

Heat-related safety

Kansas City, MO Branch 30 letter carrier John Watzlawick died while in the performance of his duties on July 24, 2012. He is identified as the first letter carrier who died as a result of the heat but is not the last.

On June 8, 2018, brand-new city carrier assistant (CCA) Daniel Rosenbach, of Georgetown, KY, died of a heart attack, which was later proven to be triggered by the extreme heat.

Just one month later, on July 6, 2018, Tri-Valley, CA Branch 2902 letter carrier Peggy Frank, who had just returned to work following a three-month medical absence, walked into a heat wave with the temperature reaching 117 degrees. She died that afternoon.

The following summer, CCA Roslyn Westfall died as a result of the heat on June 27, 2019, in St. Louis, MO.

Two years later, brand-new letter carrier Dalvir Bassi of Branch 193, San Jose, CA, who was delivering his route for the first time by himself, died on June 19, 2021.

On June 20, 2023, Dallas, TX Branch 132 letter carrier Eugene Gates Jr. died as a result of the heat.

In all of the above tragedies, our brothers and sisters were relatively new to the job or had just returned to work following an absence (illness or vacation). The NALC draws your attention to the seriousness of heat illness by reminding ourselves that the above letter carriers paid the ultimate price in the performance of their duties.

What should you do to prepare for the heat of the summer before it arrives? Letter carriers should first educate themselves on heat safety by reading available information. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) maintains a website displaying its heat safety material at [osha.gov/heat](https://www.osha.gov/heat) and instructs employers as follows:

Under OSHA law, employers are responsible for providing workplaces free of known safety hazards. This includes protecting workers from extreme heat. An employer with workers exposed to high temperatures should establish a complete heat illness prevention program.

- Provide workers with water, rest and shade.
- Allow new or returning workers to gradually increase workloads and take more frequent breaks as they acclimatize, or build a tolerance for working in the heat.
- Plan for emergencies and train workers on prevention.
- Monitor workers for signs of illness.

The NALC Safety and Health page on the NALC website ([nalc.org/workplace-issues/safety-and-health](https://www.nalc.org/workplace-issues/safety-and-health)) also provides material on heat safety. Under the heading “Ex-

treme weather” are sections titled “Safety in extreme heat,” “Enforcing heat safety rules,” “OSHA/NIOSH Heat Safety Tool” and “OSHA Citations relating to heat safety.” Each of these sections contain information important to letter carriers working in the heat of the summer.

This year the USPS has updated its HIPP training material which is referenced in this month’s Safety and Health column. Copies of all these documents are now available on Safety and Health Extreme Weather page ([nalc.org/workplace-issues/safety-and-health/extreme-weather](https://www.nalc.org/workplace-issues/safety-and-health/extreme-weather)).

Local NALC representatives should initiate a conversation with their supervisors/managers/postmasters asking that they share their plans to prevent letter carriers from suffering a heat injury, including copies of the training materials that will be used in stand-up talks. If there is pushback, shop stewards have the right to investigate what management plans to do to prevent you from suffering harm.

In the event a letter carrier suffers a heat-related injury, the following steps should be taken:

The very first thing that needs to be done is to provide the injured employee with medical attention by transporting the employee to a medical facility or immediately calling 911 for emergency care. Bringing the employee back to the office to fill out paperwork before medical care is provided could further jeopardize the employee’s

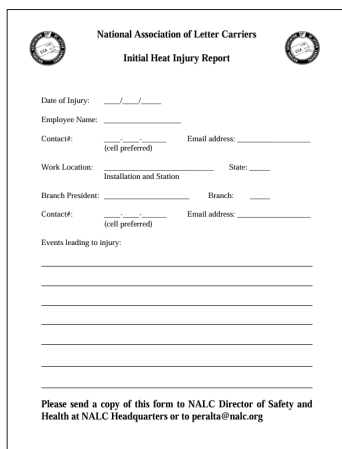
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health and is not required. An employee does not need permission to seek emergency treatment. Section 866.1 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* provides that “In the event of a medical emergency, immediate and appropriate medical care must be provided.” (See the August 2017 *Postal Record* article by NALC Director of Safety and Health Manuel L. Peralta Jr.)

The employee, a union representative, or a member of the family should request a CA-1, and complete the form requesting Continuation of Pay and submit to management. When the form is submitted to management, we should immediately obtain the receipt of the CA-1 from management.



The form is titled "National Association of Letter Carriers Initial Heat Injury Report". It contains fields for: Date of Injury, Employee Name, Contact (cell preferred), Email address, Work Location, Installation and Station, State, Branch President, Branch, Contact (cell preferred), and Email address. There is a section for "Events leading to injury" with lines for notes. At the bottom, it says "Please send a copy of this form to NALC Director of Safety and Health at NALC Headquarters or to peralta@nalc.org".

Obtain a Form CA-16, signed by management, and then provide it to the treating physician.

After medical care is provided, NALC requests that the employee or a union representative fill out an NALC “Initial Heat Injury Report.” The NALC seeks contact information for the injured employee as well as the branch president. We then need a descrip-

tion from the employee as to what happened leading up to the injury. When filling out the form, please share what type of delivery is involved (mounted, park and loop, centralized), temperature (heat, humidity and heat index if possible) symptoms experienced by the injured employee, communication with management and their response. All these factors are very helpful in getting a picture as to what went wrong.

Once the form is completed, it should be forwarded to the NALC’s director of safety and health as well as the appropriate national business agent (NBA). A copy of the form can be found on the NALC’s Safety and Health page in the section titled “Enforcing heat safety rules.”

Once the form is received at NALC Headquarters, it will be tracked and a copy will be forwarded to the appropriate NBA. The NBA then can follow up as neces-

sary with the injured employee, make sure that they have received the necessary medical care, and assist, if necessary, with workers’ compensation paperwork and processing, a service that is provided to NALC members only.

The local representative should then investigate the facts leading up to the injury. The following represents some issues that need to be explored, but many other questions might need to be asked:

- Did the employer properly train all letter carriers (including the injured employee) on how to prevent a heat injury? If so, when was this training last provided?
- Did the employer provide water, rest and shade as recommended by OSHA and NIOSH?
- If the employee or someone else communicated with management to advise of the employee’s condition, did management act appropriately and get the employee out of harm’s way, or did they fail their responsibilities to the employee? If they failed, what did they do?

After making a determination of the facts leading to the injury, the NALC representative may need to complete some or all of the following steps, depending on the circumstances:

- Fill out a PS Form 1767 to report the hazard (keeping a copy for your records).
- A grievance may need to be initiated.
- A complaint may need to be initiated with the U.S. Department of Labor. (The fifth panel on the OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety app provides contact information. You can press the “Contact” button and call or connect with the OSHA web page. Scroll down to the “Take Action” section and press “File a safety and health complaint.” This takes you to the page identified as “How to File a Safety and Health Complaint,” which lists your options.) Alternatively, you can do the same by going to [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov).

If you do file a complaint and/or grievance, please forward a copy to NALC’s director of safety and health. It is recommended that each letter carrier use the OSHA/NIOSH Heat Safety Tool app each morning (during the heat season) to help determine what should be done each day to prevent heat injuries.