

To call or not to call— that is the question



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Last month's column closed with a quote from a decision by a national arbitrator making it clear that management has an unequivocal obligation to provide safe working conditions even if optimum efficiency and economy must give way.

So, are your managers/supervisors making the right decision in terms of safety, or is their focus only on efficiency and economy?

In the morning, you advise your supervisor that you believe you will be unable to complete your assigned duties in eight hours. The workload dance then begins, and you are told to go out and do the best you can.

You already know that you are doing your best and you know that you

have made a fair, honest estimate and you are treated as if you are a thief, which you are not. Keep cool. Keep notes. Get the union involved if necessary.

To no one's surprise, the workload is as you estimated that morning and the circumstances have not changed, so you call the office in the afternoon and ask for instructions.

On prior occasions, the phone rings and rings and you get no answer; however, after 15 rings (because you did not give up), the drill instructor answers, asks why you are bothering him and then barks out his orders, pressing you for a reaction. Keep cool. Keep calm. Get the union involved.

You complete your deliveries because you were told to do so, and on your arrival, that same drill instructor attempts to bait you. Don't take the bait. Keep cool. Keep calm. Get the union involved. When you finish your workday, make notes of the events of the day. Contact your union representatives to discuss what took place and ask if there is anything that can be done.

The union can help if we are provided the necessary information. Let us help to address these issues before you react in a manner that gets you into a situation that may result in discipline.

Injuries and notifying your supervisors

I have received a number of calls detailing the hypocrisy of your supervisors as relates to safety. Some supervisors bring you together for the morning huddle to give you a message intended to protect you from the harm that is facing you each and every day. You ask relevant questions but they don't want the huddle to last a second longer than they want, so they dismiss you all and pretend they care.

In two other offices, management held their morning safety huddles to inform employees that they had to pay extra attention while delivering on foot, as there was fresh snow covering up iced up sidewalks. Later that day, in each of these two offices, an employee did, in fact, slip and fall, suffering an injury. In both of these cases, the employees needed to get to a medical facility, so they contacted their supervisors asking for help.

One of the employees called the office and, after many rings, finally got through to a supervisor, explaining that, as a result of the injury, she could not drive. The employee made a decision, based on her situation, where she recognized that it would not be safe for her to drive. That should have been the end of the question, and the conversation should have shifted to exploring options (if there were any) on how to get the employee the needed medical attention.

“Keep cool. Keep notes. Get the union involved if necessary.”

The supervisor, however, who was more interested in their other duties, advised the employee that she would have to drive herself anyway because there was no one else available to assist. The supervisor then told the employee to “drive back slowly and carefully.” What would have happened if the employee had driven anyway and then been involved in a vehicle accident, where a customer was killed? The supervisor would have been upset over the paperwork that would have to be filled out, and our letter carrier would forever be upset over causing someone's death.

What should have been done? If you are unable to drive because of an injury, and your supervisor/manager gives you instructions like in the example above, do not put yourself in harm's way. If you feel that it is necessary, call 911 to have yourself transported to a medical facility. The supervisor will have to figure how to retrieve the vehicle and the mail, but that is less important than efficiency and economy, which is where this month's column began.

Keep an eye on each other, and don't allow our brothers and sisters to be victims without your help.