

THE AMERICAN

Postal Worker

APWU

May/June 2026

TALK IS CHEAP:
SAFETY
MATTERS.



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ABOUT THE COVER

This issue is dedicated entirely to the APWU’s *Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters* campaign. Across every column and every role represented by our union in these pages, you will find a shared focus on the practices, policies, and awareness needed to keep postal workers safe on the job.

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SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT

Orlando Anderson

OTHER NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENTS

Samuel Hernandez-Algarin Michael C. Vitug

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Talk Is Cheap: Safety Matters.

PRESIDENT JONATHAN SMITH

Let me start with something our contract makes crystal clear. Article 14 places the responsibility squarely on management to provide safe working conditions in every workplace. That is not a suggestion. That is not a goal. It is a requirement. But every single day, postal workers across this country are going to work in conditions that fall short of what our contract demands.

On our livestream in February, we heard about workers in Nevada who were exposed to an airborne chemical substance that caused burning in their eyes and throats while working. The supervisor told them to keep running the machine. They ran it for 45 more minutes while the workers' pain increased and their vision got worse. By the time the union was called, workers had lost their sight entirely. And when they tried to call 911, there was a dispute about whether management would even allow emergency services inside. Three hours of chaos followed, which should have been three minutes of emergency response.

In New Jersey, a coworker was struck by a tractor-trailer in an employee parking lot, losing her life. After that tragedy, it still took months of pressure to get temporary traffic lights installed at the crosswalks.

When I take stories like this to management, I ask them to tell me what price they are putting on a life. When they tell me they cannot afford to fix a hazard, I want you to imagine it is your mother walking across that crosswalk. I want you to imagine it is your family that gets that phone call. Because that is what we are talking about. And the APWU will no longer accept excuses dressed up as reasons.

We are not asking anymore. We are demanding. The APWU has launched our Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters campaign, and it begins with you. Every member needs to download the safety checklist at: apwu.org/safety. Walk into your facility tomorrow with that checklist. Go through it item by item. When was the last time you had a fire drill? Do you know where the emergency action plan is posted? Are *PS Form 1767*s accessible? These are requirements.

The *PS Form 1767* is your most powerful tool, but only if you use it correctly and you put your name on it. Anonymous complaints do not create accountability. You have to be willing to stand up and be counted. I know that takes courage, especially when you fear retaliation. But let me say this plainly: retaliation for using a *PS Form 1767* is prohibited. The union will back you. We will be there when it gets difficult, because solidarity is our strength, and there are more of us than there are of them.

We are also holding management accountable through the contract mechanisms we already have. Article 14 grievances work. Joint labor-management safety committees work. In New York, six local presidents came together for quarterly district safety meetings, and those meetings grew from a handful of officers to rooms with 20 managers present, including district managers, plant managers, and more. That is what collective action looks like. That is what happens when you stop going through the door alone and start going through it together.

ARTICLE 14 PLACES THE RESPONSIBILITY SQUARELY ON MANAGEMENT TO PROVIDE SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS IN EVERY WORKPLACE. THAT IS NOT A SUGGESTION.

This is just the beginning. The union works with you, not for you. We are going to give you the tools, the education, and the backing you need, but you have to get involved. Download the checklist. Fill out the *PS Form 1767*. Stand up with your coworkers. Demand what you are owed under Article 14. Every postal worker deserves to go to work and come home in one piece. That is not a privilege. That is your right. And together we are going to hold management accountable to that right. ■

This Issue Is All About Safety



This issue of *The American Postal Worker* magazine is dedicated entirely to safety. Across every column and every role represented by our union in these pages, you will find a shared focus on the practices, policies, and awareness needed to keep postal workers safe on the job. Whether you work in the Clerk, Maintenance, Motor Vehicle Service, or Support Services crafts, safety is your right and a priority of our union.

Postal workers face occupational hazards every day. From heavy equipment and repetitive-motion injuries to extreme temperatures and workplace harassment, we face serious risks to make sure America's mail gets to the right place. That is why workplace safety, from educating members to enforcing our contract, must be prioritized at every level of our union. This issue reflects that commitment by bringing together knowledge and guidance from APWU national officers.

Every officer has contributed their perspective on safety as it applies to their department's work. You will read about proper equipment handling, safety for retirees, talking about safety with new members, and the importance of reporting unsafe conditions. By highlighting these topics collectively, we want to send a powerful

message: safety is everyone's responsibility, and every level has a part to play.

This focus is part of our broader Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters campaign. It is not enough for management to talk about safety in meetings or post reminders on bulletin boards. We are taking matters into our own hands and holding management accountable to the promises they make and the provisions in our contract. Enough is enough.

A safe workplace is not a luxury; it is a fundamental right. Postal workers deserve to perform their duties in environments where our health and well-being are respected. As you read through this issue, we encourage you to consider how the information applies to your work. Think about the risks you see at work and the steps you can take to reduce them or report them. Just as importantly, think about how we can support one another in creating a culture where safety is a priority, and every one of us can go home safely at the end of our tour.

Together, we can move beyond empty promises from management and make safety a reality in every facility, every shift, and every task. ■

What is the AFL-CIO Safety Committee?



The AFL-CIO Safety Committee is an arm of the labor movement that works to strengthen workplace protections and reduce hazards across industries.

The committee plays a central role in shaping labor union policies on occupational safety and health and advocating for stronger federal and state regulations. It also engages in legislative efforts to expand protections for workers, often coordinating with agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Education and training are key components of the committee's mission. It provides unions and workers with resources, workshops, and programs designed to identify and prevent workplace risks. The committee also

supports research into emerging hazards and promotes higher safety standards nationwide.

Beyond policy and training, the group organizes campaigns and public events to raise awareness about worker safety. These include efforts tied to Workers' Memorial Day, which honors those killed or injured on the job and highlights ongoing safety challenges.

The committee also monitors employer compliance with safety regulations and pressures enforcement when violations occur. Through these combined efforts, it aims to improve working conditions and ensure that employers are held accountable for maintaining safe environments. The committee's work remains critical as industries evolve and new workplace risks continue to emerge across the country.

Unions that are part of the AFL-CIO are invited to participate in the committee, and the APWU is proud to be part of the work. ■

Role of the APWU National Safety Committee

Every postal worker should be able to go to their office with the reasonable expectation of doing their job in an environment free from preventable hazards and injuries. But management has been failing to uphold its responsibility for the safety and health of postal workers. Article 14 of the *APWU-USPS Collective Bargaining Agreement* requires management to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all employees covered by the agreement in all present and future installations and to develop a safe working force. To achieve this end, the contract provides for the establishment of joint safety and health committees at various levels throughout the Postal Service.

At the Headquarters level, there is the Joint Labor-Management Safety Committee and Joint Labor-Management Ergonomics Committee. The APWU's National Safety Committee is a cornerstone of the union's efforts to ensure a safe working environment for our members and meets with the USPS semi-annually to assist management in meeting its safety responsibilities.

The APWU National Safety Committee works to ensure that management implements safety programs and policies that will protect workers; reviews new equipment for ergonomics and safety factors; keeps track of the latest developments that affect postal workers' health

and safety – including new studies, regulations, and standards; and provides education and information to APWU members and locals.

The committee's work begins on the workroom floor. When APWU-represented workers report safety issues, the local Joint Labor-Management Safety Committees work to remedy them. If management fails to remedy safety issues at the district or area levels, they move to the Joint Labor-Management Safety Committees at the Headquarters level for resolution. The APWU National Safety Committee holds management accountable when the USPS fails to meet its responsibilities or follow the necessary procedures to maintain contractually guaranteed safe and healthy workplaces for our members.

Current APWU National Safety Committee members include Industrial Relations Director Charlie Cash, National Safety Specialist Don Barron, Maintenance Division Assistant Director Jason Treier, and Industrial Relations Executive Assistant Lee Branca. Work from this committee can bring real change to the workroom floor. For example, in icy conditions, postal workers are now issued slip-on traction devices to wear from their vehicles to the building during the winter. By raising our voices and enforcing our safety protections, we can make sure management gives us what we need to stay safe. ■

SAFETY COMMITTEES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Local safety committees and Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health meetings are two key tools for local APWU leaders to improve workplace conditions in postal facilities.

The Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee (JLMSHC) meetings are outlined and governed by the Postal Service's "Handbook EL-809." These committees operate at the local, district, and area levels, providing a structured forum for collaboration between labor and management on safety issues.

Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committees

Joint safety committees typically meet monthly or quarterly and include representation from postal management and APWU locals. Their mission is to identify and resolve workplace hazards, promote safety awareness, review accident and injury trends, and ensure compliance with established safety policies. Some locals will work together to schedule area-level meetings, bringing more power with their numbers.

A standard meeting agenda includes reviewing prior meeting minutes, discussing accidents and near-misses, tracking hazard abatement efforts, evaluating safety inspections, and considering worker suggestions. Committees are also responsible for investigating serious incidents, recommending corrective actions, and following up to ensure that hazards are addressed.

For local unions, these committees provide a mechanism to document and address safety concerns that

may later become formal grievances if left unresolved. Proactively addressing hazards helps prevent accidents and protects workers on the workroom floor.

Additionally, information gathered at the local level supports national union efforts by identifying trends and enforcing our contract. This allows the APWU's national leadership to respond strategically to recurring issues and recognize successful safety initiatives. This helps to identify and fix major safety lapses around the country.

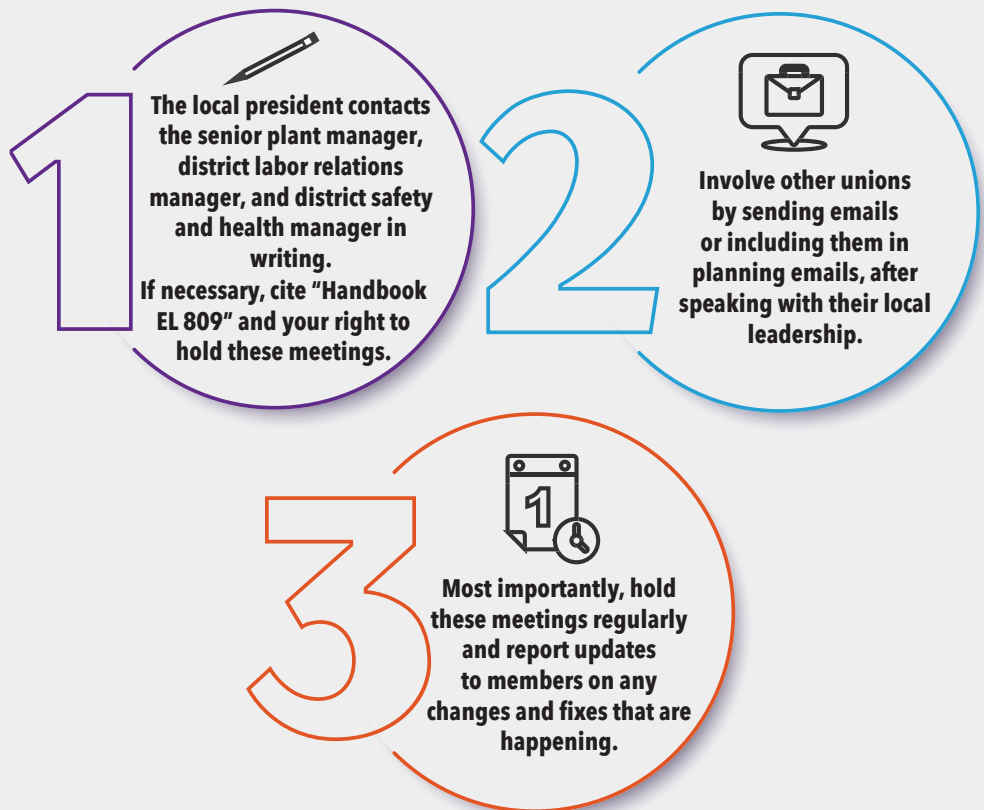
Best practices for locals include becoming familiar with the governing handbooks, ensuring consistent participation by elected officers, and inviting representatives from different crafts to attend meetings.

Local Safety Committee

Local safety committees are committees within a local union and are typically chaired by the local president or the industrial relations director. These meetings are often held during grievance committee sessions, where representatives raise safety concerns, review ongoing issues, and discuss activities related to Article 14 Safety and Health grievances. While these committees are separate from the JLMSHC, they offer an avenue for addressing workplace hazards at the local level and identifying issues that may need to go to the next JLMSHC meeting.

Together, these two committees can build a strong safety program and help enforce safety at every level of the Postal Service. ■

How to Start a Safety Committee



Rebecca Gill

Industrial Relations Director,
Salt Lake City Area Local, APWU

Rebecca Gill's alarm goes off at 7:30 a.m. By 9:30, she's already at the post office – and from that moment on, it is nonstop.

A Lead Clerk at the retail window of her post office, Rebecca starts every shift the same way – reviewing Time & Attendance Collection System (TACS) records and making sure her fellow clerks have what they need to do their work. But Rebecca's day is not just postal work and taking care of customers and coworkers. On top of her duties as Lead Clerk, Rebecca serves as industrial relations director of the Salt Lake City Area Local, a job that does not get to clock out.

As industrial relations director for her local, Rebecca serves as the safety coordinator. Stewards and members can reach her by email or text anytime a concern comes up, or they need advice on handling a grievance. Along with her union brothers and sisters, she attends the quarterly Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee meetings with her local and the USPS, where the group reviews *PS Form 1767s* that workers submit but have not yet been addressed. She also conducts monthly walks, known as Gemba walks, with postal managers, during which she and her counterpart at the USPS walk through the facilities together and address hazards.

"If we see any safety concerns, especially with the managers right there, we address it right then," she says. "So hopefully they can put in a work order, whatever needs to happen." When a steward sends her a *PS Form 1767*, she follows up with management and then follows up again with the steward to confirm the issue was actually resolved.

Rebecca was appointed to her current position about three years ago, after serving for years as a local union steward and then as the local customer service coordinator for the local. Safety was a new

"IF WE SEE ANY SAFETY CONCERNS, ESPECIALLY WITH THE MANAGERS RIGHT THERE, WE ADDRESS IT RIGHT THEN," SHE SAYS.

area for her, but she has been learning fast. She leans on the resources around her, connecting with management safety contacts, and thinking creatively. She recently floated an idea to the local's executive board about offering CPR training to all stewards. The suggestion came after hearing about a coworker who had collapsed on the job. "Ideas come from those things," she says.

32 Years and Still Showing Up

Rebecca has been with the Postal Service for 32 years. She was a union steward for at least 13 years, then a trustee, then a customer service coordinator, and now the local industrial relations director. It is not her title that keeps her motivated, though. For her, it is the people she gets to help. She said, "Sometimes I'm up at night thinking, stewing over a grievance..." and may even get up to write notes to herself so that she does not forget an argument she thought of in the dark.

She still remembers the employees she helped years ago and feels satisfaction when she sees them still working, still saying hello. "It is really fulfilling. For [workers], this is their livelihood, their life. So, I get to help them protect that – that's what we do. We protect; we help."

Her instinct is always to show up, to volunteer, to stay involved. "I'm happy to serve in this union," she says. "I love our union." ■





Stand Up for Safe Jobs!

What You Can Do About Unsafe Conditions PS FORM 1767 & YOU

Management has a legal and contractual obligation to provide a safe work environment. But we have an important role as well.

Look around your workplace. If you see something that concerns you, ask yourself: Can it hurt me? Can it make me sick? If the answer to either question is “yes,” then it’s unsafe.

What rights do I have?

Section 814.1 of the Employee Labor Relations Manual (ELM) says: “Employees have the right to: a. Become actively involved in the Postal Service’s safety and health program and be provided a safe and healthful work environment. b. Report unsafe and unhealthful working conditions using PS Form 1767, *Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice.*”

How do I report a hazard?

Fill out a PS Form 1767

Section 824.631 of the ELM says: “Any employee, or the representative of any employee, who believes that an unsafe or unhealthful condition exists in the workplace may do any or all of the following: a. File a report of the condition on PS Form 1767 with the immediate supervisor and request an inspection of the alleged condition...” *Remember to keep the blue copy of the form. And keep in mind, using the form is most effective if ALL employees take part.*

Where do I get PS Form 1767?

Article 14, Section 2 says: “A supply of PS Form 1767 must be readily available in the workplace...”

Can management retaliate?

No. Section 814.1.e. of the ELM states: “Employees have the right to: Participate in the safety and health program without fear of: Restraint, Interference, Coercion, Discrimination, or Reprisal.”

What must my supervisor do?

Section 824.632 of the ELM says: “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 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...”

Everyone has the right to leave work in one piece.

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR SAFE JOBS!

Keeping Postal Facilities Safe with a Checklist

Postal workers provide a critical service to our communities every day. No matter how rural the address or what the weather brings, we move the mail across the country and get the job done.



But what many do not realize is the dangers that postal workers like us face while doing our jobs. From moving heavy equipment to working in facilities lacking proper climate control, postal workers face more workplace dangers than those in other federal agencies. Our union contract guarantees us rights that keep us safe in these dangerous environments. But management is failing to meet its responsibility to follow the procedures to protect our safety and health. As postal workers are aware, serious workplace accidents and even deaths are far too common.

That is why we are saying, “Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters!” We demand more than promises—we need real action to prevent injuries and save lives. We can make that happen by standing together and demanding that management meet their obligations.

Here is how we can hold management accountable!

The APWU has created a new safety checklist for our members, which you can find on the opposite page. It is designed to help you identify workplace safety hazards and hold management accountable for fixing them.

From locating emergency exits in your facilities to ensuring *PS Form 1767s* are readily available, the comprehensive checklist helps keep management accountable and helps us keep each other safe. We encourage you to use the checklist and share it with your coworkers. Do not wait for permission to protect yourself. This campaign will only be as good as your involvement.

Use this checklist to ensure your workplace complies with safety guidelines and makes safety resources accessible to everyone. Let’s send a strong message to management that there is no compromise on our safety.

By staying informed, vigilant, and, most of all, united, we can make sure management treats workplace safety with the seriousness it deserves. We are done accepting excuses; it is time for action, because safety matters.



TALK IS CHEAP: SAFETY MATTERS.

Management has a duty to protect us and is failing. Use this checklist to ensure that your workplace is complying with safety guidelines.

USPS Workplace Safety: Quick Reference Checklist for All Workers

- Do you know your local emergency call procedure and where emergency numbers are posted?
- Can you identify emergency exits, evacuation routes, muster points, and alarm signals? You can call 9-1-1 for life-threatening emergencies.
- Is *PS Form 1767* available and accessible? Retaliation for reporting is prohibited!
- Are all injuries and illnesses reported to your supervisor immediately? You should obtain *CA-1* (injury) or *CA-2* (illness) form and receipt the same day.
- Do you tag and remove defective equipment from service using *PS Form 4707* and never operate unsafe or defective machinery?
- Do you know and exercise your safety rights? You have the right to a safe workplace, you can report hazards without retaliation, and you can participate in safety programs.
- Can you locate Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for chemicals in your work area? Do you isolate and report any leaking parcels or spills immediately?
- Do you verify equipment is fully locked out and tagged out before servicing? Never bypass guards or emergency stops.
- Do you only operate equipment for which you are trained and authorized?
- Do you use mechanical aids or team lifts when needed?
- Do you isolate suspicious mail immediately? Do not handle; keep distance; wash hands; call USPS stating "emergency."
- Do you document and report harassment that creates unsafe work conditions using *PS Form 1767*? If so, do you notify your union representative?
- Are current local emergency contact numbers maintained and posted? Including emergency services, safety office, security, hospital, and injury compensation.

Local Contacts (Post and Keep Current):

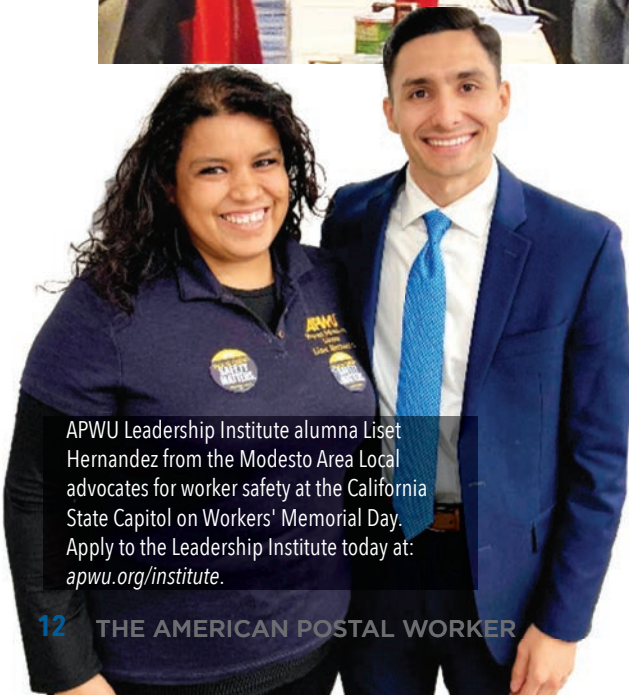
Rescue/EMS:	Hospital/Occ Health:
Police:	Fire:
Safety Officer/FSC:	Security:
Spill/Leak Team:	Injury Comp:

MEMBERS



APWU's Pittsburgh Metro Area Local Retiree Chapter members declare "U.S. Mail, Not for Sale" at a No Kings rally in Washington, PA.

APWU members attend the Secretary Treasurer's Conference in Atlanta, GA.



APWU Leadership Institute alumna Liset Hernandez from the Modesto Area Local advocates for worker safety at the California State Capitol on Workers' Memorial Day. Apply to the Leadership Institute today at: apwu.org/institute.



Stewards from the Tampa Area Local complete CPR training with National Safety Representative Don Barron!

IN ACTION



The Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee convenes for a regular meeting at the Tampa, FL P&DC.



APWU Central Regional Coordinator Amy Puhalski, Indiana State President Doug Brown, and Gary Local President Jose DeJesus take a photo with guest speaker Congressman Frank Mrvan, Indiana 1st Congressional District.



Indiana locals that raised significant Committee on Political Action (COPA) funds receive the IPWU COPA Award.



Indiana Postal Workers Union (IPWU) delegates attend the Indiana State Convention in April.

Holding Management Accountable to Safety on Workers' Memorial Day

On Workers' Memorial Day, APWU members took action at events nationwide to shine a light on the need for safety in postal installations and to honor those who were injured or lost their lives on the job. During the events, postal workers wore stickers branded with the Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters campaign slogan. By wearing stickers and submitting photos and selfies, postal workers showed that we are standing together in force to hold management accountable to the safety provisions guaranteed to us by our union contract.

Workers' Memorial Day, observed annually on April 28, is also the day when the *Occupational Safety and Health Act* took effect in 1970, and when the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was created 55 years ago in 1971.

This year, hundreds of APWU members took action by wearing stickers and sending us pictures. Even more filled out the safety checklists that we mailed to them. These checklists help workers familiarize themselves with the basic information they need to stay safe at work, like ensuring emergency numbers are up to date, and that they know where the *PS Form 1767 Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice* can be found if they need to report a safety hazard.

By staying informed, vigilant, and united, postal workers are making sure management treats workplace safety with the seriousness it deserves. This action shows that we are done accepting excuses and false promises and are ready to do what it takes to protect ourselves and our coworkers on the workroom floor. ■



**TALK IS CHEAP:
SAFETY MATTERS.**

MAKE

YOUR

VOICE

HEARD!

**APWU
SAFETY SURVEY**

Three lucky winners of The March-April issue of *The American Postal Worker* quiz:

Leigh Coffman, Northeast Tennessee Area Local

Steven Lipe, Oklahoma City Area Local

Eilene Melchor, Albuquerque Local

Instead of our usual quiz and crossword, this special safety issue of *the American Postal Worker* includes a survey about your safety at work.

APWU National is asking you to make your voice heard. We want to know what your experience is like in your workplace.

What does safety look like to you? What do you need to hold management accountable for our right to a safe and healthy workplace?

APWU members who complete the online survey will be entered for a chance to win a \$50 gift card to the APWU store.

Please go to apwu.org/safety-survey to find the survey, or scan the QR code below.



**WIN A
\$50 Gift
Card**



Postal Facilities Must Have the Capability to Dial 911 in an Emergency

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires covered employers, including the USPS, to record and report information on all work-related injuries and illnesses that require medical treatment beyond first aid or result in days away from work, restricted work, transfer, or death.

The Postal Service consistently reports some of the highest numbers of cases of severe workplace injuries and illnesses among federal agencies. Postal management can and must do better. In Fiscal Year 2025, OSHA recorded 27,971 on-the-job illnesses and injuries. One of the many ways the Postal Service can help keep workers safe is by improving cellular service in postal facilities for medical emergencies. Being unable to reach emergency services promptly could result in preventable deaths.

During a visit to the Atlanta Regional Distribution Center last year, which has experienced three worker deaths since it opened two years ago, I personally experienced a lack of cellular phone service. The APWU immediately reported this as a safety issue to postal management at the headquarters level, and we are still fighting to expand cellular capabilities at USPS facilities.

A real concern we have had since the implementation of the USPS Delivering for America plan is that employees at several new Regional Processing Centers have been unable to get cell phone service in the buildings, which lack adequate cellular capabilities and pose a risk during emergencies. Improving cellular capabilities is an easy, common-sense solution. Cell phones can be a safety device if you or a coworker needs emergency medical assistance. There could be a serious accident or workplace violence situation where you will need your phone and service to call for help. Time lost from no service or dropped calls could result in very real life-or-death situations.

If something serious happens to you on the job like a stroke, heart attack, convulsion, electrocution, workplace violence, fall, slip, trip, machine guarding accident, heat exhaustion, seizure, fire, explosion, or exposure to harmful substances, you must be able to have cell phone service to contact 911 for yourself or a coworker to get an immediate lifesaving first response.

If you work in a postal facility that has no cell phone service, you should complete a *PS Form 1767 Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice*, which should be easy to find and readily accessible in your workplace. Not having these forms available and accessible is a violation in itself. As a remedy, you should request that management provide cellular capabilities immediately. We need your help to keep you and your family safe! ■

DURING A VISIT TO THE ATLANTA REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION CENTER LAST YEAR, WHICH HAS EXPERIENCED THREE WORKER DEATHS SINCE IT OPENED TWO YEARS AGO, I PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED A LACK OF CELLULAR PHONE SERVICE. THE APWU IMMEDIATELY REPORTED THIS AS A SAFETY ISSUE TO POSTAL MANAGEMENT AT THE HEADQUARTERS LEVEL, AND WE ARE STILL FIGHTING TO EXPAND CELLULAR CAPABILITIES AT USPS FACILITIES.

OSHA and Your Contract Are a Formidable Force for Safety

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) sets the minimum legal standards for workplace safety, but our collective bargaining agreement adds another layer of security. Through the strength of our union and negotiations over the years, APWU members have secured stronger protections that reflect the real conditions we face every day on the workroom floor.

Too often, management puts their priorities ahead of our safety. That's why both OSHA regulations and our union contract protections matter. Neither was given freely; both were won through decades of

worker organizing, solidarity, and persistence.

When combined, OSHA enforcement and our union contract create a powerful system of protection for workers. OSHA establishes the legal baseline, while the APWU ensures those standards are enforced and improved upon through grievance procedures and joint labor-management safety and health committees. Our union contract also has safety protections that are stronger than or reinforce the OSHA baseline and address safety issues specific to postal work. All safety-related grievances can bypass the Step 1 meeting. That

means our union can meet on the issue and get a solution more quickly.

Postal workers have seen the impact of that power in recent years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the APWU fought for and won critical protections for postal workers. Our union secured personal protective equipment, stronger cleaning protocols, and additional paid leave for those who were sick with COVID. We held management accountable, forcing the USPS to provide masks, gloves, and sanitizer, and to address dangerous shortages.

All of this shows that our contract is not just words on paper; it is a tool that we can use to protect our lives. ■

OSHA 10-Hour Training Helps Create a Culture of Workplace Safety

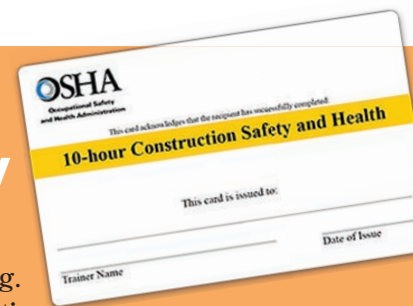
Along with our union contract, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has a unique training program to help keep our workplaces safe. OSHA offers a 10-hour general industry course as an introductory safety training program designed for workers across industrial sectors. Although it is not tailored to postal workers or postal installations, it is a great additional training to help prevent workplace accidents and injuries. You can find the training on OSHA's website, an OSHA-authorized online Outreach Provider like *osha.com*, or through other authorized providers near you. The course introduces workers to core safety principles, workplace hazards, and federal regulations under OSHA standards.

The 10-hour program covers hazard communication, personal protective equipment, electrical safety, emergency action plans, and machine guarding. It also provides an overview of worker rights and employer responsibilities under OSHA regulations. Participants must complete modules and pass assessments to earn a Department of Labor-issued completion card, also

known as a "10-Hour Card," which serves as proof of training. OSHA also offers a 30-Hour certification for workers who wish to pursue further training.

The training is useful for postal workers, as we work in large warehouses, sometimes facing exposure to physical and even chemical hazards. The course helps you recognize and prevent workplace dangers, reducing the likelihood of injuries, illnesses, and fatalities.

Moving mail around heavy machinery and bulky equipment means risks are inherent to our work, and the OSHA 10-hour general industry course serves as an important step in building a culture of workplace safety. By educating ourselves, the program helps create safer workplaces, ensures regulatory compliance, and ultimately protects both employees and employers from preventable harm. This training, along with a strong understanding and enforcement of our union contract, helps protect postal workers and ensures management provides a safe and healthy work environment. ■





Spring Cleaning Your Dues Checkoff

SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

Local and state officers rely on their Dues Checkoff (DCO) for union administration and to represent their members. The DCO ensures that locals and states meet constitutional obligations and provides funds to be used solely for the union and its members in accordance with section 501 of the *Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act* (LMRDA). To ensure the DCO is accurate, local presidents and treasurers should review it every two weeks. Performing a review maintains accuracy, and any errors can be corrected immediately. A review of the DCO also ensures that all funds received by the local or state coincide with the number of members in the local or state, and that the finance numbers assigned to the local or state are accurate.

For presidents and treasurers to have access to the DCO, the current officers must submit a “Local and State Officer Term Update” form to the APWU Per Capita Department. Upon receipt, the local profile will be updated, and access to local reports will then be available to them. Access to local reports allows officers to review dues deductions for accuracy, ensure finance numbers under their jurisdiction are correct, and correct any issues that arise from members transferring from the mail handler, letter carrier, and rural carrier unions to the APWU.

FOR PRESIDENTS AND TREASURERS TO HAVE ACCESS TO THE DUES CHECKOFF, THE CURRENT OFFICERS MUST SUBMIT A “LOCAL AND STATE OFFICER TERM UPDATE” FORM TO THE APWU PER CAPITA DEPARTMENT. UPON RECEIPT, THE LOCAL PROFILE WILL BE UPDATED, AND ACCESS TO LOCAL REPORTS WILL THEN BE AVAILABLE TO THEM.

Local and state presidents and treasurers can also make address changes for their members and administratively process member 1187 forms locally, if they have attended the required training provided by the

Per Capita Department. Local and state participation in this program and training is strictly voluntary. The Per Capita Department processes all address changes and 1187 forms for local and state affiliates.

SAVE THE DATE! May 15 - IRS 990 Reports Are Due

The IRS requires unions and retiree chapters, which have their own employer identification numbers (EINs) and separate bank accounts, to electronically submit an IRS Form 990 to maintain their tax-exempt status. The annual financial 990 report to the IRS is due on the 15th day of the fifth month after the fiscal year ends. Failing to file the report for three consecutive years can result in severe fines or the automatic revocation of the union’s tax-exempt status. **May 15** is the deadline for affiliates with a fiscal year ending December 31. There are three types of reports, and the sum of the annual receipts collected will determine which form the local, state, or retiree chapter should use to file electronically.

<u>Annual Receipts</u>	<u>990 form</u>
0-\$49,999	990-N
\$50,000-\$199,999	990-EZ
Over \$200,000	990

APWU Scholarship Deadline Is May 31!

For the children or grandchildren of current, retired, or deceased APWU members, the APWU Scholarship Program is one of the great benefits of being a member of the union. The 2026 APWU Scholarship Application forms are available on the Secretary-Treasurer’s web page at apwu.org/scholarship-programs.

The August 2026 APWU National Convention Resolutions Deadline is June 1

June 1 is the deadline to electronically submit resolutions for accepting and printing in the convention book. Resolutions are accepted from local or state affiliates, local and state retiree chapters, or from members-at-large (MAL), who are the only members permitted to submit resolutions under their own signature. ■

Get Safety Campaign Gear

You can now find gear for the Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters campaign online at the APWU store. The store has been updated to include a black T-shirt made with soft, breathable fabric. It is union and American-made, of course! For those who have stricter uniform guidelines, the APWU has also created a wristband so you can still show your union pride at work. All of this can be found online at apwustore.org. For those who are attending the 2026 Biennial Convention, merch will be available for purchase at the K + R booth in the vendor hall. Make sure you visit, because these items will certainly sell out! ■





Safety Practices at Work Must Become Second Nature

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR CHARLIE CASH

Safety is all around us. We may not even notice the safety-related things we do every single day, many of which we do without even thinking about them. I know that each time I get in my car, I instinctively buckle my seat belt. When I go to work in my yard, it is second nature for me to put on hearing and eye protection. In the kitchen, I do simple things like turning the pot and pan handles so they cannot be easily grabbed or get caught on my clothing. These are just second nature—but they are also safety practices.

No one else is going to do these things for me. No one at my home will force me to do these things. In comparison, this is how we must approach safety when we go to work at the post office each day. The contract says a safe work environment is management's responsibility. But when do you see them take that responsibility seriously on the workroom floor? I will tell you what my experience has shown: management takes its responsibility seriously when a person has already been injured.

Early in my postal career, just a few days out of probation, I was moving a fully loaded cage of letters. I was pulling that cage to the dock, and management was rushing me to get it there so the dispatch would not be late. While trying to make a sharp turn, I crashed the cage into the wall and crushed my hand. After the accident, I was investigated for not working safely because I was not pushing the cage. This was the first time in my new job as a mail processor that I was told, "push, don't pull." My point is, management had not cared for months that I was not doing the work safely. They could have stopped me and told me how to push a cage anytime, but because pulling was faster, they did not care until the reportable accident showed up in their stats. But once I learned that pushing was the correct way to move the cages, even though it slowed me down, I pushed the cages. And if management ever said anything about my pace, I would remind them this was the safe way I was instructed to perform the task, and they couldn't do a thing about it.

