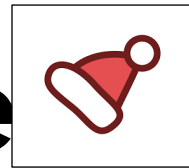


The Sentinel



A message from your San Francisco Region NBAs

INSIDE

- 204B Utilization
- FMLA Protection
- Coping with Stress
- Injury Compensation OWCP
- Protecting Clerk Work
- Beware of the Union
- Bid Reversions
- Unassigned Regulars UAR's
- Administrative pay Act of God
- Work and Time Standards
- Retail Issues
- Safety



On behalf of our families to your family, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a safe, healthy and prosperous 2024.

From:

*Your San Francisco Region Clerk **NBA's.***

Chuck Locke
Mike Hetticher

1350 Old Bayshore Hwy., Suite 370
 Burlingame, CA 94010
 (650) 685-7404

Sonia Canchola
Fabiola Dominguez

1055 E. Colorado Blvd., Suite 335
 Pasadena, Ca 91106
 (626) 585-1404

204B Utilization

-By Chuck Locke

Management is utilizing 204bs in violation of the CBA on a regular basis. There should not be a 204b in your office if there is not a vacancy of more than 14 days and not more than 90-days. Management is also required to give advance notice to the Local Union of any 204b details. So, if you have a 204b in your office, call your Local Union President to see if they were provided advanced notice as required by the CBA. The Union has been successful in winning hundreds of thousands of dollars for this violation. It pays to file ☺



Benefits

FMLA PROTECTION

By- Chuck Locke

The Postal Service is cracking down on irregular attendance. If you have a qualifying condition, protect yourself and get your FMLA certification. FMLA gives you 12 weeks off, and management can't use those days off against you for discipline. You have to get your condition approved by your doctor and file the appropriate FMLA form with the Postal Service. To qualify for FMLA you must have worked 1,250 hours during the 12 months prior to the start of your leave. Under the regulations, employees continue to be able to use FMLA leave for any period of incapacity or treatment due to a chronic serious health condition. FMLA leave to care for a relative is generally limited to caring for a spouse, a son or daughter 18 years old or younger, or a parent. FMLA is a great law that protects employees who need time off to care for themselves or family members. Use it if you qualify. ☺



COPING WITH STRESS!

By- Sonia Canchola

Working hard should not be confused with overworking at the expense of relationships and physical health.

Everyone who has ever held a job has, at some point, felt the pressure of work-related stress. Any job can have stressful elements, even if you love what you do. In the short-term, you may experience pressure to meet a deadline or to fulfill a challenging obligation. But when work stress becomes chronic, it can be overwhelming—and harmful to both physical and emotional health.

Unfortunately, such long-term stress is all too common. In fact, by simply speaking with many of our members, I have found that that work is cited as a significant source of stress by the majority of our members. You can't always avoid the tensions that occur on the job. Yet you can take steps to manage work-related stress.

Common sources of work-related stress

Certain factors tend to go hand-in-hand with work-related stress. Some common work-related stressors are:

- ❖ Improper staffing
- ❖ Excessive workloads
- ❖ Abusive Supervisors or Managers

Effects of uncontrolled stress

Work-related stress doesn't just disappear when you head home for the day. When stress persists, it can take a toll on your health and well-being.

Continued on page 5

INJURY COMPENSATION (OWCP) - Fabiola Dominguez

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) provides wage loss compensation and medical benefits to postal and federal employees who become injured or ill as a result of their duties.

FECA provides that employees who suffer job-related disabilities are entitled to:

Continuation of pay (COP) for the period of the disability, up to a maximum of 45 calendar days, for a traumatic job-related injury, and compensation for wages lost as a result of job-related injury or disease or illness.

To be eligible for COP, an employee must:

1. Have a traumatic injury;
2. File Form CA-1 within 30 days of the date of the injury and elect COP; and
3. Begin losing time from work within 45 days of the injury.

Traumatic injury is a condition of the body caused by external force, including stress or strain. The injury must be identifiable as to the time and place of occurrence, and member or function of the body affected and must be caused by a specific event or incident, or series of events or incidents, within a single day or work shift.

The notice of traumatic injury is given on Form CA-1

FECA requires that written notice of a traumatic injury be given by the employee, or person acting on behalf of the employee, within 3 years of the injury. However, failure to give notice on Form CA-1 within 30 calendar days from the date the injury occurred will result in a loss of entitlement to COP and may also result in a loss of compensation rights if the claim for compensation is not filed within 3 years. In order to protect their own interests and to ensure an uninterrupted income, employees should give notice or have someone give notice on their behalf, immediately after the traumatic injury occurs.

Occupational Disease or Illness Notice

The Notice of occupational disease or illness is given on Form CA-2.

FECA specifies that notice be given by the employee, or person acting on behalf of the employee, within 3 years of the onset of the condition. In cases of latent disability, the time for filing the claim does not begin to run until the employee has a compensable disability and is aware, or reasonably should be aware, of the causal relationship between the disability and the employment. Failure to give notice within this period of time may result in a loss of compensation rights. If the claim is not filed within 3 years, compensation may still be allowed if notice of injury was given within 30 days, or the employer had actual knowledge of the injury or death within 30 days after occurrence. This knowledge may be evidenced by written records or verbal notification.

Note: Continuation of regular pay is not applicable in instances of occupational disease or illness.

Continued page 4

When a notice of traumatic injury or occupational disease is filed, the immediate supervisor is responsible for doing the following:

1. Immediately ensuring that appropriate medical care is provided;
2. Providing the employee a Form CA-1 or a Form CA-2;
3. Completing the receipt attached to Form CA-1 or CA-2 and giving the receipt to the employee or the employee's representative;
4. Investigating all reported job-related injuries and/or illnesses;
5. Immediately notifying the control office or control point of an injury, disease, or illness; and
6. Prompt completion and forwarding of Form CA-1 or CA-2 to the control office or control point on the same day it is received from the employee.

In case of a traumatic injury, the **supervisor** must advise the employee of the following:

The right to select a physician of choice

If the injury is disabling, the right to either of the following: To elect COP for up to 45 calendar days, or to use annual or sick leave. An employee may subsequently request COP (subject to leave carryover provisions) in lieu of previously requested sick and/or annual leave, however, such a request must be made within 1 year of the date the leave was used, or within 1 year of the date of OWCP's approval of the claim, whichever is later.

The control office or control point is responsible for completing Forms CA-16 and CA-17. Control office and control point supervisors are responsible for reviewing all claims for accuracy and completeness and for forwarding claims and related documents to OWCP within prescribed FECA time frames. Control points at major postal installations may be given authority by the control office to manage and submit claims directly to OWCP. The control office or control point must advise the employee whether COP will be controverted and whether pay will be interrupted. The control office must provide the employee a copy of the completed CA-1 or CA-2 and all correspondence between the Postal Service and the treating physician.

When an employee sustains a work-related traumatic injury that requires medical examination, medical treatment, or both, the control office or control point must authorize such examination and/or treatment by issuing a Form CA-16. Form CA-16 is used for all traumatic injuries requiring medical attention. The control office or control point must advise the employee of the right to an initial choice of physician. The control office or control point must promptly authorize medical treatment by issuing the employee a properly executed Form CA-16 within 4 hours of the claimed injury. If the control office or control point gives verbal authorization for care, Form CA-16 should be issued within 48 hours. The control office or control point is not required to issue a Form CA-16 more than one week after the occurrence of the claimed injury.

The **employee** is responsible for the following:

1. Ensuring that the treating physician specifies work limitations and provides them to the control office or control point;
2. Providing the treating physician with a description of any specific alternative positions offered;
3. Ensuring a prompt response from the treating physician with an opinion on whether and how soon the employee can be expected to return to work in any capacity, either an offered position or offered modified duties; and
4. Seeking and accepting suitable work.

Continued page 5

Waiting Period

There is a waiting period of 3 calendar days before OWCP compensation begins, unless the disability extends beyond 14 calendar days. The 3-day waiting period may not be satisfied by using sick or annual leave; the employee must be in a nonpaid status.

The waiting period applies as follows:

- a. In the case of an occupational disease or illness, compensation is not payable for the first 3 days of disability, unless the disability extends beyond 14 calendar days;
- b. In the case of traumatic injury, the 3-day waiting period begins immediately after the end of the 45-day COP period, unless the disability continues for more than 14 calendar days after the expiration of the 45-day COP period.

IMPORTANT: Please remember if you suffer an on-the-job injury, please report it immediately. It does not matter how small or insignificant you believe the injury is. You do not have to receive medical treatment at the time of the injury, but please report it just in case you do need medical treatment later.

References: ELM Chapter 540, Handbook EL 505, CA-550, CA-810 & 20 CFR Parts 10 and 25. ●

Coping With Stress, continued.

A stressful work environment can contribute to problems such as headache, stomachache, sleep disturbances, short temper, and difficulty concentrating. Chronic stress can result in anxiety, insomnia, high blood pressure, and a weakened immune system. It can also contribute to health conditions such as depression, obesity, and heart disease. Compounding the problem, people who experience excessive stress often deal with it in unhealthy ways, such as overeating, eating unhealthy foods, smoking cigarettes, or abusing drugs and alcohol.

Taking steps to manage stress:

- ❖ **Track your stressors** - Keep a journal for a week or two to identify which situations create the most stress and how you respond to them. Record your thoughts, feelings, and information about the environment, including the people and circumstances involved, the physical setting, and how you reacted. Did you raise your voice? Get a snack from the vending machine? Go for a walk? Taking notes can help you find patterns among your stressors and your reactions to them.
- ❖ **Establish boundaries** - In today's digital world, it's easy to feel pressure to be available 24 hours a day. Establish some work-life boundaries for yourself. That might mean making a rule not to check email from home in the evening, or not answering the phone during dinner. Although people have different preferences when it comes to how much they blend their work and home life, creating some clear boundaries between these realms can reduce the potential for work-life conflict and the stress that goes with it.

- ❖ **Take time to recharge** - To avoid the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout, we need time to replenish and return to our pre-stress level of functioning. This recovery process requires “switching off” from work by having periods of time when you are neither engaging in work-related activities, nor thinking about work. That’s why it’s critical that you disconnect from time to time, in a way that fits your needs and preferences. Don’t let your vacation days go to waste. When possible, take time off to relax and unwind, so you come back to work feeling reinvigorated and ready to perform at your best. When you’re not able to take time off, get a quick boost by turning off your smartphone and focusing your attention on nonwork activities for a while.
- ❖ **Learn how to relax** - Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, and mindfulness (a state in which you actively observe present experiences and thoughts without judging them) can help melt away stress. Start by taking a few minutes each day to focus on a simple activity like breathing, walking, or enjoying a meal. The skill of being able to focus purposefully on a single activity without distraction will get stronger with practice and you’ll find that you can apply it to many different aspects of your life.
- ❖ **Get some support** - Accepting help from trusted friends and family members can improve your ability to manage stress. Your employer may also have stress management resources available through an employee assistance program, including online information, available counseling, and referral to mental health professionals, if needed. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by work stress, you may want to talk to a psychologist, who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behavior. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is always a good resource **800-327-4968**📞

Protecting Clerk Craft Work

By- Chuck Locke

We all need you to help to protect Clerk Craft work. If you see management, letter carriers, mail handlers, or rural carriers performing clerk craft work, you need to write a statement and give it to your Union steward. They are not helping you when they are doing our work. They are stealing our jobs! The Union needs your assistance with this fight. When you see the violations, give the Union a statement so we can pursue the violations. Without your assistance, we will lose jobs.

If your office is performing **lobby sweeps**, these transactions should be entered into the system. If they are not, we are not getting the credit for these transactions. These transactions should be entered into the system every 30 minutes to have an accurate history. If this is not being done in your office, please file a grievance. 😊

BEWARE OF THE UNION

By- Sonia Canchola

The Employer recognizes the Union designated below as the exclusive bargaining representative of all employees in the bargaining unit for which each has been recognized and certified at the National level: AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO

- ❖ Maintenance Employees
- ❖ Motor Vehicle Employees
- ❖ Postal Clerks
- ❖ Mail Equipment Shops Employees
- ❖ Material Distribution Centers Employees
- ❖ Operating Services and Facilities Services Employees

I find it very important to write about this because there is a union or "alliance" called The National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees that continues to surface in Southern California. The reason I am concerned is because some of our APWU members are not aware that this "alliance" **CANNOT** represent our members in the grievance/arbitration process and have gone to them for representation through the EEO process. Although anyone can represent an employee through the EEO process, only APWU can represent you in a grievance. There are strict time frames for your steward to file your grievance whether it is discipline or contract. We only have 14 days to file your grievance. If you decide to go through your EEO (with the Alliance or anyone else) and fail to file your grievance within the contractual time frame, the grievance can potentially be untimely and will not be arbitrable.

Do not gamble with your job. Submit a PS Form 13 and request union time with your certified APWU steward. 🗣️

Bid Reversions

By- Chuck Locke

Management is in full attack mode to eliminate clerk craft bids. They have been reverting bids like crazy. Luckily for us, management doesn't know how to revert bids correctly. We have been very successful in getting all of our bids back. If you have a job that becomes vacant in your office, let your local union know. So many times, management just lets the bid go and fails to revert it within the 28-day time frame of the CBA. Don't assume management will do the right thing and contact the Union. The struggle continues and your participation is essential to the survival of the clerk craft. 🗣️

Unassigned Regulars UAR'S

With our new contract from 2022, our PSEs will now, upon completion of two (2) 360-day appointments, be converted to Non-Traditional Full Time Flex (NTFTF) positions. Keep in mind, once you become a NTFTF, you will normally be given a "schedule". This schedule is only temporary until you bid onto a position. Contractually, if you are unassigned (unencumbered) for a period of 120 calendar days, under Article 37.4.D, the need to post a newly established full-time regular duty assignment in accordance with Article 37.3.A.1.a. is demonstrated. So, if you are a PSE who has been converted into an unassigned regular or NTFTF, request union time so that the Union can gather the information and file a grievance to have a bid posted for bid. ☺

Administrative Leave "Acts of God"

By- Sonia Canchola

With the wet weather soon approaching, there may be some incidents that may qualify under "Acts of God". **Definition:** Administrative leave is absence from duty authorized by appropriate postal officials without charge to annual or sick leave and without loss of pay. "Acts of God" involve community disasters such as fire, flood, or storms. The disaster situation must be general rather than personal in scope and impact. It must prevent **groups** of employees from working or reporting to work. When there is a major storm and the road closures affect mass areas, that is considered a general disaster. For example: A major storm hit southern California, affecting the employees who live in Lancaster and Palmdale, and the Governor declared a state of emergency due to freeway and road closures. They closed off the both the 14 and 138 freeways in both directions. There was no way to get to the SC P&DC. Under the ELM 519.125 Employees Prevented from Reporting Employees scheduled to report who are prevented from reporting or, who after reporting, are prevented from working by an act of God may be excused as follows:

- a. Full-time and part-time regular employees receive administrative leave to cover their scheduled tour of duty not to exceed 8 hours;
- b. Part-time flexible employees receive administrative leave, subject to the 8-hour limitation, for their scheduled workhours, as provided in 519.214c.

On the day in question, call in and request Administrative Leave. Immediately upon your return, once on the clock, fill out your PS3971 (in duplicate). Mark off administrative leave and completely fill out the form. Submit the form along with proof of internet articles supporting the fact that the roads were closed, and our elected official declared a State of Emergency in the area (keep copies of all this information for yourself) to your immediate supervisor (remember, have them initial your copy). Ask to speak with your union steward. Once on union time, hand over the copy of your completed PS3971, copies of news clippings, and your statement. The steward will then file a class action grievance and gather the information of those employees who live in Lancaster and Palmdale who were impacted. This is considered a "general" scope (more than one person). ☺

Work and Time Standards

By- Mike Hetticher

The principle of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay is recognized by all parties in the National Agreement. The Postal Service is cutting staffing and hours throughout the country, which places more of a burden on employees with Management expecting to get more done with less. One thing all employees should be doing is working safely. There is no requirement to throw a certain number of parcels, letters, or flats per hour. Again, you work safely and to the best of your ability. Don't work off the clock or during lunches and/or breaks. Make sure you take your breaks. Management controls staffing. If there is a dispatch to be met, then they need to staff accordingly. Do not give up your right to a rest period. 😊

Retail Issues

By- Mike Hetticher

The Holidays are here and so is the increase in customers mailing gifts to loved ones. This can be a stressful time of year as you see the line going out the door into the lobby, complaints about prices, how long it will take to get to its destination, and any number of other things that may come up. Be careful and do not try to cut corners or go too quickly. This is when mistakes happen that usually end up costing you at the end of the day when your deposit is short. Take time to make sure the payment given to you is correct. Count the change back to the customer. Conduct one financial transaction at a time. Take the time to focus on the customer in front of you so that they can receive the service they deserve, but also to avoid any financial mistakes due to multi-tasking and trying to do too much too fast. Finally, remember, DO NOT bypass or answer the Hazmat question for the customer regardless of how long the line behind them is. That is their responsibility. 😊

Safety First

By- Mike Hetticher

Safety is everyone's responsibility. The month of December brings an increase in mail volume, inclement weather, and a whole new level of stress. Be aware of your surroundings. Watch for wet floors when it's raining out. Yield to moving equipment. It's easier for you to see them and let them pass by. Utilize PS Form 1767 when you observe a safety issue. Don't assume somebody else will do it. At the end of the day, we should all be able to go home to our loved ones. 😊

