



Warning Signs That a Unit Officer/Steward Is In Trouble

Part of becoming an effective Unit Officer/Steward is staying tuned to what is happening around you. Unit Officers/Stewards need to do more than simply respond to problems. They should be able to anticipate where and when problems may be brewing. Unit Officers/Stewards also must be prepared to constantly reassess how they are doing. While it's impossible to come up with a complete list of all the things you need to watch out for, here are a few important ones:

- **YOU'RE IN TROUBLE** if you see workers in your department who are strangers. Your responsibility as a UPSEU Local 1222 Officer/Steward begins as soon as someone walks in off the street or from another department. You are the front line for the union, so you need to introduce yourself and begin talking union to any new people as soon as possible. Don't wait until workers are off probation or until they come to you with a problem. If they don't know you and you don't know them, then everything they learn about the union and their work is from management.
- **YOU'RE IN TROUBLE** when members don't come to you with their problems. The workers you represent need to know that you are available and willing to help. Unit Officer/Stewards sometimes make the mistake of only wanting to deal with legitimate grievances. Yet it is often through helping members on more minor issues that you build credibility and respect that is invaluable in solving more serious problems. Be sure to publicize UPSEU Local 1222's grievance victories on the union bulletin board or a regular newsletter to remind members of what can be won through grievances and union representation.
- **YOU'RE IN TROUBLE** when members seek help from other members. This may be happening because you haven't been making yourself available, but it sometimes occurs when Unit Officers/Stewards are new or inexperienced. To get more experience you should take advantage of whatever steward training programs the union offers and you should seek the advice of your UPSEU Local 1222 Labor Relations Representative. Another reason members may not be seeking you out: rightly or wrongly, they may perceive that you are tied to a particular clique. You must make it clear to all members that you have no favorites and are prepared to represent everyone equally.
- **YOU'RE IN TROUBLE** when management refuses to meet with you. You have to build credibility with management, not just with members. This is not to suggest that management will always like you, but through your integrity, persistence and hard work, management will realize that you and the union are a force they need to contend with.
- **YOU'RE IN TROUBLE** when members and management make private deals without you or the union's involvement. You need to make members understand that without the assistance of a Unit Officer/Steward and the union, the likelihood of getting justice is very small. Furthermore, without the involvement of the union, these back room deals undermine the contract and make things worse for everyone.
- **YOU'RE IN TROUBLE** when you never win a grievance. Winning isn't everything, particularly if you're up against an aggressive employer or a difficult workplace. But if you are rarely winning it's time to reevaluate your grievance strategy. Are you filing too many grievances that don't have merit? Are you doing careful grievance investigations? Are you carefully preparing for the hearing, including practicing with the grievant and witnesses? Are you figuring ways to reassure the employer outside of the grievance procedure? It also may be a good time to do some internal organizing in order to use rank and file support to pressure the employer to settle in the union's favor.
- **YOU'RE IN TROUBLE** when you've missed more than one union meeting. Being an effective Unit Officer/Steward is not just handling problems in your department. You also need to be an active union member and up to date on what is happening in the rest of the workplace. You need to attend meetings to make sure that the interests and concerns of the members you represent are heard and addressed by the union.

Cases in the News by Morici & Morici, LLP

Attorneys at Law

Bikers Beware



A current pending personal injury action regarding a bicyclist and pedestrian collision on the Brooklyn Bridge has raised awareness of the City of New York's (and all other municipalities for that matter) responsibility to keep bicyclists and pedestrians safe. In *Olenick v. City of New York*, bicyclist Olenick sustained injuries including a fractured wrist and lacerations to his face, knees and hands after colliding with a pedestrian that stepped from the walking lane into the bike lane on the bridge's walkway.

The City of New York moved to dismiss Mr. Olenick's claims on the basis that they should not be found liable for his injuries. However, a Kings County Justice of the Supreme Court has decided that dismissal of Mr. Olenick's claims are not warranted and that a jury should decide whether or not the City of New York should be held accountable for Mr. Olenick's injuries due to potentially "inadequate markings" intended to separate bike riders and pedestrians.



Vehicle Defects Causing Injuries Across America

Recently, many motorists have sustained injuries due to defects within the vehicle. Multiple airbag companies are being sued due to airbag malfunctions causing injuries to drivers and passengers. Additionally, motor vehicle accident victims and their families are seeking compensation from malfunctioning ignition switches. Anyone injured as a result of a motor vehicle accident should contact Morici & Morici immediately so that we can assess every potential avenue of compensation to assist in recovering for personal injuries and financial loss.

Morici & Morici, LLP is here to help!

The above examples of unfortunate causes of injury demonstrate that should you or a loved one sustain an injury in ANY type of accident, it is imperative to call Morici & Morici, LLP to assess your rights and responsibilities.

Additionally, please keep in mind that accidents such as Mr. Olenick's which involve a claim against a municipality have very strict time requirements which must be satisfied for a successful claim to be pursued. That is why it is also important to contact our firm as soon as possible.

SCAMS TARGET YOU

JUST SAY NO TO SCAMS!

PROTECT YOURSELF

Protect Your Assets

You worked hard for your money and property, but if you allow someone to take advantage of you, everything you have could be taken away from you. Learn to protect your assets by following these simple rules:

1. Never give your bank account numbers or other personal information to someone who calls you on the phone.
2. Never allow strangers to come into your home and take information about you and your assets.
3. Never assume that a stranger who says he represents a deserving organization will use the money you give him for a good purpose.
4. Never assign power of attorney to people you don't know very well.
5. Never sign contracts that have any blank lines in them. Someone may later add clauses that will harm you.
6. Never arrange for a home loan until you have had a knowledgeable third party review your contract. A disreputable lender could steal your home.



How to Fight Back on Crooked Schemes & Scams

Home Improvement Scams:

Work only with licensed and insured contractors. Call your state contractors licensing board to verify licenses, and ask all contractors to provide proof of insurance. Check customer references. Get other bids for the work.

Foreign Lottery Prizes & Sweepstakes:

When someone says you've won a lottery or contest that you didn't enter, that is a lie. Any money you send will be lost.

Investment Fraud:

Do your homework about investments. Learn how much you can expect to earn in the market. If you are targeted with questionable investment offers, file a complaint with the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

Fake Emergency Appeals:

Never volunteer information to someone who calls you on the phone. Hang up on people who will not identify themselves. Before you wire money, check with other family members to make sure there is a legitimate emergency.

Charitable Solicitations:

Ask how much of your contribution will go to the agency you wish to help. Before you give, check with www.charitywatch.org. Call your police and fire departments and ask how to make a donation directly to them.

Article from Capital One Consumer Action

Drug Plans:

Companies offering Medicare drug plans are not allowed to call, send emails or come to your home unless you ask them. If you are interested in benefits available to you, visit www.medicare.gov.

Credit Card Fraud:

Always review your bill when it arrives and call your credit card issuer immediately if you see any charges you didn't authorize. Shred all old credit card statements.

Identity Theft:

Get free copies of your credit reports each year. Visit the Federal Trade Commission's identity theft website www.ftc.gov for more info.

Burial & Funeral Fraud:

When planning your funeral and burial in advance, ask how your prepayment will be processed in case the company goes out of business. You can provide for your funeral costs in your will.

Caregiver Fraud:

Always check the background and references of people you hire to work in your home. Lock up all financial documents and store valuables in a bank safety deposit box.

Phishing:

Legitimate companies never send emails asking for account information. If you receive one bearing the name of your bank, call your bank to report it. Never hit "reply". Delete the message.

Steward's Note Keeping Checklist & Guide

Among the matters that you may want to keep notes on are:

- Contract violations
- Grievance deadlines
- Witness names and statements
- Harassment by supervisors
- Grievances or problems settled on a verbal basis
- Violations of work rules by supervisors or other non-bargaining unit members (valuable in proving disparate treatment)
- Violations of work rules by bargaining unit members, observed by management, that are not punished, or punished lightly (useful in proving lax enforcement or disparate treatment)
- Favoritism toward particular employees (useful for gaining benefits for others)
- Safety violations (valuable for bargaining or for filing OSHA complaints)
- Negative or hostile statements by supervisors about bargaining unit members (valuable for proving prejudice)
- Supervisors or outsiders doing bargaining unit work
- Equipment or machinery malfunctions (valuable if employees are accused of negligence)



NOTE: Stewards should keep separate files for individual grievances

LABOR QUOTE: DEFENDING LABOR RIGHTS

“Those who would destroy or further limit the rights of organized labor- those who cripple collective bargaining or prevent organization of the unorganized- do a disservice to the cause of democracy.”

John F. Kennedy



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