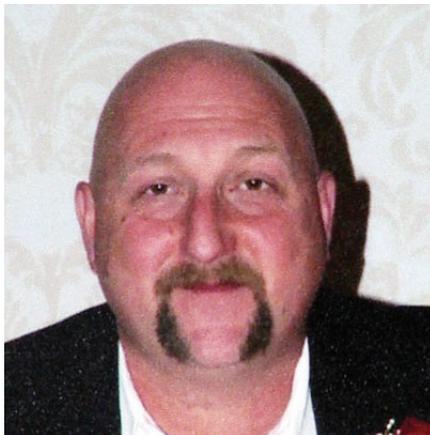


OSHA cites USPS after heat-related death



James Baldassarre

On July 6, Medford, MA letter carrier James Baldassarre, 45, died after collapsing the day before while making a delivery on his route. The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) investigated the matter and has cited the U.S. Postal Service for a serious safety violation in connection with the heat-related death.

"Heat stress illnesses and fatalities can be prevented with knowledge. Knowing how to recognize and respond to symptoms can save a life," said Jeffrey Erskine, OSHA's area director for Middlesex and Essex counties in Massachusetts. "In this case, the Postal Service had such information, but failed to communicate it to letter carriers so they could protect themselves. Had this been

done, this tragedy could have been prevented."

OSHA's investigation found that the Postal Service exposed workers to the recognized hazard of working in excessive heat by failing to implement an adequate heat stress management program that would have addressed the matter and informed letter carriers how to identify, prevent and report symptoms of heat-related illnesses.

The citation includes suggested ways to address the hazard, including adequately implementing a heat stress management program tailored to the particular work performed by letter carriers. An effective program would contain measures to address the recognized hazard of exposure to excessive heat, and it would train workers to recognize, prevent, respond to and report heat-related illnesses. **PR**

Time to register for food drive

NALC President Fredric Rolando recently sent a letter and registration form to all NALC branches, encouraging them to register for this year's food drive. It is important they do so soon to ensure that they receive reminder post cards to distribute to customers.

Upon receipt of the branch registration form, a food drive coordinator's package will be sent to the designated branch food drive coordinator. This includes a new promotional DVD and a coordinators manual containing letters of support from our national partners (including the postmaster general and Feeding America); our new Family Circus cartoon; information on ordering posters, shirts, pins and other promotional materials; and many valuable tips. Also included in the package will be the user name and password for our food drive database.

"We celebrate 21 years and 1.3 billion pounds of success in our national Letter Carrier Food Drive, as we should," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "But letter carriers never stay still for any length of time, and so we are 'Building on a Billion!'"

Registration forms must be submitted by mailing them to Director of Community Services Pam Donato, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144. For more information, go to nalc.org/commun/fooddrive. **PR**

NALC announces joint safety and service program

As NALC President Fredric Rolando announced in his president's message in the December issue of *The Postal Record*, a new joint effort to identify and address safety issues for America's letter carriers and issues with service to postal customers has been launched.

After productive discussions with high-level USPS management, the parties agreed to establish a joint program to look at offices with safety issues—whether during the daylight hours or after dark—and to address issues that affect service to customers, such as routine delivery after traditional delivery hours.

Joint teams will go into areas experiencing these safety and service problems to evaluate every factor possibly causing the issues. While there are common causes of some problems, the causes often differ from office to office, so the solutions will differ as well. The teams will work hard to develop lasting solutions that improve the safety of letter carriers and service to our customers.

Updates will be released as they become available. **PR**

‘Do not put yourself in danger’ from cold temperatures

Delivering America’s mail requires that letter carriers spend most of our time outdoors. And many of us are accustomed to facing the added hazard of cold stress at this time of year while we visit every residential and commercial address on our routes.

But during the first full week of 2014, a so-called “polar vortex” helped make this particular winter one for the record books, as an unusually large Arctic weather system covered most of the continental United States, bringing with it below-zero temperatures and even colder wind chills.

To gear up for the coming extreme cold, the Postal Service issued mandatory safety talks on Jan. 3 that were to be given to all employees on the subject of protecting yourselves from cold temperatures.

One talk dealt with cold stress, which can cause illness or injury and can even become life-threatening. This talk emphasized how important it is for letter carriers to take the proper steps to protect themselves from cold stress:

- by wearing proper attire for the weather conditions and dressing in water-resistant layers,
- by protecting your face and extremities,
- by staying dry as best you can,
- by taking short breaks in warm areas on cold days, and
- by continuously monitoring your physical condition.

A separate talk focused on recognizing the different types of cold-stress illnesses and injuries. Their symptoms include:

Hypothermia: Occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can be



produced, which then decreases body temperature to dangerous levels.

Frostbite: An injury to the body caused by freezing, which can cause loss of feeling, change in skin color and skin damage. In severe cases, frostbite can lead to amputation of the affected area.

Trench foot: An injury to the feet caused by prolonged exposure to wet and cold conditions.

Chilblains: A tissue injury caused by repeated exposure to cool, humid conditions.

This stand-up talk also outlined the proper first-aid treatments for each of these types of cold stress.

“Letter carriers need to remember to dress appropriately for the weather,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “If you feel that you are experiencing cold-stress symptoms or other weather-related issues, notify your supervisor immediately.

“Bottom line: Do not put yourself in danger,” Rolando said.

If management has not provided either of these mandatory safety talks, advise your supervisor, shop steward, branch officers or, if necessary, your national business agent. Go to nalc.org to find the documents that management was to provide you through these stand-up talks. **PR**



Images of carriers dealing with the extreme winter weather

COLA: Cost-of-living adjustment

- ▶ There was **no projected accumulation** toward the third cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for letter carriers under the 2011-2016 National Agreement following the release of the December 2013 Consumer Price Index (CPI). This COLA will be based on the increase in the CPI between July 2013 and January 2014 and will take effect in the second full pay period after the release of the January CPI.
- ▶ The 2014 COLA for both CSRS and FERS benefits was set at **1.5 percent** following the release of the September 2013 CPI. The COLA was included in January annuity checks.
- ▶ The 2014 COLA under the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) was set at **1.5 percent** following the release of the December 2013 CPI. The COLA is based on the increase in the CPI between December 2012 and December 2013, and will become effective on March 1.