



## Greetings for a new year

I want to first of all thank you, the membership, for the honor and privilege of serving you as your new director of safety and health. I come from California having served as a shop steward and officer for Garden Grove Branch 1100 before I moved to the NBA office, where I served for 20 years as a regional administrative assistant and then national business agent.

I want to thank the membership and officers of my branch for all of their support and guidance through the years, especially thanking Brian Farris and Tom Young, who also served as NBAs and then resident officers for this union. I also want to thank the membership in Region 1 for their friendship and assistance as well as for all of the training that they provided through our experiences together.

I want to add a thank-you to President Rolando for his confidence in selecting me to be on his team of officers serving you.

**“If we (union and management alike) sincerely embrace what we have bargained for, then and only then will any venture on safety be successful.”**

There are many aspects of this new job that appear to be new, but when you look at them closely, you find that they are not. If we were thoroughly and properly trained as shop stewards, our teachers would have covered all aspects of the National Agreement, even though some articles appeal more to one union officer or shop steward than they do to others. If we were not thoroughly trained, we might have and should have stumbled on Article 14 after we read about light duty and prior to delving into the grievance procedure.

What we do at each level of this organization on the subject of safety draws its guidance from the simple words found in Article 14, Section 1 as follows:

*It is the responsibility of management to provide safe working conditions in all present and future installations and to develop a safe working force. The Union will cooperate with and assist management to live up to this responsibility....* (Emphasis added.)

The above is a simple yet complicated statement that causes us to spend much time pointing fingers at each other.

If we (union and management alike) sincerely embrace what we have bargained for, then and only then will any venture on safety be successful. We should begin by asking ourselves a series of questions to find a good solution. It could be simple or complex, depending on the situation that you are exploring. We might be faced with a vehicle accident that was caused by a series of bad decisions. We need to find out what actually led to each individual decision in the series so that we learn from those mistakes.

We need not only find out what the driver did, but why. Dig deep to find out the motivating factors that really led to the problem. Don't stop at the first answers. Keep digging.

Was it a lack of training? If so, why? What steps are we going to put in place to prevent another training failure? Did the employee take a safety short cut? If so, why? Was budget pressure a contributing factor? If so, why? How do we prevent the same cycle of events (series of bad decisions) the next time around?

Article 14, Section 4 of the National Agreement addresses

“Local Safety Committees” as follows:

At each postal installation having 50 or more employees, a Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee will be established. In installations having fewer than 50 employees, installation heads are encouraged to establish similar committees when requested by the Union. Where no Safety and Health Committee exists, safety and health items may be placed on the agenda and discussed at labor-management meetings.

The National Agreement places a responsibility on both sides to find out why an accident happened and then to come up with a solution as to how to prevent similar accidents in the future.

**Safety is everyone's business. Get involved. Contribute to the solution.** 