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## BUKOWSKI'S POST OFFICE APPROACHES 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Representations of postal workers in popular culture are generally benign and comical. Most of us will think of Cheers' Cliff Claven or Seinfeld's Newman before any other fictional posties. Cliff was a charming dullard who liked to wet his whistle at Boston's best watering hole. Newman was proud of his position as a "United States postal worker" but also quite lazy - revealing in one episode that he always called in sick on rainy days. Mr. McFeely from Mister Rogers' Neighborhood is a much more wholesome and good-natured portrayal of a letter carrier (though it's easy to imagine his calm, gentle demeanor being tested in today's postal atmosphere of constant requests from management to limit office time and/or pivot...). Probably the earliest piece of pop culture to depict the darker side of working for the postal service is Charles Bukowski's debut novel, *Post Office*.

The publication of *Post Office* more or less coincided with the massive wildcat strike of letter carriers, clerks, and mail handlers in March of the previous year, but it depicts an earlier, grittier era of laboring for the U.S. Postal Department, more

than a decade before the gains of the strike (higher pay, safer working conditions, etc.) were implemented. Much like George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*, published a few decades prior, Bukowski's novel is a fictionalized account of his own working class experiences. While working as a substitute



letter carrier (and later clerk) for the Postal Department in Los Angeles, Bukowski learned firsthand how difficult and stressful it was being a postal employee. Being a substitute carrier was particularly grueling in those days before rookies were guaranteed minimum work hours and allowed membership in the

union. Bukowski writes of rampant favoritism by postal supervisors and of waiting around for an hour or more each morning on the off chance that a regular carrier would call in sick. If none did, subs were sent home without pay, only to repeat this degrading ritual every day until they could apply to carry on a vacant route, which in Bukowski's literary alter ego, Henry Chinaski's case, took two years.

Roughly the first third of *Post Office* gives readers a peek into what it was like to be a substitute carrier in the 1950s. Like CCAs of today, subs were overworked and underpaid. Bukowski wrote of the severe stress and physical toil that characterized his postal duties. He also detailed the anxiety that accompanied not knowing what sort of route he'd be on from one day to the next and of the ongoing petty squabbles he endured with postal supervisors on a power trip. The remainder of the novel explores the main character's personal life and eventual changing of crafts to that of a postal clerk.

Like most of Bukowski's writings, *Post Office* is crude and transgressive. It's also honest and poignant. Modern day carriers will

*Bukowski cont'd on page 7*

# RETIREMENTS



Last Punch for Barb Kelly (Brooklyn Center) with Steward Crystal Wolfe. Happy Retirement!



Gary Sooger (Main Office) with EVP Samantha Hartwig, received his retirement pin and watch. Good Luck in Retirement!



Last Punch for Dick Wells (Fridley) with Steward Perry Korzenowski. Best Wishes in Retirement!



Last Punch for Deb Ochetti (Burnsville) with Connie Beissel. Happy Retirement!



Last Punch for Scott Haselhuhn (Nokomis) with Steward Duane Pederson. Have Fun!



Last Punch for Dave Anderson (Elk River) with Steward Jim Julik. Happy Retirement!



Last Punch for Geri Bruss (Richfield) with Steward Joe Rian. Enjoy Retirement!



Last Punch for Jerry Perron (Diamond Lake) with Steward Chris Pennock. Happy Retirement!

Last Punch for Don Grunnes (Lowry) with Joe Tanner, Manon Wojack and Steward Cindy Fossum. Best Wishes in Retirement!

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The opinions expressed by the writers are not necessarily those of the OFFICERS, or of NALC Branch 9.

**Articles MUST be submitted to the editor by the 1st of the month, and must be signed.** The Editorial Staff reserves the right to edit or refuse to print articles which are derogatory in nature.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I write this, it is Veteran's Day 2019. It is one hundred and one years from the end of the "war to end all wars." Veteran's Day, originally called Armistice Day, was declared by President Woodrow Wilson as a day of remembrance for the veterans of the Great War. There were parades, there was a moment of silence in commemoration of those veterans both living and dead of the war at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. This day was later changed to Veteran's Day after the Korean War. Its intent was to recognize the sacrifice and service of those who have served their country. Branch 9 has well over 250 active and retired members who have served our country. On behalf of the Brothers and Sisters of Branch 9 we thank you for your service. I encourage all veterans to visit the NALC Veteran's Group page on the NALC website; <https://www.nalc.org/member-benefits/military-veterans>. If you have any questions about the Group, please contact the Branch Office.

### Safety

Workplace safety is one of the primary reasons that people formed Unions in the first place. Workers realized that they should be most concerned about workplace safety for themselves and their families. That is why we keep repeating the mantra an injury to one is an injury to all. It is also why it is frustrating when carriers continue take shortcuts that infringe on their personal safety. If we don't think it is important to protect our safety does anyone believe that management will? We need to take the time to not only do it right but do it safely.

### Safety – Delivery After Dark

As we prepare to enter winter, the atmosphere that carriers will find themselves is ever changing. With the end of Daylights Savings Time, it's that time of year when letter carriers will find themselves trying to deliver the mail in less

than ideal conditions. There is a copy of our Delivery After Dark flier that should be on your Union Bulletin Board. Please take a few moments to talk to the newer employees who may be facing the prospect of being out on the street after dark trying to deliver mail for the first time. Now is the time to set up a plan of what to do. Just because there is supposed to be an emphasis on possibly delivering parcels after dark does not mean that it is any less dangerous. It is up to each of us to work safely and educate our newer sisters and brothers on how to do that before they find themselves alone, cold and in the dark.

### Safety – Accidents and Injuries

Every week the Branch receives a list of the accidents and injuries for the previous week that happened in the Minneapolis Installation. The top four areas accidents and injuries are: Lifting Injuries, Animal and Insect bites, Motor Vehicle Accidents and the number one cause of accident and injuries, **Slips, Trips and Falls**. In the last 10 months, there have been over 130 slips, trips and falls reported. A disproportionate number by our newest employees. Delivering the mail is dangerous simply because we are not in a controlled environment and it is ever changing because of elements that are beyond our control. Too often carriers are in a hurry and don't see that dip in the ground or items covered by leaves, snow or ice. It is important to pay attention to where you are walking and your footing even if you have walked the same route for years. The importance of delivering mail can never be overshadowed by doing so safely. If you are injured, report it to your supervisor, then contact your steward or the Branch Office.

### Safety – Motor Vehicle Accidents:

It is important to remember, when driving in winter's ice and snow to make allowances for increased stopping distance and slow down. By now all of you have heard the "leave yourself an out" talk. So be aware of your surroundings.



**Mike Zagaros**

Watch out for narrower streets (snowbanks) and watch out for other drivers. You've heard about the emphasis of not backing up while making deliveries. You have been asked numerous times to look for alternatives even if it means driving around the block. Avoid U-turns do not drive into driveways unless there is a turn around. If you miss a delivery. Get out of your vehicle and walk back. The most important thing to drive safely. Every time you are moving a vehicle do so safely with your seatbelt on always.

### Our National Agreement

November 28th marks the Thanksgiving Holiday where friends and families gather together to celebrate the blessing that have been given to all us this year. While there is plenty of room for improvement, there is much to be thankful for. Thanksgiving also marks the end of the 60-day mediation period that the National Parties are required to undergo after reaching an impasse. The parties are now discussing who will be the impartial Chair of the Arbitral Panel. This panel is made up of 3 people, one representing the Postal Service, one representing the NALC and the impartial chair who will take testimony and eventually make a decision as to what the terms of our next National Agreement will be.

One behalf of the Executive Board, here is wishing you a happy Thanksgiving to you and yours.

# Above and Beyond the Call of Duty



Jonathan Xianaj  
Nokomis Station (*pictured left*) was presented the Above and Beyond the Call of Duty award by President Mike Zagaros.

On behalf of the Branch 9 Executive Board, you have been selected to receive Branch 9 "Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award" for your efforts to be the eyes for the community in which you work, you truly made the difference.

As a Carrier Technician you have responsibility for learning and delivering 5 routes on your string. When you were delivering route 14, you heard a faint cry for help. You looked up and saw an elderly lady crouched over her wheelchair in distress saying that she couldn't breathe. You contacted 911 and stayed with the woman until the Fire Department. After she was stable, you were thanked, and you continued on your route.

You were nominated for this recognition by your Steward Duane Pederson and recognized at the General Membership Meeting on Tuesday October 22nd.

## Brian Yaeger Anoka Station (*pictured right*)

was presented the Above and Beyond the Call of Duty award by President Mike Zagaros.

On behalf of the Branch 9 Executive Board, you have been selected to receive Branch 9 "Above and Beyond the Call of duty Award" for your efforts to be the eyes for the community in which you work, you truly made the difference.

As a Carrier Technician you have responsibility for learning and delivering 5 routes on your string. When you were delivering one of your routes notice an elderly lady lying in her driveway. She had fallen on Black Ice and fractured her kneecap You helped get her into her house. Unfortunately, she did know you're name until she had talked to the regular on the route Stacey Ellingson. She then gave Stacey a letter where she referred to you as her "hero." She had been laying on the driveway for a while and doesn't know how she would have been lying there but for your actions.

You were nominated for this recognition by your Branch 9 Trustee Stacey Ellingson and recognized at the General Membership Meeting on Tuesday October 22nd.



## Exec. Vice President's Report

I recently attended the Committee of Presidents (COP) meeting, and the NALC Health Benefit Seminar in October. The COP is a meeting of NALC Branch Presidents from across the country, or their designee. At this COP Fred Rolando, our National President, spoke on several topics.

### Committee of Presidents

Fred talked about what the NALC agenda is during contract negotiations. The NALC is looking to have an all career workforce, possibly a return to Part-Time Flexibles (PTF). In San Francisco the USPS has been allowed to hire PTF carriers instead of CCA carriers, because they were not able retain any CCAs. The National is attempting to get language for an automatic conversion of CCAs to career status for all size offices. The previous one-time conversion of CCAs to career in September of 2018 mostly affected small offices, the Minneapolis Installation did not have anyone converted, only a handful in the associate offices that Branch 9 represents.

Fred also talked about the USPS reluctance to comply with the contract and trying to get stronger language to enforce contract compliance. Additionally, the USPS has made no effort to date in getting new letter carrier uniforms made with materials that would be better suited to delivering mail in the variety of weather conditions that carriers must contend with.

### Contract Negotiations

The NALC put on the negotiating table a 44-month contract and looking to add an additional step, beyond step-O, to the letter carrier pay chart. Currently when you reach six years as a career letter carrier you will have no-lay off protection. National is attempting to enhance the no-lay off protection and change it to when you are hired as career, the no-lay off protection will begin immediately. The NALC also wants

he ability to automatically audit pay records for carriers.

Right now, the NALC and USPS are in the process of selecting an arbitrator. Around Thanksgiving if there still is no agreement on the contract the NALC and USPS will go through mediation before going to full fledged arbitration.

### National Level Issues

On November 24, 2018 all city letter carriers were upgraded to Grade 2. Under the current contract the USPS can't excess clerks into a Grade 2 city letter carrier position. The USPS is withholding city letter positions across the country for excessing of clerks into the city letter carrier craft; which caused the NALC to file a national level grievance on this issue. If the NALC prevails, then that will mean that no clerks anywhere can be excessed into the city letter carrier craft; and all assignments that are being withheld will then need to be released and posted on the bid sheet. This grievance is scheduled for arbitration in December.

Consolidated casing is in 61 offices nationwide. The NALC filed a lawsuit to stop the consolidated casing initiative by the USPS. The biggest hurdle is proving to a judge that there has been irreparable harm to city letter carriers because of consolidated casing. The NALC is gathering statements, and evidence from the offices where consolidated casing has been implemented for the lawsuit. We do not have any offices in Minneapolis active yet; however, Burnsville and Nokomis are still on the list as sites for consolidated casing.

There is a National level grievance filed on the USPS putting cameras in Postal Vehicles that record all day long. These cameras even record after the vehicle is shut off for about 2 hours. Currently, we are not aware of cameras in Postal



**Samantha Hartwig**

vehicles in Minneapolis that record all day. The service states this is for safety reasons.

The NALC did get a proper Article 34 request from the USPS that they want to develop new standards for city letter carriers; however, there have been no details as to what the service is looking at for new standards.

### Legislation

I started reading a new book, *How the Post Office Created America*. I am only about halfway through the book, but there is one theme that I see throughout, and that is since the inception of the USPS politics have always set the direction of the service. Politics can make or break the USPS, our employer, at any given time. Right now, with the prefunding mandate, that was created in 2006 by Congress, the service has missed \$42 ½ Billion in payments.

The Treasury Department could call for payment on this debt any time, and the USPS may not be able to pay it. In this worse case scenario, it would hurt everyone if we do nothing. Right now, 7 of Minnesota's 8 Congressional Representatives have signed in support of HR 2382, a bill in the House of Representatives, that will fix the prefunding mandate if it can get passed. Only

*EVP. Report cont'd on page 6*



*EVP Report cont'd from page 6*

Representative Jim Hagedorn, in the 1st District, has not signed on at this time.

There are two ways to get our elected officials to support us, and the first way is to keep talking to them. Keep sending them letters, phone calls, face to face meetings, and educating them on our issues. The second way is through monetary contributions. To get friends on both sides of the isle in Congress takes money, our issues are bipartisan. Unfortunately, money is needed to get us in the door with some members of Congress to speak about our Postal Issues.

We can't use Union dues, but the NALC has a National PAC fund, and Branch 9 has a Local PAC fund. Nationally only 9.75% of the membership contributes to the National NALC PAC Fund. I contribute to the National PAC and our PAL 9 PAC because I see the importance of keeping our members of Congress informed on our issues, and the reality is that money talks. Asking for money is never fun but making sure that Congress supports our issues is important and having friends in Congress helps letter carriers. Anyone who is interested in donating can call the Branch Office for assistance with how to contribute, it is so easy and **it is only \$5.00 a pay period**, that is the cost of a cup of coffee at a Starbucks or Caribou Coffee. I just make one less trip a month to Caribou Coffee!

**Open Season**

Open season for changing or signing up for a Federal Health Plan begins November 11, 2019 through December 9th. You can also sign up for a Federal Vision and/or Dental plan during this time too. The website to go is **OPM.GOV**, and you can compare health plans. The NALC offers a health plan that I encourage everyone to look at. If you do not currently have a health plan, and you don't sign up during open

season, then you will need to wait till the next open season. The only way to enroll outside of open season is due to a life changing event, such as marriage, divorce, childbirth.

I encourage anyone who is going to change plans or enroll in a Federal Health plan for the first time to do so right away when open season begins, waiting till the last week of open season could cause problems, especially if you have any questions.

In Solidarity,

*\*\*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 guideline amounts listed above are merely suggestions, and you may contribute more or less than the guidelines suggest and the union will not favor or disadvantage you by reason of the amount of your contribution or your decision not to contribute. 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.*

*Bukowski cont'd from page 1*

note how much of the workplace jargon remains the same and how similar the overall depiction of mail delivery rings true, even five decades after its initial publication. Bukowski himself lasted about ten years as a postal employee before becoming a professional novelist and poet. John Martin, founding publisher of Black Sparrow Press, reportedly offered Bukowski \$100 a month to quit sorting letters and write for him full-time, an offer he didn't pass up. He would later write in a letter to Martin that "they never pay (us) enough (to) get free, just enough (to) stay alive and come back to work..."

Clearly, he was more cut out for a life of self-employment as an artist than one of drudgery as a postal worker.

Bukowski continued to write until his death in 1994. He left behind a body of work that all began, for better or worse, with a fictional memoir based on his time in, and out of, the US Postal Service.

David Feldman  
Lake Street Station

**The Following is a List of PAL 9 Paid Members for September & October.**

**Very Concerned Members**

Linda Olson  
David Olson

**Regular Members**

Thank you.  
Jim Fodstad  
Treasurer PAL 9

**NEW MEMBERS**

Kitty Berg  
Ahmed Diriye  
Faith Johnson  
Chase McKay  
Kevin Mills  
Chelsea Ness  
Jenna O'Connor  
Shavanna Rucker  
Joshua Seipel  
Chasidy Washington

# Director of Retirees Report

## Just in time for

**Halloween**, Senator Mitt Romney introduces a “bipartisan” bill to “save” Social Security. The House Democrats are close to the mark up process on Social Security 2100 which would actually save Social Security while increasing benefits. So, Romney to the “rescue” with his TRUST Act (Time to Rescue United States Trusts), which promises nothing for several of the trust funds in the federal government. According to this plan, the Treasury will have 30 days to report on the status of each trust fund (one of which is Social Security). The Senate would then create bipartisan committees to bolster or “improve” the programs. If the committees have a recommendation in the form of a bill, it would get expedited consideration. So, no details, no transparency and probably little debate time on any proposals. If the phrase bipartisan support sways you as to the validity of this approach, take a look at the Democrats supporting the TRUST Act: Doug Jones (AL), Joe Manchin (VA) and Kyrsten Sinema (AZ). DINO’s all. Now, solvency for the Trust fund is a good goal. Social Security 2100 does that and tells you how that will happen. Romney’s bill doesn’t outline any solutions. Don’t be fooled. We need a bill that provides adequate benefits to keep seniors out of

poverty. Social Security 2100 does that.

I recently had the honor of presenting a retiree his NALC pin and watch on his last day of work. One of the questions an about to be retired person is asked is “now what are you going to do?” The standard answer is “anything I want.” My suggestion is that retirees don’t leave that response unexamined. Consider your options, desires and go exploring. The Postal Record had an excellent article on active Retirees. Honestly, none of those activities were “me,” but the point is the same. Keep moving!

On July 4th I discovered my credit union debit card had been hacked as I attempted to fill my tank to leave town on a vacation. Not good timing. What to do when you have a security breach? Of course get new cards and cancel the old ones. The other point is to not use your cat’s name (I know, I know) as a password or the last four digits of your phone number as a pin number (who hasn’t?). Use a mix of letters, numbers and symbols unconnected to personal information. Most importantly—protect your Social Security number. This means reporting a stolen number to local law



**Melia Derrick**

enforcement and IdentityTheft.gov. Hackers get into all kinds of our personal online life. Protect yourself.

Stay Tuned In  
Melia Derrick

### In Memoriam



Carriers lined up in Anoka to attend Todd Brandell’s funeral



## AME’S UNIFORMS

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**Dave Allmann**

# Safety Liason Report

more burden to the stations that are already running ragged.

This is what we all face together at our stations. We all pitch in to get the job done day after day. Finally, it is time to go home and leave all of this behind. For many, going home has other challenges such as explaining to family why you are getting home late again. When am I going to find the time to buy gifts? Family is coming into town

burdens you carry each day.

Are you feeling the stress? Anxieties? Can you imagine how a new CCA is feeling? Are you in a giving mood? Take a CCA under your wing and mentor them. Help them through by sharing your experiences and what to expect.

Perhaps all the above is too much to handle. Are you feeling overwhelmed? Losing sleep? Having a hard time finding your happy spot? There is help for you. EAP is available to you for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can call them at 1-800-EAP-4YOU, or 1-800-327-4968.



These are all distractions that prevent us from focusing on what's important, you. You are important to yourself, your family, your friends and your co-workers. I know dynamics are there making you think you're not that important. We all count on you to come home the same as you were when you left. Co-workers are counting on you to make it back safely. Only to see your smiling face at the time clock the next day.

The holiday season will be upon us by the time you read this. This also comes in with some pretty tough days ahead. Dealing with shorter days means delivering mail in the dark, as early as 4:00 in the afternoon. On top of that we will be dealing with colder temps, snow, ice, rain and anything else that Mother Nature decides to throw our way. If that isn't enough there is the ever increasing amount of packages. Which seem to be getting bigger and heavier than the last holiday season. Add a little dash of vacations, sick calls, unassigned routes.

If you're on the OTDL list you can probably count on 10+hour days. Working your days off which always seem to exceed 8 hours as we are exempted from V time. Let's don't forget the non OTDL list carriers that are forced to work overtime. We can count on at least 5 weeks of this. This only adds

for the holidays, when do I get the house ready for that? Don't forget about the kid's holiday show at school, hopefully I'll get off in time. Tackling family issues are a challenge and can be unresolved at the end of the day. Only to be rolled into the next day. All of which we bring with us to work the next day. No one knows the

When you hit that high stress level, take a deep breath, exhale and breathe. Just breathe, you are no good to anyone unless you breathe. BREATHE!

Happy Holidays

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## Tus beneficios

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- Conflictos en el lugar de trabajo
- Dificultades interpersonales
- Inquietudes matrimoniales y familiares
- Manejo del estrés
- Dificultades emocionales
- Temas financieros
- Problemas de drogas y alcohol

Los empleados pueden confiar en la experiencia del Programa de Asistencia para los Empleados de New Directions. Cuando llame, nuestros profesionales con licencia del EAP lo ayudarán a resolver problemas, y lo derivarán a los recursos comunitarios y de tratamiento que sean necesarios.

Estamos aquí para ayudarlo a USTED a encontrar ese equilibrio entre el trabajo y el hogar, tan necesario para tener una buena calidad de vida y tan difícil de lograr sin ayuda. Llámenos las 24 horas del día, los 365 días del año. Sus inquietudes se tratarán con absoluta reserva o confidencialidad, de acuerdo con todas las leyes federales y estatales. Para programar una cita, llame a 800-327-4968.

## NOMINATED DELAGATES 2020 NATIONAL CONVENTION

1. Christa L Abraham
2. Angie Anderson
3. Rodney E Anderson
4. David A Ayres
5. Robert E Baird
6. Constance W Beissel
7. Angelina A Brown
8. Martin R Cornell
9. Melia Derrick
10. Pam Donato
11. Stacey A Ellingson
12. Michael J Erhard
13. Rosa M Espinoza
14. Vicki L Fleming
15. David L Flynn
16. James F Fodstad
17. Troy D Fredenburg
18. Vincent J Froehlich
19. JoAnn Gilbaugh De Luna
20. Laurie L Harry
21. Samantha R Hartwig
22. James H Hendrickson
23. Renee C Hickerson
24. Ken A Jambois
25. Jeffrey L Johnson
26. Catherine Jones
27. Jason A Karnopp
28. Bradley J Knutson
29. Leonard A Larson
30. Michael J Linn
31. Johnna I Lush
32. Darrell G Maus
33. Ned E McCraine
34. Michael J Meier
35. James M Nelson
36. Elizabeth A O'Neill
37. Cole M Ostendorf
38. Patrick E Paplow
39. Christopher C Pennock
40. Robert J Petersburg
41. Raymond C Peterson
42. Darwin J Rian
43. Johnea S Rystedt
44. Nathan R Serie
45. Joseph W Tanner
46. Joseph E Tiemann
47. Nicholas M Tiemann
48. Joel S Turrentine
49. Douglas T Waldhoff
50. Barry J Weiner
51. Janice E Wild
52. Paul F Woida
53. Michael T Zagaros

## Delivery After Dark

Daylight Savings Time ends on Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, and with that comes a decrease of daylight hours available. Carriers will once again be exposed to the possibility of delivering mail after dark.

**What should you do? Is it safe to be delivering mail after dark?** That depends. There is no uniform policy regarding delivery after dark. That's because we are not dealing with a consistent situation for everyone.

There are some delivery areas that may not be safe and should not be delivered to after dark. That depends on whether or not a carrier can safely make that delivery based on individual circumstances such as is it unfamiliar territory, a high crime area, is there poor visibility or other hazards (i.e. animals, uneven surfaces or other impediments such as fences, toys, etc).

The time to plan for delivering after dark is now before you find yourself literally in the dark. Are there parts of your route that are less hazardous than other to being delivered after dark (apartments with lighted entryways or well lit neighborhoods). Discuss these issues with your supervisor, steward and safety liaison then make a plan and write it down for the CCA's who may be delivering your route for the first time.

If you find yourself in a situation where you believe you'll be out delivering mail after dark, REMEMBER THAT YOU DO HAVE RIGHTS, and follow these instructions:

1. Inform your supervisor in the morning of your need of auxiliary assistance in order to complete your street duties before dark. **THIS MEANS FILL OUT FORM 3996 - HELP SLIP.**
2. Notify your supervisor prior to heading out to the street that you may not be able to complete your duties on the street by dark.
3. When on the street if you realize that you definitely will be out after dark, call your supervisor and make them aware of that reality. Stress your concern for your safety and again request auxiliary assistance.
4. Assuming no help arrives and you are faced with darkening conditions, attempt to continue.
5. **IF** while attempting delivery, you literally experience a safety hazard (i.e. stumbling, tripping, hear dogs barking, but unable to see that threat, not able to see potential dangers using your LLV/van's outside mirrors ...) call your supervisor. Explain your situation and notify them that you cannot safely continue delivery then return to your station.
6. **COMPLETE FORM 1571 - Curtailment form for the undelivered mail.**

Be sure to hand the curtailment slip to the supervisor, and ASK FOR A COPY. The copy is for your protection. You can also request a Form 1767 - Notice of Hazardous Working Condition. This will help you document the safety hazards you encountered while attempting to deliver after dark.

**It is important to note that these instructions are not intended to endorse or encourage the unnecessary curtailment of any mail. It is about your safety and the protection of the mail in our charge.**

There is not a single answer for every possible situation. It simply is the responsibility of each carrier to measure their safety and ensure that they are working safely. PERIOD.

## OIG Integrity Tests

This recent Holiday Season we have reported that there have been Postal employees disciplined and even removed for using gift cards that they found in collection boxes, on the street, and in some cases given to them by customers saying they found the gift cards in front of the Post Office. In all of these instances, the gift cards were planted by the OIG. Our office has learned that the OIG is again planting gift cards to test Letter Carriers.

In the recent examples that we have heard of, the OIG are conducting "integrity tests". In these tests, the OIG agents are placing gift cards that have values of \$25-\$50 in the outgoing mail slots, collections boxes and even in single-family mailboxes. As Letter Carriers, it is common for our customers to leave gifts in their mailbox even outside of the

holidays, and we normally accept those gifts.

Where a Letter Carrier may get into trouble is when they accept cash in any amount or gifts (including gift cards) valued above \$20. This is where the OIG agents are testing our integrity.

Although one wonders how these OIG agents would score on any test of integrity. That said, the rules are the rules and below is language from the Code of Federal Regulations 2635.204(a), which should be considered the next time one of your patrons, gives you a gift.

