

BRANCH 111 N.A.L.C. “THE WASATCH BRANCH”

www.branch111.com

Pavement Pounder



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February 2024

Midvale - Millcreek - Murray - Northwest - Orem - Sandy - South Salt Lake - Sugarhouse - Tooele - West Jordan - West Valley

March

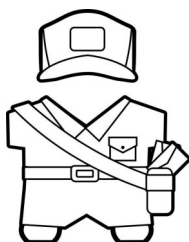
Thursday 7th	E-Board
Thursday 14th	Branch Meeting
Wednesday 20th	Steward Training

April

Thursday 4th	E-Board
Thursday 11th	Branch Meeting
14th - 18th	Steward College (Year 4)
Wednesday 17th	Steward Training

May

Thursday 2nd	E-Board
Thursday 9th	Branch Meeting
Wednesday 15th	Steward Training



Uniforms Needed!

Please bring any uniforms you may have that you'd be willing to donate.

We accept any uniforms in new or used condition, but please none in bad condition.

The President's Report

Throwing Away Mail

Right now we have the worst staffing situation I have ever seen at the United States Postal Service. Much of this has to do with the labor shortage in general, but it also has to do with inflation and starting wages, the former being too high, and the latter being too low. The Union is not giving the USPS a pass on staffing... they currently have the ability to hire new Carriers as PTFs anywhere they want, which is higher wages and better benefits, but as of now they have declined to do so in Utah. It should be noted that the decision to do so would be at a national level, not a local level, so blaming your Supervisor, Station Manager, or Postmaster won't accomplish anything.

As a result of the absolute dismal staffing, we have routes that are not being delivered on a regular basis, and long hours at work including mandatory overtime for Letter Carriers who are not medically restricted. It is an ugly situation, and while there are glimmers of hope on the horizon, peak season will be difficult to say the least.

All of this leads me to a topic that will not affect the vast majority of Letter Carriers, but it is a topic that has come up repeatedly and more frequently as of late: Throwing away deliverable mail. And as I go through this, you might notice a few practices that you have seen fellow Letter Carriers engage in that should be immediately stopped, especially since any incident of throwing away deliverable mail is potentially a removable offense.

In my twenty plus years of Union representation, I have seen way too many incidents of throwing away mail, improper disposition of mail, and improper delay of mail. For this article, I will just deal with mostly with throwing away mail, but the other two infractions may be treated with equal severity. I have seen removals for Letter Carriers who threw mail away into dumpsters, threw mail into trash receptacles, placed mail into trash bags and left it outside, stashed mail at vacant properties, or deposited mail into UBBM containers or recycling bins at their duty station. All of the aforementioned may be considered throwing away mail if the mail is deliverable or is supposed to be dealt with in a different manner by regulation.

Recently our Branch dealt with yet another situation in which a Letter Carrier threw bulk mail into a dumpster. The reason given for this action was that it was a heavy day and the Carrier felt it was too difficult to deliver the advertisements and felt pressured to be done faster. This is a common theme when it comes to throwing away mail. However, less obvious situations can also lead to similar outcomes. We also recently had a scenario where deliverable mail was found in a route's UBBM tub. While mistakes happen, and occasionally a piece of deliverable (or forwardable) mail will end up in the UBBM, when a large amount winds up in there it may be considered throwing away mail. The same can be said for a large amount of "extra" Advos or circulars that end up in the UBBM or recycle bin.

