

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Vacation Selections and Surveys by: Jackie Engelhart, President
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Floor Edition

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Vacation Submissions

It's that time of year again. Time for employees to submit their applications for their vacations.

If you are in an associate office, please see your area union steward for information regarding vacation selections. If necessary, you can always contact the Associate Office Director, Kathy Stokes by calling the Union Building at (630) 833-0088.

Bargaining unit employees at Carol Stream, Palatine and the Chicago Metro Surface Hub have until January 31st at midnite to submit their requests.

If you have less than 3 years of combined postal and military service (you earn 13 days of annual leave each year), you can apply for two options:

OPTION A: A single option of up to 10 working days (2 consecutive workweeks)

OPTION B: 2 selections of 5 days each (1 work-week each).

If you have 3 or more years of service (you earn 20 or 26 days of annual leave) you have 3 options:

OPTION A: 2 selections-- one of 5 working days and one of 10 working days.

OPTION B: 2 selections of 5 working days each (1 work week).

OPTION C: One selection of up to 15 working days (3 consecutive weeks).

The choice vacation period at Carol Stream and Palatine is from March 1 thru November 30 and from December 25 thru January 2.

The choice vacation period at CMSH is from February 18 thru November 30.

Submissions for vacations are done on PS Form 3971 and PS Form 1547, in triplicate. Once

you submit your request(s) mgt must immediately timestamp and return the 3rd copy to you. Mgt must post the vacation results, and return the signed, approved copies of the PS forms 3971 to each employee by Feb 15 at the CMSH and by Feb 21 at Palatine and Carol Stream.

Incidental Annual Leave

You can put in for annual leave (for days during the vacation period), once the vacation schedule is posted. Please remember though that vacation selections take priority over incidental leave requests. For incidental leave requests outside the choice vacation period, you can now submit those requests 45 days in advance as opposed to only 30 days in advance. This was a recent change made during local negotiations.

If you have any questions regarding leave submissions, you can always see your area union steward.

Special points of interest:

Vacation Selections

Incidental Annual Leave

Surveys-VOE-Union Position

Gift Certificates

50-50 Ends

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Surveys on top of Surveys!

On Monday, January 9, 2006 I received a call from Palatine tour 2 Chief Steward Al Czerwinski, informing me that surveys were being conducted at Palatine P&DC. Two "Climate Place Analysts" came to the union office to inform us that they would be conducting surveys this week at Palatine, next week at Carol Stream, and then at Rockford. The survey is titled "Climate Assessment Questions" and it contains 14 questions related to the workplace environment. I asked of the EAS personnel conducting the surveys who they were working for and was directed to the District Human Resources Manager, Phyllis Lingenfelter. I spoke with Phyllis and she informed me that the "VOE scores were down". VOE stands for Voice of the Employee. She said senior management is concerned about this and wants to find out what going on. I told her that we (the union) have been in regular communication with management at all levels concerning the problems on the work room floor and that nothing is being done. I told her we have had problems with tour 1 at Palatine for years, with favoritism in machine assignments, & supervisor treatment of employees. Employees constantly pushed harder, inability to get leave, and drafting on holidays are problems on all three tours. With employees constantly being pushed harder, a day of leave or a holiday off are important to them. Senior employees were drafted for New Year's day and then in some cases issued Letters of Warning for not coming in. Productivity and efficiency are eliminating any consideration for the employees.

Problems in the AO's

In the Associate Offices, management at the Northern Illinois District has decided to excess 67 clerks. Many AO's are already understaffed with overtime necessary to staff later window hours. How do you extend hours and cut staffing? If you walk into a Post Office these days, you will invariably see long lines and one window clerk, or two if you're lucky. In some AO's clerks are being forced to bid on the window. Window clerks are subject to "Mystery Shops" where a postal manager poses as a customer and if the clerk fails to ask all scripted questions, they are subject to discipline. Postmasters are evaluated, in part on their scores for Mystery Shop. Most window clerks take pride in their job and understand customer service is important. They understand that understaffing leads to long lines and unhappy customers, even if management does not. The constant stress created by understaffing and scripted questions is taking a toll on window clerks. VOE is not helping them!

Only the Scores Matter
VOE response levels are factors in the performance evaluation of plant managers & their yearly bonus. No one seems interested in the actual substance of the surveys, only on the number of surveys returned. While we continue to pursue every avenue of communication management continues to ignore the problems of the employees. We file grievances, we discuss them at Labor-Management meetings, we talk to the Plant Managers, Labor Relations, etc. Now that the VOE scores are down management is "concerned". We have been telling management what the problems are but they are not being addressed.

Union's Position

The concept of listening to your employees has become a tool to reward plant managers. We remember when management used these surveys in contract negotiations to claim the employees indicated they were adequately paid and therefore did not need a raise. The APWU is opposed to all forms of USPS Surveys. The purpose of labor-management meetings is that employees speak in a united voice, so their message cannot be manipulated contrary to the interests of the membership and APWU. Surveys conducted by an employer are designed to circumvent bargaining with the unions and are used in management's effort to reduce wages, hours, and benefits. This has been our experience with the Postal Service. Because the Postal Service is aware that participation in employee opinion surveys is voluntary, they can be very creative. There is only one way to ensure that you do not contribute to surveys that may adversely affect your livelihood and that is simply refuse to participate.

Just Say "No".

The VOE Survey was started by former Postmaster Marvin Runyon who was no friend to craft or EAS. What improvements have you seen over the years as a result of these surveys? If anything, things are getting worse. These surveys are improving management's bonuses, not the employees working conditions.

Get Your Gift Certificate Now

Any NWIAL member who has yet to get their ten dollar Jewel Xmas gift certificate please go to your union office and get one. We would like to make sure every member gets one.

50-50 ends on 1-31-06

The 50-50 Organizing Drive ends on 1-31-06. Anyone considering joining should sign up before it ends.

JK