



# ***WAKE UP!***

President/ Editor  
Dave Barbuzzi

Publisher

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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

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## ***OWCP - A Primer***

Merriam-Webster defines “primer” as “a small introductory book on a subject”, or “a short informative piece of writing.” Thus, this article is by no means intended to provide exhaustive training on OWCP. Instead, it is meant to address misunderstandings, misconceptions, and the general lack of awareness throughout the branch on things OWCP.

If you are injured on the job, you should immediately report your injury to your supervisor and you should make note of when you reported your injury and who you spoke to. It is a good idea to notify the branch office immediately as well. Often mistakes are made completing paperwork that wouldn't be made if you speak to the branch office first.

The law provides that you have up to 3 years to file a CA-1 or a CA-2. A CA-1 is used for “traumatic injury” which is an injury that occurs during one shift. A CA-2 is used to report an “occupational disease or illness” which is an illness or injury that develops over time. It is NOT a good idea to wait 3 years to file a claim. Report the injury immediately, and then file the appropriate claim.

How do you file the claim? There are a few ways. If the injury is non-emergent, I would recommend filing your claim through “E-comp”. You do so by going online at [ecomp.dol.gov](http://ecomp.dol.gov) . You will have to register for an account (free) and you will complete the CA-1 online. Later, you will be able to upload documents through the website. Documents include medical narratives from

DOCTORS (not nurses or physician’s assistants) or witness statements or other relevant documents. The biggest advantage to filing online with e-comp is the speed with which your CA-1 is transmitted to the Department of Labor (who administer OWCP). You can complete the CA-1 at home, or you can complete it on a computer at work. Management has been trained on the completion of forms with e-comp and they should be happy to assist you.

If you are not comfortable with a computer or management is not willing to help you, you can absolutely complete a paper CA-1 or CA-2. Once you complete the form and turn it in to your supervisor, he or she has till the close of business THAT DAY to send the form to the “control point”. For us, that is injury compensation in Boston. The control point then has 10 days to get the paperwork to the department of labor. Remember what I said about speed?

Just a note about completing the CA-1. The form asks whether you want to use your own leave or whether you want to elect “continuation of pay”. Continuation of pay kicks in after 3 days of disability. However, if your disability goes beyond 14 days, you can then receive continuation of pay for those first three days. The only negative to continuation of pay in my opinion is that if your claim is eventually denied, you will have to repay the continuation of pay. If you use sick or annual leave, and your claim is approved, you can “buy back the leave that you used BEFORE your claim was approved. (cont)

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## President's Message

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### ***“Take a Shot”***

At press time, postal employees are FINALLY eligible for the Covid-19 vaccine in Massachusetts. As a matter of fact, not long after you receive this month's "Wake-Up!", EVERYONE in Massachusetts will be eligible for the vaccine. Hopefully, people will receive the vaccine in a timely manner. I would like to think that as soon as May we may be able to meet in person again. Of course, I will monitor CDC guidelines and the branch will adhere to them. It is important to get together and meet as a body and I am looking forward to doing so.

This is a big year. In the fall, there will be nominations and elections of branch officers, shop steward elections, and nominations and elections for the 2022 NALC Convention in Chicago. If you have questions about any of the above, don't hesitate to contact the branch office.

I don't have information yet regarding when and whether normalcy will return to the postal service regarding social distancing, start times, etc. I would like to think that as more carriers are vaccinated, perhaps more carriers can start at the same time. Perhaps the "A" and "B" designations can be modified to accommodate the change in the make-up of vaccinated and non-vaccinated employees. Only time will tell.

Since we last met, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act. Along with another round of stimulus checks, one of the significant provisions of the Act is Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL). The leave, which became effective on March 12, covers ALL federal employees. The leave will last until September 30, 2021, or until the \$570,000,000 funding runs out.

To give a little perspective, there are 2.1 million civilian workers in the federal government. The maximum amount of pay per week allowed under the Act is \$2800. That would yield 203,571 weeks of pay, or roughly 4 hours of pay per employee if every employee earned that rate and decided to put in for leave. The point I'm trying to make is that there is no guarantee the funding will last till September 30 and there is no guarantee that you will be able to get the leave. Get your shots as soon as possible so that you can use the leave to get your shot and you can use the leave if you have an adverse reaction to your shot. You can go to the branch website to see the criteria for using the leave.

