The communications union

LETTER TO BRANCHES

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Royal Mail - Mk 4 Parcel York Container Trial - Health, Safety, Ergonomic and Training Documentation & CWU ASR Involvement Joint Statement:

To: All Postal Branches, Local, Area and Divisional Representatives
All Area and Workplace Safety Representatives

Dear Colleagues,

History
The Health, Safety & Environment Department has been working with Royal Mail Logistics, the Material Handling Assets Team, the Containers Team and Manufacturers, along with input from the RM Principle Ergonomist, RM Engineering and the RM Safety Team since 2011 on the development of a new version Packet/Parcel York Container. This has been reported regularly via LTBs and at CWU Regional Health and Safety Forums and joint Royal Mail/ASRs events.

Over the years, as Branches and ASRs will know, the Health, Safety & Environment Department has been pressing Royal Mail to resolve problems around the safe movement, handling, transportation, loading, unloading of Packets/Small Parcels and Strapped Bundles in York Containers without the need for a sleeve (as used with the York Containers Mks 1, 2 & 3, first introduced in 1991) and the need to deal with the overuse and abuse of Cardboard Sleeves in Yorks.

Both sides recognised that there had been no fundamental change to the York Container design for 20 years and although the basic design was still sound, it was designed originally for Mail Bags and Letter Trays. The changing mail streams were now presenting more small parcels/packets and strapped bundles. Sleeves were originally introduced for the Amazon Contract but York sleeves present other problems and don't deal with bundles which slide between Standard York Container bars and push out the Strapped front of the Mks 1, 2 & 3 York Containers causing Safety and Transportation problems.

A number of prototypes and solutions have been developed and considered over the years with some early prototypes looked at during 2011 and 2012. In April 2013 a competitive tender process sought to provide, "a roll container that is suitable for all mail types without the need for a separate sleeve."

- 28 suppliers were invited to tender by RM.
- 10 responded, which through a series of evaluations, a shortlist was reduced to 7; then 4; then 2 (Hartwall and Hoza) which were close enough to the requirements to go further.

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- The Initial prototypes were evaluated in small scale trials against the specification and by frontline staff at an MC, and RDC, a DO, HWDC and EMA.
- Robust feedback and suggestions from the evaluations were provided to the suppliers to enable them to improve their designs.
- Final prototypes were received in April 2016, then evaluated by the RM project team in consultation with the CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department and a representative sample of the user population at Swindon MC.
- This led to the selection of the Hartwall model as the preferred Container and it was called the Mk4 Parcel York Container and it was agreed to plan for an operational trial in early 2017.

Previous LTBs
Previous LTBs were issued by the Health, Safety & Environment Department with reference to the Mk4 Parcel York Container/Cardboard Sleeves; LTBs 1052/11, 143/2012, 916/12, 797/13, 393/14, 667/16. Several update reports on the Packet/Parcel York Container have been circulated via LTBs on Containerisation Safety, Cardboard Sleeves, ALP Sleeves, and Xmas Containerisation Strategy etc.

Joint Working Group
Following talks between the RM Containers Team and the Health, Safety & Environment Department, a Joint Working Group was established with all stakeholders involved to produce a trial programme, produce safety and ergonomics documentation, a training and information plan plus agree the trial format and a number of Offices in which to trial the Container in closed loops, including MC to MC, MC to DOs, plus a Distribution Centre and a Walk Bundling Centre and a Customer to trial/test the containers.

The Mk4 York Trial Containers
182 of the new type Mk4 Yorks have been produced and shipped to the UK and recently arrived at Swindon MC for the purpose of the trial. The idea now is to trial the concept with the small number of units (182) operating out of Swindon Mail Centre in a series of closed loop operations to different Office environments; i.e.MC to/from DOs/Hubs/MC plus test them in DC, WBC and Customer environments (POL Stores, Swindon, Customer selected).

The Mk4 Parcel York Container Description and Functionality:
The main difference between the Mk4 Parcel York Container and the Standard Mk's 1,2 and 3 is that it is of solid sided construction with a solid, three section gate as opposed to the standard Polymer Base, Steel Cage type construction with a 'Strapped' open front as with the standard York Containers Mks 1,2 and 3. The Mk4 is of the same dimensions as standard Yorks and will nest with them. The Mk 4 Parcel York has an 'integral' adjustable two-height base, set up by the operating staff according to the use required and so will require Safety/SOP training. The base can be adjusted up or down and locked into place. Photographs of the Mk 4 York are included in the Safety Documentation attached to this LTB.

The MK 4 York is designed primarily to handle loose small parcels/packets/bundles and other loads not adequately retained by other Yorks as well as existing mail streams while being compatible with the current York container fleet. E.g. nestable with Mks 1, 2 and 3 and can be used for other mail steams if required to be used as a standard York Container. Additionally, the Parcels Automation programme is a more recent development, adding another dimension to the requirements of the new Container. This now requires a container which can be tipped, retaining its integrity when inverted, with efficient and safe evacuation of the load.

As described above, the raised base is manually adjustable when the container is empty. So, if the container is to be sent to a site with automatic tippers, the operator will place the base in the lower position; whereas if the container is to be sent to a site where it will be unloaded manually, then the base will be placed in the upper position, in order that the unloading operation can be completed in a safe and ergonomically acceptable manner. As well as

making the container safe for manual small parcel operations, the upper position also offers a solution to the safe unloading of strapped bundles.

The Mk4 York is constructed of a UV stable material capable of withstanding sub-zero temperatures in normal operation, and will not deteriorate, fracture or break and can be left exposed to the elements for long periods of time.

The 200kg shelf offers improved ergonomic manual handling of strapped bundles in particular. The smooth interior allows contents to be tipped reliably with the base in either the raised or lowered position. The Mk4 has the same footprint as previous Mks 1, 2 and 3 generations of the York container. Vehicle operations and loading plans are not affected by the new Mk4 York in mixed or single type loads.

The new features are:

- A Combined base and shelf for improved ergonomics when manually loading/emptying the unit.
- A Solid polypropylene panelled construction to retain items.
- Transparent viewing panels provide visibility inside the container from the front and back of unit.
- A Lightweight 3 part door/gate which can be opened as a single piece or drop down panels to provide progressive access to the load space.
- A Container that can be fork lifted and handled.

In all other respects the MK 4 York performs in a similar way to the existing York container fleet, specifically:

- Brake handle
- Steering and manoeuvring handles
- Nesting configuration — a different arrangement for strapping when moving nested Yorks is described later

In summary the new York Mk4 Parcel Roll Container is designed as follows:-

- Solid walls to retain parcels and strapped bundles
- Smooth walls to allow for tipping
- A three section gate that retains parcels and folds down to allow staged manual emptying
- A 2-level adjustable base that can be deployed at a higher level for manual sortation
- External dimensions are the same as the current York (compatible for vehicle loading)
- Compatible with the current York for nesting
- Ability to carry up to 21 trays if required (but not an efficient use of this asset)
- A tip-able improved roll container that meets the requirements for parcel automation
- Ability to tip effectively in the automated environment
- Long life – Longer than an ALP Sleeve.
- No need to fit and remove the ALP sleeve to this container
- Reduces need to store and repatriate ALP sleeves
- Reduced repair costs by reducing wear and tear maintenance on ALPs
- Improved container fill in comparison with the ALP sleeve
- Benefits for vehicle capacity and bullring operations
- Unique barcode and suitable for potential future RFID tracking requirement

Trial Details

The trial will take place at Swindon Mail Centre, NHC Mail Centre, Oxford DO, Reading DO, SWDC and Swindon WBC. A basic overview of the trial is as follows:

