

# Using handbooks and manuals to your advantage

**D**id management violate...? Did management have just cause to...? Isn't that how most grievance issue statements are framed?

The issue statement is a question, posed by the union, to ask if management has acted correctly within the four corners of the National Agreement—the decision and remedy is the answer to that question. As an effective shop steward, it isn't enough to simply ask the question. Your job is to ask the question, investigate the facts in question, and attempt to resolve the conflict.

**Asking the question and sometimes determining the resolution** is much easier than investigating the facts. What happens when the words in the contract don't exactly match what you see as the violation? For example, your office has just seen yet another overtime violation. Clearly, there was an overtime violation; what is the issue? You believe staffing is the root cause of the violation—if you had a full complement of carriers on board, there wouldn't be any overtime violations. Staffing, however, isn't addressed directly in the printed contract; how is it enforceable? While staffing complement isn't mentioned by name, it is most certainly covered by the contract.

One of the Postal Service handbooks, *EL-312*, has specific references to staffing and who is responsible to ensure staffing. Article 19—*Handbooks and Manuals*—is the contractual connection between your dispute and the issue. As such, Article 19 stipulates:

Those parts of all handbooks, manuals and published regulations of the Postal Service, that directly relate to wages, hours or working conditions, as they apply to employees covered by this Agreement...

Never neglect to use this valuable direct extension of the contract. In the example above, *Handbook EL-312, Employment and Placement Handbook* says:

**Section 124:** The District Manager of Human Resources is responsible for...

C) Planning and conducting appropriate ongoing recruitment efforts to meet local needs

D) Planning, opening, announcing, and publicizing examinations for recruitment to meet staffing needs of the district

**Section 211.1** Forecasting—The installation head is responsible for forecasting the recruitment requirements in the installation in sufficient time to assure that there are qualified persons available for appointment. While the installation head is responsible for forecasting recruitment needs, local management *from all organizational functions must work together in assessing how changing operational needs will affect recruitment needs* (emphasis added).

As you investigate your overtime grievance, request the documents related to planning, ongoing recruitment, examinations and forecasting. The documents you acquire related to the handbooks and manuals may well prove to be a goldmine in answering questions posed in the issue statement.

Article 19 only opens the door for union activists to walk through while investigating and proving a violation of the contract.

**While not an exhaustive list of applicable handbooks and manuals** at your disposal, take the time to review these additional handbooks and manuals covered by Article 19:

- *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)*
- *M-39 Management of Delivery Services*
- *M-41 City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*
- *Administrative Support Manual (ASM)*
- *Postal Operations Manual (POM)*
- *EL-307 Reasonable Accommodation*
- *EL-505 Injury Compensation*
- *F-21 Time and Attendance*

These handbooks and manuals are available at [www.nalc.org/depart/cau/manual.html](http://www.nalc.org/depart/cau/manual.html).

**Did management violate... a handbook or manual? Be sure** to use every tool and resource available to you to answer the question. 