

Letter to Branches

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General Secretary: Billy Hayes (www.billyhayes.co.uk)

No. 735/06

Ref C25

Date: 3 November 2006

To: Branches with POSTAL Members

(Copied to all CWU Royal Mail ASRs for the immediate attention of all Area Processing/Distribution Representatives)

Dear Colleagues,

York Containers - Cardboard Sleeves Withdrawal from Use

This LTB is issued further to LTB 569/05 dated 21 November 2005 and LTB 601/05 dated 5 December 2005, for the attention of Postal Branches and Area Safety Representatives.

As reported in LTB 569/05 and LTB 601/05, a joint statement was agreed last year regarding the phased withdrawal of Cardboard Sleeves from "general use" and instructions were issued to Area General Managers and Mail Centre Manager to comply with an instruction to remove the sleeves from circulation.

The grounds for withdrawal of Cardboard Sleeves were set out by Central Postal Control (CPC) in the instructions sent to AGMs and MCMs as follows (See Copy at Appendix 3):-

- The use of Cardboard Sleeves for packet traffic was having an adverse affect on the network
- Safe Systems of Work were not being followed
- Increased York Container demands
- Reduced vehicle utilisation
- Large amounts of unwanted, waste cardboard requiring repatriation.

The instruction to AGMs and MCMs stated clearly that Cardboard Sleeves can only continue in use for the Amazon Book Contract and the QVC operation at Crewe and additionally for "emergency use" only which needs to be cleared by Central Postal Control (CPC) and would require the use of "false bases" and "cross member supports" to improve the lifting height of packets from the Sleeves and so reduce the risk of injury. The instruction to AGMs was issued by Mike Eady Royal Mail HQ Head of Central Postal Control (CPC) and Cathy Way Royal Mail HQ Head of Network Design.

Since CPC issued the Instruction to AGMs and MCMs there was a very mixed response. Full credit to those MCM who working closely with Area Safety Reps and Area Processing/Distribution/Delivery Reps, made a concerted effort to eliminate the use of Cardboard sleeves successfully. However, a number of MCMs simply ignored the instruction and continued to despatch traffic in Cardboard sleeved Yorks to other Mail Centres and to Delivery Offices placing our members at risk of back injury and other WRULD strains. Some of those MCM claimed they were "exempt" from the instruction which is not true.

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During the last 12 months the Health, Safety & Environment Department has continued to press CPC and Royal Mail HQ via the Material Handling SSG for action. The matter was also raised on the Royal Mail Letters National Joint Safety Steering Group and most recently raised in correspondence with Tony Fox Territorial Director. Tony is also Chair of the Royal Mail Letters National Joint Safety Steering Group and the "OPEX" representative on the SSG. A copy of my letter dated 30 October and the reply from Tony Fox are attached as Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

You will see from the positive reply that Royal Mail HQ have reconfirmed the agreed Policy change to remove Cardboard Sleeves and have stated that it is the right thing to do. Tony goes on to say "There are good reasons to review their use and as you are aware we have given a commitment that cardboard sleeved Yorks will no longer be routinely used for the distribution of packets within the Mail Centre network. This has taken longer than expected, but I hope to be able to confirm complete withdrawal very soon. I will re affirm our commitment to remove cardboard sleeves from the Mail Centre network but recognise the need to retain their use for specific tactical purposes."

Yours sincerely

Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer

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Appendix 1

Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer
CWU HQ
2nd November 2006

Dear Dave

Thanks for your note concerning the use of RSCs and sleeved Yorks within Royal Mail.

I do not believe that the use of RSCs or sleeved Yorks for the movement of loose packets is unsafe, provided the agreed SSOW is fully and consistently deployed.

There are however, good reasons to review their use and as you are aware we have given a commitment that cardboard sleeved Yorks will no longer be routinely used for the distribution of packets within the mailcentre network. This has taken longer than expected, but I hope to be able to confirm complete withdrawal very soon. The ALP sleeve, whilst preferable to cardboard is not a suitable replacement; this explains some of the delay.

The type of mail products handled by the business has changed significantly over the last two years, with a migration towards packet traffic that looks set to continue. Additionally, increased environmental awareness has caused us to challenge inefficient vehicle utilisation and poor packaging solutions.

In response, a design review has been commissioned to investigate opportunities to introduce alternative MHE solutions that will be suitable for changing business needs. The review will build on recent innovations such as the tray dolly, improved York strap and clear mailbag.

The review is expected to take 16 weeks to complete.

Prime outputs will be solutions that are

- Safe
- Environmentally sound
- Effective

Short term, I will re affirm our commitment to remove cardboard sleeves from the mailcentre network but recognise the need to retain their use for specific tactical purposes.

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I have also asked Mike Eady who leads most of our materials handling design to join the National Safety Steering Group.

In conclusion, I share your desire to eliminate MHE solutions that are not fit for purpose and will ensure that you are fully involved in developing alternatives.

Regards
Tony Fox
Territorial Director

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Appendix 2

30 October 2006

Tony Fox Territorial Director tony.fox@royalmail.com
Chair Royal Mail UK Letters Safety Steering Group

Dear Tony,

HSE Backs Campaign & HSE LOPP - Solving Key Manual Handling Problems in Royal Mail Letters & Ensuring Back Safety in the Mails Pipeline ready for XMAS 2006 - Misuse of York Cardboard Sleeves and RSCs for loose Packet Traffic:

We have two major Manual Handling Problems still to resolve in spite of the fact that both Royal Mail Management and the CWU agree the problems shouldn't even exist.

