

Court says Adventist postmen can't get Saturday off

by [Daniel Burke](#)

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(RNS) Neither snow nor rain nor Saturday Sabbaths should keep a Missouri mailman from his appointed rounds, a federal appeals court has ruled.

Seventh-day Adventist Hosea Harrell argued he was the victim of religious discrimination when the U.S. Postal Service refused to give him Saturdays off. Harrell took the days off anyway and was fired in 2008.

Like Jews, Seventh-day Adventists observe the Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, and believe the day should be kept holy by refraining from secular work.

But the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, upholding a lower court decision, ruled that giving Harrell Saturdays off would create an "undue hardship" for his fellow mail carriers and the post office where he worked.

"This accommodation would have burdened other letter carriers with more Saturday work at least in part because they did not share Harrell's religious beliefs," wrote Circuit Judge Bobby Shepherd.

Also, the Warrensburg post office schedule is determined by seniority and could not have been changed without violating a collective bargaining agreement with a mail carriers' union, according to Shepherd. Harrell was the most junior letter carrier.

The six other mail carriers were asked to give up their Saturdays but declined. Harrell was offered a different position with the USPS and leave to attend church services on Saturday, but rejected both offers, according to Shepherd. The routes could not have been covered using

fewer carries, the USPS argued.