

Safe Workload Allocation for Couriers

“Equally and ultimately the best judge of what can be safely done ... rests with the person actually performing the work” – NZ Post 17 February 2022

Management pressure on couriers to deliver unsafe volumes of parcels can lead to accidents, injuries, property damage, a lack of work life balance, chronic fatigue, mental health issues, customer complaints and a number of other negative impacts on the life and health of NZ Post's contract couriers.

It was management pressure on posties to deliver excessive amounts of mail that led the Postal Workers Union to issue a newsletter to posties on 17 January last year about the safe allocation of mail workload for delivery. A PWUA Members' Update advised posties to self select for delivery only that amount of mail that they can safely deliver in their rostered hours (and any voluntary overtime).

NZ Post management understood the Union's concern and issued a detailed Team Brief to posties on 17 February 2022 which included:

- *Workload should be allocated at the start of the day by leaders on the basis of providing sufficient work to fill the paid rostered hours for the day (no more).* (Emphasis added)
- *“...the best judge of what can be safely done for the day given those variables rests with the person actually performing the work ... that is the DA.”* (Delivery Agent - postie)

Section 36(3)(c) of the Health and Safety at Work Act states that the company must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable *“the provision and maintenance of safe systems of work ...”* The Union believes that NZ Post's current practices of parcel volume allocation for couriers and run redesign process do not comply with the Act.

NZ Post's obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act to provide and maintain safe systems of work apply equally to the couriers as to the posties. Any requirement by management for the couriers to deliver any more parcels than they can safely deliver is, by definition, unsafe.

In accordance with the NZ Post Team Brief of 17 February 2022 the couriers should be instructed by the senior management that they select from the parcel volumes allocated to them by NZ Post only what they can safely deliver in one day. NZ Post has told the Union that the company allocates parcel volumes to each courier based on 10 to 11 hours of work a day, “based on averages”.

The Postal Workers Union will be taking up with NZ Post senior management that the safeguards provided by the company for posties since February 2022 must also be applied by NZ Post to its couriers. Any freight left behind is the responsibility of NZ Post to deliver, not the responsibility of the couriers who have no control over the volumes of freight allocated to them by NZ Post.

The Union is also following up on the misclassification of couriers as contractors when the control that NZ Post has over them means they are employees - employees with no annual leave entitlements, no sick pay and none of the other entitlements that the law and Collective Agreement provide for union members.

You can also join the PWUA now by going to the union's website, www.pwua.org.nz, click on the “Join Us” link, and submit the form.