

# “They treat us like property”: Postal workers in Detroit, Atlanta outraged over workplace deaths of Nick Acker and Russell Scruggs Jr.

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

The *World Socialist Web Site* is continuing to receive new comments from postal workers in response to the deaths of Nick Acker on November 8 at a United States Postal Service facility near Detroit and of Russell Scruggs Jr. near Atlanta, Georgia on November 15.

Several postal workers spoke to a WSWS reporting team at the distribution center in downtown Detroit about Acker's death.

One worker, Kim, said, “They are really not saying much about what happened, except that it was a two-man job and [Nick] knew it. But I say, even if he knew it was a two-man job, that wasn't the first day he did that. You knew what was going on. They don't care about us period.”

“I know how they are. They are trying to make it like it was his fault,” she said. “They are blaming his supervisor. The supervisor should not be the only one held accountable. All management. Where was the person who was supposed to help?”

Another worker said that even if Nick had been instructed by his supervisor to do the job by himself, “there should have been some kind of mechanism (a sensor) to shut off the machine the moment he fell inside of it.”

However, workers at Acker's plant informed the WSWS that these basic safety mechanisms were disabled in order to keep operations going.

A veteran with many years at the post office said, “There is no way he should have been working by himself. He was a newer employee.” He added, “There was another death not long ago at the same building in

Allen Park. A man fell to his death with a fire extinguisher. I knew him. What a nice guy.” He concluded, “We never heard anything.”

He added: “It's a shame what they are doing, and they are doing all over the place. They are so damn greedy. The top 1 percent, what do they control? Sixty percent of all the wealth? They are getting it all, but we can't get healthcare, but we can build bombs.”

A comment on Facebook echoed a widely-held sentiment: “USPS treats its contracted employees like property. All employees other than management are not allowed to have a voice even with a Union. Without craft employees USPS would be nothing. Have management do the work, I'd like to see them get it done instead of barking orders.”

Multiple workers have both written into and spoken with WSWS reporters on the death of Scruggs at the Palmetto Processing and Distribution Center.

One worker submitted a comment detailing an experience closely resembling that which resulted in Scruggs' death:

“My concern is the treatment of injured workers in an unsafe environment and the lack of care and concern when on the jobs accidents occur. My fall happened in front of two supervisors, one made a rude comment and turned her back as if she didn't see me, the second supervisor was more concerned about my ripped glove than my injuries. Neither supervisor offered assistance as I struggled to get to my feet, nor did they ask if I was okay.”

“Although I suffered back, hip, and knee injuries in the fall, a report was never generated and neither supervisor faced disciplinary action for failure to offer assistance. Management seems to support abusive

supervisors while punishing injured workers.”

Another postal worker at the North Metro Processing and Distribution Center in Duluth, Georgia shared their experience of management abuse.

“They fired me for failure to report to work, but at the time I was hospitalized unable to walk nor talk or work let alone breathe on my own. All because the United States Postal Service thought that it was smart and safe to do construction work [with the facility running]. While we the employees were in the building working, there weren’t any air ventilation systems set up. In fact, they took them all down. They had myself along with a ton of other coworkers working in the building that was deemed unsafe, that looked condemned.

“I lost my medical coverage because I was wrongfully terminated. I lost my all the benefits that I had in regards to the United States Postal Service. That is all now gone and I’m without a job.

“The United States Postal Service won’t take accountability for having their employees in an unsafe work environment, and then they don’t want to take accountability and responsibility for when their employees are injured while working on their premises.”

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees has announced an independent workers inquiry into the deaths of Acker and Scruggs. In a statement, the IWA-RFC explained: “This is not a journalistic exercise but an effort to arm workers with the knowledge they need to defend themselves and go on the offensive against the regime of corporate dictatorship in the workplaces, which makes these deaths inevitable.”

It concluded:

The time has come to take a stand. An independent investigation into the deaths of Nick Acker, Russell Scruggs, Jr. and other postal workers will become a spearhead for the fight to empower rank-and-file committees to take control of safety conditions, guarantee the right to life, health and safety on the job, and end the dictatorship of production for profit.



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