In the past I have heard Carriers attempt to excuse this kind of behavior with explanations of being under "too much pressure", or that "other Carriers told me to do it". I once had a Carrier tell me that he put mail in a trash bag and left it in a parking garage because he was late for a religious function. There have even been times when Carriers have thrown away "bulk" mail because they have "always done so", or they were "taught to do it that way", or because their "patrons want them to" (Throwing advertisements into the trash can of a mail room is never acceptable). None of these excuses will work, in fact it is the mailers that have paid to have the mail delivered, not the recipients, and while recipients may refuse delivery, they need to do so in writing (on each piece of mail) to comply with regulations. I once had a patron who was refusing the vast majority of his mail. One day he told me how happy he was that all his bulk mail was being sent back to the mailers after he had refused it. I informed him that when he refused bulk mail, it simply went into the UBBM and was destroyed, that it could not be returned to the mailer because it did not have the requisite return postage attached. So he started paying the postage to have it all returned to the mailers. After a couple of weeks, when he realized how much he was paying to have all his bulk mail returned to the senders, he stopped the practice and just went back to refusing it.

The rules that are usually cited in removals for throwing away mail are:

ELM 665.21 Incomplete Mail Disposition. It is a criminal act for anyone who has taken charge of any mail to quit voluntarily or desert the mail before making proper disposition of the mail according to 18 U.S.C. 1700.

M-41 112.31 Protect all mail, money, and equipment entrusted to your care.

M-41 112.32 Return all mail, money, and equipment to the Post Office at the end of the workday.

There are many more contractual cites that say pretty much the same thing, so I will leave it there. The bottom line is that Letter Carriers need to make sure that the mail they are entrusted with is delivered or processed appropriately and not discarded or thrown away improperly.

The most important thing to remember is that we get paid by the hour to do the job properly. You cannot be successfully disciplined for not making management's "times", nor can you be held to some arbitrary speed for casing or delivering mail. Make sure you are taking the time necessary to do the job right. If you have a question about discarding mail (or curtailing mail), ask your supervisor for instructions. If those instruction seem improper, then talk about them with your Shop Steward. I encourage all Letter Carriers to protect yourselves at all times by communicating with your supervisors and Shop Stewards as to what you are supposed to be doing with the mail.

Michael Wahlquist – President

Branch 111, NALC

Not if but when?

Far too often carriers that have been injured on the job have relied on management to file the necessary forms to file their OWCP claim. DO NOT make this mistake. I have talked to several carriers that trusted management to file their claim correctly and ended up stuck with medical bills or using their own sick leave. At some point in our careers almost all of us will suffer a traumatic on the job injury. A traumatic injury is defined as:

“A wound or other condition of the body caused by external force, including stress or strain, which is identifiable as to the time and place of occurrence and member or function of the body affected. The injury must be caused by a specific event or incident or series of events or incidents within a single workday or work shift.”

I could write pages on the process but I want to keep it simple. Follow this process:

- Assess your injury and call 911 if it is an emergency
- Immediately notify your supervisor of your injury and your intent to file a claim using ECOMP. Get your supervisor's email, you'll need it later.
- Call your Steward or the Union Hall. You can call me if you don't know who else to call 801-628-1848. Call the Union immediately after reporting the injury to your manager.
- Get medical attention. You have the right to seek treatment from your own doctor. If you are examined by a physician's assistant or nurse practitioner, ask them to have a Doctor review and counter-sign the report.
- While waiting to see the doctor, register on ecomp.dol.gov. This is just setting up your profile. Personal info and password. This will save time later.
- Follow up with Branch Compensation Specialist Bob Jewell at 801-244-0929. Bob will help you file a CA-1 and help with everything else you need to know. ASK ABOUT COP!

Those who seek assistance from the Union have a far better experience and far better results with their claim. Just do it!

In Solidarity, Mike Hansen: Executive Vice President. Branch 111, NALC

PTFs: Opting and Holding Down Higher Level Assignments

I just want to say it is an honor to serve you all as the Branch 111 Vice President. Thank you all for participating in the election. I'm hoping to come up with some new ideas for our training to make them more engaging.

