

# ABA NEWS DIGEST

Vol. 41, No. 1

*Postal Workers Serving Postal Workers Since 1891*

Spring 2026

National Director

Wayne Maurer

## A Few Worthy Thoughts



Welcome everyone to another issue of our News Digest. I hope a happy and healthy start to the new year was had by all. First off, this edition contains our National Convention Call, our yearly Scholarship Application along with the instructions and our Election for APWABA Board positions information. Should there be any contested positions within our Board, those elections will take place at our APWABA Convention in Los Angeles on Monday evening.

Next up is our premiums structure. I'm pleased to announce that yet

again we will not be looking for any premium increase this year. The last time the premiums for our three plans were increased was back in August of 2022. Although we look at our revenue and expenses yearly, I believe we will not be looking at an increase in 2027 as well. Next up is my thoughts on our own recent elections. I was pleased to be invited to our Installation of Officers gala in November, and I look forward to the direction this Union takes over the next three years. I wish nothing but the best for President Smith and his Executive

Board. We are fortunate that this Union had the right to vote for and elect a leader from two outstanding, highly qualified candidates in Brothers Smith and Jones. Finally, I want to thank all of the locals and states who provide our benefit package to their membership at our reduced premium rate. Many locals and states have been with us for generations and you are the reason we are still in the business of providing a low cost, much-needed accident benefit package to our membership. Now in my tenth year as your National Director, I can say I've never seen more interest in our association. I want to recognize those who have joined us just since our last Convention concluded. In no particular order a shout out goes to Trenton, New Jersey Metro Area Local, Wilmington, North Carolina Local, Greater Hicksville Mid-Island, New York Area Local, Inland Empire, Washington Area Local, Kirksville, Missouri Area Local, Palm Beach, Florida Area Local and just this past month the St Louis Gateway District, Missouri Area Local have voted to join us. Whether you've been with us for decades or just recently climbed on board I say thank you and please know that we appreciate your support and membership.

That does it for me. Please browse through this edition of the News Digest and again I say thank you to each of you.

In Union solidarity,  
Wayne

## 2026 ABA CONVENTION

**The ABA National Convention will convene on Monday, August 17, 2026 at 6:00P.M. at the Los Angeles Convention Center, in Los Angeles, CA.**

**Registration will begin on Friday, August 14, 2026, at the ABA Registration Booth, where credentials must be presented no later than two hours prior to the start of the APW-ABA National Convention.**

### ARTICLE 7

#### ELECTION OF DELEGATES AND OFFICERS

##### Section 1.

(a) The members of the respective Locals or State ABA organizations shall use procedure that is consistent with ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER to elect delegates to the ABA Convention. The names of delegates should be received by the home office in New Hampshire prior to June 1st of the Convention year.

(b) Delegate's credentials must be presented at the ABA Registration Booth no later than two (2) hours prior to the scheduled start of the ABA National Convention.

##### Section 2.

(a) The membership of the National Convention shall be composed of the Board of Directors and registered delegates. An eligible MAL may petition their state organization to gain delegate status to the National ABA Convention.

(b) Each Local or State shall be entitled to representation at the National Convention on the following basis:

|                    |             |                     |             |
|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 3 to 75 members    | 1 delegate  | 301 to 500 members  | 4 delegates |
| 76 to 150 members  | 2 delegates | 501 to 750 members  | 5 delegates |
| 151 to 300 members | 3 delegates | 751 to 1000 members | 6 delegates |

and for each additional 250 members or major fraction thereof in any Local or State, one additional delegate is authorized, with a maximum of twenty delegates for any single Local or State. For the purpose of calculating the number of delegates a Local or State shall be entitled to at the APW-ABA National Convention, the date of March 1st of each convention year shall be used for membership numbers to determine the number of delegates entitled each Local or State organization.

##### Section 3.

The President, National Director, and Regional Directors shall be elected for a term consistent with the schedule of the American Postal Workers Union National Convention. All nominations for office by members must be in writing and sent via U.S. Postal Service mail to the National Director's office at APW-ABA, P.O. Box 120, Rochester, New Hampshire 03866 and must be received after March 1, but no later than close of business on April 15 of the election year. All nomination letters of intent must be signed and state the office the member wishes to be a candidate for. There will be no nominations accepted after 4:00 p.m., April 15 and he/she must be a member in good standing on the date the letter of intent is received by the APW-ABA home office. Any candidate who wishes to withdraw from consideration for office must follow the same procedures used for nominations and said withdraw must be received by May 15th of the election year. As the first order of business, the National Director will read all the names and offices of the candidates seeking elective office. The election of officers shall be the last order of business of the Convention prior to the Installation of Officers.

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# 2026 ABA CONVENTION

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(a) A candidate for the office of President or National Director, must be a member in good standing in the Association and shall be elected by delegates present and voting.

(b) A candidate for the office of Regional Director A or Regional Director B shall be a member in good standing in the Association within the Area he or she seeks to represent and shall be elected by the delegates representing that Area. A candidate for the office of Regional Director shall declare which position they wish to be a candidate for during the nominating process.

**Section 4:** Regional Directors

Two (2) Regional Directors shall be elected from each of the five ABA Regions:

**1. Northeast Region:** Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts,

Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York.

**2. Eastern Region:** Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland

**3. Southern Region:** North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands.

**4. Central Region:** Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska

**5. Western Region:** Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California, Hawaii, Pacific Islands

**Section 5.**

Any candidate for National Office who receives a majority of votes cast

at the Convention for said office shall be declared elected. No write in votes will be valid.

**Section 6.**

When there are two or more candidates for National Office and the two candidates receiving a majority of the votes cast for such offices result in a tie on the first ballot another election shall be held immediately. These two candidates engaged in a tie shall be voted upon as candidates for such office in the second election, and the candidate with the majority of the votes shall be declared elected.

**Section 7.**

All National ABA officers will be installed following the completion of the election by the President of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, or his/her designee.

**Section 8.**

The members, officers, representatives or delegates of this Association will not be permitted to vote by proxy.

**Section 9.**

Each delegate and each member of the Board of Directors shall receive one vote. Members of the Board shall be allowed to vote for the Director of their respective Region.

**Section 10.**

The President of the Accident Benefit Association shall establish an Election Committee, no member of which shall be a candidate for election while serving on such committee. The Election Committee shall be responsible for conducting the election. Prior to the acceptance of the Election Committee report any candidate who feels aggrieved in connection with the

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**AMERICAN  
POSTAL  
WORKERS**



**ACCIDENT  
BENEFIT  
ASSOCIATION**

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The editors of the ABA News Digest reserve the exclusive right to edit, amend or delete any article considered to be destructive to its goals of unity and union spirit.



**PROUD MEMBER**

## Honorarys

**Hank Greenberg**  
National Director  
Emeritus (2004)

**Michael B. Ganino, Jr.**  
National Director  
Emeritus (2012)

**David E. Daniel**  
National Director  
Emeritus (2016)

## Home Office Staff\*

- Executive Assistant/Business Coordinator** ..... **Melissa Potter**
- Accounts Receivable/Customer Service Coordinator**  
(Associate Editor, ABA News Digest) ..... **Lisa Bado**
- Accounting Technician** ..... **Kelly O'Neil**
- Claims Administrator/System Development Coordinator** ..... **Jennifer Coelho**

\*Proud members of OPEIU Local 6

President

Richard Phillips

# Remembering the Past - Working Toward the Future



or even a shout, but with a sickening thud.

*(Note: the following portion of this article about Frances Perkins was taken in large part from readily available articles in books, tv and movie documentaries, etc.)*

The sidewalk trembled with a sickening, wet thud. It was New York City, March 25, 1911. Washington Square Park. Frances Perkins was enjoying a cup of tea in a townhouse when she heard the fire engines. Running outside she looked up at the Asch Building. Smoke was billowing from the upper floors of the **Triangle Shirtwaist Factory**.

But it wasn't just smoke. Frances watched in horror as young women some no older than 14 climbed onto the window ledges to escape the inferno behind them. The fire escape had collapsed. The doors to the doorways and exits were locked from the outside by managers who wanted to prevent unauthorized breaks and "theft". There was nowhere to go. So, they jumped.

Frances stood frozen on the pavement as 146 workers – 123 women and girls and 23 men – died from either the fire, smoke inhalation, or falling or jumping to their deaths. She heard their bodies hitting the stone and never forgot it. Most onlookers saw a tragedy; she saw a crime scene. In that moment the socialite, Frances Perkins, died, and the most dangerous woman in American politics was born. She didn't cry. She plotted. She realized that charity wasn't enough; kindness wasn't enough; and in today's world, the phrase "Thoughts and Prayers" weren't enough.

To address her concerns she needed power, so she spent the next two decades climbing the political ladder, fighting toe-to-toe against corruption.

She became an expert on worker safety. Then, in 1933, her phone rang. It was President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt. He wanted her to be his Secretary of Labor. It was an impossible offer, as no woman had ever served in the U.S. Cabinet. The press called the idea "sentimental". Even the unions were skeptical. The business tycoons were terrified. Frances went to meet FDR. She didn't just say yes. She walked in with a piece of paper. She

looked the President in the eye and issued an ultimatum. "I will take the job," she said, "but only if you promise to back me on these demands.", demands that we take for granted today. She read from her list: A 40-hour workweek; A minimum wage; Unemployment compensation; Worker's compensation; A ban on child labor; Social Security; It was a wish list of "radical" ideas that had never existed in America.

Much has been written about the founding of the APW-ABA back in the 1890s by a group of Postal Railway Clerks who worked sorting mail on fast moving railroad cars. Well, as we all know, the days of sorting mail on moving trains have passed. However, there are still concerns about accidents. These concerns include recent announcements from the national APWU which state that there will be a renewed focus on the prevention of industrial accidents at the post office; because that's what we've fought for in our Collective Bargaining Agreement and, basically, one of the many things we have a right to do. But it wasn't always that way...

According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, one definition of an accident is. "an unfortunate incident that happens unexpectedly and unintentionally, typically resulting in damage or injury". However, it goes on to further define an accident as, "an event that happens by chance or that is without apparent or deliberate cause". I'm writing this article to alert members to the matter of management's contributing to "deliberate cause" and the potential of accelerating an accident to become a catastrophe. And history shows that these concerns didn't just present themselves with a simple whimper



Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

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## 2026 ABA CONVENTION

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election shall file an appeal with the Election Committee at the ABA Convention. Where the Committee finds merit in an appeal, it shall report its findings to the President who will report to the delegates. The delegates shall act on the findings of the Committee. (For the purpose of this Article the term "election" shall include nominating procedures.)

### ARTICLE 8 NATIONAL AND LOCAL MEETINGS

#### Section 1.

The National Convention shall convene in the same month and years as the American Postal Workers Union

Convention, at a time and place to be named by the Board of Directors, provided a National Convention is held at least once every four (4) years. Special sessions of the ABA National Convention may be convened upon call of the President, subject to the approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the Board of Directors.

(a) At least one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the biennial session of the National ABA Convention this association shall publish in the Official Publication of the ABA, a notice stating the time and place of the National Convention. This information shall be sent to every ABA Local and State Association, not later than April 10th of the Convention year.

(b) At least sixty (60) days prior to

any special session of a National ABA Convention, the National Director will notify all ABA affiliated locals and State Organizations of the time, place, and purpose of the special session.

(c) It shall be the duty of the Local or State President or Secretary to furnish a certified list showing the names of the delegates and alternates. These certified credentials shall be furnished to the ABA Home Office no later than June 1 of the Convention year and it is to be used to entitle them to be seated as a delegate at the National ABA Convention.

(d) Resolutions must be submitted for the ABA Convention prior to June 1 of the convention year. The author of the resolution is required to send these resolutions to the office

of the National Director in duplicate. This shall not prevent the submission of resolutions by delegates at convention as long as a copy is available for each delegate in attendance.

Resolutions submitted after the report of the Constitution Committee will not be considered nor acted upon.

#### Section 2.

The Board of Directors meeting shall take place each non-convention year in conjunction with the spring or fall audit, telephonically with the National Director. In addition, the Constitution Committee shall review the Constitution and make recommendations to the next convention to conform with such state and federal regulations as required by law.

Northeast Region Director B &amp; Vice Preident

Dana Coletti

# Spring Cleaning in the Digital Age: Refresh Your Home and Devices

## How to Declutter and Rejuvenate Your Physical and Digital Spaces This Spring

As winter fades and the days grow longer, many people feel the urge to refresh their surroundings and embrace the spirit of renewal that comes with spring. Traditionally, this has meant deep cleaning our homes, organizing closets, and letting in fresh air. However, in today's connected world, spring cleaning isn't just for your physical spaces, it's equally important to declutter and organize your digital life. This article explores practical strategies for both home and digital spring cleaning, helping you create a more organized, stress-free environment inside and out.

### WHY SPRING-CLEANING MATTERS

Clutter – whether physical or digital – can be overwhelming. Piles of paperwork, overflowing closets, and dusty corners can make your home feel chaotic. Similarly, a cluttered inbox, unused apps, and disorganized files can slow down your devices and increase stress. Spring cleaning offers an opportunity to hit the reset button, improving productivity, clarity, and peace of mind.

### HOME SPRING CLEANING: OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

#### 1. Make a Plan

Before you grab your cleaning supplies, take a few moments to plan. Walk through your home and make a checklist of areas that need attention—kitchens, bathrooms, closets, and garages are common trouble spots. Prioritize spaces that cause the most frustration or have gone the longest without thorough cleaning.

#### 2. Declutter Room by Room

Work systematically, focusing on one room at a time. Sort items into four categories: keep, donate, recycle,

and discard. Be honest—if you haven't used something in a year, consider letting it go. Organizing items as you go keeps your progress visible and motivates you to continue.

#### 3. Deep Clean Surfaces and Fixtures

Once you've decluttered, clean surfaces thoroughly. Dust ceiling fans, wash windows, and wipe down baseboards. Don't forget "invisible" areas like behind appliances, under furniture, and inside cabinets. Refresh curtains and carpets by laundering or vacuuming them and consider rotating or flipping mattresses for even wear.

#### 4. Organize and Refresh

With clutter gone, it's time to organize. Use bins, baskets, or drawer dividers to group similar items. Label containers for easy access. Add a touch of spring by bringing in fresh flowers, swapping out heavy drapes for lighter ones, or rearranging furniture for a new perspective.

### DIGITAL SPRING CLEANING: ORGANIZE YOUR VIRTUAL WORLD

#### 1. Tidy Up Your Desktop and Files

A messy computer desktop can be just as distracting as a cluttered kitchen counter. Start by removing unused shortcuts, grouping files into folders, and deleting duplicates. Consider creating a consistent naming convention to make searching for files easier in the future.

#### 2. Clean Out Emails and Messages

Inbox overload is a common source of stress. Unsubscribe from newsletters you no longer read, archive old messages, and set up filters for important

contacts. Don't forget to empty your spam and trash folders to free up storage space.

