

The good, the bad and the ugly



**Paul
Barner**

In today's world, storing and accessing information electronically has become the norm. As a society, we have become so dependent on digital technology that it begs the question of how we could function day-to-day without it. From networks and databases to social media accounts and smartphone apps, we all stay connected, to some extent, through digital transactions. The proper use of this technology has proven to make life easier, both at work and in our private lives.

That said, any electronic database is only as strong as its weakest link. Done right and maintained properly, information remains right at one's fingertips. Conversely, a haphazard approach or failing to continually modernize the infrastructure and security protocols will likely result in unintended and, oftentimes, devastating consequences. Inadequately maintained systems can risk compromising sensitive data, requiring system shutdowns that result in the inability to access vital information, thereby effectively handcuffing end users of that data. And then comes the return to the Stone Age of having to revert to manually accessing information or make changes to information via paper format that was previously facilitated electronically. The long-term consequence of this haphazard approach includes the erosion of confidence in the overall security of the data and the deliverability of the information when needed.

As follow-up to my March 2023 *Postal Record* article wherein I referenced the PostalEase scam to which many postal employees, including some in the city letter carrier craft, fell victim, NALC received on April 7 an updated timeline for when postal employees will regain the ability to make net to bank and allotment changes. As of the writing of this article, preliminary information indicates the existence of continued accessibility issues. NALC will monitor this ever-evolving situation and provide relevant updates to the members.

Along with the PostalEase debacle, the Postal Service discontinued access to eOPF, resulting in employees now having to request their files in paper format. For years, postal employees have gained access to their

official personnel file electronically. This issue of denied access has been going on now for several months and is projected by the Postal Service to continue for many more months. The Postal Service has advised NALC that employees may request a copy of their eOPF in person or in writing to their district human resources office. If the request is made in writing, the employee will be asked to provide proof of identity. In addition, the Postal Service has confirmed that no charges will be assessed on any active Postal Service employees for requested paper copies of their eOPF while the eOPF system remains unavailable due to security upgrades.

On the other hand, NALC takes the approach of constantly improving maintenance and modernization of its information technology systems and infrastructure to ensure continuity of deliverables to the end users without the need to crawl back to the Stone Age. As I wrote about in my May 2022 *Postal Record* article, NALC has and will continue to develop applications and provide electronic access to assist branches and state associations with the representation of our members.

Here is a recap of a few of the latest resources and tools accessible through the Members Only portal of the NALC website:

- NALC automated the bylaws submission process to allow for the electronic submission of changes and to provide an electronic library of past submissions.
- Biweekly dues rosters are available electronically.
- Branch and state association presidents and secretaries now have full access to viewing and downloading membership rosters, which will include the most up-to-date data NALC has in its membership database at the time. This access provides the capability for branches and state associations to select rosters of their entire membership and, for branches, the ability to select modified rosters for use to assist branches during the election process.
- Branch presidents and secretaries have a new platform to submit proper notification to the national secretary-treasurer when members have reached one of the membership milestones identified in Article 2, Section 5 (a) of the *National Association of Letter Carriers Constitution* and are thereby entitled to recognition through the receipt of a lapel pin, life membership gold card and lapel pin, or plaque. The platform was designed to identify members who, by NALC records, qualify for certain membership

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Heat safety (continued)

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This comment by the OSHRC regarding the Postal Service's expert witness should remind letter carriers that we cannot rely solely on management to maintain safety. Letter carriers must look out for each other and make safety a priority; Article 14, Section 1 explains that "the Union will cooperate with and assist management to live up to this responsibility."

During the same hearing, the Postal Service stated that it provides unlimited comfort breaks. The OSHRC decision states:

The Postal Service also maintains that it already gives carriers "rest, lunch, and unlimited comfort breaks" and acclimatizes new carriers through its on-the-job training program...

In addition to a grievance, if management does not take steps to keep letter carriers safe, shop stewards and affected letter carriers should consider the need to file a safety and

health complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor through [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov). Employees or their representatives have a right to file a confidential complaint and request an OSHA inspection of the workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or if they believe the employer is not following OSHA standards. The complaint should be filed as soon as possible.

Carriers injured in the heat should file a workers' compensation claim to ensure that their medical care and any lost wages are covered appropriately.

Heat safety is of the utmost importance as we head into the hottest months of the year. Shop stewards are vital in this quest to ensure that management follows its own program and actively works to reduce and mitigate heat injuries. This becomes more and more important as letter carriers spend more time on the street (more exposure) all while our world continues to warm and experience more extreme weather conditions.

Executive Vice President

The good, the bad and the ugly (continued)

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recognition. Branches should also consult their membership records, as they may provide additional information that is not available through the Headquarters membership database. As an added feature, the platform not only identifies the current membership milestone recognition that a member is entitled to receive, but also any past recogni-

tions that have not yet been awarded. This provides branches an easy way to get caught up on membership milestone recognitions as addressed in Article 2, Section 5 (a) of the *Constitution*.

NALC will continue to approach information technology in a secure and professional manner, incorporating industry best practices to stay ahead of the curve and avoid unnecessary interruptions of data flow and accessibility.

Vice President

Beyond the 22 LMOU items (continued)

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On another note, on March 30, I had the honor and privilege of attending Branch 60's retirement ceremony for letter carrier Anthony Spartaccini out of Stamford, CT (see photo at right). Brother Spartaccini has been an active letter carrier for more than 65 years and has amassed more than 6,000 hours of sick leave. He has been an NALC member nearly the entire time. Brother Spartaccini picketed the line in the 1970 Great Postal Strike and is considered part of the greatest generation of letter carriers, who paved the

way for collective bargaining for all letter carriers. Brother Spartaccini epitomizes the highest level of dedication, devotion, work ethic and unionism.

I would like to congratulate him on his retirement and wish him health and happiness in the next chapter of his life.