The three most popular questions that the branch office is dealing with lately are: When can we stop scanning MSP points? When are CCA's converted to career employees? and When do we get the retro pay? The answer to the first two questions is no later than May 8, 2021. The answer to the retro pay...***as soon as practicable.***

There are staffing issues in many offices. However, there is an outright staffing emergency

presently in Lawrence. Lawrence is not part of Branch 25, but some of our CCA's may find themselves being required to work in Lawrence if they haven't been required to do so already. This is explained in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the National Union and the postal service back in December of 2013. If you would like a copy of the MOU, contact the Union office and we will email you a copy.

If you are a steward in an office where CCA(s) are being sent to Lawrence, be sure to protect the rights of the carriers in your own office as well. First, unless a CCA volunteers to go to another office, CCA(s) are sent by inverse relative standing. Second, the text of the MOU provides that ***“Temporary assignments must otherwise be consistent with the National Agreement (e.g. assigning CCAs to work outside their employing office may not violate Article 7.1.C.4 in the temporary office or the letter carrier paragraph in the employing office.”***

The letter carrier paragraph reads as follows: ***“In the Letter Carrier craft, where management determines that overtime or auxiliary assistance is needed on an employee's route on one of the employee's regularly scheduled days and the employee is not on the overtime desired list, the employer will seek to utilize auxiliary assistance, when available, rather than requiring the employee to work mandatory overtime.”***

That means that management should not send a CCA to another installation and require you to work overtime on your own assignment on a regularly scheduled day. If this happens, request union time and speak to your shop steward or call the union office on your lunch break or 10-minute break.

If there is any positive that can be drawn from the situation in Lawrence it is that there is opportunity for CCA's to go to Lawrence permanently and make regular very quickly presently. Although it is a very personal decision that only the individual can make, it is something worth considering for a newer CCA that is looking at 24 months before becoming a ptf and then who knows how much longer to become a regular. Again, if you have questions about the process, contact the branch.

Finally, a parcel sorting machine will be installed in the Woburn installation mid-April. The machine has a very large footprint which results in the delivery units being moved into less than ideal conditions. We are investigating OSHA compliance and will stay on top of future developments. On a positive note, parcels should be complete before carriers clock in in the morning.

Stay informed!

Dave Barbuzzi

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## Executive Vice-President's Report

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As I write this the amount of Covid vaccinations that have been administered is approaching 130 million, with approximately 15 percent of this country's population fully vaccinated. Postal workers have just been named eligible to receive vaccinations in Massachusetts so hopefully as many members as possible will take advantage of this. Most health care providers and pharmacies are administering the vaccines and the amount being sent to each state should be increasing, so maybe things will get back to a little sense of normalcy within a couple months. With the weather getting better as least we can spend some time outside. Please stay vigilant and keep masking up, stay socially distant, keep washing and sanitizing your hands until this virus is under control.

It is almost Opening Day at Fenway and there will actually be a small percentage of fans in the stands. Any figure is better than the amount at games last summer, zero. The Bruins and Celtics will be doing the same thing at Boston Garden also which is a small sign of getting things back on track, allowing at least a small percentage of the Garden and Fenway employees to work. Hopefully, these percentages increase when the amount of vaccines administered increases. We have had a long haul as USPS employees during the past year, but for the most part we haven't missed pay or benefits. I think most carriers would say they have actually worked too much for their liking. While millions of Americans are unemployed, or under employed, we are gainfully employed and we have continued to accrue retirement benefits. Just a thought.

There has been a re-alignment of Postal Districts throughout the country, essentially eliminating some districts by combining parts of Districts with others. Basically, this will eliminate some positions in management that doesn't really have an effect on the letter carriers, but will result in offering managers an early retirement opportunity. We have gotten calls at the Union office inquiring if this offer applies to carriers. It doesn't and it also does not include a financial incentive for the managers to retire. There has been talk about the carrier craft being offered an early retirement if the CCA workforce is stabilized, which may be possible under the new National Agreement. I am not saying an early retirement WILL be offered to carriers in the near future but there have been a lot of inquiries about it at the Union office. If it is offered at some point, it is also unlikely to have a financial incentive, but time will tell. I know a lot of carriers are eligible to retire immediately and there probably will be a lot of them requesting their retirement papers now that the contract has been resolved, but if you are one of them do it well before the date you would like to retire. I am getting reports that

there is a delay in getting out the "blue books" that are necessary to set up a counseling session with Human Resources. Give yourself 6 months if possible.

It looks as if we are getting closer to being able to meet in person as a branch, with the state lifting some restrictions for indoor gatherings. We aren't there yet but barring any setbacks it is close. Until then the Zoom meetings we have each month will be a good source for information, they have been well attended but it would be great to see some additional members. They usually last about an hour and there is no travel time to and from the meeting. If you have had a long day, you don't even have to leave your house to join in. Enjoy a beverage and relax. The Zoom information is in the Wakeup and there is also a direct link to join on the branch website, [www.nalcbranch25.com](http://www.nalcbranch25.com).

Stay safe and keep your head up!

Paul Desmond

### Calendar of Events

April 1	April Fool's Day
April 2	Good Friday
April 4	Easter Sunday
April 6	Branch 25 Monthly Zoom Meeting
April 10	National Siblings Day
April 12	Ramadan
April 19	Patriots' Day
April 22	Earth Day
April 30	Arbor Day

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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
Andy Coan	Secretary
James P. Nutter	Treasurer
Kenneth Dusombre	Health Benefits Rep.
Jim Salvati	Safety Officer
Jack Lyman	Sergeant At Arms
Ron Noviello	Chmn. Board of Trustees
Dan Raske	Trustee
Bruce Johnson	Trustee
John McNulty	Trustee
Anthony Bossi	Assistant Secretary
Peter Godino	Assistant Treasurer
Bob Cronin	MBA-NSBA Rep
Steve Pickett	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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## OWCP Primer Continued

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Ok, so now that you've filled out the CA-1, what's next? Your supervisor should give you a CA-16. A CA-16 is ONLY provided AFTER a CA-1 has been completed. A CA-16 is two pages to be completed along with two pages of instruction and a one page privacy act notice, remember that. The CA-16 authorizes the doctor or hospital to provide necessary treatment. This authorization is NOT dependent upon your claim being approved.

So, as you can see, it is to your advantage to immediately complete the CA-1 so that you can get the CA-16. Don't let your supervisor tell you that they don't have a CA-16, THEY DO! They can print them off of e-comp.

You've filled out your CA-1 and you have your CA-16 in hand, now what? Go to the doctor or hospital! If it is not an emergency, your supervisor does not have the right to go with you and he or she does not have the right to tell you where to go. If it is an emergency (eye injury, broken bone, heart attack, weapon wounds to name a few), the supervisor is responsible to accompany you or to arrange for another supervisor to accompany you to ensure that you receive "prompt medical treatment".


We haven't talked about your doctor yet. Your doctor plays a crucial role. There are five requirements of a claim, and your doctor's portion of the CA-1 is responsible for three of them. The five requirements are that the claim is timely filed, that the claimant is a postal employee, that the injury actually happened, that the injury occurred while the employee was in the

performance of duty, and that the medical condition for which the benefits are claimed is causally related to the claimed injury.

This is where things can get dicey. Although doctors are highly educated and seemingly perform miracles in treating us, many of them are not very good at following directions when filling out forms. For a traumatic injury, your doctor fills out a CA-20. The whole form is important, but there are three questions in particular that seal the deal. "What are your findings? (X-rays, lab reports, etc)" "What is your specific diagnosis(es) related to the employment activity?" "Do you believe the condition found was caused or aggravated by an employment activity as described in item 4?" (Item 4 is What history of the employment injury (including disease) did the patient give you?)

In other words, the doctor has to prove through tests and diagnosis that what you said happened actually did happen and that what happened caused the injury that you are seeking treatment and compensation for. It is a good idea to let us at the branch office see the doctor's report BEFORE you submit it to OWCP. Why? Because often, we catch things. For instance, "pain" is not a compensable diagnosis and sometimes the doctor lists "pain" as a diagnosis. Sometimes the doctor leaves something blank. Sometimes the doctor doesn't include the results of x-rays or other tests. The point is, doctors are busy people and paperwork is a nuisance. Although we at the branch office are not claims examiners, we can spot obvious issues and advise you what to tell your doctor in order to correct those issues. It is much easier to get the claim approved the first time around than it is to have to appeal a negative decision.

Finally, sometimes you will get a letter from OWCP after you file a claim that is asking for more information. This is a development letter. A development letter is NOT a denial. Too often, carriers think that development letters are denials and they never respond to them. Then time limits expire and things get tougher. That is yet another reason to keep the branch in the loop of all OWCP correspondence. If you learned anything from this, thank Doug Murray, he's the one that asked me to write it!

 **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



### *“Don’t Drop Your Guard”*

On July 21, 1927 Jack Dempsey fought the heavily favored Jack Sharkey at Yankee Stadium in front of 82,000 fans. Sharkey had a great left hand and he moved far ahead through the first five rounds. Only Dempsey’s great staying power saved him. Dempsey’s body blows slowed Sharkey in the sixth and Dempsey continued body-punching in the seventh. One punch bounced off a Sharkey elbow and landed against a hip. Another seemed to land below the belt line. Sharkey turned to the referee, Jack O’Sullivan and dropped his hands. He started to complain, “He hit me low and—” He did not finish the sentence. Dempsey threw his great left hook into Sharkey’s jaw. Sharkey fell and rolled awkwardly so that he was lying face down. The referee counted Sharkey out. The win over Sharkey was the final victory of Dempsey’s great heavyweight’s career. No prudent man facing Jack Dempsey in a prize ring dropped his guard. Ever.

Like Sharkey , we don’t want to let our guard down with Covid-19. Things are looking up with vaccines coming but the virus is still around. In the second week of March my office experienced another carrier testing positive. Let’s keep on wearing our masks, washing our hands, and socially distancing. We’ve fought a good fight so far but we have a couple rounds still to go.

Stay safe,

Jim Salvati

Source: [Flame of Pure Fire: Jack Dempsey and the Roaring ‘20s.](#)

By Roger Kahn

Boxing Trivia

Who is the only heavyweight champion to have finished his career undefeated?

“We no longer need government running our lives.” No more wearing masks! - Texas Governor Greg Abbot after more than 2 million cases and 45 thousand deaths in Texas from the COVID-19 virus. Hey, let’s apply that kind of thinking to the electric power grid in The Lone State. That way we can have more than eighty deaths and millions of Texans living in misery during the winter of ‘20-’21. How’s that working out for you Gov? Here’s the solution. Be a lying liar and blame it on renewable energy sources rather than the real reason - frozen natural gas lines. Here’s the irony. The nation’s greatest energy producer couldn’t provide enough energy for the citizens of its own state.

Albert Einstein said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Tell that to the thousands of college kids on Spring Break in Florida as I write this, gathering together on the beaches, no masks, no social distancing and then flooding the bars and restaurants at day’s end. They are not alone. Indications are that because of the vaccinations going on, more and more people are becoming overly complacent regarding the virus. Are we going to have still another surge?

I recently was fortunate enough to receive my second vaccine dose. I made it a point to seek out and have a conversation with the supervisor in charge of the operation. We both agreed that complacency is a major threat to overcoming this plague. Did you happen to catch the recent “ceremonial” mask burning out in Idaho? How frustrating. So many innocent people suffering and dying because of the selfishness and short-sightedness of others. I’m sure by now you’ve sensed the angry tone in this article. In part it’s because I know that untold numbers of letter carriers would not have had to suffer and die if people simply listened to the science.

All the above is simply an attempt to encourage you to stay the course. Continue to mask up, wash your hands frequently and maintain social distancing. We’re winning the battles but the war is not over.

Keep on truckin’

Rich Donlon

## Vice President's Report

As we head into spring and summer things seem to be looking up. The weather is improving, our new National Agreement was just ratified and although the pandemic is far from over things are getting better. More people are getting vaccinated every day and restrictions are slowly lifting. Hopefully, we will be able to meet in-person soon. Since this all started over a year ago there have been a lot of changes for us. Mail volume went from really low at the start of the pandemic to really high during the holiday season. The "7:01 Rule" memo has been in effect throughout the last year with many carriers taking advantage of "free money". With so many changes it is easy for carriers to fall into bad habits. That could mean Casing DPS or FSS, skipping lunch and/or breaks or other things that will take time away from your route. Route inspections were cancelled for most of 2020 and it seems like not much will be going on this spring. Who knows what the fall may bring but now would be a good time to start paying attention to doing things correctly.

On March 8 NALC membership ratified the 2019-2023 National Agreement. One of the provisions of the new agreement is the elimination of the Postal Service's Managed Service Points (MSPs). MSP scans have basically been useless since management gained the ability to track carriers through GPS, yet the Postal Service continued to use them. I have heard some carriers say that in their offices no one has cared whether they scanned the MSPs for a while now. I believe most offices still require carriers to make those scans. The contract says within 60 days of ratification the MSPs will be eliminated. Carriers should continue to make those scans until management says not to. If your office is requiring the use of MSPs after the 60 days let your steward or the branch office know.

Carrying mail is not an easy job. Sometimes it can be a dangerous or even deadly job. Letter carriers lose their lives in the line of duty every year due to many reasons. Health issues, heat related illness, accidents and even attacks have taken letter carrier's lives. In 2020 a Maryland carrier was shot and killed while delivering after dark and an Indianapolis carrier was shot and killed in a dispute over hold mail. One of the saddest carrier deaths was the recent death of a 27-year-old CCA in Chicago in early March. She was on her second day delivering in Chicago, as one of the many carriers brought in from other offices to help clear the backlog of delayed mail in Chicago. She was found dead in the back of her vehicle from an apparent suicide. There has not been much follow-up reporting, but it would seem like mental health issues most likely played a part. Mental illness and depression affect millions of people and letter

carriers are not exempt. The stresses and pressures of our job can create or worsen issues for letter carriers. The COVID-19 pandemic has not helped and according to the National Institute for Mental Health the numbers are increasing. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 21% of Americans experienced some sort of mental illness in 2019. However, only 44% received treatment for it.

Most carriers have at least heard of the EAP even if you may not be fully aware of what the program is all about. The EAP is the Employee Assistance Program. EAP falls under Article 35 of the National Agreement. EAP is jointly administered by the NALC, the APWU and the USPS. It provides confidential education, referral, and counseling to help employees through personal challenges of all types, including alcoholism and drug-abuse programs. Any employee who feels they need some help can reach out to EAP by calling 1-800-EAP-4YOU (800-327-4968) or going to [www.eap4you.com](http://www.eap4you.com). I would also encourage carriers to reach out to their fellow carriers, even if it is just in a small way by asking how someone is doing or reaching out to someone who seems like they are struggling. You never know when something small can make a big difference to someone else!

In Solidarity,

Dan Wheeler



*Branch 25's newest retiree, John Avant of Acton addresses the Acton employees on his last day March 24, 2021.*



COACHING

## Coaching for Self-Care

Mind, body and spirit

Do you find it difficult to focus on your own self-care while you continue to put others first? While this may seem like the right thing to do, in reality, you cannot take care of others if you fail to take care yourself. However, many people find it hard to take their focus off others and put it on themselves.

You have to take care of yourself before you can care for others.

Reach out to your Employee Assistance Program.

By taking advantage of the coaching services offered through your EAP, we can help you understand the importance of taking care of yourself, aid you in setting goals to improve yourself and help you find the time and the way to make the changes necessary to take care of yourself — mind, body and spirit.

The healthier you are and the more positive you feel about yourself, the better you are able to help others.

Call today to learn more about coaching services and your own self-care or visit [EAP4YOU.com](http://EAP4YOU.com)



CALL US TODAY: 800-327-4968  
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[WWW.EAP4YOU.COM](http://WWW.EAP4YOU.COM)

## **WAKE UP**

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*at the next meeting*  
**April 6**  
*via*  
**ZOOM Meeting**

**Topic: Regular Branch Meeting**

**Time: Apr 6, 2021 08:00 PM Eastern Time**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85279808589>

**Meeting ID: 852 7980 8589**

One tap mobile

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