



# THE SENTINEL

March 2024

## Heat Illness Prevention



***President***

*by Mike O'Neill*

In 2012, letter carrier John Watzlawick died as a result of delivering mail in extreme heat. He had returned to work following a long-term absence, and was assigned his normal duties in the midst of an extreme heat wave. In response to the tragic passing of Brother Watzlawick and pressure from OSHA and NALC, USPS created the Heat Illness Prevention Program (HIPP) in 2018. The purpose was to equip employees with knowledge needed to recognize and abate heat-related illness.

The HIPP training has undergone changes over the years following 2018. The current management obligations, as directed by USPS Headquarters, have not changed since 2020 and are in place today. Those obligations include:

- 1) Every single city carrier supervisor is required to annually take LMS Course Name: SAF:SS: Heat Stress Recognition and Prevention - Course Number: 10019802.
- 2) Every single city letter carrier is required to annually take LMS Course Name: SAF:SS: Heat Stress Recognition and Prevention - Course Number: 10019802.

3) The annual deadline (2020 and beyond) to undergo this training is April 1st.

4) Employees who were absent from work during the training will be provided the time necessary to take the course "...prior to returning to their street duties..."

5) Installation Heads are tasked with making certain that the above obligations are met.

**Local management is required to certify that every employee** receives this training prior to April 1st. It has become apparent that the HIPP training has not been taken in many of the offices throughout the country, including our Branch. It has also been documented that management in many offices has fraudulently certified that the training was done when it was not.

**There have been a number of deaths and serious injuries** suffered by letter carriers due to heat illness over the years. This is a serious safety issue and must be addressed accordingly. The HIPP training is a video which lasts about 15 minutes. If anyone has not received the HIPP training by April 1, please notify your shop steward or Area Representative.

**I also ask that you log into liteblue, then locate "Hero Login"** in the Human Resources Section. From there hover over the My Learning menu and click on My Active Training. In this section filter by training status "completed" and you will find what is listed as training that the employee has taken. If management has indicated that you have completed the HIPP training and you have not, print out the report and contact your shop steward or Area Representative.

**I cannot stress enough the importance of this training and** our obligation to make sure everyone receives it. I also find it inexcusable and criminal that any manager would fail to provide this training and falsely certify that it was given.

# NEW JERSEY MERGED BRANCH 38

**National Association of Letter Carriers**

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## Branch Officers

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Joseph S. Rutkoski III	Treasurer
Mark McGrady	Director of City Delivery
Christine A. Strasser	Corresponding Secretary
Pete Bednarz	Full-Time Area Rep/HBR
Roy Jancio	Recording Secretary/MBAR
Dominic Walton	Sergeant-At-Arms
Ron Villegas	Director of Retirees

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Clint Colie	Keith Hemmings
Richard O'Connell Jr.	Joseph Otero
Armando Pedreira	

### PART TIME AREA REPRESENTATIVES

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### BRANCH 38 ATTORNEY

Donald Millman, Esq. 973-669-9776

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Roy Jancio 973-564-7244 (Ext.24)

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### BRANCH MEETINGS

April 3, 2024  
May 1, 2024  
June 5, 2024

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Shop Steward Training  
March 28, 2024

Retiree Luncheon  
April 21, 2024

Retirement Seminar  
May 5, 2024

NALC Food Drive  
May 11, 2024

Memorial Day  
May 27, 2024

Scholarship Night  
June 5, 2024

**NJ Merged Branch 38  
Web Site**

<http://www.Branch38nalc.com/>

# Injured at Work - Now What



## **Executive Vice President**

by *Dan Szucs*

**Today's letter carriers are working harder than ever.** We have longer street times, we are delivering more packages, and we have MDD that tracks our every move. With the increased physical nature of our jobs and working in the elements, the risk of getting hurt on the job increases. The Postal Service has several manuals that explain how we should do our jobs, and they all require us to work safely. Accidents happen even when you feel you were doing everything in your power to work safely. What do you do when you get hurt doing your job?