As most of us know we now have PTFs in the Salt Lake Installation. One thing that is hard about being a PTF or CCA is that they don't have a set schedule or route. So to gain that we usually opt. Under the provisions of Article 41 PTFs can opt. JCAM pg 41-10 states, "Full-time reserve letter carriers, full-time flexible schedule letter carriers, unassigned full-time carriers, PTFs, and CCAs may all opt for hold-down assignments." PTFs can opt on an assignment that is going to be vacant for 5 days or more. Usually, this occurs when a regular is on vacation or when a route is vacated and up for bid. Please write down your request to opt and keep a copy. This can help your steward in the future if your opt is broken. When on an opt a PTF assumes the schedule of the route, but that does not mean management can not schedule a PTF on the days off assigned to the route. Nor, do they have to place a PTF on the route if it is the routes NS (Non-scheduled) day.

Additionally, PTFs with a year of city carrier experience (According to Carrier Technician requirements) are also eligible to 'hold down' a higher-level assignment. JCAM pg 25-1 states, "Article 25.4 sets forth rules for filling temporarily vacant, bargaining unit, higher level positions. The rules depend upon the duration of the vacancy. For a vacancy of less than five working days, any employee may be selected from those who are senior, qualified, eligible, and available in the immediate work area in which the vacancy occurs. For a vacancy of five working days or more, the senior, qualified, eligible, and available volunteer in the immediate work area must be selected. All qualified letter carriers, including part-time flexibles and full-time regular letter carriers with bid positions, are eligible to apply for higher-level assignments under the provisions of this section." The higher-level assignments are referring to T-6 strings. These strings cover 5 routes on the NS days.

More information can be found in Article 25 and 41 (Starting on JCAM pg 41-10) if you are curious.

In Solidarity,

Destiney Carrillo

Vice President

NALC HEALTH BENEFITS

Jimmy Kerekes

We have had an experience last part of December 2023. Far as I know unprecedented in our Branch 111's history. Close to 70 or thereabouts have become career employees converted to full-time regular or to part-time flexible status. We hope they are going to stay united with us in keeping things in a right way to be able to raise and support self and family life.

We hope many will sign-up for NALC Health Insurance and give it a try. I know having had the same doctor is quite a common thing. When you want you can always research in-network doctors, etc. and start a new relationship with them. Also, some of you under the age of 26 can stay with your parents' plan.

For those who only get information through our mailed Pavement Pounder here is some information about SilverScript. This is for those who are eligible for it. A person has to have Medicare to participate. Have Medicare A only then you are eligible. If you only have Part A, you don't get any of the \$600.00 of the Part B premium reimbursement. But you get a part D Prescription Card.

If you have Part A & Part B you get the annual \$600.00 after paying out \$600.00 worth of Premiums or other method of paying it. You have to show proof you spent \$600.00. Those methods I will share in the next issue of our Pavement Pounder. A spouse that has A or B will also get \$600.00 off their Part B premium. If a spouse has neither A &/or B, they are just covered as before with NALC Health Insurance. Everyone enrolled and eligible will get their own SilverScript prescription card. Everyone should have gotten that card by now.

Before writing about some of the procedures for getting drugs, here are the places to go to if you have questions:

Call Customer Care at 1-833-272-9886 or Caremark.com

Benefits of SilverScript:

You will be allowed 30 day fills of maintenance medications. NALC current plan rules are after your 1st fill and refill, you are required to fill 90 days. SilverScript members can get a 90 day of maintenance medication at CVS Caremark Mail service pharmacy or any local in-network pharmacy. But if you use Caremark mail order or CVS pharmacy you will save money.

You are allowed to fill 60 to 90 day fills at any participating SilverScript pharmacy like Walgreens, Walmart, Costco and others. But note: a 90 day fill received anywhere other than through the mail order or CVS pharmacy may have higher copays and cost. But whatever your prescription benefits are they will never cost more than your current coverage you have with NALC. They are telling me in some cases it may cost less. They also tell us you will never see a higher cost share.

Specialty Drugs: You can get these in one of two ways: At a participating retail pharmacy

Through CVS Specialty pharmacy, choosing delivery to home or office, or designated CVS pharmacy.

