

OSHA fines USPS only \$26,481 over death of Allen Park, Michigan, postal worker Nick Acker

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28 May 2026

Are you a postal or logistics worker? Contact the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee with information about conditions at your facility. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Federal regulators issued a \$26,481 fine this week for the death of 36-year-old postal worker Nick Acker, who died last November at the USPS Detroit Network Distribution Center (DNDC) in Allen Park, Michigan. The fine is a reduction from the initial figure of \$66,200, equivalent to 10 seconds worth of USPS revenue and likely not even half of what Acker's yearly salary was at the post office.

Acker was crushed to death inside a mail sorting machine and found wedged between a guardrail and a conveyor belt. Authorities estimated he was dead for six to eight hours before firefighters discovered his body and only after his fiancée came to look for him when he did not return home from work. The Wayne County Medical Examiner determined his cause of death to be mechanical asphyxiation.

Nick's coworkers believe that his death was "100% preventable," and that if he had been working with a partner and the proper safety protocols were in place, he would not have died.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) posted five citations on its inspection page for the case, which is still open as of this writing.

The OSHA citations document a pattern of systemic disregard for Lockout/Tagout (LOTO) safety procedures, the federally mandated protocols designed to prevent workers from being killed or maimed by machinery that can start up unexpectedly during maintenance.

The citations, all issued on April 10, 2026, are as

follows:

Citation #01001: On or around November 8, the day Acker was killed, USPS failed to conduct periodic inspections, required at least annually, of energy control procedures for the Alpha conveyors at the Allen Park facility. Workers (in this case, Acker) performing mail search activities on and near these conveyors were exposed to caught-in hazards from a running or unexpectedly starting conveyor. The initial penalty of \$16,550 was reduced to \$8,827.

Citation #01002: On January 28, 2026, more than two months after Acker's death, OSHA found that USPS still had not corrected its failures. On that date, maintenance employees tasked with repairing hotel conveyor belt #40 had not received adequate training covering group lockout/tagout procedures. Supervisors overseeing the work were also untrained. The initial penalty of \$16,550 was reduced to \$8,827.

Citation #01004A: USPS failed to ensure that each authorized employee affixed a personal lockout device to the group energy isolation device before beginning repair work on the conveyor belt, exposing workers to caught-in and fall hazards. The initial penalty of \$16,550 was reduced to \$8,827.

Citation #01004B: USPS failed to maintain proper procedures during shift changes to ensure continuity of lockout protections, again exposing workers to the hazard of unexpected equipment startup. The penalty amount for this citation is \$0.

Citation #01004C: USPS failed to ensure that its own energy control procedures were followed when maintenance employees repaired the hotel conveyor belt, work including replacing or shortening the belt or repairing metal lacing while the equipment remained

hazardous. The initial penalty of \$16,550 was reduced to \$0.

The OSHA citations officially confirm what workers already knew, that the failure to follow lockout/tagout procedures was an ongoing institutional practice at the Allen Park facility. Workers there were exposed to these hazards before Acker's death, on the day he was killed and for months afterward, in spite of a list of grievances for safety violations leading up to his death.

The American Postal Workers Union (APWU) has not issued a statement on the paltry fine. Acker's friend and coworker Matthew Stiffler told the *World Socialist Web Site* that "we have a ways to go," and that although there has been safety re-training since Nick's death, "the fine was not enough."

Workers at the Allen Park DNDC, where starting pay is under \$21 an hour, described the facility as understaffed, requiring mandatory overtime of at least 10 hours per shift, and managed with contempt for workers' basic dignity and safety.

Gary Acker, Nick's father, told the *Detroit News*, "OSHA told me they heard the same thing I did about no one following the rules, but they couldn't get anyone to testify to it... No one will stand up and fight with them. It's like no real fine, and we can't sue them, so it's just gonna be swept under the table."

Nick's fiancée, Stephanie Jaszcz, told local news outlets: "It is disgusting and infuriating that a company can hide behind a program like OSHA, a system that's supposed to protect workers and make sure people come home alive, only to walk away with slashed fines, meaningless citations, and zero real accountability. What's the point of a safety agency if the companies who violate the rules get a discount for killing someone?"

The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee issued a statement in December 2025 calling on postal workers to come forward with information on Nick's death and warned against putting trust in the union bureaucracy.

"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," the committee stated.

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