

Pavement Pounder

BRANCH 111 N.A.L.C. "THE WASATCH BRANCH"



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July 2020

AUGUST 13 6:30

Join us from the comfort of your sofa for our first ZOOM Branch Meeting.

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Log on early to avoid any issues logging in.

The President's Report

Water, Water Everywhere...But Not a Drop to Drink (Part 2)

I originally wrote this article 3 years ago, and once again, I am starting it off with a modernized quote from “The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge... my favorite poem. The actual poem reads as follows:

*Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.*

In this famous poem, the crew of a ill-fated ship find themselves stuck in the “doldrums” (stuck on a still sea with no wind with which to move their vessel). They run out of water and are stuck baking in the hot sun for weeks until they finally succumb to dehydration and all drop dead (except for the narrator/protagonist who lives to tell the tell). If you haven’t read it, it is not a “happy ending” poem, but rather poem that seeks to teach a life lesson, or to warn of possible life-consequences, by the telling of a tragedy.

During the first 25 years of my career, I heard stand-up after stand-up where we were cautioned to avoid all symptoms of heat related illness. We were told that if we did feel any symptoms coming on, we were to immediately hydrate with water, seek shade or air-conditioning, and take an extra break (if necessary) for our safety and health. We were told to always make sure we hand an adequate supply of water with us, and to drink copiously from it, and to dump some of it on our heads if we needed to. We were told that if we ran out of water, or found ourselves without sufficient water, to immediately take the steps necessary to obtain water.

In 2017, for the first time in my experience, we began to have some trouble between Craft and Management regarding the instructions about “water”. There were many disputes, but the most serious concern was whether a Letter Carrier, who found themselves without water “for any reason”, could obtain additional water. I do not need to go into the many reasons for which someone could find themselves without water, it has happened to me on several occasions, and I am sure it happens to all of us from time to time. The problem arose because management was giving bad (and potentially dangerous) instructions

about water. Some members of management stated that Letter Carriers should never find themselves without water (presumably because they should always be prepared for any contingency), so getting water should never be an issue. I find that kind of logic to be disingenuous, naïve, and flawed, because running out of water does happen, and it will happen to everyone eventually. So, after several failed attempts to explain this to Management, and to get a definitive answer regarding whether a Carrier could deviate to get water when necessary, I was forced to write an open letter to the District Manager at that time (Darrell Stoke) which stated in part:

“I have asked you and the numerous other EAS employees that I have encountered in the Downtown office to give the following instruction: “If you [Letter Carriers] find yourselves without water FOR ANY REASON, immediately procure water sufficient for your needs.”...

...“Since management has declined to give this instruction, I find that I must get the word out, so this open letter will be published in our branch newsletter, and I am saying to all Letter Carriers, “If you [Letter Carriers] find yourselves without water FOR ANY REASON, immediately procure water sufficient for your needs.” The Union will be happy to defend any Letter Carrier who is disciplined for procuring water when it is necessary for their safety.”

After that letter, the Union resolved a grievance with the following language [in part]: *“Any management employees that have told employees that they cannot have water will be instructed to cease and desist. Management will be told employees in the heat cannot be denied water.”*

Yesterday I had a conversation with Steve Chaus, the Postmaster of the Salt Lake City Installation. He stated that management and the Union are in complete agreement regarding water. He stated that bottled water is being provided in all Salt Lake City Installation offices (and I believe all the Associate Offices are providing bottled water as well, please let me know if that stops being the case, or isn't the case). He stated that Carriers are being instructed to obtain water sufficient for their needs anytime they find themselves without water. And he also stated that if anyone finds that they are having heat-related illness (for example, being unable to continue delivering due to heat-related symptoms), they should call 911, or call their Manager/Supervisor for assistance, whichever they deem expedient and appropriate. We spoke about heat-related illness [heat stress, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke], and agreed that while every case is subjective, the Postal Service will make every effort to err on the side of caution, by calling 911, providing rides to the Hospital, or making sure Letter Carriers are checked out

by medical professionals after having on-the-job heat-related illness (all of the aforementioned to be done when appropriate... every situation is unique).

The bottom line is that both the Postal Service, and Letter Carriers should take Heat Safety seriously. It is my fervent hope that Management and Letter Carriers will use their best judgement in dealing with both heat and hydration. The hierarchy of importance is: Health, Family, and then Job. Remember, you won't have a job if you don't protect your health, and you won't want a job if you have to sacrifice your family to keep it.

