

## **RESOLVING ISSUES IN THE OFFICE**

In a perfect world, there would be little need to worry about resolving issues or disputes. Rural carriers need not be told that the USPS is not a perfect world. With top level managers constantly predicting financial ruin from the continuing E-business erosion of the Postal Service's bottom line, and mid-level managers knee-jerking ever more severe hourly budgets, the fallout from the higher levels of the Company inevitably works its way down to those who touch the mail. From redlining to leave denial, conditions have never been better for disagreements between craft and management.

Every rural carrier needs to realize that when management gives an order, as long as that order is not patently harmful or dangerous to the employee or the people who will be affected by the employee's compliance to the order, the employee needs to follow the order first, and attempt to reverse and/or restore losses at a later date. Every employee, not just stewards and Union officials, needs to understand the process for resolving disputes that inevitably occur in the workplace. The responsibility for ensuring that management conforms to the rules and regulations set forth in the contract and relevant Postal manuals starts with each one of us as individuals. Stewards are facilitators of dispute resolution; they are not the personal servants or supervisors of either craft or management.

The outline below is designed to provide a step-by-step procedure for dealing with conflicts and/or complaints between the rural craft and management.

It is suggested that every rural craft employee keep a copy of this outline in an accessible location at the Post Office. It is a rare individual indeed who will never have the opportunity and/or inclination to resolve an issue of contention with management.

### **BEFORE FILING A GRIEVANCE:**

1. Discuss the possible contractual violation, problem, or complaint with your immediate supervisor.
2. If the issue remains unresolved, contact the steward responsible for representing your office. Describe all pertinent facts relating to the issue, and then ask the steward for advice. If your office does not have a local steward, call or email your State Steward (see information at the end of this article) and your State Steward will identify the Area or Assistant State Steward assigned to your office.
3. If after discussing the issue with the steward responsible for representing your office you feel that a grievance is warranted, contact your immediate supervisor and arrange for a mutually convenient time to file your grievance and discuss its merits.

### **WHEN YOU MEET WITH YOUR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR TO FILE AND DISCUSS YOUR GRIEVANCE:**

1. Clearly state at the beginning of the meeting that you are filing a grievance. Remember, it is your responsibility to file your grievance within 14 days of when you learn, or could reasonably be expected to learn, of the event that you are electing to grieve.
2. Make a sincere effort to clarify the facts and resolve the issue(s) with your immediate supervisor.
3. If you are successful in clarifying misunderstandings and or reaching common ground, document your mutual agreement, preferably by utilizing the NRLCA Settlement Form.
4. If resolution isn't forthcoming, or your immediate supervisor indicates that he/she will need some time to render a decision, fill out section 1 through 4 on the PS Form 8191 (Joint Step 1 Grievance Form.)
5. In the small space provided for sections 3B of the PS Form 8191, be sure to indicate the date of your discussion of the grievance with your immediate supervisor and then indicate that the date is correct by both you and your immediate supervisor initialing right above the date.
6. Frame the issue of your grievance by stating it as a question in section 4 of the 8191. Try to include who, what, and when in the question that you pose in section 4. For example, the following is some typical language found in section 4: Should RCA John Smith have been utilized on RR003 on Saturday, December 09, 2000, instead of RCA Jane Doe? If so, what should the remedy be?
7. If the grievance is against discipline issued to you by management, it is strongly suggested that you obtain advice from the steward representing your office on what to put in section 4 of the 8191.
8. Most important of all, if you are ever approached by management or postal inspectors to answer questions about an incident where you were or might be thought to be involved, immediately produce the card handed out at Union meetings and read the following question: If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, I respectfully request that my union steward be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions.
9. If the issue of your grievance is the same as for other regular carriers and/or non-TRC leave replacements in your office, then you should contact the steward assigned to represent your office about the prospect of filing a class action grievance.

#### **AFTER FILING A GRIEVANCE:**

Make 2 copies of the PS Form 8191. One copy is for your records, the other copy is for your immediate supervisor, and the original PS Form 8191 should be immediately mailed to the steward assigned to represent your office. Along with the original of the 8191, be sure to mail to your steward the original of your signed and dated written statement of events and pertinent facts leading up to and including the situation that led you to file the grievance

**AFTER YOU HAVE MAILED THE ORIGINAL 8191 AND YOUR WRITTEN SIGNED AND DATED STATEMENT TO YOUR STEWARD:**

Your steward is required to meet with management within 10 days of the date indicated in 3B of the 8191 to complete the remainder of the PS Form 8191, unless time limits are mutually extended.

It becomes the Union's responsibility to take over the processing of your grievance.

**IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CONTACT THE STATE STEWARD  
OR ASSISTANT STATE  
STEWARD.**