



APWU Web News Articles

Updated

Maintenance Craft Settles Dispute on Custodial Staffing; Will Convert More Than 3,150 PSEs

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July 11, 2014 - The APWU and USPS signed a major settlement July 9 that resolves a long-standing dispute over custodial staffing and results in the conversion to career of all Maintenance Craft Postal Support Employees, Maintenance Craft Director Steve Raymer has announced.

The agreement stipulates that the MS-47 Handbook – Transmittal Letter 5, which governs custodial work and staffing, will be implemented as written. The Transmittal Letter 5 version includes the following provisions:

- Management must maintain custodial staffing levels determined by the procedures outlined in the MS-47 Handbook;
- The USPS is prohibited from disciplining custodians who exceed estimated times outlined in the handbook;
- Managers must include all duties custodians perform in staffing packages they prepare locally;
- Performance standards will be revised based on the work-and-time standards outlined in ISSA 540.

The MOU itself contains provisions that:

- There will be an automatic penalty if management fails to ensure all required custodial work is performed;
- There will be no excessing of employees based on implementing the MS-47 Transmittal Letter 5 (except for cross-section excessing within the Maintenance Craft and within the installation).

The settlement will also result in the conversion of over 3,150 Postal Support Employees (PSEs). Conversion to career status must take place “as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than within 30 days after the signing of this agreement.” The settlement stipulates that:

- The USPS will convert “in-place” all current Maintenance Craft PSEs to career status, either as full-time regulars or part-time regulars. “In-place” means the PSEs will be assigned to the duty assignments they are currently covering;
- PSEs will not serve a probationary period if they have completed two terms as a PSE or if they are employed at one of 10 identified sites currently operating under Transmittal Letter 5 (TL-5) or going under TL-5;
- Going forward, the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and Memorandums of Understanding covering PSEs will be applied.

“The MS-47 Handbook is probably the most litigated handbook in the history of the APWU,” Raymer said, noting that management has tried on numerous occasions to modify it, only to have the changes successfully challenged by the APWU in arbitration.

However, beginning in December 2011, the USPS announced new plans to modify the MS-47 Handbook. “The difference this time around was that management learned from their earlier arbitration defeats,” he said.

“Maintenance Craft officers weighed the prospects of succeeding if we challenged management’s new plans in arbitration, where the union would have the burden of proving that proposed changes failed to meet the criteria of being ‘fair, reasonable and equitable.’”

Intense negotiations followed, resulting in the July 9 settlement. “We maintained many of our previous accomplishments,” Raymer said.

“This MS-47-TL 5 will result in a reduction in staffing at many locations,” Raymer said. “The impact will vary, with larger reductions at the largest facilities and smaller reduction or none at all at smaller facilities. But the settlement includes important protections for current custodians and will help protect Maintenance Craft work for the future.

“It also will immediately improve the lives of more than 3,150 PSEs, who will now be able to enjoy the stability of career jobs.”

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