Safety committees

Manuel L. Peralta Jr.

The ***2023-2026 National Agreement*** created a new safety committee at the district level. The NALC representatives on those committees were recommended by our national business agents. The approval, as defined in the *National Agreement*, is made by the national president or their designee. The responsibilities of these new district committees include (but are not limited to) the following:

> ...District Safety Committees are responsible for assisting in implementing District-wide safety initiatives, facilitating communication between Area and Local Safety Committees, and assisting Local Committees as determined by the District Manager and Union...

In order to understand the duties of the new district committees, we need to explore what the local committee should be doing.

Article 14, Section 8 defines the responsibility of the local (installation) committee as follows:

> The Committee shall review the progress in accident prevention and health at the installation; determine program areas which should have increased emphasis; and it may investigate major accidents which result in disabling injuries. Items properly relating to employee safety and health shall be considered appropriate discussion items. Upon a timely request, information or records necessary for the local Safety and Health Committee to investigate real or potential safety and health issues will be made available to the Committee.
>
> In addition, the Committee shall promote the cause of safety and health in the installation by:
>
> 1. Reviewing safety and health suggestions, safety training records and reports of unsafe conditions or practices.
> 2. Reviewing local safety and health rules.
> 3. Identifying employee unsafe work practices and assisting in enforcing safety work rules.
> 4. Reviewing updated list of hazardous materials used in the installation.
> 5. Reviewing local dog bite prevention efforts.

Are we meeting as intended in the contract? If so, are we fulfilling the responsibilities assigned to the committee and performing the duties of the position in a manner that will make our workplace safer?

Article 14, Section 8 of the *Joint Contract Administration Manual* (*JCAM*) offers the following joint understanding of the duties of the local committees:

> Local Safety and Health Committees have review responsibilities over accident prevention and health issues such as the review of safety and health suggestions, safety-related records and rules, dog bite prevention efforts, and the list of hazardous materials.
>
> On-the-spot inspection of particular troublesome areas may be made by individual Committee members, a subcommittee, or the Committee as a whole upon proper written request to the Chair of the Committee. Such request shall not be unreasonably denied. When so approved, the Committee members shall be on official time while making such inspection.
>
> A union representative from the local Safety and Health Committee may participate in the inspection(s) conducted by district safety and health services personnel in accordance with ELM Section 824, provided that the union represents employees at the facility being inspected. In no case shall there be more than one NALC representative on such inspections.

All of the above opens the door to the NALC, as one of the unions on the committee, to dive deep into an accident or hazard and question the factors/circumstances that led to the accident or the hazard. In the case of an accident, if we study what really happened, what really led to the accident, then and only then can we come up with a solution to prevent a similar injury for all the other employees.

We have all experienced management's investigation of an accident. Your supervisor is trained to find someone to blame instead of learning how it happened and how we can teach others to learn from what was discovered in an honest investigation.

Let's take a simple situation that led to an eye injury. A carrier returns to the office and advises his supervisor that while driving to his next delivery, he was struck in the eye and suffered an injury. What did the safety committee do in its investigation? What conclusions were drawn and what training was passed on to others?

Every accident is a challenge to understand, study, truly learn what happened, and find a solution that helps everyone.

Sadly, the above event is based on a true incident that is magnified by the following circumstances. The carrier had worked for the USPS for over 41 years. The

(continued on next page)

Director of Safety and Health

Safety committees (continued)

(continued from previous page)

date of his injury was his last scheduled day of work before his retirement. He was taken for medical care on the evening of his injury with a follow-up appointment four days later, at which time he was given some medicine because pressure was building behind his eye. He went into cardiac arrest almost immediately after taking the medicine while in the doctor's office.

This carrier died on what would have been his first day to enjoy a well-earned retirement. How would you feel if you worked at this facility, were a member of the local safety committee and discovered that a similar accident had taken place earlier, but the safety committee did not look into it?

If your installation does not have an NALC representative on the safety committee, step forward, contact your branch president and get involved.

Executive Vice President

Employment verification compliance (continued)

(continued from page 76)

ously completed I-9. Some branches and state associations find it easier to complete a new Form I-9 for all rehires.

Auditing and correcting Form I-9

It is good practice to periodically audit and make any necessary corrections to the I-9s. Remember to make all corrections in a different color of ink (red is suggested) to avoid the appearance of tampering with the timing or other compliance requirements. Some Form I-9 errors are technical and can be corrected, but others are substantive and could require new I-9s in addition to the original forms. Important: Never backdate a form! Periodic self-audits and corrections may assist employers in demonstrating a good-faith effort to comply with the law in the event of a government audit.

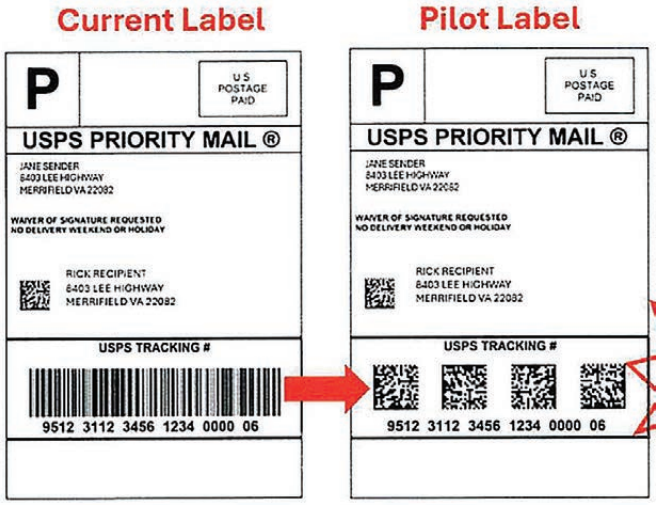
Given that both audits and raids are becoming more commonplace—and the criminal penalties and fines are severe—it is critical that branches and state associations have a robust I-9 compliance practice in place.

Director of City Delivery

City Delivery updates (continued)

(continued from page 80)

supplies to all post offices and customers. Based on the notification, the purpose of this pilot is to improve readability of packages in the postal network.



I will continue to share updates on the pilot tests and initiatives from USPS with the membership. Be sure to read my article each month and visit nalc.org for more information.