**The first responsibility that you have is to notify management** as soon as possible when you sustain an injury, even if you feel that your injury does not need medical treatment. Some injuries do not show signs of hurting until hours or days later, so it is important to notify management any time you believe you may have been injured, regardless of the severity of the injury.

**The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) is a federal law** that provides you with medical care, continuation of pay (COP), wage loss compensation, schedule awards, vocational rehabilitation, and death benefits. That is why after you have notified your supervisor, go on the computer, tablet, or smartphone, and file a claim in Employees Compensation Operations and Management Portal (ECOMP). ECOMP is a "free web-based application hosted by OWCP that provides federal agencies with an electronic system for recording workplace injuries and illnesses, and processing claims under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA)." Click on this link: <https://www.nalc.org/workplace-issues/body/Filing-a-CA-1-in-ECOMP.pdf>, for instructions on how to process your claim.

**Why is ECOMP so important? To avoid the delays and safeguard your medical information from management.** Registering with ECOMP allows an injured letter carrier to file a claim immediately. While you are seeking medical treatment you could be completing the CA-1 from your smart phone. On ECOMP you can retrieve claim numbers, track the process of the claim, upload

documents, view claim examiners notes, and numerous other features.

**It is important for all letter carriers to register with ECOMP** prior to being injured. That will make it easier and less time-consuming to initiate a claim when an injury occurs. The "employee dashboard" will list all prior cases filed under OWCP and their status.

**You still have the right to request a CA-1 from management** but most of the front-line supervisors are not trained and have no clue what to do when you report the injury to them. This delays proper medical treatment and having your claim processed quickly and properly. More importantly, using ECOMP will avoid delays in receiving your pay.

**When you are injured, you have the right to choose your own physician.** The ELM provides that employees have the right to choose their treating physician and management has the obligation to inform an injured employee of that right.

**It is very important that you notify the union as soon as you get hurt.** We will assist members file a claim and guide them through every step of this process. Remember to work safely and avoid injuries. But accidents do happen every day so it's important to **know your rights.**

## **Bob Paccioretti** **MDA Shamrock Drive**

We want to thank all of our friends and members who helped us to raise nearly \$14,000.00 during our Shamrock Drive for MDA in 2023. That got us off to a great start last year, and we hope to add to that total in 2024.

The battle is not over. A cure has not been found, and there are many clients still in need of assistance from MDA and friends such as you. The COVID-19 pandemic had impacted MDA and the clients they assist more than you might imagine. For people with muscular dystrophy, contracting COVID-19 would most likely be a death sentence. MDA's fund raising ability has also been severely restricted. They have been forced to reduce their operation in order to continue to provide services to their clients.

The Bob Paccioretti MDA Shamrock Campaign has become one of the most successful fund raisers in recent years, thanks to your help and generosity. We are again asking for your support. Please reach out to your shop steward or Area Representative and offer to purchase a Shamrock for \$5.00 in support of MDA and in memory of our friend and brother, Bob Paccioretti. Thank you all in advance for your help and continued generosity.

# Employee Assistance Program



**Treasurer**

**by Joe Rutkoski**

The U.S. Postal Service provides a resource for facing life's many challenges. The Employee Assistance Program is governed by Article 35 of the national agreement. EAP is a confidential program that offers assessment, consultation, counseling, life coaching or training for any postal employee or family member who needs help. EAP can also advise a concerned employee on how to help a co-worker. The services are all offered free of charge and an employee can utilize the services on the clock.

**Section 941.35 of the ELM provides:**

a. An employee's first visit to EAP is on the clock, whether the visit is initiated by management, the union representative, or the employee (unless the employee prefers to visit the EAP unit on his or her own time).

- b. Subsequent consultations are on the employee's own time.
- c. If a reasonable period of time has elapsed since a management referral or a previously disclosed self-referral, the manager or supervisor may, on a case-by-case basis, approve an additional on-the-clock session.
- d. To receive pay for an on-the-clock session, the employee must authorize the EAP provider to disclose his or her attendance to management.

**Discussions with EAP professionals are protected by strict federal and state confidentiality laws and regulations, and by professional ethics standards for counselors, even when they relate to work.** All EAP counselors have at least a master's degree in counseling or social work, are licensed in their state and have experience in dealing with a wide range of personal and workplace concerns. Many of our members have gotten help from EAP dealing with issues such as difficulties with family, children, marriage, divorce, care of an elderly person, childcare, depression or anxiety, grief or loss, substance abuse, job performance problems, or personal or work relationship problems.

**Members seeking assistance from EAP may do so not only by person-to-person counseling but also by phone communication.** Employees or family members may also use video counseling or messaging through a phone or tablet using the EAP's privacy protecting portal. The EAP's website, [eap4you.com](http://eap4you.com), is also a resource for getting help.

**Members seeking EAP services can call 800-EAP-4YOU (800-327-4968), TTY 877-492-7341 or visit [eap4you.com](http://eap4you.com).**

## NJ Merged Branch 38 Retiree Breakfast South

**On Tuesday, May 14, 2024, at 10:00 AM, NJ Merged Branch 38 will be holding our annual Retiree Breakfast in the Southern section of New Jersey.** The Breakfast will be held at the Toms River Elks Lodge 1875 at 600 Washington Street, Toms River, NJ. To reserve a spot, and to get directions, call Branch 38 Director of Retirees, Ron Villegas at 973-564-7244 (Ext. 21). All Branch 38 retirees are welcome to attend. There is no charge to retired members and a guest.

**Your Branch Officers and Region 15 NBA Bruce Didriksen will be in attendance. This is an excellent opportunity for retirees who have relocated to the southern end of New Jersey to come together to exchange old stories, renew old friendships, and hear what's going on in NALC and Branch 38.** This is planned to be a less formal event, so casual attire is encouraged.

**The NALC and Branch 38 values the participation and support of our retirees. This is another opportunity to get together and stay in touch.** We also take this opportunity to present awards to long time members entitled to NALC recognition. We were pleased that the turn-out at the Retiree Breakfasts in Toms River has grown each year, and are happy that it has become an annual event on the Branch 38 calendar. We're hoping for another good turn-out this year as well. Hope to see you there.

# Your Role In Safety - Form 1767



**Director  
of  
City  
Delivery**

**by Mark McGrady**

All Postal Employees are responsible for reporting hazards, unsafe conditions, and unsafe practices to our immediate supervisors. The best way to report a hazard, unsafe condition or practice is to fill out a PS Form 1767. As per the ELM, this form is designed to encourage employee participation in the Postal Service Safety and Health Program and to provide prompt action when employees report a hazard. This form provides a channel of communication to report safety issues between employees and management that promotes a prompt analysis and response with corrective action. Although you are not required to fill out this form, it is a great way to start a paper trail to be sure management corrects the hazardous condition.

The PS Form 1767 is broken down into 4 sections. First, the “Employee Action” Section. You want to be specific about where the location of the hazard is, describe what the hazard is and what you believe could correct the hazard. Complete section I. and file it with your immediate supervisor. If you desire anonymity, complete section I (including your name) and file the report with the Safety Office. Safety personnel will immediately return the form to your supervisor for necessary action and will delete your name from the form to ensure your anonymity. In order to receive a receipt and be able to follow up on your report, it is best that you put your name on the form. You can also ask your shop steward to submit the form without your name.

Next is the “Supervisor’s Action” section. Management must investigate the alleged hazard during the same tour of duty in which the report was received and abate the hazard if it is within the scope of their authority to do so. They must record the action taken to eliminate the hazard or record recommendation for corrective action in section II and sign their name. The supervisor then forwards the original and yellow copy to their immediate supervisor (approving official), sends the pink copy to the safety office, and gives the employee the remaining blue copy as a receipt. It is their responsibility to always monitor the status of the report until the hazard is abated.

Third is the “Approving Official’s Action” section. They must initiate an action to eliminate or minimize the hazard. If this results in the submission of a work order, they should attach the original form, and forward it through channels to the manager, Plant Maintenance. If they determine that there are no reasonable grounds to believe a hazard exists, they must notify the employee in writing within 15 calendar days. Safety personnel will assist them in this determination when requested. If the hazard was abated by the first line supervisor or when it has been abated through the actions of the approving official, they must notify the employee in writing, and send the original of the form to the Safety Office.

The fourth is the “Maintenance Action” section. When the work order has been completed, they must sign, date, and return the original of the form to the approving official who will then forward it to the Safety Office.

Your supervisor must maintain a supply of PS Forms 1767 in the workplace in a manner that provides employees with both easy and (if desired) anonymous access. If management fails to correct a hazard or unsafe condition after filling out a PS Form 1767, your shop steward has the right to file a grievance within fourteen days directly to Formal Step A of the grievance procedure. Let’s all keep each other safe and report any unsafe condition on a PS Form 1767.

## John Sheridan MDA Day at the Races

Sunday, May 19, 2024

Monmouth Park Race Track  
175 Oceanport Ave, Oceanport, NJ

**\$70.00 Per Person Includes:**  
**Admission & Program**  
**Food Provided by Twin Oaks Caterer**  
**BBQ Ribs, Fried Chicken, Sausage & Peppers**  
**Corn On The Cob, Grilled Vegetables, Potatoes**  
**Cole Slaw, Salad, Fruit Salad**  
**Corn Bread, Biscuits, Desert**  
**Iced Tea, Lemonade**  
**BYOB**

**For Tickets Call**  
**Armando Pedreira: 973-564-7244 (Ext.19)**  
**or Contact Your Area Rep**  
**All Proceeds Go Directly to MDA**

# *Honoring Our Veterans*

**Rahway shop steward, Ernesto Rivera, has presented the Branch 38 Executive Board with a unique way of honoring our military veterans.** Ernesto, who is a veteran himself, spends much of his free time working with wood and designed a plaque to be presented to any Branch 38 member who is a veteran of any Branch of the United States Military upon request. Our veterans may request a plaque by contacting Ernesto at [erivera178@icloud.com](mailto:erivera178@icloud.com). The wording on the plaque reads, "While only one day of the year is dedicated solely to honoring our veterans, Americans must never forget the sacrifices that many of our countrymen have made to defend our country and protect our freedoms. Bless you all and thank you for your service." Thanks to our veterans and Ernesto.



## **Retirement Seminar**

**Sunday, May 5, 2024  
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

**WOODBIDGE ELKS LODGE #2116  
665 RAHWAY AVENUE  
WOODBIDGE, NJ 07095**

**NJ Merged Branch 38 will be holding a retirement seminar for those considering their option to retire during the next few years. Information relative to CSRS and FERS retirement plans will be addressed.**

**We will be covering topics such as how to calculate your annuity and carrying health and life insurance into retirement. We will discuss what information you will need to complete the application for retirement, and what you need to do to prepare for retirement.**

**You will have a chance to ask questions and meet with some of the Branch 38 officers. Spouses are also welcome.**

**Please let us know if you plan to attend by contacting Ron Villegas at 973-564-7244 (Ext. 21) or your Area Rep no later than April 28, so that we will be sure to have an adequate supply of training material and space available.**

## **Sign Up for the Letter Carrier Political Fund Now!!!**

**Help Protect:  
Your Job  
Your Benefits  
The Postal Service**

**Go to: <http://nalc.org/>**

By making a contribution to the Letter Carrier Political fund, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it part of union dues. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal. The Letter Carrier Political Fund will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until cancelled. Contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the Letter Carrier Political Fund from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, executive and administrative staff or their families. Any contribution received from such an individual will be refunded to that contributor. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year.

# Your Power is Your Vote



**Corresponding Secretary**

*by Christine Strasser*

**Most of us had no concept of the connection between the Postal Service and the Federal Government** when we first came to work at the Post Office. The decision to become a letter carrier was based on salary, vacation time, holidays, pensions, and benefits. Some carriers are still not aware how much of what happens in Washington affects our jobs, wages, and benefits.

**The Postal Service is a quasi-federal entity. It relies only on the revenue generated by the sale of postage, not tax dollars.** We are, however, governed by legislation passed by both Houses of the United States Congress, subject to the approval of the President of the United States. Article 43.1 of our National Agreement provides:

*“Should any part of this Agreement or any provision contained herein be rendered or declared invalid by reason of any existing or subsequently enacted legislation or by a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidation of such part or provision of this Agreement shall not invalidate the remaining portions of this Agreement, and they shall remain in full force and effect.”*

**What that means is that the Federal Government, Congress and the President, has the authority to change any part of our National Agreement with the swipe of a pen.** The Federal Government also has the ability to affect the financial well-being of the Postal Service, either positively or negatively, via legislation. That is why NALC constantly monitors what goes on in Congress and uses the influence of our 280,000 members to protect the interests of the Postal Service and our members.

**That is why we encourage our members to contribute to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, and that is why I write this article to remind you how important it is for all of us to have our voices heard by voting.** The right to vote is not only a valuable privilege given to the American public, but also an obligation to ensure that our government officials in office are aware of our best interests and priorities.

**On June 4, 2024, there is a primary election for one of two New Jersey Senate seats.** The primary election will determine which

candidate from each political party will run in the general election held on November 5, 2024. Representative Andy Kim and Tammy Murphy have announced their candidacy. Representative Kim has repeatedly supported letter carrier’s issue in the past. Ms. Murphy has not made her commitment to letter carriers known. Senator Mendez is the incumbent and, as of this writing, has not declared his intent to run for re-election.

**The presidential election will also be held on November 5, 2024.** Many letter carriers may not be aware that the President of the United States nominates the Boards of Governors (BOG), with the consent of the US Senate. The BOG is responsible for overseeing the executive management of the United States Postal Service. It is important to have members of the BOG nominated by individuals that have knowledge of our interests as a union and support those interests.

**Any legislation passed concerning the Postal Service by the President or Congress will affect every letter carrier.** To overturn bad legislation for the postal service is nearly impossible. It took over fifteen years to repair the damage done by the mandate for the Postal Service to prefund retiree health benefits decades into the future. Voting for candidates who are aware of our issues and support our positions is the best way to avoid reliving the past.

**The deadline to register to vote in any election in New Jersey is 21 days prior to election day.** For the primary election it is May 14, 2024. The deadline for the general election is October 15, 2024. You can register online or check your registration status at [nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration](http://nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration). It could not be easier.

**Voting is an essential part of the democratic system. No matter what your beliefs are or who you choose to support, it is important to exercise your rights.** Do you want someone else to decide what laws will impact your state or what legislation will impact the Postal Service? Voting gives you power. It is your right and your obligation. Begin by voting in the primary election on June 4 and in the general election on November 5.

## **NALC Disaster Relief Foundation**

In 2018, NALC established the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation to alleviate the suffering of members affected by natural disasters including earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, and wildfires. The Foundation was designed to provide an avenue for our members to assist our fellow sister and brother members during extreme times of great financial need. Branch 38 members have benefited several times from this Foundation. Please consider contributing to this worthy cause by going to [nalc.org](http://nalc.org) and clicking on the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation link. Thank you.

# The Letter Carrier Political Fund



**Full-Time  
Area Rep  
& HBP Rep**

**by Pete Bednarz**

The Letter Carrier Political Fund is the NALC’s political action committee. It is completely funded by voluntary contributions from our members. The NALC utilized these funds in achieving postal reform. This was a significant step in ensuring the financial stability of the Postal Service and job security for postal employees. On February 8, 2022, the House of Representatives passed the Postal Reform Act with a strong bipartisan vote of 342-92. The Senate passed the Postal Reform Act on March 8, 2022, by a vote of 79-19. A month later, President Biden signed the Postal Service Reform Act into law. The large bipartisan support would not have happened if we did not have friends on both sides of the aisle. The LCPF has been advocating for this important legislation over the past 12 years. The LCPF helped set the USPS on a more stable and secure financial path. The reforms addressed critical issues and have positioned the USPS for long term viability.

**Some of the key points of the legislation are:**

1. Repeal of the 2006 Prefunding Mandate- This eliminated the requirement that the USPS must pre-fund billions of dollars each year for future retiree health benefits decades in advance. This change relieved financial pressure and allowed the USPS to operate more sustainably.
2. Guaranteed Six Day Delivery- This eliminates the need to renew the six-day requirement every year through the congressional appropriations process.
3. Prospective Medicare Integration- The legislation proposes integrating Medicare with the USPS retiree health benefit program. Future USPS retirees, upon reaching age 65, will be enrolled in both Medicare and the Federal Employees Health benefits Program (FEHBP). Medicare will serve as the primary provider, while FEHBP will act as the secondary provider. Current retirees are not affected by this change but will have an opportunity to enroll in Medicare without penalty if they choose to.

**Letter carriers still need important legislation to be passed in the future. A strong LCPF will allow us to elect pro-letter carrier**

candidates. We need politicians that will support the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R.82/S.597). This bill would greatly help certain retirees who get reduced Social Security benefits. If enacted, the bill would provide fair treatment to individuals who have dedicated their careers to public service by removing the provisions that negatively impact their Social Security benefits. We also need to see the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 5995) pass. This bill would allow federal employees, including letter carriers, to buy back their time served in non-career positions such as City Carrier assistants (CCAs), Transitional employees (TEs) or casuals. If enacted, the years of service would be credible under the Federal Employees Retirement System.

**There are too many letter carriers that take their job, benefits and pay for granted.** Working for the USPS and belonging to a strong union does seem like job security. The part that is overlooked, however, is that the federal government is our employer. Congress has the power to impact our lives and future by voting to make drastic changes to the Postal Service. We were fortunate to have the Postal Reform Act enacted into law. Our political fund helps ensure that Congress hears our voices when it makes decisions affecting our jobs and our lives. Most political candidates rely on their allies for help and that’s where LCPF comes in.

**We need to continue to grow our Political Action Committee (PAC).** Branch 38 has over 800 active and retired letter carriers that participate in the Letter Carrier Political Fund. Please read the February 2024 issue of the Postal Record. It explains LCPF further and has a listing on pages 66-68 of all the letter carriers in Branch 38 that are contributing to LCPF. If you don’t see your name, please consider signing up this year.

**There have been members who were signed up but were unexpectedly dropped.** When a carrier retires, they are dropped and should sign up again through their annuity or bank account. When a CCA is converted to career status or has their break in service, they are also dropped from their LCPF contributions and should easily sign up again. Another situation in which a member may be dropped is if they are on OWCP. If you were dropped for any reason or would like to sign up for the Letter Carrier Political Fund for the first time, please speak to any Branch 38 Representative or call me at 973-564-7244 Ext.23.

**The Branch 38  
Facebook Page  
“NJ Merged Branch 38”**

All Branch 38 members are invited to join our closed Facebook page to stay in touch and keep up to date on NALC news and Branch events and activities.



# *Route Protection & TIAREAP*



**Recording  
Secretary**

*by Roy Jancio*

**In May 2022 the NALC and USPS agreed to implement The Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process (TIAREAP).** The agreement has been extended through the end of May 2024, and may be extended further. The process replaces the route inspection process provided for in the M-39. In short, it eliminates the often adversarial component of evaluating routes, specifically being followed by a supervisor on one or more days during the week of inspection. In place of the in-person route examiner, the carrier's street performance is evaluated using information from the MMD used by carriers every day.

**Without going into detail regarding the process itself, this article** is designed to remind letter carriers that, under this process, they are virtually on route inspection every day, and should work accordingly. This article is intended to remind letter carriers of the importance of performing office and street duties properly every day.

**The first thing anyone does in the morning that drives a postal vehicle** is vehicle check. The vehicle check is properly done using the buddy system. You should pair up with another carrier and check both vehicles together using the USPS expanded vehicle check form. This is the only way to check your truck and you must complete this task every day. It is important to use the time necessary to check your vehicle.

**In addition to casing and pulling down your mail, there are** other duties other than the vehicle check that constitute your fixed office time. Stand-up talks, pulling mail, getting accountable items, getting equipment, office breaks where applicable, wash-up time, etc. are all part of your office time. All these functions should be performed in an efficient and safe manner. Do not allow yourself to be pressured into working faster than a safe pace would permit. This applies also to your PM office duties. Artificially applied time limits have no basis in any USPS manual. You are required to perform all these duties and you are entitled to the time it takes to do them safely.

**The same safety requirement applies to street duties as well.** NALC and the Postal Service have agreed that there is no standard or minimum street pace that a carrier is required to maintain. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated into speeding up by anyone in management. You are required to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, nothing more. Safety is your most important responsibility. Here are some reminders to make sure you receive a fair evaluation of your route.

**Do not finger mail when walking up or down steps or curbs,** when crossing streets, or at any time it would create a safety hazard to yourself or to the public (M-41 Section 133.2). You must not finger mail while driving or hold mail in your hands while the vehicle is in motion. You should cross lawns to deliver mail only if there is, in your opinion, no safety hazard such as a dog, slippery surface, snow/ice, uneven terrain or unusual obstacles, chemically treated lawns, and only if there is no objection from the patron (National Agreement Article 41.3.N).

**Never use a residential customer's driveway for any deliveries.** USPS policy (M-00341) states that employees who perform curbside deliveries shall adhere to the following procedures: While on a level street or road, place the vehicle in neutral and place your foot firmly on brake pedal while collecting mail or placing mail in a mail receptacle. On a hill, place the vehicle in park and place your foot firmly on brake pedal while collecting mail or placing mail in a mail receptacle. Adhere to all speed limits, driving, and parking laws.

**Always scan and attempt the parcels and accountable items** at the resident or business address and not at the cluster box or mail room. This will take time, but it is a service to which our customers are entitled and time to which we should be credited with.

**Carriers are entitled to either one break in the office and one break on the street or two breaks on street time.** Do not let management intimidate you or coerce you into skipping or reducing your break. You should take your full 30-minute lunch at one of the authorized locations recorded on Form 1564-A in your route book. Do not let management intimidate you or coerce you into skipping or reducing your lunch break.

**In addition to your lunch period and break periods, you may** take any comfort stops reasonably necessary while performing your street duties. Reasonable comfort stops will not be deducted from your actual time (M-39 Section 242.341). Do not let management intimidate you or coerce you into taking comfort stops instead of breaks.

# Family Medical Leave



## Area Representative

by *Armando Pedreira*

**The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) is a federal law** which requires the Postal Service and other employers, to provide employees time off from work, without penalty, to assist family members with a serious health condition, or their own serious health condition. Every carrier should familiarize themselves with FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993) benefits.

**The following definitions apply for the purposes of Absence for Family Care or Illness of Employee:**

- a. Son or daughter — biological, adopted, or foster child, stepchild, legal ward, or child who stands in the position of a son or daughter to the employee, who is under 18 years of age or who is 18 or older and incapable of self-care because of mental or physical disability.
- b. Parent — biological, adoptive, step or foster parent or any other individual who stood in that position to the employee when the employee was a child.
- c. Spouse — husband or wife.

### **What is considered a serious health condition?**

A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves any of the following:

- (1) Hospital care — inpatient care
- (2) Absence plus treatment — a period of incapacity of more than 3 consecutive full calendar days
- (3) Pregnancy — any period of incapacity due to pregnancy or for prenatal care
- (4) Chronic condition requiring treatments
- (5) Permanent or long-term condition requiring supervision
- (6) Condition requiring multiple treatments (nonchronic condition)

### **How do you determine if you are qualified for FMLA?**

For an absence to be covered by the FMLA, the employee must have been employed by the Postal Service for an accumulated total of 12 months and must have worked a minimum of 1,250 hours during the 12-month period before the date leave begins.

**Absences that qualify as FMLA leave may be charged as annual leave, sick leave, continuation of pay, or leave without pay, or a combination of these.** Leave is charged consistent with current leave policies and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

**Since FMLA's inception, the National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA) of 2008 created two new categories for military families.** In November of 2015, the NALC and the Postal Service jointly developed (M-01866), this document provides a mutual understanding of the national parties on the issues related to Leave covered under FMLA.

