

Distractions, distractions, distractions



Manuel L. Peralta Jr.

I have come to know Joe Henschen, president of West Coast Florida Branch 1477, through my duties in this office. I see Joe as a serious believer in safety who makes all reasonable efforts to teach our membership how to prevent becoming a victim to the work we do and the way we do it.

I share here a few of his observations, which reflect many of the conversations that I have had with NALC leadership throughout the country.

“Distractions are becoming more and more evident as technology advances,” Joe said. “More and more, the supervisors are communicating with carriers while they are driving. Toss in some social media while

working and we are creating a dangerous situation for the carriers. Especially those who spend the day driving.”

USPS “has placed the carriers in a situation that is potentially unsafe,” Joe said. “Although we encourage the carriers to not answer or look at the phone or scanners while driving, it’s just too easy.”

Texts from managers “are common. I’ve seen text threads from supervisors constantly badgering carriers on their progress,” Joe continued. “Calls and texts made and received, just minutes apart.”

Ask yourself how often your supervisors call or text while you are out delivering mail, whether you are driving or walking. Distractions can cause you to lose focus on hazardous situations and result in injuries or more.

If you receive a text message or phone call from your supervisor, pull off the road, shut off the engine, place the vehicle in park and set the parking (emergency) brake. If you are delivering on foot, check your surroundings to make sure it is safe to take the call or review the message. Your supervisors and managers do not know exactly what you are doing when they reach out, so you must use your judgment. Stay safe.

Keep track of the extra time that these distractions cause you. On your return to the office, report this additional time through a revision to Form 3996. If your supervisors argue with you over this extra time, immediately ask for your union steward and take up the dispute with him or her.

Hypocrisy

There are times when management overreacts to accidents and injuries. Recently, a shop steward shared that, as a result of an accident, management started a new safety

program called GOAL, which stands for Get Out And Look. Every time a carrier returned to his or her vehicle following a dismount delivery, or each time the carrier was about to back up the vehicle, he or she was first required to get out and look. We received no complaints at this level over the implementation of this extra step; however, the program was brought to our attention after operations got involved.

The punch line? This safety measure was too expensive. It took too much time. You see, when one of the affected carriers was being route-inspected, the examiner noted that there was too much time being spent performing the GOAL walk-around and the carrier was instructed to stop doing it. The route examiner has a mission and safety works against that mission.

“Ask yourself how often your supervisors call or text while you are out delivering mail, whether you are driving or walking.”

2018 heat safety message

This month’s Contract Talk contains a message to all of you on heat-related safety. Please read it carefully and follow its advice closely.

We can make a difference in our work environment by understanding and applying the rules that were bargained for in our National Agreement, were developed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or were developed at your installation through your local safety committee.

In 2017, city letter carriers suffered more than 300 heat-related injuries. Many of them resulted in carriers passing out before they knew what hit them. Some experienced renal failure and a few required more extensive medical treatment. The effects of heat on your system can be affected by many health issues. Take care of yourself and take note of what you are experiencing before it is too late.

Keep an eye on each other and speak up when you see something wrong.