- Week 1: Generic type testing ; training of staff at all locations; plus WBC assessment
- Week 2: Closed loop Oxford DO (CH) – Swindon MC – Oxford DO
- Week 3: Closed loop Oxford DO (CH) – Swindon MC – Oxford DO; plus SWDC assessment

- Week 4: Closed loop Oxford DO (CH) – Swindon MC – HCN NC – Swindon MC - Oxford DO
- Week 5: Closed loop Oxford DO (CH) & Reading DO (CH) – Swindon MC – HCN NC – Swindon MC - Oxford DO & Reading DO; plus large customer (PO Stores) assessment
- Week 6: Closed loop Oxford DO (CH) & Reading DO (CH) – Swindon MC – HCN NC – Swindon MC - Oxford DO & Reading DO
- The trial will assess using the Mk4 York to tip mail onto the machine and receive mail from the machine at the sorter output chutes
- The trial will also assess the impact of sorting to and from the Mk4 York in the manual sort process in DO and Mail Centre environments, including strapped bundles at SWDC.
- The trial is scheduled to commence from 20 February 2017 and run until 31 March 2017.

Safety Documentation
To enable the trial to commence, detailed discussions have taken place of safety issues and required enabling documentation and the necessary safety documentation has now been produced. These documents have been initially reviewed and the Safe Systems of Work and Standard Operating Procedures have been developed prior to and ready for the start of the trial. These Safe Working Practices and procedures will be reviewed and updated as necessary during the trial and will be jointly evaluated on completion of the trial. Feedback will be gathered from ASRs, WSRs members and all stakeholders with the lessons learned being addressed via appropriate review risk control measures and Safety documents, Safe Systems of Work and Safety Training and Information documentation will be reviewed as required and updated. Once that is complete and the documentation is fit for purpose, final full concurrence for the Mk4 Parcel York Container will be signed-off. There will need to be a review of the Generic SSoW for York Containers V3 as well as the new Specific Mk4 York Container SSoW, to take account of the functionality of the Container and cross-references. Pending the outcome of the trial a new updated Generic York container SSoW will be produced to incorporate all versions of the York container including the Mk4.

Unit Managers operational instructions Briefing Pack & Safety Information Pack
All Trial Unit Managers will receive a Safety Information Pack and a separate operational instruction Briefing Pack. The purpose of the Managers' Safety Information Pack is to assist Managers with general duties under the Health and Safety at Work act 1974 and relevant statutory legislation such as the Provision of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998. The pack includes all the safety documentation that Managers require to discharge their responsibilities. The MK4 York Unit Manager Brief gives them an overview of the trial programme and the process to be followed should they have any problems with the containers. It also includes specific safety information for the user and is designed to be used as a flyer, hand-out or poster, pinned up on a notice board etc.

Documents Included are-

1. Safety Assessment & Concurrence (SAC1)
2. Work Equipment Change Safety Assessment (WECSA)
3. Ergonomic screening assessment
4. York and Mini York Generic Safe System of Work (SSoW) V3
5. York Container MK4 SSoW (additional requirements)
6. MK4 York training brief

Mk4 York Safety Inspection
Managers are instructed that before use arrangements must be made to carry out the 10 point safety checklist' detailed in the York SSoW and carry out additional checks described in the MK4 SSoW (additional requirements) document.

Safe System of Work (SSoW)

The current Generic York SSoW (V3) is still relevant to using the MK4 Parcel York Container and Unit Managers have been instructed that this should be applied together with the contents of a Mk4 Parcel York (additional requirements) SSoW document that has been written specifically for the MK4 trial container. Pending the outcome of the trial a new updated SSoW will be produced to incorporate all versions of the York container.

Training Stipulation
Trainers are being trained this week at Swindon to deploy staff training from the trial start date. All staff taking part in the Proof of Concept Mk4 York Container Trial activity will be fully trained on the Standard Operating Procedure and SSOW. Untrained staff cannot operate the Mk4 Yorks.

