

Mike's News Flash

NJ Merged Branch 38, NALC

March 2010

Odds & Ends

Route Adjustments

Most offices have been through the MI-ARAP process at least twice. Although the time frame for the agreement has passed, we're pretty sure another round will be coming with the introduction of Flat Sorting Machines, if not sooner. Hopefully, all carriers are now aware of how the system works and will adjust their work habits accordingly.

The adjustments, thanks to the best efforts of our local contacts and District Evaluation & Adjustment Team members, have been fairly accurate. If you are one of those whose route has been left over burdened, you still have the right to a special route inspection. If your route uses 30 minutes of either overtime or auxiliary assistance on three days a week for six consecutive weeks, your route qualifies for a special route inspection. If you need help proving that you qualify or making the request, give me a call and I'll help you get that inspection. I will also provide some information regarding your rights during a route inspection.

The Postal Service is in the middle of an economic crisis that is affecting every aspect of American life. The NALC is committed to working with the Postal Service as we try to get through these difficult times together. That does not mean that any letter carrier should be expected to do more than an eight hour route on an average day. If your route is out of adjustment, I will help you get your inspection.

Retiree Luncheon

Branch 38 holds a Retiree Luncheon every year in honor of our members who have retired during the previous calendar year. We also take that opportunity to honor carriers who have achieved the milestones of NALC membership for either 50 or 60 years. Each honoree receives a written invitation to attend and bring a guest.

The luncheon is a very nice affair and a suitable way of saying thanks and good luck to our retirees. All of the Branch Officers are in attendance, and quest speakers include our National Business Agent, a Resident National Officer, and RAA Bruce Didriksen. Certificates, lapel pins, and Branch 38 jackets are presented to each of the retirees.

We owe so much to the letter carriers who came before us and who, through their solidarity, helped to achieve the wages and benefits we enjoy today. It is more than fitting that we take this small opportunity to express our gratitude.

The Retiree Luncheon this year will be held at the Chandelier Restaurant in Belleville on Sunday, April 18, 2010 at noon. If a carrier from your office retired during 2009 and you would like to join us to celebrate their achievement, give me a call and I'll let you know if that carrier will be attending the luncheon. The cost of the luncheon is \$50 and includes a cocktail hour, dinner, and open bar. Why not get a table together and join us as we thank the retired carriers and wish them our best?

The Battle Is On

This week Postal Service management make public their plans for dealing with the economic recession and the loss of revenue. Their plan includes the elimination of Saturday delivery. This will immediately lead to the loss of tens of thousands of letter carrier jobs, and will eventually lead to the end of the Postal Service.

This strategy is just the tip of the iceberg. Our National Agreement ends in 2011 and you can be sure management will be looking to end our temporary agreements regarding contracting out. You can rest assured that they will be going after many of our hard earned benefits as well, especially in the area of health benefits.

We cannot sit idle and hope for the best. We must do all we can to protect our jobs and benefits. Management's plans for five day delivery and any other changes require the approval of Congress. We have to make sure that our representatives in Congress hear our concerns and cover our backs.

This makes the NALC political action fund, COLCPE, even more critical. If you haven't already signed up as an automatic contributor to COLCPE, please consider doing so now. We all need to chip in. Our jobs are at stake.

Give me a call me at 973-564-7244 (Ext. 18) and I'll help you sign up. A buck or two a pay period may save your job.

More Odds & Ends

NALC Food Drive

Hunger in America, a concept many of us have a hard time grasping, has increased at an alarming rate over the past few years. The great recession has left many who would never have imagined being in need of charity with empty cupboards. One in five children in this great country, 20%, has had to turn to food pantries or food stamps to avoid going to bed hungry.

There is no question that the 2010 NALC Food Drive is critical to the welfare of hundreds of thousands of our fellow Americans. It is the biggest single day food drive in the world, and many of our local food banks are relying on our efforts to help those less fortunate than ourselves. These folks are not some faceless people in places far away. Many folks who have been able to work and put food on the table for their families all of their lives have lost their jobs and need our help. They live in our local communities where we live and work.

I know from experience that many of you find the Food Drive to be an enjoyable and rewarding event. I also know that it can make your day a little more difficult and many would rather not participate. We're asking every carrier to make an effort to help out this year. Our neighbors need our help, and it's a privilege to be in a position to do so. For one day a year, let's pull together and make a difference for those who find themselves in financial trouble. It may be inconvenient, but imagine if it were you who had to walk into that food bank in order to feed your children.

If you've been involved in the Food Drive every year, thank you. If not, this is the year to join in. Thanks in advance.

Medical Documentation

The following language from the Employee & Labor Relations Manual defines what is considered acceptable medical documentation:

513.364 Medical Documentation or Other Acceptable Evidence

When employees are required to submit medical documentation, such documentation should be furnished by the employee's attending physician or other attending practitioner who is performing within the scope of his or her practice. The documentation should provide an explanation of the nature of the employee's illness or injury sufficient to indicate to management that the employee was (or will be) unable to perform his or her normal duties for the period of absence. Normally, medical statements such as "under my care" or "received treatment" are not acceptable evidence of incapacitation to perform duties.

The ELM also specifies when management is allowed to require documentation when leave is requested. Any absence of more than three days requires that documentation be provided. There are instances when management may be entitled to documentation for absences of less than three days. These were discussed in my February Newsflash which can still be obtained by seeing your shop steward. If management requests documentation, whether appropriate or not, it is always best to obtain the documentation and file a grievance for payment later. This will help you to avoid missing days on your paycheck.

If you are going to the trouble of getting medical documentation, it is important that the documentation meet the requirements as outline in the ELM. The documentation should state the nature of the illness or injury. This means a general description of the condition sufficient to indicate that your were unable to work. A diagnosis or specifics of your condition is not required. The documentation should specify that your were incapacitated or unable to work, and should indicate on what day or days you couldn't work. If your documentation lacks any of the above mentioned specifics, management may claim that your documentation is unacceptable and deny your request for leave.

It is important that you share this information with your provider and make sure he/she understands the importance of proper documentation. You can bring this article with you if you like. Let them know that your pay is at stake, and review the documentation with them before you leave the office.

A Day to Remember

March 18, 2010 will be the fortieth anniversary of the first and largest nation wide strike against the government of the United States. It was a wild cat strike waged by America's letter carriers which began in New York City and spread throughout the country like wild fire. The letter carriers who walked off the job on that fateful day risked their jobs, their pensions, and imprisonment, and the government made sure they knew it. Their bravery changed the face of the Postal Service, and in many ways the American labor movement. There is no question that every letter carrier and every postal worker since that day will be forever in their debt. The wages and benefits we enjoy today are directly attributable to their actions on that March morning in 1970. Enjoy the remembrances of some of your officers in this month's Sentinel, and take a minute to say thanks.

**Check out your Branch 38 web site:
<http://www.branch38nalc.com>**