Heroes Work Here

Cascade Connection

Volume 4 Issue 4

Autumn 2020

Washington Chapter of United Postmasters and Managers of America

Welcome

Chari Camper
Frederick Thiel

to
Washington
UPMA!

President
Gordon Williams

Staying True to Our Common Humanity During Uncertain Times

On a cold, rainy winter day last peak season when I happened to be working the window, a nice elderly lady purchased some stamps and a Hallmark card. A few minutes later, she returned and let me know she had locked her keys in her car. She had no cell phone, and when I offered to let her use our phone to call some local family, she said she had none. I went out to assist her in the rain and cold but to no avail. Newer cars are more challenging to do this than in the olden days for sure. I went across the street to the fire station to see if they could help. It was Christmas, and our lobby was bustling, but as we all worked to get her access to her vehicle, I had her come into my office to stay dry and warm and to sit down. We ended up waiting for a cab company to come help. During the wait, which was quite lengthy, I visited with this woman in my office. Her story was interesting, and we finally got her into her car and on her way. She appreciated the hot tea we provided, and she was astounded to learn, during her forty-five minutes in my office, of what we do each day. I was glad to give her some positive insight into the level of attention and dedication each employee has, no matter the title or position.

This story illustrates what essential heroes -- clerks, carriers, Postmasters, Managers, and Supervisors -- do for our customers when a situation like this happens every single day across this great country that we serve as USPS employees. During these stressful times and through all the challenges we have had this year, as humans, as Americans, and as USPS employees, we help others out in times of need, large and small. I related to this ninety-plus-year-old lady due to caring for my ninety-two-year-old mother with dementia. As EAS and craft employees, every day we can impact someone's life in a positive way. Our reporting processes, Zooms, and meetings are all paused when responding to a customer's or fellow employee's urgent need.

There has been a fantastic number of contradictory and conflicting messaging regarding public health, social issues, and the integrity of the USPS. As your chapter president, I have been engaged with District and Area USPS officials, with our Washington representatives and senators, and with local community groups who are concerned about the national and local news items. I have reached out and sought guidance from USPS communications, UPMA ational, and I have listened to the real stories from many, MANY, phone calls, texts, and emails from our active UPMA members in Washington and across the country. The messages are generally the same as what I hear every single day: USPS needs short-term relief for the massive impact of COVID-19 and long-term solutions for the U.S. Postal SERVICE's sustainability. We are not a business, and practical strategies to make our structure more efficient are long overdue.

In recent weeks, we've met with our leaders at Seattle District and have addressed issues that our members have universally communicated to me and our executive aboard. Seattle District Manager Pam Cook met with me recently, and we went over several issues—I've seen some evidence that our concerns are being addressed. There is more work and follow up to do, but know we are working despite this unique time. Some individual issues and ELM 650 (non-bargaining) discipline issues have dominated every single minute of my lunch, pre-work, post-work, and weekend time.

Continued on page 5

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Investigative Interviews

Brian Ireland
Chapter Member Representative

I decided to get into my email account that I created for UPMA and saw an email stating that the date was moved up for our articles to be turned in. I have resolved to check this email account more often as I don't want to miss something important.

As the newly appointed Chapter Member Representative Committee Chair, I am getting involved with representing Postmasters undergoing investigative interviews. Based on everything I'm seeing going on in two of the six areas, I believe there is a lot of pressure being put on the MPOOs to produce improvements around the district. I believe it is a goal of each of us to do well and to work within our established budgets. It seems that often, we can get so busy just trying to survive each day with the added parcel volumes and the various requirements that have to be accomplished by close of business today or tomorrow, that it's easy to miss something that we should have done. And then we're in trouble with our boss. If that happens, I would definitely advise you to call me or another state officer if your boss wants to give you an investigative interview.

I spoke with an MPOO recently who said that he receives 500 to 600 emails a day, and that he has to choose where to fail as it's impossible to go through that many emails in a day. In Area 4 right now, our acting manager is placing a huge emphasis on safety, which really continues with what our retired manager, Chuck Roberts, prioritized. So if something happens under your control that involves an unsafe act that leads to an accident, make sure you conduct a thorough and timely investigation and issue corrective action if just cause is met. Remember that in discipline cases that the burden of proof is on management.

In a safety training recently, we were informed that a past year's accident roll up averaged almost $30,000 per accident. That's a pretty big number if you think about it. Imagine a whole new fleet of vehicles that we could have easily paid for by eliminating accidents.

