

# “SAFETY, AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE”

EUGENE HORTON, NATIONAL CAD REPRESENTATIVE



In an ever-changing Postal Service we've withstood a COVID-19 pandemic, the fallout of Postal Realignment and Restructuring reducing 7 Areas to 4, a round of bargaining between the NPMHU/USPS, the establishing of a 10-year "Delivering for America" Plan. Amidst all of the revenue spent to achieve the mission of the 10-year plan, the Postal Service has not made a single financial, investment into the preserving the health and safety of our most precious commodity, the workforce, specifically, the Mail Handlers. None of the correspondence disseminated from Postal HQs makes even a mere mention of "Safety." It is as if our safety was intentionally omitted from the text of the 10-year plan. Put simply, safety and health for all intent and purpose lost its priority.

Members of the Joint Safety & Health Committee (JS&HC) recently met to discuss the revamping of safety and health activities across the country. We discussed that during the most health-challenged times in recent history of America, safety and health within the Postal Service was virtually non-existent. At the start of the pandemic, with virtual meetings in its infancy state, meetings were unsafe due to the lack of social distancing and other factors. The Realignment also adversely effected our safety and Health committees, given that the Postal Service reassigned qualified Safety Specialists from their safety positions to other non-safety positions within the Postal Service.

The JS&HC had discussions into various topics from accident and incident reporting, reporting potential hazards through abatement, processing HAZMAT on processing

machines, Flex Rover Sorter batteries catching fire during changing, bargained for training opportunities for regional representatives, and the growing concerns of potential violence in the workplace.

## ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORTING

Too many accidents/incidents occur but are never reported because of the stigma, and the concern that the employee will be disciplined/separated. This is commonplace amongst our newer employees. Injuries are sustained and no CA-1 is executed on the injured employee's behalf by the Service.

## REPORTING POTENTIAL HAZARDS THROUGH ABATEMENT

PS Form 1767's remains the proper form to make the Service aware of a potential hazard as well as the receipt for the ways and means in which the potential hazard was abated. These forms are made a part of the record at the respective District's Safety & Health Management Toolkit.

## PROCESSING HAZMAT ON MAIL PROCESSING EQUIPMENT

The JS&HC discussed the implementation of this practice as well as the concerns for potential mercury spills and spreading. The processing on the mail processing equipment as explained is separations of Surface and Air. For example: lithium batteries are considered mailable only by surface means. They're prohibited from air transport. The JS&HC will continue to discuss HAZMAT to ensure that it includes Mercury Spills.



### **FLEX ROVER SORTER BATTERIES CATCHING FIRE**

There were two incidents where lithium batteries caught fire in the same installation during the battery exchange. While the incidents were isolated to one facility, the Service, maintenance, and the manufacturer investigated the events which caused these highly flammable batteries to ignite and created a new MMO-123-23 as a preventive measure. This item was tabled by the JS&HC for the next meeting.

### **REGIONAL/AREA SAFETY & HEALTH REP TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

The JS&HC agreed when we revamp the Safety & Health Committees, the starting point to be effective is that our committee representatives are up to par with their counterparts with identical training as agreed upon. The JS&HC is looking into providing the training materials via a link, digital means or, hardcopies to the NPMHU.

### **POTENTIAL VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE**

As unfortunate as this topic is to discuss, it nonetheless needs to be discussed. Our membership is being subjected to bullying tactics by the hands of management. Systemic tactics include taking mail handlers off the clock when they're at work, misuse of the emergency procedures of 16.7, like an Indefinite Suspension, and never issuing subsequent discipline, to outright taunting these mail handlers to a fight. The need for intervention into some of these facilities is an absolute must.

### **TRANSPORTING DOUBLE-STACKED, CARDBOARD GAYLORD/TRI-WALLS (INSIDE FACILITIES)**

This is an absolute "No-No." The JS&HC had lengthy discussions with regards to why the NPMHU takes the position that this practice should not be permitted. The NPMHU stressed that there is no support for finding that this practice to be safe. The cardboard isn't stable enough to support the weight of another cardboard container of mail without collapsing while transporting. In fact, the PO-502 prohibits the transporting of double and or triple stacked, empty wire containers throughout the facility. The NPMHU called for an immediate cease on this practice until we have something definitive suggesting otherwise. The Service will research and follow up on this with us.

We agreed the HQs level would serve as a "model situation" for the lower levels. We would ensure the regional/area level committees would receive the direct support from the HQs level through our respective HQs representatives. We further agreed that the regional/area committees would mirror in identical support to their respective district committees and the districts to their respective installation level committees. Effective communication between the levels of the safety & health committees will quickly bridge the gap between accident/incident reporting and abatement. We will continue to ensure that "Safety" will be given the priority it properly deserves going forwards.