

## Promises not kept



**Manuel L. Peralta Jr.**

Service-owned or -operated facilities will be responsible for the implementation of a HIPP for the employees, provided that the facility meets the heat exposure criteria outlined above.

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### **“Keep an eye on each other and hold your managers responsible for compliance with Article 14.”**

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Many aspects of the program were in fact previously suggested by the NALC during settlement efforts on citations issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). These citations were and still are being contested by the USPS before the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission (OSHRC).

The citations were issued after inspections of USPS facilities. The inspections came about because of the heat-related injuries of our letter carriers and because our membership filed complaints with OSHA. OSHA responded to our needs and USPS is fighting that response.

In its 2019 HIPP, USPS indicated that:

...The Postal Service will require annual completion of a HERO course on heat stress by all employees in every facility, regardless of exposure assessment findings: HERO Course Name: SAF:SS: Heat Stress Recognition and Prevention - Course Number: 10019802...Employees must complete this training prior to April 1 each year...

In its instructions, USPS explained that the April 1 deadline was extended to April 30 for this year, but that the

training must be completed “annually” by April 1, in each subsequent year.

Also contained in the training was an instruction to hold weekly safety talks throughout the season (April 1 to Oct. 31), and that these talks will be documented in the “Safety Tool Kit” with certification of completion for all employees. What does certification of completion entail?

In August of 2017, I wrote a column titled, “When should you call 911?” We were pleased to see that the 2019 HIPP included instruction to employees relating to emergency calls as follows:

...Employees working away from a Postal Service facility should immediately call 911 and then their supervisor, if able, when they experience signs or symptoms of heat stress...When in doubt, do not hesitate to call 911. Employees and supervisors may use personal cell phones and other mobile electronic devices to communicate or call 911...

On May 23, I forwarded USPS4437 to all of you, through your business agents. In the last seven years, the NALC has increased messaging to you about heat illnesses, and the need to keep an eye on each other. We have been encouraging you to call 911 immediately when you feel a medical emergency.

In mid-August, the NALC hosted a training and rap session in Denver. On Saturday, during each of the four safety workshops, I took a poll to determine how many of the attendees had actually taken the HERO course referenced above. We averaged 225 letter carriers in each of the classes based on the registration numbers. Fewer than 40 hands went up all day.

If that poll is representative of what happened throughout the country, then less than 5 percent of our carriers actually took the 2019 HIPP training. What is more bothersome and of greater concern is that the behavior of many of your supervisors shows that they either did not take the course or did not absorb what they were taught.

The reports that I have received from injured carriers and their union representatives (go to my safety page and download the heat injury report form) clearly establish that a few supervisors/managers took seriously the 2019 HIPP. Sadly, the majority of your supervisors have not even given their typical lip service to the seriousness of this information.

If you have filed a grievance on management’s failure to do what was promised above, or have filed an OSHA complaint, I ask you to forward copies of such to my attention for our records.

**Keep an eye on each other and hold your managers responsible for compliance with Article 14.**