

Buckle up for safety



Manuel L. Peralta Jr.

Last fall, the USPS approached the NALC and the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) requesting our cooperation and participation in the creation of a joint safety and health message and video on the subject of seat belts. The NRLCA and the NALC immediately agreed to do this, subject to the condition that this initiative cannot be used against any letter carrier.

Management immediately agreed, and the following was added to the PowerPoint slides as we drafted what would be in the presentation:

This pledge is meant as an engagement activity and **will not be used in**

support of discipline or adverse action. (Emphasis added.)

We also added the following graphic to the very end of the recorded video (at the 5-minute, 4-second mark):

THE CRDO SAFETY PLEDGE MAY NOT BE USED, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, TO INITIATE OR SUPPORT ANY FORM OF CORRECTIVE ACTION.

In February, we recorded the message and, beginning the week before the pledge, we rolled out some publicity information so that all parties were made aware of the plan.

Throughout the afternoon of the 21st, I began to receive messages from our regional offices and some branches indicating that management, in some offices, did not carry out the activities as intended in our agreement. As a result, I sent a message to the USPS sharing the following:

In spite of what I consider good faith efforts by union and management to raise awareness on seatbelt safety, the rogue attitude by some managers made a magic moment evaporate and become a disappointment.

As I have received information relating to the problems, I have shared them with management and they are being addressed. Among the problems that surfaced are the following:

1. A number of managers made the pledge mandatory and when our carriers did not want to sign the pledge,

they were threatened. The entire thrust of this initiative was based on voluntary participation.

2. In one instance, an office did not provide the seat belt stand-up talk nor did it show the video, but did send a RIMS message thanking the carriers for "taking the pledge." Why aren't those managers being held accountable for their dishonest claims?
3. In one office, a manager took the opportunity to declare this pledge day a formal training session and required carriers to sign a document attesting to their attendance.

Putting the miscues behind us, we urge you to not miss the point of this initiative. It is to raise awareness about the subject of seat belt safety.

Sadly, too many letter carriers and others have lost their lives because they did not wear their seat belts. Whether you're on duty or off, your family and co-workers suffer.

On Oct. 21, 2006, Honolulu, HI, letter carrier CL died following an on-duty accident in which she was not wearing her seat belt. I will never forget CL's 12-year-old daughter sharing that she will always miss mommy.

On March 7, 2013, Port St. Lucie, FL, letter carrier JCR died following an on-duty accident in which he was not wearing his seat belt.

On Dec. 5, 2014, Los Angeles, CA, letter carrier SV died following an on-duty accident in which he was not wearing his seat belt.

On Aug. 13, 2015, Savannah, GA, letter carrier DC died following an off-duty accident in which he was not wearing his seat belt.

On June 9, 2017, Marshalltown, IA, letter carrier AS died following an on-duty accident in which she was not wearing her seat belt.

On May 29, 2022, Litchfield, ME, letter carrier JR died following an off-duty accident in which he was not wearing his seat belt.

On June 3, 2022, Travelers Rest, SC, letter carrier MH died following an on-duty accident in which he was not wearing his seat belt.

These deaths are the ones that were brought to my attention. Take a moment to think how much pain your family might suffer if you were on this list.

In January of 2015, Rochester, NY, letter carrier Jeremy Lighthouse of Branch 210 suffered following an on-duty accident that I described as horrific. He wore his seat belt and was lucky to have survived the accident. Read his story, which you can find in my March 2015 *Postal Record* column.

Keep an eye on each other.