Firstly the misuse of Cardboard sleeves for packet Traffic continues despite crystal clear instructions from Mike Eady CPC that Mail Centre Managers and AGMs to cease using Cardboard Sleeves for Packet Traffic by the end of January 2006 and to only use the correct ALP Sleeved York Containers.

The agreed grounds for withdrawal of Cardboard Sleeves were set out by Central Postal Control (CPC) in the instructions (copy attached) sent to AGMs and MCMs as follows:-

- The use of Cardboard Sleeves for packet traffic was having an adverse affect on the network
- Safe Systems of Work were not being followed
- Increased York Container demands
- Reduced vehicle utilisation
- Large amounts of unwanted, waste cardboard requiring repatriation.

My congratulations to those MCMs and AGMs that complied with the Instruction but a number of MCMs have simply ignored the instruction and continued to despatch traffic in Cardboard sleeved Yorks to other Mail Centres and to Delivery Offices placing our members at risk of back injury and other WRULD strains.

Second problem is Packets in RSCs. As you yourself agreed at the RMUK Letters SSG when my colleague Tony Hayes raised the problem he faced at Swindon Mail Centre - loose Packet Traffic should not go in RSCs because of the obvious bad ergonomic of fishing packets out of the RSCs from ground level with multiple lifts, exactly the same problem with Cardboard Sleeved Yorks (without a false base). Never the less a number of Mail Centres continue to put Packets into RSCs and despatch them into the network. Some Mail Centres moved Packet Traffic from Cardboard Sleeved York's to RSCs and quite literally jumped our members from the Frying Pan into the Fire and solved nothing.

We are told that large Packet Posters such as Wolverhampton Mail Centre will not purchase ALP sleeves as they despatch large quantities of outward packets but receive hardly anything by way of inward packets and are therefore not prepared to purchase ALP Sleeves out of the MCMs budget for the benefit of other Mail Centres. This is frankly crass.

Other MCMs take a similar attitude of not wanting to purchase ALP Sleeves from their own budget then send them out into the Network at the risk of not getting them back

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because other MCMs may keep them. This is a nonsense which is easily solvable if ALP Sleeves were purchased centrally.

With Xmas approaching and bad working practices continuing, the risk of Back Injury and Repetitive Strain Injury and WRULDs will increase. I would therefore appreciate your assistance by:

1. Issuing an instruction to all AGMs and MCMs to cease the use of Cardboard Sleeved Yorks and RSCs for loose Packet Traffic and to use the right equipment and in doing so discharge their legal duty of care to ensure the health and safety of staff and not put them at risk of back or other WRULD strain injuries.
2. Ensure an injection of ALP Sleeves and York Containers into the Mails Pipeline so as to reduce the injury risk and ensure Safe Working throughout the Pipeline.

I look forward to hearing from you and in anticipation of positive action, thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours Sincerely

Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer

CC Tom Melvin Opps Director
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Appendix 3

INSTRUCTION FROM MIKE EADY, HEAD OF CENTRAL POSTAL CONTROL TO MAIL CENTRE MANAGERS

Use of cardboard York inserts

Background:

York containers can be used to circulate non-bagged packets when used in conjunction with the approved red sleeve, which is available for areas to purchase. The red sleeve has a spring-loaded base that allows full use of the York while reducing bending and lifting when emptying. In addition a cardboard insert for Yorks was specifically designed for the movement of packets that have controlled weights from major packet producing customers. EG Amazon.

The Safe System of Work for cardboard sleeve inserts **requires** the following actions

- Rotation of staff sorting from sleeved Yorks due to high frequency bending and twisting actions
- Use of high level base when average packet weight exceeds 2.5 KG or an individual item weight exceeds 5.0KG

Over the past 12 months there has been an increase in the incorrect use of cardboard sleeves for MC to MC circulation. This has lead to the flowing problems:

- Increased demand for York containers – the cardboard sleeve is designed to hold around 66% of a full York, the red sleeve allows for full use of capacity.
- Increased bulking out of vehicles – driven by additional Yorks
- Collapsing of SiSo selections from some MC's without authority - there are limited Mc flows where packet directs are justified, so despatching in sleeved Yorks is effectively exporting workload.
- Receiving MC's having to dispose of cardboard sleeves.
- Concerns that SSOW for cardboard sleeves are not well known at those MC's who receive but do not use cardboard sleeves.

In response to concerns raised by a number of Mail Centres the following approach has been developed and is to be adopted by all MC's.

- MC to MC circulation of packets – where justified under SiSo should be done in Red Sleeved Yorks only.
- Bulk posters such as Amazon will continue to use cardboard sleeves but will stick to use of a false high base to eliminate bending/lifting injury.

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- MC to DO circulation of packets may be done in either Red Sleeved Yorks or cardboard-sleeved Yorks. However a local SSOW must be developed for the MC and receiving DO's.
- The use of cardboard sleeves for MC to MC circulation will be phased out over the next 2 months – therefore MCM's must now order stocks of red sleeves if SiSo justifies continued use.

CWU have been consulted on the use of cardboard-sleeved inserts and support our approach. They have issued advice to branches that use of cardboard sleeves will cease. **However they are now clarifying this in line with the above.**

Mike Eady
Head of Central Postal Control
November 2005