Gifts of \$20 or less. An employee may accept unsolicited gifts having an aggregate market value of \$20 or less per source per occasion, provided that the aggregate market value of individual gifts received from any one person under the authority of this paragraph shall not exceed \$50 in a calendar year. This

exception does not apply to gifts of cash or of investment interests such as stock, bonds, or certificates of deposit. Where the market value of a gift or the aggregate market value of gifts offered on any single occasion exceeds \$20, the employee may not pay the excess value over \$20 in order to accept that portion of the gift or those gifts worth \$20. Where the aggregate value of tangible items offered on a single occasion exceeds \$20, the employee may decline any distinct and separate item in order to accept those items aggregating \$20 or less.

If you have any questions, regarding gifts from your customers contact your supervisor to get verification that it is acceptable to accept the gift in question. If you disagree with the supervisor's opinion based on the language above, contact your steward or the Branch office for clarification.

## Open Season Health Benefits

Your once-a-year opportunity to make changes to your health coverage or choose a new plan, is November 11 - December 9.

### Here's what you should know:

- All employees should review their coverage. The Postal Service encourages you to evaluate your options to ensure you have the coverage you need without paying for services you don't.
- **Several options are available.** Employees can choose from a variety of health, vision and dental coverage through the Federal Employees Health Program (FEHB), USPS Health Benefits Plan (USPSHB) for non-career employees, Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) and flexible spending accounts (FSAs).
- **You can explore your options online.** Log onto the Open Season LiteBlue page to review your health plan and find out what's available. You can compare multiple plans through Checkbook's Guide to Health Plans, an online guide.
- **You can make changes online, too.** To enroll or change coverage in FEHB or USPSHB, go to Postalease or call 877-477-3273 (select option 1). Some facilities also offer self-service kiosks that allow you to change your coverage. Use the Benefeds site to enroll or make changes to your FEDVIP coverage and the FSA Feds site to enroll in FSAs.
- **Help is available.** For assistance, call the HR Shared Service Center at 877-477-3273 (select option 5). The TTY number is 866-260-7507.

The Postal Service will provide additional information and reminders throughout open season.



Branch Nine News  
2408 Central Avenue NE  
Minneapolis, MN 55418-3712


Change Service Requested

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
TWIN CITIES MN  
PERMIT NO. 91964

**Stay informed by:**

- \*Signing up for E-activist at [NALC.org](http://NALC.org)
- \* [Branch9nalc.com](http://Branch9nalc.com) (website)
- \* "like" our Branch 9 Facebook Page
- \* Follow us on Twitter

**Contribute to the PAC**  
The Letter Carrier Political Fund is the anchor for NALC's legislative and political activities.



[nalc.org/government-affairs/political-activity](http://nalc.org/government-affairs/political-activity)

## Branch 9 Calendar

### November 24

Branch 9 Holiday Party  
12-3 PM  
New Hope Cinema Grill

### November 26

General Membership Meeting  
7:00PM  
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN

### November 28

THANKSGIVING DAY

### December 10

\*Combined Meetings\*

Steward Meeting  
6:00PM  
&

General Membership Meeting  
7:00 PM  
Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN



*From the Branch 9 Executive Board*

### Northside Retiree Breakfast

1st Tuesday of the Month  
9:30AM @ Elsie's  
729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis

### N Suburban Retiree Breakfast

1st Friday of the Month  
8:30AM @ Denny's Restaurant  
9020 Quaday Avenue NE, Otsego

### Southside Retiree Breakfast

2nd Tuesday of the Month  
9:00AM @ Fred Babcock VFW  
6715 Lakeshore Dr, Richfield

### Nokomis Retiree Breakfast

4th Tuesday of the Month  
9:00AM @ Fred Babcock VFW  
6715 Lakeshore Dr, Richfield

### POCUM

4th Monday of the Month  
6:00PM - MFT 59  
67 8th St. NE  
Minneapolis, MN 55412