Fighting for a Safe Workplace at CLT

By Donielle Prophete, Vice President
CWA Local 3645

Last August our CWA family lost a valued member in a workplace tragedy. Kendrick Hudson, a 24-year-old passenger service agent and member of CWA Local 3645, was killed when the vehicle he was driving at Charlotte-Douglas International Airport flipped over after hitting a piece of fallen baggage. Kendrick’s family is now suing American Airlines as well as the city of Charlotte and asking that poor lighting and other dangerous conditions be addressed.

After completing a study that showed illumination on Concourses B, D, and E was below recommended levels, airport officials say they plan to upgrade lighting on the tarmac. In addition, the North Carolina Department of Labor has cited Piedmont Airlines with a $19,600 penalty for multiple safety violations.

Leaders of our union had been begging Piedmont to fix safety hazards at CLT, especially insufficient lighting and lack of roadway lines, for months before Kendrick’s death. According to a survey of Piedmont agents conducted by CWA last December, two-thirds of my coworkers in Charlotte reported raising safety concerns to management in the past six months (see the story below). Many of us have participated in the North Carolina Department of Labor’s investigation of the accident,

and our hope is that the findings will result in real improvements to make our workplace safe and prevent future tragedies. We encourage all agents to work safe and report any and all safety and health issues using the reporting mechanisms that are in place at their stations.

Read More:
Thank you to the nearly 500 Piedmont agents who completed the safety survey conducted by CWA in December 2019. The results are helping us approach management with concrete information to resolve health and safety issues that affect all of us.

*Being understaffed is the number one safety concern because we are rushed to do our jobs, which raises the risk of missing safety steps.*

—Sandy Wizzard, CLT

In the survey, Piedmont agents reported serious hazards on the job, including severe understaffing, poor equipment, and failures by management to address risks. We are determined to make sure that the company takes action to minimize these risks. We all deserve to feel safe on the job.

Click [here](#) to read a summary of the survey results; or to view the complete survey results, click [here](#). Help us spread the word to every CWA agent about our efforts to make our workplaces safer by sharing this newsletter with coworkers who may not have received it. They can simply [click here to sign up for our email alerts](#) today. And be sure to follow us on [Facebook](#) for further updates.

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**Agents at American Are Building Relationships To Tackle Air Rage at ORD**

*By Qushaun Naugle, Passenger Service Coordinator and President, Local 4201*

*And Jennifer Morales, Gate Agent and Vice President, Local 4201*

At airports across the country passenger service agents are preparing for the busy spring break season—which can mean long lines, overbooked flights, and frustrated families. For agents those inconveniences become dangerous when passenger anger boils over into verbal or even physical abuse.

There’s a simple bottom line for every passenger service agent, no matter what their position or the size of their station: We should be able to come to work without fear of angry customers abusing us with words or actions. We have strong support from our union in resolving disputes, and now we hope management will step up and continue to make improvements. We deserve it.

We work for American Airlines at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport (ORD), one of the world’s busiest hubs, serving more than 80 million passengers a year. On behalf of CWA Local 4201, we’ve been working with AA management and consulting with the Chicago Police Department for the past few months in order to make sure our agents are prepared and safe.

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Since the ratification of the first collective bargaining agreement with Envoy Air back in August 2019, there has been a powerful wave of enthusiasm growing among passenger service agents across the South. Dozens of agents have volunteered to train as stewards in order to help their fellow agents resolve problems and improve their workplaces.

Our union represents more than 1,700 Envoy agents at 23 stations in CWA’s District 3, which is comprised of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Puerto Rico. The largest group is at Miami International Airport, with 785 CWA agents right now and an additional 300 joining soon in ground security, equipment, and bag runner positions. Across the district, 48 new stewards have already been trained, and many more are eager to be trained as soon as possible.

“The surge of excitement about the union is happening because everyone can see that we’ve got their backs,” says James McKnight, an Envoy agent at MIA. “For example, by following the procedures set out in our contract, we were able to bring back seven workers who had been fired in Miami.”

In Charleston, we won two important grievance victories, and our union has seen almost a 40 percent increase in union membership. Instead of the old system, in which the company could make arbitrary decisions, there are now clear rules to follow at every station.

Read More: https://bit.ly/3cXnxLX

STAY CONNECTED

If you haven't visited our website for awhile, please check out CWAAgents.org. We've updated the "Find Your Local" section and have added several new Piedmont locals. To stay up-to-date on bargaining, mobilization, and other issues, be sure to follow us on Facebook at American Agents Connected, Piedmont Agents Connected, and Envoy Agents.