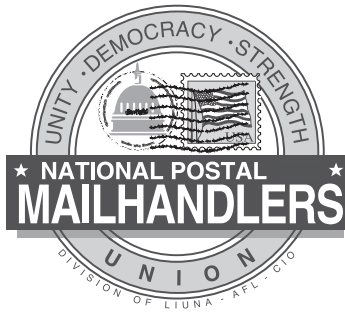




ORGANIZING NEW MAIL HANDLERS

**Updated March 2024 By
The Committee on the Future of the NPMHU**



TO: All Local Union Officers and Shop Stewards

FROM: Paul V. Hogrogian, National President
Kevin P. Tabarus, National Secretary-Treasurer

DATE: March 2024

RE: Strategies for Recruiting New Mail Handlers

The Committee on the Future of the NPMHU continues to have extensive discussions about the NPMHU's membership and organizing efforts. While the size of the NPMHU bargaining unit has and, we anticipate, will continue to grow, the percentage of the bargaining unit that have become members of the NPMHU has not kept pace. While there are a number of contributing factors, the primary issue is the lower percentage of Mail Handler Assistants (MHAs) who are signing up for membership. While MHAs are pre-career employees, they are immediately eligible to join our Union and are the future of the Union. Notably, all future opportunities to become full-time career Mail Handlers will occur from within the MHA ranks.

As of this writing, more than 45,000 MHAs have been converted to a full-time regular (FTR) position; this trend is expected to continue. MHAs (and those who formally worked as an MHA and were converted to a career position) now make-up more than 60% of the NPMHU membership and are a key component of our craft complement. MHAs vote in our officer elections, can become Convention Delegates, run for Local Union office, and sit on Executive Boards. The Committee believes that it is essential to focus on, and improve, our recruitment of new members.

Beginning in late 1997, and again in 2008, 2013 and 2016, the Committee recommended a renewed focus on membership recruitment efforts.

Nationally, prior to the establishment of the MHA category, almost 90% of Mail Handler bargaining unit members voluntarily elected to become union members in an open shop. Unfortunately, in many Locals these enrollment figures are much lower for our MHAs. The Committee believes that there is a great opportunity for improvement by focusing on our MHAs.

The Committee believes that one possible cause of non-membership is that some Local Unions fail to appear at new employee orientation sessions to recruit new members, which should be the time when most new employees are convinced to join their Union. In addition, the Committee concluded that some Local Unions—even if they send representatives to orientation programs—may not properly be using the time they are given during orientation to attract new members.

The Committee also uncovered problems relative to the proper and timely processing of 1187 Authorization for Dues Deduction forms. The Local must monitor dues check-off reports to ensure that 1187s submitted to Human Resources Shared Service Center (HRSSC) are actually being timely processed. You are encouraged to maintain a ‘clean’ copy of the 1187. In the event that dues do not begin within “the first full pay period following the receipt”¹ at HRSSC, the Local should contact National CAD Manager Teresa Harmon with the specific fact circumstances and documentation so an inquiry can be submitted to HRSSC.

The Committee previously developed and distributed guidelines to assist Local Union representatives during the new employee orientation program. The Committee has periodically updated those guidelines, and all of the changes that are deemed appropriate to ensure we get our new MHAs to become members of the NPMHU are reprinted in this booklet.

A prior update to this booklet included new information concerning the recruitment of postal employees who happen, for one reason or another, to transfer into the Mail Handler craft. We are calling on all Locals to expand their focus beyond transferees and long-term non-members. The number of new Mail Handlers is increasing with the introduction of MHAs. The Local Union representatives need to focus on the recruitment of these new MHA members.

To further assist in your recruitment process, each Local will receive a monthly distribution from the NPMHU National Office listing current non-members in the Mail Handler craft. Please review the list carefully to ensure its accuracy. For example, a Mail Handler may have already submitted a signed

¹ ELM 924.5 Implementation of Dues Withholdings

1187 form, but that form may not have been processed yet. Each Local is encouraged to review the list and make one-on-one contact with each non-member regularly. In addition, each Local should be monitoring every Dues Check-off report (DCO). A DCO will highlight new members, transfers, terminations, and cancelations.

Given that the membership of our Union comes from those who are presently working as MHAs and who were converted to FTR from the MHA ranks, the need for NPMHU representatives to focus on the recruitment and concerns of MHAs during the orientation process is paramount.

We hope these guidelines are helpful to you.

Recruiting Newly Hired Mail Handlers

The Committee on the Future of the NPMHU offers the following guidelines to assist the Local Unions and all Local Union officers and representatives in their efforts to sign up new members at orientation. We hope that you will find these suggestions useful during the orientation process.