Questions about Specialty Drugs call CVS Specialty Customer Care 800-237-2767, M – F 8am to 8pm EST

If you want a copy of the Part D Formulary covered drugs call the first Customer Care phone number above.

This phone number is good 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If in the future you want to leave this program read the booklet you got dated Nov. 9, 2023. Always keep all the correspondence you get about the program. If at anytime you choose to join another Part D or Advantage plan your SilverScript plan will be terminated.

Drugs that need prior authorization may not transfer to the SilverScript plan. They are to send additional information about this. But during your 90 days of enrollment, you can obtain up to 90 day or transition fill at the pharmacy for most drugs requiring prior authorization. The booklet dated Nov. 9, 2023, also has information titled 2024 Summary of Benefits. **Read that it is important.**

More next month on this topic.

Now one more reminder on the New Postal Service Health Plan for 2025. The April – Oct. 2024 opportunity to sign up for Part B Medicare without penalty if you never signed up starts in less than 100 days. Those who are eligible maybe receiving letters soon maybe as early as this month. Let me know if you receive any information so we can educate others affected. P.S. To obtain prior authorization of drugs call CVS Caremark at 800-294-5979 To get a list of drugs from NALC call 800-733-6252 or www.nalchbp.org More next month.

NALC BRANCH 111
Minutes of the Regular Union Meeting
February 8, 2024

Convened at 6:30 pm

The meeting was also broadcast over Zoom for those unable to attend in person.

Conducting: Mike Wahlquist, President

Pledge of Allegiance conducted by Mike Simonsen

Roll Call by Steve McNees

Minutes of the January 2024 union meeting were posted. Without objection, they will be filed for future reference.

Reading of the Communications by Steve McNees

- Pursuant to a vote at the last branch meeting, a letter of formal endorsement was sent endorsing Sheila Srivastava to be the SL County Treasurer.
- Jeff Howell wrote to the branch. He is running for the Utah House District 23. He is requesting our branch's support. He indicates his support for workers, quality of life, fair wages, and collective bargaining.

Application for Membership by Mike Hansen

- Alicia Davidson, Gillian Morris, Daniel Tate, Bobbie Morgan, Jesse Fischer, Richard Hart, Celia Mancinas, Nathan Hacking, Steven McCulloch, William Echternkamp, David Shipman, Ray Gullickson

Sworn in: David Shipman and Ray Gullickson

LETTER CARRIER POLITICAL FUND (LCPF) by Josh Thibodeau –

- The Retirement Fairness Act currently has 74 signing on so far.

MDA COORDINATOR by Nathan Chester

- He has a goal to raise \$10,000 this year. We have raised \$3,050 so far from the Super Bowl Square game. He has a goal chart that will be displayed regularly.
- You can make donations on our branch111.com website. He is considering having game nights (bingo, poker, cornhole etc). Maybe after union meetings and other nights. He needs suggestions on how to notify members of coming games or activities.

DIRECTOR OF VETERAN AFFAIRS by Jimmy Fleming – no report

LEGISLATIVE by Chad Mortensen

- Super busy time for legislation. There are state and national bills regarding the post office.
- People we endorse and support have been helping us at the state and national level. Future national leaders will come from local and state leaders, who we can support if they are willing to support us.
- Currently, state bill HB92 would end vote by mail. This will negatively affect letter carriers. Hopefully, local leaders we support, will support us and vote against this bill. We hope there will be those we supported locally who have moved up.
- HB214 would stop properly ball dated ballots from not being counted if received after election day. Fortunately, this was killed immediately.
- Locally, HB285 would not allow union deductions from state employees (school teacher, etc) pay checks.
- You can send representatives messages by texting “1fight” to 2342466 to receive messages about current issues. All you have to do then is press “send” to have an email sent to your representatives.
- Chad will be in DC on March 19th to meet with all of our representatives and senators. They will be talking about HR-5995 (Retirement Fairness Act). HR82 will also be discussed (Windfall Elimination Act) trying to get it out of committee. There is a good chance it could happen now. Please contact the House Ways and Means Committee and let them know your/our position (google for email address or phone #).
- June 14th is the AFL-CIO golf tournament for the food bank.
- June 28th is the AFL-CIO State Convention.

