

The Local Line

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The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Local Update by Jackie Engelhart

Palatine Crackdown on Light Duty Employees.

On 3-26-08 we were informed that management was telling some light duty employees not to return to work until they were able to perform the core of duties of their bid. On 3-26-08 Chief Steward Olivia Norman and I met with A/Senior MDO Bracket about this. He said he was going by the 2% and was following the LMOU in light of the mail volume decline. He said he was put in charge of Light Duty by the District and he was reviewing light duty requests. He said we currently have approximately 823 Clerks at Palatine and 2% equals 19 Clerks. I am told we have 39 Clerks on light duty. On 3-27-08 several Clerks received letters stating "I cannot approve your light duty request at this time." For over 30 years (15 years at Palatine), I am not aware of any light duty requests denied unless they were for a change of tour. The language in item 15 of the LMOU has not changed.

LMOU Item 15

A. "The number of Light Duty Assignments approved shall be 2% of the assignments in each craft represented by the APWU. If additional assignments are needed per Article 13 requirements, Union and Management shall meet and designate those assignments.

B. "Employees whose illness/injury is job-related, or who are classified as "regular duty with restrictions" (restrictions in which they are still assigned to their bid assignment), or whose restrictions are maternity related, shall not be counted in the percentages indicated in "A" above."

LMOU Item 17

"Light duty assignments will not be specifically designated, but shall be determined by the employer, taking into consideration the individual's limitations and the needs of the service." The parties agree that some of the following job assignments shall be set aside for injured clerks:

1. Manual Letters
2. Manual Flats

3. Nixie
4. Hot Cases
5. Keying in CFS
6. PARS table
7. Manual Flats table

The first option for injured employee assignments shall be in their bid assignment, if possible, with reasonable accommodation, referred to as "regular duty with restrictions."

Greatest Consideration ?

In the letters being given out under Mr. Bracket's signature, he states "I have reviewed your request for light duty and have given it the greatest consideration." Is Senior Management at Palatine really giving "the greatest consideration" or enforcing the 2% language regardless of the fact that work may be available? It seems they have determined that the number to accommodate is 19 Clerks and that they can only find work for 19. With the National Reassessment Process getting nearer to the interview phase we know they will start sending the light duty home, but no one was given any notice.

Floor Edition

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Palatine Crackdown on Light Duty Employees

Greatest Consideration?

No Discussion with the Union

District Manager Bob Hart to Meet with Palatine T-1 Clerks

Incidental Leave & "SLIC"

Grievances for Denied Leave

FMLA Grievances

Article 1.6

Work Safely!

New Plant Manager at CMSH

No Discussion with the Union

No discussion was held with the APWU prior to management changing the long-term historical practice of approving all light duty requests, regardless of the 2% language in the LMOU. Without any discussion, Senior Management at Palatine has decided to start disapproving light duty requests and instructing the employees not to report until they are able to perform the core of duties of a Mail Processing Clerk. We asked him for a copy of the core of duties for each duty assignment but that has not been provided to us. We have sent a letter to District Manager Robert Hart, and discussed this with Labor Relations at both the District and Area level. We have asked for copies of all denied light duty as well as the method used to determine who is and is not approved. While the overall mail volume is down 3% over last year, this decline does not justify the sudden denial of light duty, nor the failure to discuss this with the Union in advance and to hold Service Talks with the affected employees.

District Manager Bob Hart to meet with Palatine T-1 Clerks

Vice President Dave Baskin was approached by some upper automation Clerks regarding the problems at Palatine. They requested a meeting with Mr. Hart. On 3-20-08 Dave spoke to Mr. Hart about the possibility of setting up a meeting with the employees. Mr. Hart stated that he would look into setting up a meeting in 2 weeks or so. We will let you know more when the meeting date and time is finalized. They are tired of the heavy-handed methods favored by Senior management to increase production & get the mail out.

Incidental Leave & "SLIC"

On 3-21-08 Clerks started getting the 3971's back they had submitted on 2-21-08. 95% of them were disapproved "needs of the service" no matter when they were put in for. I spoke to three Clerks in the union room that night and they did not understand why they could not get any of their leave approved. One Clerk told me he put in for a few days of incidental leave to take his kids on a trip, and he honestly did not "get it". I explained that Ron Woodall and Danny Bracket tell us they cannot approve incidental leave because too many people call in and "don't come to work". The employee's comment was "You're kidding" but they are not kidding. They get angry when we even bring up incidental leave and the 14%. According to them there is no 14% and that is only for vacations, but the LMOU says the number of employees allowed off during the choice vacation period shall be 14% by section and tour. Dave has appealed this issue to Impasse Arbitration from the 2007 LMOU negotiations and this is our best chance to get this changed. In the meantime there is no common sense as management closes the books most of the time and forces clerks to beg for a day off.

The "Sick Leave Improvement Committee" with Phyllis

Human Resource Manager Phyllis Lingenfelter contacted the Local Unions and asked us to meet monthly to find ways to improve attendance without resorting to discipline. At the first meeting she was told by the Unions that a major problem is that employees cannot get leave and the morale (at Palatine) continues to deteriorate. A/Senior MDO Bracket attended this meeting and heard the comments of both Unions in this regard but nothing has changed.

Grievances for Denied Leave

We will be filing a grievance for each denied 3971 at Palatine and Carol Stream, so bring in your 3971 as soon as you get it back as we have 14 days from when you get it back disapproved.

FMLA Grievances

FMLA should be acted on in a timely manner. Management has two days to designate it as FMLA so they designate it within the two days for pay purposes and then may not get back to you for many weeks. The fact that the leave was designated as FMLA within the required two days does not relieve them of their obligation to process the leave request in a timely manner. They report they remain two months behind on FMLA requests and this is not timely. We can and should file grievances when management is not timely in responding to FMLA requests.

Article 1.6

When you see a supervisor working we need a statement with their name, how much time they performed the bargaining unit work and what they did. The remedy is OT pay to the section ODL.

Work Safely!

As pressure to increase thru-put and certification continues, it is important to avoid injuries. Work in a safe manner, do not rush!

New Plant Manager at CMSH

Ruby Branch will be returning to the Chicago Metro Surface Hub as the Plant Manager. We echo the Mail Handler Union in hoping that she will work with the Unions to improve the conditions at CMSH and make it a better place to work.