

National Business Agent's Report
Mike Weir
July 2008

In May & June, historic flooding and numerous tornadoes wreaked havoc across Region 5, causing disruption in mail service, devastation to numerous communities and, sadly, the loss of homes and all possessions for some of our members. Letter carriers in the affected areas continue to go above and beyond to deliver mail to customers despite routes either under water or damaged by tornadoes, being evacuated from stations, mail flow problems from plants being closed, suspension of collection services, adjusted starting times and working out of make-shift buildings using temporary equipment. The Postal Service has implemented emergency procedures in the affected areas and, slowly, progress is being made to restore mail service where possible. Understandably, the effects of these natural disasters will not be erased over night; and unfortunately, some managers have not been particularly sympathetic toward the plight of letter carriers impacted by these disasters.

Although we recognize the emergency nature of such disasters, we also fully expect that management will do everything possible to assist impacted employees and abide by the provisions of the National Agreement. With that understanding in mind, we continue to work with the Postal Service to handle the challenges that have arisen in the affected post offices. Additionally, we will assist local union leaders as they continue to monitor the emergency procedures in their installations, and their after effects, to ensure that management does not exploit the situation by dragging out those procedures longer than needed, or use them as an excuse to ignore their obligations under the contract.

Above all, the safety of letter carriers working in these areas must be the top priority when implementing emergency procedures and as the Postal Service works to restore delivery in the affected areas.

Another top priority is to address the needs and concerns of our members and their families, who have been significantly impacted by these disasters. Letter carriers who have incurred substantial damage to or total loss of their homes from the tornadoes and flooding could be eligible for assistance from The Postal Employees' Relief Fund (PERF), a charitable organization created by the NALC, USPS and other union and management organizations. The Fund provides grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$35,000, depending on the total amount of qualified loss after payments from the individual's insurance company and other relief assistance, such as Federal Disaster Relief from FEMA.

Letter carriers must first determine what, if any, payments they are eligible for from their home insurance company and from federal aid before they are eligible to receive funds from PERF. The Postal Employees' Relief Fund is a supplemental fund designed to help with losses not covered by insurance or from federal relief.

Branch officers need to ensure that those affected are made aware of the Postal Employees' Relief Fund. For more information or to obtain an application form for assistance, go to the Fund's website: www.postalrelief.com, call (202) 408-1869, or write: Postal Employees' Relief Fund, P.O. Box 34422, Washington, DC 20043-4422. If you have any questions or need any additional assistance on how to proceed, contact Danny, Nicole or me at the regional office.

Applications for the 2009 NALC Leadership Academy classes are now being accepted at national headquarters. Application forms must be postmarked by September 30th. Forms are available on line at www.nalc.org. Previous applicants must re-apply and include updated information, along with a renewed commitment from their mentors, to be considered for the 2009 classes.

The Leadership Academy was created to nurture the next generation of union leaders. The classes provide valuable training on subjects ranging from the history of the union and the NALC's legislative and political agenda to contract administration and the discussion of current and long-range issues facing the union.

Members from Region 5 who have attended the Leadership Academy continue to grow in their leadership roles since graduating from the program - a testament to the success and quality of the program.

Branch officers should not only consider applying, but also encourage other members and future branch leaders to apply for the Leadership Academy and be willing to step forward to be mentors for them. One of the most important duties of any leader is to prepare their successor(s) to take on their responsibilities. Such an approach ensures that NALC, at the local, state and national levels, will not miss a beat in providing the best possible representation for our membership. The academy provides the perfect opportunity to continue that legacy.

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