**An eligible employee must be allowed to use up to twelve workweeks of leave within the Postal Service leave year.** An eligible employee of a covered service member must be allowed up to twenty-six workweeks of leave during a single twelve-month period. The leave which qualifies for FMLA may be used as annual leave, sick leave, continuation of pay, or leave without pay. The leave can be used as one leave type or a combination of leave types, but the leave is charged under the current leave policies and applicable collective bargaining agreements, you are not entitled to more leave than earned. The twelve weeks of leave can be taken all at once, on an intermittent basis, or on a reduced schedule.

**Now that there is no COVID protocol, it would be a good idea to apply for FMLA protection if you are diagnosed with COVID.** In most cases, when someone contracts COVID they are usually out for more than three (3) days and that is one of the definitions of a serious health condition as outlined in Section 515.2 of the ELM.

## Download The NALC Member App

The app contains links to workplace resources, including the National Agreement, the JCAM, the MRS, CCA resources and more. It also includes legislative tools, such as a bill tracker, an individualized list of your Congressional Representatives and PAC information. One of the coolest features is an Interactive Non-Scheduled Days calendar. Available for iPhone and Android smartphones. The app is available at the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store. Search for “NALC Member App.” Go to [NALC.org](http://NALC.org) for more information.

# *NJ Merged Branch 38 Scholarship Application*

NJ Merged Branch 38 is proud to announce that we are now accepting applications for our 39th annual scholarships in honor of former Executive Board Member of NJ Merged Branch 38, Michael J. McTigue, former Branch Chaplin, Gil Hampton, former National Secretary Treasurer, Richard O'Connell, and former State Association President Tony Massa.

All four scholarships are in the amount of \$1,500 and will be awarded to four dependents of Branch 38 members in their final year of high school. The scholarships will be presented to the winners at the Branch Meeting on June 5, 2024 at the Woodbridge Elk's Lodge #2116, 665 Rahway Avenue, Woodbridge, NJ.

To be eligible, the applicant must be the son or daughter of an active or retired member of Branch 38, and must be graduating from an accredited secondary school this year, and planning entry into an accredited college or university this September. Other applicants will be considered where a member of Branch 38 is shown to be the student's primary source of dependency.

Interested applicants should fill in the accompanying form on this page, and provide the requested information in a legible manner and send, along with their High School transcript to: NJ Merged Branch 38 Scholarships, 374 Morris Avenue, Springfield, NJ 07081-1106.

The transcript must include S.A.T. scores, scholastic records, and any extra-curricular activities participated in. Recommendations of faculty or guidance personnel may also be included.

For questions or additional information, please contact Mike O'Neill at 973-564-7244 (Ext. 18).

**APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED  
NO LATER THAN  
MAY 15, 2024**

## 2024 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Branch 38 Member  
(Parent or Guardian)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Office Employed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name & Address of High School:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**List of Colleges or Universities Applied To:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Applicant:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Member:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THE SENTINEL**  
NJ Merged Branch 38, NALC  
374 Morris Avenue  
Springfield, NJ 07081

NON-PROFIT  
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TRENTON, NJ

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



## **Branch Meeting Information & Directions**

Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the first Wednesday of each month, except July & August.

The Branch Meetings are held at:

**ELKS BPO LODGE #2116**  
**665 RAHWAY AVENUE**  
**WOODBIDGE, NJ 07095**  
**732-634-2116**

**Directions:**

**SOUTH** on Garden State Parkway. Take Exit #129 to Route 9 North to Woodbridge Exit (Just after the Forge Restaurant on your right). At the end of the Exit Ramp, turn right onto Main Street (Route 514) and proceed until you reach a monument at City Hall. Bear left onto Rahway Avenue. The Elks is @1/2 mile down the road on your left.

**NORTH** on Garden State Parkway. Take Exit #127 to Route 9 North and follow directions above.

**NJ Turnpike.** Take Exit 12 (Carteret). Bear right after toll booth and turn left at light after overpass. Proceed through industrial park to Rahway Avenue and turn left. The Elks is 1 mile ahead on your right.