



Reduce harmful work stressors.
Improve job quality and health.

Healthy Work **Strategies**

First collective bargaining agreement for airport workers and security officers at New York and New Jersey airports

With the help of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 32BJ, subcontracted airport workers initiated a movement to secure better wages and benefits, better control over workload, hours and schedule, and union representation, in 2012.¹ Airport workers (i.e. cleaners, attendants, security officers), from Kennedy, LaGuardia, and Newark airports joined this effort, engaging in sit-ins, marches, rallies, and strikes.

The conditions that initiated this campaign were low wages, as low as \$7.25 per hour, last-minute scheduling changes, lack of overtime pay, and hazardous working conditions, such as lack of safety and health protections, and substandard and/or no safety training.² Due to these organizing efforts, Martin Luther King Day is now a paid holiday, and airport workers were given a pay raise to \$10.10 per hour. In collaboration with organizers from the “Fight for 15,” movement, the workers were able to lobby for and achieve a \$15 minimum wage in New York State. A contract agreement, covering the time period of January 1, 2017 to February 29, 2020, was reached for airport workers and security officers.^{1,3,4}

A summary of what was achieved in the contract^{3,4}

- **Workweek and Pay:**
 - The employer is required to “...establish a regular workweek.”
 - Hours worked over 40 hours/week will be paid at 1.5 times the hourly rate
 - Employees will be given, at minimum, 20 hours of work per week
 - The employer must provide any work schedule changes to the employee one week in advance
 - The employer is not permitted to reduce the base hourly rate of employees
 - Accurate reporting of tips by “tipped employees” shall not be met with retaliation from the employer
 - The employer will provide a space for employees to take their break

- **Seniority:**
 - Employers will provide a “seniority list” to the union
 - Vacant jobs will be awarded to the most qualified employee, in order of seniority.
 - The newest employees are subject to layoff, in the event of reduction in hours and/or workforce. Increased hours will be given in order of seniority.

- **Workload:** Employees will not be “...assigned an unreasonable workload.” The union should be given advance notification for a reduction in work hours.

- **Grievance and Arbitration Procedures:** A written grievance, from the union or employer, is to be submitted to either party within 14 calendar days. A meeting will be held, within 30 calendar days to resolve any grievance. In the event that a grievance is not resolved, an independent arbitrator may be used.

- **Health and Safety:**
 - The employer is required to comply with all federal, state, and local regulations on workplace safety.
 - Employers will not retaliate against employees for asking that hazardous work conditions be corrected.
 - The employer is required to supply employees with uniforms and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as well as working equipment, properly labeled, to perform their work tasks.

- **Training:** The employer will provide training related to health and safety and job functions.

- **Creation of a Labor-Management Committee,** which is responsible for dealing with issues of labor relations, worker health and safety, and customer service.

- **Employee Free Choice Procedure Agreement (EFCP):** Guarantees that workers that join the union are protected from retaliation (such as layoffs, discrimination, or intimidation).

- **Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Enforcement:** The union will ensure compliance with the CBA by reviewing records supplied by the employer.

Conclusion

This collective bargaining agreement is the first union contract for airport workers and security officers at Kennedy, LaGuardia, and Newark airports. It holds the potential for improving the working conditions and reducing the job stressors faced by airport workers, for example, by providing workers with a say over their work schedule and workload, greater job security, protection from retaliation, and improved health and safety. Research is needed to measure the impact of this agreement on working conditions and on employee health.

References:

1. A Historic Deal for Airport Workers! 32BJ SEIU. <https://www.seiu32bj.org/>.
2. Kiefer E. Newark Airport Workers Join Nationwide Strike: PHOTOS. Newark, NJ Patch. <https://patch.com/>. March 31, 2016.
3. Kennedy, LaGuardia & Newark Airports Service Workers Agreement. 32BJ. <https://www.seiu32bj.org/>.
4. Kennedy, LaGuardia & Newark Airports Security Officers Agreement. 32BJ. <https://www.seiu32bj.org/>.