

USPS worker Christopher Montano, 46, dies after collapsing outside Illinois postal annex

Kristina Betinis
22 January 2026

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) has called for an independent investigation, led by rank-and-file workers, into the recent deaths of US Postal Service workers Nick Acker, 36, in the Detroit area and Russell Scruggs, Jr., 44, near Atlanta. We urge postal workers to come forward with information about safety conditions at their facilities by filling out the form at the end of this article. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Christopher Montano, a 46-year-old letter carrier, collapsed and died on December 15 in the parking lot of the US Post Office Carrier Annex near Lake Forest, Illinois of a reported cardiac arrest.

A 10-year veteran of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), Montano was finishing his shift around 9 p.m. when he collapsed. News reports indicate a co-worker saw him in distress and called 911. Paramedics arrived and made lifesaving efforts, but pronounced him dead at the scene.

The Lake County Coroner's Office preliminary autopsy results indicated his death appeared to be natural and likely related to a cardiac condition, noting Montano had a "significant cardiac history."

Montano is survived by his partner of 25 years, Isabel Rodriguez, his four children, his mother, sister and extended family members. Described by loved ones as a dedicated family man, a jokester, and a kind-hearted person, Montano was also a committed union steward with the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), who "would take extra time to listen to and advise his fellow colleagues through different situations, even when it took away from his own free time," according to a notice posted by the family.

In a perfunctory statement to local media, a USPS spokesperson said, "We are saddened to learn of the death of one of our own employees and coworkers,"

offering "thoughts and deepest sympathies" to his family and friends.

With the support of both big-business parties, the USPS has been transformed into a profit-driven entity at the direct expense of its workforce. For more than a decade, postal workers have faced relentless speedup, mandatory overtime, short-staffing, the elimination of breaks, and a punitive monitoring regime.

Letter carriers routinely work 10-12 hour days, six and often seven days a week, in all weather extremes, under constant pressure to complete ever-expanding routes. The stress is compounded by the threat of discipline for any delay. Sustained intense conditions are known contributors to cardiovascular crisis, especially for workers with pre-existing conditions.

43-year-old Russell Scruggs died in Palmetto, Georgia after a "cardiac event" inside a USPS facility where there was no defibrillator or medical personnel on hand. Earlier in the day, Russell felt unwell and requested to be sent home. According to a coworker, "We know Russell asked a supervisor two times to go home and was told no. He didn't feel good. He was going back and forth getting water and others in his department said he was denied his request to leave early.

"It's a standard practice for these supervisors: if you're sick and ask to go home, they'll say you can't, because they need you to keep things functioning. We're supposed to be allowed to leave with a 3971 form but they tell MHAs [mail handler assistants] and non-career employees that if you leave, you could get fired. They threaten you with that."

In 2024 another Chicago-area USPS worker in his 40s, Keywan Glenn, collapsed and died under remarkably similar circumstances. No public statement

was made by USPS. Glenn was a warehouse worker who had gone in despite not feeling well that day, under ongoing pressure from a supervisor to avoid any absenteeism, as reported to the WSWs by his family.

Just one week before Scruggs' death, USPS maintenance mechanic Nick Acker, 36, was killed at the Detroit Network Distribution Center in Allen Park, Michigan. His body was found stuck in a mail sorting machine, where authorities estimated he had been dead for many hours before being discovered.

Rank and file postal workers speak out against intolerable conditions

On December 3, 2025, the Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee issued a statement calling on all postal workers to come forward with information on the deaths of Russell Scruggs Jr., Nick Acker, and any other deaths and unsafe working conditions.

The committee explained that its independent inquiry "will collect testimonies, inspect machine lockout/tagout records, document the bypassing of safety features, obtain grievance histories and witness statements, and preserve photographic and video evidence."

Since the investigation launched, USPS workers are exposing the extremely dangerous conditions that prevail in the facilities. One worker reports she suffered very serious health problems while working during a construction project at her facility. After falling into a coma due to breathing particulate pollution, she was later denied workers' compensation. Management ignored her physician's work restrictions and then fired her.

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee stated, "Workers in postal facilities across the country report speedup, lack of safety procedures, inadequate staffing and pressure from management to keep machines running instead of properly shutting down for repairs. Postal carriers are facing job cuts and wage cuts, along with a draconian monitoring regime.

"Management, OSHA and the union bureaucracy have repeatedly failed to protect us. Company-run

investigations and advance notice of inspectors allow management to temporarily 'clean up' plants before visits. Union officials are complicit or passive, leaving grievances unresolved and safety failures unchecked."

Independent initiative by the rank and file is critical. Fill out the form below to get in touch with the committee. We will protect your identity.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact