

Be a hero to new employees



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This afternoon as I write this, the NALC hosted the annual Heroes of the Year luncheon. I congratulate all of our award recipients, as well as all of you who each day serve America by delivering and often protecting the neighborhoods you serve. All of our heroes were very humble, indicating that you, too, would have done what they did.

After pondering what this year's heroes shared, I started thinking about your role in teaching our newer employees and protecting them from the harm that they could meet every day on the routes they deliver.

Teach them how to do the job professionally and safely. Teach them that you are there to assist when the

need arises. Teach them that we are there as brothers and sisters on the workroom floor, at the ready, when they least expect it.

We have recently written much about how employees are being treated on the workroom floor, so I add the following to those thoughts.

“We need to be heroes to our new employees by stepping forward when we see them being treated in violation of their rights to dignity and respect in the workplace.”

Pressure, intimidation, threats and bullying by supervisors does nothing to improve the skills of any letter carrier. Instead, this inappropriate behavior destroys the fiber of our workplace families, our spirit of service and our ability to engage our customers. This in turn causes us to focus our attention on the emotions that we experience and not the task of driving safely, with all of our attention on the road as well as every other possible hazard that we may encounter throughout the course of our day.

The pressure and intimidation only leads to employees making bad choices. They fear that they have to finger mail while driving or while walking up or down steps or while crossing the street, in violation of Article 41-3-1 of our National Agreement, just to save some time. They don't want to take the extra time to fasten and unfasten their seatbelts as often as is required just to save a few minutes, even

though a number of carriers have lost their lives because they did not fasten their seatbelts. This month's column could go on and on forever with examples of choices made that were not compliant with training we received. The USPS shares that the accident rate among new employees is more than twice the rate of any other category of employee. Is there a reason?

Shortly before turning 16, while impatiently waiting to get my driver's license, I recall my parents providing me with a copy of the California driver's handbook and encouraging me to read it, understand it and get ready to apply it. I was excited, not because I had to read the book, but because this was a step that I had to take before testing for my learner's permit. After reading it, I recall reflecting on a passage that addressed not driving when your emotions were not in check. At the time I thought that to be odd, thinking that there should be no need to say this.

Since then, I have formed a strong opinion that these comments must have been included in the booklet based on the opinions of professionals who identified this as a factor of concern after their study of so many accidents.

OSHA instructs us to conduct a proper investigation of all accidents so that we may learn the cause and then pass on the acquired knowledge to the other employees to prevent a similar accident.

The current *California Driver's Handbook* on page 80 tells the reader: “Do not let your emotions interfere with safe driving.”

Pay close attention to your brothers and sisters on the workroom floor, and you will observe how they react to the above-referenced pressure, intimidation and bullying. What you will see is that, in spite of all of our efforts to develop solid training processes, all of our efforts go out the window when the supervisor is more interested in making the numbers than in reinforcing safe and professional work habits.

So what do we do? We need to control the work environment by challenging inappropriate behavior that interferes with safe and sound decision-making. We need to be heroes to our new employees by stepping forward when we see them being treated in violation of their rights to dignity and respect in the workplace.

Keep an eye on each other.