TRUSTEES by Chad Mortensen

- The trustees met Tuesday and went through all of December and January warrants, receipts, etc. They didn't find any errors or mistakes. The system is working. Just ask, if you have any questions about our finances.

MBA / COMPENSATION, by Bob Jewell

- He is getting daily calls about injuries. The main complaint of injured employees is that supervisors are not completing their parts of form CA-1. If you get hurt, call your supervisor and then Bob.
- If you sign up with OWCP you can fill out your CA-1 on the street so your supervisor will have it in their email when you get back to the office.
- If the supervisor doesn't have it when you return, contact your shop steward. When you return be sure your CA-1 is completed and get a CA-16 and CA-17 (doctor's work status report) from your supervisor.
- Problems – carriers are not getting paid COP because supervisors don't know what they are doing.
- Stewards will be getting training on OWCP/Compensation this month.
- Everyone should sign up with OWCP before being injured (now). Call Bob if you get injured and are not sure about all the requirements. Bob's number is on the Pavement Pounder and the branch website (branch111.com).

HEALTH BENEFITS by Jim Kerekes

- MEDICARE: www.keepingposted.org has information about the new HB plans with updates. This is a good source of information on the new plans.
- Those who haven't already signed up for part B Medicare will be informed on when and how to sign up for free. More information is supposed to be mailed out soon. Check to make sure your spouse has also signed up for part B benefits.
- Silver Script doesn't cover everything. You have to request a list of the drugs that are covered. If you cancel Silver Script you won't get your \$600 refund.
- If you are working and 65 or older, you don't have to sign up for part B until you retire.

ORGANIZER by Justin Lindquist

- He has signed up all 33 of the newest carriers, in training.

SAFETY AND HEALTH by Justin Lindquist

- Doors open and seatbelts off is a problem. If you see a carrier doing this you could let them know it is totally dangerous/wrong. There have been a lot of accidents.
- Remember – weather conditions dictate your pace.

DIRECTOR OF RETIREES by Jeff Asay

- One check for \$250 will be awarded tonight. There won't be a big Christmas give away any more. Jeff will have unannounced drawings in random months for differing amounts. He is trying to increase regular attendance from the retirees.
- He would like everyone who is interested in activities or information to text him and give him your number to be added to his text message list. This will allow him to only contact those who have approved him to contact them. He will then advertise branch events and activities that are more friendly to retirees.
- There will be a retiree dinner in October this year.
- Jeff's number is in the Pavement Pounder and on our website (branch111.com)

TREASURER by Mike Madsen

- Today, he deposited \$13,000 from progressive/permissive remedies from overtime grievances. We have collected \$65,000 in remedies since 2020. We have spent \$29,000 of this and have \$36,000 left.
- We had \$42,000 income last month with expenses of \$32,315 for an increase of \$9,685 for January.
- He had copies of this year's proposed budget for all in attendance (and on the website).

VICE PRESIDENT by Destiney Carrillo

- Steward training is on the 21st with pizza being served. There will be OWCP training (in 2-3 parts) and maybe some training from grievance files we have.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT by Mike Hansen

317 grievances so far this year. • Super bowl squares (game) receipts, for MDA, have been really successful. • He has ordered t-shirts and beanies with the branch logos on them to sale to members.

PRESIDENT by Mike Wahlquist

• A vehicle was stolen from the Northwest office this week. The thief was quickly tracked down in Bountiful because the carrier's scanner (GPS) was still in his truck. The carrier did everything right as far as not engaging with the thief. The carrier went home safe that night. We all get to make some choices on the things we can control with safety most important. • Management is working on changing technology so Arrow keys will be replaced with digital keys. Unfortunately, the USPS is very slow with technology. • Hiring – Since Dec. 16th, there have been almost daily benefit orientations because of all the new hires. Because now, people get benefits from when they are hired in the Salt Lake and Sandy installations. • Getting a date for the national arbitration is going very slow. It will likely be at least 6-9 months.
• We are out of uniforms. We need uniform donations desperately, more than ever before. We have a lot of new hires and there are a lot more to come. We need your donated uniforms. • Cloud migration – we have talked to two IT companies to see about transferring our grievance and other files with cloud migration. They will be well protected. More updates to come. Mike wants to get things updated as much as possible. • A new Formal A agreement assigns Destiney Carrillo to all Formal A grievances in the Salt Lake installation. She is the branch trainer. This will greatly improve grievance quality.
A long discussion regarding the new formal A agreement and availability of Step B files to stewards, required a motion to extend the meeting by 30 minutes. The motion passed

SPECIAL ORDERS: none

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: none

2024 Proposed Budget approval: A motion was made to approve the budget as proposed with specific line items held out. The motion passed. • Requested items to be held out for discussion: Retirement watches budget, MDA budget, Orem travel expenses. • Motion to reduce the Retiree Watch budget by ½ to \$500. The motion passed. Motion to reduce the MDA budget from \$5,000 to \$4,000. The motion passed. Motion to increase the Orem travel expenses from \$400 to \$600, to be used for travel and food expenses. The motion passed. • Motion to sign up for a branch credit card that has rewards with the reward money going to MDA. An amendment made to have the money go to the general fund. The amendment passed. The motion to get a credit card with rewards going to the general fund passed.

NEW BUSINESS: none

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION: none

DRAW AND ADJOURN – 9:00 pm

- \$25 drawing winners: Jeff Asay and Bob Valdez
 - RETIREES – \$350 (Dan Moss was not present). Next month it will be \$375.
 - PROGRESSIVE A - \$750 (Teresa Teubner was not present). Next Meeting it will be \$775.
 - PROGRESSIVE B - \$650 (Belinda Madrid was not present). Next Meeting it will be \$675.
- Retiree special drawing of \$250 for those attending – winner: Gary Thorne

Safety and Health Safety Depends On You!

Employee Safety is Our Number One Priority! How many of us have seen this or heard these messages? How many of us wonder what it actually means? How does it depend on you, or me? The fact is that being a letter carrier is a very dangerous job. Simply put, our injury rate is alarming. For letter carriers as a whole, around 12% of us will sustain a reported injury this year. If your office has 100 carriers, 12 of them probably will be injured enough to report it. It gets worse if you are a CCA or a PTF. They have an astounding 21% injury rate! Compare that to the average rate of employee incidents in the United States of 2.7%, and you can see that being a letter carrier is incredibly hard on human bodies.

We all know that we also suffer many small injuries every day. We bump our heads, we get stung by bees, we smack our shins, twist our ankles, and a whole variety of other small injuries daily that we don't even report. Add in the cumulative effects of repetitive motion and wear and tear on our joints and muscles, and after 30+ years of being a carrier, you are almost guaranteed to suffer some sort of injury or injuries before you retire. USPS knows all of this data and more. Yet they continue to tell their supervisors to "drive performance". And, when we are involved in an accident, too often they hand out discipline for twisting an ankle or falling on icy steps. We have protection! Read the safety handbooks and the M-41, follow the guidelines set forth in those. Put your body and its safety and health first, like their message says. Make it your priority. Watch out for each other. Make it your goal to leave 2024 healthier than when you entered it. Yours in solidarity, Nathan Chester (with permission from Health and Safety Officer, Justin Lindquist) Source: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-556.pdf>

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The financial records of Branch 111 are available to anyone by appointment and a monthly record is always available at Branch 111 monthly meeting.

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Vice-President

Mike Hansen

Vice-President

Destiney Carrillo

Treasurer

Mike Madsen

Secretary

Steve McNees

Sergeant

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Mike Simonsen

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