

National Reassessment Process

By Jeanne Larch, Compensation Officer, Branch 4374

The National Reassessment Process (NRP) is management's attempt to begin withdrawing light and limited duty work.

The Postal Service is contractually and legally obligated to make every effort to assign limited duty work to employees who have not fully recovered from an on-the-job injury. At this point in time the postal service is ignoring that obligation, in some cases, by beginning the first phase of the NRP.

This phase starts with identifying the injured employee and scrutinizing their medical restrictions. The next step is to request a medical update from the employee and most often from the treating physician. In the cases that we have seen in this branch, this is the step that gets management into contractual trouble.

The medical update requests are improper in many respects. The doctor cannot be contacted without the knowledge of the injured letter carrier. Any written correspondence with your doctor should be duplicated, and sent to you at the same time it is sent to your doctor. Some doctors' offices reply to these letters without the knowledge of the patient, while others are aware enough to contact the letter carrier with concerns about such a request from the postal service.

Updated medical is valuable to management and to the injured letter carrier. The only medical documentation that management has a right to is the CA-17, showing the restrictions needed to perform your work duties. Federal regulation 20CFR 10.331(b) cites that medical reports shall be submitted directly to OWCP. If the Postal Service thinks it is necessary for them to see the medical report, they must request it from OWCP. There are no other provisions within our current regulations or manuals, that gives the Injury Compensation Office at the district level, the right to require the injured worker to provide medical documentation other than a CA-17 or a CA-16.

Also, the injured carrier will receive requests for updates from the district. For those on long-term restrictions, sometimes this can be an appropriate request. This request should be for an updated CA-17, nothing more. A CA-17 assists in defining the duties of a carrier working a limited duty job with restrictions, usually with a modified or permanent job offer. Many times the letter to the doctor asks questions that can only be of value to medical personnel.

The letter that is improperly requesting medical documentation presents questions such as:

- Please clarify if — — — experienced any complications delaying a timely recovery?
- Please clarify if there are any underlying conditions that might impact recovery?
- Due to the nature of the diagnosis and medical documentation presented, has there been any recent test to warrant these ongoing restrictions?
- Has — — — been actively participating in physical therapy for this problem?
- What is the anticipated date when — — — can resume full duty job functions?

If you receive any requests with questions like this, contact your steward, not your doctor. This is grievable, and it should be challenged because there is no contractual or legal obligation for an injured letter carrier to provide management with this medical documentation.

Remember this is phase one of the NRP and at this point management has already violated federal regulations, part of the ELM Sec 546, Federal Procedure Manual, and the EL505.

Be sure you know your rights and ask for your steward.

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