

**Handbook EL-814**

**Postal Employee's Guide to Safety**

**January 1997**

# **Postal Employee's Guide to Safety**

Handbook EL-814  
January 1997

# Emergency Phone Numbers

First Aid-Medical or Health Unit ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Ambulance (Emergency Rescue)  
Service ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Department ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Police Department ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Safety Office ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Security Office ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Inspector ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Hazardous Materials Spill or  
Leak Control ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Injury Compensation Control Office  
or Control Point ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Assistance Program ..... \_\_\_\_\_

For use only during regular workhours and  
only on postal premises.



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# Introduction

**T**his booklet provides simple, easy-to-locate safety rules and procedures so that you can familiarize yourself with those rules that apply to your job. The booklet is intended for reference only. It is not to be taken off postal premises; use it only during your regular work hours. This booklet is not intended to be all-inclusive, as it cannot cover all the conditions which may arise on your job. Your local office may have more specific rules to supplement these requirements.

The omission of any safety information from this booklet does not reduce your personal responsibility to remain alert and use good judgment when performing your duties. If any rule or procedure is not perfectly clear to you, ask your supervisor for clarification. Learn and use all the rules and procedures that apply to your job.

The Postal Service welcomes any suggestions you may have that might improve the safety of operations. Submit your suggestions to your supervisor. You may wish to submit a suggestion on Form 1270, *Idea Proposal*.

If you observe an unsafe condition or an unsafe act, report it immediately to your supervisor. Use Form 1767, *Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice*. If you want to submit your report anonymously, file the Form 1767 directly with your installation's safety officer or collateral-duty safety officer. Form 1767 should be available in your work area.

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## SECTION I

# General Safety Rules

### ***A. General Rules***

Safety rules are for your benefit; observing safe working practices and postal safety rules is a primary responsibility of all postal employees. General safety rules include, but are not limited to:

- Never work under the influence of intoxicants.
- Never sell, possess, or use illegal drugs on postal premises. If you are required to take physician-prescribed drugs which could impair your mental or physical abilities, you must notify your supervisor; never drive or work around moving equipment while under the influence of drugs.
- Never keep contraband material such as firearms, dangerous weapons, fireworks, intoxicants, or illegal drugs on postal premises.
- Never engage in horseplay, scuffling, fighting, or playing practical jokes on postal premises.

In addition:

- Don't run in postal facilities. Walk down stairs and hold the handrail.
- Don't toss or throw packages or bundles, unless required by the operation (e.g., culling belt, etc.).
- Observe all warning signs and notices; they have been installed for your protection.
- Comply with all safety and health regulations, procedures, and practices, including the use of approved personal protective equipment.

- Keep your work area in a safe and healthful condition through proper maintenance of property and equipment. Immediately report safety hazards and unsafe working conditions.
- Keep physically and mentally fit to meet the job requirements.
- Drive defensively and professionally; extend courtesy in all situations; and obey all state, local, and postal regulations when driving a vehicle owned, leased, or contracted for by the Postal Service.

Other safety rules may apply to your job. Perform your duties in the safest possible manner at all times. If you have questions about how to do your job safely, ask your supervisor.

## ***B. Environmental Protection***

- Comply with environmental protection regulations, procedures, and practices.
- Participate in pollution prevention by reducing waste, recycling, and reusing materials.
- Conform to Clean Air Act requirements by carpooling or using public transportation.

## ***C. Office Safety***

- Keep unattended drawers and doors closed in desks, file cabinets, etc., to eliminate tripping hazards or sources of cuts or abrasions.
- Open the top drawer of file cabinets slowly, standing to one side of the file cabinet. When you finish with one file drawer, close it before opening another.

- Fill the lowest drawer in a file cabinet first to reduce the chance of its tipping over. Place heavy objects in the bottom drawers.
- Keep the tops of file cabinets, bookcases, etc., free of files, papers, books, and any other materials.
- When seated, keep your chair firmly on the floor. Tipping it backwards on its rear legs invites an accident and possible injury.
- Don't operate or attempt to repair any office equipment or machinery unless you have been properly trained to do so.
- Handle typewriter cleaning fluids with care; some are toxic and others are flammable. (See Section IV.B. for specific guidelines on handling toxic and flammable items.)
- Keep desktop paper cutters in a closed, locked position when you are not using them.
- Exercise care when you use and store sharp or pointed instruments, such as letter openers, scissors, pencils, etc.
- Adjust video display terminals, chairs, and other equipment for maximum comfort.
- Guard office equipment with shields covering moving parts to prevent clothing, hair, or fingers from getting caught.
- Keep all debris picked up off the floor, especially rubber bands, straps, and paper clips.

## **1. *Obstructions***

- Keep all aisles clear of tripping hazards, such as waste baskets, electrical cords, protruding utility outlets, trash, etc.
- Keep your floor area dry. If you spill water or some other liquid on the floor, wipe the floor dry immediately to eliminate possible slipping hazards.  
Call your supervisor for assistance when cleaning large spills.

## **2. *Climbing***

- When you must climb, use a step stool, ladder, or other equipment designed for that purpose. Don't climb onto chairs or other office furniture.

## **3. *Lifting***

- Lift with your legs instead of your back. Ask for assistance when the object is too heavy, is awkwardly shaped, or blocks your view when you carry it. (See Section VII.A. for more guidelines on lifting heavy objects.)

## ***D. Elevators***

- Load capacities are posted in elevators, both by pounds and by number of persons. Never exceed this limit for any reason.
- Repair an elevator only if you are qualified in elevator maintenance and repair.
- Don't use elevators during a fire emergency evacuation.
- Don't smoke in elevators.

- Be alert and watch your step when entering or leaving an elevator.
- Don't ride in freight elevators unless you have been authorized to do so.
- Don't use passenger elevators for freight.

## ***E. Dock Safety***

- Don't smoke anywhere on the docks or when you are loading or unloading trucks, trailers, vans, railroad cars, or any other vehicles.
- Never jump off the docks. Use approved steps or ladders.
- Close dump holes when you are not using them.
- Chock all trailers before loading or unloading them. Keep unused chocks out of walkways and stored against the dock.
- Store dock plates in an anchored, upright position.
- When using dock plates, secure them in position to keep them from slipping or sliding away.
- Always be aware of moving vehicles and equipment on the dock.

## ***F. Rest Bars***

- Don't place rest bars in positions beyond the last notch when adjusting the height. Make the height adjustment using only the notches provided; never use nails or other sharp objects for rest bar pins. Adjust the seat angle using only the slots provided in the seat support. Tilting the seat to its most forward position and resting the seat support against the welded stop is not allowed.
- Keep at least one foot on the floor (base) when using the rest bar. If you put one foot on the bar rest, your foot must be *on* the bar rest rather than inside. Never place your feet on case ledges when you are using the rest bar seat.
- After using the rest bar, fold the seat down flat and place it in a safe location, possibly near the working case. Be sure the seat support does not stick out.



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## SECTION II

# Occupational Injury or Illness

### ***A. Reporting Injuries or Illness***

If you are injured or become ill from work-related causes, you must report immediately to your supervisor, even if the problem seems minor. Follow these procedures:

#### ***1. Treatment***

You must receive authorized medical evaluation and treatment or first aid in accordance with procedures outlined in the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* (ELM) 543. The lack of prompt attention to even slight injuries could lead to more serious complications.

#### ***2. Reporting***

Your supervisor must contact the medical or health unit (if available) or the local emergency rescue or paramedic unit and report the type of injury and your location. Follow the procedures outlined in ELM 544. All reports must comply with the requirements of the Postal Service, the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

### *3. Prevention*

Your supervisor must investigate and evaluate each accident and take any necessary measures to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents.

## ***B. Eye Injuries***

- Don't permit a fellow employee to attempt to remove a foreign body from your eye. Have any eye injury treated immediately by professional medical personnel.
- If corrosive liquids, such as acids or other irritants, are splashed in your eyes, flush them thoroughly with clear, cold running water for 15 minutes. Call for assistance immediately (you may need help to hold your eyes open), and have the medical unit or emergency first aid facility contacted.
- Clean up spills in accordance with your local standard operating procedures and Section V.C. of this handbook.

## ***C. Emergency First Aid Telephone Numbers***

- Become familiar with emergency first aid telephone numbers and the procedure for obtaining emergency first aid when needed. (Use the inside cover of this handbook to list your local emergency phone numbers.)

**Immediately** notify your supervisor of any emergency.

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## SECTION III

# Fire Prevention and Protection

### *A. Reporting Fire Hazards*

- Report all suspected fire hazards to your supervisor immediately.

### *B. Emergency Evacuation*

- Become familiar with your floor plan. You should know the location of and how to use all fire alarm stations, fire exits, and fire-fighting equipment for your facility in case of fire.
- Follow the directions given by the assigned fire brigade members and supervisors in your area.
- Evacuate your area immediately; don't go to your lockers to retrieve personal items.
- The use of elevators during an emergency evacuation is prohibited.  
**Exception:** Employees with disabilities and their escorts may use elevators during an emergency, if necessary.
- Follow all fire evacuation procedures during fire drills as well as during an actual emergency.

## ***C. Fire in Your Work Area***

- Sound your local alarm first. Take any other required steps to alert fellow employees and the fire department to the fire.
- Don't engage in any disruptive actions or unnecessary talking that might prevent others from hearing and understanding instructions and directions.
- Move quickly, but don't run, to the nearest exit.
- Attempt to put out first-stage fires only if you have received training on how to use fire extinguishers and if you believe you can do so safely. If you have any doubt about your ability to extinguish the fire, leave the area. Remember, your own safety comes first.

**Note:** Postal personnel are not to fight fires involving the structure of the building.

- Some postal facilities may have electrical transformers which contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). If such transformers are in or near your building, the facility Emergency Action Plan should contain instructions for dealing with PCB transformer fires. Your supervisor or local safety personnel can provide you with information on the emergency action and fire prevention plans. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FIGHT A PCB FIRE YOURSELF. FIRES INVOLVING PCBs SHOULD BE REPORTED TO THE MUNICIPAL FIRE DEPARTMENT IMMEDIATELY.**

## ***D. Fire-Fighting Equipment***

- Fire hoses, hydrants, and sprinkler systems are for fire-fighting purposes and are to be used by municipal fire departments only.
- Promptly report to your supervisor the existence of any used or damaged fire extinguishers.
- Don't stack or store material within 18 inches of a sprinkler head. Report any deficiencies to your supervisor immediately.
- Don't lock (except with approved fire exit locking mechanisms) or obstruct exits, passageways leading to fire exits, or fire-extinguishing equipment such as fire extinguishers, alarm boxes, etc. This equipment must be kept accessible at all times.

## ***E. Flammable Materials***

- Store flammable liquids or solvents (up to 5 gallons) in approved bulk storage safety containers.
- Dispose of oily rags, or other flammable waste subject to spontaneous combustion, in closed metal containers.
- Properly label all cans to indicate their contents and store them in designated areas. Don't use spark or heat-producing devices in the vicinity of flammable liquids, vapors, or gases.
- Gases or vapors escaping from the contents of damaged parcels may be flammable. Follow your facility's hazardous materials standard operating procedures for handling these parcels.

## ***F. Smoking***

- Smoking is prohibited in all Postal Facilities.

Also, smoking is prohibited:

- While collecting or delivering mail.
- Within 25 feet of gasoline pumps, gas and oil storage tanks, spray paint operations, or other operations involving flammable liquids or gases.

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## SECTION IV

# Personal Safety and Protective Equipment

### *A. Personal Safety*

#### *1. Clothing*

- Wear sensible, properly fitting clothing to work. Oversized clothing, wide-flared pants, full dresses or skirts, full or flared sleeves on shirts or blouses, neckties, scarves, loose aprons, and similar clothing can be hazardous if you work with machinery, vehicles, or moving equipment. Such clothing is not acceptable apparel for the workroom floor.
- Do not wear neckties around moving machinery or automated equipment. If you must wear a tie, wear the clip-on variety.
- Dress appropriately for weather conditions.

