

Increased parcel workload



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Over the last few months, while on assignment in the field, I have had the opportunity to go to a number of delivery units to visit with our members at work. No surprise as to the amount of parcels that we are receiving and delivering. How we handle the increase has created logistics issues and raised safety issues that concern me.

The first challenge is getting those parcels from your workroom floor to your vehicle. You fill your hampers as much as you can, navigate across the floor and down ramp (if applicable). You then push them across the pavement to your vehicles and, if necessary, you repeat. The pencil-pushers look at repeat

trips to the vehicle as inefficient and try to find ways around the challenge by making you feel that you should not make more than one trip, leaving you with the thought that some managers are concerned about safety and other managers are not.

The second challenge is having enough space in the vehicle to safely load all the parcels and make it in one trip—that is, of course, if it is possible. Sometimes it is not, so we resort to solutions that are not safe and, in fact, put you in harm's way. I have observed that many carriers are stacking up mail on their working tray and doing so in such a way that obstructs their view to the left while driving. On a recent trip, I observed only a carrier's hands because the tray was so full of parcels that it was impossible for him to see to his left. How can that carrier see what is on his left if he adds to the challenge in driving an LLV? That is an accident waiting to happen.

At the early part of my career, NALC had an agreement that instructed carriers not to load the working tray beyond the bottom nine inches of the left-side window so that we had a clear view of the road to our left. That standard should apply, as your mirrors will not make up for blocking the left-side view.

The third challenge involves getting those parcels delivered and doing so in a safe manner. If the parcel is too heavy, you need to arrange for assistance and you should not be waiting to figure this out at the delivery point. Talk to your union officers about this and get it worked out before you suffer an injury. Further, you are most likely not getting the time necessary to get these additional parcels delivered and, with time, your route becomes overburdened. Approach the union and press the issue.

The fourth challenge comes from the concept of you being pushed too hard and then making decisions that conflict with all the training that you have received. In a conversation with an officer of my branch late last year, she shared her view of the distraction factor. (Thank you, Anita.) As an example, a carrier is involved in an investigative interview based on working more hours than the pencil-pusher feels acceptable. The carrier is doing their best but by the questioning is accused of doing something wrong and as such is insulted. We battle irate customers, climate, animal interference and then the rabid manager who should be on a leash.

We are then sent to the street to perform our duties with our emotions distracting us from being able to focus our attention on performing our duties in a safe way. It's important that we remember that we sometimes have no control of overzealous or disrespectful managers. So how do you get your Zen back? Count to 10, take some deep breaths and remind yourself that it is important that you get home to your family.

The managers who are not concerned about your safety push you until you break and then they pretend to *care* about your safety when injuries happen. In their effort to deflect from accepting any responsibility for contributing to the accident/injury, they will throw you under the bus in a heartbeat instead of doing the right thing and identifying all of the contributing factors that led to the accident.

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Keep an eye on each other.