#### 3. Update and Organize Devices

Review the apps on your phone, tablet, and computer. Remove those you no longer use and update the ones you keep ensuring security. Back up important data—photos, documents, and contacts—using cloud services or an external drive.

#### 4. Strengthen Security

Spring is a great time to review your digital security. Change passwords, enable two-factor authentication where available, and ensure your antivirus software is current. This not only protects your information but also gives you peace of mind.

### TIPS FOR MAINTAINING YOUR CLEAN SLATE

- Set a regular schedule for light cleaning and digital organization—

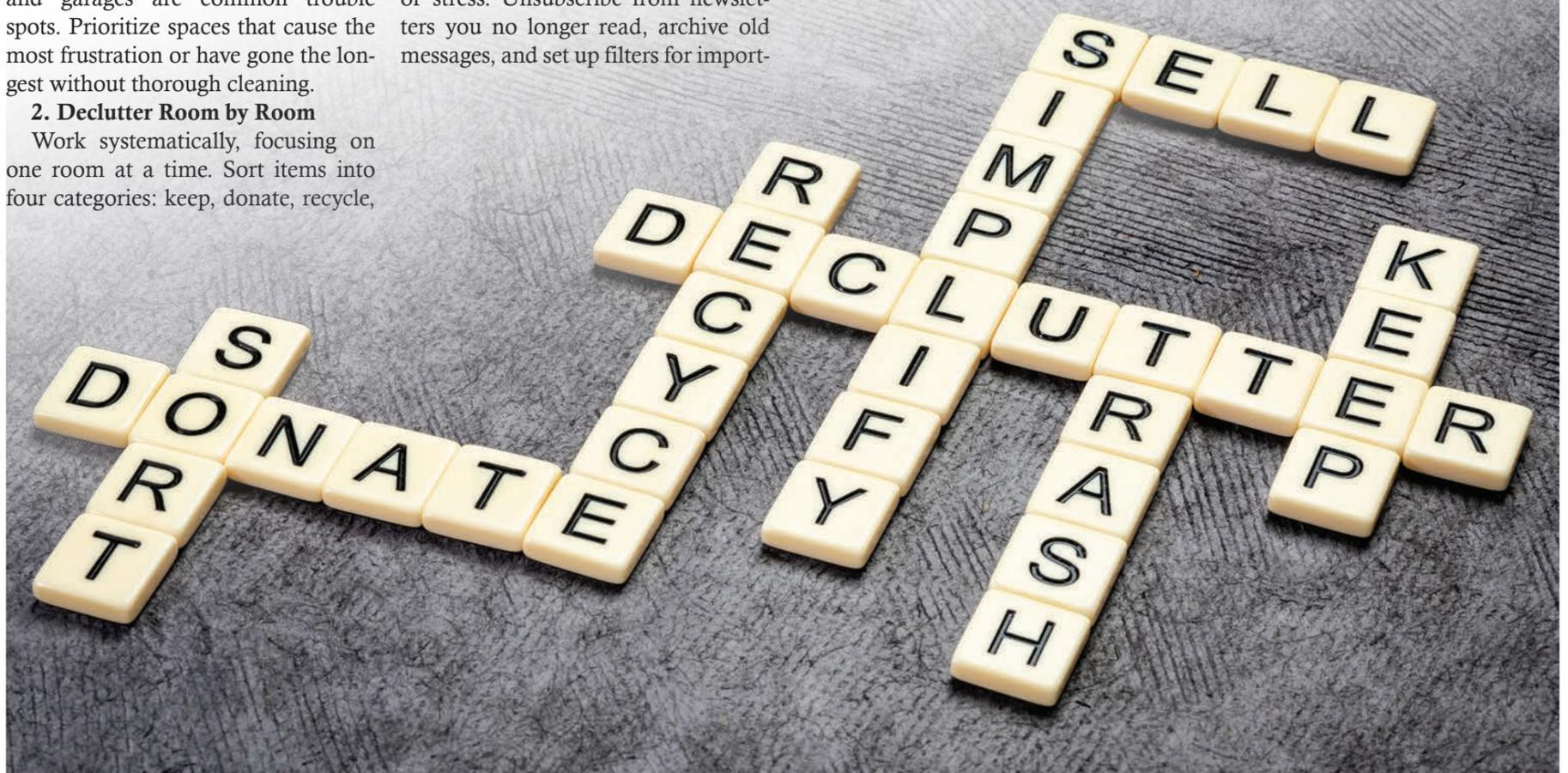
monthly or quarterly check-ins work well.

- Involve your household or family to share the workload and keep everyone on the same page.

- Adopt the "one in, one out" rule: whenever you bring a new item or app into your life, remove one you no longer need.

Spring cleaning is more than a tradition—it's an opportunity to clear out the old and welcome the new, in both our homes and our digital lives. By dedicating time to declutter, deep clean, and organize, you can create environments that inspire productivity, relaxation, and a sense of renewal. Embrace the season and enjoy the satisfaction of a fresh start, inside and out.

*In today's connected world, spring cleaning isn't just for your physical spaces, it's equally important to declutter and organize your digital life.*



## Eastern Region Director B

Sherry C. McKnight



Greeting Brothers and Sisters

Hope this article finds you all in good health. As spring arrives, postal workers face longer days, warmer temperatures, and increased exposure to outdoors elements. While the season brings fresh air and new growth, it also marks the start of spring allergy season, which can significantly affect postal employees who work outdoors, on loading docks, and in facilities with constant air circulation.

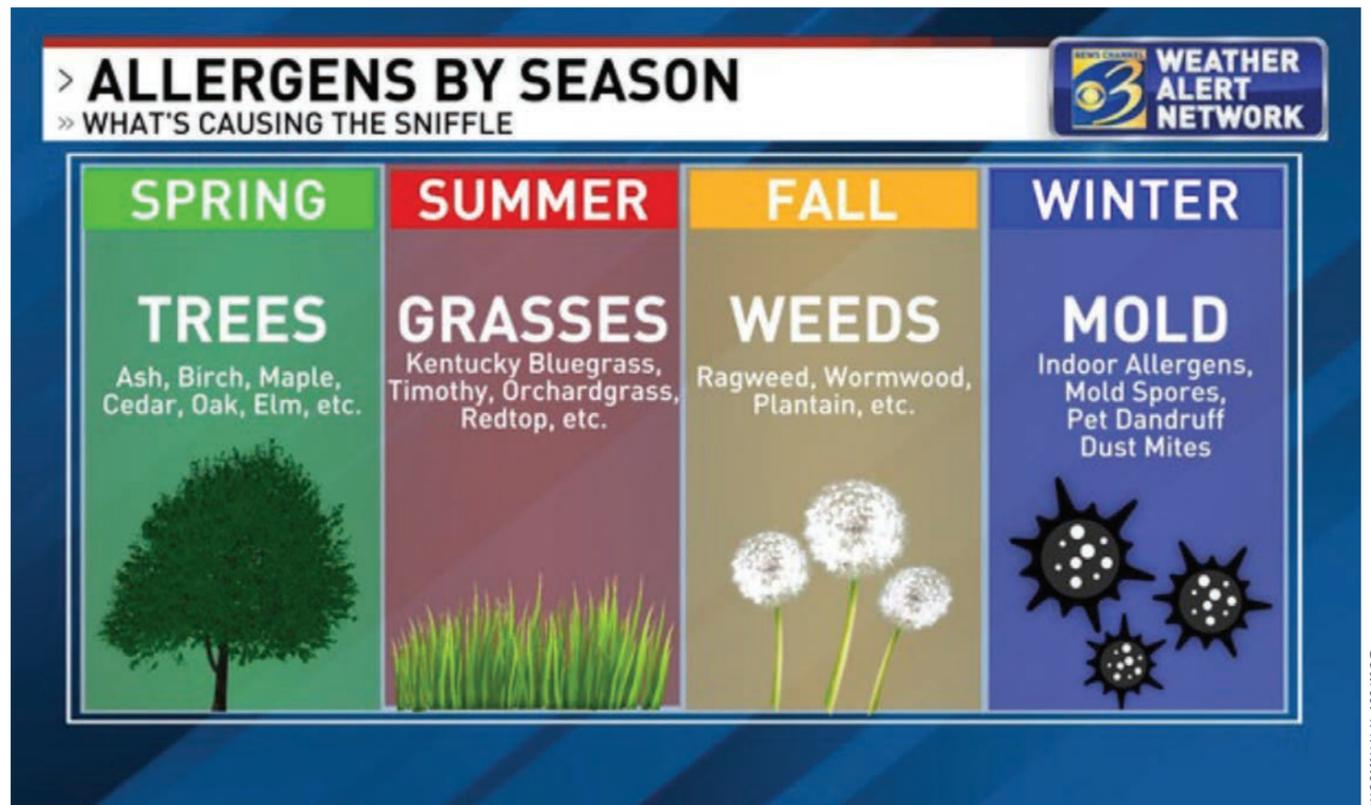
#### WHAT CAUSES SPRING ALLERGIES

Spring allergies are most commonly triggered by **pollen** released from trees, grasses, and weeds, as well as mold spores that increase with warmer and wetter conditions. Postal workers may be exposed to higher levels of allergens due to:

- Outdoor mail delivery and walking
- Open dock doors and ventilation systems
- Dust and debris in postal vehicles and facilities

#### COMMON SYMPTOMS

Allergy symptoms can vary in severity and may affect a worker's ability to perform safely and efficiently.



- Sneezing and runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Itchy, watery or burning eyes
- Coughing or scratchy throat
- Headaches and sinus pressure
- Dark circles under the eyes
- Fatigue, which may affect focus and alertness

These symptoms may interfere with sleep and overall quality of life.

#### WHEN DO SPRING ALLERGIES OCCUR?

Spring allergy season typically begins in early spring, as trees release pollen, and may continue through late spring or early summer when grasses pollinate.

Symptoms may worsen on warm, windy days and after prolonged outdoor exposure, conditions are common during mail delivery and dock operations.

#### TREATMENT AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

While spring allergies cannot be cured, symptoms can be managed with proper treatment:

- **Over-the-counter medications, antihistamines and nasal sprays** (non-drowsy options are recommended for workers operating vehicles or machinery)
- **Prescription medications**, recommended by a healthcare provider if symptoms persist or worsen
- **Preventive steps**, such as washing hands and face after routes, changing clothes after work, keeping vehicle windows closed when possible, and staying hydrated
- **Monitoring pollen counts** and taking medication before symptoms become severe

#### WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

Severe allergy symptoms can also worsen. Postal workers should consult a healthcare provider if symptoms interfere with job performance, sleep or safety. What may seem like allergies could also be a sinus infection, asthma, or another medical condition.

Employees should remember that seeking medical care and using approved leave when necessary is very important for personal health and workplace safety.

#### TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH THIS SPRING

Spring allergies are common, but they should not be ignored. Recognizing symptoms early and managing them properly can help postal workers stay healthy, focused, and safe on the job throughout the spring season.



## Eastern Region Director A

# I Love the APW-ABA



Brothers and Sisters, I truly love the APW-ABA, and you the members, and have enjoyed representing members in New Jersey, Washington D.C., Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and Delaware and I look forward to representing you in my next term as APW-ABA Eastern Region Director.

I love the ABA because it has helped so many across our great land since 1891. Personally, I'd rather get my accident benefit coverage from an organization run by retired and current APWU postal workers who I know understand my needs. I also believe in helping my own before helping others.

The American Postal Workers-Accident Benefit Association comes from very humble beginnings in 1891. It was incorporated on December 12th, 1898, and originally named the "National Association of Railway Postal Clerks." It was started by several Railway Mail Clerks who had very dangerous jobs hanging out of trains attaching mail sacks to hooks as the train rolled along. As a result of the immense danger, no company wanted to insure them, so they started the "National Association of Railway Postal Clerks."

On September 5th, 1972, the organization's name was changed to the

American Postal Workers Accident Benefit Association (APW-ABA) which has paid out millions in claims and remains solvent today even after the Great Depression and more recent Recession.

Brothers and Sisters, if you're tired of your local spending money on parties or other things that some, but not all can enjoy or benefit from, then you should consider what I believe is a wiser use of your Local's funds that helps all local members rather than just some. If you put your thinking cap on, you can probably figure out where money can be diverted from one local activity to pay for an APW-ABA benefit plan(s).

One of the great benefits for 100% local members is the local pays premiums for all members, including those that are in a no-pay status. On average this is only about 3% of your total membership, but this is insignificant when you consider what a great in-

centive this is to attract new members.

It's easy to become a 100% ABA Local and get discounts on our plans. Simply make a motion at your local union membership meeting, vote, and pass the motion, and once it passes by majority or two-thirds vote, you will then only need to send a copy of the minutes of the meeting where the motion passed, to both the APWU National Secretary-Treasurers office and to the APW-ABA Home office.

**PLEASE JOIN THE ABA!**

*Articles written by me are based on experience and particular fact circumstances in individual case(s) and should not be relied upon as advice for all situations because each case can have different mitigating circumstances. In short, you should never solely rely on info in my article(s) before taking an action. You should always confer with your Union steward or attorney about all the facts in your case and let them decide the best course of action for you to take related to any issue.*

## If Fired and Eligible for Retirement You Can Retire and Draw Retirement and After You Win Your Grievance Return to the U.S. Postal Service

Brothers and sisters, I've been Representing people for over 40 years. In 2012, after raising hell in the streets about Mitch McConnell not saving KY postal jobs in Ashland KY and filing an OSHA case forcing USPS to put on a new roof on the Ashland KY post office to the tune of 1.4 million dollars, I was set up on an email and fired. I filed a grievance that others handled and like many awaited a decision for several months. I was way eligible for CSRS retirement as I was 58 and had 32 years' service.

I immediately called officials after grievance was filed to see if I could draw my retirement and if I won the case could I return to the USPS. No one I called at Region or National knew the answer. Finally, someone said call Phil Tabita because he knows everything. Well, I did, but he did not have the answer, so I took it upon myself like many times before to find the answer. I finally talked to a lady at OPM. She told me I could return and retirement would be cut off, but I could keep the retirement I had been paid and return to USPS and later when I voluntarily decided to retire, I would fill out all retirement paperwork again. I asked her where this regulation could be found. She said it was in the OPM handbook RI-5029. She also said, even if you were fired for misconduct or delinquency and these charges are removed you could return to USPS. I subsequently found the OPM RI-2059 handbook on the internet and found said regulation on page 10. It states:

### RETURNING TO WORK IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

You have the same rights as anyone else seeking a federal job. If you are reemployed by the Federal Government, you and your agency must notify us in writing.

One of the following situations will apply to you:

a) If your retirement was based on an involuntary separation (except for mandatory retirement because of age in certain positions), the separation wasn't due to misconduct or delinquency, and the job is covered by a federal retirement system, your annuity will stop effective the day before you start work. However, if your job is not covered by a federal retirement system, your annuity payments continue but your salary is reduced by the amount of annuity you receive; or

b) If your retirement was based on a voluntary separation (including early-optional retirement during a reduction-in-force or major reorganization) or on an involuntary separation you caused due to misconduct or delinquency, or if you retired under a mandatory age provision, your annuity continues while you work. Your salary is reduced by the amount of annuity you receive; or

c) If you are retired because of a disability, see RI 30-13, *Information for Disability Annuitants*, for a full explanation of the effect of Federal reemployment on your annuity.

**Note:** To address their manpower shortages, a few agencies have obtained permission to pay reemployed

retired Federal employees the full salary for some positions with no reduction. Ask the employing agency about this if you are considering returning to work in the Federal Government. If you accept Federal employment under these conditions, you will not be permitted to make retirement contributions and the service you perform cannot be used to compute a supplemental or a recomputed annuity.

After you quit working, the following applies:

If your annuity stopped because you took the Federal job, your future retirement rights are normally controlled by the law in effect when you leave your new job. If you separate from the Federal service more than one year after your date of reemployment, you have the same retirement rights as any other Federal employee with the same age, length of service, and kind of separation.

If your annuity continues while you work full-time for one year (or the equivalent of one year on a part-time basis), you may be eligible for a supplemental annuity after you leave the job or move to another job that requires only intermittent work. To obtain a supplemental annuity, you must apply to us. You will be asked to pay a deposit (unless you elect to have retirement deductions withheld from your salary) to cover the reemployment service.

After completing at least five years of continuous service (or part-time service which is equivalent to five years of full-time service), you may

have your entire annuity recomputed under the law in effect at the time you leave the job if you pay a deposit (unless retirement deductions were withheld from your salary) to cover the reemployment service. The amount of the deposit will equal the amount of the retirement deductions that would have been withheld from the full salary of your position, plus interest.

If you are reemployed on a part-time rather than full-time basis and your annuity continues, your annual annuity is converted to an hourly rate used to reduce your salary.

For example, if you receive a gross annuity of \$750 per month and you work part-time, 24 hours per week, the offset is computed as follows: (\$750 x 12 months) divided by 2087 hours per year = \$4.31, the hourly rate of your annuity. This amount is subtracted from the hourly rate of your pay. Thus, if you work 24 hours a week, your biweekly pay would be reduced by \$206.88 (\$4.31 per hour x 24 hours per week x 2 weeks).

### ABA AND OWCP CLAIMS

In the past 2 years I have helped many members with ABA and OWCP questions because sometimes the 2 become intertwined when an employee is injured on the job due to an accident related to external causes. I thought now would be a good time to go over some things we sometimes forget or maybe don't know.

- You are not required to claim your ABA claim payments as income on your OWCP form.



- Normally, the first 3 days of Continuation of Pay (COP) or Compensation must be charged to annual, sick, or LWOP, unless your doctor on the original report or possibly later report explains your permanent or partial disability is going to be in duration of longer than 14 days. Section 8117(b) of the FECA law states:

*A Postal Service employee is not entitled to compensation or continuation of pay for the first 3 days of temporary disability, except as provided under paragraph (3) of subsection (a). A Postal Service employee may use annual leave, sick leave, or leave without pay during that 3-day period, except that if the disability exceeds 14 days or is followed by permanent disability, the employee may have their sick leave or annual leave reinstated or receive pay for the time spent on leave without pay under this section.*

- If an employee gets injured at work due to external force during a period of 24 hours or less an OWCP claim should be filed on form CA-1 and qualifies as a COP situation and the employee should get up to 45 calendar days of normally straight time pay, less the 3 days mentioned above, unless your doctor has said your disability will exceed 14 days.

- If an employee has a medical problem that occurs over a period in excess of 24 hours related to or aggravated by their employment a claim should be filed on form CA-2. No COP is authorized in these situations, and the employee must follow up with form CA-7 to start compensation. During the interim period while waiting on Compensation to start the employee can use annual, sick or LWOP and if they use annual or sick leave, they can buy it back using the CA-7 or other related forms.

- Compensation is paid at a rate of 66 and 2/3% which equates to 66.6666667 of an employee's regular average pay if they're single or 75% if married. An employee can also receive a lump sum scheduled award payment in addition to other compensation or COP after the doctor declares they have done all they can do medically and the employee has lost all or part of mobility in part of their body or they have lost a body part related to or aggravated by their employment.

Normally Compensation is paid based on an employee's average salary over the past 12 months, but like COP there are different calculations for unusual situations. COP is based on what an employee's average or fixed salary was in the past 12 months prior to injury date, but because there are situations outside the 12-month period, for example; the employee is a PTF or PSE or the employee has not worked 12 months yet, there are several different ways to calculate an employee's pay. Section 8114(d) of the FECA law breaks these different ways of calculating how COP will be paid and it states:

*(d) Average annual earnings are determined as follows:*

*(1) If the employee worked in the employment in which he was employed at the time of his injury during substantially the whole year immediately preceding the injury and the employment was in a position for which an annual rate of pay--*

*(A) was fixed, the average annual earnings are the annual rate of pay; or*

*(B) was not fixed, the average annual earnings are the product obtained by multiplying his daily wage for the particular employment, or the average thereof if the daily wage has fluctuated, by 300 if he was employed on the basis of a 6-day*

*workweek, 280 if employed on the basis of a 5 1/2 -day week, and 260 if employed on the basis of a 5-day week.*

*(2) If the employee did not work in employment in which he was employed at the time of his injury during substantially the whole year immediately preceding the injury, but the position was one which would have afforded employment for substantially a whole year, the average annual earnings are a sum equal to the average annual earnings of an employee of the same class working substantially the whole immediately preceding year in the same or similar employment by the United States in the same or neighboring place, as determined under paragraph (1) of this subsection.*

*(3) If either of the foregoing methods of determining the average annual earnings cannot be applied reasonably and fairly, the average annual earnings are a sum that reasonably represents the annual earning capacity of the injured employee in the employment in which he was working at the time of the injury having regard to the previous earnings of the employee in Federal employment, and of other employees of the United States in the same or most similar class working in the same or most similar employment in the same or neighboring location, other previous employment of the employee, or other relevant factors. However, the average annual earnings may not be less than 150 times the average daily wage the employee earned during the days employed within 1 year immediately preceding his injury.*

*(4) If the employee served without pay or at nominal pay, paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) of this subsection apply as far as practicable, but the average annual earnings of the employee may not exceed the minimum rate of basic pay for GS-15. If the average annual earnings cannot be determined reasonably and fairly in the manner otherwise provided by this section, the average*

*annual earnings shall be determined at the reasonable value of the service performed but not in excess of \$3,600 a year.*

*(e) The value of subsistence and quarters, and of any other form of remuneration in kind for services if its value can be estimated in money, and premium pay under section 5545(c)(1) of this title are included as part of the pay, but account is not taken of--*

*(1) overtime pay.*

*(2) additional pay or allowance authorized outside the United States because of differential in cost of living or other special circumstances; or*

*(3) bonus or premium pay for extraordinary service including bonuses or pay for particularly hazardous service in time of war.*

- Many employees believe they do not have an OWCP claim if a preexisting medical problem flares up while working or it is related to working for their employer, but these thoughts are misguided. The FECA plainly states that if your medical problem is related to or aggravated by your employment and you prove it through your doctor's comments on OWCP forms that you will qualify for Compensation.

- Workers Comp will only pay your medical bills related to a work-related injury if your claim is approved and the doctor is recognized as your attending physician. This is usually the first doctor that initiates your CA-20 form. Workers' comp will also pay for visits to other doctors, but only if your attending physician refers you to another doctor. If you don't get a referral from your recognized OWCP attending Physician OWCP will not pay that doctor's bill and you will be responsible for payment.

Southern Region Director A

Kenyon Beasley

# Workplace Safety

Workplace safety refers to the policies, procedures, and practices put in place to protect employees from hazards and risks associated with their work. These hazards can be physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic, or psychological. From construction sites and manufacturing plants to offices and remote workspaces, safety considerations vary widely—but the underlying principles remain the same: identify risks, implement controls, and continuously improve safety measures.

Effective safety management begins with recognizing that hazards are not always obvious. Slippery floors, faulty equipment, exposed wiring, toxic substances, repetitive motions, excessive noise, workplace violence, and stress are all potential threats. Employers must conduct regular risk assessments to identify these dangers and take appropriate corrective action.

## THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EMPLOYERS

The United States Postal Service has both a legal and ethical obligation to provide a safe working envi-

ronment. Regulations established by agencies like the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the United States set standards for hazard communication, personal protective equipment (PPE), machine guarding, fall protection, and more.

Compliance with these regulations is essential, but true workplace safety goes beyond mere adherence to laws. Ethical employers actively seek to create a culture where safety is integrated into everyday operations. They encourage open communication, invest in training, and prioritize worker well-being even when it requires additional time or resources.

## THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN SAFETY CULTURE

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping workplace safety. When managers demonstrate a visible commitment to safety, employees are more likely to follow established procedures and report concerns. A strong safety culture is built on trust, accountability, and shared responsibility.

Leaders can promote safety by:

- Establishing clear safety policies and expectations

- Providing adequate resources for training and equipment
- Encouraging employees to report hazards without fear of retaliation
- Conducting regular safety audits and meetings
- Recognizing and rewarding safe behavior

When safety becomes part of the Postal Service's core values, it shifts from being a compliance requirement to a collective mission.

## TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Comprehensive training is one of the most effective ways to prevent workplace accidents. Employees must understand the risks associated with their roles and know how to mitigate them. Training should be ongoing rather than a one-time event, ensuring that workers stay informed about new equipment, procedures, and regulations.

Effective training programs include:

- Orientation sessions for new employees
- Regular refresher courses
- Emergency response drills
- Hands-on demonstrations
- Clear documentation and accessible safety manuals

Technology has also enhanced safety training through virtual simulations and online modules. These tools allow employees to practice responding to hazardous situations in a controlled environment.

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment serves as the last line of defense against workplace hazards. Items such as helmets, gloves, safety glasses, respirators, ear protection, and steel-toed boots reduce the risk of injury when hazards cannot be eliminated entirely.

However, PPE is only effective when it is:

- Properly selected for the specific hazard
- Correctly fitted and maintained
- Used consistently by employees

The Postal Service must ensure that workers understand how and when to use PPE and that equipment meets recognized safety standards.

## HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT

A proactive approach to workplace safety involves regularly identifying hazards before they cause harm. Risk assessment helps the APWU and Postal Service evaluate the likelihood and severity of potential incidents. This process typically includes:

1. Identifying potential hazards
2. Determining who may be harmed and how
3. Evaluating risks and deciding on preventive measures
4. Recording findings

5. Reviewing and updating assessments regularly

By systematically analyzing risks, we are able to implement controls such as engineering solutions, administrative policies, or protective equipment to reduce exposure.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Even with preventive measures in place, emergencies can still occur. Fires, chemical spills, natural disasters, medical emergencies, and workplace violence require prompt and coordinated responses. An effective emergency preparedness plan should include:

- Clear evacuation procedures
- Designated assembly points
- Accessible emergency equipment
- Communication protocols
- Regular drills and practice sessions

Employees must know their roles during emergencies and feel confident in their ability to respond appropriately. Well-prepared organizations minimize confusion and reduce the severity of incidents.

Workplace safety is not a one-time achievement; it requires continuous monitoring and improvement. Organizations should track safety metrics such as incident rates, near miss reports, and training completion. Analyzing this data helps identify trends and areas for enhancement.

Employee feedback is also invaluable. Workers on the front lines often have firsthand knowledge of potential hazards. Encouraging their input fosters collaboration and innovation in safety practices.

Periodic reviews of safety policies ensure they remain relevant and effective. As technology evolves and industries change, new risks may emerge, requiring updated strategies.

Safety in the workplace is a shared responsibility that demands commitment from both employers and employees. By adhering to regulations set forth by organizations like the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and guided by standards set by the APWU, the USPS can establish a strong foundation for protection. However, true safety goes beyond compliance, it is rooted in culture, communication, and continuous improvement.

When organizations as a whole prioritize safety, they demonstrate respect for their most valuable asset: their employees. A safe workplace is not only a productive one but also a place where individuals feel valued, protected, and empowered to perform at their best.

By fostering awareness, providing training, and embracing a proactive mindset, the USPS can and will create an environment where everyone returns home safely at the end of each day.



Southern Region Director B

Donald Barron



# Winter Safety Tips to Prevent Accidents At Home, Work and On the Road

## 1. PREVENT SLIPS, TRIPS & FALLS

Winter surfaces can be extremely hazardous, and you do not want to have an accident.

- Wear shoes or boots with **non slip soles**.
- Walk like a penguin: **short steps, flat footed, arms free for balance**.
- Use handrails on stairs and ramps.
- Keep driveways, porches, and walkways **shoveled, salted, or sanded**.
- Wipe shoes upon entering buildings to avoid slippery floors.

## 2. DRIVING & VEHICLE PREPARATION

Cold weather creates dangerous travel conditions, and you don't want to have an accident.

### Before driving:

- Clear all windows, mirrors, headlights, and roof of snow/ice.
- Keep tires properly inflated; consider **winter tires** if you live in a snowy region.

• Maintain at least **double the normal following distance** on wet/icy roads.

### While driving:

- Reduce speed. Black ice can be invisible.

- Avoid sudden braking or sharp turns.
- Keep emergency supplies in the car (blanket, flashlight, scraper, water, jumper cables).

## 3. PROTECT YOURSELF FROM COLD EXPOSURE

Hypothermia and frostbite can occur quickly.

### Stay safe by:

- Dressing in layers: moisture wicking inner layer, insulating middle, wind/water resistant outer layer.
- Keeping extremities warm with gloves, thermal socks, and a hat.
- Limiting time outdoors during extreme cold or wind chill.
- Staying dry—wet clothing loses insulation.

## 4. SAFE SNOW REMOVAL

Shoveling can be physically stressful and hazardous.

### Use a safe technique:

- Warm up your muscles first.
- Push snow instead of lifting when possible.
- Lift small amounts at a time to avoid back injuries.
- Take breaks to avoid overexertion, especially if you have heart related risks.

## If using a snowblower:

- Never clear jams with your hands—use a stick or tool.
- Keep children and pets away during operation.

## 5. HEATING & FIRE SAFETY

Home heating causes many winter fires.

### Protect your residence by:

- Keeping space heaters **at least 3 feet** from anything flammable.
- Never leave heaters unattended.
- Cleaning chimneys and vents before winter.
- Installing and testing **smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors**.
- Avoiding the use of ovens for heating.

## 6. WORKPLACE WINTER SAFETY

Perfect for shops, warehouses, postal facilities, and outdoor jobs.

### Work safely by:

- Marking wet or icy areas with signs.
- Requiring non slip footwear if employees walk outdoors.
- Using proper lighting for early morning/evening shifts.
- Training staff on cold stress symptoms (frostbite, hypothermia).



## 7. WINTER PREPAREDNESS AT HOME

Small steps reduce risk enormously:

- Keep a **winter emergency kit** (flashlights, batteries, blankets).
- Have backup heat sources available.
- Ensure handrails and outdoor lighting are secure.
- Check that gutters drain properly to prevent ice buildups.

Hopefully, these simple tips will prevent you and your loved ones from having an accident that results in an injury!

Stay safe and stay warm!

# Western Region Director A

# Marty Schneider

Sisters and Brothers:

Here it is almost Springtime and another two years have passed by. It is once again time to look forward to our APW-ABA Biennial Convention in Los Angeles, CA on Monday, August 17, 2026. Please make plans to attend the Convention.

It's also time to apply for the Association's two \$1,000 Scholarships honoring **Thomas Hartos, Michael Tosches and Eugene Johnson.**

Nothing makes me happier than seeing young people with goals, having an additional opportunity to further their education. The APW-ABA

Scholarships have been offered by the Association since the mid 2000's. The three men for which the scholarships are named were staunch unionists and huge advocates of education. It is a proud tradition which the APW-ABA carries on awarding these two scholarships by random drawing. The Application can be found on the APW-ABA website and in this publication.

Members, please remind High School Seniors that these Scholarships are available! The only requirements are: 1). The applicant must be the child or ward of a member of the APW-ABA. 2). Fill out and submit

the application. HOW SIMPLE IS THAT?! I encourage High School Seniors of our members to apply. The deadline to submit an application is May 15, 2026. Best of luck to all who apply.

Sincerely,  
Marty



# 2026 APW-ABA Scholarship Program

## Honoring Thomas Hartos, Michael Tosches & Eugene Johnson

### APW-ABA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

honoring

**THOMAS HARTOS, MICHAEL TOSCHES & EUGENE JOHNSON**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MAY 15, 2026**

**APPLICATIONS MUST BE FILLED OUT IN THEIR ENTIRETY**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE#: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

I will graduate from \_\_\_\_\_ High School, which is located in \_\_\_\_\_, in \_\_\_\_\_ (City - State) \_\_\_\_\_ (Month - Year)

I will be enrolled for the \_\_\_\_\_ term of \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (Year) \_\_\_\_\_ (School)

in \_\_\_\_\_ (City - State). My father, mother or legal guardian is a member

in good standing in the ABA and the \_\_\_\_\_ Local APWU. (Local name)

ABA Member's EID#: \_\_\_\_\_

ABA Member's email address: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ (printed name & signature)

Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ (printed name & signature)

**ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE SENT TO:**

**ABA Scholarship Program • PO Box 120, Rochester, NH 03866-0120**

*(This section to be completed by ABA National Director)*

**This application has been reviewed and certifies that the above member is a member in good standing of the Accident Benefit Association.**

Local Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Local #: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Recv'd: \_\_\_\_\_

ABA Nat'l Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**2026 APW-ABA**

**SCHOLARSHIP GUIDELINES**

1). The scholarship announcement, application and guidelines will be mailed each year to all Local and State Presidents and ABA Board of Directors, no later than March of each year. The announcement and application will also be printed in the ABA News Digest as well as posted on the official ABA website. The deadline for returning the scholarship application will be set forth by the ABA.

2). All entrants must submit a completed application which will be verified by their local or state president or by the ABA home office. Properly completed applications will be entered into a drawing for a one thousand dollar (\$1,000) scholarship. Entrants must be a graduating high school senior who is the son, daughter or legal ward of a member of the ABA.

3). The scholarship award is limited to a one time amount of one thousand dollars, (\$1,000). Two scholarships will be awarded per calendar year.

4). The scholarship drawings will be held at the ABA home office no later than June of each year. These drawings will be strict "luck of the draw", meaning the entrants pulled are the winners. No preferential treatment will be given to any entrant. All applicants will be assigned a random number for drawing. The winners will be drawn from amongst all applicants and notified by certified mail.

5). Scholarships will be paid directly to the school that has been designated on each winners application. Each winner will also be required to submit an acceptance letter and photograph accompanied by a biography which will appear in an issue of the ABA News Digest.

6). The National Director will coordinate the scholarship program with the authority to settle any or all eligibility requirements or disputes that may arise.

## Central Region Director A

Keith M. Richardson

Greetings, brothers and sisters of the APWABA,

Hoping this finds you well. What's on your mind? Anything bothering you? Stress from home or outside work? If so, don't let what's going on in your life affect how you behave at work. Being inattentive around machines, wet floors, or obstructions could lead to an accident. For example, someone who is stressed might not pay attention to safety instructions or may be more likely to take unnecessary risks, which could lead to serious injuries. Keep your head up, stay

alert, and pay attention. It only takes a moment for something bad to happen. Stress can cause accidents not only at work but also at home, while commuting, or when you're out socializing. Be careful. Stay alert. Don't be too stubborn to talk to someone if you need to.

The bottom line is that accidents can happen at any time. Try not to let stress, grief, or animosity towards someone or something contribute to an accident occurring.

In solidarity,  
Keith

*What's on your mind? Anything bothering you? Stress from home or outside work?*



## Central Region Director B

Keith Combs

# Safety Is Our Responsibility

Greetings to all ABA members,

My name is Keith Combs, and I am one of two Regional Directors for the Central Region.

Every member must look out for their own safety. I know we hear all the time that management cares about our safety. However, we have seen far

too many injuries and deaths in Postal facilities around the country.

We must not stand by and do nothing if we see something wrong. We must always lock out our machines if we are working on Postal equipment. Protect yourself even when management tells you not to. One death because of a safe-

ty violation is one death too many.

The ABA has been there to help employees when injuries occur, but when a death occurs it affects the employee's family, their co-workers, their friends, and the entire facility. Do not take your health for granted. We want each and every employee to return home in the

same condition they made it to work.

Remember that injustice to one is injustice to all. Remember if you have not seen your co-worker or friend in several hours tell someone who will make sure to check on the employee.

Let's be safe at all costs. Because being unsafe could be costly.

## Western Region Director B

Scott Parkin

Do you ever find yourself feeling 'stuck'? I know that I do. When does dwelling go too far? If you find yourself stuck, you might be suffering from something called Rumination. So, what is the rumination trap and how do you get yourself out of it? Rumination is a cycle of repetitive thinking or dwelling on negative feelings and distress that hinders emotional well-being and even daily functioning. It occurs when we repeat the same thoughts without progress with no real plan or action coming from the thinking. Rumination can increase low mood, anxiety, and self-criticism while reducing mental clarity and focus. Rumination often leads to physical stress, sleep disturbances and difficulty in problem solving.

There are four faces of Rumination according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Brooding, Reflection, Intrusive and Deliberate.

Brooding is passive, repetitive thinking about one's negative mood or situation, often viewing oneself in a hopeless light. You might have woken up and had something not go right first thing and you sit and think about it all day, leading to it ruining the rest of your day.

Reflection is an intentional inward examination of why a situation happened, aiming to understand and find a solution. You might be stuck thinking about a past mistake and coming up with ways to avoid making that same mistake in the future.

Intrusive are unwanted involun-

tary thoughts or flashbacks related to a stressful event that feel difficult to stop. This happens when you keep replaying traumatic details of events, even when trying not to.

Deliberate is actively focusing all your mental energy on understanding an event from multiple perspectives to reach a conclusion. You might have an intense focused analysis of a stressful event to fully "get to the bottom of it".

There are several methods for dealing with being stuck in a rut. First is identifying common triggers. Emotional triggers include feelings of anxiety, guilt and inadequacy. Situational triggers involve conflicts, work related stress and major life changes. Internal triggers can stem from perfectionism and rigid expectations, while environmental triggers include isolation and unstructured time.