It is expected that this will be a long, hot Summer. Water is good. Gatorade is good. Wet towels on the neck, wet hats, sweating, fans, shade, air-conditioning, and an extra break if necessary are all good. Please take care of your health this summer by taking the steps necessary to keep yourselves hydrated and not over-heated.

And of course, with all of this going on, we still have the Pandemic to deal with. I have written several articles on this recently, so I will forego saying anything other than "Thank You!" for being at work during this crisis. Please keep doing the right things. The rate of positive tests for Branch 111 Letter Carriers has been amazingly low, which indicates to me that we are doing the right things to stay safe both at work and at home. Thank you for protecting both yourselves and your work family, and please have a safe Summer!

Michael Wahlquist – President

Branch 111, NALC

AFL-CIO Convention nominations were suppose to happen in the April meeting. It is assumed at this time that the Convention like all other events is being postponed until further notice.

Branch 111 officer elections are coming up at the end of the year. Nominations will be held in the October meeting.

ZOOM ZOOM

First of all, I know some people may have concerns about how to join our ZOOM Branch Meeting on August 13. I know for some people technology can be intimidating. I assure you it is very simple to join meetings via ZOOM. You can join on your laptop, desktop, or your phone. Please test your device early to make sure you can log right in. A camera and microphone are helpful but not necessary (smart phones and laptops usually have these built in). If you are joining on your desktop make sure your speakers are plugged in and turned up. If anyone knows that they will have a problem with this format please contact the Union Hall and we can make some other arrangements for you. Please see the flyer that is in this publication for log in information. This will be the first attempt at this for us so I am expecting a few hiccups. We have a few weeks to get ourselves ready so please do a test run on logging in. That can be done at any time. There is a virtual waiting room for the meeting and you will see a message saying "waiting for host". Also if anyone wants me to send them a link to the meeting so they can Join that way please send me an email request and I will reply with the link. Mikehansen0427@yahoo.com

The first half of 2020 has been a very interesting and trying time for so many. We have all read the stories and know people that have lost so much. I feel so grateful to be working for the Postal Service and don't have to worry about lost wages and lost benefits. We are very lucky to be going to work everyday. We are blessed.

Over the last few weeks I have seen an overwhelming number of our coworkers make the decision to put on a mask. I thank you all for putting on a mask while you are in the office. This small inconvenience helps make others feel safer when coming to work. I know everyone feels differently about being told they have to put on a mask but with a growing number of positive tests in our branch it's the least I can do.

In Solidarity
Mike Hansen
Vice President
NALC Branch 111

NALC HEALTH BENEFITS

Jimmy Kerekes

I've had a few questions raised about Health Insurance. Some are for active carriers and some that are of a mixed nature. There are a lot of rules with Health Insurance. There are also a number of family and single situations in our society today.

One situation we come across as postal workers is both people maybe postal employees. One also maybe a combination of Clerk/Carrier family or Mailhandler/Clerk or both could be of the same work craft.

Rules for the dependents are many for different situations brought about by the above combinations. But, also the changes in health rules and requirements are many.

Rules change sometimes when it's retirement time. Also, when there are interruptions in relationships.

*Here is something that is frequently asked about health insurance.

Husband and Wife Eligible to Enroll:

If both you and your spouse are eligible to enroll, one of you may enroll in Self Plus One or Self and Family to cover your entire family. If you have no eligible children to cover, each of you may enroll under Self Only in the same or different plans.

Another question almost always asked is do I get to keep health insurance when I retire? I know this has been answered many times before but here it is again. The answer is yes. If you have been continuously enrolled (or as a covered family member) in any FEHB plan for 5 years of service immediately before the date of your annuity starts.

Common Law Marriage is another bit of information, it is eligible coverage (based on applicable state laws). States vary in their laws.

Next article- I will research and answer the following question. A Federal employees' spouse is not a Federal employee. If they have no dependents, can they both have Self Only coverage under the FEHP program active or retired?

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BRANCH 79 - The Seventy Niner: MAY 2020

BY NICK SIMMONS

Recently one of my favorite customers had to move from her home and I had not seen her in a number of weeks. The family appeared to clean out her home and by chance she was there as I did my rounds. She rushed to me and latched on to my arm and said: "It is so good to see you again." Of course the family were yelling at her to maintain social distance but for just a moment I realized that my job allows me a chance to meet many wonderful people and allows me many opportunities to connect. I do realize that at times interactions can be difficult and unpleasant but this one time it was an amazing feeling to connect again. A huge thanks to Nick Simmons for his art work.

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