To close this out, I will say that the discipline that I'm aware of being issued to Managers right now is dealing with safety and failure to follow instructions given out about Express Mail delivery. I spoke with an MPOO after one investigative interview and reminded him of the times when he was a Manager and Postmaster. I asked him to think about how and why more work is piled on on postal management. With the seemingly endless surveys and reports, it gets hard to take care of our customers who are the ones who pay our wages. Hopefully, this MPOO will not forget where he came from.

Finally, if you know Managers who don't belong to UPMA, encourage them to join; they need to be a member for a year to qualify for help from the Adverse Action Legal Defense Plan.

Issue date: September 10, 2020
The *Cascade Connection* is published four times a year in March, June, September, and December.

Authorized organization: Washington State Chapter of United Postmasters and Managers of America

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Unrest in the Postal Service

Teresa Goss
Vice President: Legislative/Pac

Hello, UPMA family!

I can't believe we are at the end of summer and headed back into fall and winter. I have to say I have never had so much trouble coming up with what to share in an article. This whole year has been absolutely mind boggling. Just the last few months there have been so many changes and unrest in the Postal Service and our country. I had hoped if I waited until the last possible moment, I would be able to share some good news on the legislative side. But it did not happen.

As I am sure most of you are aware, the new Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy, has come under some heavy scrutiny for some of the processes he put in place when he became the Postmaster General. On August 21, DeJoy testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. On Monday the 24th, he testified before the House of Representatives Oversight and Reform Committee. During these testimonies, DeJoy was asked some tough questions on whether some of the processes that were starting to take place—such as moving blue boxes, removing some machines, eliminating extra trips, and reducing overtime —would hinder the November election with mail-in ballots. Because of the concern in the country, DeJoy said the USPS would wait until after the election to return to some of the processes that were started.

In his statements, DeJoy reminded the committees that the Postal Service continues to lose money because of current conditions and now the added expenses COVID-19 has created. He reminded the committees that legislative actions have been discussed and debated for years with no action taken. He said, and I quote, "Had Congress and the PRC fulfilled their obligation to the American public concerning the Postal Service, I am certain that much of the $80 billion in cumulative losses since 2007 could have been avoided, and that our operational and financial performance would not now be in jeopardy."

I felt his frustration as I feel that disappointment every year when we are hopeful our visits to Washington D.C. and visits and calls to our elected officials will get something accomplished. Sadly, each year goes by without any movement.

I will say that, on a positive note, all the attention the Postal Service has gotten in the last few months has opened up some eyes and ears to the plight it is in. I have had so many customers come in to thank us for all we do and to tell us they support us. They will often buy stamps to show their support.

On Saturday the 22nd, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 8015, the Delivering For America Act that addresses issues within the Postal Service and the operation of the Postal Service. It also contains a provision that would provide $25 Billion to deal with the cost of the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, it does not look like there will be any action taken on it in the Senate. But as National UPMA Dan Heins, said, we are in a wait and see mode. It appears that there will be another bill in late September. I will let you know when that happens so we can be calling and contacting our congressional members.

I am really hoping and praying that by my next article I will have better news to share on postal legislative reform.

I hope you are all taking care of yourself and your families, enjoying the summer, and for your peace of mind, unplugging from social media and the news often. I miss seeing so many of you, and I can't wait until we can meet together again at a convention.

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Consider an Exit Plan

Charles P. Smith
Executive Vice President

I am supposed to write an article but frankly, I am at a loss. As much as I love the job of being a small office Postmaster, it is quite depressing to consider the state of our great organization.

The USPS being used as a political football may or may not turn out to be beneficial, but one thing it has done is bring the boo birds out in the open. The USPS can't be trusted to do this…. The USPS is another bloated government entity that shouldn't be funded….. USPS employees are lazy, we don't need them, and at least UPS and FedEx will deliver to my front door…. Just one negative comment after another.

If this wasn't discouraging enough, the utter lack of support our members get out in the field would be criminal in any other business. The same person who sends 967 people an email that's only pertinent to five offices is the same person who cannot seemingly be bothered with a question in regards to the topic he or she is allegedly the subject matter expert on.

I have said it before, and it is only becoming more glaring; we are not on the same team anymore. There are clearly levels of importance, and we (just speaking primarily of those of us out in the field) just are not on their level. When ops people call me and talk to me like I work for them, I see that as a problem, and frankly, I become way less receptive.

Anyone who knows me knows that I am not a big fan of the whole earned vs actual ruse that's promoted by people in the USPS that, in most cases, have little experience doing our job. The other day, I took a look at mine and saw that our plan for Saturday was four hours. Now, I do not have the fastest clerks ever, but they are not slow. And I used to have a very fast clerk, and I know that even he could not get done on Saturday in under five and a half to six hours, and that was before the COVID parcel increase. My current clerks usually are sitting at six to seven hours. If my Saturday plan is off by two to three hours, how far do you suppose the plan is off for the week?

The bottom line (they will not tell you this or acknowledge it, in fact they would down right deny it) is that they expect you to want an NPA bad enough to play loose with the rules, primarily the fifteen hours of craft work per week rule: "Mr. Smith, you are budgeted X number of hours." "But Mr. Bossman it takes us Y number of hours." "Yes sir, that's your problem. "If you want an NPA, figure it out." It's really the only logical conclusion we can come to when we truly consider the options.

We have managers getting disciplined because someone on their workroom floor didn't have a mask on at an inopportune time. It makes me think of the movies *A Few Good Men* and *Code Red*. Why does that discipline not roll uphill as well? Like, why don't Lt. Kendrick and Colonel Jessup get disciplined also? If we are all just following orders and someone doesn't obey one, shouldn't you fix that problem by chopping off the head instead of the toe? I have written about The Blame Game before, so I will not regurgitate, but the bottom line is that there is zero pretense in regards to how disinterested our bosses are in being good bosses or treating us like members of the TEAM. We are pawns used to hopefully make them look good. We are managers in name only. We better do what we are told.

How discouraging is it to have the people making the important decisions be so far disconnected from the reality of serving our customers?

All I can say is, cover your butt and consider an exit plan, because I really am not at all encouraged that things will get better anytime soon.

Do Your Best to be Positive

Kristin Luther
Treasurer

Fall is coming, and we didn't get to enjoy or live a normal spring or summer; what will fall and winter have in store for us? I hope you are all making the best of the situations we are being dealt with, and that you all are dealing with work and all the added responsibility we have been handed. As an organization, we have missed so much together this year. We have had to cancel our conventions, cancel our national events, and have been unable to meet in person to conduct our business. We have been doing many zoom meetings as an executive board to conduct chapter business ~ our decisions we have made have been made with the safety and health of our members in mind. We will get to be together again when our state allows us to.

We now have a new Postmaster General, and we are getting so many mixed messages and so many changes. They are coming fast and furious. Change is hard. But we need to follow what we are instructed to do the best we can and be a strong leader to our staff. If we don't comply, then how can we get our staff to comply. We need to continue to be positive and continue to protect our staff, our customers. and ourselves. We are essential, and our communities depend on our ability to serve them daily. Please continue to take pride in your position and job and continue to do your best ~ everyone is watching, and it is our job to serve them. That is what we are all paid to do daily. I know some are losing sight of this very thing. Stay strong and if you need a pick-me-up, call me, text, or email me. I will listen. I will help you as best I can. Everyone is under so much pressure to do more with less. If you need to call EAP, please do. They are a tremendous help and a benefit we are all entitled to.

Until we see each other again in person. Stay safe, and take time for you and your family.

On the Road Again

Diana Schuler
Secretary

Hello friends. I hope you are finding things you can get out and do now that summer is here while still following all the mandates that are in each of our lives now because of the coronavirus, as I all too frequently have to tell my granddaughters when they want to do something we should be able to do but can't. What a strange world the littles in our life are experiencing.

My husband, George, and I decided in late June to take an impromptu motorcycle trip from our home in Bellingham through Oregon to see the Painted Hills in the John Day Fossil Beds. The next morning after breakfast, we saw my aunt, who I had not seen in twenty-five years. We headed through Idaho to experience the Lava Hot Springs in the town they were named after, which were incredible to be in after riding for three days. We stopped for lunch at the home of a retired Supervisor I used to work with, then headed for the Grand Tetons and Jackson Hole, WY. We spent two days there, then headed into Yellowstone, with home base being in West Yellowstone, MT. Yellowstone did not disappoint, with its beauty and wildlife. We headed home, with our first night's stop in Missoula, MT. The next morning, we stopped for a short visit at the home of retired Postmaster Cyndi Wiese's brother; his late wife, Rebecca Perry, was a retired Postmaster. We then headed to Bayview, ID, for coffee and some appetizers with Eric Soles, a financial planner for many of us and son of retired PM Louise Soles. Then we headed to Liberty Lake, WA, for dinner with Louise and stayed the night in her beautiful home. The next morning, we were treated to a fabulous breakfast by Louise and headed across the freeway to Otis Orchards, WA, to visit with retired PM Millie Kropp. Then we were back on the bikes headed home for Bellingham.

About an hour or so later, my bike with training wheels, as I call the conversion kit, had a major blow out of the rear center tire at seventy miles per hour, around mile post 200 eastbound on I-90. I am fine, and the bike is being fixed. I was able to get to the side of the road safely and call for roadside assistance.

In thinking about how close that could have been to a serious or even fatal accident, I can see many blessings. A couple that I want to focus on are that my husband, George, and I had just spent the last eleven days together enjoying riding our individual bikes and spending uninterrupted time together while experiencing the beauty of our national parks. The second was the time we spent visiting those we love, appreciate, and enjoy being with. I thought about the hug each received by me and the last words of each visit being thank you and I love you. I am so blessed that these were not final memories on that trip.

So TODAY, my challenge for each of you is to contact someone you have not been in touch with through a call or a letter. Let them see your handwritten words or hear the sound of your voice and your laugh. If you can give a HUG, give one. Reach out to those you love and tell them. I am telling YOU right here, right now, that if we have met, I love you my friend and am so glad we are family through UPMA. If you are in Bellingham, please stop by.

Gordon Williams
Continued from the front page

Based on what we knew when we last met, the executive board decided to cancel our convention plans for the umpteenth time (seemingly) for this year. Since then, national UPMA adopted a pathway for Zoom conventions that has been questioned by some parliamentarian scholars. I just know that our Washington chapter board members took into consideration the safety and inclusivity of ALL of our members to participate in some of the association business based on our current bylaws. This is our organization. While we are not a union, we depend upon each other's knowledge, skills, and experience to learn and grow, tos tay positive, and to stay protected and proactive in our daily jobs.

Restructuring plans implemented by Postmaster General DeJoy are taking effect, and many of our support staff at the Districts are anxious about more changes coming. Our subject matter experts in these functional support areas are there to support our jobs, and we should be aware of their perspectives during these times of evolution.

Every day, we have opportunities to do extraordinary things, and those opportunities create a positive ripple effect with our employees and our throngs of supportive customers. As leaders, we set an example: wearing masks, social distancing, supporting our Supervisors and Managers when they need assistance. Every day we have opportunities to impact someone's life, even with what might seem trivial to us but affects someone else at a much-needed time. At the end of each day, before you get into your car to drive home, try to think of three positive things, such as helping a customer or a positive interaction with an employee. Try to be grateful for those moments and interactions so that you can be refreshed and ready with a positive mental state for what is to come when you start the next workday. Amidst all the tumult and strife around us, we are the Postal Service heroes, a calming, steady part of this great country.

Stay safe, be well, be strong, and stay united. Peace.

All USPS employees are welcome to join UPMA

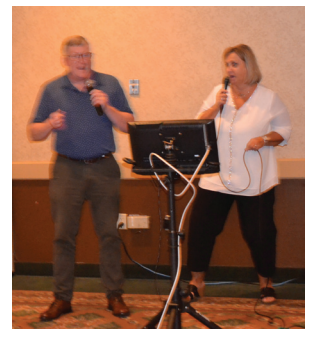
MAKING A DIFFERENCE 2020

this certificate is awarded to:

Gordon Williams

in recognition, of

Service to UPMA and its members, the United States Postal Service, and community involvement



Congratulations to Gordon Williams, recipient of the 2020 Making a Difference Award! Though we weren't able to celebrate in person, here are some of the thoughts plucked from nominating submissions:

Gordon has a real passion for representing the members of UPMA, currently as president, and historically as NAPUS president, vice president, and legislative and adverse action representative. He dedicates long hours to serving members as chapter member representative concurrently with his president duties.

One of his most admirable traits is his ability to create well thought out plans: forecasting goals and planning the steps needed to accomplish them. His professionalism with the ever-changing Seattle leadership is to be admired; he stays the course and remembers he is representing both as Postmaster and as a state president. Gordon is willing to help wherever he is needed, in addition to keeping members informed and motivated in this uncertain time. And, as one nominee put it, "…I just think he really cares about the post office and his employees and UPMA."

Gordon is a dedicated husband to his wife, Toni, and a proud father to his son, Tanner. As well, he served our country in the Unites States Marine Corp.

Postal Employees Relief Fund

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UPMA Working for *You:* UPMA request for changes to the Annual Leave Carryover and the ALE fringe benefit programs

National President Dan Heins is pleased to announce that his request to have the limits on the amount of annual leave that could be carried over to Fiscal Year 2021 during this troubling year we have been having with the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges related to it in 2020, has been granted by Postal Service Headquarters. The letter outlining the changes is posted on the national website www.unitedpma.org. You will be able to carry over an additional 80 hours in 2020, and also have the right to exchange (sell back) an additional 40 hours in 2021.

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessrily reflect those of the state or national organizations of UPMA.

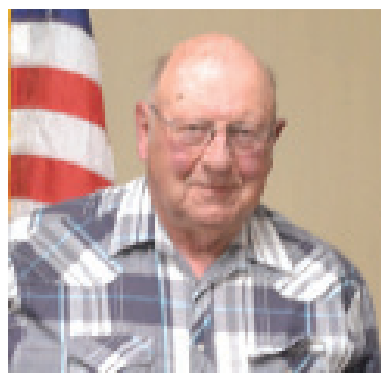
The Retirees' Corner

The virus got to us. For the safety of our members, the 2020 state convention has been cancelled. This is too bad, but it had to be done. We will make up for it somehow. If you have any questions, contact an officer. I am sure that any of us can be helpful in answering any questions you may have.

I'm am wondering what the new Postmaster General will be like. No experience in postal matters, and he appears to be more interested in cutting hours to save money and delaying mail to do it. Boy, have times changed from the good old days. Time will tell, I guess.

Please mask up for the protection of your employer, customer, and yourself. Hopefully, the virus will go away soon, and we will get back to normal.

This message is short, but I hope it will be beneficial.
Until next time…



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President - Retirees

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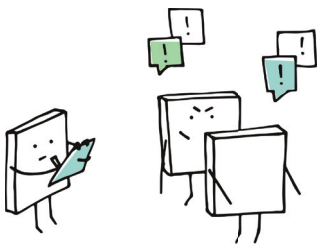


Nonviolent Communication

Developed by Marshall Rosenberg, nonviolent communication (NVC) is a process that enables individuals to communicate their needs without causing injury to the other, even during difficult conversations. A core assumption of nonviolent communication is that all behavior is an expression of people trying to get their needs met.

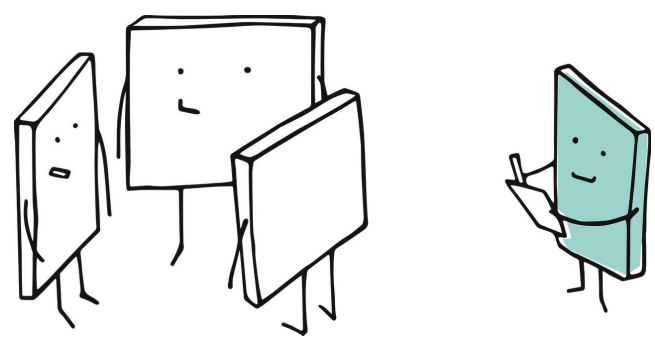
Communication that is violent causes harm to oneself and to the other. Here are some common ways of communicating that shut down the possibility of forming trust:

- Moralistic judgements ("That was a stupid thing to do.")
- Making comparisons ("Why can't you be more like Marie?")
- Denial of responsibility ("I'm just doing what I was told to do.")
- Belief/expectation that we can "make" another human do something (We *can* create consequences for undesirable behavior.)

When we seek to change the climate in our lives—whether at work or home—or seek to build trust, it is crucial that we do not communicate violently.

NVC provides a simple four-step formula for effective communication:

1. **State your observation:** state the specific behavior you want to address without judgement
2. **State your feeling:** explain how you feel when you see/hear/experience this behavior
3. **State your need:** explain the behavior's effect on you by expressing what you need (a universal need such as safety, respect, or peace)
4. **Make your request:** request the specific, do-able, observable alternative behavior



Accident Investigation

Shari Hetzler
National Adverse Action Member Representative
AK, Northern CA, ID, OR, WA

With the increased working hours in many offices and extra stress on EAS employees, it is becoming more and more difficult to complete all of the daily requirements. Throw in an accident and there you have about four hours of extra work. Where can you get the time? IT COMES FIRST!! As soon as you get the call that there is an accident, you need to notify your supervisor! Then the investigation begins. Hopefully, you have an accident kit all set up so all you have to do is grab it and go to the scene of the accident. The camera, tape rule, forms, blank paper (for statements) and, of course, writing implements. I know that cell phones are great for pictures, but the rest you should have all ready for any investigation.

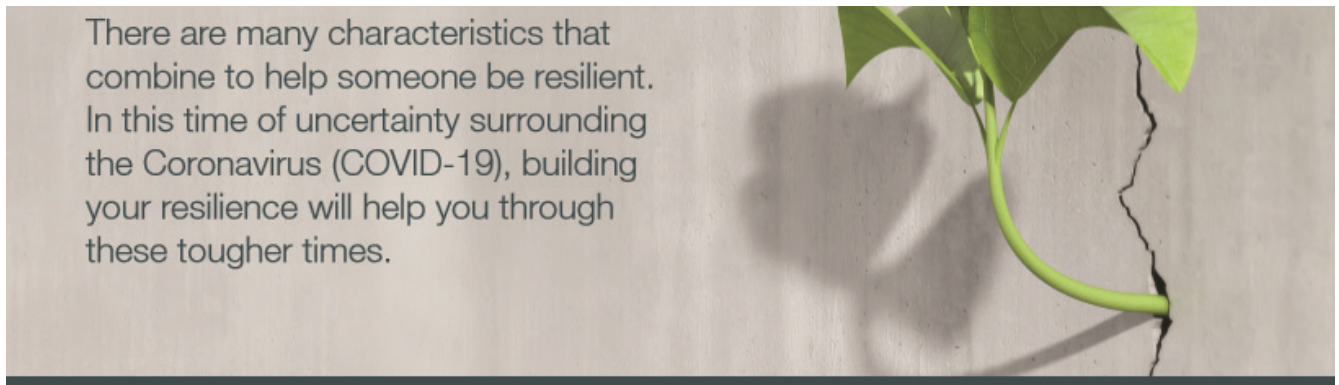
Pictures are one of the most important pieces of the investigation. Take a picture of the people involved in the accident, the vehicles or equipment involved. Everything is important. Take at least one picture of every side of the vehicle and include the license plate; that is nice for later when you are filling out the forms. Then if there is a postal vehicle involved, same with that. Again, get the vehicle number in the pictures. All of the pictures may be needed or none of them may be needed. It is better to have too many pictures than not enough. Even a picture of the carrier next to the vehicle is a plus. You just never know what will be needed or who will finish the investigation if you cannot.

Statements from everyone, in writing, are a must. Do get them the same day. The mind is a powerful instrument, but it does tend to change things the longer time elapses between the statement and the incident. Right turn? Left turn? Red car? Blue car? Get the earliest remarks in writing. Now it may be impossible to get a written statement from the non-postal individual(s) involved, but you can ask questions, and then your statement needs to be put into writing as soon as possible!!

There is also EHS, which is the most user-unfriendly program ever. However, you must enter your information into the program the same day. All accidents must be reported to OSHA. You do your part in EHS. I would call someone in Safety to help me. Make a friend. Network in advance so that you are not scrambling at the last minute.

Always do an investigative interview with the involved employees. Interview the witnesses. You may decide that there is no discipline to take effect, but let the employee know your decision. Should you get called for an investigative interview, get representation. Someone else can take the notes so that you can focus on the questions and your answers.

C: 209-419-1635 / hetz51@yahoo.com



Coronavirus
Encouraging Resilience

Resilience is what helps you successfully get through change and challenging times. There are many characteristics that combine to help make one resilient. By focusing on these traits, you can encourage resilience and increase your resiliency skills.

By striving to be better at each of the following, you will naturally increase your ability to be resilient not only during the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, but in your every day life:

- Have a sense of purpose
- Have a positive outlook
- Take an active approach to problem-solving
- Build relationships
- Have a sense of humor
- Expect change
- Care for yourself
- Continue to learn

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: by telephone 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU), TTY: 877-492-7341, online at EAP4YOU.com, through video, by live chat or text message. Reach out to us to learn more about the many options you have to receive support from your Employee Assistance Program.

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. For the latest information visit CDC.gov.

EAP USPS Employee Assistance Program

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WWW.EAP4YOU.COM