

An update on a fatal accident



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On Nov. 14, 2015, letter carrier Alton Hall died in a vehicle accident when his LLV was broadsided by a driver who ran a stop sign. I reported on this tragedy in my January 2016 *Postal Record* column. On Nov. 24, 2015, Las Vegas Branch 2502 President Glenn Norton provided photos indicating that the seatbelt shoulder harness had been broken at the time of the accident, and how it was possible for a driver to be ejected from a vehicle in spite of wearing a seatbelt. I asked that the photos and an explanation be given to the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) for their consideration and use in the investigative process.

On Nov. 25, 2015, the Western Area vice president of operations waived the internal USPS Serious Accident Report. We were later advised that USPS had decided that it would be relying on the findings of the LVMPD. The waiver form, however, determined that Mr. Hall was not wearing his seatbelt. This conclusion led a number of managers to use that statement as fact and develop training material accusing Hall of not wearing his seatbelt.

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In December, the NALC advised local management that there was evidence establishing that the seatbelt was buckled and had failed. As such, NALC believed that Section 844 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)* and the Seatbelt Use Incentive should be activated.

During its investigative process, the LVMPD was able to acquire the “airbag control module” of the vehicle that struck Hall’s LLV. The evidence established that the vehicle was traveling at 42 miles per hour at the time of impact. The force of impact may have broken the shoulder harness anchors as seen in the photos above that the NALC provided to the police department.



Photos provided to NALC following the crash that killed Las Vegas letter carrier Alton Hall.

The accident investigation report indicated that:

...The anchor point was damaged on this vehicle and the ‘D-Ring’ was separated from the seatback. The seatbelt latch plate was seated in the buckle as I found it...

To the credit of upper management, USPS did, in fact, process the necessary paperwork for the family to receive additional funds as referenced in Section 844 of the *ELM*.

There are times that conclusions are made in accident investigations that lead to other actions. Sadly, in this case, Brother Alton Hall lost his life. By pressing the issue at the local level, NALC was able to discover and present important facts and evidence to the LVMPD, information that, in turn was given great weight in the final report and conclusions therein. When you investigate an accident, ask as many questions as you need to get to the true root cause. Only then can we learn how to prevent the same or a similar outcome.

In the handbook *EL-809*, which I have frequently referenced, we identify the duties and responsibilities of safety committees. Among those duties is the responsibility to review the Form 1769s for all accidents in your installation so that we can understand what led to the injury and then develop a means to prevent the same or a similar result.

Please add a thorough inspection of your seatbelt harness to your inspection of your vehicle.

Keep an eye on each other and seek to find out what really happened in all accidents.

Merry Christmas and happy holidays to all of you! Be safe through the holiday season.