There are some strategies to reduce Rumination including noticing thought patterns and redirecting attention to engaging activities. Try to reframe unhelpful thoughts and use scheduled 'worry time' to contain your worries. Give yourself 2 minutes a day to linger on your worries then move on to something productive. You can also reduce triggers by managing isolation and structuring your daily tasks. Grounding can be helpful to interrupt Rumination cycles. The 5-4-3-2-1 technique helps to shift focus by identifying sensory experiences. Shift your attention away from the negative looping by identifying 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste.

Temperature changes can help reset the nervous system and deep breathing can help you calm the stress response. Describing your environment to yourself or others can anchor the mind in the present. Describe the things around you and be descriptive with colors, textures and shapes. Try to engage in a short absorbing activity that can disrupt your negative thought loops like taking a walk, making yourself something to drink, folding laundry or reading or listening to a book. Anything to break the cycle and take your mind out of the loop.

When you find yourself stuck, take a pause and ask yourself, "Is this something that I can take action on right now?" If the answer is yes, then take a few minutes to develop a few options but don't spend too much time thinking about them. Write them down in what I call a brain dump. Put them on paper then get them out of your head. Choose small realistic steps to accomplishing the options you've written down and don't try to solve everything at once. Act, then pause to see what worked and what didn't, then re-strategize if need be. If you ask yourself and the answer is no, redirect your mind to something else. Try the steps above if you can't think of another issue that needs your attention. Use activities, movements, or conversations to help shift your mind out of the loop. Keep your problem-solving time limited, focused and structured on the next steps, don't look to the past.

Until next time, I wish you all the best, good health, and safe travels.



# Remembering the Past - Working Toward the Future

*continued from page 3*

It's reported that FDR smiled and said, "I promise". Francis Perkins took the job and walked into a buzzsaw. For 12 years, she was the most hated person in Washinton by Conservative Congressmen, newspapers, and business leaders alike. She ignored them all. Instead, she worked the backrooms. She twisted arms. She used her charm and her steel-trap mind to draft legislation that was bulletproof. When the Social Security Act was stalled in committee, she locked the door and refused to let the men leave until they found a solution.

Frances Perkins didn't care about being liked; she cared about the girls she saw on the sidewalk. She kept a copy of Triangle Shirtwaist Fire investigation on her desk every single day. It was her fuel. By the time she left office, she had rewritten the social contract of the United States. She took a country where old age meant starvation and created a safety net. She took a county where weekends didn't exist and gave us Saturday and Sunday. She is the reason we have fire exits. She is the reason we get overtime pay. She is the reason our 10-year-old sons and daughters are in school, not a factory.

Because of her efforts the changes in codes and labor laws generated in the aftermath of the Triangle Fire and had beneficial effects on the safety and the working conditions of workers in New York State and across the country.

Frances Perkins died in 1965. She is rarely the face on the posters, although in 1980 the United States Postal Service did issue a 15-cent commemorative postal stamp in her honor. She

proved that the government isn't just a referee for the rich, it is a shield for the vulnerable. She saw the worst of humanity on the sidewalk in 1911, and she spent the rest of her life forcing America to be better.

## THE STRUGGLES CONTINUE

Unfortunately, this was not the final word. Sweatshops and unsafe factory conditions persisted, and many factory owners continue to lock the doors of their shops. In 1958, a fire at the **Monarch garment shop** on Broadway, in New York, killed 25 workers. Located in an old building loft, the garment factory was above a shop where an industrial oven had malfunctioned. Once again, the workers on the floor above were unable to escape a raging fire. The tragedy brought back the painful memories of the Triangle fire, and many asked why these sorts of accidents could still occur. The ILGWU renewed its efforts to help monitor conditions in factories and co-sponsored a very successful fire warden program in New York City garment shops, which involved thousands of union members. It also included fire prevention programs in collective bargaining agreements.

## YET ANOTHER TRAGEDY

Many of us will also remember reports that on September 3, 1991, a fire at the **Imperial Food Products chicken processing plant** in Hamlet, North Carolina, killed 25 workers and injured 54 others. The incident occurred when a hydraulic line broke, causing oil to ignite, which spread rapidly through the plant. Again, workers were trapped inside

because management had padlocked exit doors from the outside to prevent theft, and a delivery truck blocked a back exit, causing many to succumb to smoke inhalation while trying to escape. Moreover, the facility lacked fire alarms, sprinklers, and emergency lighting, and had never been inspected by OSHA in its 11 years of operation.

In its aftermath, investigators concluded this event as a major, avoidable industrial disaster highlighting the dangers of locked workplace exits and lack of safety oversight. Tragedy resulted in massive fines and spurred renewed focus on workplace safety regulations.

## A TRAGEDY NARROWLY AVOIDED

On the morning of May 19, 2000, Tampa (FL) Fire Rescue personnel were called to a report of electric lines down that would soon become a fire the likes of which hadn't been seen in Tampa for more than 80 years. The initial call reported electric wires down near an apartment complex under construction in the Ybor City portion of the city of Tampa. The apartment complex, to be known as "The Park at Ybor," was to have been a 450-unit complex covering more than four city blocks. This complex, like many others in the area, was rapidly built of wood-frame construction. Since the Park at Ybor complex was under construction, it did not have the benefit of installed firestopping, draft stopping, or drywall at the time of the fire. It was at its most vulnerable point, with nothing but exposed wood-frame construction extending more than three stories high.

What the report did not state was that the apartment complex (and city-blocks-wide inferno) was located directly across the street from the Ybor City post office, where clerks and city carriers were sorting mail. At first notice management instructed the employees to keep working, as the fire was "all the way across the street". What they didn't know was the entire apartment complex work site would soon be consumed by large 3-4 story flames. And guess what – radiant heat in the roof and wooden rafters of the post office was building to a combustible level.

The post office seemingly had all the safeguards in place: fire alarm(s),

sprinkler system(s), emergency lighting, etc. And, unlike the tragedies of the Triangle Waistcoat Factory, the Monarch Garment Shop, and the Imperial Food Products plant, the chains on the vestibules leading to the outside parking lot at the back of the building were not secured (although the exits to the front of the post office were blocked at this point by the fire). Good so far, huh? Well, here's the rub:

Upon exiting the now burning post office building the employees attempted to flee the area by walking across the USPS parking lot where a gate would have allowed them to evacuate the area. However, the padlock on the gate was locked, and rusted shut, as no one had ever listed this on any safety walkthrough inspections. At this point all the clerks and carriers were able to physically push down the chain link fence, and everyone was able to escape. The post office building, however, burned and was not replaced for 5 years.

Follow-up investigations raised several concerns, including what would have happened if the fire across the street from the post office had started an hour later and the carriers had already departed on their assigned routes that morning, leaving only a handful of clerks alone in the back of the parking lot? Moreover, why wasn't the padlock on the parking lot gate checked regularly to make sure it was in working order?

**A final thought:** While developing agenda items for local and national Safety Committee Meetings, it's not just the obvious checklist we should be bringing up, including the "locking-in of employees", with chains and padlocks in the vestibule doors or blocked exits. It's our chance to bring out the little things; in this case a rusted padlock on a gate several yards from the back of the post office. Remember, the USPS has many facilities nationwide, some small and some large, some in and near industrial areas like airports, seaports, fuel storage facilities, etc. With the attacks on unions in general and the USPS specifically, it's important that we all act like Frances Perkins, as too many of the benefits she fought for – and won- are under severe attacks!

Best wishes for a safe and healthy 2026 ABA Convention.



*The cooker around which the Imperial Foods chicken processing plant fire was centered.*



*A view of the plant taken from a ladder across the street, showing a collapsed section of roof directly above the origin of the fire.*