

Razorback Scheme

American Postal Workers Union • Fayetteville Arkansas Local 667

March 2009

— Local Leaders Attend — TRI-STATE APWU CONVENTION, Hot Springs



LEFT to RIGHT: Aaron Newport, Diana Newport, Drew Heyd, Keith Carlton, Pam Beck, Karma Beck and Robert Beck

Postal Workers ill from Paper Dust

WLS ABC-TV7, Chicago

CHICAGO (WLS) -- Nationwide, hundreds of postal employees say they're ill with what they call severe, mysterious, respiratory problems.

Current and former postal workers blame paper dust inside the post offices. The last government studies on postal dust were ten years ago. The USPS says the science

can't verify their theory. That's not acceptable for people who say they're "sorting through a sickness."

"I do believe that my life is going to be shortened," says former postal employee Delphine Howard. She and other former US postal workers in the Chicago area say they're all fighting chronic respiratory illness. Their medi-

cal records reflect their claims. They all say they've never smoked.

"I began to have breathing problems, asthma symptoms, bronchitis," said former employee Betty Booker.

Sandra Sutton echoed that, saying, "I turn asthmatic and it shuts my lungs down."

More than 450 employees and former employees on a petition to occupational health officials and postal unions blame health concerns on paper dust fibers inside post offices. Several are fighting for health benefits.

Some former employees listed on the petition, like 37-year-old Judy Jimerson, passed away. Besides Illinois, the people on the petition are also from Kansas City and St. Louis.

There's also Earnest Perry, who complained, "You'd see dust flying." He's a lung transplant patient, in Raleigh, North Carolina. "It's scary not being able to breathe," he said.

They blame their illnesses on dust from letter sorting machines. They showed ABC7 dusty filters that workers say used to be in the sorting machines

"I started having severe bronchitis attacks, severe asthma attacks, severe chest pains. I would just break out," said Howard. She was manager at two area post offices since 1987. She left in 2005 after her doctor wrote a letter saying that Howard has a medical condition that is affected by unclean air, dust particles and residue in volumes in her present employment areas."

Harvard doctor Christine Oliver has worked in environmental and occupational medicine for almost 30 years. She says postal paper fibers could be the source of the symptoms. She points out, "Significant difficulties can arise as a result of work in a building with airborne contaminants or other problems."

There were two studies in 1998 from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, one in Tampa and one in an Omaha post office. Both reported no direct link to health concerns and postal dust, but Dr. Oliver says the studies uncovered some serious concerns, "Such things as dust volatile organic compounds...in the work environment, in one postal department, dust mites were identified in the air."

Both NIOSH and the US Postal Service declined on-camera interviews but said there is no need for more studies. The USPS also says it has only received two direct complaints of respiratory problems in the

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The **RAZORBACK SCHEME** is the official voice of Fayetteville APWU Local. However, opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the APWU, union officials, or the Editor. Articles, artwork, cartoons, and other material are solicited from those readers who wish to share their views with others. Although freedom of the press is recognized, contributors are exhorted not to write derogatorily about any fellow union member or to submit any false allegation concerning management or any other individual inside or out of this union. All letters must be signed and in the hands of the editor ten days prior to next scheduled business meeting. Names will be withheld upon request. Send contributions to P.O. Box 654, Fayetteville, AR 72702, or submit to union officials. Submissions may be returned upon request.

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NEXT UNION MEETING:

Sunday, March 15, 2009

Jim's Razorback Pizza • 1:00 p.m.

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LEFT to RIGHT: Mike Morris (Nat'l Assistant Clerk Craft Director) and Bob Kessler (Nat'l Business Agent) at TRI-STATE, Feb 20

last several years.

In a letter dated January of 2007, NIOSH denied postal workers a request for further studies, saying they "were not likely to yield additional useful information."

Agency officials said they made their decision after talking with a union health official and postal office officials. They also reviewed air tests from some facilities which said "outside contractors had revealed that levels of airborne dust were far below Occupational Safety and Health Administration permissible exposure limits."

That is not a reason to not pay attention, says Oliver. "Just because the dust levels are low does not mean there is not a problem."

Postal workers continue to fight for more studies.

As for people on the petition who have since passed away, some of their family members still blame the post office work environment and postal dust. Dr. Oliver says that would be a rare instance, but studies do show that postal dust does contain volatile organic compounds from ink jet printers, which can be harmful.

NIOSH says, in the last several years, more precautions have been

taken at post offices across the country, like encouraging workers to wear masks.

Two NIOSH health hazard evaluation reports page address paper dust in postal facilities:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nhe/reports/pdfs/1998-0017-2699.pdf> (Omaha)

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nhe/reports/pdfs/1998-0307-2761.pdf> (Tampa)

It appears the evaluations reached similar conclusions. The investigators were unable, based on environmental measurements and health information from employees, to determine whether employees' symptoms were related to paper dust. As precautionary measures, the investigators recommended measures to control accumulations of paper dust.

If you are a former employee or employee concerned about postal dust you can contact:

-NIOSH

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/>

-Grassroots organizer and former USPS employee Sandra Sutton
(sandrasutton2002@aol.com)

http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news/special_segments&id=6498616

SOLUTIONS

by Loren Adams, Editor and
Arkansas District 6 Vice-President

The preceding article about dust cites real experiences by postal workers nationwide. The solution is what's missing.

If a homeowner neglected to clean his/her own house properly over a period of months (or years), do you suppose it would create a health hazard? Dust mites, roach eggs and other types of rodent residue would take over sending residents to the hospital.

So, there's a simple solution to dust accumulation: CLEAN THE DIRTY HOUSE. As past Local President for 10 years, I made it a point to suggest to management several times that the Plant needs a thorough going-through, equipment needs cleaning, and much is in need of repair. Did they listen? We have the staff and equipment; so why the delay? There's no excuse for nastiness, no reason postal workers should suffer debilitating illnesses because of preventable diseases attributable to work conditions, none!

Get Well



Cards, messages, prayers & flowers appreciated.

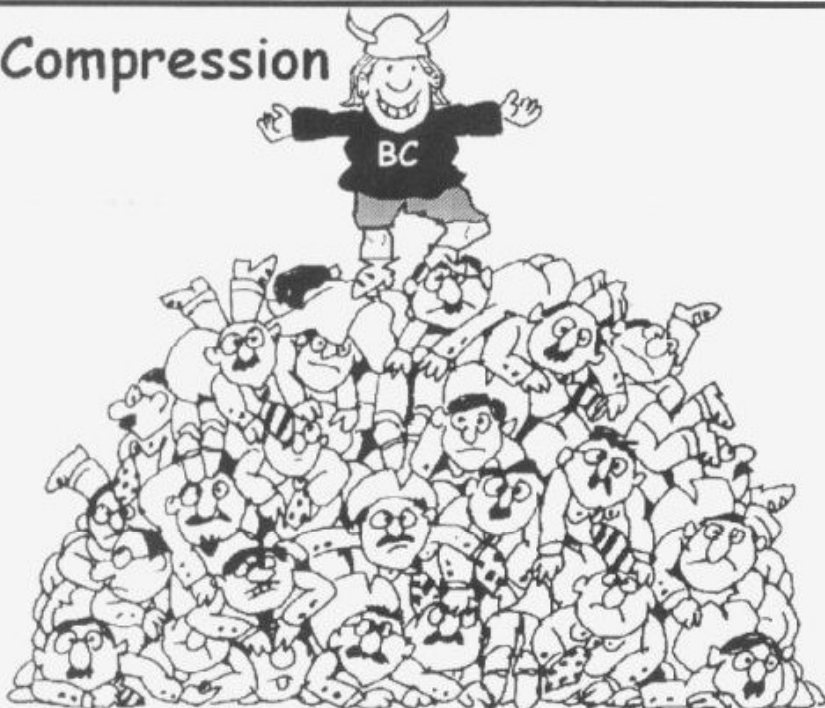
Jim Warford underwent heart and back surgery and will be laid up for several weeks.

JIM WARFORD
1997 Silverado Place
Springdale, AR 72762

Randall Woodlee is recovering from surgery and cancer treatment.

RANDALL WOODLEE
1999 Finger Road
Fayetteville, AR 72701

Compression



Compress them all into one schedule and one spot, and they'll get more done in less time! BRILLIANT!

How many times have I had to clean monitors on processing equipment because I couldn't read necessary information to run it? There's a \$2 million machine sitting out there -- fairly new -- that looks older than its short life. Why? Because it's not cleaned regularly and properly.

SLEEP DEPRIVATION & ABSENCES

Here's another pet peeve. At every Labor-Management Meeting for six (6) years I suggested management contact WRMC Sleep Clinic to hold free stand-ups for employees how best to cope with night-shift hours, sleep deprivation, circadian rhythm, etc.

Did they listen? No. Instead, they fell back on the same-old same-old SOP whereby unscheduled absences are met with discipline. (Do you realize sleep deprivation causes more accidents than drunk drivers?) Sleep remedies would not be a cure-all, but they certainly would help attendance. The positive is always ignored while the negative embraced. We need solutions, not more of the same.

Suggested also for 6 years were physical therapy clinics: lifting, back & leg support, preventing repetitive motion sickness, etc. Did they listen? (And coworkers wonder why stewards & officers experience burn-out.)

The recent schedule changes are a repeat from twice before when the concept of "compression" failed both times. The economic downturn was just an excuse. We want what's best for the Service, but constantly moving workers around for reasons that don't improve



productivity [but, in fact, harms it] makes the intent discredited and workers demoralized.

At the Tri-State APWU Convention in Hot Springs last month, the theme was "Postal challenges -- APWU solutions." It was the desire of most in attendance to hear national leaders suggest SOLUTIONS along with all the breaking bad news (economy, deficits, downsizing, office closings). Unfortunately, I heard nothing of the sort. Did I miss something?

Right now we are in deep recession; it doesn't look pretty. But there's light at the end of the tunnel. America will recover, always has. Perhaps we should start thinking about tomorrow when the economy is again back on track. How are we going to cope with success?

REMEMBER your coworkers and their families. Gini Hickman's husband, Henry, suffered a heart attack during the ice storm and underwent surgery. Jim Warford also experienced a heart attack and surgery two weeks later, and Randall Woodlee had surgery to remove his esophagus and went through cancer treatment. Bill Cassidy's wife, Wanda, has gone through cancer treatment for several months. Charlie Payne is recovering after brain surgery. Cards, letters, visits and flowers are in order.

Mark This DATE!

Union Meeting

Sunday, March 15, 2009
1:00 pm
Jim's Razorback Pizza, Westgate Bypass (I-540) & U.S. 62

- New Job Postings & Schedules
- Stewards' Reports
- Soft Drinks & Cheese Bread on the House!



"When putting in for a transfer to a WARMER CLIMATE, I had no idea...."