

CFS Clerks Upgraded to Level 5

In the conclusion of a nearly 20-year struggle, Level 4 Clerks who work in Computerized Forwarding System positions were upgraded to PS-5 on Nov. 13. The higher-level wages will appear in paychecks dated Dec. 3.

The upgrade is the result of a Memorandum of Understanding that was part of the 2000-2003 Collective Bargaining Agreement extension approved two years ago. A similar memorandum, which was also part of the contract extension, upgraded PS-10 and PS-11 Electronic Technicians (in the Maintenance Craft) to PS-11 and PS-12 late last year.

The Postal Service and the APWU agreed that all PS-4 CFS clerks would be upgraded based on a "step-to-step" mechanism, including credit for waiting period time already served.

"This is the culmination of a decades-long effort to upgrade Clerk Craft members who were denied appropriate compensation," said APWU President William Burrus.

"We fought for many years to upgrade Mail Processors, first from Level 3 to Level 4, and then from Level 4 to Level

5," he said. "At long last, the CFS Clerks have joined the ranks of Level 5 employees."

"For many years, Level 4 clerks were denied the right to bid on higher-level positions," he said. "Employees often felt trapped, with little opportunity to improve their pay or their schedule, until inter-level bidding was negotiated in 1992."

Throughout the years, management routinely assigned Level 4 CFS clerks higher-level duties, Burrus noted, forcing the employees and the union to file grievances to secure the correct compensation. "The pay upgrade was a major achievement," Burrus said.

The CFS employees were the last Level 4 clerks housed at mail processing centers. A dispute is pending regarding the upgrade of PS-4 Data Conversion Operators, who work at Remote Encoding Centers.

APWU members will receive their final 1.3 percent annual raise under the National Agreement on Nov. 27. Cost-of-Living adjustments are expected to provide additional increases next March and September. The Collective Bargaining Agreement with the USPS expires Nov. 20, 2005.

Union Advises Avoiding USPS Surveys

The APWU opposes worker participation in USPS employee opinion surveys, President William Burrus said in a recent statement.

"We are aware that the Postal Service continues to mail 'Voice of Employee' surveys on an annual basis," he said, "but we discourage union members from participating."

The union policy, adopted by the National Executive Board in 1998, contests "the use of all surveys, focus groups, polls and audits as a means of interviewing employees and union officials to evaluate job-related and internal issues."

Experience has taught union members a bitter lesson in that regard, said APWU Industrial Relations Director Greg Bell. Opinion surveys, he said, are often designed to elicit a specific response or result. "In most cases, surveys conducted by an employer are designed to circumvent bargain-

ing with unions and are used in management's effort to reduce employee wages, hours, benefits, and working conditions. This undermines collective bargaining," Bell said.

"The Postal Service has misrepresented the results of previous employee opinion surveys," he said, "and has used survey data to justify claims that employees supported its wage proposals during contract negotiations and interest arbitrations."

The subjects addressed in the survey should be discussed in labor-management meetings, Bell said, where the concerns of all represented employees are considered.

"The APWU's concern," Bell said, "is that results of a survey of individual employees can be misrepresented or manipulated by the Postal Service in order to achieve management goals that the union does not share."

Penalty Overtime Exclusion Period Starts Dec. 4

The Postal Service has set the 2004 Penalty Overtime Exclusion Period for Dec. 4 to Dec. 31.

Per Article 8 of the National Agreement, penalty over-

time regulations are not applicable for the "December" period of four consecutive service weeks. This year, the effective dates are the first day of Week 2 of Pay Period 26-04 through the last day of Week 1 of PP 01-05.