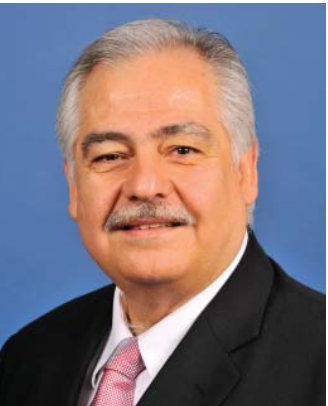


Your union needs you



Manuel L. Peralta Jr.

Your union needs you to get involved and stay involved. When you get involved, you contribute to a change for the better. There are many ways to get involved and too many excuses not to. Shop stewards enforce the National Agreement and the Local Memorandum of Understanding. Enforcement of those agreements is governed by Article 15 of the contract and there are very specific steps that must be taken to process a grievance properly.

There are a number of other issues that may be dealt with outside of the grievance procedure, and you might be just the one to get involved in helping your union perform its duties. Among them is the matter of

safety and health as defined in the National Agreement.

In the past, we have referenced our joint responsibility on safety, as found in Article 14, Section 1:

It is the responsibility of management to provide safe working conditions in all present and future installations and to develop a safe working force. The Union will cooperate with and assist management to live up to this responsibility.

“We need you to keep our union strong and protect your rights long into the future.”

You can and should get involved by identifying any hazardous condition(s) and bringing them to the attention of your managers through the submission of a Form 1767. The Form 1767 becomes an official notification to the employer of our opinion on a hazardous situation requiring their careful attention and action.

Once management has been notified of the hazard, the burden shifts to them to promptly investigate and act on the notification. If managers agree with our opinion that there is a hazard, they are required to abate the hazard as promptly as possible. If they do not agree, they must explain in writing, on the Form 1767. If the latter is the case, then take the Form 1767 to your shop steward for review and for processing of a grievance if necessary.

Separately, your observations, input and suggestions on safety are appropriate items for review and consideration by the Local Safety Committee. Article 14, Section 4 provides that:

At each postal installation having 50 or more employees, a Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee will be established. In installations having fewer than 50 employees, installation heads are encouraged to establish similar committees when requested by the Union. Where no Safety and Health Committee exists, safety and health items may be placed on the agenda and discussed at labor-management meetings.

The Handbook *EL-809* (12 pages) details the duties and responsibilities of the Local Safety Committee and the Area Safety Committee. This handbook lists a number of duties for the committee to address, including the following two:

- Monitor the progress of accident prevention and health activities, and, when necessary, make recommendations for improvement to the installation head. Membership on a safety and health committee does not entitle the members to have access to individual employee medical records without the employee's consent.
- Review Forms 1767, Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice, and responses or corrective action taken.

These two simple duties can make a world of difference in changing how we do our jobs and how we make our workplace safer.

Continuing with the Article 14 responsibilities, we draw your attention to the Area Safety Committee, as referenced in Article 14, Section 3-B, which in part provides that:

There shall be established at the Employer's Area level, an Area Joint Labor-Management Safety Committee, which will be scheduled to meet quarterly. The Employer and Union Representatives will exchange proposed agenda items two weeks before the scheduled meetings.

Why is this important to you? If you are having difficulty getting management to address your safety concerns at the installation level (your post office), even after seeking the assistance of your branch president/officers, you still have another ally to assist you in your area. The NALC's area-level representatives are your national business agents (NBAs) and they all serve on the Area Level Safety Committees. If you are not sure who your NBA is, go to nalc.org/nalc/regions/index.html to find out. Call your NBA and advise him or her of the problems you are having. He or she will assist you.

As I have written before, we need you. We need your eyes and ears. We need you to report what is really happening. We need you to connect with your shop steward and the local union. We need you to keep our union strong and protect your rights long into the future. Keep an eye on each other.