

Following death of postal worker Russell Scruggs, Jr.

Workers speak out on dangerous conditions at Palmetto, Georgia mail facility

“That could've been me, that could've been any of us”

Kathleen Martin
19 November 2025

Postal workers, come forward with descriptions of the conditions at your plant by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

On Saturday, November 15, just one week after Nick Acker's death in Detroit, another postal worker died at the Palmetto, Georgia USPS Processing & Distribution Center. Workers reported to the *World Socialist Web Site* that Russell Scruggs, Jr. died inside the facility after falling and hitting his head and that the lack of cell phone service inside the plant prevented workers from being able to contact emergency services in time.

Russell's coworkers are coming forward and speaking out about dangerous conditions and a toxic environment inside the plant. Their names have been changed to protect them from retaliation.

Mary said, “The only thing management cares about is moving the mail. They have no regard to employee safety at all and it shows. There is a new plant manager and no one other than management has officially met him, he's not personable and he's well aware of these issues and has done nothing to obliterate the issues.

“I watched that young man while he was under the machine on the floor and I look at the so-called supervisors and managerial staff around him and I was disgusted at the lack of empathy, compassion and their will to do the bare minimum which was check for a pulse, stop the bleeding, call 911, ask if anyone standing around was CPR qualified.”

No phone service for workers

Danielle contacted the WSWWS after she read about her coworker Russell's death. She confirmed that employees' phones do not work. “We believe they have a firewall on. You have no signal in the building at all. Your phone goes into SOS. So in order to get a signal, you have to walk to the front of the building, which is up through the entrance, and then you maybe can pick up some service then, or you have to go out the back door to the dock outside,” she said.

Another employee, Jess, also confirmed this. “There have been many emergencies and due to the lack of cell phone service there is no way to reach outside without walking nearly 10 minutes from the back of the building. The time clock to the door is about 100 yards. I've been with USPS nearly 10 years and all of our other plants there are no cells blocked, only in this building.

“More than anything phone service is needed. We shouldn't have to run outside to check if our children are okay. Last year a couple there lost

their daughter in a car accident. There was no way to reach them. Someone had to drive to the location to inform them both. Someone's house burned down, same situation,” Jess added.

Danielle described how workers try to use the facility's WiFi to access their phones, but that management will change the WiFi code to prevent them from using it “because it slows down the machines and they want to keep those machines running all the time.” She said around six months ago someone started a petition to get the building updated to allow phone service for employees, but nothing ever came of it. She even tried to use a hotspot that she brought from home with no success.

“There's no weather radio in that building. If I'm at home and they're reporting bad weather is gonna come... I just don't go to work, because you don't know what's going on outside once you're in there. There's no siren, no alerts, even Amber Alerts don't come through on your phone. You don't know if a tornado has touched down or they're telling you to take cover. Even people in jail got cellphones and know what's going on. And my understanding, it's all because the equipment they use to scan the mail is run on Wi-Fi. Why can't they just have two Wi-Fi connections then?” she asked.

Workplace deaths as a regular occurrence

“When somebody dies, they don't even announce it. Unless someone knew them personally, maybe somebody that worked with them will make a flyer at home on their own and post it. The day [Eric Smith a 59-year-old technician] died in the break room [in June 2025] it was like, ‘Back to work, as normal,’” Danielle said.

She also said workers heard that after Sharon Barnes died last summer inside the facility, the family was not alerted because there was no emergency contact on file for her. She said Barnes' family found out when one of Barnes' family members who happens to work at the facility reported in for his shift.

“When I saw this article come across my phone about Russell today I felt very bad, and especially when they say they let that guy lay there ... I can see them doing nothing, and the thing is, that could've been me, that could've been any of us. So I had to say something about this when I heard what had happened to Russell in there.

“I can imagine since I saw when the man died in the break room, how long it took the ambulance to come in there, how long it took for them to call. It's just sad. And I guarantee you management was just saying, ‘Go

back to work. Go back to work. Go back to work.' Supposedly there are cameras in there so I hope that they find out what happened to him. For the workers themselves, it is not a safe environment."

