



National Association of Letter Carriers



The Letter Carrier's Guide

Dear Letter Carrier:

Greetings from the National Association of Letter Carriers and welcome to your new job. As a letter carrier, you will perform an important service for the American people. This is why letter carriers for generations have won the respect and admiration of their fellow citizens. It is a recognition we have diligently earned.

For well over a century, letter carriers have joined together into a strong union. In fact, 2014 will mark our 125th anniversary as a union; something we are very proud to celebrate. We represent all city letter carriers in the United States. More than nine out of 10 active carriers belong to the NALC.

We have created this booklet to tell you a little bit about ourselves—the history of the NALC, our internal makeup and the wide range of services we provide to all our members. But we would also like to give you a basic introduction to your job—your duties and responsibilities as a letter carrier. As a letter carrier, you are the face of the Postal Service, which is consistently voted the most trusted of all government agencies. It is a responsibility that letter carriers take pride in fulfilling.

We are here to guide you and help you in your new job so that you may enjoy a long and prosperous career as a letter carrier. Again, welcome to your new job, and remember, the NALC is here to serve you.



In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Fredric V. Rolando'.

Fredric V. Rolando
President, National Association
of Letter Carriers

The Letter Carrier's Guide



**National Association
of Letter Carriers**
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You and Your Union

Everyone loves their letter carrier. That's why there is more to becoming a letter carrier than just doing a job and collecting a paycheck. Letter carriers have a history, a special importance in American society and a proud tradition of unionism. More than 91 percent of our country's letter carriers have chosen to take part in that tradition by joining the National Association of Letter Carriers. You should too, and we're pleased to tell you why.

NALC's Past: A Rich Tradition Steeped in Struggle

Long hours, low pay and carrying the mail every day of the year—those were the conditions that led some 60 letter carriers from 13 states to establish the National Association of Letter Carriers in 1889. By founding their own labor union to fight for a decent living and justice on the job, these early letter carriers were joining fellow American workers in the fledgling labor movement of the late 19th century.

From its inception until 1970, the National Association of Letter Carriers fought for wages and benefits in the halls of Congress, because it was



Congress that oversaw the operation of what was then the Post Office Department—an arm of the executive branch of the government. Throughout this period, the NALC faced constant opposition—from repressive postmasters, an often indifferent, hostile Congress and, at times, a vindictive White House.

Finding strength in unity, the NALC won pay increases, vacations, sick leave, retirement benefits for its members, and freedom for letter carriers to voice their concerns in the nation's legislative halls.

Despite these strenuous legislative efforts, letter carrier wages remained painfully low throughout most of the 20th century—even during the prosperous 1950s and 1960s. In fact,

wages were so low that some qualified for public assistance programs. By 1970, letter carriers' patience had run out.

In March 1970, letter carriers in New York City went out on strike. Joined by carriers and other postal workers across the country, the strikers ultimately numbered 200,000 strong.

The strike rocked Congress and the White House. In August of 1970, Congress enacted pay increases and passed the Postal Reorganization Act. The act replaced the old Post Office Department, with an independent quasi-corporate entity, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). Most importantly, under the new law, postal employees won the right to bargain with the newly creat-





ed USPS over wages, hours and working conditions.

A new era for letter carriers began, as the NALC emerged a stronger and more effective advocate. Collective bargaining was added to NALC's arsenal.

For decades, letter carriers have won significant gains at the negotiating table and at the work place, while the

union has renewed its commitment to advance the interests of letter carriers through legislation. Equally important, during the 1970s letter carriers revolutionized NALC from the inside with reforms ensuring that every member's voice would be heard. Today NALC stands proud as a model of strong and democratic unionism.

NALC's Present: Membership Services

Joining NALC entitles you to a lot more than a union card. As an NALC member, you gain a wide range of services and benefits tailored to letter carriers.

A Contract That Protects You

The NALC is the exclusive nationwide bargaining representative for all city letter carriers. That means NALC negotiates one collective-bargaining agreement for all city carriers employed by the Postal Service. This “National Agreement” is the “law of the workplace.” It spells out the terms of employment and therefore affects nearly every facet of a letter carrier’s job. Members should read the Agreement and keep a copy for reference.

NALC’s elected national officers have negotiated new contracts every two to five years in face-to-face meetings with Postal Service officials since 1971. Every negotiated contract must be approved by a majority of the membership. In this way, every NALC member can have a voice in decisions vital to his or her job. If we are unable to agree with the Postal Service on a negotiated con-

tract, the NALC can go to arbitration to attain a new National Agreement.

While the National Agreement establishes uniform wages and working conditions for letter carriers throughout the United States, Article 30 of the contract permits individual branches to bargain over a number of workplace issues. This allows local leaders to negotiate certain aspects of local work schedules, such as vacation bidding, job postings and overtime lists.

A Grievance Procedure That Safeguards Your Rights

One of the most significant gains NALC members have achieved is a comprehensive grievance procedure. The grievance procedure allows letter carriers to challenge postal management conduct that violates the National Agreement. NALC officers throughout the union—stewards, branch officers, regional officers and the national leadership are all involved in the grievance process, enforcing your rights on the job. By providing members with skilled representation in dealing with management, the NALC works to ensure fair and decent treat-



ment for all letter carriers. To learn more about the grievance procedure, consult page 36 of this Guide and Article 15 of the National Agreement.

Making Our Case On Capitol Hill

Although NALC bargains directly with the Postal Service for the wages, working conditions and many fringe benefits for letter carriers, other benefits are set by law and provided to all federal employees—which is one reason why the

union backs up its collective-bargaining strength with aggressive lobbying.

Perhaps more importantly, the health and viability of the USPS as a public institution and the rights of letter carriers to bargain collectively depend on the political support of Congress. Rights granted by Congress in law can just as easily be taken away by Congress. Furthermore, every gain we make at the bargaining table can be taken away by the stroke of a legislative pen. This is why the

union energetically champions the interests of letter carriers and the Postal Service in the halls of Congress.

In the mid-1980s, the NALC played a key role in keeping federal retirement benefits by helping to create the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS), which provides career postal and federal employees with the means for a secure retirement. During the past two decades, the union has also lobbied against attempts to increase the cost of or diminish the quality of health insurance for career letter carriers under the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program. In addition, we have succeeded in stopping repeated congressional efforts to cut retirement benefits, eliminate cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) and weaken the Thrift Savings Plan. Through the passage of Hatch Act reform, the NALC led a successful fight to reform the decades-old law that sharply restricted the political rights of letter carriers and other postal and federal workers.

More recently, the NALC has focused on finding ways to help the Postal Service adapt to technological and economic challenges posed by the Internet. We are working to strengthen the Postal Service every day. Our

goal is to ensure that letter carriers will be delivering mail in every city and town for decades to come while protecting our middle-class standard of living.

The NALC encourages all letter carriers to participate in the union's grassroots legislative program. Under the leadership of the National President and the Legislative Department, State Association Presidents (Chairs) lead legislative and political action on the state and federal level in their respective jurisdictions. In 2005, the NALC unveiled its "NALC's Field Plan for the Future" ensuring that NALC members will be legislatively and politically active in all





50 states for years to come. With the adoption of the “Field Plan,” a Congressional District Liaison (an NALC member serving as the NALC’s contact person to a congressional representative) has been appointed in every congressional district to keep NALC issues visible. Another new position introduced in the “Field Plan” was the appointment of a member, in every branch with 50 or members, charged with raising money and awareness of the NALC’s political action committee (PAC), which is named COLCPE (Committee on Letter Carriers Political Education). The field plan, which is regularly re-viewed and adjusted, set the stage for amendments to the

NALC Constitution to give the state associations the primary function to mobilize letter carriers for legislative and political activism.

A consistent effort is made to get NALC members to join the union’s “e-Activist” legislative network. This network provides immediate legislative updates and calls on you, the members, to take immediate action when necessary. Through our strong relationships with members of Congress, the continued growth of our PAC and the activism of our members, the NALC is a union that is committed to protecting the rights and benefits of its members at the grassroots level as well as on Capitol Hill.

The NALC Auxiliary, a voluntary organization of carriers' spouses and relatives, also participates in congressional lobbying, local community activities and branch social functions.

Keeping Members Informed

NALC places the highest priority on keeping its members and the public fully informed about its activities. *The Postal Record*, the union's monthly magazine, is mailed to every member, and approximately twice each month the *NALC Bulletin* is sent to branch officers and a designee in your work location for posting on NALC bulletin boards. These publications contain articles on matters vital to letter carriers, messages from NALC's president and other national officers and many additional features of general interest to members, their families and the public.

The Postal Record is a continuing chronicle of important NALC issues and activities. *The Postal Record* also reserves a number of pages for items of interest submitted by branch and state associations.

Another publication is the *NALC Activist*, a quarterly newsletter for branch officers and stewards. Additionally,

many NALC state associations and branches publish their own newspapers to keep members up to date on state and local union developments.

In addition to communicating with members via print publications, the NALC uses the Internet not only to enhance the union's grass-roots legislative program as discussed on page 8, but also to provide union and craft information to members and to the general public. By logging on to the NALC website,



Internet users can find out about the structure and history of the union, look up NALC officers and regions, access digital versions of many printed NALC and USPS publications. They also review information on the NALC Health Benefit Plan, Mutual Benefit Association and Auxiliary, find resource materials on community service projects, check details on upcoming union activities or research affiliated postal and labor organizations. In many sections crucial full-text documents, are available in Acrobat PDF format for browsing or downloading so members can be sure that they are getting authoritative, official information on crucial issues directly from National Headquarters. Whether you are looking for information on the NALC, carrier issues or the latest news, be sure to check online at www.nalc.org.

Insuring Lives

The United States Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association (MBA) is NALC's Life Insurance Department. MBA was formed by the NALC as a fraternal organization to provide low cost plans of insurance that would assure income and security for active and retired NALC members. Active NALC members may insure

themselves as well as their spouse, children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren.

The MBA offers a variety of life insurance products, including whole, term and universal life. In addition, annuities (Non-Qualified, Traditional IRA and Roth IRA) are offered. The hospital confinement coverage offers benefits of \$30, \$50, \$75, or even as much as \$100 per day, over and above the Health Benefit Plan benefits.

For more information about the U.S. Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association and its plans, contact your MBA representative or call the home office at NALC National Headquarters in Washington, DC, 202-638-4318, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.–3:30 p.m., Eastern Time, 800-424-5184 Tuesday and Thursday, 10 a.m.–12 p.m. and 2–4 p.m. Eastern Time or log onto www.nalc.org.

Providing Health Benefit Coverage

The 2011 National Agreement contains provisions for health insurance for CCAs. A letter from NALC Director of Health Benefits Brian Hellman is reproduced on the next few pages. This letter thoroughly explains health insurance options available to CCAs.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS
HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN

20547 Waverly Court, Ashburn, Virginia 20149 • (703) 729-4677 or 1-888-636-NALC (6252)
Fredric V. Rolando, President • Brian Hellman, Director



November 18, 2013

Dear NALC Member:

Over the past few weeks you have received correspondence from the Postal Service regarding health insurance coverage in 2014. I also sent you a brochure on the NALC Health Benefit Plan's new Consumer-Driven and Value Option health plans. This information may be a bit confusing to new City Carrier Assistants; therefore, I am writing in my capacity as NALC Director of Health Benefits to clarify the issues surrounding CCA health insurance, and to ensure that you fully understand your options and rights under the NALC's National Agreement with the Postal Service.

The scope of your health care options in 2014 depends on two factors: First, on whether you have completed a 360-term of service with the Postal Service (counting any prior service as a Transitional Employee), and second, on the resolution of a dispute we have with the Postal Service on the meaning of language in the Das interest arbitration award that set the terms and conditions for CCA employees. To help you understand your health care options, I will explain the language in the Das Award and then summarize the choices you face.

The Health Insurance section of Appendix B of the 2011-2016 Collective Bargaining Agreement between the NALC and the USPS contains the following three paragraphs on health benefits coverage for City Carrier Assistants (CCAs): (See <http://www.nalc.org/depart/cau/pdf/agreement/na2011.pdf> – page 144.)

1. *After an initial appointment for a 360-day term and upon reappointment to another 360-day term, any eligible noncareer CCA employee who wants to pay health premiums to participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program on a pre-tax basis will be required to make an election to do so in accordance with applicable procedures. A previous appointment as a transitional employee will count toward qualifying for participation in FEHB, in accordance with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations. The total cost of health insurance is the responsibility of the noncareer employee except as provided below.*

Paragraph #1 provides for the health care option that was previously available to NALC transitional employees. Under this option, CCAs reappointed to another 360-day term after serving an initial 360-day term (let's call them 360-day CCAs), have full Open Season rights to choose any available plan in FEHB (including those offered by the NALC HBP), but they must pay the total cost of the plan as there is no Postal Service contribution toward the premium.

2. *Beginning in Plan Year 2014, the Postal Service will make a bi-weekly contribution to the total premium for any CCA employee who wishes to participate in the USPS Noncareer Health Care Plan (USPS Plan) equal to the greater of (a) \$125, or (b) the minimum required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and applicable regulations, for self-only. The CCA employee is fully responsible for the cost of premiums for any health insurance plan beyond a self-only plan. Any CCA employee wishing to make their health care contribution on a pre-tax basis will be required to make an election to do so in accordance with applicable procedures. All CCA employees will be eligible for the USPS Plan within a reasonable period from the date of hire and entry into a pay status, consistent with the requirements established under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.*

Paragraph #2 provides for CCA participation in the USPS Noncareer Health Care Plan. CCAs who select self-only coverage and want to receive a bi-weekly contribution of \$125 from the Postal Service toward

their health insurance premium must select the USPS Plan. The Postal Service has indicated that all CCAs are eligible for the plan, and that self & family coverage is also available. However, keep in mind that the Postal Service contribution is \$125 regardless of whether you elect self-only or self & family coverage.

3. *If for any reason the USPS Plan is not available to a CCA, or if a CCA elects more than self-only coverage, the Postal Service will make a bi-weekly contribution for any eligible CCA who selects an NALC Consumer Driven Plan or Value Option Plan equal to the greater of (a) \$125, or (b) the minimum required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and applicable regulations, for self-only.*

Paragraph # 3 covers CCAs who want self & family coverage and protects CCAs in the event that the USPS Plan is not available to them for any reason. As mentioned above, the USPS has advised the NALC that all CCAs are eligible for participation in the USPS Non-career plan in 2014. So for the coming year, paragraph #3 effectively addresses the options available to CCAs who want self & family coverage. The NALC Health Benefit Plan offers two variations of a consumer driven plan. CCAs may select the NALC Consumer Driven Plan or Value Option Plan instead of the USPS noncareer plan. A CCA who selects an NALC Plan because they want self & family coverage will receive the \$125 bi-weekly Postal Service contribution. (In future years, if the USPS Plan is not available for any reason, CCAs will also receive the \$125 contribution for either self-only or family coverage under either of the NALC Consumer Driven plans.)

Please note that the NALC and the USPS have a dispute with regard to the implementation of Paragraph #3. The NALC believes it applies to all CCAs who want self & family coverage, regardless of their length of service. The Postal Service has taken the position that only CCAs who have completed a 360-day period of service and who want self & family coverage are eligible to enroll in one of the NALC Consumer Driven Plans and to receive a contribution of \$125 every two weeks. Pending resolution of this dispute the Postal Service will only make the \$125 contribution for 360-day CCAs who select self & family coverage from either of the NALC Consumer Driven Plans.

In summary, what this means for now is that CCAs have the following options for health benefits coverage next year (2014):

If you are a 360-day CCA, you have three options: (1) You can choose self-only or self & family coverage in the USPS Noncareer Plan and receive a \$125 contribution to the premium every two weeks; (2) As a NALC member, you can choose to become a member and select self & family coverage (not self-only) from the NALC Consumer Driven Plan or Value Option Plan and receive the \$125 bi-weekly contribution from USPS; or (3) You can choose self-only or self & family coverage in any plan offered through the FEHB Program, but receive no contribution toward premium costs.

If you have not completed a 360-day period of service, you have only one plan option: You can choose to enroll in USPS Noncareer plan (with either self-only or family coverage) and receive the \$125 bi-weekly premium contribution from the Postal Service. However, if the NALC prevails in its dispute with the USPS, you may also have the option in the future to choose self & family coverage under either version of the NALC Consumer Driven Plan or Value Option Plan and receive the \$125 bi-weekly contribution from USPS.

I hope this clarifies a very complicated issue and helps you make the right decision for you and your family. If you have any questions, feel free to call (888) 636-6252 for assistance.

Sincerely,



Brian Hellman
Director of Health Benefits



And Many Additional Services

NALC's officers and professional staff also provide many other resources and services to members. For instance:

- Information and Research Services provides research assistance to union officers, staff and members in the field in two ways. First, the Information Center furnishes reference information on the Postal Service, labor relations, general economic and political developments, NALC history and the like. Second, economic and statistical research is conducted in three major areas: analysis of Postal Service operating and financial data; the monitoring of NALC membership and organizing efforts; and the study of a variety of broader economic issues that directly and indirectly affect the lives of letter carriers.

- The Office of the General Counsel provides NALC with professional legal support. Our attorneys represent members and the union in court, assist NALC officers in high-level grievance actions, and promote the membership's interests before the Postal Regulatory Commission and in federal regulatory proceedings, at the direction of the National President.

- The Compensation Department provides information and assistance regarding on-the-job injury claims, and thus helps ensure that NALC members receive the full benefits and protections of the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA). The department provides information on the required procedures for filing workers' compensation claims in a column in *The Postal Record* each month, on the NALC website, and periodically in other NALC publications such as the *NALC Activist*. The Director of Workers' Compensation provides direct assistance to the Union's 15 National Business Agents and their offices with guidance concerning issues and problems that arise in the course of claims, and, when claims are denied, in analysis of pending appeals to the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) of the Department of Labor (DOL) including appeals to Hearings and Review and requests for Reconsideration. The Director also represents individual NALC members, upon request, in their appeals to the Employees Compensation Appeal Board (ECAB) in Washington, DC.

- An elected national officer works cooperatively with the Postal Service to ensure the safety and health of carriers as well as the effectiveness, integrity and confidentiality of management's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP is designed for employees and their immediate families with substance abuse or other personal problems that interfere with employees' workplace performance. In addition to both serving on joint labor-management committees that oversee the safety and health and EAP provisions of the National Agreement and monitoring related programs at the USPS area and district levels, the elected Director of Safety and Health provides safety, health and EAP information to the union's National Business Agents, branch officers and members through a monthly column in *The Postal Record* and a regularly updated safety and health/EAP page on NALC's website.

- The Education Department creates union education programs for NALC activists and officers in the field. In addition, the department assists other Headquarters departments and the regional offices in formulating educational pro-

grams, developing strategies for delivering programs to the membership and publishing educational materials for instructors and training session participants. The department's goal is to build union strength by providing participatory educational opportunities for all NALC activists.

- Under the direction of an elected national officer, the Retirement Department helps retired members enjoy the full benefits they've earned. The department is in frequent contact with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and other federal agencies to track down information for retirees having special

problems. It keeps retirees up to date on important retiree issues through the department's page on the NALC website and through the Director of Retired Members' *Postal Record* column. In addition, the department helps NALC's legislative staff understand retirement-related legislation before the Congress and mobilizes retired members to take an active role in backing candidates who support letter carriers. NALC members with questions about retirement issues can call the department toll-free at 800-424-5186 every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and 2-4 p.m. Eastern





Time or 202-393-4695
Monday–Friday, from 9
am.–4:30 p.m.

- All letter carriers who belong to the NALC automatically are covered by a \$5,000 Accidental Death Insurance Policy. Since 1985, approximately \$5 million has been paid out to active and retired letter carriers under the policy. In addition, every NALC branch has the option of purchasing additional group insurance on behalf of all active members of the branch.

- Every year, the NALC Scholarship Program awards four William C. Doherty college scholarships and one John

T. Donelon scholarship to the children, legally adopted step children or grandchildren of active and retired letter carriers who are NALC members in good standing. The Doherty scholarships are each worth \$4,000 per undergraduate year and the Donelon Scholarship, \$1,000 per undergraduate year. Scholarships are awarded on a competitive basis by the NALC Scholarship Committee assisted by professional educators.

- All active and retired NALC members are eligible for a number of money-saving programs offered by Union Privilege, an arm of the AFL-

CIO. These include a low-interest, no-annual-fee Letter Carriers Master Card that has a number of special features. The credit process is handled confidentially between Household Bank and union members. Additionally, Union Privilege offers credit counseling, credit score information, an online tax service, low-cost legal services, an auto-buying service, vacation tours, low-cost Internet services, and discounts on Dell computer products, car rentals, AT&T wireless service and much more. To view benefits offered to NALC members, log on to www.unionplus.org.

How the Union Works

Running a union with hundreds of thousands of members is no simple task. It takes money, competent officers and staff, a sound organization and involved members. Here's how NALC operates.

The Union Runs on Dues

Your dues dollars keep the NALC alive—so paying union dues as a member of the NALC is the best way to protect and promote your interests. Dues pay for offices and administrative support, repre-

sentation, contract negotiation, arbitration, publication of union news and technical support materials, the salaries for your union officers, staff, union conventions and other essential functions.

Dues for active members are deducted each pay period in one lump sum and distributed to the national, your state association and your branch to perform their functions representing you.

NALC is fully accountable for all dues. Protections include an annual audit by an independent accounting firm and federal laws requiring financial disclosure. In addition, NALC publishes financial statements every six months and biennial fiscal reports to the national convention. Moreover, changes in dues can only come through democratic processes. Most of all, dues are a sound investment in your future. You are the union and your dues enable the union to function.



NALC Is Democracy at Work

Unions are essential to a democratic society. They give workers a real voice in their work life and provide justice in the workplace.

Democracy is the bedrock of NALC. Letter carriers elect every union official from branch officers to the national union president. It's one member, one vote in every election.

In addition, National Agreements—unless decided by arbitration—must be approved by NALC members in a mail-ballot referendum.

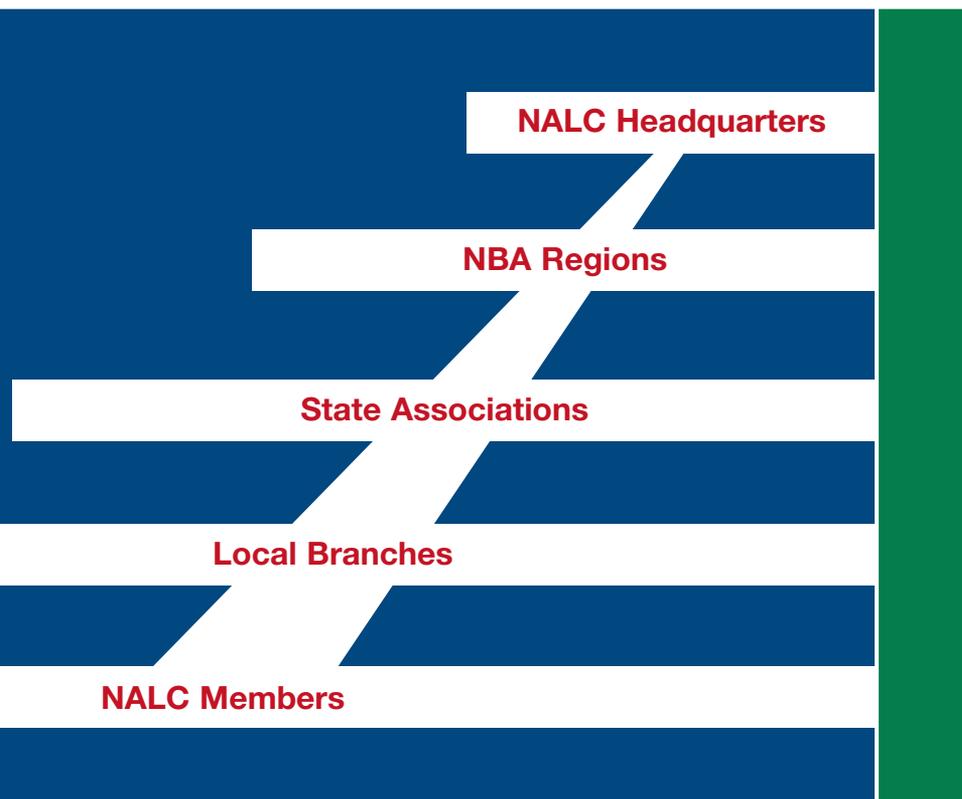
NALC democracy is firmly rooted in a written constitution that spells out election procedures, officers' duties, convention responsibilities, and other key matters. NALC's constitution has evolved over the years to meet the union's changing needs and to strengthen members' control over union affairs.

NALC's national convention is the union's supreme governing body. The convention meets every two years, and elected delegates from every branch across the country are eligible to attend. At the convention, delegates consider constitutional amendments, discuss key issues in standing committees,

UNION STRUCTURE

and set national policy for NALC. In addition, delegates to every other convention nominate national officers for election to four-year terms.

While the *National Constitution* is the supreme governing document for union rules and functions, some decisions are left to local branches to decide in the form of branch bylaws, such as those governing branch meeting times and places, and branch officers' duties. Local branches may



enact these branch bylaws, as long as they are not in conflict with the *National Constitution*.

The lifeblood of a democratic union is the active participation of its members. You—the letter carrier—make union democracy work.

Union Structure and Officers

For strength and efficiency, NALC is organized into a well-defined structure which is out-

lined in the union constitution. Democratic procedures, lines of authority, and officers' duties are specified in order to help the union work for you.

All NALC officers, from steward to national president, have one goal—to serve the members. They need your support to realize that goal. You can help by attending and contributing to union meetings, and volunteering your time for union activities.

Union officers and functions



are organized into four structural levels:

Branches: As an NALC member you are automatically a member of your local branch—one of thousands of NALC branches of varying size throughout the country.

Your branch is run entirely by letter carriers like yourself. Although some of the larger NALC branches have one or more full-time elected officer(s), virtually all branches rely heavily on volunteer union activists who give their time to help their fellow carriers and to do good works in the community.

Members elect their own branch officers in free and fair elections, and any regular member in good standing may run for office. In addition, each branch has shop stewards—letter carriers who represent you in your dealings with management. (For more on the role of the steward, see page 37.) Branch business is conducted at monthly membership meetings, which any member may attend.

Although the branch's first job is to represent letter carriers at work and thus ensure that carriers receive all the rights and benefits of our labor agreements, many branches also engage in additional activities, depending on member interests. Many NALC branches, for example, offer classes to help new carriers “work smarter” on the job, and conduct special classes for shop stewards and other union activists. Many NALC branches are deeply involved in the political and legislative process, promoting the interests of letter carriers.

NALC branches also have many benefits for its members such as vision and dental benefits, additional retirement benefits, accidental death benefits and scholarships, to name a few.

NALC branches promote fellowship and solidarity among branch members by offering a variety of social activities, from bowling nights to picnics to ball games to special dinners for retirees, stewards and other groups. Finally, branches engage in a number of community and charitable activities, including NALC's annual nationwide food drive and our annual collection for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

For tens of thousands of letter carriers, participating in the NALC is simply a great way to help strengthen the one organization dedicated solely to protecting carriers' interests in the workplace and in the halls of Congress—and to also serve our fellow Americans. Find out how you can get involved!

State associations: Members also belong to NALC state associations. Among their duties, elected state association presidents supervise NALC's grass roots legislative activities in their jurisdictions and, in many cases, organize lobbying visits to Washington, DC, to meet with the state's elected representatives. State associations also coordinate training programs with the national business agents and at a minimum

of once every three years; they also hold conventions attended by branch delegates.

NBA Regions: NALC's national administration is grouped into regions, each directed by an elected national business agent (NBA). Every region also employs at least two regional administrative assistants (RAAs), appointed by the NALC national president. Acting under the national president's ultimate direction, NBA's have extensive authority over union affairs in their regions, and serve on the NALC executive council. An NBA's primary responsibility is contract administration—handling grievances, presenting arbitrations, and dealing with area and district postal management. They also provide skilled services to the field, responding to branch officers' requests for advice and assistance.

National Headquarters: National union business is generally conducted at the NALC's Washington, DC, headquarters by nationally elected resident officers. These include the president, executive vice president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, assistant secretary-treasurer, director of city delivery, director of safety and health, director of life



insurance, director of health benefits, and director of retired members.

These officers, along with the NBAs and the nationally elected three-member board of trustees, form the NALC executive council. The executive council, chaired by the president, governs the union between conventions.

NALC national officers, representing the entire membership on the national level, are ultimately responsible for all aspects of union administration and policy. Under the president's leadership, the officers help negotiate and police the national agreement, conduct

legislative campaigns, direct the union's staff departments and represent NALC before the public. Final authority for the union's executive functions rests with the president, who presides at the national convention.

