

The heat of summer is coming our way



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Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission (OS-HRC). In the process of preparing for that trial, we requested, received and further investigated heat injuries suffered in 2016.

The result of the efforts from each of the regional offices has revealed a number of very inappropriate events. An item that concerns us the most is the pressure placed on new city carrier assistants (CCAs) to continue to work as if there was no heat wave, under threat of being released during their first 120 days of employment. We know that the employee faces a difficult choice: Do they report the trouble that they are having in the extreme heat, or do they sweat it out in hopes of making it through the day?

If one of our newer employees is separated because they reported an injury or reported a safety hazard, then we need to advise that employee of their right to file a whistleblower's complaint through OSHA. This complaint must be filed within 30 days of the adverse action. (For more information, go to the NALC Safety and Health page on nalc.org; at the OSHA section, click on "Whistleblower protection.") Of course, the same rules apply to career employees, but in most cases they are past probation and are protected by the "just cause" provisions of Article 16.

There are many managers who care about your safety and show it through their actions. On the other hand, there are as many managers (if not more) who only look at the bottom line and performance while they wink and nod at the safety message.

As I review the recently received reports of heat-related injuries, I note that there were more than 200 heat safety injuries in 2016 that had not been brought to the attention of the national business agent, nor me, at the time of the

Over the last few years, we have been attempting to educate as many carriers as possible about protecting themselves from the harm of extreme heat. Our craft has experienced two deaths since the summer of 2012, including Independence, MO Branch 827 member John Watzlawick.

Over the past few years, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued a number of citations and hazard alerts to USPS because of its failure to provide our craft with a work environment free from recognized hazards. A few of those citations were contested by USPS and have since been combined for a trial before the

event. If you experience a heat safety event, please fill out an "initial heat injury report" and send it to my attention as well as to your national business agent. You can find a copy of that report on the NALC Safety and Health page in the section titled "Enforcing heat safety rules." The benefit of promptly filling out the report is that we can assist and guide you in a timely manner when it is immediately brought to our attention.

The recently received reports show that management does not know what to do when we bring a heat incident to their attention. They don't leave their desk to go out and check on you early enough to make a difference. They don't bring you any cool water. They delay emergency medical attention if you are fortunate enough to make contact with them.

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In one case, a carrier felt dizzy and nauseated and had a headache, but instead of calling her supervisor, she called a fellow carrier. Call 911 if you feel those symptoms. Don't wait, as every moment of delay could further harm you.

A carrier, while being accompanied by a supervisor, indicated that she was not feeling well due to the heat. The supervisor did nothing for the carrier until she vomited.

A carrier experienced excessive sweating and cramping but continued out of some fear. It was later determined that his kidneys were shutting down.

A carrier became overheated and threw up, and was forced to go to the doctor on her own because no one at the post office would take her.

A carrier called in advising that he was not feeling well and could not finish his route. He was threatened with discipline and forced to continue. Customers called 911 an hour later and he was taken to the hospital. The same supervisor went to the hospital to give him a hard time and then threatened him when he did not return to work because the doctor advised him to take off for an extended period.

A few carriers who were mothers-to-be, well into their pregnancies, called for help in the heat and were faced with heartless responses instructing them to continue. If not for vigilant and caring customers, we may have experienced tragedies.

Keep an eye on each other and let us know when you need our assistance.