Reporting M4 Parcel York Equipment Failures and Malfunctions and Feedback
All equipment malfunctions and faults must be reported. The unit manager will be given specific instructions on the steps to take and how to feedback information to the project team identifying the container concerned.

ASR involvement
ASRs with Offices in their Branch areas have been communicated with directly, briefed and updated. They will be fully involved and the ASRs have a very important role to play in monitoring the Trial from a health, safety and ergonomic perspective, feeding back on the Container's performance in their Units, collating workforce comments and feedback and importantly on the question of the Safety documentation and the training and information given to members. ASRs can participate in the Training in their Offices and participate the WTLs sessions. A Royal Mail/CWU joint statement has been agreed on ASR involvement and input – copy attached.

Health, Safety and Ergonomic Evaluation Aspects of the Trial
In relation to the question on lifting and bending, i.e. the ergonomics of the equipment, this drives at the root of one of the key initial reasons for the Container's development.

Firstly, the Parcel York, with its integral base overcomes the problem of Cardboard Sleeved Yorks without the Cross-Members and False Bases being inappropriately misused and abused when dispatched into the Network or inappropriately used for Packet/Parcel Transfers to DOs which causes excessive bending, stretching and lifting repetitively.

Secondly the Parcel York overcomes the problem of loads not well contained in Yorks e.g. strapped bundles which has become a major problem, sliding between the bars of Standard Yorks and bulging out the York Straps, causing breakages, jamming, entanglement and lost loads in vehicles plus the resultant safety and ergonomic problems when unloading the vehicles and subsequently unloading the Yorks. The gate that retains parcels folds down to allow staged manual emptying. From a Safety and Ergonomic view, the raised height base can be deployed at the higher level for manual unloading to enable improved working height for lifting and bending and therefore Lifting parcels, packets or bundles from the container will pose an Adequately Controlled – Moderate Manual Handling risk depending on the size and weight of the item and position in the container. Unloading the container may result in limited bending for items towards the bottom of the load but this will be minimised by deployment of the raised base for manual flows. The same as current cardboard sleeve Yorks with the cross-member and false base. Evaluation of these aspects are important – e.g. height and reach etc.

Thirdly, the Parcel York can be used specifically with parcels automation due to the Solid walls to retain parcels. It's a tip-able container that meets the requirements for parcel automation, the ability to tip effectively in the automated environment and it has smooth walls rather than bars to allow for tipping efficiently.

The aim will be to make all three aspects work safely, healthily and successfully.

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Conclusion
The trial will be formally reviewed by the Health, Safety & Environment Department and Project Team including the Containers Team and SHE Team in relation to health, safety and ergonomic considerations. The Postal Department will deal with all operational parcels automation and IR aspects. Any questions of interpretation, implementation, or application of the Trial should be referred to the appropriate Headquarters department. There will be a full joint review of the Safety Documentation at the end of the trial and the need to cross reference with the Generic York Containers SSoW as well finalising the new Specific Mk4 York Container SSoW, to take account of input including that from the ASRs. Based on the documents and concurrences provided, the Mk4 Parcel York Trial has been agreed with the following provisos:

1. That on completion of the trial, lessons learned are addressed via appropriate risk control measures and documents updated; and
2. That once the above is complete, there will be discussions in relation to a final safety concurrence for the Mk4 Parcel York, prior to national roll-out.

Attachments:-
1. Royal Mail Mk4 Parcel York Container Trial – CWU ASR Involvement Joint Statement
2. Your Container Mk4 Additional Requirements SSoW (v1.2)
3. SAC1 York Container Mk4 Feb 2017 (v2)
4. WECSA York Container Mk4 Jan 2017 (v1.1)
5. Mk4 York Trial Plan
6. York and Mini York SSoW (v3)
7. Mk4 York Unit Manager Brief
8. Mk 4 York Training Brief

Yours sincerely

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