

USPS Night Differential and Sunday Premium: Complete Guide

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If you work nights or Sundays at USPS, you're earning more than your base rate — but figuring out exactly how much can be confusing. Night differential and Sunday premium are calculated differently, they interact with overtime in different ways, and not every employee qualifies for both. Here's the complete breakdown.

Night Differential: The Basics

Night differential is additional pay for any hours worked between **6:00 PM and 6:00 AM**. The way it's calculated depends on your craft and whether you're a career or non-career employee.

APWU (clerks, maintenance, motor vehicle)

Night differential for APWU-represented employees is a **flat dollar amount** added to each hour worked during the 6PM–6AM window. The amount varies by pay grade and step — it's not a percentage of your base rate. For most clerk grades, the differential ranges from roughly **\$1.00 to \$2.20 per hour** depending on your grade and step. The exact rates are published by the APWU and updated with each contract. Check the [APWU Night Shift Differential Rates](#) page for your specific amount.

Non-career employees

CCAs, PSEs, and MHAs do receive night differential for hours worked between 6PM and 6AM. The rates are typically lower than their career counterparts but still add meaningful income, especially for employees regularly assigned to evening or overnight tours.

Tour schedule reference: Tour 1 is the overnight shift (typically 11PM–7:30AM) — all hours qualify for night differential. Tour 2 is the day shift (typically 7AM–3:30PM) — no night differential. Tour 3 is the evening shift (typically 4PM–12:30AM) — hours after 6PM qualify. If your tour straddles the 6PM or 6AM boundary, you only receive the differential for the hours that fall within the window.

Sunday Premium: Who Gets It and How Much

Sunday premium is a **25% addition to your base hourly rate** for all non-overtime hours worked on Sunday. This is one of the most valuable premium pay categories in the Postal Service, and it applies to career employees only.

Employee Type	Sunday Premium?
Full-Time Regular (all crafts)	Yes — 25% of base rate
Part-Time Flexible (PTF)	Yes — 25% of base rate
CCA (City Carrier Assistant)	No
PSE (Postal Support Employee)	No
MHA (Mail Handler Assistant)	No

Non-career employees do not receive Sunday premium. This is a common point of confusion. If you're a CCA, PSE, or MHA working on Sunday, you earn your regular rate (plus night differential if applicable, and overtime if you exceed 8/day or 40/week). The 25% Sunday bump only applies after you convert to career status. This is one of the most significant pay differences between non-career and career employees.

How Sunday premium is calculated

Sunday premium applies to your **base hourly rate only** — not to overtime. If you work 8 straight-time hours on Sunday, you earn your base rate plus 25%. If you work 10 hours on Sunday (8 straight time + 2 overtime), the premium applies to the 8 straight-time hours only. The 2 overtime hours are paid at the overtime rate (1.5x or 2x) without the additional Sunday bump.

For a career carrier at Table 1 Step A making approximately \$25.20/hour, Sunday premium adds about **\$6.30 per hour** to your straight-time pay. Over an 8-hour Sunday shift, that's an extra **\$50.40** compared to working the same hours on a weekday.

How Premiums Stack with Overtime

This is where it gets complicated. The key rules:

Night differential + straight time: Night differential is added on top of your base rate for every qualifying hour, whether straight time or overtime. It's included in your "regular rate of pay" for FLSA overtime calculations.

Night differential + overtime: When you work overtime hours that fall within the 6PM–6AM window, you get both the overtime rate AND the night differential. The differential is factored into the overtime calculation, which means your effective OT rate is slightly higher than 1.5x base alone.

Sunday premium + overtime: These do *not* stack on the same hours. Sunday premium applies only to straight-time Sunday hours. Once you cross into overtime on a Sunday, those hours are paid at the overtime rate without the additional 25%. You get one or the other on any given hour, not both.

Sunday premium + night differential: These *do* stack. If you work a straight-time hour on Sunday night between 6PM and 6AM, you earn your base rate + 25% Sunday premium + the night differential amount. This is the highest-paying combination of premium pay outside of overtime.

Example: Sunday night shift for a PS-06 Step D clerk

Base rate: ~\$32.50/hr

Sunday premium (25%): +\$8.13

Night differential: +~\$1.50

Total straight-time rate: **~\$42.13/hr**

That's nearly 30% more than the same hour worked on a Tuesday afternoon. Over a full 8-hour Sunday night tour, the premiums add roughly **\$77** to your pay compared to a regular day shift.

How to Verify Your Premium Pay

Your premium pay shows up on your earnings statement (pay stub) as separate line items. Look for:

"Night Diff" or "ND" — this should show the total night differential hours and the dollar amount for the pay period.

"Sunday Prem" — total Sunday premium hours and amount. Only appears if you worked straight-time hours on Sunday.

If you regularly work nights or Sundays and don't see these line items on your pay stub, something is wrong. Report it to your supervisor and steward immediately. See our [pay stub guide](#) for a full line-by-line walkthrough.

Impact on Retirement and TSP

Night differential and Sunday premium count as part of your basic pay for several important calculations. They're included in your **FERS high-3 average salary** if you consistently work nights or Sundays throughout your career, which means they increase your retirement annuity. They're also included in the pay base that USPS uses to calculate your **TSP matching contributions**.

This is particularly significant for mail handlers and clerks on permanent night tours. If you spend 20+ years on Tour 1, your high-3 average will include decades of night differential, resulting in a meaningfully higher annuity than a day-shift employee at the same grade and step. See our [FERS retirement guide](#) for how the high-3 calculation works.

Planning Around Premium Pay

Understanding premium pay helps you make smarter decisions about tour preferences, overtime opportunities, and career planning:

If you're a non-career employee, know that converting to career unlocks Sunday premium — a 25% boost that doesn't exist for CCAs, PSEs, and MHAs. This is one of the most underappreciated financial benefits of [career conversion](#).

If you're considering a tour change, calculate the full impact of night differential on your annual pay before deciding. A Tour 1 mail handler earning \$1.50/hr differential for 2,080 hours annually makes an extra **\$3,120/year** compared to the same position on Tour 2. Over a 25-year career, that's \$78,000+ in additional earnings, plus a higher retirement annuity.

If you regularly work Sundays, the premium adds roughly \$50–65 per Sunday shift for most craft employees. Over a year of weekly Sunday shifts, that's an extra **\$2,600–\$3,400** in annual pay.

Source: MyPostalPay