

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: Members are tempted to immediately call their Union Rep. or an Officer of the Local Union at the first hint of a problem. But, before you call consider this, each Union Rep. has a huge number of members to watch over and the Officers of the Local Union have over 5,000! If you disrespect your Steward and call the Union hall first, it creates a phone system traffic jam, and we all suffer. The best advice is to know your contract and talk to your Union Steward first - you can understand why.

STEP 1. ALWAYS TALK WITH YOUR STEWARD FIRST. If you have a problem, talk to your Union Steward first before you call your Union Rep. at the Local Union office. If you need to file a grievance, remember to do it within the time limits set in your contract's grievance procedure.

STEP 2. DECIDE IF YOU HAVE A GRIEVANCE. Ask yourself the following questions to determine if you have a grievance. Consult with your Union Steward for guidance. Remember, every grievance is a gripe, but not all gripes are grievances. Below are the six areas in which a grievance could occur.

- A. Has the employer violated the contract?
- B. Has the employer done something that is against the law?
- C. Did the employer violate the company's own rules?
- D. Is the employer singling out you or a small group of your co-workers?
- E. Did the employer change a long standing past practice?
- F. Were you terminated, suspended or disciplined unfairly?



STEP 3. FOLLOW THE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE. Locate the grievance procedure language in your contract and look it over. Follow your grievance procedure plus the advice listed below.

- A. **Process your grievance on time.** Be aware of the time limits set forth in your contract. Give your written grievance (pages 1,2 & 3) to your Union Steward. You must follow the grievance procedure outlined in your contract or you risk having your grievance called improper by the employer.
- B. **Write a proper grievance.** Follow the instructions on the grievance form. Be brief and give, "just the facts" on page 1. On every grievance, complete all necessary pages of the grievance form so that your Union Steward can properly process your grievance. Don't give a copy of page 3 to the employer.
- C. **Provide evidence and explanation.** Your Steward and Union Rep. will do a much better job presenting your case if you are able to offer a clear, complete, understandable description of your case along with supporting statements and evidence. Don't make your Steward do all the work.
- D. **Participate in winning your grievance.** If your problem is shared by one or more of your co-workers, you are urged to file a group grievance. In addition, it is important that you ask your Union Steward what you can do to help get a favorable decision. It is important to involve your co-workers.

THE FOUR RULES OF EVIDENCE AND EXPLANATION.

1. **Opinions are not facts.** All opinions must be specifically qualified. It's a long way from saying "everyone knows" to proving your case.
2. **Hearsay evidence is not fact.** We need eye witness statements, dated and signed. Pictures, diagrams or copies of evidence are also helpful.
3. **Facts must be relevant.** You need to identify the facts that have direct relevance to your particular grievance. Focus on one incident or complaint per grievance form. Separate your issues into separate grievances. Don't worry, we can print more forms.
4. **Facts must be timely.** Know the time limits set forth in your contract. You can have the best grievance in the world but if it isn't processed on time, it's no good. Additionally, most grievance procedures do not allow the employer or the Union to bring up actions or evidence that occurred in the distant past. Be sure what you are bringing up is within the timeliness "zone" for your contract (usually nine months). **Caution:** When the employer attempts action against you, if you bring up your record or some other evidence that is beyond the timeliness "zone", you open your entire record for use by the employer in their case. If you have a spotless record, fine. Otherwise, it's not a good idea.