



# ***WAKE UP!***

President/ Editor  
Dave Barbuzzi

Publisher  
Chris Bruno

**Volume 46 Issue 2**

**February 2022**

Acton , Amesbury , Andover , Bedford , Beverly , Billerica , Burlington , Chelmsford , Concord , Danvers, Dracut , Gloucester, Haverhill, Holliston, Ipswich, Lowell, Lynnfield, Manchester, Marblehead, Maynard, Merrimac, Newburyport, North Chelmsford, North Reading , Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Salem , South Hamilton, Sudbury , Tewksbury , Topsfield, Wakefield , Wayland , Wilmington , Winchester



At the December branch meeting, your 2022-2024 Branch officers were sworn in by NBA Rick DiCecca. They are: (seated left to right) Sargeant At Arms Jack Lyman, Secretary Tony Bossi, Assistant Treasurer Jim Nutter, President Dave Barbuzzi, Executive Vice President Paul Desmond, Safety Officer Jim Salvati, Chairman Board of Trustees Dan Raske  
(Standing left to right) MBA-NSBA Rep Bob Cronin, Vice President Dan Wheeler, Assistant Health Benefits Rep Richie Donlon, Trustee Bruce Johnson, Assistant Secretary Andy Coan, Assistant Safety Officer Jeremy Provost, Health Benefits Rep Ken Dusombre, Trustee John McNulty, Trustee Mark Gangi, NBA Rick DiCecca.  
Not pictured Trustee Joe Stearns and Wake-Up! Publisher Chris Bruno

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## President's Message

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I'm going to start my Article this month by urging you to read the rest of the Articles carefully. There is quite a bit of timely information on the pages of this newsletter. As a matter of fact, if you read the Wake-Up! each month I would bet that questions that you may have will be answered at some point.

It has been very busy lately. I describe the Union office right now as similar to an emergency room during a full moon; crazy busy with weird stuff happening.

Both NBA DiCecca and Vice President Wheeler write about COVID. I won't elaborate on what they've written but I wanted to add a bit. I have seen reports that have predicted that EVERYONE will eventually be infected with COVID. I don't know whether that prediction will come to fruition but I do know that if infected you should file a CA-1. There is a lot of bad information out there designed to discourage you from filing. For instance, just this week I have spoken to carriers that have said they've been told if they file a CA-1 they will have that proverbial "target on their back". Carriers have also been told that they don't receive full pay if they file a CA-1. Finally, apparently some managers have attempted to "shame" carriers out of filing a CA-1 saying that the carriers probably got COVID somewhere other than work.

Forget about the target on your back. There won't be one and if for some reason one appears, we'll address it. If you file a CA-1 and choose continuation of pay, you will receive full pay, not 2/3 or 3/4 as some are saying. Continuation of pay is full pay for 45 days. If you are out less than 14 days, the first 3 days will be your own leave but then you won't be using your leave. That 3 days will be restored if you are out for more than 14 days. Finally, the Department of Labor has determined that if you are a letter carrier, and you have been to work within 21 days of contracting COVID, you got it at work. File the claim!

Perhaps worse than any of the misinformation referenced above is that there are managers that are trying to discourage carriers from getting tested for COVID. I've heard of supervisors saying to carriers things like: "Don't go home, it's probably just the flu", or "You already had COVID so you'll probably test positive no matter what because it's in your system." Management is so desperate to not lose more workers they are casting aside good judgement and endangering everyone. If you are under the weather, assume you have COVID and get tested. Your coworkers and customers will thank you for keeping them safe.

Home testing kits are now available, and the government is giving any household that asks for them 4 free ones. That's fine, but if you're going to be filing a claim with workers' comp, be sure to have a DOCTOR confirm your diagnosis. I've been told that doctors are doing so over the phone or via zoom.

I have also recently become aware of CCA's being sent to Lawrence for a month at a time. If this has happened to you or to anyone in your office, notify the Union office IMMEDIATELY. Management is allowed to send you to another installation on an "occasional" basis. Occasional is not defined but I'm willing to test at arbitration that a month at a time is not occasional.

I have also recently been made aware that carriers (mostly CCA's) that have been required to work in offices other than their home office have not been being paid mileage for their travel to the other offices. If your commute to the other office is longer than your commute to your home office, you are entitled to be paid mileage for the difference in commutes. If you have worked in another office and have not been paid mileage, get in touch with your steward or the Union office IMMEDIATELY.

Holiday schedules are always a nightmare, but they are even more problematic when they deal with the actual day of a Holiday where there is a hub delivering parcels to spokes. In such a situation, the hub office is responsible for delivery of parcels and the hub office must follow the pecking order contained in their LMOU. For instance, recently we a hub where parcels were delivered on MLK Monday. The hub should have had a holiday schedule. Unfortunately, the pecking order would have required the people who's n/s day was Monday to work. The overtime desired list doesn't come into play. Everyone else had Monday as their holiday.

Then, if there weren't enough Monday n/s people to get the parcels delivered, everyone else in the office would be forced by juniority, regardless of whether they are on the overtime desired list. CCA's from other offices could be used, but regulars from other offices could not be used. This means that regulars from the hub may be delivering parcels in the spoke offices. Don't shoot the messenger. I don't like this arrangement, but that is what the contract dictates. If something other than this has happened, please make your steward and the Union office aware immediately.

Finally, as mentioned elsewhere, there is a backlog of people waiting to be cleared to return to work. If you are one of them, be sure to talk to your steward and/or the union office so that we can grieve on your behalf.

Stay informed and stay well!

Dave Barbuzzi

# Executive Vice-President's Report

Every so often management gets some ideas in their heads that may seem good to them at the time, but in reality it is just creating another problem. As we know, there are many offices that serve as "hubs" on Sundays in order to deliver mostly parcels. Sometimes these hubs also operate on holidays. The use of CCAs in these Sunday hubs is contractually compliant and expected, and also one of the reasons the CCAs were hired. Unfortunately, they do not want to hear that, but it is reality and hopefully the CCAs will be converted to regular status long before the 2-year conversion to PTF happens. The problem becomes when management decides to schedule full-time regular carriers from outside installations to work in these hubs on Sundays. Full-time regular carriers that are needed for OT are to be scheduled in the work location where the employees regularly work. This is straight contract language. Even if CCAs are scheduled from a station to go to a hub on Sunday, a regular from the same station can not go to the hub. The hub uses regular employees from their own roster if necessary. If every station delivered their own parcels from their own station, then the use of regulars on Sundays would be a different story. It would depend on using the OT list to the maximum from that particular station. If you are a full-time regular scheduled in a hub that is not your regular work location, please contact your steward or notify the Union office immediately. Holidays are a little different because of the particular LMOUs in the hubs, but in short, full-time regulars from other stations should not be going to any hubs.

The fact that so many carriers are out with covid brings up many problems, some have to do with their pay. Some carriers are filing CA-1s to be paid Continuation of Pay, and others are simply using sick leave. Some carriers have large sick leave balances and are choosing this option, it is an individual choice. Whichever option you choose if you come down with covid, make sure to keep an eye on your leave usage. The COP should kick in after 3 days, but in some instances the COP is not instantly approved, usually waiting for medical proof of covid and an adjustment has to be made to change the leave to COP. Other times, the supervisor simply hits the wrong button and charges you leave, a simple mistake but it must be corrected. Keep an eye on this, as there have been delays to returning to work and carriers are sometimes out longer than expected. We can address this if adjustments are necessary. Regardless of the situation, you should always be checking your pay to make sure you were paid properly.

Speaking of being paid properly, there are a lot of CCAs being used in offices other than the one they were hired to work in. If the station you are going to is a longer commute than the one you were hired for, you are entitled to be paid mileage for the difference. This is a round trip difference, not just one way. Management

should be setting up a mileage account for you and most likely won't do it unless you request it. Please do or call the Union office and we will call them. The mileage rate is the Federal reimbursement rate which is about 58.5 cents per mile. I could be a little off on the figure, but it is close. This is not something you should ignore seeing the price of gasoline is rising, and if you drive an electric or hybrid vehicle you are still paying to charge it. The miles add up pretty quick if you are going somewhere every week or in some cases more often. Keep track of all mileage outside of your own station in case it takes a while to get the account set up.

There is a good article in the Postal Record this month written by Director of Retired Members, Dan Toth. It answers some basic questions that we get a lot at the Union office about timelines of retirement. It does not go into great details of the "blue book" used to apply for retirement but gives a quick estimate of how long it takes to process your application. We always suggest requesting the blue book 6 months ahead of your planned retirement date. You can always change the date if you want to go sooner. The Retirement Department at NALC is the best source for all retirement questions. We won't be meeting in person for a while to allow covid to settle down, but hopefully it won't take too long.

Keep your head up!

Paul Desmond

## Calendar of Events

February 1	Branch Meeting via ZOOM (Meeting address on back cover)
February 1	Chinese New Years
February 2	Ground Hog Day
February 3	The Day the Music Died
February 4	Thank a Mailman Day
February 8	Boy Scout Day
February 12	Lincoln's Birthday
February 14	Valentines' Day
February 21	President's Day
February 22	Washington's Birthday

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## Branch 25 Directory of Officers

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David J. Barbuzzi	President
Paul G. Desmond	Executive V.P.
Dan Wheeler	Vice President
Anthony Bossi	Secretary
James P. Nutter	Treasurer
Kenneth Dusombre	Health Benefits Rep.
Jim Salvati	Safety Officer
Jack Lyman	Sergeant At Arms
Dan Raske	Chmn. Board of Trustees
Mark Gangi	Trustee
Bruce Johnson	Trustee
John McNulty	Trustee
Joe Stearns	Trustee
Andy Coan	Assistant Secretary
James Metilinos	Assistant Treasurer
Chris Bruno	Wake-Up Publisher
Bob Cronin	MBA-NSBA Rep
Jeremy Provost	Assistant Safety Officer
Richard Donlon	Asst Health Benefits Rep
Ron Noviello	Workers' Comp Rep.

*Your "Wake-Up!" is produced in-house at the Branch 25 Union office each and every month.*

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### Just For The Health Of It

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As previously indicated (see last month's Wake-Up!) this article is addressed to the literally tens of millions of Americans who are or who will confront the difficult task of being caregivers for victims of Alzheimer's disease. In this context, I'm confident that the following information will prove useful.

1. There is a distinction between dementia and Alzheimer's. Basically to the lay person it equates to a question of degree of decline in cognitive ability and the practical approaches in dealing with either of the two afflictions.
2. Dementia does increase over time as may the role of a caregiver.
3. If you notice unsettling signs (again in the January issue of the Wake-Up!) on your part or that of another, CONSULT WITH A DOCTOR.
4. Alzheimer's caregiving is a team effort. There are resources available to you. Specifically, the NALC Health Benefits Plan offers our Disease Management Program. You connect with a dedicated health advocate at no additional cost to you.
5. CVS Health has joined the Alzheimer's Association in an effort to develop a new caregiver education program in the near future. I would be happy to share that information in person-to-person contact with those interested as it becomes available. Contact me through the office.

A personal note. We retirees thought we had it tough delivering the mail and we did (anthrax, bombs in the mail, etc.), but I think you active carriers have it even tougher. Yet, you get it done. I admire all of you.

Keep on truckin'

Rich Donlon

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### Safety

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Most people have heard of OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) but how many have heard of NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health)? So what is NIOSH and how is it different from OSHA?

The main difference between the two agencies is that OSHA creates and enforces safety rules which employers must follow while NIOSH is a research and education institution. Another difference is that OSHA is an office within the Department of Labor, while NIOSH is governed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Both entities were mandated in 1970 when the Occupational Safety and Health Act was passed. It was decided that improving job safety would require a regulatory agency as well as a research institution.

Over the nearly 50 years of their existence, OSHA and NIOSH haven't always coordinated perfectly. But in the wake of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster, both agencies worked closely together to protect staff involved in cleanup efforts. They continue to work closely today.

If you want to see what NIOSH does head over to <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/index.htm> . You'll find information on topics from A to Z. Literally. You can click through the alphabet and find a long list of safety and health subjects. Some topics have printable articles, some have videos and some have webinars. Not all will apply to Letter Carriers but there are quite a few such as heat and cold stress, fatigue, motor vehicle safety etc. There are even listings of conferences that take place nationally and internationally. Check it out!

Stay Safe,

Jim Salvati  
Lyrics Trivia

Well, I built me a raft and she's ready for floatin'  
Ol' Mississippi, she's callin' my name  
Catfish are jumpin', that paddle wheel thumpin'...



## “OMICRON”

Just when everyone thought it was safe to come out and play, COVID has re-energized itself!

I am not aware of one letter carrier or postal employee that wouldn't like nothing more than to burn every mask, rubber glove, and bottle of sanitizer they could get their hands on.

Unfortunately, we will all need to wait. With 2022 ringing in the New Year everyone has to recommit to the safety protocols put in place in 2020-2021. In New England we are experiencing well over 100 new positive COVID cases amongst postal employees each day! When I walk into offices or attend meetings often very few employees are wearing a mask or practicing social distancing. When questioned I hear “I had COVID already” or “I am fully vaccinated” and even more disturbing “it's a made-up virus used to scare everyone into getting a vaccine”; none of which will protect you from the “OMICRON” variant. Many have let their guard down or thrown their hands up in frustration, attending family gatherings and social events while throwing caution to the wind. We need to refocus. We need to get back to protecting ourselves and the carriers around us. Wearing a mask or getting a vaccine is not a sign of weakness; it is an example we set for our children. It is the small sacrifice we make to protect not only ourselves but everyone around us. If this sounds like the same old same old, take a moment and think about a friend or family member who has lost their life to COVID. That's reality.

I have spoken of this in past articles and mailings and I feel with this latest surge the need to address it again. With the signing of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 it was made easier to file a workers' compensation claim for a carrier who is diagnosed with COVID and can document they had worked within 21 days prior to a positive test. The process is simple, and carriers should be filing a claim with the Department of Labor (DOL). All one must do is go to the DOL's ECOMP website ([www.ecomp.dol.gov](http://www.ecomp.dol.gov)), create an ECOMP account, and have a positive PCR or Antigen test. All you must show is that you've worked within the 21 days preceding the positive COVID test, and than can easily be done with your clock rings. Talk to your steward or Branch President if you have any questions. They have each received a guide to help with this process. Everyone needs to keep in mind the unknown effects this virus could have on us in the years to come. An approved workers' compensation claim will help to protect you from loss of wages as well as protect your family if you should get very ill or die from this virus.

On a related issue of quarantine and return to work the USPS has put in place a new “decision tree” to help in identifying those infected as well as contact trace..The USPS OHNAs (Occupational Health Nurse Administrators) are overwhelmed, with frequent delays in return-to-work calls or contact tracing calls. Many carriers are waiting too long for that return-to-work call. If you find yourself in that position, have a negative test, and have no symptoms, be sure to call your steward. Ask him/her to investigate to determine if a contractual violation has occurred. If you filed a CA-1 for COVID and are receiving Continuation of Pay (COP), that should not stop just because the USPS or OHNA cannot get to you in a timely manner. **Do not hesitate to file a workers' compensation claim!**


Lastly, everyone has been hearing about the federal mandate requiring all federal employees to be vaccinated to be able to work. This does not apply to the Postal Service. But what will affect and apply to the Postal Service is OSHA's mandate that requires vaccination or weekly testing for the unvaccinated to report to work. The USPS has requested an extension on the implementation of this requirement and a decision has not yet been made, but when one is rendered, the NALC will provide guidance.

We are all feeling the effects of this variant, but we will prevail.

Thank you for your dedication and service throughout these most difficult times as I know we will be able to go and play freely if we all practice the safety protocols every day in our work lives and personal lives.

*Ask yourself this question: “Will this matter a year from now?”*

Richard Carlson, American Psychotherapist, and author of *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*

 **BRANCH 25 RETIREE GRATUITY VOUCHER**


Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(as it will appear on plaque)

P.O. Retiring from: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Retirement date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: Retiree must be a member in good standing at date of retirement. Retiree has 4 months from retirement date to remit this voucher to the branch office. Please mail to: NALC Branch 25  
2500 Main St, Suite 201, Tewksbury Ma, 01876



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## Vice President's Report

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2022 has started out with a bang here in Branch 25, unfortunately not in a good way. The omicron variant of the coronavirus really took off at the very end of 2021 and into 2022. On October 1 there were about 1600 new cases being reported in Massachusetts each day and by the end of December that number had risen to over 5000 new cases per day. Many offices struggled as employees were out with the virus, sometimes losing almost half of the office at one time. In my office, it affected carriers, clerks, and management. To exacerbate the situation, employees who cleared the return-to-work protocols were left waiting for a call from the Postal Service to clear them to return to work. At one point, there were, reportedly, hundreds of employees in the district waiting for that phone call to get back to work. Thankfully, those who got sick with this new variant seemed to get over the illness quicker, for the most part. The latest projections show the omicron variant peaking, here in Massachusetts, within the next couple of weeks. Hopefully, we are looking to having more healthy carriers soon! The NALC is encouraging any carrier who contracted the coronavirus to fill out a CA-1 (Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation) with the Department of Labor. If you worked within 21 days of testing positive your claim will be approved. Please ask your steward or call the branch office for assistance or more details.

The White House has just announced it will be purchasing 1 billion at-home rapid COVID tests to be made available to the American public starting on January 19. There will be free tests available for every household, and to promote broad access, the initial program will allow four free tests to be requested per residential address. Starting January 19<sup>th</sup>, Americans will be able to order their tests online at [COVIDTests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov), and tests will typically ship within 7-12 days of ordering. We, as letter carriers, will be delivering these tests. The Biden administration has partnered with the Postal Service to, not only, deliver these tests but to process them as well. The American postal Workers Union (APWU), which represents the clerk craft, has signed a deal with the Postal Service. This deal will allow the clerks to package and label the tests. The tests going to the continental United States will be sent First Class Mail, and tests going to Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. Territories and APO/FPO/DPO addresses will be sent through Priority Mail. This is another opportunity to show how vital that letter carriers and the Postal Service's delivery network are to the American people.

I have written in previous articles about workers at Amazon locations across the country and their struggle at attempting to organize and Amazon's efforts to stop any organizing. A couple of days before Christmas the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and Amazon announced a landmark settlement. Amazon agreed to

inform employees of their organizing rights and that Amazon would not prevent employees from exercising these rights. Amazon pledged to notify all employees of their organizing rights via email and in notices posted for 60 days at all Amazon facilities. Amazon pledged not to threaten discipline, call the police on organizers, or throw employees out of buildings within 15 minutes of their shifts ending. These are some of the tactics employed to suppress potential organizing in the past. NLRB General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo said, "The NLRB will vigorously seek to ensure Amazon's compliance with this settlement." The agreement by Amazon surprised many people. Amazon had previously shown no appetite to accept potential organizing by employees and had spent million of dollars to combat it. They had, however, been under more public scrutiny about their anti-worker policies that prioritize profit over employee's safety of late. In December, an Amazon warehouse in Edwardsville Illinois collapsed after being hit by a tornado. 6 workers were killed, and stories started to emerge of employees being threatened with termination if they left the building, despite active tornado warnings. It is sad that it takes lives being lost to bring about positive change but that is often what it takes.

A couple of other items: The Postal Service seemed to do a better job of moving mail this holiday season. Between Thanksgiving and December 30, 2021, 11.1 billion pieces of mail were accepted for mailing. According to Postal Service data, the average mail piece took 2.7 days to deliver this season. The Thrift savings Plan finished 2021 on a high note. All funds except for one, that being the F Fund, were up in December.

In Solidarity,  
Dan Wheeler



# Coronavirus

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## Self-Care

Because of the elevated level of uncertainty associated with COVID-19, many feel anxious, stressed and overwhelmed. Other common reactions include fear, anger and helplessness. Juggling the demands of work, taking care of family and dealing with additional COVID-19 related challenges can be taxing. Practicing self-care can reduce stress, increase focus and put us in a better position to help and support others.

### Self-care for your physical health:

- Fuel your body by eating a healthy, well-balanced diet and by drinking plenty of water.
- Aim to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.
- Exercise every day. If your gym is closed — go for a walk outside, ride a bike or follow exercise videos online.
- Take deep breaths and stretch often.
- Avoid destructive behavior — abusing alcohol or drugs, excessive gambling or ignoring safety recommendations.
- Spend time outside. Work in the yard, appreciate nature, walk the dog, wash the car or just soak in some sunshine.

### Self-care for your mental health:

- Set and maintain a routine. Sticking to a schedule can give you a sense of control and normalcy.
- Focus on things you can control.
- Use technology to maintain social connections. Schedule regular check-ins to give you something to look forward to.
- Focus your thoughts on the present and things to be grateful for today.
- Listen to music or read books.
- Stay informed with reliable news sources. Limit your exposure to news and social media if it makes you anxious.
- Lean on your personal beliefs and faith for support.
- Look for ways to help your community, such as by giving blood, checking on older people in your neighborhood, or donating supplies or money to help local organizations.
- Acknowledge and appreciate what others are doing to help you and your community.

As always, your EAP is here for you and your family. Whether you are staying home or continuing your routine, there are a variety of ways to connect with your EAP including: telephone 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU), TTY: 877-492-7341, online at [EAP4YOU.com](http://EAP4YOU.com), through video, live chat or text message. Reach out to learn more about the many ways you can receive support from your Employee Assistance Program.



**CALL US TODAY: 800-327-4968**  
800-EAP-4YOU | TTY: 877-492-7341  
[WWW.EAP4YOU.COM](http://WWW.EAP4YOU.COM)

## **WAKE UP**

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*at the next meeting*  
**Via**  
**ZOOM.**  
*(address below)*

Regular Monthly Branch 25 Meeting  
Feb 1, 2022 08:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81479711036>

Dial by your location

- +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
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- +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
- +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
- +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 814 7971 1036

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81479711036>