

# TIAREAP surveillance system secretly extended by US Postal Service and city letter carriers' union

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The National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) union and US Postal Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) last December, behind closed doors, to extend an intrusive surveillance program targeting city carriers past its initial two-year “provisional” period. The Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process (TIAREAP) was first imposed on city letter carriers in 2022; the program was extended under a Memorandum of Understanding even while 275,000 NALC members have worked under an expired contract for the last eight months.

TIAREAP is a digital surveillance system, where every minute of a letter carrier’s route is tracked via a wearable device. Carriers can be disciplined for “stationary events,” which ultimately impact employment decisions, route bidding, and wages. The system often reports “stationary events” when carriers fulfill core responsibilities like delivering mail at cluster boxes outside apartment buildings, which may serve dozens or even hundreds of customers at a centralized unit, or take measures to protect their health, like water and restroom breaks.

Neither USPS management or the NALC bureaucracy feel obligated to justify why they are extending TIAREAP, provide a report on its two-year provisional implementation, or address growing worker complaints. NALC published only a perfunctory statement on its website, indicating, “[TIAREAP] is an agreed upon process by the national parties that utilizes teams of NALC and USPS representatives to evaluate and adjust

city delivery routes.”

NALC is a full partner with USPS management in carrying out attacks on working conditions. While it continues the hated TIAREAP system behind the backs of city carriers, NALC is also seeking to impose the next contract without a vote from the membership through binding interest arbitration, as they did in 2014.

Forcing workers to stay in motion and punishing them for bathroom and water breaks contributed to the premature death of veteran letter carrier Eugene Gates in Dallas, Texas last June. The 66-year-old collapsed while delivering his route in a 100-degree Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) heat wave. Gates, a 36-year veteran of the Postal Service with a spotless record, had just received his first-ever disciplinary action due to TIAREAP.

One city carrier on Reddit summed up the prevailing sentiment on TIAREAP: “A lot of people can’t and refuse to work like that. We’re grown adults, not toddlers.”

During twice-a-year route adjustments, letter carriers meet with managers, who pore over carriers’ Digital Street Review (DSR) data and scrutinize where, how often, and for how long the worker stops to use the bathroom and other “stationary events.”

Despite this invasive monitoring, route evaluations are determined through heavy reliance on a single “live week” and take the minimum, not average, route times, as well as the minimum between a carrier’s office time and “standard” office time.

Carriers broadly view these evaluation periods as rigged, since routes can be manipulated by managers. One expressed on social media, “Them taking the lowest time has been one of their bread and butter

[methods] in every route adjustment process they've used ... [they are picking and] choosing what time best represents the route, when they can manipulate numbers and volume to their whim. Every route adjustment process they choose, they've never been fair!"

TIAREAP is one of numerous programs implemented at USPS with the aim of cutting workers' wages and ultimately forcing them out of the workforce. Rural carriers have had the Rural Route Evaluated Compensation System (RRECS) by a similar side agreement with the National Rural Letter Carriers Association, also implemented in 2022. RRECS has reduced wages overnight for two-thirds of rural letter carriers, some by as much as \$20,000 a year.

Both of these hated systems are part of a sweeping 10-year restructuring of the Postal Service mislabeled "Delivering for America" (DFA), initiated under Trump-backed Postmaster General Louis DeJoy but with the support of the Democratic Party.

DFA is a plan to eliminate tens of thousands of the 500,000 or so remaining postal jobs—down from a high of 800,000 in 2000—while demanding speedup from the rest, even as their wages and benefits are gutted. Sorting and processing functions are being taken out of local post offices and centralized in several hundred Amazon-style regional processing centers.

For letter carriers, this will mean doubling the length of an average route, as they will no longer be able to collect mail at their local station, but rather, will have to drive to load and unload mail at these regional hubs. Likewise, many postal customers will have to drive much farther to access postal services, which may even violate the USPS federal charter, which requires equal access.

The rollout of DFA has been accompanied at every step by the trampling of regulations and working norms, with the support of the Biden administration and postal regulators. It is now widespread policy to preference Amazon deliveries over mail, leading to massive levels of overwork and exhaustion. And new sorting machines are being rammed through despite undelivered mail piling up in Richmond and more recently in Houston.

This year will be a critical one for the fight against DFA. This year, contracts also expire for postal workers in the American Postal Workers Union

(APWU) and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association (NRLCA). The recent upsurge in strikes and labor actions indicates postal workers would have many allies and great support from the American working class.

But workers have to understand that they face a two-pronged battle, waged against both management and their corrupt unions, who are currently preparing massive betrayals. A perspective of union "reform" or aspirations to join "fighting" unions like the Teamsters and UAW, both of whom forced through sellout contracts last year which have set the stage for mass layoffs, will lead nowhere.

Instead, we call on all postal workers to join the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee and form action committees at their stations and centers. As our founding statement states, our demands include an end to "RRECS, TIAREAP and other surveillance programs, the re-establishment of the 8-hour day, an immediate 25 percent pay increase to make up for decades of lost wages, full transparency in collective bargaining talks and an end to the Delivering for America program, among other demands."



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