

What the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Inquiry uncovered about Palmetto RPDC, where 4 workers have died in 2 years

Jane Wise
11 June 2026

On Sunday, June 14, the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee is holding an online public meeting: “4 workers dead at Palmetto—The consequence of decades of cuts and the drive to privatize USPS.” Register for the event here.

Newly released 911 calls shed new light on the death of U.S.P.S. worker Demarcus Little at the Palmetto Regional Processing and Distribution Center (RPDC) in Georgia. Little, a 45-year-old father of two, collapsed and died at the facility on June 3. He is the fourth worker known to have died at Palmetto since it opened just over two years ago.

According to 11Alive, coworkers who called 911 said Little appeared to be suffering a medical emergency. In another call, a coworker expressed alarm over the delay in emergency response: “We’ve called several times, and nobody has made it here. This man has been down for like 10 minutes.” Dispatch records state that the first 911 call was received at 11:06 p.m. and that CPR was in progress by 11:25 p.m., roughly 19 minutes later.

But the reports do not explain who was administering CPR, what happened inside the facility before the call was made or what emergency procedures were followed. Little’s fiancée Laura Wheaton and coworkers report that he had asked to leave after telling a supervisor he felt sick and was refused permission to go home.

Workers at Palmetto and across the country are demanding an investigation into Little’s death. In November 2025, the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee launched an independent inquiry into deaths at the post office, following the deaths of Russell Scruggs Jr., also at Palmetto, and Nick Acker at the

Detroit Network Distribution Center that same month. The inquiry was launched because management, federal regulators and the union bureaucracy had failed to protect workers. This was underscored by a recent OSHA decision to fine USPS \$26,481 over the death of Acker, who fell into a postal sort machine and was not discovered until hours later.

Little’s death took place under circumstances that are very similar to those which led to the death of Scruggs. Scruggs had also told a supervisor he felt sick but was refused permission to leave. Like Little, Scruggs collapsed after a medical emergency, and the cause of death was later determined to be a heart attack. And also as the 911 transcripts reveal in Little’s case, there were lengthy delays in getting him emergency care. In Scruggs’ case, there were no defibrillators on hand, and EMS was delayed by over an hour, due to lack of cell service and difficulty entering and navigating the facility.

In fact, lengthy delays in emergency care appear to have been factors in all four deaths in Palmetto. Shannon Barnes died in August 2024 after suffering a brain aneurysm in the facility; she was untreated for around half an hour and her family believes that her life could have been saved if help had arrived sooner. When Eric Smith collapsed in June 2025, co-workers were unable to call 911 on their cell phones.

The committee investigated these circumstances in late 2025 and early 2026. Based on testimony provided by workers, it discovered:

- There have never been written safety protocols at the facility;
- There are no on-site nurses or medical professionals;
- There are no defibrillators or readily available life-

saving equipment;

- There is no reliable cell phone coverage inside the facility, and many workers believe that the signals are being blocked by management;
- There are continuous delays and confusion in directing first responders through the massive building;
- There is unsafe machinery and a failure to follow basic lockout/tagout procedures.

These findings came from workers' accounts of conditions on the shop floor. They are not limited to Palmetto. The committee also reported on other deaths and serious health incidents around the country, including the death of Lucy Diaz at the Morgan Postal Distribution Center in New York City.

A local rank-and-file committee founded at a postal facility in Springfield has reported disgusting conditions in the facility, including the presence of asbestos and Legionnaires' disease.

But Palmetto concentrates the issue with exceptional force. It is not a backwater but a crown jewel in the so-called "Delivering for America" (DFA) program launched under previous Postmaster General (PMG) Louis DeJoy. Its aim is to consolidate the network into a smaller number of large, highly automated facilities, mimicking the networks of private companies like Amazon. The purpose is to close post offices, consolidate routes and shrink the size of the workforce, with an eye towards its potential privatization.

Now, this objective is being pursued forcefully by current PMG David Steiner, who is using a cash crisis to float ending six-day-a-week mail delivery, closing "unprofitable" offices and ending the Universal Service Obligation, which would jeopardize reliable mail delivery for much of the country.

This underscores the fact that these deaths are the result not simply of negligence. They are the inevitable result of relentless cost-cutting and exploitation.

From its findings, the Rank-and-File Committee urged postal workers to advance the following demands over safety:

- **Defibrillators and fully stocked first aid equipment in every facility;**
- **Nurses and trained medical personnel on site;**
- **An end to the blocking of cell phone signals;**
- **Written emergency plans in every building, subject to workers' oversight;**
- **Strict enforcement of lockout/tagout and other**

safety procedures;

• **Full transparency over workplace injuries, medical emergencies and deaths;**

The right of workers to stop work when conditions are unsafe.

The postal unions have not issued a single statement on the deaths at Palmetto or the conditions that produced them. Having endorsed Delivering for America and collaborated in its implementation, they bear direct responsibility for the conditions that have killed workers. The same conditions persist and the deaths continue.

Workers in every facility must organize to enforce safety measures, not waste time and effort pleading with management or Congress.

The USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee's investigation into safety continues. But this issue is inseparable from broader demands to end overwork: an end to Delivering for America and no more facility closures; full protection for career jobs; an end to workplace surveillance and punitive "productivity" regimes; and a reaffirmation of USPS as a public service.

Therefore, the fight must be organized from below, independent of the union apparatus. As the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee declared in a statement Wednesday: "What we are advocating is not a petition campaign or a phone-banking drive. Rather, it is the development of a fighting organization, controlled democratically by workers themselves, campaigning to mobilize workers against the cuts and the entire framework behind it."

For more information on how to join the committee, fill out the form below.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact