



Minneapolis letter carriers declare, 'Enough is enough!'

"All of us are angry," NALC President Brian L. Renfro told a crowd in Minneapolis, MN, on Jan. 7. "We are furious. Our members are under attack."

Since 2022, Region 7, which includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota, has seen more than 30 attacks and robberies targeting letter carriers. That includes the shooting death of Milwaukee Branch 2 letter carrier **Aundre Cross** in December 2022.

In mid-November, two Minneapolis carriers were robbed at gunpoint within 24 hours of each other. "Fortunately, in these two cases, nobody was physically harmed, but the trauma lives," Branch 9 Executive Vice President **Joseph Tiemann** said at the latest "Enough is enough" rally. "This is something that a letter carrier should never have to experience."

"We're working longer hours now because of the staffing and stuff like that. So now, a lot of times we're working, it gets dark," Region 7 National Business Agent Patrick Johnson told the crowd of Twin Cities carriers at the rally. "You've got to pay attention when you're delivering in the dark, but now you've got to watch over your shoulder for violent criminals to come and attack you for an Arrow Key."

Branch 9 veteran carrier and shop steward **Manon Wojack** said carriers want to go home safely and noted that she doesn't feel safe "on a daily basis." Unfortunately, attacks on letter carriers have become an epidemic throughout the United States.

"More than 2,000 letter carriers have been victims of violent crime. This is a growing problem not just here in the Twin Cities or in the state of Minnesota, but around the country," Renfro said. "It's unacceptable, it's appalling and it's out of control. No workers should ever live in fear while they're doing their job. This violence against our members must stop."

"We're here because this violence should come with an increase in protection, awareness and community. But instead, as is often the case, it feels like we only have one another," Renfro added.

Renfro noted that, of those 2,000 cases, only 14 percent have led to an arrest and federal prosecution. Prosecutions that occur at the local level include penalties that are not as severe as those available to federal prosecutors.

It takes a joint investigation among the Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. attorney general's office and a local police force to hand the case to federal prosecutors. That, combined with the low number of such cases being prosecuted in the first place, reduces the deterrence to potential lawbreakers who aim to attack letter carriers.

"Do you know what message that sends to people on the street?" Renfro asked. "Our members are left to defend themselves, because the Postal Inspection Service is not doing its job, and the Department of Justice is failing to prosecute the criminals responsible."

Renfro called on the Inspection Service's leaders to do more: "Times have drastically changed, and methods for protecting our members while we do our job must reflect the current circumstances."

In addition to more frequent and stronger prosecutions, President Renfro said that NALC would like to see newer technological versions of the Arrow Keys that criminals often are after.

He added that NALC is working with members of Congress on legislation to help speed up these improvements. He vowed that NALC would make such legislation NALC's top priority in Congress.

The rallies are part of NALC's effort to get out a multifaceted message:

- to the Postal Service to better protect letter carriers on their routes;
- to locally based federal prosecutors to take these cases and apply the harsh federal penalties that local prosecutors do not have available;
- to residents to alert authorities if they see anything worrisome and to preserve evidence, such as doorbell or other surveillance videos, for use by investigators; and
- to their elected representatives to be aware of the need for solutions.

Another way NALC is getting out the message is through interviews with reporters for local and regional TV broadcasts, radio shows, newspaper articles and online news outlets about the surge in violence nationwide. Having the letter carrier perspective as a central element in these media reports increases community awareness of the issue and helps strengthen NALC's push for solutions. That is especially so because of the widespread public support for letter carriers, who in poll after poll for years have topped the list of the most trusted and highly regarded federal employees.

President Renfro called on local branches to hold rallies such as the ones held in various cities in preceding months. Branch leaders are encouraged to contact their national business agents' offices for information and material to help organize a rally or for help contacting the media to amplify our message to their communities.

"Events like these make a difference and bring awareness to this growing problem," he said. "I encourage all NALC branches, especially in areas that are experiencing an uptick in crime, to mobilize and plan similar events. When we all come out with a unified message, we are heard."

Stay safe in winter weather

One year ago, in February 2023, Old Forge, NY, saw the coldest U.S. temperature recorded all year, minus 36 degrees Fahrenheit, according to Forbes. Though most letter carriers are unlikely to experience weather like that this month, it's important to be aware of the dangers that cold temperatures and conditions present to those who work outdoors.

NALC Director of Safety and Health Manuel L. Peralta Jr. said that one of the biggest problems when it comes to cold weather are the slips and falls that can occur in snowy and icy conditions. The chance of injury that comes along with icy conditions might be drastically reduced when proper protocols are followed, but when carriers are not provided with proper training, clothing and safe working environments, icy conditions have caused serious injuries and even death in some cases.

Peralta pointed to an incident that occurred in March 2014, when **Leo Sucharski**, a Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 letter carrier, died after falling and hitting his head in the partially unplowed parking lot of the post office where he worked. The Buffalo post office had failed to move the trucks when the parking lot was plowed, leaving slippery conditions in certain areas of the lot. Peralta said that the Postal Service's failure to follow protocols for cold weather conditions was the cause of Sucharski's death.

In addition to safety measures being followed, it is important to have proper clothing so that cold weather-related conditions such as frostbite and hypothermia don't occur.

Cold weather conditions

It is critical to be well prepared and to be aware of the risks that can occur if someone is not properly dressed and is unprepared for the weather while spending prolonged periods outdoors.

One cold condition to be aware of is hypothermia, which causes the body to lose heat faster than it can be produced, resulting in body temperature drops. It also can lead to decreased brain function, making it challenging to recognize signs of the condition. Early symptoms to look for include shivering, fatigue, confusion and loss of coordination. Late symptoms that can be present are blue skin, dilated pupils, slowed pulse and breathing and loss of consciousness.

In chilling weather, it also is important to be on the lookout for frostbite. Most typically affecting the nose, ears, fingers, toes, chin and cheeks, frostbite is common in improperly dressed outdoor workers, and the risk is increased in those with reduced blood circulation. To catch early signs of frostbite, be aware of reduced blood flow to hands or feet, numbness, tingling, stinging, aching and bluish or pale skin. In extreme cases, afflicted areas may need to be amputated, so it is critical to be equipped for the weather.

Another related condition, trench foot, can occur when feet are cold or wet for long periods of time. It can arise in temperatures up to 60 degrees, so wearing proper footwear to ensure dry feet is necessary, even in warmer temperatures. With trench foot, skin tissue on the feet eventually begins to die and blood vessels shut down circulation to feet. Symptoms of trench foot include numbness, leg cramps, redness, swelling, tingling pain, blisters, ulcers, bleeding under skin and gangrene.

Lastly, chilblains are caused by repeated exposure to temperatures slightly above freezing to temperatures around 60 degrees. Chilblains is a skin condition that leads to skin becoming red and itchy. The condition is permanent and will flare up upon additional cold exposure. Common infection sites are cheeks, ears, fingers and toes.

Prevention

"The first rule of cold weather is to prevent hypothermia or frostbite by wearing the right clothing and consuming warm food and drink," Peralta said. "The second rule is to know the signs and get to a warm place if the cold is getting the best of you. Warm up in your vehicle or a warm place on your route when you need to, and if you are experiencing problems, immediately contact your supervisors, or dial 911 if you feel it is an emergency."

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), it's important to wear at least three layers of loose-fitting clothing for better insulation and blood circulation. The inner layer should consist of wool, silk or synthetic moisture-wicking material. The middle clothing layer should consist of wool or synthetic materials for insulation in wet conditions. Finally, the outer layer should be a jacket that protects from wind and rain, while also providing ventilation. Accessories could include a hat that covers ears, as well as insulated gloves and waterproof boots. OSHA emphasizes that it's crucial to wear clothing that keeps you dry and ventilated, while keeping extra clothing on hand in case of emergency.

"If you have any additional cold weather uniform items that are sitting in a closet, we ask you to gift or loan them to our new employees," Peralta said. "Let's all help each other get through another winter safe and sound so we can enjoy carrying the mail next spring."

For more information, visit nalc.org/workplace-issues/safety-and-health.

Grievance on PostalEASE breach goes to national-level arbitration

In December 2022, the Postal Service informed NALC that some city letter carriers who were enrolled in direct deposit via the USPS Human Resources website, LiteBlue.usps.gov, may have had their pay routed to bank accounts not associated or controlled by the employees. As a result of this criminal activity and breach of USPS systems, many of those letter carriers were never compensated for the hours they worked during the period in which their funds were stolen.

After many meetings with USPS to get these issues resolved, NALC ultimately filed a national-level dispute on June 2, 2023, over the failure of the Postal Service to pay these individuals. The arbitration hearing took place in front of Arbitrator Dennis R. Nolan Jan. 23-24 in Washington, DC, with the American Postal Workers Union and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union intervening on the side of NALC.

It remains the position of NALC that the Postal Service has an obligation to compensate these employees for their work and make them whole. The Postal Service's failure to pay these individuals violates numerous provisions of the National Agreement. Management has the responsibility to safeguard its employees from this type of criminal activity by ensuring that USPS-controlled websites are secure. NALC will provide an update once the arbitrator renders his decision.