This is what we must do when we go to work. We must work to rule, no matter how much slower management may think it is. Article 34 of our contract states, "The principle of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay is recognized by all parties to this Agreement." It does not say you have to be the fastest, and it does not say to ignore safety rules to get the mail out. What this means is you do your job to the best of your ability and in the safest way possible.

SAFETY MUST BECOME ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS YOU THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU GO TO WORK...THINGS LIKE LOCK-OUT/TAG-OUT, CHECKING YOUR AREA FOR TRIP HAZARDS, REMOVING BROKEN EQUIPMENT FROM SERVICE AND "RED" TAGGING IT, AND USING PROPER LIFTING TECHNIQUES.

This must become second nature, just like putting on your seat belt. Things you hear every day should become muscle-memory actions. Things like lock-out/tag-out, checking your area for trip hazards, removing broken equipment from service and "red" tagging it, and using proper lifting techniques. And take the appropriate breaks to rest your bodies—yes, breaks are part of taking care of your safety. More injuries occur across all industries when employees are fatigued.

Safety must become one of the first things you think about when you go to work. I guarantee management will not make safety their first priority, at least not until you get hurt and they try to scapegoat their lack of safety enforcement onto you.

Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters! Solidarity! ■



Workplace Safety Is a Fundamental Right

Workplace safety and the health of postal workers are not just priorities; they are fundamental rights. Workplace safety is central to everything we do as a union, organizing, bargaining, and advocating for our members. Right now, that mission is more important than ever.

We are at a critical moment where protections that workers have fought decades to secure are being weakened. This Workers' Memorial Day served as both a time of remembrance and a call to action. The fight for safe working conditions is ongoing, and we must stand firm against efforts to roll back protections that save countless lives.

This year marks important milestones for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), which both reach 55 years of service. These agencies were created because working people demanded better, and unions organized, spoke out, and insisted that no one should risk their life to earn a living, and every worker deserves a safe job. Since then, unions have continued to push for stronger standards, better enforcement, and real accountability. Those efforts have created safer workplaces and prevented injuries, illnesses, and deaths. But today, those gains are under serious threat. Years of underfunding has weakened the system. Reduced staffing and resources, paired with recent attacks on regulatory agen-

cies, have stretched worker safety protections dangerously thin.

Each day, nearly 385 U.S. workers are killed by workplace hazards—including 15 from traumatic injuries and 370 from occupational diseases, and over 8,600 suffer preventable injuries or illnesses. Yet, safety enforcement has reached a historic low. OSHA is operating with fewer inspectors than ever; at the current pace, it would take nearly 200 years to inspect every U.S. workplace. Even more concerning, the funding allocated per worker is minimal, far too little to ensure meaningful oversight.

When enforcement is weakened, the consequences are predictable. Without proper oversight, too many employers fail to uphold even the most basic safety standards. Cuts to inspections, investigations, and enforcement increase the risk for every worker on the job.

We are also seeing broader efforts to dismantle the regulatory framework that protects workers. Attempts to weaken safety standards, eliminate protections, and slow or halt the development of new regulations threaten decades of progress, make it harder for OSHA to do its job, and prevent it from improving safety standards that benefit all workers.

Current workplace safety laws remain insufficient in many areas. Penalties for violations are often too low to serve as an effective deterrent. Workers who speak out about unsafe conditions continue to face retaliation, and serious hazards such as extreme heat, workplace violence,

infectious diseases, and exposure to harmful chemicals remain inadequately addressed. These are real and present dangers that demand attention and action.

Therefore, we must recommit ourselves to the fight for safer workplaces. That means standing together on the workroom floor, at the bargaining table, and in the halls of government. We must hold the Postal Service accountable for maintaining safe working conditions, push for stronger enforcement, demand that our government invest in the necessary resources to protect all workers effectively, and continue advocating for dignity and respect on the job.

For union members, having a voice at work is not just about wages or benefits, it can be a matter of life and death. Collective bargaining gives workers the power to demand safer conditions, better protections, and a more secure future for themselves and their families. We will continue to hold the line, defending the rights we have won and fighting for the protections we still need. Because at the end of the day, every worker deserves to return home safely to their loved ones.

That is not too much to ask. It is a fundamental right. ■

**WORKPLACE SAFETY IS
CENTRAL TO EVERYTHING
WE DO AS A UNION,
ORGANIZING, BARGAINING,
AND ADVOCATING FOR OUR
MEMBERS.**

Clerk Craft Receives Mixed Results in Two National Awards



Assistant Director **Ashley Cargill**, Assistant Director **Robert Romanowski**, Director **Lamont Brooks**, and Assistant Director **Sam Lisenbe**

Two recent national-level arbitration awards affecting Clerk Craft employees produced different outcomes. Both awards, however, clarified work assignments that should benefit our craft in the future.

Dispatch Coordinator

In 2022, the Postal Service created the new position of Dispatch Coordinator, originally assigning it to the Clerk Craft before later reassigning it to the Motor Vehicle Service Craft. Our case involved comparing the Dispatch Coordinator position to the General Expeditors position.

Arbitrator Homer LaRue disagreed with the union's evaluation, citing a crucial element of the Dispatch Coordinator's responsibility, "for the movement of trucks," to ensure proper, timely dispatches of mail at Regional Processing and Distribution Centers (RPDCs). By contrast, General Expeditors "primarily handle(s) the movement of mail." This difference in principal responsibilities was relied upon by the arbitrator, who maintained, "...the Dispatch Coordinator does not handle mail or engage in mail processing tasks," but rather the position's focus "remains on vehicle flow, yard visibility, and trip coordinator – not on mail flow."

The distinction between the Dispatch Coordinator and General Expeditors positions should reinforce the Clerk Craft's efforts to retain and acquire duties belonging to our craft.

Clerk Craft Jobs MOUs – Arbitrability

In a decision from Arbitrator Margo Newman involving Article 1.5 and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) relating to Clerk Craft jobs, the Postal Service claimed the case was not arbitrable due to what it perceived as a "factual dispute about the assignment of specific duties at a particular location." The arbitrator concluded that the union's case is arbitrable on the merits based on "the scope and meaning of the phrase 'non-managerial and non-supervisory work' in Article 1.5.A" and the relevant work-preservation MOUs.

The arbitrator noted that the union's position was evident by our statement that the cited contractual provisions draw a "bright red line" between bargaining unit work and managerial or supervisory duties, which

contradicts the Postal Service's claim of "shared duties." Furthermore, the Clerk Craft Jobs MOU points out the "presumption that the duties will be returned to the APWU craft" when work is in question. The award addressed the arbitrability of the dispute only and did not resolve the non-managerial, non-supervisory work issue. That determination is made when the parties proceed to the merits hearing.

Employees' Safety Vital in Mail Processing and Retail

Clerks working on Delivery Bar Code Sorters (DBCS) are routinely forced to operate the machines alone without proper staffing. This is not only a contractual violation, it could also cause injuries. In past years, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has investigated and issued ergonomic and safety assessments concerning the DBCS. The most important aspects are employees working safely on properly staffed DBCS machines.

The Joint Contract Interpretation Manual (JCIM) contains specific conditions for staffing the DBCS. Article 37 of the JCIM has Questions & Answers (Q&As) for DBCS staffing. These Q&As require a minimum of two clerks per machine "to address safety and ergonomic issues." During periods such as start-up or low mail volume, staffing remains at two clerks, with one performing allied duties.

Our members must demand compliance with these Q&As involving appropriate staffing of DBCS machines. If management fails or refuses to provide proper staffing, notify your steward.

For retail units, the Postal Service issued safety guidance in the Window Services Crime Prevention Booklet, which identifies subjects such as suspicious transactions, post office burglaries, and other situations in which the inspection service or police are notified. Also cited were procedures for handling money orders, checking for counterfeit or altered currency, and assault prevention. Handbook PO-209, Chapter 6, covers information regarding security and safety. It is an excellent tool for retail clerks handling mail, selling postal money orders, and dealing with registered and other accountable items. ■

Enforcing Safety Through the Maintenance Pecking Order for Filling Vacant Positions



Assistant Director Terry Martinez, Director Idowu Balogun, and Assistant Director Jason Treier

As proud members of the APWU, we have long championed the fundamental right of postal workers to return home safely after each shift. The connection between understaffing and workplace hazards is undeniable. When positions remain vacant, the burden falls on existing employees who are often required to work excessive overtime, cover additional routes, or perform additional duties, increasing the risk of fatigue-related injuries, workplace accidents, and long-term health problems.

This is why the Maintenance Division negotiated a pecking order for management to quickly fill vacant maintenance positions. That pecking order was updated during the 2024 contract negotiations. Locals and states must enforce compliance and demand that management quickly and correctly fill all vacant jobs.

National Agreement Article 38.8 - Updated Pecking Order:

1. *Select the ranking employee on the appropriate preferred assignment register (PAR).*
2. *An unassigned regular employee may be assigned to the vacant duty assignment.*
3. *Activate retreat rights for excessing which occurred under 12.5.C.4 (within craft and installation).*
4. *Consider higher-level qualified maintenance employees requesting change to lower level. A “previously submitted” written request for assignment to lower level must have been submitted prior to the close of the Notice of Intent (Article 38.5.A.10).*
5. *Select the ranking employee on the appropriate promotion eligibility register (PER).*
6. *a. Activate retreat rights for excessing which occurred under 12.5.C.5.*

- b. Offer former Maintenance Craft employees within the installation that were involuntarily reassigned into the installation and into another craft under 12.5.C.1 (discontinuance of an independent installation) and/or 12.5.C.5 (reduction in the number of employees in an installation other than by attrition). Selections shall be made using service seniority as defined in Article 38.2.E.*
7. *Select Maintenance Craft employees on the In-Service Register.*
8. *Select Maintenance Craft employees requesting a transfer:*
 - a. Maintenance Craft employees who are already qualified for the position in question;*
 - b. Maintenance Craft employees who are not qualified for the position in question but have been afforded an opportunity to qualify under the provisions for qualifying for transfer (see EL-304, Qualifying for Transfer).*
9. *Consider non-Maintenance Craft employees on the in-service register in score order:*
 - a. APWU represented career Craft employees;*
 - b. Other career bargaining unit postal employees.*
10. *Select current career employees for return to Maintenance Craft to a position previously held or to any position of equal or lower level for which he/she holds an eligibility rating. Employee must meet the time and eligibility criteria (outlined below).*
11. *Consider non-Maintenance requesting transfer through eReassign.*
12. *Consider former career postal employees for return to Maintenance Craft to a position previously held or to any position of equal or lower level for which he/she holds an eligibility rating. Applicants must meet the reinstatement requirements and the time and eligibility criteria (outlined below).*
13. *Consider APWU non-career bargaining unit employees with an in-service eligibility in score order.*
14. *Consider career National Rural Letter Carrier Association (NRLCA), Postal Police Officer, Nurse, Human Resource Shared Service Center (HRSSC) bargaining unit postal employees, with an in-service eligibility in score order.*
15. *Consider Executive and Administrative Schedule (EAS) employees in score order.*
16. *Consider entrance register eligibles in score order.*

USPS Selection Criteria Prohibitions

The USPS is prohibited from using attendance and safety records as selection criteria for Maintenance applicants. This principle is rooted in the negotiated framework between the APWU and the USPS, which governs how employees are considered for Maintenance positions. The intent is clear; selection must be based on merit, qualifications, and demonstrated ability to perform the position’s duties, not other subjective or potentially punitive factors.

Attendance records and safety incidents are not valid determinants of an employee’s ability to perform Maintenance duties. Introducing such factors into the selection process creates an uneven playing field and undermines the integrity of the negotiated procedures. ■

Driving and Working Safely



Director Michael Foster and Assistant Director Garrett Langley

Every Postal Worker has the Right to a Safe Workplace

There is a contractual expectation that management will provide safe working conditions and ensure a safe and healthy work environment for postal workers. Because of the enormous and often dangerous equipment postal workers use to process, maintain, and transport mail, we must demand that our workplaces and the equipment we use are properly maintained so that we return home safe at the end of the day. In support of the Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters campaign, this column will address Motor Vehicle Service (MVS) safety.

Why Isn't There a Grievance on Postal Vehicle Service Safety Vests?

The MVS Division has not filed any national disputes over the mandatory use of safety vests.

Over the years, far too many Postal Service Vehicle (PVS) drivers, other postal employees, contractors, and pedestrians have been severely injured or killed during the performance of postal service duties. But it is very difficult to challenge that safety vests are not a safety enhancement.

The issue of safety vests should be addressed by local union officers and monitored and regulated at the local and district levels to be effective.

Wearing and maintaining safety vests should be discussed at local Safety and Health Committee meetings. If PVS drivers are required to wear vests on the docks and in the yard, then all employees who operate in the same space should—the rules should apply equally. Local unions should discuss the upkeep, repair, and replacement of safety vests with management since drivers constantly load, unload, and drive in them. Management should replace equipment as it becomes soiled, torn, or worn, so it doesn't distract from the overall appearance of PVS uniforms.

As with so many other postal policies, safety rules are not implemented or enforced equally across the postal system. In some locations, management does not correct or address safety issues until something serious

happens. How many times have *PS Form 1767s* not been returned or the issues corrected? The *PS Form 1767* is designed to be completed in triplicate, with the employee retaining a copy for their records. Management must respond to this form within the employees' work shift. If unsafe conditions cannot be abated immediately, management officials should, at a minimum, update employees on the abatement progress weekly.

Vehicle Maintenance Facility Safety and Training on Next Generation Delivery Vehicles

In Vehicle Maintenance Facilities (VMFs), we must wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when performing duties in difficult, dangerous situations. Those situations may include battery-powered electric vehicles, where arc flash equipment is required to protect against high voltage electrocution. Proper, approved leather gloves over rubber gloves in addition to a face shield, rubber-soled boots, an arc flash-resistant jacket, and arc flash-resistant pants are required when working on battery-powered electric vehicles. There are special procedures for evaluating and testing PPE equipment before usage. Training for these procedures is provided at the NCED. PPE should be of good quality and used each time work is performed on high-voltage systems, including during training at the NCED. With the introduction of the Next Generation Delivery Vehicles (NGDVs) into the fleet, we must demand proper equipment and training to repair and maintain them; proper safety equipment must be used when repairing or operating all equipment in VMFs.

Forming local Safety and Health Committees, meeting in VMFs, and holding management accountable for safe workplaces are important ways to keep postal workers safe. Committee meetings should meet regularly, have formal agenda items, and include meeting minutes to record issues discussed between the parties. Article 14 of the union contract established a joint commitment to maintain a safe working environment. Everyone must play a part in ensuring a safe workplace, and the Safety and Health committees are crucial.

Work Safe and Drive Safe. ■

Safety and Support: The Vital Role of Occupational Health Nurses in APWU Support Services



Director Kimberly A. Maurer

Safety has always been a cornerstone of the APWU's mission. Every day, thousands of postal workers across the country perform demanding work that requires physical effort, attention to detail, and hours of standing, lifting, and repetitive motion. Ensuring that workers remain healthy and safe is a central mission for our union and the occupational health nurses (OHNs) in Support Services.

One of the most important, yet often underrecognized, contributors to workplace safety in the postal system are the OHNs.

The Demands of Postal Work

Postal workers perform jobs that can place significant strain on the body. Repetitive tasks, lifting heavy containers, standing for extended periods, and working in varying environmental conditions can increase the risk of workplace injuries.

Preventing these injuries requires more than policies and safety posters. It requires trained professionals who understand both medical care and the unique demands of the postal work environment. This is where OHNs play an essential role.

The First Line of Workplace Health Support

Occupational health nurses are a critical link between employee health and workplace safety. As part of the Support Services Craft, they are available to postal employees and can provide immediate medical assessment, guidance, and preventative care. When an employee experiences a workplace injury or health concern, they are often the first point of medical contact. Their ability to quickly assess a situation can prevent minor injuries from becoming more serious conditions.

Occupational health nurses evaluate workplace injuries and health concerns, provide immediate care and guidance, and can assist employees during the recovery and return-to-work process.

By addressing health issues early, they can help protect employees and reduce lost work time and long-term complications.

Prevention Through Education

One of the most valuable contributions OHNs make is in injury prevention and health education. Through workplace consultations, safety briefings, and individual guidance, they educate employees on topics such as: proper lifting techniques, hydration and heat-related illness prevention, and other injury prevention strategies.

Supporting Employees Through Recovery

Workplace injuries can be stressful for employees, both physically and emotionally. OHNs provide an important support system during the recovery process. They help employees understand their medical care, monitor recovery progress, and collaborate with safety teams and supervisors to ensure a safe and appropriate return to work. Their involvement helps employees feel supported and informed throughout the process.

This support is particularly valuable in a physically demanding work environment such as the USPS, where safely returning to work is essential for an employee's well-being.

Strengthening the Culture of Safety

The presence of OHNs contributes to a stronger culture of safety throughout the workplace. Their expertise, compassion, and preventative approach reinforce the message that employee health is a shared responsibility. By collaborating with safety committees, union representatives, and workplace leadership, they identify injury trends and recommend improvements to make postal facilities safer for everyone.

A Shared Commitment to Safety

A priority of the APWU has always included advocating for safe working conditions and protecting our members' well-being. OHNs are an essential part of that effort. Their dedication to employee health ensures that postal workers receive the care, guidance, and support they need to perform their jobs safely.

At the end of every shift, every postal worker should be able to return home safely and in good health. Through their work in prevention, care, and recovery, OHNs help make that goal a reality for our members and postal employees nationwide. ■



Central Region Coordinator Amy Puhalski

Safety Is a Fundamental Right for All Employees at the USPS

Greetings APWU family. As Central Region Coordinator, I oversee many issues in the 13 states that I represent. This month, I want to discuss one that is especially important and often gets overlooked by postal management. I continue to read articles in USPS publications about safety. Yet there are so many safety violations across the country that put postal workers in harm's way. USPS management needs to do better and recognize that there are Executive and Administrative Schedule (EAS) employees who do nothing to ensure facilities are safe.

Safety is a fundamental right for all employees who work for the United States Postal Service. We recognize that all APWU members work tirelessly to keep the mail moving, often under demanding conditions. Ensuring safe workplaces must remain a shared responsibility between management and employees, with accountability at every level.

USPS employees face a wide range of hazards, from repetitive motion injuries and heavy lifting to extreme temperatures and outdated equipment. These risks are real, and without proper safeguards, can lead to serious injuries and long-term health issues.

APWU leadership continues to advocate for improved working conditions, including proper staffing, functional equipment, and climate-controlled facilities. We recognize that when work environments are safe, you are all better prepared to perform your duties efficiently and with confidence.

I encourage you all to speak up when you see unsafe conditions. Reporting hazards with a *PS Form 1767 Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice*, participating in safety committees and meetings, and knowing your rights are all critical steps in preventing accidents before they happen. We cannot be silent. If you see something, say something. If management does

nothing to address your concerns, please reach out to your local union. If your local continues to have issues, they can reach out to us, your regional coordinators, to address them. Please do not be discouraged or intimidated into not reporting unsafe conditions.

Union solidarity plays a key role in workplace safety. We need to continue to educate ourselves and share that education with newer employees. By standing together, we can hold management accountable and push for necessary changes.

Key handbooks and manuals that provide guidance include Article 14 of the *APWU-USPS Collective Bargaining Agreement*; the "Employee and Labor Relations Manual" ELM Section 800; EL-801; EL-809; EL-814; and MS-10. A *PS Form 1767* should be located and easily accessible in every facility for you to report unsafe conditions.

At the end of the day, every worker deserves to return home safely. ■

**REPORTING HAZARDS WITH
A PS FORM 1767 REPORT OF
HAZARD, UNSAFE CONDITION
OR PRACTICE, PARTICIPATING
IN SAFETY COMMITTEES AND
MEETINGS, AND KNOWING YOUR
RIGHTS ARE ALL CRITICAL STEPS
IN PREVENTING ACCIDENTS
BEFORE THEY HAPPEN.**



Judy Beard, Director

The Numbers Don't Lie: Vote-by-Mail Is Safe, Secure, Reliable

As the November elections near, Vote-by-Mail has dominated the headlines. In March, the White House issued an executive order mandating that the USPS regulate who can receive ballots, and lawmakers in Congress are debating potential restrictions on Vote-by-Mail. It is important to know the facts.

There are many safeguards in place at each phase of the mail-in voting process. Voter registration verification, ballot tracking, and signature matching are just some of the ways that states keep Vote-by-Mail safe. According to the Institute for Responsive Government, “like ballots cast in person, mail ballots are subject to sophisticated and redundant chain-of-custody protocols, physical seals and barriers, exceedingly controlled access, bipartisan teams, and surveillance.”

When it comes to the security of voting by mail, studies show that voter fraud is extremely rare. The Brookings Institution reported that there have been fewer than 200 cases of mail-voting fraud between 2016 and 2022, amounting to 0.000043%, or about 1 in 2.5 million. A person is more likely to get struck by lightning than to cast a fraudulent mail-in ballot.

In terms of reliability, the USPS reports that since 2020, postal workers delivered over 97% of ballots in federal elections to election officials within just three days. That number jumps to over 99.8% of ballots delivered within one week. The table to the right, titled “USPS Post-Election Reports,” clearly illustrates that the American people can rely on us to process and deliver their ballots on time.

Voting by mail has many additional benefits, including accessibility and higher turnout. Casting a mail-in ballot allows millions of Americans who would have otherwise stayed home to vote. This applies to many registered voters, including those without access to transportation, those with disabilities, those living in rural areas, those without paid time off to vote, and more.

Vote-by-Mail is not a partisan issue. Republican states like Utah and Democratic states like California mail ballots to every registered voter. The Pew Research Center reports that almost 60% of Americans favor “allowing any voter to vote by mail if they want to.”

As postal workers, we have proven that we can efficiently process and deliver ballots during every election season. In addition to “extraordinary measures,” the Postal Service also has an Election Mail Task Force, which includes both management and the postal unions. Statistics show that our work makes Vote-by-Mail reliable, secure from fraud, and a safe voting option for millions of Americans.

Safety Spotlight: Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 1065)

With attacks on postal workers becoming increasingly common members of Congress are taking action. Representatives Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-01) and Greg Landsman (D-OH-01) introduced the bipartisan *Protect Our Letter Carriers Act* (H.R. 1065) last year. If passed and signed into law, this bill would replace arrow keys with electronic keys, introduce new high-security collection boxes, expedite investigations into postal crimes, and strengthen penalties for offenders. While the bill directly names letter carriers, crimes against any postal worker in custody of mail are included. We must stand in solidarity to support H.R. 1065, the *Protect Our Letter Carriers Act!*

USPS Post-Election Reports			
	2020	2022	2024
Percentage of ballots delivered from voters to election officials within seven days	99.89%	99.93%	99.88%
Percentage of ballots delivered from voters to election officials within five days	99.7%	99.82%	99.64%
Percentage of ballots delivered from voters to election officials within three days	97.9%	98.96%	97.73%
Days on average to deliver ballots from voters to election officials	1.6 Days	Less than 2 Days	1 Day

Sources: USPS 2020 Post-Election Analysis, USPS 2022 Post-Election Analysis, USPS 2024 Post Election-Analysis



Anna Smith, Director

Organizing for Safety

When our union president, Jonathan Smith, asked us to focus on workplace safety for this issue, I will be honest, I did not realize just how deep this topic really goes. Like a lot of us, I usually think first about wages and benefits when it comes to union organizing. Safety matters, of course, but it is not always the first thing that comes to mind.

