

National Business Agent's Report
Mike Weir
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We are in the midst of one of the worst winters in recent memory. Snow has been accumulating at record levels, and temperatures have been hovering in the single digits with wind-chill factors well below zero. These conditions have been the rule, rather than the exception, in many locations throughout the region. I am amazed at the dedication and determination of letter carriers who somehow manage to provide quality service to their customers in spite of the hardships and hurrles this severe weather has thrown at them on a daily basis. I am not surprised, but extremely angry and frustrated, that management is compounding the issue with their total disregard for the carriers' safety and health, and their dismissive attitude of the carriers' efforts. Instead of showing appreciation for a job well done under nearly impossible conditions, management is belittling the carriers' performance and berating them for not meeting their DOIS expectations. Local supervisors cannot understand why twelve inches of snow on top of two inches of ice with sub-zero conditions should have any effect on street time delivery. Rather than praise carriers for their efforts, they harass them and threaten them with discipline. Instead of recognizing the physical and mental toll that such extreme weather imposes on an individual, and looking for ways to lessen its impact, they ratchet up the pressure, mandate carriers to take on extra work, throw the contract out the window (where it is lost in six-foot snow drifts) and then rail about increased sick leave usage. The current crop of supervisors and managers do not seem to have a clue about what a letter carrier's job entails. This is probably a result of the fact that they never did the job or they could not do the job, and that's why they went into management in the first place. In any case, their brand of supervision is number-driven; and their approach to "making the numbers" is to browbeat the workforce into submission.

This situation has generated a number of grievances involving the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace. Management must be held accountable for their actions,

and one of the best ways to accomplish that goal is through the grievance procedure. Once we have developed a paper trail documenting a supervisor's abusive tactics, it is less difficult to establish a pattern of inappropriate behavior which is in violation of the Joint Statement and which must be addressed in accordance with the National level award from Arbitrator Snow. If we cannot convince management to deal with abusive supervisors appropriately, then we will process these grievances all the way through arbitration. We just did that in Lawrence, KS and are currently awaiting the arbitrator's decision. There is absolutely no excuse for harassing and intimidating supervisory tactics; we believe there should be zero tolerance for such an approach, and we will continue to press the Postal Service on this issue until they take that position as well.

We have been in touch with the Area offices, particularly the Western Area where most of the districts which are employing these kinds of tactics are located. The plan is to convince them that this is the wrong approach and partner with them to address it. The National Agreement provides an avenue to accomplish this goal: the Intervention Process. As I mentioned last month, we are seeing a significant increase in intervention requests. While many of these requests involve the failure to abide by the Dispute Resolution Process, the underlying issues driving management's actions include, but are not limited to, excessive grievance activity, repetitive grievances, failure to provide documentation and steward time, a lack of communication or communication that is counter-productive, and staffing issues, all of which contribute to a poisoned atmosphere on the workroom floor. We are receiving so many requests for intervention that it has been difficult to respond in as timely a manner as we would like. Nonetheless, we are working behind the scenes in an effort to provide some short-term relief until both parties can actually get into these installations and deal with the problems on a face-to-face basis. The wheels of justice grind slowly in the Postal Service, as does everything else; and this is a source of frustration for us as well as the branches and carriers in the affected offices. Please be assured that we recognize the seriousness of the issues being surfaced to us, and we are pushing upper management to address them as quickly as possible.

One of the results of management's constant violations of the National Agreement and consistent disrespect of letter carriers is the rank and file members arguing amongst themselves and taking the local officers to task. Local management is delighted with this development. They would love to drive a wedge between the union and the membership, and pit carrier against carrier on the workroom floor. This provides them with the opportunity to more easily pursue their agenda. We cannot give them an opening which would further strengthen their hand. Remember, management is the party which is pursuing these violations of our rights; they are the ones who are making letter carriers' lives miserable on a daily basis. We need to remain focused and supportive of each other as we chart a course to deal with their ridiculous policies. Your local branch officers are working very hard to protect your rights; they need your encouragement and assistance as they struggle to deliver their routes and defend the contract. Stand up for each other, watch each others' backs and present a united front in the face of management's abuses. Together, we will ultimately prevail.

The Regional Rap Session is scheduled for February 20 and 21 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown St. Louis. The training is open to all union members; so take advantage of this opportunity to be part of the discussion on the important issues facing us as letter carriers and working men and women.

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