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The Pavement Pounder



APRIL 2005

Bountiful * Lehi Magna * Midvale * Murray * Salt Lake * Sandy * Taylorsville * Tooele * West Jordan * West Valley

The President's Corner

By: Mike Miller



We got a big surprise at our March meeting, the Manager of Safety and Health, Bob Adamson came to our union meeting and congratulated all of the Letter Carriers in Branch 111 for all of the hard work they have done towards safety over the past year. Accidents and injuries are down by 47% in the Salt Lake District over the past year, and we are now #1 in the country for safety instead of dead last as we have been in the past. And the District Manager wanted to give thanks where thanks was due, and that is to all of you, because it was all of you who made this possible. If it wasn't for all of you and your determination to be safe we would never have been able to achieve such a goal. In fact no other District in the country has ever been able to achieve that big of a reduction in accidents and injuries in a single year.

Safety is extremely important as we carry out our duties each and every day. We all need to remember to take the time to be safe. As letter carriers we are all professionals and we need conduct ourselves in a professional manner at all times. And as professionals we are no different than a truck drivers or bus drivers, we drive for a living each and every day, and we are in the publics eye each and every day and we need to remain aware of that at all times and conduct ourselves accordingly.

We as letter carriers need to take the time to be safe, you cannot be disciplined for taking the time to be safe, but you can be disciplined for violating safety rules and regulations, especially if you have an accident as a result of it. Take the time to be safe, we can still be efficient and be safe at the same time. We need to make safety a habit, a way of life, so that we work safely without even thinking about it.

We have come a long way in the past year but we still have a way to go. We still have safety issues that need to be dealt with. Some of the most common safety violations lately are not wearing a seat belt, improper backing, and driving through intersections with doors open. These are some very serious safety infractions and some of the easiest to avoid. It is a no brainer that each of these infractions can not only be hazardous to your health but can also be hazardous to ones career. Don't take any

Drawing for the April Branch Meeting

Branch Progressive drawing	\$525.00
Retirees Progressive drawing	\$100.00
Brookfield Progressive drawing	\$150.00
Skaggs gift cert.	\$50.00
Door prizes (3)	\$25.00

You must be present to win

chances, it's not worth it.

Seat belts should be worn whenever your vehicle is in motion, without exception. And when backing, you should always try to position your vehicle so that you minimize the need for backing. But we all know that eliminating backing altogether would be impossible, so when you cannot avoid backing, always remember to get out and walk around your vehicle first to ensure that you have adequate clearance first. We have

had a lot of backing accidents; don't allow yourself to become one of those statistics. A

simple observation each time can eliminate that possibility. And one of the stupidest things we as letter carriers can do is drive through an intersection with our door open, and most of those observed doing this also were not wearing their seat belt through the intersection. All it takes is someone not paying attention and running a red light to put this carrier in the lap of the driver running the red light. Surviving an accident like that would be slim at best, don't let that happen to you.

Let's all make 2005 an even better year than 2004 was, let's cut accidents and injuries by another 47% again.

Vice President Article

Dog Attacks and Bites Start Rising in February; Peak in June. The NALC joins the Postal Service in calling attention to one of the nation's most commonly reported public health problems: Dog Bites.

The National Dog Bite Prevention Week in mid-May provides an opportunity for all NALC and Postal Service leaders to remind letter carriers, customers, and community representatives of our joint responsibility to do everything possible to prevent animal attacks.

But don't wait until May to be on the lookout for dangerous animals. Be sure to carry dog spray and use dog leashes and dog warning cards as the weather turns warmer. THE NALC Director of Safety & Health Brian Hellman urges NALC Branches to alert members that as spring arrives, dogs are outside more often. Now is the time to include dog bite awareness information in your safety and health awareness program. Hellman says the members need to be reminded that, "Preventing dog bites is important to the safety and health of every letter carrier, every day. As soon you get out on the street, you are immediately exposed to potential harm from dangerous animals. Remember, in many instances, carriers are badly wounded despite pet owners' insistence that their dog would never bite anyone."

The Humane Society of the United States reports that small children, the elderly, and USPS Letter Carriers — in that order — are the most frequent victims of dog bites. In fact, recent statistics show the annual number of dog attacks exceeds the reported instances of measles, whooping cough, and mumps combined. Dog Bite victims account for up to five percent of emergency room visits.

Medical expenses, workers' compensation, legal costs, delivery curtailment, carrier replacement, and other costs associated with dog bite accidents are estimated to exceed \$25 million annually for the Postal Service. The cost in employee pain and suffering cannot be measured.

Helpful Tips to Prevent Dog Bites

- Don't run past a dog. The dog's natural instinct is to chase and catch prey.
- If a dog threatens you, don't scream.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Try to remain motionless until the dog leaves, then back away slowly until the dog is out of sight.
- Don't approach a strange dog, especially one that's tethered or confined.
- While letter carriers are discouraged from petting animals, people who choose to pet dogs should always let a dog see and sniff them before petting the animal.

Social Security is the labor movement's proudest achievement.

Unions were instrumental in making Social Security the centerpiece of the New Deal reforms of the 1930s. As a system of social insurance, Social Security today protects more than 125 million workers and their families from the devastating loss of income that may result from a worker's disability or early death and it ensures that every elderly American can live in dignity by providing a guaranteed level of income during retirement. Another 47 million Americans currently receive benefits from Social Security. More than 3/4ths of active letter carriers—

those covered by the Federal Employees' Retirement System—are covered by Social security. Many older carriers covered by CSRS also qualify for benefits as spouses or on the basis of other private sector employment. Social Security, which has helped this country virtually eliminate poverty among the elderly, is widely regarded as one of the most successful government programs in history. Yet, as on a number of occasions in the past, it may be necessary to reform Social Security to maintain its financial strength in the decades to come. Congress is expected to debate a number of proposals to reform Social Security this year. President Bush is advocating a partial privatization of the system while others are proposing a combination of reforms designed to boost the system's revenues and to reduce its costs. Every American, including every active and retired city carrier, has a stake in the outcome of this debate.

Background

Social Security is largely a "pay as you go" system. The payroll (FICA) taxes of current workers pay the benefits of the retirees, disabled workers, survivors and their dependents who currently receive benefits. These taxes are currently set at 12.4 percent of covered payroll, split evenly between workers and employers. The problem facing the Social Security system is the impending retirement of the Baby Boom generation. Over the next few decades, the num-

ber of Americans drawing benefits from the system will grow much faster than the number of workers paying into it. In the early 1980s, Congress first acted to anticipate this problem by raising payroll taxes, boosting the normal retirement age and extending coverage to all Federal and postal employees hired after 1983. (FERS was created to supplement the Social Security benefits of these new federal employees.) Because of the 1983 Social Security amendments, the government has been collecting more in payroll taxes than it is paying out in benefits—\$160 billion more last year. The idea was to build up a surplus in the Social Security Trust Funds to help finance the Baby Boom's retirement. That surplus, which will continue to grow over the next 15 to 20 years, has been invested in Treasury bonds and will be used to pay benefits when payroll taxes no longer cover the cost of benefits. Using various assumptions about the size of the work force, life expectancy among retired Americans and economic growth (which affects wage growth and FICA tax levels), the Social Security Administration (SSA) now believes that we will need to dip into the trust fund surplus in 2018 and that by 2042 the trust fund will be exhausted. Thereafter, without any changes, Social Security taxes will cover just 73 percent of promised benefits—which increase each year as wages in the economy rise. Over the next 75 years, the SSA forecasts a \$3.7 trillion deficit in the system.

A problem, not a crisis

Although some have characterized the situation facing Social Security as a "crisis," the reality is not nearly so dire. Indeed, the \$3.7 trillion deficit adds up to just 1.2% of payroll subject to Social Security taxes over the next 75 years. In other words, raising payroll taxes over that period by 1.2 percentage points (from 12.4% to 13.6%) would eliminate the deficit entirely. Moreover, the economic assumptions used to forecast the deficit are almost certainly too pessimistic: the SSA assumes the economy will

grow just 1.5% for most of the next 75 years. That is less than half the historical average growth rate of 3.4 percent. At historical rates of economic growth, there is no deficit at all! In fact, the financial outlook for Social Security has been steadily improving over the past 10 years. Projections of the year in which the Social Security Trust Fund will, without legislative action, run out of money have increased from 2029 to 2042 over this period.

Beware private accounts

Although NALC understands the positive aspects of personal accounts for retirement savings, which is reflected in the popularity of the Thrift Savings Plan among letter carriers, such accounts should not be built using diverted FICA taxes that are needed to cover existing Social Security benefits. Such proposals, even if limited to younger workers, would do nothing to solve the financial problem facing Social Security. It will simply make the problem worse by draining the Social Security trust fund more quickly—a move that would threaten the benefits of all Social Security recipients, young and old. Indeed, every proposal for private accounts includes ideas for reducing the guaranteed Social Security benefits. These include: indexing benefits to prices instead of wages, cutting or eliminating COLAs, raising the retirement age or using gains in private accounts to partially offset guaranteed benefits. The NALC's long-held view is that any personal account should be added to a guaranteed Social Security benefit, not substituted for it.

