



NALC safety task force

In January, we held a meeting of the NALC-USPS National Safety Task Force. The NALC is represented on this task force by Mike Gorham, Boston Branch 34; Tom Gates, Eugene, OR Branch 916; and our newest member, Richard Thurman, St. Louis Branch 343. It is co-chaired by Region 6 National Business Agent Pat Carroll. This committee serves as an extension of the national committee as provided for in Article 14 of the National Agreement. I serve as a member of the committee by virtue of my position. The USPS is represented by its safety team at the headquarters level, led by Bob Brant, manager of safety and OSHA compliance programs.

Our committee meets by phone on a monthly basis and face-to-face on occasion throughout the year. Our purpose is to evaluate and make recommendations on all aspects of the Employer's Safety Program, to include program adequacy, implementation at the local level, and studies being conducted to improve the work environment.

During our January meeting, we discussed an issue involving LLV mirror modifications. In August 2009, the USPS issued a vehicle modification order, which instructed vehicle maintenance facility (VMF) to re-position the mirrors on an LLV when the vehicle was in for scheduled maintenance. The directive had not been brought to the attention of the NALC, nor had it been brought to the attention of the committee. The committee decided to study the change through surveys in two districts. Last December, we agreed that the modification would be ended and that the mirrors should be returned to their original configuration. In a Dec. 14 memo, the USPS issued the following directive:

VMO-01-09, Repositioning of LLV Right Side Mirrors (8/1/2009 edition), is cleared for obsolescence on 12/12/2011.

The task force also discussed a major mutual concern, that being roll-away vehicle accidents. We are at a loss as to why these continue to happen and how to get the message to each and every letter carrier that it is in all of our

interests to follow the safety rules that are put in place to protect you and our customers.

In the past, our regulations allowed us to leave our engines running if we were going to be out of the vehicle for less than 10 seconds. **Those rules were changed.** The regulation in the PO-701 now reads as follows:

245.27 Parking and Securing Vehicle. Whenever a driver leaves the vehicle, the vehicle must be parked. When parking, place vehicles with automatic transmissions in the park position (manual transmissions should be placed in gear), turn off the ignition, and remove the key. The hand parking brake must be engaged and the front wheels turned toward the curb on a flat surface or when the vehicle is facing downhill. If the vehicle is parked facing uphill, the front wheels should be turned away from the curb. Lock the vehicle if it will be out of sight of the driver.

Are we following the above rule, which was written to prevent disaster? We all know that managers will use this article to support their position in the event that you are issued discipline for not following the rule, so this is for you. If management pushes you to do more than you can do safely, file a grievance. If management tries to intimidate you into skipping safety rules and regulations, file a grievance. If management tries to infringe on your right to a safe work environment, file a grievance. Don't let them take away your rights. Be safe and do the right thing.

If you see a co-worker pushed to the point that they are giving up their rights to a safe work environment, contact your shop steward and provide a statement of your observation. We can prevail if we stick together and make sure that the truth is known. Fight like hell for the living!

In closing, I want to take a moment to thank John Foley, who was a member of this task force since 2005. John is now a retired member of Northeastern New York Branch 358 in Schenectady. We thank you for your service as a member of the committee and for your willingness to invest your time in our effort to help provide a safer work environment. ☒