

SID's New Approach to Work Improves Productivity and Work-Life Balance

Over the last 18 months, we have all had to change the way that we work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of our teammates began working from home while others continued working in GPO's facilities or both. This summer, GPO implemented its new telework and remote work policy for eligible teammates. In early October, Security and Intelligent Documents (SID) moved to its new four-day, 40-hour a week work schedule, and this new approach to work is off to a great start.

"The gain that we experience with this 10-hour schedule in production is pretty significant," says Printing Officer John Putnam who works in Stennis. "It actually gives us a little more time to run production and not have so many interruptions as we start and stop. So, overall, I would give it an A."

"I often say that it's important to try new things and this new approach to work on GPO's passport and secure credential production seems to be creating the efficiencies we hoped for," says GPO Director Hugh Halpern. "Additionally, the schedule should help with our teammates' work-life balance by creating more days at home. This new approach looks like it will help us deliver on the State Department's order for nearly 19 million passport books during FY22 and I'm really proud that we can approach our work in such an innovative way."

"Production has been good," says Printing Officer-Supervisory Supply Management Specialist Chris Evans. "Our goals have gone up. We have to make a certain number of passports a day. With the two extra hours, we are able to get more done and exceed our goal."

With the rest of the agency getting to participate in telework and remote work, SID saw an opportunity to make a change in the way they worked, too. At the start of the pandemic, our teammates in SID had alternate work schedules. With this new change, they are now able to work a four-day, 40-hour a week work schedule. "The new four-day work week for SID's production operations at both our DC and Stennis locations has enabled our team to benefit from a better work-life balance," says SID's Managing Director Steve LeBlanc. "It also keeps our machines



Second Offset Pressperson Scott Welcher makes sure all prints are consistently high quality.



Printing Plant Worker (PPW) Patricia Powell stacks the passports in preparation for mailing.

running longer allowing for an increase in production for our customers.”

“We are really excited to offer our employees the 10-hour work days and long weekends,” says SID’s Operations Manager Dave Ford. “It’s going really well, and production is where we expected it to be. This change is something we have, in some areas, wanted to do for quite a while. We wanted to offer this opportunity to our employees and saw it as a benefit for them and for us.”

Our teammates in SID have had to make many adjustments and changes in their lives to accommodate the longer work days, whether it be with commuting or making personal arrangements, but they have adjusted well to this new approach to work. “Obviously, when there is a big change some people may be apprehensive, but everybody has done a great job, and they are adapting well to it,” says Supervisory Quality Control Officer Chris Cluster about the new work schedule. Cluster has a team of 11 technicians who work as quality inspectors in the passport and secure credential centers. They are responsible for inspecting products and doing product testing. “The new schedule definitely helps with production, and I think a lot of people are enjoying the work-life balance.”

“I love the new work schedule,” says Lead Quality Assurance Specialist Rebecca Nicholson, who began working at GPO in early September, “We get a lot of work done in production with those 10-hour days, and I still have energy at the end of the day to get other things done.” Foreperson Julia Dixon, who works on third shift, agrees. “The new schedule is working really well. I don’t even feel the extra two hours that we work.”

Having the new schedule also helps with the upkeep of equipment, freeing up most Fridays for maintenance and saving on down time. It is also good for recruitment. “The four-day work week is a great recruiting tool to attract talented and qualified applicants to our open job postings,” says LeBlanc. “We are looking forward to evaluating the impacts of this new schedule throughout the rest of the fiscal year.”



Passport Manager Danny Wilson and Printing Officer-Supervisory Supply Management Specialist Chris Evans discuss passport production for the day.



Bookbinder Michael Little checks the measurements of one of the passport booklets.



Press Apprentice Michael Stuart ensures the print sheets are lined up correctly on one of the machines.



Printing Officer John Putnam closely examines the details of the print job for the passports.



Printing Officer-Supervisory Supply Management Specialist Chris Evans inspects the passports.



Lead Quality Assurance Specialist Rebecca Nicholson ensures the passports meet quality standards.



Second Offset Pressperson Denard Bankston reviews the prints and ensures they are error-free.