USPS unveils first electric vehicle charging stations

As part of its Delivering for America Plan—the 10-year initiative to restructure the processing, transportation and delivery networks—the Postal Service has committed to purchasing and deploying battery electric vehicles (BEVs) as part of its efforts to replace the aging delivery fleet.

On Jan. 22, Postmaster General Louis DeJoy introduced the first electric charging stations at the South Atlanta Sorting and Delivery Center (S&DC). Two representatives from the Biden administration—Brenda Mallory, the chairperson of the Council on Environmental Quality, and John Podesta, the senior advisor to the president for clean energy innovation and implementation—also attended.

Both Mallory and Podesta spoke about the administration's commitment to clean energy and the Postal Service's efforts to electrify the fleet. DeJoy acknowledged the administration's assistance in securing funds in the Inflation Reduction Act to help the Postal Service offset the costs of purchasing and installing the electric charging stations.

In addition to personnel from the other craft unions, members of the media and USPS employees, NALC representatives attended this announcement. National Business Agent (NBA) Steve Lassen from Region 8 and NBA Eddie Davidson from Region 9 were both present for the event.

In addition to the installation of charging stations at the South Atlanta S&DC, the Postal Service also unveiled the first deployment of the Ford e-Transit, which is a left-hand drive BEV. The Postal Service plans to purchase and deploy 9,250 of these delivery vans across the country.

Beginning later this year, USPS will begin to receive the Next Generation Delivery Vehicles (NGDVs). Current plans call for USPS to produce a minimum of 60,000 NGDVs over the next six years, with 45,000 of them being battery-powered.

Overall, the Postal Service intends to acquire 106,480 new delivery vehicles to replace the outdated Long Life Vehicles (LLVs) and Flex Fuel Vehicles (FFVs), with 62 percent of them being BEVs. The remaining vehicles will be a mix of additional NGDVs and commercial vehicles, such as the e-Transit. As it plans for the deployment of the new fleet, the Postal Service intends to install electric charging stations and station BEVs in the S&DCs being implemented across the country.



The electric charging stations at the South Atlanta S&DC

Branch Officers Training set for Washington, DC

An NALC Branch Officers Training session has been set for April 22-25 in Washington, DC.

Branch Officers Training sessions consist of three and a half days of educational seminars tailored to assist branch presidents, vice presidents, treasurers, recording secretaries, financial secretaries and trustees in the performance of their duties.

The training covers the basics for financial officers: taxes; accounting systems and maintenance of proper controls; reporting to the Department of Labor; fiduciary duties under the Landrum-Griffin Act; bonding of branch officers and IRS reporting requirements.

Additional training topics include the *NALC Constitution* and branch bylaws; branch operations and identifying branch policies; maintaining accurate and complete meeting minutes; member notification requirements; record keeping; branch elections and branch dues and how to read a dues roster.

The registration deadline for this training session is March 25; however, please be aware that the training session has limited space and tends to fill up quickly. Room rate (single/double) is \$259 plus tax.

Use the registration form below to register. **Note: Please do not make airline reservations until you receive an acceptance letter.**

Branch Officers Training registration form

Please register me for the following NALC Branch Officers Training seminar:

April 22-25 in Washington, DC
Room rate [single/double] is \$259 plus tax.*

Registration deadline is March 25.

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY

Name _____

Branch or state position _____

Branch # _____ Branch city _____ State _____

Home address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone number (required) _____

Send to:
Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine
National Association of Letter Carriers
100 Indiana Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20001-2144
Or email a copy of the form to:
BOT@nalc.org

** Please do not make airline reservations until you receive an acceptance letter.*

MDA March Branch Challenge

It's time for the March MDA Challenge. MDA has registered all branches, which means that every branch has its own web page for the 2024 campaign.

Branches can confirm that their branch has been registered at mda.donordrive.com/event/NALC2024. If your branch is not registered, please contact Sabrina Allen of MDA at 312-392-1100 or at nalc@mdausa.org.

For the March campaign, the top 10 NALC fundraising branches will receive recognition at the end of the month. Those branches that raise \$500 or more with an online fundraising campaign will receive special prizes.

All checks must be sent with an allocation form to: Muscular Dystrophy Association Inc., Attn: NALC, P.O. Box 7410354, Chicago, IL 60674-0354.

Please remember to send Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson copies of all items sent to MDA so that branches can receive proper credit for the 2024 campaign. Allocation forms are available on the NALC website at nalc.org/community-service/body/PDF-2023-NALC-Allocation-form-1-1.pdf.

If branches want any events to be shared in the magazine or posted on social media, please send photos and information to Davidson at mda@nalc.org or davidson@nalc.org.

The MDA Honor Roll, containing a final listing of all branch MDA contributions for 2023, will be in the April issue of *The Postal Record*.

National Association of Letter Carriers

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