

You are your most important delivery



Manuel L. Peralta Jr.

Recently, I was asked a few questions about reported assaults on letter carriers. The questions caused me to look into the rearview mirror and reflect on the past.

When I began my career in 1979, it was a very rare occurrence for a letter carrier to be the victim of an assault. During that era, letter carriers were more respected for the job that we do. We were not viewed as an easy target. We served our communities, and generally there was a line that was not crossed as we provided service to all of our customers.

As society has changed, so has its attitude toward us. As

the years have passed, much has changed and that line is crossed on a frequent basis. We are now victims more often.

In March of this year, a carrier and a customer were in an argument that escalated to a physical altercation.

In June of this year, a letter carrier was attacked by a group of gang members while delivering mail on his assignment. The union representative reported that a stand-up was conducted by him, the Inspection Service and management with the message that nothing that the carriers have with them—mail, personal items or anything else—is worth a challenge on the street. They were instructed to drive off and leave the scene if possible and then to contact the police and the P.O. as soon as it was safe to do so.

In July of this year, a letter carrier in an LLV was shot at by three juveniles using an airsoft pistol with plastic rounds. The suspects fled and were not apprehended.

In August of this year, a female letter carrier was assaulted by an angry customer over a road-rage event. The customer fled.

Last month, a female carrier was delivering to a gang box in a parking garage when a male customer came up from behind and placed his hands on her shoulders and pressed his body against hers. Another customer came down to the delivery area, so the male customer walked away. Management held a stand-up talk advising carriers to remove themselves if possible from any volatile situation they might encounter with the general public and notify 911 if it is an emergency.

Also last month, a postal carrier was held up in broad daylight as he delivered mail. Thankfully, he was not injured.

In December 2010, I transitioned from California as the national business agent to Washington to serve in my current position. On the week that we took the oath of office, President Rolando and I met with the Postal Inspection Service on the subject of safety of our carriers and assaults as described above. The Inspection Service had created a short video to be shown to letter carriers at their worksites. They provided a number of CDs with a video for us to distribute to our national business agents during the Executive Council meeting scheduled for the following week.

On Dec. 6, 2010, South Florida Branch 1071 member Bruce Parton lost his life during an assault while delivering the mail. The announcement came while the Council was in session before we had distributed the videos.

The video is titled, “Just Another Tuesday, Letter Carrier Safety, Employee Security Initiative.” If you have not seen the video, view it at nalc.org/depart/safety/index.html. It is a short and to-the-point presentation that we encourage you to watch.

We cannot control what others do when they want to harm us. Even with our best efforts to avoid danger, we sometimes become victims. We ask you, however, to keep an eye on each other at all times and to report any and all concerns to your supervisors and your union stewards/officers in our effort to prevent as much harm as we can.

