

093043



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548



CIVIL DIVISION

DEC 14 1970

BEST DOCUMENT AVAILABLE

Dear Mr. Postmaster General:

The General Accounting Office has made a survey of the payment of Sunday premium pay to Postal Service employees. The survey was performed at the Detroit, Michigan, Post Office in the Chicago Postal Region, the Seattle and Tacoma, Washington, Post Offices in the Seattle Postal Region, and the Postal Service headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Sunday premium pay costs for fiscal year 1970 totaled about \$20 million. For the Chicago and Seattle Postal Regional Offices, the fiscal year 1970 Sunday premium pay cost was \$2,106,381 and \$583,535, respectively.

Our survey showed that the Postal Service's efforts to control costs of Sunday premium pay have resulted in several undesirable effects on productivity and employee morale. We are bringing this matter to your attention for consideration during future negotiations with employee labor organizations.

The provision of title 39 United States Code 3573(e) provides that:

"Each regular employee whose regular work schedule includes an eight-hour period of service any part of which is within the period commencing at midnight Saturday and ending at midnight Sunday shall be paid extra compensation at the rate of 25 per centum of his hourly rate of basic compensation for each hour of work performed during that eight-hour period of service."

Under this provision, a substantial amount of premium is paid for non-Sunday work--work performed prior to midnight Saturday or after midnight Sunday. An employee can receive as much as 16 hours Sunday premium pay for each Sunday because two of his tours may overlap into the period requiring payment of the premium.

For example, one employee worked from 11 p.m. on Saturday to 7:30 a.m. on Sunday and from 11 p.m. on Sunday to 7:30 a.m. on Monday. For these two 8-hour tours, the employee was entitled to 16 hours of Sunday premium pay even though the work actually performed between midnight Saturday and midnight Sunday was only 8 hours.

~~714303~~

093043

To control the cost of Sunday premium pay attributable to non-Sunday work, the Postal Service headquarters instructed post offices to reschedule the starting times of employee workdays so that no tours overlap from Saturday into Sunday or from Sunday into Monday. Officials at the Detroit, Seattle, and Tacoma Post Offices advised us that the rescheduling of employees' work hours to control the cost of Sunday premium pay has resulted in many adverse effects on productivity and employee morale including the following:

1. Loss of management flexibility to schedule employees' duty hours to correspond with manpower needs for processing mail.
2. Mail congestion in dispatch areas and delays in mail delivery resulting from the adjustments to duty hours.
3. Increased instances of overtime to meet dispatch schedules on Saturday and Sunday which fall between the end of tour 3 at 10 p.m. and the beginning of tour 1 at 12:01 a.m. on the following days. Normally, tour 1 begins work at 10 p.m., but on Saturday and Sunday, tour 1 begins work 2 hours later at 12:01 a.m. to avoid paying Sunday premium for work not performed on Sunday.
4. A light workload on Monday for letter carriers due to 2 hours less mail processing time on tour 1 before dispatch time for daily delivery.
5. Overmanning during the period when tour 1 and tour 2 overlap--from 6 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. on Sunday and Monday.
6. Lower productivity and employee morale due to inconvenience and hardship caused by irregular hours and later starting time on tour 1.
7. An increase in unscheduled employee absences.
8. Compounded employee parking problems due to the overlap of tours 1 and 2.

During our survey we contacted several Seattle union officials representing postal clerks, carriers, vehicle employees, and supervisors. Most of the union officials expressed concern about the employees' inconvenience and low morale associated with the shifting of weekend work schedules. They stated that it would be desirable to allow Sunday premium pay only for work actually performed between midnight Saturday

BEST DOCUMENT AVAILABLE

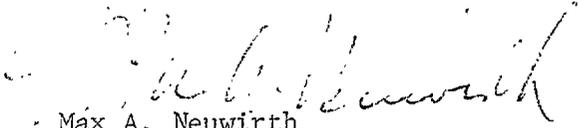
and midnight Sunday and thereby eliminate the need to adjust weekend work schedules. Officials of the three post offices we visited also suggested the desirability of limiting the payment of Sunday premium pay to hours actually worked on Sunday.

The Postal Reorganization Act (84 Stat 719) will eventually supercede the existing provision of law on Sunday premium pay. The act provides that the existing laws on compensation shall continue to apply until changed by agreement between the collective bargaining representatives of the employees and the Postal Service.

Because of the concern about employee morale expressed by both union and postal officials, we recommend that the Postal Service seek agreement with employee union representatives to allow payment of Sunday premium pay only for work actually performed between midnight Saturday and midnight Sunday.

We will appreciate being advised of your views on these matters and of any actions planned or contemplated.

Sincerely yours,



Max A. Neuwirth
Associate Director

The Honorable
The Postmaster General

BEST DOCUMENT AVAILABLE