#### *2. Jewelry*

- Don't wear jewelry such as necklaces, neck chains, pins, dangling earrings, bracelets, watches, watch chains, rings, etc., around moving machinery or exposed electrical circuits.

#### *3. Hair*

- If your hairstyle restricts either your forward or peripheral vision, or if your hair can become entangled in moving machinery or equipment, tie your hair back or otherwise confine it.

## 4. *Shoes*

- Wear appropriate work shoes, whether you walk many miles on a route or handle mail in the workroom. Wear shoes that are fully enclosed at the heel, toe, and sides, made of leather or a substantial synthetic material (canvas or nylon is not acceptable). The approved footwear for uniform program employees must have the SR./USA label.
- To eliminate slips, trips, and falls, don't wear the following types of shoes on the workroom floor:
  - Heels more than 1 and 1/2 inches and soles more than 1/2 inch in height.
  - Spiked heels, regardless of height.
  - Open shoes (including open sides, toes, or heels) such as thongs, sandals, mules, house slippers, clogs, wedgies, etc.
  - Heels with steel taps.
  - Shoes with cloth, nylon, or mesh-woven tops, such as tennis shoes, athletic or jogging shoes (except those with leather or leatherlike uppers), moccasins, etc.
  - Shoes no longer adequate because of disrepair.

## ***B. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)***

Wear all personal protective equipment required by the USPS or by your supervisor for the jobs or tasks that you perform. If you have questions about PPE, when handling chemicals, refer to the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).



## 1. *Eye and Face Protection*

- Wear eye and face protection that meets American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards when working in areas where hazards exist that could cause eye injuries. You must wear the side shields with your safety glasses.

Safety goggles or face shields for the following types of work are **mandatory**:

- Handling or pouring acid or other corrosive chemicals.
  - Using an emery wheel or grinding, riveting, chipping, or sandblasting equipment.
  - Using compressed air for cleaning.
  - Working in areas designated as rewrap operations.
  - Working in laboratory situations where eye hazards exist.
- Never wear contact lenses in the presence of corrosive or irritating materials, especially in battery-charging rooms.
  - Wear proper eye protection of the correct shade when observing or performing welding operations. Use appropriate shielding to protect other employees' eyes from arc flashes. **Never** look at or in the direction of a welding arc without appropriate eye protection, as it can cause painful damage to your eyes.
  - Make sure that the lenses of all eye protection devices are free from cracks, chips, or obscurities; replace or repair such lenses immediately.

## *2. Hand Protection*

- Wear gloves if there is a possibility of hand injury, such as when handling corrosive or contaminated objects. Don't wear gauntlet gloves around moving equipment, including conveyors.
- Use protective or barrier creams on your hands and arms if they are exposed to oils and greases, chemicals, or corrosive or irritating cleaning compounds.

## *3. Head Protection*

- Wear hard hats when your work exposes you to falling objects, when there is a risk of striking your head against low stationary objects, when you are in areas designated for hard-hat protection (especially above floor level), or when you use such equipment as "lift-a-lofts," "vert-a-lifts," tow motors, forklifts, etc.
- Regulation hats, caps, or pith helmets are recommended for protection from the sun or cold for employees working outdoors.

## *4. Hearing Protection*

- You may be required to wear hearing protection if noise levels cannot be controlled to below OSHA limits. Safety and health personnel will provide a selection of approved hearing protection devices and assist you with the fit and care of the devices. Hearing protection also will be made available if noise levels on your job exceed 85 decibels.
- Radio headsets are not a substitute for approved hearing protectors. Don't wear them in areas where hearing protection is required.

## 5. *Respiratory Protection*

- There may be situations where you are required to wear a respirator to protect you from exposure to toxic vapors, dusts, etc. Your supervisor or safety officer will provide approved respirators and instruct you, on the clock and on postal premises, in the proper fit and use of your respirator.
- Keep your respirator clean, inspect it frequently as instructed, and store it in a clean place.
- If your job requires the use of a respirator, you will be evaluated by a medical officer to ensure that you can wear one safely.



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## SECTION V

# Housekeeping and Sanitation

Keeping your immediate work area clean is your personal responsibility. A neat, orderly work place is a safer place in which to work.

### ***A. Personal Items***

- The Postal Service provides you with lockers and changing rooms so you can keep clothing and other personal belongings out of operating areas. Keep your lockers clean, neat, and free from debris. Don't store items on top of your locker.
- Eat and store food and beverages only in authorized areas; don't store or consume them in restrooms.
- Dispose of food wastes, etc., only in receptacles intended for this purpose. You are responsible for disposing of your own food waste, wrappers, cans, etc.

### ***B. Obstacles***

- Keep aisles, passageways, stairways, exits, and all other walking areas free from obstructions at all times. Make sure that electrical panels, switches, fire-fighting equipment, exit doors, fire alarm stations, and postal inspector breakout doors are kept clear.

- Don't enter roped-off or marked areas where maintenance work is being done, or where hazardous or slippery conditions exist.

## ***C. Spills and Leaks***

- If a spill or leak occurs, notify your supervisor for immediate cleanup and repair, if needed. If the spilled substance is flammable, take every precaution to avoid possible ignition of the substance.
- If suspected harmful vapors or gases are escaping from a spill or related accident, leave the vicinity at once and notify your supervisor.
- Follow the regulations for cleaning up spills and leaks of hazardous materials. Refer to Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for information on chemical spills or leaks.

## ***D. Tools and Other Portable Equipment***

- Keep all tools and other pieces of portable equipment in their assigned places when not using them.
- Use safety glasses when operating power tools. Safety glasses must meet ANSI criteria.

## ***E. Cleaning***

- Never mix cleaning compounds. The chemicals used in them, such as ammonia and chlorine, when combined, can form toxic or explosive mixtures.
- Remove dust by vacuuming rather than by blowing down an area with compressed air whenever possible.
- Rope off wet floor areas with high visibility safety marking rope and post “Wet Floor” signs until the floors are dry.
- Follow all vendors’ instructions regarding equipment, materials, and supplies.

## ***F. Use of Compressed Air***

- Use a vacuum rather than compressed air to remove dust, dirt, or other debris from your clothing or body. Using compressed air to blow dust, dirt, or debris off yourself is an extremely hazardous practice.
- Use air compressed at less than 30 psi for cleaning machinery, parts, etc., or use a hose that is equipped with a nozzle that will deadhead at less than 30 psi in case the outlet is obstructed.
- Wear eye protection which meets ANSI standards when you use compressed air.





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## SECTION VI

# Machinery and Electrical Equipment

### ***A. General Rules***

- Treat all electrical circuits as “live” circuitry.
- Turn off all electrical equipment when you are not using it.
- Never overload an electrical circuit.
- Use Postal Service machinery and equipment only if you are trained and authorized to do so.
- Never operate defective machinery or equipment. Report all such machinery or equipment to your supervisor immediately. Complete and attach Form 4707, *Out of Order*, to all such equipment. Don't operate any equipment which has been red-tagged with this form.

### ***B. Machine Guarding***

Never operate equipment or machinery that is not properly guarded.

- Make sure that guards are in place on all drives, pinch points, and points-of-operation; keep all guards in place while the machine is in motion.
- Before starting machinery, make sure that everyone is in the clear and that guards and safety devices are in working condition and are properly adjusted.

- Keep all guards in place, securely fastened, and maintained in a functional condition.
- Don't remove, replace, or adjust a guard on moving machinery or equipment.
- Don't use the "stop" button to try to lock out equipment; it is not effective as a lockout device.

### ***C. Emergency Stop Cords and Buttons***

- You must be trained, on the clock and on postal premises, in the use of emergency stop cords, buttons, switches, etc., before you are assigned to a machine area.
- Keep all emergency stopping devices accessible, in plain view, and in operating condition. Report any defects to your supervisor immediately.

