

Taking a fall for the Postal Service?



**Kevin
Card**

A letter carrier named Charlie is out delivering mail one day when he steps into a hole while crossing a lawn. Charlie falls to the ground, scattering mail everywhere. Charlie attempts to stand up and continue delivering his route. A sharp pain shoots through Charlie's ankle and it becomes painfully clear to Charlie that he's not going to be able to finish his route. Charlie knows that he has to call his supervisor to report his injury, so he hobbles to the nearby porch, takes out his cell phone and calls his office.

After several dozen rings, a clerk answers the phone and Charlie is eventually put through to his supervisor. Charlie explains what happened, and his supervisor tells Charlie he will come out to get him.

When his supervisor shows up, Charlie explains what happened and says he needs to get his ankle checked out. The supervisor gathers up the mail, locks Charlie's vehicle, helps Charlie into his car and then proceeds to drive to the office.

At the office, Charlie requests a CA-1, Claim for Traumatic Injury; a CA-16, Authorization for Examination and/or Treatment; and a CA-17, Duty Status Report. Charlie's supervisor makes a few phone calls while Charlie finishes filling out his portion of the CA-1. When his supervisor returns, Charlie asks the supervisor to make a photocopy of his completed portion of the CA-1 and requests that the supervisor sign the CA-1 receipt.

When his supervisor finally gives Charlie a properly signed CA-16, Charlie asks for a ride to his doctor's office to get his ankle examined. After some discussion with her manager, the supervisor takes Charlie to his doctor's office.

Charlie gets an X-ray and is told he fractured a bone in his ankle. Charlie asks the doctor to fill out the CA-17, which he gets photocopied at the doctor's office. The doctor puts Charlie's injured ankle in a restrictive boot and restricts him from work until his next appointment. Charlie gives a copy of the CA-17 to his supervisor and gets a ride home.

After Charlie's follow-up appointment, the doctor restricts Charlie from any standing, walking and climbing. Charlie sends a newly completed CA-17 to his postmaster. The postmaster tells Charlie that they have no sedentary work, leaving Charlie to sit at home to recover. Sitting at home unable to walk is tough on Charlie; he's been a letter carrier for more than 20 years and loves his job. He misses his customers and the physical act of carrying mail.

Ankle injuries are among the most difficult injuries for a letter carrier to overcome, and Charlie's is no different. He remembers a fellow carrier who never reported a sprained ankle and struggled to walk for the rest of his life. So Charlie follows his doctor's restriction and sits at home, impatiently waiting for his ankle to heal. Charlie's claim for a fractured ankle is accepted by OWCP.

When Charlie's doctor determines that the ankle bone has begun healing, he schedules him for a series of physical therapy appointments. Charlie's physical therapist begins treatment by having Charlie do light exercises to regain the strength in his injured leg. The physical therapist tells Charlie that although he is restricted from carrying mail, he can start walking as much as he can comfortably do without experiencing pain.

Charlie is ecstatic—no more sitting at home all day. So the next day, Charlie walks down to the corner and back. The following day, Charlie is back outside, this time walking twice as far. When Charlie returns to physical therapy, he talks about his attempts to walk. The physical therapist congratulates him, but reminds him not to do too much, only what he can safely tolerate.

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What Charlie does not know is that he is being secretly videotaped. Every drive to a medical appointment, walk around the block and trip to the drug store to fill his prescriptions is being videotaped. Private contractors, hired to investigate possible workers' compensation fraud, have been following Charlie for weeks. The contractors have access to Charlie's medical restrictions and are attempting to build a workers' compensation fraud case.

But Charlie is oblivious to it all. He continues to attend his medical and physical therapy appointments and takes his daily walks around his neighborhood. Even though Charlie regularly submits CA-17s to his supervisor, he has yet to receive a limited-duty job offer. According to his doctor, carrying his usual 35-pound mail satchel would only delay Charlie's healing process and possibly reinjure his ankle.

And then one day, Charlie receives a phone call and a letter indicating he has an appointment with a pair of workers' compensation specialists to discuss a rehabilitation job offer. Little does he know, the specialists are the people who have been videotaping him.

To be continued....