

REGION 9 UPDATES

Greetings Sisters & Brothers,

As letter carriers, we are deemed as essential workers. Based on the fact we provide a much-needed service to our customers at every address every day. Letter carriers deliver medications, stimulus checks, parcels containing needed household supplies such as food, water, toiletries and of course cards and letters from friends and family.

After every natural disaster, a sense of hope and normalcy is felt by our customers when they see letter carriers return to their routes. As letter carriers we have always faced all different kinds of safety concerns and obstacles as we complete our appointed rounds. We safely navigate around storm debris, torrential rain and lightning, wildfires and the infamous "bad dog" to name a few. However, over the last several months letter carriers are facing yet another unprecedented safety concern with COVID-19.

While the entire country sheltered in place, letter carriers continued to be that sense of normalcy delivering an essential service every day. As stated earlier, we as letter carriers are diligent in working around safety issues. However, this unprecedented pandemic is different. COVID-19 has presented new obstacles in the fact we cannot see, hear, touch or smell where this virus might be lurking. I know, personally I could return to a route I had not delivered in years and remember the addresses that had the "bad dog!" I could prepare myself and take extra precaution when approaching that particular address. With COVID-19 you just don't know, how do you prepare yourself to stay safe from the unknown?

As this COVID-19 pandemic was spreading through the world, prior to the virus reaching our shores, NALC President Fredric Rolando approached USPS Headquarters to negotiate Memorandums of Understandings (MOU's) to keep letter carriers safe while we continue working and providing that essential service to our beloved customers.

Every aspect of our daily duties were considered. How can letter carriers work safely in a new COVID kind of way? At the onset of this pandemic, MOU's were being signed off daily, sometimes multiple MOU's daily = staggered start times, providing employees personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitizing our work areas/vehicles, social distancing, signing for our customers receipt of accountable mail on the MDD to name a few.

Not only did our work life change, the way we lived our personal lives changed as well. Groups of more than ten were disallowed and those ten must be able to social distance by maintaining a six-foot separation, restaurants, doctor's offices everything was temporarily closed.

NALC was forced to cancel or postpone union meetings, trainings, State and National Conventions to keep everyone safe and virus free. Wait! What? These meetings are the methodology used to bring letter carriers information concerning changes in the workplace!

NALC rallied at every level to make sure letter carriers had the information needed to work safe. Branches, State Associations, Region 9 and NALC Headquarters relied on communicating with letter carriers via the internet and written publications sent through the US Mail.

I always say, knowledge is power. I ask and encourage each of you to stay informed of all the resources being provided to keep you safe. The Families First Response to the Coronavirus Act provides additional leave above your earned leave bank, EAP has virtual sessions to help each of us through these unprecedented times and of course the many MOU's providing you new protections for liberal leave and safe work practices.

All of the MOU's are listed on NALC.org or the NALC app, a special COVID-19 page has been created for easy access. I have created a closed Facebook page for Region 9 members, entitled "Region 9 Updates." On this page I have listed all the MOU's, mandatory Stand Up Talks and USPS training materials for your knowledge. Additionally, across the cover photo is the Region 9 phone number (678-942-5295), if you have any questions give me a call!

Last but not least, there is our reliable monthly magazine the Postal Record which has always been a wealth of resourceful information. However, NALC has also made the Postal Record into an audible version which can be listened to on the PODBEAN app.

COVID-19 has changed the way we live our lives, the "new norm" as they say. Please continue to stay informed regarding all the changes implemented to keep letter carriers safe by choosing one of the resources listed above.

Until we can gather together again, I want to Thank You for your dedication. You are American Heroes!

Stay Well and Stay Safe.

**Lynne Pendleton
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NALC Region 9**