

# A call for humane employee treatment



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**L**ast month I wrote about management's treatment of employees in a work location following an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) presentation.

As a follow-up to that article, I want to address the treatment of employees again, but this time with a focus on how management's behavior affects the quality of communication between employee and employer.

If you are a good manager, treating your employees with dignity and respect, then this month's column is not about you. The NALC thanks you for your efforts to maintain a pleasant work environment, leading employees to do a good

job every day. Your treatment of our members allows them to do their best because they are not distracted by fear, anger or rage.

In too many work locations, however, we have supervisors who act like prison guards, with their approach serving no useful purpose. They, along with the wardens who hire them, should be in the unemployment lines because they create distress, spread fear and drive good employees away. You can look at the numbers in your office to see how many employees want to transfer out of your station, out of your installation or simply quit working for the Postal Service.

**During my tenure as the national business agent of Region 1 (California, Nevada, Hawaii and Guam),** I frequently met with local union representatives and their management counterparts in labor-management meetings, as defined in Article 17 and as referenced in the National Labor Relations Act. Most of these meetings were prompted by the abusive treatment of employees by a few managers who simply enjoyed hurting others.

In one instance, the officers of a large local reached out for help and the postmaster of a large installation agreed to schedule a meeting with our office. The meeting started with a lot of finger-pointing and defensive responses. We asked what management was doing to the employees and why. Management's reaction stunned me. Their response was that the performance of some employees was so poor that something had to be done about it, and they defended the abusive behavior of their front-line managers.

I stunned management with my response. I do not care how poorly an employee performs. Their actions do not and cannot justify your abuse of our employees. If you are dissatisfied with our performance, follow the rules of the contract, treat employees with dignity and respect, and find solutions that will help both union and management in achieving our individual and common goals. No matter what employees do wrong, you do not have the right to handle the issue any way that you see fit.

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The fourth and fifth paragraph of the February 1992 Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior (JSOV) provide as follows:

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.

**So here is the connection to safety. When your mind is distracted by the behavior of your supervisors in such a way that you are not paying attention to what you are doing, and you are not following the safety training you have received (if, in fact, the training records are true and correct), then it is your manager who is jeopardizing your safety because of how they treat you.**

If your managers are violating the JSOV, the local union should be investigating and processing necessary grievances on this issue. Shop stewards should read the *Dignity and Respect* booklet found in the Members Only portal of the NALC website, which includes the JSOV and more resources to help you.

Keep an eye on each other and enforce the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior.