

Fellow Members-

In the wake of Independence Day, I'd like to lead off with some recognition and gratitude for all of our veterans. Freedom is never free and I'd like to thank all of those who served to protect us and our rights.

Next up, let me just stress the importance of handing in three copies and putting a date and time in the "date submitted" and "time of call or request" blocks of your 3971 when requesting an A/L day. The first copy of your slip should be handed immediately back to you with a signature and date in the "signature of supervisor and date notified" block. You should then receive another copy of the slip with a decision of approved or disapproved checked off and signed later after the supervisor checks the book and your leave balance. It is important to follow these steps because if management does not get your slip back to you in the contractually allotted time then you automatically are approved for the day. We have to be able to show when you submitted the slips in order to prove the violation.

Incidental leave limits have been adjusted to coincide with the jobs that are being moved from Tour 3 to Tour 2.

The new plant manager is stressing the importance of being regular in attendance and, in doing so; there are a lot of PDIs being conducted. This is just a reminder that PDIs are not discipline. They are Pre-Disciplinary Interviews. They are meant to be your day in court to explain a situation and tell your side of the story. The sad truth is that most of the time, supervisors have already made up their mind prior to conducting the PDI, but it is still necessary to conduct them. PDIs do not go in your file or on your record. It is important that you request a steward if a supervisor says that they are taking you in for a PDI. There are steps that need to be followed and stewards know to look for procedural faults that could help remove any discipline that is issued. Having a steward is your right when you feel that being questioned may lead to discipline and management cannot continue without one if you request one, but they do not have to give you a steward unless you exercise your right.

I'd also like to remind everyone that on all of the machines in the building there are ergonomic rotations and they are there to protect you. The AI/AFSM, the APPS, the APBS, and the HSTS/ATU all have rotations set up. The rotation may be set up jointly by the employees and supervisor, but they do exist and they should be followed for all

employees working that job. Whether it's your bid or not does not matter, the point of the rotation is to protect against repetitive motion injuries and wear and tear to your body. These injuries can happen to regulars and MHAs so rotation is necessary for all. If someone is assigned to the job then they become part of the rotation, it's for everyone's benefit.

There is no "one hour rule" in terms of working a higher level job and then being displaced by a senior person who had no opportunity to do the job. This is important to note with all of the different start times. This is not "bumping", it is exercising your seniority rights to higher level assignments. It is not your coworkers' faults that there are different start times and that affects the higher level jobs.

From the "watch who you trust" and "why we have a Union" categories come two passages; the first is about trusting a supervisor and the second is about our contract. A Mail Handler who diligently did his job every night for thirty years is out of the building now and it is with the aid of a supervisor whom he trusted. This Mail Handler routinely pulled more containers than he should have and most of the time it was that supervisor who not only watched the illegal trips, he even hooked the containers up for the employee. Lo and behold though, when it came time to discipline the employee for something else, the supervisor called this an "egregious unsafe act". I have tried telling equipment operators for years that if you choose to do extra unsafe things, don't ever expect management to back you when push comes to shove. They will allow you to do it all night long and will assist you in doing it, but if you get caught doing it or get hurt doing it then you will stand alone as the person in the wrong. Watch who you trust and what you do for them. Look out for you, your safety, and your job---they won't!! Pulling the recommended number of containers saves your job and possibly another person's. Now, the second part of this is "why we have a Union" and our contract. If you read your "The Mail Handler" magazine that you get from the Union, on page 12 is just some of the proposals that the USPS had floated out at negotiations and I saw the arbitration award of the APWU contract and some of management's offers to them. If you think that the Union doesn't do anything for you then please look at the casuals and how they are treated and paid, because if it wasn't for the negotiating power that the National Union brings to the table then we would all be treated like those casuals. No rights, less pay, no benefits, and no job security would be the norm for all of us. When you pay Union dues you aren't only paying for what goes on in your building, but also what goes on at the national level.

Remember that the Lehigh Valley Branch Picnic will be held on Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup>. More information and times will be posted later.

While grievances have gone down since our plant manager was replaced and things seem to be slightly more peaceful, that does not mean that violations are not occurring. Please remember to exercise your rights to a steward when you are going to be disciplined or when you witness an infraction of the Contract. Ask to see a steward. Also, remember, this is your Union too, so if there is anything that we can do to improve things around here, then please feel free to give me suggestions.

Stay United, Stay Strong-

*Sean*