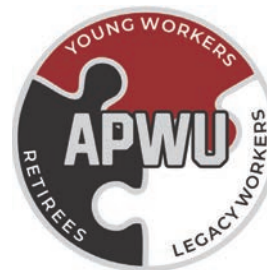
While I am aware of some significant historical events in which union organizing resulted from inadequate safety measures, I decided to dig deeper.

A lot of what we take for granted in the workplace, like having accessible fire exits, safety talks, protective gear, and even the ability to speak up when something does not feel right, did not just happen by chance. They came from workers who were put in bad situations and decided something needed to change.

Take the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. Workers could not even leave the building because the doors were locked. Or the Hawks Nest Tunnel disaster, in which workers were exposed to deadly conditions without warning. Those events are why safety standards exist today. Situations like these are the kind of things that led to some of the protections we have now.

And it is not just history when workers have come together over safety concerns; you see and hear about it today. I think everyone knows about the horrifying work conditions at Amazon warehouses. But did you know workers at those facilities have been speaking up about safety, workloads, and what they are dealing with, trying to get through their shift without getting hurt. The same thing happens in health care. You have seen it in the news for years, where workers talk about staffing levels, having the right equipment, and being able to do their jobs without putting their own health at risk.

While we may work in different industries and situations, it all comes down to one thing: workers coming together because they want to be safe at work. Safety is one of the reasons unions exist today! Many of the protections we have today came from people before us who spoke up and stood together. And if we are not pay-



**OUR FUTURE IS
IN OUR HANDS**
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO

ing attention, if we are not willing to do the same, those protections will weaken or become obsolete.

At the end of the day, safety is not just a talking point to join your union. It is about making sure we all go home at the end of our shifts, in the same way we began our tour.

Organizing in Action Spotlight

One of the most important tools we have for organizing is something that we have already fought for and secured in our contract, union orientation.

Scott Adams, general president of the Portland Area Local (ME) and secretary for the Maine Postal Workers Union, recently shared a great example of why that time matters. During an orientation, a new employee asked if everyone has to join the union, and what power we really have if we cannot strike. Scott took the time to walk through those questions and explain what collective power actually looks like.

By the end of the conversation, that same employee turned in her membership application and shared that she had been telling people not to join the union for the past 25 years. That changed in one conversation.

That is the impact of orientation! It is more than just providing information; it is our opportunity to connect, answer real questions, and show the value of standing together. ■

Scan the QR code to sign your local up for and to be a part of the National Organizing Campaign. Let's grow our union together.



Local Pledge



Joyce B. Robinson, Director

Safety at Home

The APWU takes a firm stance on workplace safety and demands that management provide safe working conditions, proper equipment, and adhere to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. Although workplace safety is paramount, at-home safety is also very important. Safety tips include keeping emergency contact numbers on every phone, knowing the poison control hotline (1-800-222-1222), keeping fire extinguishers on every floor, and dialing 911 in emergencies for fire, police, or ambulance services.

Other Key Safety Measures:

Homes have hidden hazards that could be harmful. Installing smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors on every floor, changing batteries twice a year, and keeping an emergency ladder for upper levels of your home can save lives. Other factors to consider include:

- Creating a family fire escape plan with a designated outside meeting spot; have a first aid kit available.
- Keeping stairways and walkways clear of tripping hazards.
- Scheduling annual inspections for furnaces, hot-water heaters, gas appliances, chimneys, and flues.
- Never using kerosene or gas space heaters in unvented rooms. Do not keep cars, motorcycles, or lawn mowers running in closed or attached garages.
- Being cautious when using ladders, inspecting them for loose or worn parts, and using them only on stable, level ground.
- Wearing protective footwear and eyewear when mowing the lawn or operating machinery and power tools.
- Installing decorative markers on glass doors so that people do not walk into them.

Emergency Preparation Room-by-Room Tips

Make safety plans for each room of your home to exit safely in an emergency. Ensure walkways are wide enough for mobility aids. Place frequently used items on lower shelves. Use nightlights in the bedroom, hallway, and bathroom.

- **Kitchens:** Turn pot handles inward on stoves or place pots on back burners. Store glass objects or appliances with sharp blades, and keep plastic garbage, dry-cleaning, grocery, and sandwich bags out of reach. Put matches and lighters in a locked cabinet.

- **Bathrooms:** Use nonslip mats on floors and install grab bars in tubs and showers. Store medicine in original containers. Place bottles of mouthwash, perfume, hair spray, nail polish, scissors, razor blades, or sharp tools out of children's reach. Install emergency releases on the outsides of your bathroom and bedroom doors, or remove locks so children cannot lock themselves in. Unplug curling irons, hair dryers, and electric razors when not in use.
- **Bedrooms:** Place dressers close to walls to prevent tipping and secure them to the wall to prevent tipping. For young children, use cribs that meet current safety standards and have a firm, tight-fitting mattress so children cannot slip between the cracks or crib sides. Never place blankets, pillows, or stuffed animals in cribs. Babies should never sleep with adults, as it puts them at risk for suffocation or strangulation. Make sure toy chests are non-locking and that lids have safety mechanisms to keep them from slamming closed.
- **Living Rooms:** Anchor televisions and shelves, remove throw rugs, ensure adequate lighting, and use childproof covers for outlets.
- **Outdoors:** Inspect swing sets to make sure they are free from rust and sharp edges. Keep young children away from lawn mowers and other sharp garden equipment. For swimming pools, install a four-sided fence with an automatic child-proof gate, and remove ladders when not in use.

Following these safety tips can help prevent injuries, illnesses, and fatalities. ■

Resources: www.ready.gov, an official website of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



Instructors and graduates of the NBA Arbitration Training Boot Camp held in February. (Seated front center) Research and Education Director Joyce B. Robinson, with Class Valedictorian Leo Kreyenbuhl to her right.

Holding the Veterans Affairs Secretary Accountable for the Severely Damaged Veterans' Health Care System

In February 2025, representatives from Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) began working with the newly appointed Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Doug Collins to identify alleged wasteful contracts and improve VA operations. DOGE cancelled hundreds of VA contracts and carried out thousands of staffing reductions, including the dismissal of probationary employees, under the downsizing initiatives. By January 2026, the VA had shed another 40,000 jobs through resignations, retirements, and hiring freezes.

So, with all of the job cuts in 2025, how can Secretary Collins claim the current administration has improved the VA health care system for veterans in 2026? An August 2024

Report by the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute, titled "A Second Trump Term Would Decimate Veterans' Healthcare and Benefits: Analyzing the Impacts of Project 2025 on the Veterans Health and Benefits Administrations," accurately predicted that the damage to veterans and the VA's disability benefits system would include longer wait times, worsened outcomes for compensation and pension decisions, more errors in VA claims decisions, anti-veteran regulations, eliminated benefits, and a purge of top VA career federal officials. More private, for-profit companies will now perform disability medical examinations, creating a blended workforce with more contractors processing claims. This will make it much harder for veterans to get a disability rating based on their service-connected conditions. Veterans are seeing a system gutted by budget cuts, outsourced care, and ceaseless attacks on organized labor, which represents tens of thousands of veteran workers.

On March 9, 2026, the VA issued a press release titled, *VA Moves to Speed Up Community Care Appointment Scheduling*, which states that "The new External Provider Scheduling system gives VA employees instant access to the scheduling systems of all community care

providers who participate in this program. With that information, VA can immediately book appointments for Veterans that fit their schedules." This means that the VA Secretary announced the creation of a new community care scheduling system designed to outsource appointment scheduling, using artificial intelligence (AI) and automation to process veterans' disability claims. Secretary Collins was sworn into office in February 2025. How could he claim that he improved the veterans' health care system if he let DOGE put VA jobs and programs on the chopping block? Veterans must hold Secretary Collins accountable for the current state of Veterans' health care.

The AFL-CIO's Union Veterans Council (UVC) responded on March 13, addressing the VA's plans to use AI to review over one million disability benefits questionnaires and claims. "We recognize the importance of maintaining the integrity of the VA benefits system," said UVC Executive Director Craig Romanovich. "However, the implementation of AI must not come at the expense of transparency or the rights of individual Veterans. When we begin treating the VBA's obligations as a budgetary line item to be managed by algorithms, we risk losing sight of the service and sacrifice those benefits are meant to honor." Our goal is to ensure that technology is used to support veterans, not to create new barriers to veterans' care. "Decisions that impact a Veteran's livelihood must remain rooted in human judgment and medical expertise. We are calling for clear guardrails and Congressional oversight, to ensure that no Veteran's due process is compromised by an automated system."

The UVC is an official AFL-CIO constituency organization. The APWU is one of 36 unions on the governing board. The council was established in 2009 to bring working-class veterans together to speak out on the issues that impact us most: the need for good jobs and a strong, fully funded, and staffed VA. The UVC remains committed to working with the VA and Congress to ensure that the veterans' claims process remains fair, accurate, and focused on the needs of those who served. ■



Daleo Freeman, Director

A Culture of Safety: Protecting Our Own

As a postal worker and former president of the William H. Burrus Cleveland Area Local, I have witnessed the devastating impact workplace injuries have on our members and their families. We are passionate about promoting safety and providing support for our members. Safety and health aren't just priorities; they are a core value. This guides everything we do, from how we handle equipment to how we treat one another. When we prioritize safety, we become more productive, engaged, and committed to our work. Most importantly, it ensures that we return home to our families at the end of the day, healthy and happy.

In our department, we have programs such as the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) and the *Federal Employees' Compensation Act* (FECA) that provide essential support to workers injured on the job. These programs provide medical treatment, wage replacement benefits, and vocational rehabilitation services to help our members recover and return to work. We also have the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which provides confidential counseling services and resources to help workers cope with stress, anxiety, and other mental health concerns. If you are struggling with mental health issues or know someone who is, please reach out for help. The EAP program offers confidential counseling and resources at www.eap4you.com. Unfortunately, we have observed an increase in suicide rates among our members, a tragedy that affects us all. This situation underscores the importance of prioritizing safety and well-being in our workplace. We must come together to support one another in our efforts to promote safety.

We offer OWCP training to help our members when they get hurt. We have trained over 9,000 members. We all have a role in fostering a culture of safety and doing our best to help out the next brother or sister, and we all benefit when we work together to prevent workplace injuries. To address this, we are working with President Jonathan Smith, the APWU National Executive Board, and officers nationwide. Safety is a journey, not a destination. It requires effort and commitment from all of us. I believe we can create a culture of safety and health.

As we move forward, I encourage you to take an active role in promoting safety and health in your workplace. Report hazards with a *PS Form 1767*, speak up if you see something wrong, and support your fellow members in our safety efforts. Together, we can create a culture of safety that is ingrained in everything we do. Let's integrate safety into our daily routines, our conversations, and our values.

Our goal is to establish a proactive approach rather than a reactive one. We aim to prevent injuries and illnesses, not respond to them.

WE UNDERSTAND THAT MAINTAINING FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS WHILE INJURED IS IMPORTANT. IF YOU ARE INJURED AT WORK, WE WANT YOU TO KNOW YOUR RIGHTS ON HOW YOU CAN PROPERLY FILE AN INJURY CLAIM.

At the APWU, we recognize that safety is a collective effort. Each of us has a role in promoting a culture of safety, and we all benefit when we collaborate to prevent workplace injuries.

While we fight for safe workplaces, the reality is that injuries do occur. We have a booklet, titled "Workers' Compensation Guidance for APWU Members Injured at Work," that you can view or download at apwu.org/human-relations. The guide can inform and assist you through the process of reporting injuries, getting claims approved, and accessing benefits.

