

## One week after death of USPS worker Nick Acker in Detroit Postal worker Russell Scruggs Jr. dies at Palmetto, Georgia distribution center

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On Saturday, November 15, just one week after Nick Acker's death in Detroit, another postal worker died at the Palmetto, Georgia USPS Processing and Distribution center. The family confirmed with the *World Socialist Web Site* that Russell Scruggs, Jr. is the worker who lost his life. The cause of death has not yet been reported and an investigation is ongoing.

USPS only confirmed with local news 11Alive Monday that a death occurred at the facility. Coworkers told the WSWS that Russell died in the plant when his head hit the ground after falling. The exact cause of his fall remains unclear, but workers raised concerns over the lack of medical emergency protocol and zero cell phone service throughout most of the building, which causes significant delays in their ability to call for help. Russell's death is not the first such incident at the Palmetto facility. At least two other workers have died in the plant since last year.

### Russell's death

Russell's coworker, Jane, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, contacted the WSWS after reading about the death of 36-year-old postal worker Nick Acker in Allen Park, Michigan.

"Russell was a very caring person and he always put everybody before himself. We're human beings and we deserve to have rights as human beings. Something as simple as having a cell phone for you to be able to call your loved ones or for somebody to call you shouldn't be something that is taken away from you. That's not a privilege, that's a right," she said.

She said that Russell "was laying on the floor underneath a machine in a puddle of blood. He had a big gash on his head from hitting the machinery when he fell and there's blood everywhere. His head was just pouring blood out for a whole 45 minutes and nobody tended to him—they weren't doing CPR; they hadn't checked his pulse, they hadn't tried CPR or to attend to his head wound.

"Some supervisors were standing around him. He wasn't covered up, nobody was attending to him. We asked, 'Has anybody checked to see if he's breathing?' And they would do nothing. They're just all standing there.

"They took one of the workers who was there and put her in a room in an office, they wouldn't let her go see Russell.

"This all happened near the time clock. They took a cardboard box

and stood it around him so other people couldn't see, because people were clocking in. They were telling people, 'Go back to your operations, don't worry about clocking in, we'll take care of your paperwork later.'"

"Finally a security guard was called in and she started administering CPR to him and she tried and tried until the EMT got there. The whole time he was still not breathing," she continued. "It appeared to me that he was already dead by the time they even called EMT."

### Too late for medical intervention

She said that even after the emergency services showed up, "It was too long. The ambulance came and then they put him on a stretcher and they were still giving him CPR. And it takes about 10 minutes to walk from where we were to the door where the ambulance was to get his body to the ambulance. Then it was another 15 minutes before the ambulance even left the building."

She said that Russell's family told her that the doctor who worked on him in the hospital said he "apparently was already dead when they picked him up and dead when he arrived at the hospital."

We asked Jane if USPS, the plant manager, or the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) had released any statements on Russell's death to the other employees. "They didn't make a statement, they didn't send us anything in that building. Many people have died in this building and they never make a formal statement.

"His family had to call up there to find out what happened and I don't know what they told them, but it wasn't much. His own father would not have even known the details if another employee had not contacted the family. Russell had just started there three weeks ago."

"They have cameras in there. They don't know if he tripped, they don't know if or why he fell," she continued. "There are people there who were witnesses, who said that they saw what happened." Jane said a worker who initially had said there were witnesses later changed their story to say there were no witnesses. "That's a lie, the whole department was full of people that witnessed what happened. I know people in that department who saw it [the fall]. People coming in from the next shift saw what was going on."

## No emergency protocols, lack of medical equipment and training

Jane admonished plant management for wasting precious time that could have potentially saved Russell's life. Workers have no access to phone service inside the building so it was entirely up to management to summon help.

"One of us asked management, 'Why is it taking so long for the ambulance to come?' He said that their protocol is that they call the security first, and then security calls the ambulance," she said. "My question is, why would you do that? Why won't you call the ambulance first instead of security first? None of the security are medically trained. They call security like if this is a crime scene, but a person is dying here. And none of the supervisors have any training or any protocol for what to do in case of emergency."

"They don't have any defibrillator machines," she continued. "They don't have anything for CPR training. Nothing, no kind of triage or anything. The only thing they had was a first aid kit on the wall. And then they don't have any emergency phones, even though they know their building has no service. If there is some emergency phone line, they didn't tell us, because we can't get any calls, nobody can call in there."

"USPS needs to provide these services and they need to have training." She noted it was a federal job. "They need to train people to know how to do things when an emergency happens. It should be mandatory that the facilities have training on medical treatments and safety."

## Other deaths at the Palmetto facility

There have been many other deaths at this same facility. In August 2024, 48-year-old Sharon Barnes died due to causes that were never publicly confirmed. Jane told the WSWS that one of her coworkers was there when it happened. "Sharon told my coworker she wasn't feeling well. I don't know if she got overheated, but she passed out. My coworker caught her in her arms and I believe she ended up having a stroke.

"But she had waited there and was screaming and screaming, but no one could hear her because the machines are very loud. It was about 30 minutes until a supervisor came over there. And even in that incident, it took another 30 minutes for the ambulance to come. They went to the wrong side of the building. Our building is one million square feet and she was at the back of the building."

At the time, Sharon's family and coworkers complained of the lack of cell phone service inside the building, to no avail. Her family raised questions about the gap of time between her losing consciousness and when she was finally transported to a hospital, where doctors told the family that she had already died upon arrival, according to WSB-TV Atlanta.

In June 2025 two other fatal incidents occurred. Eric Smith, a 59-year-old electrical technician, had a heart attack and died in the lunchroom. Jane told the WSWS that another man, whose name and cause of death was never released, died just one week after Eric. She also reported an incident where a postal worker's home was on fire, but because of the lack of cell service, the fire department could not reach her and she only found out about her home burning down when

she left work.

"So, we have all those incidents, and now Russell. I don't know if he had a heart attack or what happened. But what happened to him is crazy," she said. "There was no medical care for him. It didn't make sense. It is insane. It should never have happened. I don't understand that. We're human beings, we need to be treated like human beings. And lacking basic things like medical attention or access to a phone ... it just doesn't make any sense."

## "Delivering for America"

The Palmetto Processing and Distribution center's launch was part of a consolidation of postal facilities under the "Delivering for America" program, an ongoing restructuring plan aimed at automating jobs, cutting routes and closing facilities to prepare the USPS for privatization.

11Alive reported last year on significant delays and other problems at the facility as a direct product of the implementation of Delivering for America.

## A strategy to put workers' lives over profit

Workers who attended a meeting of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) on Sunday afternoon to discuss a strategy to fight against unsafe working conditions, layoffs and hunger spoke on the question of workplace safety. It was explained that the deaths of workers like Nick Acker and Russell Scruggs Jr. are the product of a system that prioritizes profit over the lives and safety of workers. The discussion, in which workers participated from across the US and internationally, demonstrated that workers are beginning to draw the necessary conclusions.

The fight to uncover the truth about these deaths and to prevent future tragedies requires the building of rank-and-file committees in every workplace, democratically controlled by workers themselves and independent of the union apparatus.

We urge postal workers, and workers in all industries, who want to share information, expose unsafe conditions and take up the fight to build rank-and-file committees to contact the *World Socialist Web Site*.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:  
**wsws.org/contact**