

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Floor Edition

Update by: Jackie Engelhart

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Year End Report

2009 has been a difficult year for postal employees nation-wide with excessing and withholding now affecting all major crafts. For years only Clerks were affected but now Mail Handlers from Chicago are being excessed to Iowa and to Pittsburgh. Clerks remain excessed out of Palatine but 15 were finally returned from the Mail Handler craft at Palatine on 12-19-09 per the Arbitration Award. The AMP of Palatine into Carol Stream is still in the pipe with no final decision announced, but once a decision is made they have 90 days to implement it. The AMP would affect Clerks and Mail Handlers but we don't know if there would be any impact on Maintenance and MVS. The Maintenance and MVS crafts are in withholding due to excessing from Detroit and the Forest Park BMC, which means residual vacancies in these crafts have not been filled yet.

USPS 2009

Postal workers usually see the postal world from a view point of what is happening to them, and do not realize how many forces beyond the work floor are impacting them. In the last few months of 2009 it was reported that mail volume declined by 28 billion pieces and revenue was down by 7 billion. The Post Office finished the year with a 3.8 billion dollar loss that could have been 8 billion had Congress not voted to relieve the agency of paying 4 billion to pre-fund retiree health benefits. Management claims to have cut the equivalent of 65,000 jobs in 2009 and they will continue to cut work-hours in 2010. While management pushes for 5-day delivery, Potter will continue to downsize by closing post offices and consolidating operations. Union officials are faced with multiple forced migrations of workers as employees are forced to relocate to available jobs. Postal workers face an uncertain future.

USPS Plans 2010

In their report to Congress management stated *"The Postal Service will continue actions to increase efficiency, reduce costs and generate new revenue, including reducing additional work hours and headcount, maximizing operational efficiencies. Should 5 day delivery become law in fiscal 2010, no savings would likely be realized from the change until 2011...Postal costs are heavily concentrated in wages, employee and retire benefits and transportation. They are significantly impacted by wage inflation, health benefit premium increases, retirement and workers compensation costs and COLAs..."*

Postal workers will face more involuntary reassignments, at times from one craft to yet another craft. Area Mail Processing will likely increase as management looks to consolidate operations throughout the system. The savings from an AMP is the elimination of mail processing jobs in the losing facility with the gaining facility not adding any new jobs.

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Special points of interest:

Year End Report
USPS 2009
USPS Plans 2010
Contract 2010
GAO Report on NRP
Locally...
Labor Board Charges Filed for
Failure to Release 600 CCD

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Contract 2010

USPS told Congress they plan to *"negotiate fair contracts that reflect the state of the economy and current and future mail revenues to maintain financial stability."*

We can anticipate what this means at the negotiating table in August. Management will look to freeze wages, eliminate COLAs, and make employees pay more for their health and life insurance. We can also expect efforts by management to lessen seniority rights and no-layoff protection.

GAO Report on NRP

The Government Accountability Office issued a report critical of the USPS implementation of the National Reassessment Process. The GAO is saying the USPS is not moving fast enough, and it is expected that management will now attempt to move quicker to meet their goal of moving injured employees off the rolls of USPS. Management reported an increase in workers compensation costs of \$718 million in 2009 which they blame on interest rates. The fact is thousands of productive workers who were injured on duty have been forced back onto the rolls of OWCP under the NRP. The long-term plan of the PMG is to place most, if not all injured postal workers off the rolls of the Postal Service to cut the 6 billion in workers compensation costs. Management is determined to get injured workers off postal rolls. Since starting in 2006 not one district has completed all of NRP. USPS Vice President Vegliante responded that management will soon enter into another phase that will lead to a massive exodus of injured employees from the postal service to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

Locally...

At **Carol Stream** tour 3 automation clerks have been moved from 1400 and 1500 to 1500 and 1600. Most of tour 2 at both plants has been eliminated with the senior employees forced to nights. The union is forced to file a grievance for Priority bids at Carol Stream because management has failed to post them after working Priority mail for over six months. We appealed a grievance to Step 3 for the failure to post manual bids at Carol Stream. They have consistently stated they will not post bids in manual letters and flats because of their duty to accommodate injured Clerks, but many of the Injured-on-Duty (IOD) Clerks working in these units have not received NRP job offers in them. Under the NRP the work they perform in these units is not considered necessary. For years the IOD Clerks have worked in flats and letters performing unnecessary work? The union filed this grievance in anticipation of the NRP withdrawal of IOD job offers. Jobs in letters and flats are posted at **Palatine** and this has allowed Clerks to use their seniority to bid into jobs they can perform within their restrictions and obtain the protection of a duty assignment. If you are working your duty assignment with restrictions you are safe from the NRP. At **Chicago Metro Surface Hub** management rushed through major staffing in changes just before Christmas that they had been working on since April. When management decides to run a staffing program at a plant the goal is either to reduce tour 2 or to eliminate weekends. Busse does not have much of a tour 2, so this staffing plan was about eliminating weekend bids.

Labor Board Charge Filed for Failure to Release 600 CCD

Management is refusing to release 600 CCD/Steward Al Czerwinski because he has a bid in Bulk Mail. We were informed yesterday by A/Bulk Mail Manager Fran Vela and Marketing Manager Langton that they do not know when he will be released and they stated they had consulted with HR Manager Phyllis Lingenfelter on this. The union and CCD Czerwinski had attempted to be cooperative as he performed his 40 hours of on-the-job training and worked in his bid with little union release time. When we attempted to discuss his release we were told he's needed and we will have to find someone else. So much for cooperation. Management has also detailed tour 2 Steward Bitoy to a non-existent position at Allstate for several weeks leaving no regular Clerk Stewards on tour 2. I was told that Plant Manager Johnson directed either Al Czerwinski or Al Bitoy to go to Allstate. The union has now filed a grievance for a bid to be posted for Allstate. Maintenance Craft Director Joe Golden has had his problems with insufficient union time for months but has been promised he will get the time he needs as of 1-2-10. Joe continues to work many hours off the clock of the postal service to perform his duties as the craft director. The bright spot this year is that many of our co-workers were able to retire with a \$15,000 bonus which prevented any more excessing. They all got watches, but we could not afford to give out the Xmas gift certificate due to the loss of so many members. **Merry Christmas and a Happier New Year in 2010 from all NWIAL Stewards & Officers!**

