

Paxsters and Integrated Delivery - update

No Paxsters in Denmark and Sweden

The PWUA Southern District President has this month completed a visit to Denmark to observe Paxsters in use. (His trip was personally funded as part of a holiday.) The union had asked Post where in the world Paxsters were used for delivery for 8 hours or more, as Post was intending for New Zealand. The company said Paxsters were used for 8 hours a day in Denmark.

However, the PWUA official discovered that Paxsters are no longer being used in either Denmark or Sweden. It is true that there had been a trial of some Paxsters there but the combined postal service of Denmark and Sweden, Nordpost, has decided that the vehicles are not suitable. Paxsters are not permitted to be driven on footpaths in Denmark. Various reasons were mentioned for rejection of the Paxster, including low productivity, insufficient carrying capacity and insufficient battery life.

Postal items were observed being delivered in Denmark now by a combination of electric bicycles (small items) and large electric vans (parcels).

Paxsters in Norway

After visiting Denmark the PWUA official visited Norway. Paxsters are a Norwegian product. Norway Post uses a combination of Paxsters and larger electric vans, depending on the travelling distance and the volume of mail and parcels. For instance, a van was observed to be used in hilly areas at a distance from the branch. Paxsters are not permitted to be driven on footpaths.

Posties in Norway work 5 days per week, Monday to Friday. They work 7.5 hours a day, of which about 6.5 hours is spent driving the Paxster. In the branch visited by the PWUA official most of the posties return to the branch for a lunch break. The posties did not report any problems with using the Paxster this way, but they did express strong reservations about using them for much longer daily shifts as NZ Post is proposing.

Posties in Norway do not need to use a scanner and are not required to carry a mobile phone.

Paxsters in New Zealand

The PWUA has a number of serious concerns with NZ Post's plans for the replacement of most urban posties with Integrated Delivery Agents (IDA's) driving Paxsters. The company plans to have the first group of IDA's driving Paxsters in two of the teams at Porana Road Branch (on Auckland's North Shore) in August, with full delivery of mail and parcels commencing on 30 August this year. Issues the PWUA has with Post's plans include:

4-day rosters

A full-time roster of 37 hours 40 mins over 4 days means an average of 9 hours 25 mins per day. With workload variations across the week IDA's can expect to be working between about 8 hours and 11 hours per day in a typical week (more than 80% of the time outside) without any overtime.

International research from the USA and Europe has found that working days longer than 8 hours are associated with a significantly higher risk of injuries to workers. The increased risk exists regardless of the job the worker is doing, and exists even if weekly hours do not exceed 40. There is also an increased injury risk associated with working weeks longer than 40 hours.

Clause 3 in the IDA section of the new Collective Employment Agreement (CEA) says: *Rosters shall be designed with a view to ensuring that the combination of hours per day and the pattern of working and non-working days are such as to minimise the potential for employee harm.* The PWUA has told Post that although the new CEA says that full-time IDA's can be rostered over 4, 5 or 6 days per week the international research indicates that a roster over 4 days does not "minimise the potential for employee harm." The union has asked Post to construct a 5 day roster which will pose less risk to employees and members of the public, but the company has declined. They have accepted that *"fatigue and work hazards are closely linked"* but they have said: *"Our challenge is to find rosters that meet our needs as a business while at the same time minimising the exposure of the individual to harm."* The PWUA has asked Post – if the best roster for the business is not the same as the safest roster for its employees, which roster does the company want to pursue? Post has not answered that question.

The company has said it wants to introduce the 4 day rosters (which it may have a right to do under the wording of the new CEA), monitor the injury rate and safety feedback, then look at adjusting the roster if there is a need. The PWUA has said it does not want workers treated as experimental guinea pigs, and since the knowledge already exists that long shifts are more hazardous, they should be avoided.

The 4 day roster Post intends to use (without the union's agreement) will see IDA's rostered to work for 6 out of 7 consecutive days – a total of 56.5 hours. This will occur twice in every three week cycle. IDA's will not qualify for any overtime pay for working these rostered hours.

The PWUA is concerned that IDA's could find themselves exposed to cold temperatures, wind and rain for up to 9 hours continuously, without any realistic opportunity to dry off and warm up. Post has referred to truck drivers who work long hours, but they are not subject to hypothermia and exposure on top of fatigue.

IDA round sizing and work measurement

Despite repeated requests from the PWUA, Post has not provided detailed information on how the IDA's job will be measured and sized. The company said it took timings from four posties driving Paxsters in New Plymouth, and it is using this information to determine the size of IDA rounds in Auckland. The time spent at each delivery point and the time taken to drive between delivery points will be initially assumed by Post to be the same in Auckland as in New Plymouth.

Although IDA's will be paid actual time for delivery the company has indicated that IDA's will be subject to "performance management" if they do not meet the company's performance expectations. The PWUA does not wish to see IDA's rushing to complete their rounds to unrealistic deadlines if incorrect work measurement times are being used.

Speed of travel

Post has obtained approval from the NZ Transport Agency for Paxsters to be driven at up to 20 km/h on footpaths. Post has stated they will train IDA's to drive at 15 km/h on the footpath since this was the average speed driven by IDA's in the New Plymouth studies.

The PWUA has noted that footpath conditions in other parts of New Zealand (width, visibility of hazards, pedestrian congestion) may be quite different to New Plymouth and IDA's may find it difficult to reach an average speed of 15 km/h.

IDA's will be required to follow strictly all the rules of footpath operation (set by NZ Transport Agency and local councils) including giving way to other footpath users, not blocking the footpath, and not driving on any grass. Post has stated that IDA's could be prosecuted for failing to follow these rules. Post has also stated that if the IDA has an accident and the cause of the

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accident was "careless operation" then the cost of repairs may be recovered from the IDA. The PWUA has disputed Post's ability to do this.

Maximum parcel weights for IDA's

Post initially wanted IDA's to handle parcels weighing up to 25kg. The PWUA said this was excessive and posed a serious risk. The union proposed that the Work Safe Manual Handling Code of Practice be used to determine a safe weight limit. The Code takes account of factors such as weight of items, the number lifted, the posture required, visibility, environmental conditions (slopes, steps, slippery surfaces, temperature, lighting) and male/female differences.

An ergonomist engaged by Post to report on Paxster issues also recommended that a systematic approach be taken to set weight limits.

Post now says that 16kg will be the maximum weight of parcels for IDA's. The PWUA considers that, until the Manual Handling Code process has been undertaken IDA's should not be presented with parcels weighing more than 12kg as this is the maximum weight of overflow bags that posties are currently permitted to handle.

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I hereby appoint the Postal Workers Union of Aotearoa incorporated to be my authorised representative under Sections 18 and 236 of the Employment Relations Act 2000. For the purpose of this authority any duly appointed representative of the PWUA is empowered to act on my behalf in any matters related to or arising out of the negotiation and application of any Employment Agreement or any other matter relating to my employment at my request. This authority shall continue in force until revoked by myself, giving two weeks notice.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signed

Date Appointment No.

Employer

Branch

Home Address

Phone

Deduction Authority for

Postal Workers Union of Aotearoa (Northern)

I authorise my employer to deduct:

\$4.95 per week when I am employed for 30 or more hours per week, or

\$2.50 per week when I am on-call, or employed for less than 30 hours per week from my pay and credit the Postal Workers Union of Aotearoa Northern District.

Please stop any other deductions from my pay to any other union.