The two major problems that seem to exist are (1) that we simply do not have Union representatives present at each orientation and (2) that, even though in attendance, we do not successfully sign-up new members during the orientation. The NPMHU needs to correct both of these problems, if they exist in your Local Union.

In the past, one of the most common misconceptions is that the Union could not represent MHAs during their first 90 work days or 120 calendar days of employment. Based on that misconception, some Union representatives actually waited for the 90/120 days to pass before asking these employees to join the Union. **This is wrong.** The Union always has been allowed to represent MHAs in all matters except termination during their first 90/120 days of employment. Thus, WE CANNOT WAIT—the best time to enroll new Mail Handlers as new members is **during orientation!**

If you are unsuccessful in signing the new member during one's initial orientation, the Union has the right to and therefore Union representatives should meet with each non-member again at least at the conclusion of their first 90/120 day period and also again upon conversion to a career position. If you are not permitted to meet with our MHAs at their initial orientation or upon conversion to FTR, please contact your Regional Director. If necessary,

the issue will be elevated to National CAD and addressed with the USPS at the headquarters level.

Under Article 17 of the NPMHU National Agreement, the Union has the right to be present at all orientations, and to make a presentation in an effort to have any new hires complete a Form 1187 (authorization for dues deduction). It is critical that all Local Union representatives insist upon enforcement of these rights.

To take full advantage of your attendance at orientation, it also is important that NPMHU representatives makes the new MHA employees aware of the fact that they have access to many of the Articles contained in the 2022 National Agreement that runs through September 2025, as they are covered directly by Articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 7.1B, 8, 11.6D, 14, 15, 16 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36 37.4 and 39 of the National Agreement. In addition, MHAs have access to Article 16 and “just cause” protection against being disciplined. With the exception of separation at the end of their 360-day appointment or separation for lack of work during their appointment, grievances over disciplinary action issued to MHAs, including removal, can be filed by the Union. And the Union also can challenge the decision not to reappoint or a decision to terminate because of lack of work if it is alleged that those decisions were pretextual (meaning that there was another, improper purpose or motive for the decision not to reappoint or to terminate for lack of work). These important protections, along with the pay and benefits of MHAs (some of which are described below), provide the Union Officer or Steward attending the orientation with the critical facts needed to show newly hired MHAs that joining the Union is the right thing to do.

Of critical importance, MHAs have a direct path to conversion to future career appointment. In particular, “[w]hen the Postal Service determines in accordance with contractual provisions that it has need to fill vacancies with new career employees, available and qualified MHAs will be converted to fill such vacancies based on their relative standing in the installation, which is determined by their initial MHA appointment date in that installation.” Additionally, MHAs have an automatic right to be converted to a career position once they reach twenty-four months of relative standing, and they will not have to serve a probationary period when converted to career after they have completed one term of service.

MHAs will earn annual leave at the rate of one hour for every twenty hours worked. MHAs have access to health care insurance.

MHAs can work overtime and get 1-½ times their basic salary for any overtime worked over 8 hours in a day. MHAs will earn night shift differential for

work between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. and can work higher level assignments, during which they will be paid higher level for that work. MHAs hourly rates are set in the National Agreement. In addition to regular wage increases each year of the agreement, MHAs also will move to a new Step B after six months.

The Local Union should contact the Postal Service and ensure that Local Union Officers or Representatives are provided information about any and all new hire orientations. In this way, the Union will not forfeit these important opportunities to have our new MHAs join the Union. Remember, the best time to enroll new MHAs as members of the Union, and to acquaint them with the Union, is during orientation.

The following guidelines have been prepared to assist you in this endeavor:

- 1) Make a Good Impression. This is one of the most important aspects to signing up new MHA members. Show up on time, be organized, and have all of your materials in order and ready to pass out. Whether you have one steady person who makes this presentation at each facility, such as the Branch President or Chief Steward, is up to the President of the Local Union. Some facilities have two or more Mail Handlers assigned to these tasks. What is most important is that the representatives who perform this function be prepared.

The Local Union representative is encouraged to provide new MHAs with information about the Local Union and Branch structure of the NPMHU, and to verbally invite the attendees to complete the dues authorization form.

- 2) Identify your Local Union and its Officers. Explain your Local's geographic boundaries. Give the new MHA employees the telephone number, fax number, and address for the Local Union office.
- 3) Obtain the Names, Addresses and Employee Identification Number (EIN) of the new Mail Handler employees prior to orientation from the personnel office. Have the Form 1187s filled out and ready to sign at orientation.
- 4) Pass out the 1187s immediately after introducing yourself. Ask the new hires to sign the form and tell them that you will now explain the benefits of becoming a member of the NPMHU.
- 5) Remind the new MHA employees that, if not for the NPMHU, they would not be at orientation as new hires. We are constantly fighting for

career positions and the MHAs now have a path to becoming a career employee in the mail handler craft. Under the National Agreement that the Union negotiates, management can hire only a limited number of pre-career employees. Currently, that number is 25% on an installation basis. Remind the MHAs that they are the only category of non-career employees in the mail handler craft that have access to becoming career mail handlers. When career mail handlers are needed in the future, as our older workforce retires, it will be the MHAs that are given those career opportunities. If not for the contract, the new employees probably would be temporary employees, with less pay, virtually no benefits, and no job protections.

