

# Hey, Boss: Why won't you honor the Joint Statement on Violence?



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**“It is not that the employer is** always engaged in overt behavior that violates the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace; it is that they are constantly grinding and grinding on carriers.”—October 2011 *Postal Record*

**Well, the situation has become** worse since that was written. The above scenario seems subtle when compared to the inappropriate, aggressive behavior that has become more and more common on the workroom floor in our current environment.

No matter how much we hope for progress, it all depends on the top brass.

Does the leadership of USPS want to make the necessary changes to stop the vicious cycle, or do we have to constantly fight the abusers on the front line? Does upper management honor the commitments made in the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace (JSOV)? Why does upper management protect its abusive number-chasers after having promised that there would be no excuse for such behavior?

Management's actions speak much louder than the excuses we hear.

We all know that until upper management stops defending abusive managers, this madness will never end. The incoming supervisor wants to focus on numbers above anything else, especially since he or she knows that the predecessor earned the promotion by chasing those sacred numbers.

**The JSOV (M-1242) is the strongest tool we have in our** arsenal to address the inappropriate conduct of your supervisor/manager/postmaster. The JSOV was drafted by union and postal leadership following the tragic bloodshed in Royal Oak, MI, in 1991, which was preceded by a number of workplace events that led to the phrase “going postal.”

The following two commitments in the JSOV are key to bettering our workplace climate (some phrases have been bolded for emphasis):

...We openly acknowledge that in some places or units there is an unacceptable level of stress in the workplace; that there is no excuse for and will be no tolerance of violence or any threats of violence by anyone at any level of the Postal

Service; and that **there is no excuse for and will be no tolerance of harassment, intimidation, threats, or bullying by anyone.**

We also affirm that every employee at every level of the Postal Service should be treated at all times with dignity, respect, and fairness. The need for the USPS to serve the public efficiently and productively, and the need for all employees to be committed to giving a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, does not justify actions that are abusive or intolerant. “Making the numbers” is not an excuse for the abuse of anyone, **Those who do not treat others with dignity and respect will not be rewarded or promoted. Those whose unacceptable behavior continues will be removed from their positions....**

**The commitments made in the JSOV are contractually** enforceable. You need to breathe life into these commitments through your efforts, using the grievance procedure, labor-management meetings and/or safety committee meetings. Management often claims that assertions of a violation of the JSOV are not in fact safety issues.

Arbitrator Charles Rehmus, in a decision dated July 24, 1997 (C-17542), addressing the conduct of an officer in charge (OIC) in Yucaipa, CA, wrote the following:

...Here, Management argues, no safety related complaint was made to Management by any employee and hence the Union's use of [Article 14 2 c] was improper.

...The conjunction of safety concerns and undue levels of stress in Postal workplaces in these few sentences quoted from the Joint Statement is obvious. When a Union steward comes to a supervisor and complains that an OIC has threatened, bullied, and harassed Postal employees by words and actions, that is a complaint of a Safety and Health violation that can properly be raised as a Step 2 grievance under Article 14.2(c) of the National Agreement. The rejection of this argument in Management's Step 3 Answer to this grievance (Jt. Ex. 2, p.3)... is simply an example of “winks and nods, or skepticism” as the framers of the Joint Statement feared that some of the Service's 700,000 employees might take it.

The commitments made in the JSOV were the right ones. Management at every level needs to step up. Doing so would make the necessary difference.

**Keep an eye on each other, and take note of what is** happening. Your observations are key to making the changes we need. Don't look the other way. Care for your colleagues as you would have them care for you.