

# Time to rewire management's commitment to safety



**Manuel L. Peralta Jr.**

**T**he year begins anew with concerns and disappointments. Management continues its efforts to overturn Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) citations that found it in the wrong for anything, while at the same time claiming that safety comes first.

Last year, USPS spent much time and money studying the cost of compliance with safety recommendations from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). It argued that the cost of keeping you safe is just too expensive. That's right; your safety is measured against operational cost.

The bottom line will always come first until management decides that

your safety is more important.

## The 'jolt' management responds to

**A friend here in the building shared a metaphor that I believe well fits the current circumstances:**

Imagine that Safety and Operations each had their own conveyor belt, stationed side by side and operated by one supervisor. Each item coming down a conveyor belt would require the operator to turn toward it and act. A computer is assigned the task of judging each decision made by the operator. When a safety mistake occurs, the computer notifies the operator that a poor decision was made. When an operational mistake is made, the computer administers an electric shock.

Every day you can see how the the business is run: Management responds to that last jolt of electricity rather than focusing on contract and safety provisions.

Article 3 of the National Agreement gives management the exclusive right to manage "subject to the provisions" of the agreements we have made. Article 14 instructs management to develop a safe work environment and then instructs the union to help management live up to that obligation.

How management lives up to that obligation is key. Are your supervisors protecting you from harm, or do they put you in harm's way?

The next thing on my mind is how that jolt trickles downhill until management's behavior shocks *you*. We know that they should treat you with dignity and respect, but the truth is that managers are so programmed (aftershocks) to take it out on you that they don't even think to stop dead in their tracks. They can no longer control themselves. Shame, shame, shame.

## Where's the good faith?

**Earlier this year, USPS undercut our joint efforts on safety and health when it changed the Safety Captain program by ending long-standing practices and agreements with NALC and the other postal unions. Commitments were erased unilaterally while rebranding the program "Safety Ambassadors."**

Why are we disputing the decision? Management wants to allow for the use of peer-to-peer observations as a foundation for corrective action (discipline). Management also wants to be the one to decide who should serve as a carrier safety captain. It wants to choose who serves as a safety designee and, to top it off, wants to claim that we are doing this jointly. No!

Furthermore, earlier last year we discovered that management misled NALC when it "promised" it would not use information from the Counseling At Risk Employees (CARE) program against an employee—and then it used the information to fire a 30-year letter carrier. This is not the good-faith commitment we should expect of management in our safety programs.

Let's rewire the conveyor belts and get management's sincere attention to safety.

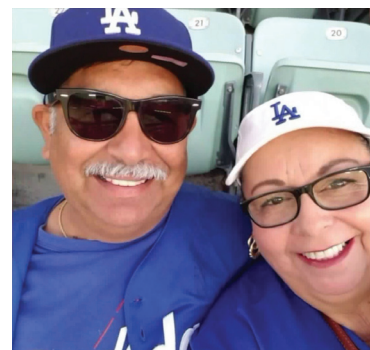
## Letter carrier killed

**On Monday, Dec. 3, 2018, while the new Executive Council convened for its first meeting of the new term, we were advised of a horrific accident involving Los Angeles, CA Branch 24 member Joel Perales.**

It is reported that Joel had just returned to his vehicle and was standing at the rear when he was struck by a driver who appeared to have been speeding. The accident is still in the investigative phase.

It is not too early to raise the concerns of where we stand whenever traffic passes us. In 2012, Branch 24 member Anthony Dunn died in what we call a Park Point Accident.

Keep an eye on each other.



**Los Angeles, CA Branch 24 member Joel Perales, shown with his wife in a family photo, was killed when he reportedly was struck by a speeding car as he stood behind his postal vehicle. He was 58.**