We understand that maintaining financial obligations while injured is important. If you are injured at work, we want you to know your rights on how you can properly file an injury claim. Prioritizing safety is not only the right thing to do, it is also the smart approach. Let's make safety an integral part of our workplace culture. Together, we can create a safer and healthier environment for all. Let's make safety and health our top priority, not just this month, but every month. ■



Nancy Olumekor, Director

Falls Aren't Just 'A Part of Getting Older'

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for older adults. But most falls are preventable and result from identifiable risk factors that can be addressed. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in four Americans over age 65 falls each year.

Most falls happen when multiple factors align. Medical factors include: side effects from medication, vision or hearing problems, muscle weakness, balance issues, foot problems, and cognitive decline. Environmental factors at home include: poor lighting, loose rugs, clutter, obstacles, stairs without handrails, pets underfoot, and inappropriate footwear. Behavioral factors, such as rushing, not using assistive devices, walking in the dark, and not asking for help, can also cause falls. Fall prevention can be accomplished by:

- Removing hazards in the home and adding support.
- Exercising for strength and balance.
- Reviewing medications to identify their risks.
- Taking care of your vision and hearing.
- Wearing supportive, non-slip footwear.
- Encouraging caregiver vigilance.
- Participating in physical therapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT), and getting medical assessments when needed.

Home Safety Assessments

Conducting routine home safety assessments allows you to identify fall risks and make modifications to reduce or prevent falls. All entryways should have good lighting; pathways should be clear throughout the house; and light switches should be within easy reach. Cords should be secured along walls, not across paths. Use chairs with armrests for support, step stools with handrails (if reaching is necessary) for rising, and sit while doing tasks if you can. Clear a path from bedrooms to bathrooms, keep beds at an appropriate height, and reduce clutter. Stairs should have secure handrails on both sides and good lighting at the top and bottom landings. Install low-cost and moderate-cost modifications to reduce fall risks, such as night lights, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, non-slip bathtub

strips, rubber-backed rugs, grab-bars, cord organizers, raised toilet seats, shower benches, handrails for stairs, and improved lighting fixtures.

Exercising to Prevent Falls

Exercise helps prevent falls by building muscle strength (especially legs), improving balance, increasing flexibility, and maintaining bone density. Physical therapists can design at-home, fall-prevention exercises for leg strengthening and balance. Be sure to consult with a doctor before starting new exercise routines.

Medical Considerations

Medications, especially sedatives and painkillers, that can cause drowsiness, confusion, dizziness, low blood sugar, dehydration, and low blood pressure, are high-risk and pose major fall risks. Your doctor can review fall-risk medications and request alternatives if high-risk medications aren't essential. Remember, never stop medications without your doctor's guidance.

Get regular eye exams and keep prescriptions up to date. Use prescribed hearing aids, as untreated hearing loss increases your risk of falls.

The right shoes matter. Keep supportive, non-slip shoes for indoor use only. Avoid walking barefoot or in socks without grip, high heels, worn-out shoes, backless slippers, flip flops, or shoes that are too big.

Caregivers have a significant role in preventing falls by observing and reporting when clients appear unsteady, there are new obstacles or hazards, or when clients seem drowsy or confused by medications.

Physical therapists can assess fall risk, prescribe specific exercises, and recommend assistive devices if there is a history of falls, visible balance problems, or a decline in mobility. Occupational therapists can provide home safety assessments and recommend adaptive equipment for daily activities.

Consider fall-prevention technology, including medical alert systems, smart, voice-activated devices with fall detection, and other features that detect changes in activity patterns.

By maintaining safe homes and practices, you can greatly reduce the risk of slips and falls, preventing unnecessary injuries. ■



Sarah Jane Rodriguez, Director

Summer Safety Tips to Prevent Skin Cancer

With summer quickly approaching, it is always a good habit to review summer safety tips and understand the dangers of getting skin cancer. Skin cancer can affect both people who get too much sun and people who don't get any at all, so it is important to reduce your risk of getting skin cancer by following a few simple tips and tricks.

Overview

According to Mayo Clinic, skin cancer is a cancer that starts as a growth of cells on the skin. The cells can invade and destroy healthy body tissue. Sometimes the cells break away and spread to other parts of the body.

Many kinds of skin cancer exist. The most common skin cancers are basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. While these are the most common, they often can be cured. The most dangerous form of skin cancer is melanoma. It is more likely to spread, making it harder to cure.

Most skin cancers happen on skin that receives a lot of sunlight. The light that comes from the sun is thought to cause most skin cancers. You can reduce the risk of skin cancer by covering your skin with clothes or sunscreen to protect it from the sun.

Some skin cancers happen on skin that doesn't typically get sun. This likely means that something else is causing these cancers. To reduce your risk of these kinds of skin cancers, check your skin regularly for any changes. Mayo Clinic recommends reporting these changes to your healthcare professional.

Practice Sun Safety

Protection from ultraviolet (UV) rays is important all year, not just during the summer. UV rays can reach you on cloudy and cool days. They reflect off surfaces such as water, cement, sand, and snow. In the continental United States, UV rays are strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. during daylight saving time, or 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. standard time.

The UV Index forecasts the strength of UV rays each day. If the UV index is 3 or higher in your area, protect your skin from too much exposure to the sun. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends several ways to protect your skin when the UV index is 3 or higher:

- Stay in the shade
- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs
- Wear a hat with a wide brim to shade your face, head, ears, and neck
- Wear sunglasses that wrap around and block both UVA and UVB rays
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher
- Avoid indoor tanning

Signs and symptoms of skin cancer include:

- A new growth on the skin that might look like a mole, a bump, or a scab
- A rough patch on the skin
- A sore on the skin that won't heal
- Changes to a mole or freckle, such as getting bigger or changing color
- Itchy skin around a skin growth
- Pain around a skin growth

When to See a Doctor

Make an appointment with a doctor or other healthcare professional if you notice any changes to your skin that worry you.

For more information on sun safety and skin cancer, visit:

The CDC at www.cdc.gov/skin-cancer/prevention

The Mayo Clinic at www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/skin-cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-20377605 ■

Stop by the Safety Booth at Convention

When you walk through the vendor hall of the 2026 APWU National Convention, make sure one stop is a can't-miss: the Safety Booth. The booth will have important information, resources, and staff available to discuss the issues that affect you every single day on the job.

The booth will educate delegates about the Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters campaign, the APWU's new initiative reminding postal management that worker safety isn't just a slogan to be posted on a wall and forgotten. Postal workers are getting injured, overworked, and pushed to their limits, while management's promises go unfulfilled. The Talk is Cheap campaign puts the spotlight on the gap between what management says it will do and what they

actually do. Visit the booth to learn about the campaign, where it stands, and how you can carry its message back to your local.

Safety is a union issue. Ergonomic injuries, heat illness, vehicle accidents, and unsafe facilities hurt workers or even lead to their deaths. One death on the job is too many.

Delegates will be able to buy campaign gear and get helpful resources and flyers to take back to their locals. There will be giveaways, gear, campaign literature, and more. So don't pass the Safety Booth by. Stop in, ask questions, grab your gear, and leave fired up. Because when it comes to protecting our members, talk is cheap — action is key to making sure postal workers stay safe and healthy on the job. ■

Attend the 'Talk is Cheap' Safety Workshop at National Convention

The Industrial Relations Department is holding a pre-convention workshop designed to build strong, active safety campaigns at the grassroots level. The training will focus on ways to reinvigorate your local union's safety programs. Topics include how to complete a *PS Form 1767 Report of Hazard*,

Unsafe Conditions or Practices; the role of local safety committees; how to seek assistance from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA); and how to help coworkers understand the importance of reporting safety violations on the job. You don't want to miss this great opportunity to dig

into the fundamentals of enforcing safety for yourself and the members you represent. If you are interested in attending, it is best to register early, as classroom space is limited. Convention attendees may sign up for workshops after arriving in Los Angeles, but space in this workshop may already be filled. ■





FROM the FIELD

Safety Spotlight: Aster “Al” Green and Kamilah Grimm

This month, we spoke about workplace safety with Charlotte Area Local Assistant Maintenance Director and Safety Representative Aster “Al” Green and Saint Louis Gateway District Area Local Industrial Relations Director Kamilah Grimm.

Al, a District 5 Representative, is OSHA-certified, conducts inspections, leads training, files OSHA complaints, and ensures members understand their safety rights.

Kamilah enforces workplace safety, educates members, and promotes a proactive safety culture while continuing her OSHA training.

Safety didn’t start the same way for either of them—but it brought them to the same purpose. They are both deeply passionate about helping provide safe working environments.

For Al, this work has always been about people—making sure everyone who comes to work goes home safely to their families. We’ve seen what happens when someone gets hurt on the job, and it doesn’t stop with the worker. It impacts families, loved ones, and entire communities.

For Kamilah, safety wasn’t even on the radar at first. After her nomination for a safety-related position, she realized the importance of this role. What began as a position quickly became a mission—to protect employees’ health and safety and make a difference on the workroom floor.

Within our facilities, safety challenges include blocked fire exits, the use of unlicensed equipment, missing machine guards, and inadequate inspections. Staff shortages force employees to work alone and rush tasks, resulting in preventable

injuries. When safety issues are overlooked, they act.

They speak directly with management and remind them of their responsibility to correct unsafe conditions. If that doesn’t work, we escalate through grievances, documentation, and OSHA complaints when necessary. Ignoring safety is not an option.

They have both seen what persistence can accomplish.

In one case involving Al, a break area was locked with chains on both exits, creating a serious hazard. After escalating the issue and contacting outside authorities, the locks were removed. Employees faced freezing conditions due to maintenance failures. Collaborating with OSHA helped to resolve the issue.

Kamilah and her coworkers faced extreme weather that affected the ground floor, with malfunctioning heaters and torn dock flaps causing discomfort. Safety teams, shop stewards, and safety ambassadors worked with employees to complete *PS Form 1767s*, resulting in swift resolution. Al and Kamilah encourage members to take part in safety. Reporting hazards, participating in training, volunteering, and keeping work areas clean all make a difference. Tools like the *PS Form 1767* are critical because they create accountability.

Al and Kamilah also understand that some workers hesitate to speak up. Fear



Al Green, Charlotte Area Local



Kamilah Grimm, Saint Louis Gateway District Area Local

of retaliation is real—but so are their rights. We remind members that they are protected, and the union stands behind them.

Education and communication are key. Kamilah emphasizes the importance of the APWU’s “Talk is Cheap: Safety Matters” campaign and its checklist as a valuable resource. The more informed workers are, the safer they are. Whether through training, meetings, or newsletters, keeping safety visible helps prevent accidents.

There are challenges—aging facilities, staffing shortages, and, at times, a lack of management accountability. These conditions increase risk, which is why safety must be a daily priority.

If they could leave one message, it would be this:

Stay vigilant. Safety is your right, and it must be your priority every day.

