

In memory of John Watzlawick



**Manuel L.
Peralta Jr.**

Safety & Health Act of 1970:

“When you step forward with your observations and your statements, you let the truth be known, and with it, you help your union serve you and your needs.”

The employer did not furnish employment and a place of employment which were free from recognized hazards that were causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees in that employees were exposed to recognized hazards related to working outside during periods of excessive heat...

The narrative that follows the above citation explains that:

[On July 23, 2012]...At around 12:00 noon, [John Watzlawick] called his supervisor and reported symptoms of heat induced illness and asked to go home; the employer required the employee to continue working in the excessive heat.

The narrative continues by noting another instance on the same day of:

...another letter carrier who called into his supervisor around 2:00 p.m. on July 23 and reported feeling ill because of the heat. He was pressured to continue working and was finally relieved at around 5:00p.m. After his shift he reported to the hospital emergency room and was admitted with heat induced illness.

By close of business on July 23, 2012, we had two letter carriers who spoke up, expressing that they were not feeling well as a result of the extreme heat, and both of these carriers were pressured to continue working by management. One was admitted to the hospital that afternoon. The other employee went home to return to work the next day.

While out on the route that next day, the following was reported by the OSHA citation:

[On July 24, 2012] ...At approximately, 12:15 p.m., [John Watzlawick] reported to his supervisor symptoms of heat induced illness. At approximately 2:50p.m., the employee collapsed while walking a mail route. At that time, the temperature was 102 degrees F, the humidity was 28%, and the heat index was 104 degrees F. The employee's core body temperature on arriving at the hospital was 108.7 degrees F, and he died as a result of his exposure to excessive heat.

The USPS was very concerned that there might be too much finger-pointing directed its way. It has challenged the citation and its findings. It prefers to place blame elsewhere. It prefers that it not be held accountable, but the evidence that is reported in the citation as well as statements that I have reviewed convince me that the USPS prefers that the truth be suppressed.

There are many managers in operations who would pressure you to continue working when such circumstances arise. Currently, the above-mentioned OSHA citation is being challenged. That's where you come in. When you step forward with your observations and your statements, you let the truth be known, and with it, you help your union serve you and your needs.

As the heat rises over the next few months, we want to draw your attention to a heat safety tool developed by OSHA that you can find at osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/heat_app.html. This page lets you download an "app" for one of the listed phones. It also provides a number of useful links. We want you to learn what OSHA is recommending and how to apply it.

On a closing note, Sunday, April 28 is Workers Memorial Day. It is a day dedicated to remembering those who have suffered and died on the job and to renewing the fight for safe workplaces. Please see page 22 to read about this day of observance.

Keep an eye on each other and get involved.