

# La palanca



**Manuel L. Peralta Jr.**

In my January column, I commented on the lack of genuine concern for your safety by some managers. As I draft this month's column, I shake my head in disbelief over more disappointing events relating to their concern over your safety.

The extreme cold experienced in Northern states beginning in December has affected you, your vehicle and the equipment assigned to you to perform your tasks. Believe it or not, there are some managers who acquired hand warmers, which initially resulted in a positive reaction by some employees...but wait. These gifts were accompanied by disheartening instructions. The hand warmers were intended not for

the carriers, but rather for the scanners. The battery life of the scanners greatly falls off as the temperature dips and, as a result, scanners were not making it through the full workday, which concerned management. Many of our carriers have suffered frostbite injuries this year. Where was management's concern for you?

Wait. There's more. Recent news over exploding batteries in cell phones has caused us to ask, "What would happen if you attach the hand warmer to the scanner?" Would you believe that a few of the warmers heat up to a temperature that far exceeds the manufacturer's maximum temperature recommendation?

On Dec. 16 in a Pacific Area city, a carrier turned in a vehicle repair tag because the emergency flashers were not functioning. The carrier was assigned another vehicle and, while moving the load from one vehicle to another, a second carrier detected the smell of gasoline, searched for and found a puddle and reported it to management. A leak was discovered. The supervisor in question, frustrated by the news of yet another defective vehicle, gave instructions to use the vehicle because it was just a slow fuel leak. NALC is pressing this issue through the grievance procedure, but what does that behavior tell you about the management commitment to safety?

On Dec. 21 in a Western Area city, we notified management that one of the vehicles had a broken parking brake. Management re-assigned the vehicle to an unsuspecting employee in another craft. NALC then turned in a 1767 reporting what happened, and local management responded by stating that the other craft employee had little need for the "emergency brake" and that it was no longer our business. Safety is always our business. The record of the 1767

should result in discussion by the local safety committee on the mishandling of the incident. Setting aside jurisdictional issues, how confident are we in believing that management's concern for safety is genuine when managers willingly assigned the vehicle to another employee?

Then there is "*la palanca*"—a lever that is a fixed body, typically a metal bar, pivoted on a fixed fulcrum used to move or lift a load. On a recent visit to a delivery unit, the president of the branch brought my attention to an on-site gas pump used for refueling our vehicles. I had previously been shown a photo of this pump and expressed disbelief over the explanation.

In the photo at right, you will see a hammer at the ready, with a handwritten note affixed to the handle on the pump, instructing the user to strike the handle "*aqui*" (here) with the hammer to get it to function properly. I am advised that the act of striking the handle resulted in sparks flying.

The officer advised me that he had brought this concern to the attention of management, but the pump was not red-tagged and put out of service until we documented the hazard and made management accountable.



**La palanca that was an issue of concern at a delivery unit's gas pump**

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**“When you notice a hazard, report it immediately by turning in a vehicle repair tag or a 1767.”**

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**The lesson:** In each of the above incidents, the forms that we fill out become the proof of our efforts to report and abate hazards, defective equipment or vehicles.

When you notice a hazard, report it immediately by turning in a vehicle repair tag or a 1767. If the hazard is not promptly abated, we need to force the issue through the grievance procedure.

Be careful and keep an eye on each other.