To us, a safe workplace is one where employees are protected, respected, and empowered to speak up without fear. Because at the end of the day, safety isn’t just part of the job—it’s about protecting lives. ■

Southern Autoworkers Win Historic Contract

In February, more than 3,200 workers at the Volkswagen Chattanooga auto manufacturing plant in TN won a historic first contract after voting to ratify a tentative agreement that secured across-the-board wage increases, affordable health care, and job security protections, among other provisions. In 2024, 73% of workers at the plant voted in favor of joining the United Auto Workers (UAW), becoming the first Southern autoworkers outside the “Big Three” to do so. While the UAW represents workers at Big Three facilities in Southern states due to organizing wins in the 1970s, it had not managed to unionize a new, foreign-owned plant in the South until April 2024. These major UAW organizing and contract wins signal a breakthrough for non-union workers across the South. In a press release, the UAW states that the ratification ensures Volkswagen workers have a legally binding and enforceable agreement that guarantees fair pay, affordable health care, safer working conditions, and clear protections against favoritism. “For years, Chattanooga workers were told to settle for less while Volkswagen made record profits. So, the workers stood together and won their union—and now they’ve secured a life-changing first agreement,” said UAW President Shawn Fain. “This deal proves what happens when autoworkers stand up and demand their fair share. People said Southern autoworkers could never form a union or win a union contract. Volkswagen workers in Chattanooga said, ‘Watch this!’” ■



Ivorian Retail Workers Win First Contracts with Carrefour and Auchan

Nearly 2,000 retail workers in the West African country Côte d'Ivoire won their first collective bargaining agreements in April with two major French-based big-box supercenter chains – Carrefour and Auchan. The contracts secured significant improvements for workers, including bonuses, financial benefits, improved health care coverage, and on-site medical services. The pair of first contracts stems from successful organizing campaigns by the UNACFAORETAIL union and covers 1,200 Carrefour workers in nine stores and 700 Auchan workers in 13 stores. Carrefour workers organized to establish UNACFAORETAIL, and they recently merged with the Auchan workers' union to form a stronger, more unified organization representing workers at both companies. The campaigns were supported by UNI Africa, UNI Global Union's regional office. “We congratulate UNACFAORETAIL for securing the first-ever collective agreements with Auchan and Carrefour in Côte d'Ivoire,” said Regional Secretary Keith Jacobs of UNI Africa. “The union turned the motto of our regional conference into action and consolidated working-class power to improve conditions for retail workers at these major multinational retailers.” ■

AFSCME Workers on Strike at Illinois State University



More than 300 building services, dining services, and grounds workers represented by AFSCME Local 1110 walked off the job at Illinois State University (ISU) on April 8, after the university stonewalled contract negotiations in the fourth round of mediation. The ISU administration refused to budge from an offer it made on January 30 that did not include the union's fair pay and retroactive pay proposals, and stripped contract language that would ensure campus janitors, culinary workers, and groundskeepers receive the same wage increases as other ISU employees. Representatives from AFSCME Local 1110 said the striking employees are among the lowest-paid workers on campus and went on strike “so the people who do the essential work receive the dignity, respect, and fair pay they deserve.” The contract expired in June 2025, and workers have spent nearly a year bargaining with the administration for a successor agreement. “By refusing to respect our work, ISU administration forced us out on strike,” said Chuck Carver, an ISU building service worker and president of AFSCME Local 1110. “By refusing to negotiate, they’re prolonging the pain for us, for students and faculty, and the whole Redbird community.” The strike was still in effect as this issue went to press. ■

EU Postal Unions Launch Campaign to Save 1.8 Million Jobs, Guarantee Universal Service



On April 16, a coalition of European postal unions, consumer groups, and lawmakers in the European Union (EU) launched a campaign called “Save Our Post” at a forum in Belgium. The campaign calls on the European Commission to pass the *EU Delivery Act*, which would modernize postal services across Europe, save 1.8 million postal jobs, and guarantee affordable, universal postal services for residents across the EU. In the late 2000s, the EU enacted laws that deregulated and partially privatized postal services, enabling private companies to profit from urban delivery, while leaving the public sector on the hook for high-cost rural delivery. The “Save Our Post” campaign is pushing for legislation that extends the universal service obligation to include packages, ensures that private operators contribute fairly to the public postal infrastructure they use, applies collective bargaining across the sector, and guarantees affordable access to postal services for every EU resident. ■

Colorado Meatpacking Workers End Strike, Ratify New Contract

On April 12, meatpacking workers represented by United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 7 in Greeley, CO, ratified a new, two-year contract with JBS, the world’s largest meat-processing company, by a 93% “Yes” vote. The UFCW and JBS reached a tentative agreement two days prior, ending a disruptive three-week strike of 3,800 workers at the massive beef-processing plant. The unfair labor practice strike began on March 16 and was the first strike of meatpacking workers in over 40 years. Workers were calling for better wages and for the company to stop charging workers for replacement personal protective equipment (PPE), among other demands. JBS was also increasing production speed while reducing work hours to 35 hours per week. The new contract secures significant wage increases, protects workers from having to pay for PPE, and adds safeguards for rising healthcare costs, among other provisions. Additionally, on April 15, over 200 members of UFCW Local 700 ratified a separate, four-year contract at a JBS Foods plant in Elkhart, IN. ■





In this special safety-focused issue of The American Postal Worker, A Grand Alliance spoke with Occupational Safety and Health Director Rebecca L. Reindel from one of our most prominent member organizations, the AFL-CIO.

Rebecca is from a union family in Cleveland, OH. Her father is a retired pipefitter/welder, and her mother is a retired city employee. Rebecca's aunt led a non-profit that trained women for jobs in the trades. She is a first-generation college student and holds a graduate degree in public health.

Tell us about the AFL-CIO's work on safety.

Our work strengthens agency standards like the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and laws Congress passes to protect workers' health and safety on the job. We use workers' experiences, research, and other evidence to negotiate with policymakers, develop advocacy materials, and testify on behalf of working people. We educate decision-makers on effective approaches.

We also help all of our unions, including APWU, connect these issues with the same issues they're working on for their members through bargaining, mobilizing, and training.

Each year, the labor movement commemorates Workers' Memorial Day, and we develop the materials that unions order and use to plan their own events.

What are the most common health and safety problems that workers in all industries face?

Workers face major risks from chemical exposures, heat exposures, infectious disease exposures, workplace violence, and repetitive motion that leads to musculoskeletal disorders and chronic pain. Burnout is also very common. These issues are all preventable when effective approaches are used.

Many postal workers face hostile management, making the workplace even more dangerous. Is that common?

Bullying and hostility are significant problems at work. Not only is it a broad labor issue, but it is also a health and safety issue. These issues can lead to anxiety, depression, burnout, and physical health problems. It is often a gradual process that can involve unreasonable workloads, constant unfair criticism, intimidation, and retaliation.

Besides the postal industry, we see it in health care and other industries. Training, grievances, and prevention measures can help identify and address this institutionalized behavior.

Reducing regulations has been a priority of the current White House, such as the draft OSHA heat injury and illness prevention standard. What can you tell us about that draft rule and what might happen to it?

The White House has pushed a massive deregulatory agenda that is weakening and removing regulations to benefit corporate interests, not workers. Many proposed deregulations attack health and safety protections, like removing OSHA coverage for some workers and lighting requirements at construction sites.

While heat isn't an existing federal regulation, OSHA issued a heat proposal in 2024. There has been strong support for it from workers and experts, but significant pushback from companies. Now companies want the agency to adopt a very weak standard so they wouldn't have to change their practices, but could show they're following the law. OSHA also weakened its heat enforcement program from 2022 to issue fewer citations and just talk to employers.

If you could introduce a new law to make every workplace safer, what would it be?

There is a comprehensive bill, called the *Protecting America's Workers Act (H.R.3036)*, which would reform OSHA. It would really change the game for workers to be able to use OSHA as a stronger tool, overall.

Winning strong regulations and fighting back against deregulation to protect workers takes a long time and hard work by union members. But when we win, it has a huge impact on people's lives every day. ■

A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service is a broad coalition of national, state and local organizations including the NAACP, Vote Vets, Jobs with Justice, National Council of Churches, and Rainbow PUSH. These groups have come together to take a stand against the unprecedented assaults on the Postal Service including efforts to dismantle and privatize it. To join A Grand Alliance, visit www.AGrandAlliance.org.

Looking Back: This Time in Our Labor History

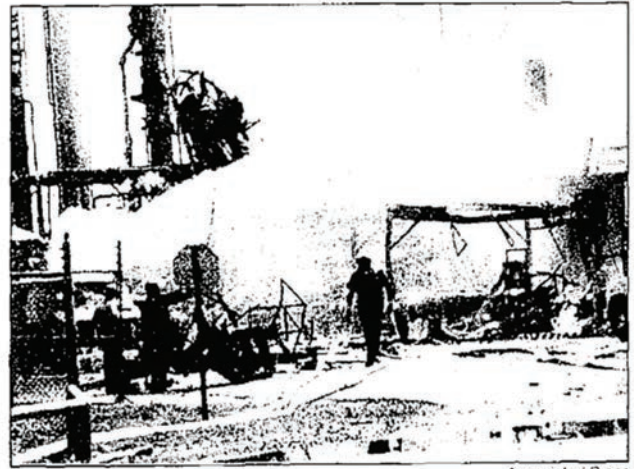
Fatal Explosion at IMC Fertilizer Plant Exposed Preventable Hazards, Human Toll of Unsafe Work Practices

May 1, 1991 – A failed waste-gas vent compressor ignited a fatal explosion at a nitroparaffin plant in Sterlington, LA, killing eight employees and injuring 120 people, including 42 workers and over 70 residents nearby. Union officials and inspectors identified a history of safety issues at the ammonia fertilizer plant, and workers represented by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) Local 4-786 reported safety concerns before the blast. The reports were left unfixed, and the blast hurled debris nearly a mile from the plant, causing extensive damage to the facility and harming the surrounding community.

The disaster at the plant, owned by the ANGUS Chemical Company and operated by the International Minerals and Chemicals (IMC) Fertilizer Group, exposed systemic failures of safety procedures, preventable hazards, and the human toll of unsafe work practices. The explosion was caused by unprotected piping and a lack of safety systems. During its investigation, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) asserted that more than 200 employees were exposed to fire and explosion risks due to the improper safety practices.

Following the disaster, OCAW acted as a watchdog, increasing its involvement in the OSHA investigation and inspection process, which led to record OSHA penalties of about \$10 million for each company—the largest fines OSHA had ever levied at the time. However, OCAW denounced the settlement terms, calling it a “sweetheart deal” that allowed the companies to settle without admitting guilt, viewing the terms as insufficient for a disaster that harmed so many workers and the community. The union pushed for stricter safety reforms, resulting in the implementation of key measures, including more detailed inspections, identification of hazardous locations, provision of protective gear, enhanced evacuation planning, installation of explosion-mitigation systems, and the inclusion of workers in the process.

In the years that followed, OCAW used the plant disaster as an example to advocate for stronger OSHA oversight and to highlight specific failures in OSHA-mandated protocols designed to prevent catastrophic incidents. Criticisms of its oversight,



Firefighters spray water on a fire caused by an explosion at the International Minerals and Chemicals Corp. plant in Sterlington, La., Wednesday.

Chemical Plant Explosion

enforcement, and settlement practices led OSHA to implement significant operational reforms throughout the 1990s. However, until OSHA was created, no formal, enforceable standards for workplace safety and health had even existed. OSHA set the baseline standard for protecting workers on the job.

Congress formed OSHA in 1971 after passing the Williams-Steiger Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970. Tony Mazzocchi, an OCAW labor leader, helped lead the fight to pass the act. He laid bare how handling dangerous chemicals without proper safety protocols increases occupational injuries, diseases, and deaths. He organized public meetings for OCAW, other union members, and scientists to testify about those dangers to workers' safety and health. The heavy media coverage and pressure from labor unions and workers compelled Congress to pass the act. Since its passage, workplace injuries have fallen from 10.9 cases per 100 workers in 1972 to about 2.3 cases per 100 workers in 2025. Workplace deaths have also plummeted from around 14,000 annually in 1972 to 5,283 in 2025, while the size of the U.S. workforce has more than doubled in that time.

Corporations have often tried to repeal OSHA, prioritizing profits over safety. However, the incident at the IMC plant, and many others like it, reinforce why workplace safety regulations exist, and how OSHA protections, paired with safety provisions in collective bargaining agreements, help keep workers safe on the job. ■

Sources: AFL-CIO, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



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