

Are you setting an example at work?



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Last month, we addressed the subject of seat belts. We hope that you are taking the time to properly use this lifesaver and setting the right example for our newer employees.

Many years ago, I was assigned to represent two letter carriers from the same city who had been fired for telling someone to work safely. The employer turned the facts upside down and tried to fire these stewards for inciting a work slowdown. The arbitrators in both cases found that charge to be in violation of the National Agreement.

The facts of those cases established that a new non-career employee was willing to rush to earn

herself a career position. These two stewards warned the employee that she was working unsafely and that if she got hurt, she would not be re-hired. The new employee eventu-

ally got hurt and when it came time, the employer elected not to re-hire the employee. (The rules of the new National Agreement now require that if the employer does not need to re-hire a CCA, they must release the CCA with the lowest relative standing.)

“With a little courage and a little follow-up, we contribute to a safer work environment.”

I share the above because too often we don't speak up. When we remain silent, we fail our fellow letter carriers. When we do the right thing for the right reasons, we should prevail, and if we stick together, we will.

You encounter hazards every day. How you respond to those hazards helps you teach our newer employees what they should do under the same circumstances. Do you report them on a Form 1767, or do you leave that to someone else? If you hear a new employee comment on a hazard that they encountered and they don't report it, get the facts and report it yourself.

Section 814.2 at Paragraph C of the *ELM* provides that all employees are responsible for:

- c. Reporting recognized safety hazards and unsafe working conditions immediately.

Every day, a letter carrier gets hurt somewhere in this

country. The investigation of the injury requires that a number of questions be asked to find out how it happened. The accident investigation process is intended to discover the reasons for the accident, to learn from those facts, and to educate our employees on how to prevent such an accident.

Once a 1767 is turned in, the responsibility shifts to management to investigate the hazard report and to abate (put an end to) the hazard. If they cannot get the problem corrected immediately, they are required to keep us updated.

Section 824.632 of the *ELM* identifies the supervisor's responsibilities as follows:

The immediate supervisor must promptly (within the tour of duty):

- a. Investigate the alleged condition.
- b. Initiate immediate corrective action or make appropriate recommendations.
- c. Record actions or recommendations on PS Form 1767.
- d. Forward the original PS Form 1767 and one copy to the next appropriate level of management (approving official).
- e. Give the employee a copy signed by the supervisor as a receipt.
- f. Immediately forward the third copy to the safety office.

It is the supervisor's responsibility to monitor the status of the report at all times until the hazard is abated. If the hazard remains unabated longer than 7 calendar days, the supervisor must verbally inform the employee as to abatement status at the end of each 7-day interval.

If the supervisor does not agree that there is a hazard that must be corrected, he or she has a responsibility to inform you, as per Section B above. When they do, you have a responsibility to reach out to your shop steward or union officers and initiate a grievance if necessary.

If we don't follow up, the issue ends, the hazard continues, and someone will be exposed to the hazard you pointed out. Someone might even get hurt doing what you knew was unsafe.

With a little courage and a little follow-up, we contribute to a safer work environment.

On a closing note, we have recently read a number of news reports on serious and vicious dog attacks. We want to establish a national policy to address this most serious concern. To that end, we need and request your input and ideas. Please send any and all information on the best possible dog safety program and/or a description of the current dog safety program in your district or your installation. Keep an eye on each other.