- 6) Describe the MHA provisions of the 2022 National Agreement. The Committee recommends having copies of the entire MHA portion of the new agreement available to these new members, perhaps as part of their “welcoming packet.” This packet is available through the National Union and has also been distributed with this booklet to all Local Unions. An electronic version of this MHA welcome packet will be distributed to all Local Presidents in the coming week. You should add your Local Union information to this welcome packet and print copies to hand out to the new MHAs.
- 7) The Union Plus Program. Have a standard package of Union Plus materials ready to pass out. Cite them all — it’s an impressive list of members-only benefits. Make sure that all of the toll-free 1-800 telephone numbers are included, as well as a credit card application and Union Plus Scholarship program.
- 8) Tell the new hires about their wages and benefits (quote the starting salary and highlight the 6.9% in salary increases that will occur during the term of the Agreement, including an additional increase after an MHA reaches six months of relative standing, discuss automatic conversion to career after 24 months, annual leave provisions, health insurance, seniority or relative standing, the right to a safe work place, and access to the grievance-arbitration provisions of the National Agreement). If you are recruiting a newly converted FTR, provide them with a copy of the MHB[®] health benefits summary brochure. Remind the MHAs that the Union negotiated all of these benefits for them.
- 9) Representation. Explain that the Union represents all members at the National, Regional, and Local levels. Explain what the National Agreement and the Local Memorandum of Understanding are, and also the

grievance procedure. The Union enforces these agreements through grievances and arbitration. You may want to mention some major cases that the Union has won in the past or cases currently pending the grievance procedure.

- 10) Strength in numbers. Stress that keeping a high percentage of Mail Handlers as Union members gives us more bargaining power against management. If management knows that we have a strong Union, they are less likely to cause trouble.
- 11) Communications. Explain that only Union members receive periodic publications from the National and Local Union offices, such as magazines, newsletters, etc. If you have extra copies of either the National or Local publications, it would be great to provide each MHA a copy of those publications. If you need extra copies, please contact Ponise Shields at the National Office at 1-202-833-9095. We have limited extra copies of each publication, but what we do have should be used as a piece of your member recruitment program.
- 12) Union meetings. Note that Union meetings are open to Union members only. These meetings are an important vehicle for each and every Union member to have a say in their Union and their job.
- 13) Elections. Remind the new MHA hires that the Union is a democratic organization, where every member has the right to vote for the Union leadership, as specified in the National and Uniform Local Union Constitutions. If you have copies of the constitution, you should have them available to provide to the new MHAs.
- 14) Union functions. Many Local Unions have functions throughout the year. If your Local holds an annual function, runs a picnic, or contributes to a community service function, let the MHAs know about these upcoming functions.
- 15) We are active politically. The Union is active in lobbying Congress on issues favorable to Mail Handlers and other postal employees, and against legislation that would be detrimental to us. Also explain briefly our affiliation with the Laborers' International Union of North America and the AFL-CIO. Ask them to become legislative activists by going to the NPMHU website — www.npmhu.org. Remind them that it costs nothing to become a legislative activist and that their future is dependent on Congress helping to save the Postal Service.

- 16) Explain some of the ins and outs of postal employment. Annual leave, 3971s, schedules, FTR bidding procedures, times of the tours, etc. Stress that good attendance is critical during the probationary period. All leave must be requested in advance, and if they do have to call in when sick or for emergencies, a written explanation or doctor's note is advisable.
- 17) Ask if there are any questions at the end of your presentation, and prepare to hand out your "welcome package," as specified below. You should hand out these written materials only to those employees who turn in a signed Form 1187 to you.

Local Unions should be responsible for handing out the following items at orientation to those new employees who sign up as Union members: the National Agreement; the Local Memorandum of Understanding; the National and Uniform Local Union Constitutions; the Local By-laws; and Union Plus information.

Also hand out any additional information specific to, or prepared by, your Local Union, such as pay-scale charts, calendars, pens, T-shirts, etc. (If you have Mail Handlers from different facilities at the orientation, a letter of introduction from each Branch President or Chief Steward may be handed out to those employees who will be working in their respective offices.)

The National Office will be responsible for sending each new member a welcome letter and union membership card.

You should make sure that you collect all of the signed 1187s, and process them promptly and properly through the USPS Human Resource Shared Service Center (HRSSC) in Greensboro, North Carolina, so that these new employees actually end up on dues check-off. It is highly recommended to submit 1187s via email HRSSC, following your Local Union procedures. If mailing, it is recommended to mail Priority Mail or Express Mail with tracking.

The current address for HRSSC as of March 2024 is:

USPS HR Shared Services Center
Compensation and Benefits
P.O. Box 970400
Greensboro, NC 27497-0400

You also should have a system in place in your Local Union to make certain that newly recruited members who have submitted their 1187s show up on the dues check-off reports during the next full pay period after receipt at HRSSC.

It also is recommended that each member's Shop Steward approach the new employee on the workroom floor within the first couple of days to introduce himself or herself, and to see how the new Mail Handler MHA is doing. Tell the new MHA hires at orientation that, if they do not see someone in the first few days, they should call the Local Union office so that this lack of communication can be fixed. It also is recommended that someone from the Union (e.g., Branch President, Steward, or Union Officer) follows up with the new hires after a couple of weeks to see how they are doing, and to again offer any assistance that they may need in acclimating themselves to the unique ways of the Postal Service.

Transfers from Other Crafts

You should be aware that transfers from other crafts are not always in attendance at new-employee orientation. You may need to approach these new Mail Handlers separately on the workroom floor. If you get a new Mail Handlers from a different craft, it will be through eReassign or through an excessing event. Periodically submit an information request seeking the names of all newly transferred Mail Handlers. Seek them out, introduce yourself and make them feel welcome. We must actively pursue their membership.

When signing up employees who have transferred into the Mail Handler craft from other postal positions, you need to make every effort to ensure that they do not end up with "double dues" being taken out of their paycheck. In other words, you want to prevent simultaneous dues withholding from both the NPMHU and the craft that can no longer represent the new Mail Handler.

To help eliminate the possibility of double dues, you can utilize a "reciprocal agreement" that has been reached at the National level of the postal unions. Essentially, the reciprocal agreement calls for the losing craft to authorize discontinuance of dues withholding (outside of the normal 10–20 day window period), provided that the employee has signed a new Form 1187 authorizing dues withholding for the gaining union. A copy of the reciprocal agreement booklet can be obtained from the National Office or from www.npmhu.org

For the National Reciprocal Agreement, you should initiate the process by having the new Mail Handler sign an 1187 to authorize NPMHU dues withholding. At the same time, you should notify the National Office that, this new

Mail Handler has signed up and please stop other union's dues withholding from the losing union.

Prior to submitting the signed 1187 to the USPS Human Resources Shared Service Center (HRSSC in Greensboro, North Carolina), simply send a letter to the NPMHU National Secretary-Treasurer with the pertinent information (name, EIN number (social security number for NALC), finance number, and the craft from which you would like to stop dues withholding). A written request will then be made to the other union at its National level. The losing craft will then send a dues cancellation notice letter with the appropriate USPS office, and will send a copy of that letter to the NPMHU National Secretary-Treasurer.

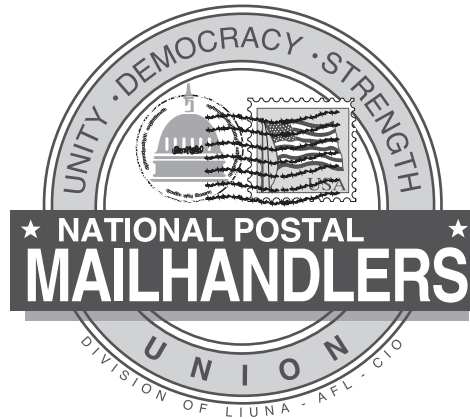
The NPMHU will then forward a copy of that correspondence to the Local Union President. Once the dues withholding has been cancelled, the NPMHU representative should process the signed 1187 for the new Mail Handler to HRSSC, which will begin the dues withholding for the NPMHU.

Part-Time Employees

Although the number of part-time regulars (PTR) employees and part-time flexible (PTF) employees have been declining over the past few years, it is important to note that PTRs and PTFs will remain members of the NPMHU bargaining unit.

Like full-time regular employees, PTRs and PTFs are part of the career workforce and are covered fully by the National Agreement between the NPMHU and the Postal Service. PTRs can still be hired under the 2022 National Agreement; at the same time, PTFs will only be allowed in the smaller facilities, with less than 200 work years of employment.

Under the 2022 National Agreement, however, the primary means for entering the Mail Handler craft, and for becoming eligible for membership in the NPMHU, will be newly hired MHA employees. All NPMHU Officers and representatives should welcome all MHAs to the Postal Service, and to the NPMHU.



National Postal Mail Handlers Union
Committee on the Future of the NPMHU

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