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Inside The Fishbowl

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https://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf1187.pdf

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***1. Stronger EPA Initiatives Ignore Mechanisms to Make Bad Bosses Accountable, Ignoring NTEU Requests for Mandatory 360 Reviews with Teeth**

A Note from NTEU Chapter 280 President Bill Evans:

The following memorandum has been widely circulated to managers across the agency. While it may open up some new opportunities for a few of us, the down-side is that there will be less personnel to do the actual work, a serious issue in these budget stressed times. This memo, in changing staff to management ratios, grants more time for managers to scrutinize and micro manage your work. In many Offices, the staff to management ratio was at this "new level" of one manager to eight workers anyway, so why the rush to send out a memo with this "new" ratio?

Although NTEU Chapt. 280 has argued repeatedly that EPA can only be as good as it's leadership, there is no talk of allowing the staff to evaluate managers' performance (360 evaluations) and hold them accountable for anything. Bad boss? Suck it up, because no one in upper management wants to know about it. No one wants to fix the problems. I think I finally get it. A stronger EPA means a stronger management with more, not less SESers, and keeping grade 14 employees out of the running for SES training programs.

At NTEU Chapt. 280's Lunch and Learn about this initiative this summer, AA for OARM, Luis Luna, advised us that participation is open to everyone at some level in the development of suggestions for "A Stronger EPA". However, increasing the size of the SES pool makes me think that a hand-picked group of people are developing these recommendations that are then heading right into implementation.

At least, we want to know who developed these "suggestions" being implemented below. We ask Mr. Luna to provide us with the names, AAship, grade and managerial status of the people who made these recommendations, and we will print it in *The Fishbowl* so you can see who is shaping your future at EPA.

The Executive Board of NTEU welcomes your view point.

JUL 10 2007

THE ADMINISTRATOR

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: A Stronger EPA: Two Key Initiatives

TO: Assistant Administrators
General Counsel
Inspector General
Chief Financial Officer
Chief of Staff
Associate Administrators
Regional Administrators

As you know, I have made "A Stronger EPA" one of my four core priorities. The Agency has a challenging mission and demanding responsibilities, and it is critically important that the people doing its work have the tools, support, and work environment they need to best serve the American people. I am committed to providing our staff with the tools and resources that foster excellence.

A workgroup headed by Wayne Nastri, Luis Luna, and George Gray, with input from abroad cross-section of EPA staff, has developed a plan that offers short- and long-term initiatives to help realize the "Stronger EPA" vision

(see http://intranet.epa.gov/ohr/a_stronger_e_pa/index.htm).

I am pleased to announce implementation of two of the plan's recommendations. I am accepting the recommendation to revisit the existing supervisory ratio of 1 :11 . Clearly, effective management of EPA's human resources depends on a strong network of first-line supervisors working with staff to achieve results. The 11 :1 ratio, however, does not always afford supervisors and managers sufficient time to focus on important areas like leadership, communicating performance expectations, and providing effective performance feedback. Many federal agencies now employ a 1 :8 ratio, and a lower ratio may be appropriate for parts of EPA as well.

The Office of Administration and Resources Management will be developing specific guidance on this issue. I ask that you give this effort your personal attention and review your organization's needs with specific focus on effective first-line supervision as a key element of your management structure.

Second, EPA's management team must be led by highly effective executive-level employees who can capitalize on the creativity and commitment of the Agency's workforce. To that end, the Executive Resources Board is working closely with the Office of Personnel Management to launch a Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program in Fiscal Year 2007/2008 that will be open to GS-15s. The specifics of the CDP, including application procedures and timeframes, will be announced shortly.

As we progress with our "Stronger EPA" planning, I will continue to share information with you about new initiatives in the areas of management and executive development, mid-level staff development, and continued professional growth opportunities for all EPA staff.

I appreciate your support in advancing efforts to create a stronger EPA. If you have any questions about these initiatives, please contact Susan Hazen, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Office of Administration and Resources Management, at (202) 564-4600 or Michael Hamlin at (202) 564-7779.

***2. The Bad Boss Issue – Contest Winners of the Worst Boss Scenarios.**

Thank you “Working America” for allowing us to reprint the winners, runners up, and notables from your Bad Boss Contest. Working America is the 1.6 million member affiliate of the AFL-CIO, those folks who brought us the 40 hour work week. The web site for the contest is:

<http://www.workingamerica.org/badboss/>

We encourage you to visit the site and scan all 650 entries and the reader responses. You may read these and think how lucky that you’ve never experienced some of these bad boss antics, or you may be saying that your boss at EPA did even worse things to you.

The winners were declared such by visitors to the website who voted on the stories.

(A long recitation of cases that appeared in the original of the issue of Inside the Fishbowl was deleted. You may access these cases at the workingamerica website cited above.)

Another Union Website you may find interesting is <http://www.biglabor.com> [Union Communication Services](#).

Union Communication Services Inc., sponsor of this site, has been publishing and distributing education, training and communication materials for unions across North America since 1981. Their Steward Update newsletter is read by more than 80,000 stewards and union officers every issue, and they do online steward training as well. Their catalog of labor books offers more than 100 union-building titles. They are a 100 percent union shop.

***3. Dwight Welch’s column: X-Bytes: Bike Locker Fiasco**

X-Bytes

by

Dwight Welch

Executive Vice President

Dwight Welch's column, X-Bytes, is an editorial column. The views expressed in the column are Mr. Welch's alone, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Executive Board.

Dangerous and Bike Unfriendly Design, Hostile Security Guards, Discourage Potomac Yard Bike Commuters - EPA Management/Arlington County Apparently Impotent to Make Necessary Changes

As a college student in my first course on Environmental Studies I learned that the most energy efficient machine known to mankind, either biological or man-made, is a human on a bicycle. Perhaps this is an urban myth, but in any event bicyclists are not creating the pollution or greenhouse gasses that other forms of transportation do. So one would think that the EPA, the U.S. Agency created to save the environment, would be encouraging and making it easier to commute to work by bike. Even though the EPA has spent more time looking after the bikers' needs than most agencies, there is still more that can be done. Read on.

In recent weeks I have been receiving numerous complaints, most of them involving stories of hostile guards and of the unsafe and biker unfriendly bike facilities at Potomac Yards (PY). While the e-mail to all PY employees from Facilities Management claims that interested parties were involved in the planning, the Unions certainly weren't and I've filed a grievance in that regard, but the bicyclists also claim their input has been ignored. I decided to investigate the situation personally. I was escorted by the PY Bike Coordinator Quentin Borges-Silva.

The alleged "state of the art" bike facilities are to bikers what the Edsel was to auto buyers and just about as well received. In addition to about a half dozen outdoor, public, sin wave style bike racks in front of the building, there were three areas within the parking garage. The main facility, including showers and a locker room are in the South Tower, about a score under the North Tower, and about a dozen in garage central. Like the Edsel, whose push button shifters often malfunctioned, the bike doors work only sporadically. When I was there it took a couple of tries to get into bike parking (BP) South, BP North flat out didn't work, and BP Central was virtually impossible to access by bike; as evidenced by zero bikes and zero bike locks and chains

being in evidence. To get to BP Central, one has to walk one's bike through numerous doors also used by pedestrian employees.

Aside from the cramped and inconvenient facilities which I will get into later, the major problem is that bikers are being prevented from using the auto entrance, but instead being subjected to significant additional risk, using the bike entrance. That's right, the bike entrances present a significant increased hazard. Enforcing the use of the bike doors are brown-shirt-style security guards working for the landlord. Indeed, in the time I was there, we were hassled three times, once each at the three garage locations, by guards. At these interceptions I presented myself as an EPA employee interested in bicycle commuting, being shown the facilities by the PY Bike Coordinator. At BP South, we were stopped, but only asked to display our badges. That's cool. At BP Central we were stopped and detained for 10-15 minutes. After some lengthy communications over the radio, they took our names and badge numbers. Seems we were in violation because we looked out at the driveway which led to BP Central but which was not permitted to be used by either bikers or pedestrians. During our involuntary detention, I got to chatting with the guard who ultimately told me he wasn't a meanie, but rather he was doing this because he "was under orders." At our third stop, BP North, we were again approached by a security guard. When we informed him that the bike door wasn't working, he immediately lightened up. Getting into a bit of conversation, we found out that his previous career was in Industrial Safety and he thought the new policy "just didn't make any sense" from a safety standpoint. (I hope his honesty will not get him in trouble.)

Before I get into why the new policy and current setup are so dangerous, let me tell you a bit about the facilities. The showers and locker room were at BP South. We went into the men's side. BP South is supposed to handle 50 bikers. The 50 lockers are kiddie daycare sized, in a very claustrophobic room, but the real indignity is the single bench in the middle. Large enough for only one man to sit down and change his clothes. One of the showers and the toilet was ADA compliant, the shower having a bench to sit on. Since the bikers had complained, a second one man bench was added. There are no vertical surfaces to put your stuff or clothes while changing. Newbies often use the sink, but they wind up with wet clothes from the automatic faucets.

The bike lockups in BP North and Central were sin wave pipes, but at the main facility BP South where the lockers and showers are, you must lift your bike off the ground and hang it up. A bit of a problem if you have back problems and/or not much upper body strength. It supposedly holds 50 bikes, but only if everyone hangs them in a consistent manner. The security lock on the cage was broken at the time I visited, so anyone could just walk right in and steal your bike.

But the big issue is safety, more precisely, the lack of it. The new policy, imposed by the landlord, backed up by the brown shirts, and cow-towed to by GSA and EPA management introduces significant increased risk to bike commuters. There are two ways to access the garage. One is if you are riding with traffic, the other is if you come down the sidewalk. Under the old (preferred by the bikers) way, coming in from the street, one could pedal along with traffic, take an immediate right after entering the garage, right into the bike cage. Under the new policy (imposed by the landlord), one must first cut across both incoming and outgoing lanes of traffic, dismount, enter the bike door, if it works, and then again cut across incoming and outgoing lanes of traffic. And might I add, this second crossing of two lanes of traffic is where there is a blind spot. Considerable amounts of car paint on the leading post of the bike cage entrance rail attests to automobiles not doing too well at that right turn.

Coming down the sidewalk, which in many jurisdictions (I don't know about Virginia) is illegal, the danger is not so great in that you only must cross the two lanes of traffic, by the blind-spot, inside and not the outside lanes.

BP Central as mentioned above is realistically inaccessible. If you can no longer get to it, I guess there is no increased danger, just wasted space.

At BP North, one must travel down a long, narrow, twisting turning sidewalk. (Hey better jump fast pedestrians, there's no room for you and a bike too.) Then you wind up bumpity, bumping down a flag stone style walk, UP A CURB, and then dismount to open the bike door which didn't work when we were there. Again, you had to cross incoming and outgoing traffic instead of, as bikers used to do, take an immediate right just inside the door.

The landlord is apparently listening to his lawyers. Instead he should consider listening to the bicyclists, safety experts, the City of Arlington, or heck even his own guards. Someone is eventually going to get tagged crossing the in and out traffic in blind areas and what a lawsuit that may be.

At the end of my "tour" I remarked to my fearless guide of the PY netherworld, that I thought it a bit irregular that we were stopped 3 times and detained for 10-15 minutes. He told me that I got off light. While escorting a building inspector from Arlington County, the visit triggered not only a slew of guards, but the arrival of a vehicle from Homeland Security! It's good to see that DHS is protecting us from Arlington Country Building Inspectors. I was told that the poor

building inspector was not only escorted from the building, but had to walk all the way around the building to leave, they wouldn't let him exit via the lobby.

The PY Bike Coordinator is hoping that Arlington County will do something about this situation.

Early on I mentioned they took my name and badge number. Numerous cyclists go through these problems on a daily basis, and as a result of this jackboot policy, one employee has had to file a grievance in order to protect himself. It appears that there has been a gross violation of his legal rights under 5 USC, not to mention his civil rights. A separate grievance has been filed because EPA management unilaterally changed the access for cyclists to the Potomac Yard garage without notifying the Unions. At this writing, it is our understanding that facility management is in the process of setting up a meeting between the cyclists, the Landlord, GSA and EPA facilities management. We will, of course, let you know the outcome.