

Hostility in the Post Office

By Eric Chornoby, Young Members Committee Chairperson

Hello, brothers and sisters! For those who don't know, I was recently elected as Chair of the 480-481 Area Local Young Members Committee. You can expect to hear a lot more from us in the near future. For now, I want to talk about Harassment and how WE fight Management bullying US. Once you know your Rights, you can fight back against Management.

What is Harassment?

EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) defines Harassment as "...unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, or pregnancy), national origin, older age (beginning at age 40), disability, or genetic information (including family medical history)." EEOC considers harassment illegal when... " 1) enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or 2) the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive." The short version is, legally, for an act to be Harassment, the action must be against a protected class.

What does our Contract Say about Harassment?

Our Contract gives us a lot of power to fight back. Article 19 of the Contract makes all USPS policies related to pay, hours, and working conditions as if they were written in the contract. The Post Office, just like every company, loves to brag about how USPS hates Harassment and loves its employees. We know how true that is, and the Union uses this to fight for you.

The ELM is filled with language which states Management must try to prevent Harassment. Management also has several Publications that directly address harassment, such as

Publication 552 and Publication 553. Publication 552 is a guide on what Management must do when Harassment is reported. This includes a six step process to investigate Harassment. We all know Management rarely follows their own policy, and this is a key way the Union fights back.

Publication 553 is what we should do about Harassment and our rights. In short, 553 states we deserve a working environment free of Harassment, and if we see Harassment, we must report it to Management. It doesn't matter if the Harassment happened to us or if we saw it happen to someone else. If you witnessed it, you must say something. If you don't immediately report it to Management, it is very easy for Management to claim it never happened.

Management can claim they are not Harassing someone. It does not mean they are not violating our rights. If Management doesn't investigate and handle the situation correctly, it is against the contract. Even if Management is not Harassing you, they may be creating a Hostile Work Environment.

What is a Hostile Work Environment?

A Hostile Work Environment is one where you are not treated with Dignity and Respect. The former Postmaster General Megan Brennan issued a statement on Harassment, which states, "*The Postal Service's workplace must be one in which all employees are treated with dignity and respect by supervisors, subordinates, and coworkers. Supervisors and managers will take prompt action to prevent, address, and remedy workplace conduct that is contrary to this policy.*"

When I looked Dignity up in my Webster's dictionary, I discovered Dignity means treating someone as an equal or a superior. When was the last

time a Supervisor approached you and treated you as if you were their equal? Never? Then, they may be creating a Hostile Work Environment.

Article 3 of the Contract requires Management to manage as long as they follow all laws, all regulations, the contract, the ELM, and Postal Service Regulations. That means Management must Manage in a way that complies with the ELM, the Publications on Harassment, and the PMG Statements. If Management does not, they are violating our Contract and creating a Hostile Work Environment.

What Can You Do?

You can step forward and report when Harassment happens. When the Union files a Grievance against Management about Harassment, we must prove the Harassment happened. The same goes for a Hostile Work Environment. It is not enough for your Steward to say, "Hey, Supervisor Smith is creating a hostile work environment in his section!"

The Union mainly proves Management is Harassing in one of two ways. One is Statements. I am including a sample statement, so you have a general idea of what the Union wants when Harassment happens. You don't need to follow my example exactly, and it can be handwritten. You are mostly covered as long as you include the general details of who, what, and where. For a Statement, the main goal is to put your name down as a witness to what happened.

The second way to prove Harassment is 1767s - the safety violation form. The ELM requires our working environment to be healthy and safe. Is it healthy to get yelled at, belittled, or insulted? NO! So we fill out a 1767. I am also including a sample 1767. The basics of a 1767 are you must explain the unsafe work conditions, when it happened, and where. The 1767 also allows you to put in a remedy, which in the example is to get rid of the

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Supervisor. Just make sure you also give a copy to the Union!

If you are not sure if what is happening in your office is Harassment or a Hostile Work Environment, ask your Steward. Any Steward will gladly explain the difference between Harassment and a Hostile Work Environment. A Supervisor telling you to do something or monitoring you may not be a Hostile Work Environment, but if you don't ask, you don't know. This is why you pay Union dues, to ask an expert.

What Happens Next?

Your Union Steward will take your Statement or copy of the 1767 and begin their investigation. If your Statement included the names of people who witnessed the situation or were the victims, they will speak to them. To prove Harassment or a Hostile Work Environment exists, the Union will do all it can to get multiple people to step forward.

For minor workroom floor issues, the Union may schedule a meeting between the Supervisor, the Union, a Manager, and the Employee to resolve disagreements. These would be issues like a supervisor and employee yelling at each other or the statements or 1767s needing clarification. Suppose there are multiple cases of minor Harassment. In that case, the Union may bring the Statements to a Labor Management Meeting or 1767s to a Safety Committee Meeting. Your Steward may contact the Local Union Office or the Postal Inspectors if a threat exists. The Union may even contact media outlets and the appropriate Congressman / Senator.

If a clear case of Harassment or a Hostile Work Environment and the Union has sufficient evidence, a Grievance will be filed. Winning a Grievance for Harassment / Hostile Work Environment requires many people to step forward and report every time a Supervisor does something hostile. Your Union Steward has many different ways to fight back against

Harassment. He will take the fastest path possible to improve the working conditions.

A Workplace Free of Harassment

I could talk for days about Harassment and a Hostile Work Environment. If you take nothing from this or want to skip to the end, every Union Member must report Harassment or a Hostile Work Environment in writing as soon as it happens, first to Management, then to the Union. Management can't use the excuse 'no one told us' if everyone steps forward. Management can't claim it isn't that bad when the Union has multiple statements showing the work environment is horrible.

For those questioning if the Union can win, I will share an example of a Grievance I did. The settlement had the following language, *"The Postal Service recognizes that supervisors must adhere to a managerial style that is conducive to a stable workforce ... while treating its employees with dignity and respect. Further,*

there shall be no delay by management in investigating claims of such nature." The settlement further required the Supervisor who created the Hostile Work Environment be sent back to training on how to support a positive work environment.

As a Steward, I used this settlement against Management immediately. The next time the Supervisor sneezed, I went to Management and said, 'We can do this again, but tell me how a Supervisor went to training and still can't treat people with respect?' That Supervisor left the Customer Care Center shortly after. Any time Management crosses the line, I pull out this settlement.

I know the Union can fight back and win against bad Management because I have done it. Your Steward can do the same for you. All it takes is for the victims of Management's hostility to step forward. No matter the type of hostility or the degree of the hostile work environment, the Union can do something. Everyone deserves to be treated with DIGNITY and RESPECT.

GRIEVANT or WITNESS STATEMENT FORM	
From: John Doe	To: American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO
Address: 123 Main Street	Local Union: 480 - 481
Phone No. 8675309	Email: you@aol.com
Tour/Reporting Time: 12:00	Facility: Post Office
Issue: Harassment / Hostile Work Environment	
1. I <u>John Doe</u> do hereby render this statement on the above issue(s). [State only the Facts]	
2. On November 1st, 2023 (or the date it happened), at about 4 PM (Put the approximate time) I witnessed	
3. Supervisor Smith (Put Supervisors name) in an altercation with my coworkers Betty White and Tommy Pickles.	
4. Supervisor Smith started yelling at Betty and Tommy. I heard him yell, "You two are slower than molasses	
5. in January." Smith was red in the face and walked up on Betty and Tommy when he said this. Thats	
6. when I started watching. Betty then said "We are working as fast as we can." Smith got mad and kicked the	
7. garbage can next to the hotcases where they were working. Smith has done this before. Katie	
8. the custodian was near by and may have seen this as well.	
9.	
10.	
15. What remedy are you seeking? Stop Supervisor Smiths Harassment and Hostile Work Environment.	
16.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Attach addition sheets as needed YOU MUST SIGN THIS FORM Signed: <u>John Doe</u> Date: <u>11/01/23</u>	



Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice



Hazard Control Number <i>(Assigned by Safety Officer)</i>
_____ _____ _____ _____

I. EMPLOYEE'S ACTION

Area (Specify Work Location)

Hot Cases at Post Office

Describe hazard, unsafe condition or practice. Recommended corrective action.

I witnessed Supervisor Smith violate ELM Chapters 6 and 8 by harassing, bullying, intimidating, and threatening my coworkers and created an unhealthful and unsafe work environment. This happened on November 1st when Supervisor Smith yelled at Betty White and Tommy Pickles, walked into their personal space, and then kicked a garbage can near Betty and Tommy. This is not the first time I have witnessed Supervisor Smith acting this way.

