

Winter is just around the corner



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It seems like just moments ago that we were being blasted by the polar vortex of 2014. It took quite a long time to thaw out, as last winter's brutal cold was much more than anticipated. Educational communication from management fell flat on its face in too many work locations. As we enter this year's winter, we ask you to get more involved and to contribute to a safer work environment. Our union's success always requires your contribution and support to achieve our goals, but that's what a union is all about.

If you are a shop steward and/or a member of the local safety and health committee, we urge you to raise the issue of cold-weather

safety at your next scheduled meeting. However, if your next meeting is not soon enough, raise it to your management's attention and request a meeting on the subject.

You and your management counterparts can focus on the specific needs of your work locations. If you are not a member of the safety committee, contact your branch leaders and ask them to address this concern. Ask that they work with local management to train all the employees at your work location.

“Keep yourself out of harm’s way. That is the message that you should keep in mind each and every day as you perform your duties.”

Last year, management at the headquarters level prepared cold-weather safety stand-up talks that were identified as mandatory. Surprise! They were only labeled as “mandatory,” and they were not given at each work location that was facing extreme cold.

A large number of letter carriers suffered frostbite last winter due to management's failure to keep you out of harm's way.

USPS safety and health officials at the headquarters level often is in agreement with the NALC as to messaging and training that needs to be given to you on the workroom floor. We sadly have learned, however, through management's failure, that messages intended to educate and protect you from harm do not reach you.

Keep yourself out of harm’s way. That is the message that you should keep in mind each and every day as you perform your duties.

If you think you are being required to do something unsafe, contact your shop steward or your branch officers to discuss your concerns. Your active involvement can and will make a difference.

This year, we need you to pitch in. Ask management when they plan to hold a cold-weather safety talk. If they do not have any information to share, bring your copy to their attention. Go to the nalc.org website, then hover the mouse over the “Workplace Issues” tab, which will open a listing of departments. Now click on the “Safety and Health” tab. Once you are on the safety page, click on the “Heat, Cold and Weather” label, which will open up the information on this subject. Now locate “Click here to find the documents that management was to provide you through these stand-up talks.” You will now be able to open the three-page PDF of the material.

The first page of the material addresses the layering of your clothing, protecting your face and extremities and staying dry. Each of those topics provides guidance. The closing comment on that first page states: “So remember... Dress appropriately for the weather, and as always, if you feel that you are experiencing weather-related issues, notify your supervisor immediately.”

The second page of the material cautions us about the early symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite, advising us to call 911, move to a warm area, and call our supervisors if necessary.

We need to keep an eye on each other at all times, and more so with our newer employees who may not have the necessary uniform items to keep themselves out of harm's way. If you see a newer employee being sent out to the street in extreme cold without the necessary clothing to protect him or herself, we need to intervene and help.

Merry Christmas and happy holidays!



Don't let this happen to you. Many letter carriers suffered frostbite last winter due to management's failure to keep you out of harm's way.