NALC: Careful approach

NALC believes the existing Social Security system is basically sound. The financial challenges facing it are manageable and there is plenty of time to debate the appropriateness of any changes. NALC will not take a position on any reforms, whether proposed by the President or by members of Congress, until the details are presented in full. It will study the details of the

proposed reforms once they are available and analyze their impact on letter carriers and

their families as well as on the country as a whole. Our goal is a strengthened Social Security system that workers and retirees can rely on for generations to come.

Key Facts for the Current Debate

- ➤ City carriers covered by FERS will rely on Social Security for nearly a third of their retirement income.
- ➤ Social Security is vital to reducing poverty among the elderly—more than 50% of recipients rely on it for more than 2/3 of their income.
- ➤ The Social Security Trust Fund has a large and growing surplus. By law—as proposed by the Greenspan Commission in 1982—the Trust Fund is invested in safe Treasury Bonds.
- These bonds are real; the U.S. government has never defaulted on its bonds and won't default on these. As it does when any bond comes due, the government either pays it off with available tax revenue or refinances it (issues new debt). Trust Fund bonds have been redeemed on 11 occasions in the past, without incident and without any Congressional action.
- ➤ There is no reason to be alarmed when payroll taxes no longer cover Social Security benefits—which is now projected to occur in 2018, give or take a few years. Drawing down the surplus built up over several decades by assessing greater-than-needed payroll taxes was the plan enacted in 1983 for financing the Baby Boom's retirement.
- ➤ Even without changing the law, current payroll taxes will cover 73% of promised benefits in 2042 when the Trust Fund is now expected to be exhausted. As a result of benefit wage indexing, these reduced benefits would still far exceed current benefit levels.



United States Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs

Senator Susan M. Collins, Chairman

March 14, 2005

SENATOR COLLINS URGES BUDGET COMMITTEE TO INCLUDE FUNDS FOR POSTAL REFORM

Collins-Carper expected to introduce postal reform legislation this week

Washington, DC – Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) has written a letter to the Senate Budget Committee urging that they include a reserve account in the Fiscal Year 2006 budget for “meaningful” postal reform. Senator Collins is expected this week to introduce postal reform legislation that she authored with Senator Tom Carper (D-DE). Senator Carper also signed the letter to the Budget Committee. Senator Collins is the Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which has jurisdiction over the United States Postal Service (USPS).

“The Postal Service is the linchpin of a \$900 billion mailing industry that employs nine million Americans in fields as diverse as direct mailing, printing, catalog production, and publishing,” wrote Senators Collins and Carper. “Few dispute that the business model created by the Postal Reorganization Act (PRA) 35 years ago is becoming increasingly disconnected from today’s reality. It is outdated and inflexible. The PRA was predicated on the assumption that continually growing mail volume would result in continually expanding revenue. That revenue, in turn, would be sufficient to cover the costs of an ever-expanding service network. This is no longer the case.”

Last year, CBO scored the postal reform bill, S. 2468, at \$9.6 billion from 2006-2010, with a first year score of approximately \$5.4 billion.

The cost of S. 2468 was associated with the proposed repeal of an escrow account provision put into place by P.L. 108-18, the Civil Service Retirement System Funding Reform Act of 2003. The Senators anticipate the first year score for the reintroduced bill to decrease by several billion, as it will require the USPS to make payments into a new Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund beginning in 2006, rather than in 2007, as was proposed by S. 2468.

“Failure to repeal the (escrow) provision will directly impact the Postal Service’s rate planning and will trigger annual rate increases, over and above any rate increases needed to fund postal operations,” wrote Senators Collins and Carper. “The soon-to-be-reintroduced bill will reflect the need to balance the pre-funding of retiree health benefits with the ability of the mailing community to withstand continued rate increases. This bill will propose to use the escrow funds to pre-fund post-retirement health benefit obligations; to pay down any outstanding debt to the Treasury; and to hold down operating expenses—thereby holding down rate increases as well.”

Senator Collins expects to introduce postal reform legislation on Thursday. Similar legislation introduced by Senators Collins and Carper was unanimously approved last Congress by the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

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THE PAVEMENT POUNDER POLICY AND NOTICES

Union meetings are held at the Union Labor Center on the second Thursday of each month.

NALC Branch #111
 2261 S Redwood Rd #14
 Salt Lake City UT 84119-1330

Business Hours:

Mon, Wed, Fri 7:30 AM – 6:00 PM
 Tues, Thursday 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Please call before visiting the Branch office to ensure someone is there.

