

Vehicle fires revisited



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In my column in May, I addressed vehicle fires, asking all shop stewards, safety captains and members of the safety committees to bring up this issue at the labor-management meetings (in offices with fewer than 50 employees) or the Joint Labor Management Safety and Health Committee (offices with 50 or more employees). Your efforts are necessary at the local level to make sure that management is properly servicing the vehicles that our letter carriers are reporting following a vehicle inspection.

Subsequent to the writing of my column, the NALC met with the USPS safety and engineering representatives to discuss our concerns. We wanted an update, given three LLV fires plus one CRV fire since January 2014 that had been brought to our attention.

Engineering reported that there were, in fact, 36 LLV fires

or her vehicle and fill out a vehicle repair tag. Any and all fluid leaks need to be reported so that the source of these leaks can be identified and repaired. Any of those leaks could be causing the fires, which are of concern. We would recommend that you look closely at the area under your vehicle. As you move out of your parking space, determine whether there is any detectable fluid leak of any type. If so, fill out a repair tag and let your union representatives know that you are concerned and that you have reported a potential vehicle hazard.

Union stewards must be vigilant in making sure that a vehicle reported as defective is not reassigned to another unsuspecting employee. I recently received notice from Tri-Valley, CA Branch 2902 that on June 27, a repair tag was prepared for a worn-out tire on an LLV. Instead of replacing the tire immediately, or taking the vehicle out of service until the tire was replaced, management kept the vehicle in service. On June 29, this same vehicle was assigned to a CCA for Sunday parcel delivery. The Form 1769 prepared by management states that “there was no defect or hazardous equipment” in spite of the fact that an employee had turned in a vehicle repair tag and the employer failed to correct the defect before the vehicle was assigned to an unsuspecting CCA.

It also is not uncommon for management to reassign defective equipment to another employee. If a steward finds out that defective vehicles or equipment are being reassigned to unsuspecting employees, he or she needs to protect the rights of all employees by initiating a grievance explaining in detail what supervisors and or managers have done.

In any case of this nature, I request that you send me copies of the relevant information to show: that a hazard was reported on a form 1767 or a Form 4565 (vehicle repair tag), and that the vehicle or equipment was reassigned to another employee before the unsafe condition was repaired.

Your help is appreciated. Keep an eye on each other.

In closing, I wanted to personally thank all of you who attended the NALC National Convention in Philadelphia for the hospitality you displayed when welcoming Dan Hohenstein, Doug Poole, Keith Wagner, Joel Cabrera, Lydia “Peaches” Ray, Dave Betts and Tim Fournier, who were all injured in park point accidents since January 2011. Do all you can to educate each other to make sure that your park points are as safe as possible.

“Union stewards must be vigilant, making sure that a vehicle reported as defective is not re-assigned to another unsuspecting employee.”

since Jan. 1 of this year that they were aware of, and that 33 of those involved vehicles used by city letter carriers. Engineering was not able to identify the cause of each of these fires, explaining that as a result of the fires and what remained of the vehicles, they are unable to make a determination.

This is not an answer that is satisfactory to you or to the NALC.

During our discussions and follow-up inquiries, we asked the USPS to do a thorough investigation of prior vehicle fires. In early May, the USPS told the NALC that it had hired a contractor to investigate future fires (May 2014 through May 2015), but that it made no hard and fast commitment to investigate the 33 fires since Jan. 1. We have formally requested a full investigation of the 33 fires that were reported by engineering. We will update you as soon as the information is received.

Until a solution is identified and implemented, we again ask for each and every carrier to thoroughly investigate his