NALC and the Labor Movement

NALC members share a common bond with the wider American labor movement. In recognition of that bond, NALC is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the nation's largest and most important labor insti-

tution. It represents millions of workers in more than 50 national and international unions. NALC's voluntary affiliation entitles the union to a voice in Federation affairs. However, it does not affect NALC's independence. NALC remains an autonomous union, accountable to its members alone.

NALC proudly shares in the tasks of the AFL-CIO as the Federation fights for the united interest of all our country's workers. Under AFL-CIO leadership, American workers

have won minimum wage legislation, protections against discrimination on the job, occupational health and safety laws, unemployment insurance, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits, and countless additional milestones. Through NALC's AFL-CIO affiliation, letter carriers continue the struggle for a better life for all Americans. But dedication to the labor movement does not stop at the United States' borders. Through the AFL-CIO, the NALC also expresses its con-



cern and commitment to improving the condition of working brothers and sisters throughout the world.

In addition, our affiliation with the Post and Logistics sector of Union Network International (UNI) demonstrates our solidarity with postal employees all over the world. NALC actively participates in UNI's efforts to improve the lives of postal employees by engaging with international institutions that regulate labor standards (the ILO), interaction mail flows (the UN's UPU) and World Trade Organization (the WTO).

NALC and the Community

NALC also contributes to the communities in which we serve. NALC founded and sponsors the Letter Carriers "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive. Annually, on the second Saturday in May, letter carriers in more than 10,000 cities and towns across America deliver much more than mail when they walk and drive along their postal routes. They collect the goodness and compassion of our postal customers participating in what has become the



largest one-day food drive in the nation.

City carriers, with the help of rural letter carriers, other postal employees and volunteers have collected well over a billion pounds of non-perishable food items and distributed it to community food banks and pantries over the last 20 years. Assisting with the drive are the Campbell Soup Company, the Postal Service, AFL-CIO, NRLCA, AARP Foundation, United Way, Valpak, Valasis, Uncle Bob's Self Storage, Feeding America, along with Family Circus cartoonist Jeff Keane.

The NALC was the first national sponsor of the Muscular

Dystrophy Association (MDA) more than 60 years ago and letter carriers are among MDA's top fund-raisers, collecting more than \$20 million in the past 15 years alone to finance research and provide care and services for children and adults with muscular dystrophies.

NALC's local branches are honored annually during the MDA Telethon over the Labor Day weekend for their efforts. Many branches plan special events year round to promote awareness and raise funds for MDA. It's a great place to start getting involved in your union.

Your Place in NALC

In the preceding pages, you've read a lot about NALC's accomplishments and services. But NALC isn't some large, impersonal organization. It's you—the men and women who will shape the union's proud tradition in the years to come. Here is just a brief list of the solid accomplishments of NALC members and their union:

- A decent standard of living for all letter carriers.
- A secure retirement.
- A voice in the workplace and the means to seek justice on the job.

- A say in the affairs of the nation—through political action and affiliation with other workers in the AFL-CIO.

- An end to management's unbridled power over workers.

That's what organized letter carriers and their union have accomplished. That's NALC's record of achievement.

Your union needs you to stay strong. The stronger NALC is, the better off all letter carriers are!

How to Get Involved

There is more to the NALC than the shop steward you see on the workroom floor. There are so many ways to get involved with the union beyond workroom-floor issues.

If you ever wanted to try your hand as a lawyer, arbitration advocacy might be for you. If you enjoy giving back in your community, you can assist with the NALC Food Drive, branch blood drives, or other volunteering opportunities. If politics is your cup of tea, there are many opportunities to contact your legislators and tell them about the importance of letter carrier and workers' issues.

These are just a few of the many ways you and your family can get involved. All you need to do is ask.

The Contract, the Law and You

This section of the Guide is offered as a primer on how letter carriers are affected by the National Agreement and federal legislation. We have included information on your wages, benefits and contractual protections.

The information in this section and the one that follows should answer many of your initial questions. However, it is not comprehensive, and should not be considered a substitute for the National Agreement, the NALC-USPS *Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM)*, the *Methods Handbook M-41* (City Delivery Carriers' Duties and Responsibilities), or the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)*. If you need information not covered in this booklet, ask your NALC steward, your other branch officers or your national business agent.

Job Classifications

City Carrier Assistant: Every City Letter Carrier hired in the Postal Service will begin as a City Carrier Assistant (CCA). The CCA workforce is made up of non-career, bargaining unit employees. CCAs are hired for terms of 360 days for each appointment and have a break of five days between appointments. CCAs earn up to 13 days of annual leave (based on number of



workhours), can bid on temporary hold-downs, get a uniform allowance and have enhanced opportunities for career employment based on relative standing. For more information on relative standing see page 40.

When the USPS hires new city letter carrier career employees, CCA employees within the installation will be converted to **full-time regular** career status to fill such vacancies based on their relative standing. A full-time regular carrier works a full schedule consisting of five eight-hour days, adding up to a 40-hour week.

In addition, you may see these employees as well:

Part-Time Regular (PTR): A part-time regular letter carrier works less than full-time, but is guaranteed a minimum number of work hours each week. There are only 682 PTRs in the country.

As Part-time Flexible (PTF) employees are converted to full-time in accordance with existing contractual processes, the PTF classification shall be phased out. There shall be no new hiring of PTF employees.

Work Schedules

While City Carrier Assistants do not have guaranteed work schedules, they do have certain protections in regard to hours:

Article 8, Section 8.D of the National Agreement states, "Any

CCA employee who is scheduled to work and who reports to work in a post office or facility with 200 or more workyears of employment shall be guaranteed four (4) hours of work or pay. CCAs at other post offices and facilities will be guaranteed two (2) hours work or pay.

Overtime Distribution

Although City Carrier Assistants receive overtime pay for hours in excess of eight per day and 40 per work week (see page 35), CCAs must work overtime when postal management directs them to do so.

On the other hand, management's ability to require full-time carriers to work overtime is restricted by the rules set out in Article 8 of the National Agreement. These rules are designed to maximize overtime for full-time carriers who want to work overtime and minimize it for those who do not.

Wages

As a newly hired letter carrier, you will enter postal service as a City Carrier Assistant (CCA). A CCA's wages can be seen on the chart on page 31.

In addition, as a CCA you will receive 6 pay increases over the life of the 2011-2015 National Agreement:

- November 16, 2013, CCAs will receive a general wage

increase of 1.0% and a CCA wage increase of another 1.0%.

- November 15, 2014, CCAs will receive a general wage increase of 1.5% and a CCA wage increase of 1.0%.

- November 14, 2015, CCAs will receive a general wage increase of 1.0% and a CCA wage increase of 1.5%.

All future career letter carriers will come from the ranks of CCAs. Based on relative standing, a CCA will be converted to career full-time status as a vacancy opens. When you reach this point, your wage scale will be the one seen on page 31.

Step Increases

Career letter carriers receive regular raise—step increases—at established intervals. The time requirements in each step before entering the next are as follows:

Step A	46 weeks
Step B	46 weeks
Step C	46 weeks
Step D	46 weeks
Step E	46 weeks
Step F.....	46 weeks
Step G	46 weeks
Step H.....	46 weeks
Step I.....	46 weeks
Step J	46 weeks
Step K.....	46 weeks
Step L.....	46 weeks
Step M	46 weeks
Step N.....	46 weeks
Step O.....	46 weeks

Letter carriers reach the top step in about 12.4 years.

Leave

Annual Leave

Annual leave is paid vacation, credited to letter carriers as it is earned. City Carrier Assistants (CCAs) can earn up to 13 days of annual leave per year based on workhours (*see chart below*).

Rate of Accrual	Hours in Pay Status	Hours of Annual Leave Earned Per Pay Period
1 hour for each unit of 20 hours in pay status in each pay period	20	1
	40	2
	60	3
	80	4 (max.)

This leave can be used for personal convenience, when you are sick or as bereavement when a family member passes away.

When a CCA becomes a career employee, they are entitled to additional types of leave and they may carry annual leave over from one year to the next. To see the earning rate for career employees, see chart at bottom of page. For more detailed information, consult your union steward.

Emergency Annual Leave

If a genuine emergency requires taking annual leave without prior approval, employees must notify postal authorities promptly about the emergency and the expected length of absence. As soon as possible after returning to duty, employees must submit Form 3971 and furnish convincing evidence of the emergency to the supervisor. Although management is not required to approve

requests for emergency leave, any arbitrary or unreasonable denial may be subject to a grievance.

Sick Leave

Sick leave is a benefit for career employees. You may take sick leave when you are too sick to work or to cover time spent at medical and dental appointments. Like annual leave, it is paid at your regular straight-time rate, and is limited to a maximum of eight hours for any single day. Career letter carriers earn sick leave at a rate of four hours per 80 hours of work, which is the equivalent to 13 days a year. You can bank an unlimited amount of sick leave hours.

Carriers taking sick leave generally must notify the appropriate supervisor before the scheduled workday begins. For absences in excess of three days, employees must submit medical documentation or other acceptable evidence of incapaci-

Annual Leave Earning Rate for Career Employees

Total Cumulative Federal Employment	per 80 hours of work	per year of full-time work
0-3 years	4 hours	13 days
3-15 years	6 hours	20 days
over 15 years	8 hours	26 days



ty to work. If a carrier requests sick leave under unusual circumstances (e.g., calling in sick on a day for which annual leave was denied), management may require medical documentation regardless of the length of the absence.

Sick Leave for Dependent Care

NALC's 1994 National Agreement with the Postal Service established a new right for career letter carriers to use sick leave. During the course of the postal calendar year, every career letter carrier is entitled to use up to 80 hours of his or her earned sick leave to give care or otherwise attend to a family

member with an illness, injury or other condition which, if any employee had such condition, would justify the use of sick leave by that employee. Family members include children, parents and spouses.

Approval of sick leave for dependent care is subject to normal procedures for leave approval.

Other Types of Leave

- Paid Court Leave is available to all career letter carriers for jury duty and for acting as a non-official witness in court on behalf of a state or local government.
- Paid Administrative Leave may be granted to career letter carriers for several reasons, each

with different regulations and time limits and subject to management approval. Administrative leave is granted to career letter carriers for acts of God (natural disasters), civil disorders, civil defense programs, voting and registering to vote, blood donations, physical exams for entering the armed forces, relocation and first-aid exams and treatment for on-the-job injury or illness.

- Paid Military Leave is available to career letter carriers who are members of the National Guard or reservists of the armed forces but it does not cover all types of military duty. Consult your union representatives for details.

- Leave without Pay (LWOP) is an authorized absence from duty by a career or CCA employee in a non-pay status, and covers only those hours which an employee would normally work or be paid. LWOP may be granted for many reasons, including: inadequate leave to cover vacation periods, personal injury or illness (when annual and sick leave are exhausted), union business, assumption of full-time union office, or other personal reasons.

Family and Medical Leave Act

The FMLA is a 1993 federal law that requires the Postal

Service and many other employers to give employees time off work, without penalty, to respond to serious family and medical problems. Each postal employee who has worked for the Postal Service for at least one year with a minimum of 1,250 hours during the 12-month period preceding an absence is guaranteed up to 12 weeks of FMLA protected leave each year for the following reasons:

- a new child in the family—by birth, adoption or by placement in foster care;
- caring for a family member with a serious health condition; or
- the employee's own serious health condition that prevents him or her from performing the job.

This is not a separate category of leave, but rather is charged to annual leave, sick leave, and/or LWOP in accordance with current leave policies. Moreover, the Family and Medical Leave Act does not provide letter carriers with paid leave in addition to that to which carriers are entitled under NALC's National Agreement with the Postal Service and any related postal handbooks and manuals. Although CCAs only earn up to 13 days of annual leave per year, they

are covered under FMLA and are eligible to use both annual leave and LWOP.

Overtime Pay

Pay for what is considered “overtime work” is either one and one-half-times the basic hourly straight-time rate or twice this same rate. The following rules, contained in Article 8 of the National Agreement, determine which rate applies:

1. Full-time regular carriers are paid at the rate of one and one-half times the base hourly straight-time rate for work performed between eight and 10 hours in a scheduled service day and for work in excess of 40 hours in a service week. Full-time regulars are paid double-time (except December) for work performed more than 10 hours in a service day, over eight hours on a non-scheduled day, and for working overtime on more than four of the five scheduled days in a week.

2. City Carrier Assistants are paid one and one-half times the base hourly straight-time rate for work performed between eight and 10 hours in a service day and for work performed between 40 and 56 hours in a service week. City



Carrier Assistants are paid double-time (except December) for work performed in excess of 10 hours in a service day or 56 hours in a service week.

Night Differential

Article 8, Section 7 of the Agreement provides that career employees receive a night differential premium for hours worked between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. The exact hourly night differential rates vary depending upon the employee's step and grade and range from \$0.97 to \$1.63 per hour.

COLA

In addition to the fixed raises above, the National Agreement provides periodic cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) in salaries for career employees. COLA is tied to increases in the Consumer Price Index and is thus designed to help letter carriers keep up with inflation.

Grievance-Arbitration Procedure

The National Agreement

The National Agreement, as explained earlier, is the "law of the workplace" for letter carriers. It is also a "Bill of Rights," guaranteeing your wages, hours and



working conditions. (“Working conditions” cover a wide range of job-related topics, such as seniority, promotions, job security, and so on.) The National Agreement and the JCAM is the authoritative source on questions about your employment. While it is written as concisely as possible, questions of interpretation and application sometimes arise. Your steward can guide you to the correct answers to most of your questions.

Your Steward

The steward in your station is a letter carrier who has been appointed or elected by the union to represent all letter carriers in your work location. The steward is empowered by the National Agreement to investigate, present and process grievances on behalf of any letter carrier, group of letter carriers or the union. You should work through your steward when you have any problem, however small, at work. This provides management with a visible demonstration that it cannot bypass the union in dealing with letter carriers’ problems. Support your steward—because he or she supports you. A strong steward system is the bedrock of a strong union.

What is a Grievance?

Article 15, Section 1 of the National Agreement defines a grievance as “a dispute, difference, disagreement, or complaint between the parties, related to wages, hours and conditions of employment.” While this technical definition is very broad, most grievances involve complaints by employees and/or the union about unfair treatment on the job or violations of the rights that the NALC has bargained for you.

The Procedure and The Process

The grievance-arbitration procedure is a detailed method for resolving grievances in a timely fashion. The procedure is set out in Article 15 of the National Agreement and is organized into a series of steps allowing NALC to pursue grievances from the workroom floor to the point of final resolution.

If you think you have a grievance, talk it over with your steward. He or she is experienced in grievance handling and can give you informed advice. After discussion with your steward, it may be determined that there is a grievance. Here are the Steps:

- **Informal Step A:** At Informal Step A, the grievant or

the union representative must discuss the grievance with the grievant's immediate supervisor within 14 days of the date the grievant or the union first learned, or should have learned, of the situation which gave rise to the grievance. During the discussion, the grievant may be accompanied and represented by a union official. In addition, the union itself may initiate a grievance on behalf of an employee or group of employees.

- **Formal Step A:** If a grievance is not settled at Informal Step A, it may be appealed by the union to Formal Step A. This step of the grievance procedure takes on the character of its name. Both parties are required to state in detail the facts and contract provisions relied upon to support their positions and provide any and all documentation.

- **Step B:** If a grievance is not resolved at Formal A, then the union has a right to appeal the case to Step B. In order to resolve grievances, the parties have adopted a system where two individuals—one appointed by NALC and the other by the Postal Service discuss cases not resolved at Formal A.

- **Arbitration:** If the parties cannot reach an agreement at

Step B, they may impasse the grievance. A case that has been impassed is sent to the appropriate national business agent (NBA) office for review. The regional NBA then has the right to appeal the grievance to arbitration, where a neutral third party (arbitrator) will render a decision that is “final and binding.”

Probationary Period

All new career postal employees must serve a probationary period for 90 calendar days. Article 12 of the National Agreement states that during this 90-day period, management may separate a probationary employee for any reason and the employee cannot contest the action through the grievance-arbitration procedure.

However, under the 2011 National Agreement any City Carrier Assistants (CCA) who successfully completes at least two successive 360-day terms as a CCA, will not serve a probationary period when hired for career appointment, provided such career appointment directly follows a CCA appointment.

In addition, every letter carrier—probationary or not—has legal appeal rights if the carrier believes he or she was removed



by reason of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin or a handicap covered by the law. Under such circumstances, the carrier may file an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint, which must be filed within certain time limits and is above and beyond the rights of your contract. Despite management's right to terminate employees during the probationary period, the union does represent probationary employees regarding wages, hours, safety and work-

ing conditions. Your union will enforce your rights through the grievance procedure.

Discipline

The following explanation of discipline is not intended to be complete, but instead explains the basic principles of the disciplinary procedure. If you are the subject of discipline or you believe you may become the subject of discipline, contact your steward immediately. Remember, your steward is your on-the-job expert in enforcing your rights.

While management retains the right to discipline postal employees, disciplinary measures are subject to the contractual protections of the National Agreement. Article 16 of the Agreement provides that discipline should be corrective rather than punitive. Moreover, no employee may be disciplined or discharged except for just cause—such as insubordination, failure to perform work as requested, failure to observe safety rules and so forth. Because “just cause” is a general term without a precise definition, the reasonableness of discipline may be challenged through the grievance-arbitration procedure. This applies to a CCA once they have worked

90 days or had 120 calendar days of employment.

Seniority and Relative Standing

Seniority is defined as the length of continuous career service. The seniority system is designed to prevent unfair discrimination and favoritism by the employer. Career letter carriers are ranked by seniority for several purposes, such as determining reassignments, choosing vacation periods and bidding on jobs.

CCAs are credited with something similar to seniority called relative standing. Relative standing is determined by the original CCA hire date in an installation. For those CCAs who were Transitional Employees (TEs) before being hired as CCAs, all time served as a TE after September 29, 2007 is credited toward relative standing.

Relative standing is extremely important. When CCAs are converted to full-time career status within an installation, the CCA with the most relative standing in that installation is the first one to be converted to full-time career status.

CCAs may use their relative standing to opt for available

temporary, full-time assignments of five or more days. CCAs who successfully opt on these temporary assignments assume the hours and schedule of the full-time carrier whose assignment is being covered.

Once a CCA becomes a career full-time letter carrier, their relative standing ends and their seniority begins.

Workers' Compensation

CCAs are covered by the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA). The FECA provides wage-loss, medical, and other benefits to Postal Service employees, including CCAs, who sustain personal injury or employment-related illness while in the performance of duty. The FECA also pays benefits to dependents if the injury or illness causes the employee's death. The Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), a subdivision of the U.S. Department of Labor, administers the FECA through 12 district offices.

It can be daunting for injured workers to successfully navigate through the intricacies of the FECA. Fortunately, CCAs who are members of the NALC



can obtain advice and assistance on their claims from their NALC branch officers and their National Business Agents. CCAs and other letter carriers who are not members of the NALC cannot draw on these valuable resources.

Employees who are injured the job should report the matter promptly to their supervisor and complete and submit the appropriate OWCP claim form. They can obtain these forms from the Postal Service or the NALC website.

If an injury is caused by a work factor(s) or event(s) occurring during a single work day or shift, it is considered to be a traumatic injury and the employee should file a CA-1 form. If the

injury is caused by work factors that extend over a period of more than one work day, it is considered an occupational disease or illness and the employee should file a CA-2 form.

Employees have the right to initially choose their physician and may select any qualified local physician or hospital to provide necessary treatment. When a claim is accepted, OWCP pays all medical services and supplies needed for treatment of the injury and reimburses transportation used for obtaining care.

Employees who sustain a job-related traumatic injury (CA-1) generally have a right to continue to receive their regular rate of pay from the Postal



Service for periods of disability, not to exceed 45 calendar days. This is called Continuation of Pay (COP). The employee, however, must use his or her own sick leave, annual leave, or leave without pay for the first three days of disability. If the disability exceeds 14 days this leave can later be converted to COP. The Postal Service does not pay COP if the disability results from an occupational disease (CA-2). In cases of disability due to occupational disease and in cases of traumatic injury (CA-1) that extend beyond the 45-day COP period, employees have a right to wage-loss compensation. Such compensation is paid at 2/3 of the employee's pay rate if the employee has no dependents and at 3/4 of the employee's

pay rate if he or she has one or more dependents.

The FECA also provides for the payment of schedule (monetary) awards when the accepted traumatic injury or occupational disease has caused permanent impairment to certain members, functions or organs of the body.

A schedule award is paid when the medical evidence shows that the injured employee has reached maximum medical improvement. Like compensation, it is paid at 2/3 or 3/4 of the employee's rate of pay. Schedule awards may be paid while an employee is working, on paid leave or while receiving an OPM annuity. However, it may not be paid while an employee is receiving wage-loss compensation benefits for the same injury.

Safety and Health

Both federal law and the National Agreement mandate that the Postal Service provide safe working conditions for letter carriers and other postal employees. They are required to investigate accidents and maintain records on occupational injuries and illnesses.

The Postal Service is subject to the Occupational Safety and Health Act. This law empowers the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) division to enforce the Act's standards and regulations.

In addition to its requirements under federal law, Article 14 of the National Agreement, obligates the Postal Service "to provide safe working conditions" in postal facilities and "develop a safe work force" and that the NALC will cooperate with and assist management to live up to this responsibility.

The contract provides that employees have the obligation to observe safety rules and procedures and that management must correct unsafe conditions and equipment and ensure that the workplace is safe and sanitary. In fulfilling

its responsibilities, management must make available at the workplace PS Form 1767 (Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice) that carriers and other employees can use to report unsafe and unhealthy conditions. In addition, employees must report all accidents and injuries immediately. You are encouraged to contribute to a safer work environment by reporting hazards that you encounter.