Change of address: Please send your new address to the branch office if you have moved recently or are planning to move in the near future.

Statement of Policy

The Pavement Pounder newsletter is published twelve times a year. The Pavement Pounder is a publication of Branch 111. The articles printed in the newsletter are submitted by the senior union officers, members and Auxiliary of the branch to inform the members of events, news, educational matters and other material deemed for the good of the association. The appropriateness of articles published is determined by the editor. The Editor reserves the right to edit or reject articles submitted based on appropriateness. Articles attacking or criticizing others will not be published. The Pavement Pounder will not be allowed to be used as a weapon against anyone or group of people. The Pavement Pounder is to be used to educate and edify the membership of the branch. The opinions expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily the opinions of the NALC or of Branch 111 or of its officers or editor.

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NALC National Food Drive 13th Annual Drive Set for May 14, 2005

Young Encourages Branches to Join Effort; Along with the U.S. Postal Service, Campbell Soup and Valpak Direct Marketing Return as Major Corporate Supporters

NALC President William H. Young encourages every NALC branch in the nation to get involved in the 13th annual NALC National Food Drive held annually on the second Saturday in May.

Young notes that NALC members conduct what has become the greatest community service activity in the entire labor movement, an effort that has done much to alleviate hunger in America. In so doing, the union has become the major catalyst for millions of Americans who want to help Stamp Out Hunger by delivering their donations to local food banks and pantries in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam.

"Many of the recipients are from working families -- people who just need a helping hand to get through some tough times," Young said. "In the 2004 drive, letter carriers collected over 70.9 million pounds of donations, an incredible result. But this year we are determined to go even higher."



NALC Injury Compensation Manual

Although the National Association of Letter Carriers has absolutely no legal obligation to represent letter carriers in their OWCP claims, the union often volunteers to assist those injured letter carriers who are members of the NALC in good standing. The NALC Injury Compensation CD has been developed to assist letter carriers navigate the bureaucratic process and to provide a reference guide to assist with the processing of claims.

The CD manual consists of easy-to-understand information about making a claim, receiving all benefits, the return to work process and other topics relating to your OWCP claim. You will also find an extensive appendix that contains links to the FECA, the Code of Federal Regulations, OWCP manuals and pamphlets, USPS manual sections dealing with workers' compensation, OWCP forms and relevant NALC contractual materials (including national level settlements and both regional and national arbitration decisions). The CD is completely searchable and contains many links that will take you to additional information on the topic selected.

Members may [download the ICM](#) or purchase the CD from the NALC Supply Department for \$10. Call 202-662-2873 or write to: Supply Department, National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO, 100 Indiana Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

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Drawing winners - March Branch Meeting

- Progressive Retirees \$75.00 Adrian Groos (not here) – next month \$100.00
- Progressive Brookfield \$135.00 Matt Earlewine (not present) – next month \$150.00
- Progressive Union Meeting \$500.00 Melvin Evensen (not present) – next month \$525.00
- \$25.00 door prizes: Adam Willden, Sharla Groves and Larry Focht
- Skaggs \$50.00 gift cert. Alan Crocker
- Donuts: Angela Graham, Dale Krall and Gary Thorne

PAVEMENT POUNDER ARTICLES

Any Branch 111 member may submit articles to the Pavement Pounder for publication. All articles submitted must comply with the Pavement Pounder "statement of Policy". No articles attacking or criticizing another member of the branch will be printed in the Pavement Pounder. Articles rejected by the Editor may be taken to the Executive Board.

Gean Ryans
 Editor

Legislative by— Phil Rodriguez

- He just got back from lobbying in DC, this year unlike the past years they got a good reception from the members of congress. They went to talk about HR-22 which is the new postal reform bill which was introduced on the first day of session. Three major parts: two of them are: 1) universal delivery at the same rate, 2) keep collective bargaining rights.
- COLCPE is the reason for so much success money talks on the hill and the word is out that the union is serious about collecting and using the money to help postal reform.
- Wind-fall elimination tax that reduces the Social Security benefits for civil service retirement people. That is basically dead, because it would cost 41 billion dollars to phase that into Social Security, which is already in trouble.
- Union in talks with the rural carriers about merging with us, the APWU approached us also but the NALC said no.

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Branch111.com

APRIL 2005 CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 Daylight Saving Time Begins	4	5	6	7 Exec Board Meeting 6:00 PM	8 Pay Day 7	9
10	11	12	13	14 Union Meeting 6:00 PM	15	16
17	18	19	20 Steward Meeting Meeting 6:00 PM	21	22 Pay Day-8	23
24 Passover Begins	25	26	27	28	29	30
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