She also said that at least two employees recently committed suicide off-site, one of which was confirmed by Jess. "They don't offer any type of grief counseling. They don't do nothing. They're just back to work," she said.

Nick Acker's coworkers also reported that grief counseling services were never made available to them, and that those who attempted to take a day off to attend his funeral were essentially punished with a write-up for being gone over two hours.

No emergency protocols, no safety teams

Danielle told the WSWs that she signed herself up to join a safety team on two separate occasions but never heard back from anyone, after she witnessed the death of Eric Smith.

"The working conditions in this building are horrible," Danielle said. "This building is huge. There's no defibrillators, there's no zone with emergency phones, they're supposed to provide water and stuff but they don't. We do not have a nurse room, like a place you can go if you're not feeling good, where somebody can check your blood pressure. This place is a danger zone. They don't take safety serious at this building. They don't train their managers. There's no professionalism. I think it's the post office's job to provide us with a safe working environment, and a lot of times, I can promise you, I do not feel safe."

She said that the lacks of emergency protocol means delays in providing emergency services. "I witnessed when the ambulance came [for Eric Smith]. They went all the way around to the back of the building in the wrong location so these are minutes wasted. These people are not trained to handle emergencies. They call 911 but then why would you not have your security people at the entrance directing the ambulance on where to go? The fire department don't know where to go either. We had a fire in the building, a piece of equipment caught fire, and they don't even know what area to go to because we need to have someone that's alerting people on where the emergency is."

Toxic workplace environment

Jess said, "We really need more attention. The guy that passed away Friday [Russell] was a MHA, a non-career [second tier] position. Similar to PSEs [Postal Support Employees], CCAs [City Carrier Assistants] and RCAs [Rural Carrier Assistants], they are all treated really bad by management. I've seen many PSEs over the years get yelled at or forced to work."

Danielle said that there is physical, mental and verbal abuse from higher-ups toward workers. "You have managers and supervisors wanting to fight employees. Like, following them out of the building, harassing employees. It's just not a good work environment. There was a fight there recently, then the next day the postal security was there checking everybody's bags. You don't know who's gonna go to their car and get a gun with all these fights breaking out."

Danielle said she knew one woman who quit after being disciplined for going outside to call her young children to make sure they arrived home safely from school. "Now that they got a title of supervisor or whatever, some of these people think they can talk to you any type of way. They

cuss at you, harass you. It's just crazy. It's all types of misconduct that I consider very unprofessional."

She said the building recently lost power and employees sat outside in the parking lot for hours waiting to come into work, and that management refused to send workers home.

Cover-ups by management

Jess told the WSWs that while the facility has gotten some negative attention in the local press, "When the news or anyone else comes we clean up and make everything presentable then after those folks leave it's back to the same old working conditions. We are unable to bid out of the building, leaving everyone stuck in Palmetto after being forced here."

Danielle said, "If they know somebody is coming, they'll load all the mail up on a truck and just move it to another location. So when people come in to inspect to see what's really going on it will look like everything is fine."

She described one of the big problems in the facility currently. "The VA [Veterans Affairs, the federal agency which provides healthcare for ex-military] sends out their medication in these containers in a plastic bag, but the plastic bag doesn't lay flat, so they get rejected. We are like 10 reject bins deep with just nothing but medications in it, because somebody have to manually go pick up this bag and see what ZIP code it is to put it in the right container." She also said that workers have accused management and supervisors of stealing cash, gift cards and checks out of the mail before it comes to the sorters and handlers.

Workers are coming forward and are not allowing Russell's death to be swept under the rug, along with the other postal workers who have lost their lives in the Palmetto facility.

Over the summer, the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee launched an inquiry into working conditions, to "expose conditions at USPS to the workers of the world and to arm postal workers with crucial information which they need to organize a fight."

We urge workers to join the committee and submit information about conditions in your facility. Fill out the form below to get in touch.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact