

APWU Warns Members:

Beware of Risks in USPS Campaign for Voluntary Transfers to Letter Carrier

The APWU is warning union members of risks associated with a management campaign to encourage career Clerk, Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Craft employees to volunteer for reassignments to the Letter Carrier Craft.

In a letter dated Jan. 3, management notified the union that it will mail a letter to all career employees in the three APWU-represented crafts (and employees in the Mail Handler Craft) touting the benefits of voluntary reassignments to the Letter Carrier Craft.

But there are disadvantages to the voluntary reassignments – which management is not divulging to employees.

Seniority:

When employees transfer voluntarily to another craft, they begin a new period of seniority.

Limits on Excessing:

The APWU negotiated strict limits on excessing during bargaining over the 2010-2015 Collective Bargaining Agreement. As a result, employees in crafts represented by the APWU cannot be excessed beyond 50 miles.

Our brothers and sisters in the National Association of Letter Carriers are currently bargaining with the Postal Service over the terms of their contract, but, as of now, the USPS is not bound by these limits for employees in the Letter Carrier Craft.

Protection Against Layoffs:

The 2010-2015 Collective Bargaining Agreement between the APWU and the USPS includes a Memorandum of Understanding that grants protection against layoffs to all regular workforce employees that were on the rolls as of Nov. 20, 2010. Our brothers and sisters in the Letter Carrier Craft do not currently enjoy this coverage; their protection against layoffs applies to Letter Carrier Craft employees who have accrued six years of “continuous service.”

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Cliff Guffey, President

The APWU asserts that once employees obtain protection against layoffs, they retain it. However, the USPS disagrees with the union’s position and contends that once employees transfer from a craft represented by the APWU to a craft represented by another union, they lose the protection against layoffs granted by the Memorandum of Understanding.

According to the Postal Service’s reasoning, employees with less than six years of continuous service who transfer to the Letter Carrier Craft could be subject to layoffs. The APWU has a pending national-level dispute challenging management’s interpretation. However, until the dispute is resolved, employees who voluntarily transfer (or are involuntarily reassigned by management) may be in jeopardy.

The loss of seniority and the potential for excessing and layoffs are not abstractions, the union points out. The Postal Service is planning workforce changes with the goal of eliminating tens of thousands of Letter Carrier positions.

“Transferring to another craft is an important decision,” said APWU President Cliff Guffey. “I encourage union members to think long and hard before they make such a major change. And I urge employees to be aware of the risks as well as the benefits when management promotes the transfers as a great opportunity.”