

# The jmu mailroom case



THE JMU MAILROOM CASE If you expect your mail to come with the same “speedy delivery” made popular by mailman Mr. McFeeley of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood, you may be disappointed over the next few weeks. While mail delivery is not drastically slower than normal, employees in the JMU postal service warehouse can offer several reasons why they are having trouble delivering mail as promptly as usual. The majority of the five-member crew who work in the warehouse, now located on South Main Street across from Duke’s Plaza say they are upset because postal service management did not take their opinions into account before throwing changes at them. We were consulted, but they didn’t take anything we said into account,” said Eric McKee, a postal service employee who works in the warehouse. Changes have included moving the warehouse to a building 10 minutes from campus which consists of a basement without running water or bathroom facilities. Employees must walk outside to the front of the building in order to use bathrooms. McKee, along with another delivery employee who wished to remain anonymous for fear of losing his job, complained of the “great physical stress” involved in carrying the large tubs of mail instead of carrying mailbags that can be thrown over the shoulder.

According to another employee who wished to remain unnamed, in addition to the physical stress, the tub-delivery system slows up mail delivery considerably. The employee said by slinging mailbags over the shoulder it was easier to carry large loads of mail, something nearly impossible with the tubs. According to Terry Woodward, director of postal services, the change from mailbags to bins came the day after the warehouse change location. The changes were brought about to accommodate the growing volume of

mail that has come as a result of the increasing numbers of departments and students in the university, Woodward said.

Delivering the mail with the tub system instead of a bag system reduces steps, Woodward said, thus speeding the delivery time. While Woodward acknowledged that the changing system is the cause for mail slowdown, he said he expects delivery to speed up as employees get used to the new system. The warehouse used to be located in a trailer behind Anthony-Seeger Hall. The new location is a five-to-ten minute drive to campus, which employees say slows down their delivery time substantially.

One delivery worker said the move has brought about “ new obstacles,” such as having to wait 10 minutes for a train to cross in front of him. The facility was forced to move off campus Aug. 3 when the Facilities Management Department took over the trailer postal services used to occupy next to Anthony-Seeger Hall, Woodward said. Woodward said he expected initial resistance to the changes by postal employees, but hoped the workers would keep an open mind while giving the new system time to smooth out. “ There’s certainly been some resistance,” Woodward said about postal employees’ reactions to the changes.

One such case of resistance may have brought about the firing of Troy Munford, a summer postal service employee who said the new system is “ unmanageable. ” Munford claims he was fired for “ insubordination” by Sonja Mace, operations manager for the postal service, when he told her the system wasn’t working and tried to arrange a meeting between the heads of postal services and the employees. Munford said that after he told Mace “

you promised to give us your best and obviously your best wasn't good enough," Mace " stomped her foot . . . nd said, ' you're fired. '" Due to Munford's firing about two weeks ago, some employees were afraid to speak out or have their names printed in the paper for fear they may also lose their jobs. By making the changes, Mace " has doubled, if not tripled, the workload" of the employees, he said. ' I'm just concerned for the people who are still here," Munford said. He said he is afraid some of them " will hurt themselves eventually, due to the physical difficulty of the job. " Mace refused to comment on any personnel issues regarding the change.