

The employer's paper trail

Let's take this issue of writing a step further. How many of us have been in the situation where the employer has created a paper trail in order to build a case against our member? Verbal warnings and letters may be indicated on some kind of disciplinary sheet in the member's personnel file.

What does the member usually do if they are assessed a verbal or written warning? In all too many cases the member does nothing. Stewards and the local union itself must counsel all members never to accept discipline that the member and/or the local union feels is unjust.

That doesn't mean every letter of warning has to be arbitrated. In many cases, it is sufficient to challenge that letter with the member's and/or union's version of what happened. This challenge should be put in writing and attached to the record or it should be properly entered directly on the discipline sheet, if possible.

If these warnings are not challenged in writing, they stand as accepted.

Management has made an art form out of progressive discipline. The union needs strong ammunition in any disciplinary situation, because the next incident could trigger time off or termination.