

It Could Be a Matter of Life and Death

Ramping Up for Safety Campaign

Declaring that “there are far too many serious safety problems at post offices and facilities,” APWU President Mark Dimondstein and Industrial Relations Director Tony D. McKinnon Sr. are calling on union members across the country to launch a Safety Awareness and Enforcement Campaign in mid-October.

“Even the Postal Regulatory Commission recently reported that USPS management failed to meet its performance goal to ‘Ensure a Safe Workplace and Engaged Workforce,’” they wrote in a letter to local and state presidents.

Noting that the struggle for a new contract is continuing, they wrote, “We should not be waiting for a new agreement to actively enforce our rights to a safe and healthy work place.”

What’s Next?

APWU members can play a pivotal role in the fight for safe working conditions. In the next few weeks, look for a series of Health and Safety Fact Sheets, which will address:

- Management’s obligation to create a safe work environment.
- How union members can work together to rid our workplaces of hazardous conditions.

Be prepared to get involved because everyone deserves to leave work in one piece!

“Too often postal workers take their own health for granted or leave it to others to wage the needed fights. But together, through collective action, we can all make a difference.”

The Aug. 28 letter called on local unions, state organizations and Contract Action Teams (CATs) to enhance safety education among union members and take the necessary steps to ensure that unhealthy and unsafe conditions are corrected.

Highlights of the campaign will include:

- Reinforcing an understanding of contractual safety rights;
- Mobilizing union members to correct safety issues;
- Using PS Form 1767 to report and document safety hazards;
- Calling for OSHA investigations to curtail unsafe conditions;
- Building safety committees, and
- Winning results from Labor-Management safety meetings.

“The Industrial Relations Department is spearheading this work but it is work that can only succeed if all of our local and state organizations are fully engaged and we empower the members to take up the fight for safety,” Dimondstein and McKinnon wrote.

“A safe workplace must be the right of every worker!”

When Legionnaires’ Bacteria was Found at Bronx GPO...

Workers at the Bronx GPO – and their union officers – got their first inkling there was a problem after the facility’s air conditioning unit tested positive for the bacteria that causes Legionnaires’ disease. Management didn’t bother to notify them until Aug. 9, the day *after* the information was reported in the *New York Daily News*. The test had been performed on Aug. 6, without any notice to workers or the APWU.

Fortunately, no postal workers died as a result of the Legionnaires’ outbreak, which caused 12 deaths in New York City over the summer. The outbreak was linked to five infected cooling systems in the South Bronx.

“This is a risk that management did not have the right to take with the employees’ safety and health,” said New York Metro Area Local President Jonathan Smith.

“Management’s unacceptable handling of the Legionnaires’ incident highlights the importance of our Safety and Health campaign,” said President Mark Dimondstein. “I urge every member to get involved.”

Legionnaires’ bacteria was also found at the London, KY, post office, said Industrial Relations Director Tony D. McKinnon Sr., “This indicates that safety is a problem in all offices – large and small,” he said.