Article 14 also sets forth several paths for employees to pursue should they believe they are being required to work under unsafe conditions. These avenues include notification to your supervisor, notification to your supervisor through your shop steward, filing a form 1767 and ultimately, the filing of a Formal Step A grievance within 14 days of notifying management if no corrective action has been taken during the employees' tour.

Finally, the National Agreement attempts to foster a cooperative approach to safety and health by establishing joint safety and health committees at the national, area and local levels to oversee, evaluate and improve management's safety and health programs.

Tips on Your Job

This will provide some useful on-the-job advice for new letter carriers. Included are some important topics you should be familiar with as you perform your day-to-day duties.

Sanctity of the Mail

The Postal Service requires its employees to adhere to very high standards of integrity and fidelity. These standards are set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct, which you can obtain from your supervisor. Foremost among these standards is the requirement that employees preserve the sanctity of the mail. Mail is private property entrusted to the letter carrier for safe passage and delivery to its intended recipient. Any compromise of the mails or other violations of standards may lead to severe discipline. In addition, there are federal statutes pertaining to willful and knowing delay, obstruction, or theft of any mail.

New letter carriers often work under great time pressures because of unfamiliarity with some work assignments. As a result, some are tempted to seek shortcuts that are not proper. Do not fall into this trap—you must take extreme



care not to be involved in any action or practice that might appear to look like mistreatment of the mail. Carelessness can get you into serious trouble.

If you need extra time to complete a work assignment, inform your supervisor by submitting Form 3996, Carriers Auxiliary Control and ask for appropriate instructions.

Postal Inspectors and Office of the Inspector General Special Agents

Postal Inspectors and Office of the Inspector General (OIG) special agents are the law enforcement and investigative arms of the Postal Service.

While you are required to cooperate fully with postal inspectors and OIG special agents at all times, you also have specific rights guaranteed by the National Agreement and laws upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. First, you may not be required to submit to a polygraph (lie detector) test. This right is found in Article 17, Section 3 of the National Agreement. Second, you have the right to demand representation during questioning by a

postal inspector or OIG special agent under the following circumstances:

1. Under the National Labor Relations Act, an employee has the right to demand the presence of a union representative during an investigatory interview which he or she reasonably believes may lead to discipline. If management denies the request for representation, the employee has the right to refuse to answer questions.

2. If you are interrogated regarding a matter that may involve criminal penalties, immediately request representation by an attorney. Say nothing and sign nothing. Respectfully decline to continue the encounter until you have representation.

Uniforms

When a newly hired City Carrier Assistant (CCA) has completed 90 work days, or has been employed for 120 calendar days, whichever comes first, the CCA will be provided with an annual uniform allowance equal to the amount provided to career employees.

Uniforms are expensive, so spend your allowance wisely. It's a good idea to ask what the



other carriers in your work location need yearly.

Being out of uniform can be grounds for discipline, so it is important that you wear only authorized uniform items.

Following Instructions of Your Manager

Letter carriers are required to follow instructions from their supervisors—except an order that would cause imminent danger to life or limb or violates the law. Under all other circumstances, the instruction should be obeyed and a grievance should be filed within 14 days if you believe it violates your rights.

Working Off the Clock

The National Agreement provides that carriers may not start early to get a head-start on their routes. Article 41, Section 3K states, “Supervisors shall not require, nor permit, employees to work ‘off the clock.’” Furthermore, this is a violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act. All stewards and most supervisors will properly enforce this provision.

Appendix: For Further information

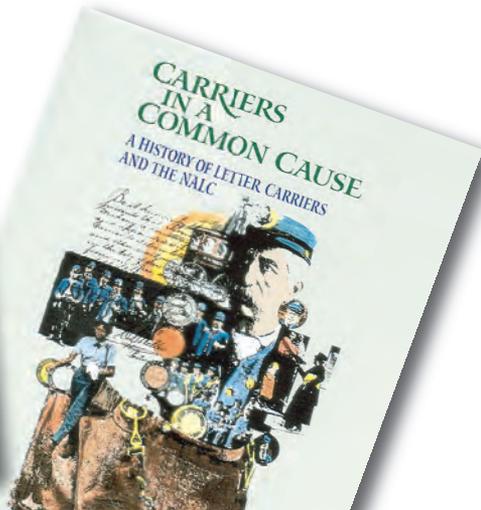
MATERIALS AVAILABLE FROM NALC

- 1. CARRIERS IN A COMMON CAUSE; A HISTORY OF LETTER CARRIERS AND THE NALC** Traces the historic struggles and victories of letter carriers from the beginning of this country's postal system in 1775, through the organization of the NALC in 1889, to the present day struggles.
- 2. CONSTITUTION** Governs NALC's structure and operations. Covers a wide variety of subjects such as elected officers' duties and salaries, elections, branch, state associations, etc.
- 3. LETTER CARRIER'S GUIDE** Describes NALC's history and operations and explains letter carriers' benefits, wages and rights. Useful for experienced carriers and for orientation of new carriers.

4. NALC CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTORY Lists leadership, members and committees of the sitting Congress. Organized by state, each entry includes party affiliation, complete Washington addresses, telephone numbers, committee membership, major staff, and term.

5. NATIONAL AGREEMENT Formal agreement between USPS and NALC with all negotiated items, including wages, hours and working conditions. Also available in PDF format on the NALC website (www.nalc.org).

6. JOINT CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION MANUAL (JCAM), the result of national-level discussions between the NALC and postal management, contains authoritative, agreed-upon interpretations of the National Agreement, clarifying contract language that has frequently been misunderstood. Also available in PDF format on the NALC website (www.nalc.org).



7. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON FERS: THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

This booklet is designed to answer 251 frequently asked questions on FERS for letter carriers who are about to or have already retired. It addresses such issues as how your annuity is calculated, how your contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan are invested, and how FERS benefits supplement Social Security. Also available in PDF format on the NALC website (www.nalc.org).

8. U.S. LETTER CARRIERS' MBA

Explanatory brochures and applications for U.S. Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association programs, including life insurance, retirement annuities, and hospital confinement insurance. See "How to Order" below. Also available in PDF format on the NALC website (www.nalc.org).

9. NALC RETIREMENT CD

This CD provides vital, in-depth information for letter carriers planning to retire in the near future and for more junior employees who are planning ahead. It is intended to be used with

NALC's shorter booklets on retirement subjects including "Questions and Answers: The Federal Employees' Retirement System." This booklet also provides references to related materials from other sources including items produced by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

10. NALC BRANCH OFFICERS' GUIDE TO FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

This guide offers important information and advice for those NALC branch officers and other members who handle the business components of local union leadership. Topics include managing and budgeting the branch's finances, tracking membership and dues, keeping the branch books, managing bank accounts, investments and other branch property, filing tax returns and other government reports and related activities. Applicable laws and regulations are cited and other resources noted.

11. NALC'S AWESOME ACTIVITY BOOK

While having fun coloring and working through various puzzles and mazes, children of all ages learn about how letter carriers process and move the mail.

HOW TO ORDER

To ensure that your request is processed quickly, state the proper title of each publication ordered.

For U.S. Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association publications, write to U.S. Letter Carriers MBA, 100 Indiana Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Phone: 202-638-4318 or call toll-free 800-424-5184, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

For all other publications listed, write NALC, Supply Department, 100 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Phone: 202-393-4695. Make checks payable to the Secretary-Treasurer or pay by credit card. Payment must be received before shipment. All prices for publications are subject to change.



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