Employee	Print and Sign John Doe <i>John Doe</i>	Date and Tour 11/01/23 Tour 3
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II. SUPERVISOR'S ACTION

Recommend or describe action taken to eliminate the hazard, unsafe condition or practice. *(If corrective action has been taken, indicate the date of abatement.)*

Supervisor	Print and Sign	Date
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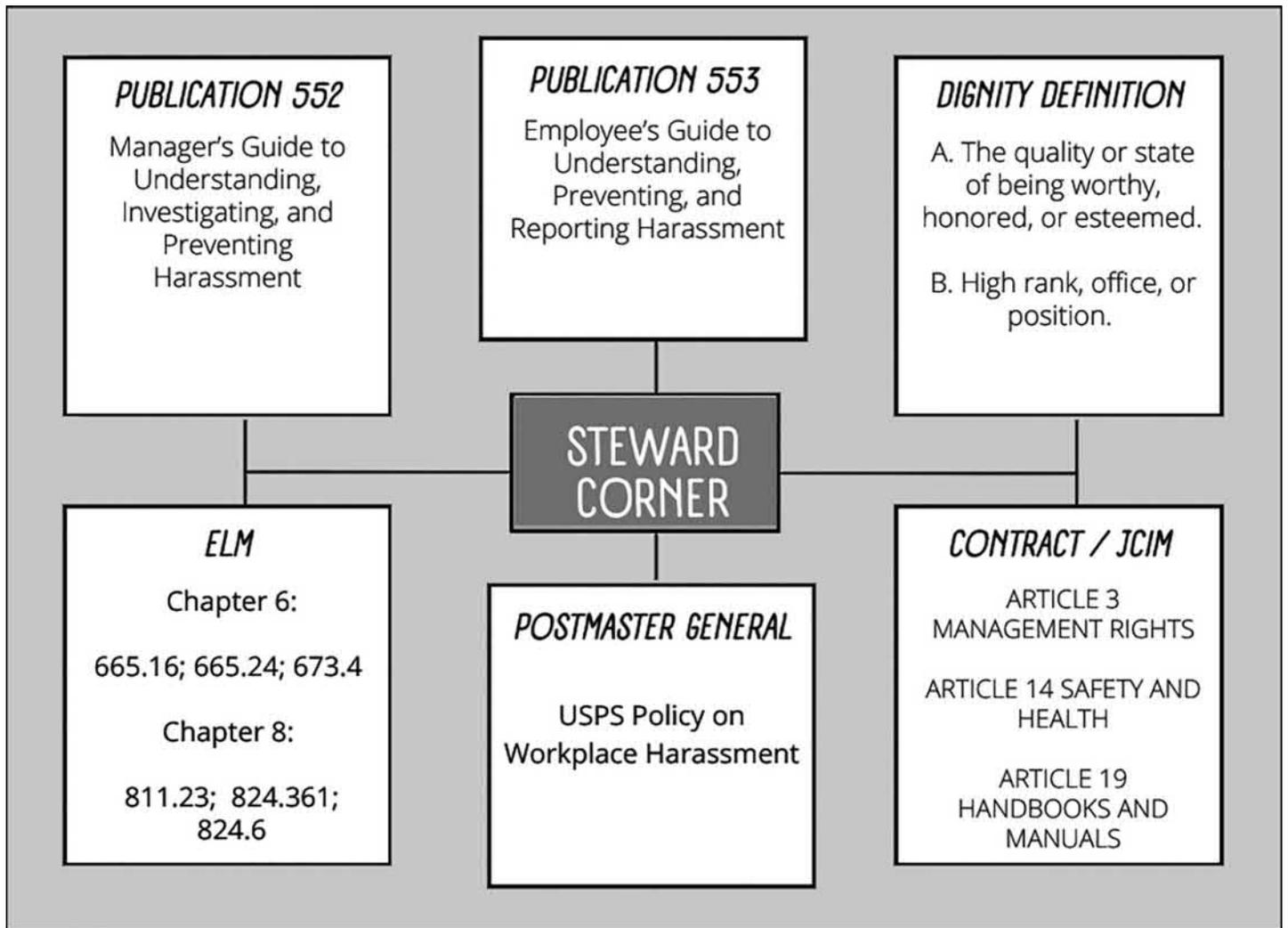
III. APPROVING OFFICIAL'S ACTION *(Check One and Complete)*

	The following corrective action was taken to eliminate the hazard, unsafe condition or practice <i>(Indicate date of abatement)</i> :
	A work order has been submitted to the manager, plant maintenance to effect the following change:
	There are no reasonable grounds to determine such a hazard exists. This decision is based upon:

Approving Official	Print and Sign	Date	Date Employee Notified
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IV. MAINTENANCE ACTION *(Complete if Necessary)*

Maintenance Supervisor	Print and Sign	Date	Date Hazard Abated
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Eric Chornoby and Nick Vucinaj volunteered to assist the United Way Campaign in getting UAW members and their families food and necessities