### ***D. Conveyors, Sorters, and Other Mechanized Equipment***

- Don't climb under or onto or cross over a conveyor, sorter, or other piece of mechanized equipment for any reason, unless the system is effectively locked out.
- Don't ride on any of this equipment.
- Turn off the equipment when freeing jams. Only trained maintenance personnel may clear a jam by mounting the equipment. Before clearing jams or working on this equipment, first lock out at the source of power. If two or more people are working on the equipment, they must all attach their own personal locks.

- Shut off equipment when you must search or pick up an item underneath it. Make certain the equipment cannot be started unexpectedly, thus exposing you to danger.
- Don't attempt to retrieve fallen, misthrown, or caught mail from moving equipment.
- If a conveyor stops, call a mechanic; don't try to restart it by pulling the belt or by using any method other than the designated start button.
- Don't overload conveyors, sorters, or other mechanized equipment.

## ***E. Cords***

- Never splice or patch electrical cords; replace them. Shorten a cord only if you are qualified to do so.
- When you disconnect electrical equipment, pull the plug rather than the cord.
- As much as possible, keep extension cords off the floor. If it is absolutely necessary to put such cords on the floor, use Underwriters Laboratories (UL)-approved or other certified testing laboratory-approved temporary floor covers to prevent tripping on or damaging the cord.
- Remove frayed or damaged electrical cords and replace them.
- Don't use extension cords as substitutes for permanent wiring.

## ***F. Grounding***

- If portable electrical tools are not double-insulated and labeled as such, make sure they are equipped with a 3-wire plug. Never cut off the ground connection.
- If the ground prong has been removed, don't use the equipment or tool until the plug has been replaced.

## ***G. Tools***

- In areas containing a potentially hazardous atmosphere, such as battery-charging rooms or spray-painting booths, use only approved nonsparking tools and explosion-proof equipment.

## ***H. Lockout Procedures***

- When working on power-driven equipment or electrical circuitry, make sure it is effectively locked out at the source.

## ***I. Defective Equipment***

- Remove all defective equipment from service immediately; tag it with Form 4707, *Out of Order*, and take it to be repaired or to be stored in the designated area for defective equipment. **DO NOT USE** tagged equipment until it has been properly repaired.

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## SECTION VII

# Lifting and Material Handling

### *A. Lifting Guidelines*

Lifting is so much a part of our everyday activity that most of us don't think about it, but it's often done incorrectly. The results can include strains, pulled muscles, disc lesions, or painful hernias.

Before lifting anything, check the immediate area and route of travel to be sure that no obstruction or hazard can cause a slip, trip, or fall, or a "striking against" accident.

The technique for proper lifting is simple:

- Assess the load. If it appears to be too heavy or bulky to lift comfortably, get help.
- Place one foot alongside the object being lifted and one behind. This method gives you greater stability and your rear foot gives you better upward thrust.
- Use the "sit-down" position and keep your back in a straight line (though not necessarily perpendicular to the floor). A straight back keeps your spine, back muscles, and organs in correct alignment and minimizes the compression of organs that can cause a hernia.
- Tuck in your chin so your neck and head are in a straight line with your back. That helps keep your spine straight and firm. It is not necessary, however, to force your chin against your chest.

- A palm grip is one of the most important elements of correct lifting. Keep your fingers and hands extended around the object you are going to lift, using your full palm. Fingers alone have very little power; you need the strength of your entire hand.
- Keep the load you are lifting drawn close, against your body; tuck your arms and elbows against your side. When your arms are held away from your body, they lose much of their strength and power. Keeping your arms tucked in also helps keep body weight centered.
- Position your body so that your weight is centered over your feet. This provides a more powerful line of thrust and also ensures better balance. Start the lift with a thrust of your rear foot.
- Avoid twisting during lifting; twisting is one of the most common causes of back injury. By simply turning your forward foot out and pointing it in the direction you are moving, you will avoid the greatest danger of injury.
- Don't fight to recover a dropping object or "lost load." Get out of its way and let it fall.
- Sudden lifting or releasing of loads can cause stress to the spine and back muscles. Always lift, move, and lower with smooth motions.

## ***B. Material-Handling Equipment***

- Inspect ropes, chains, cables, slips, jacks, skids, and other hoisting and rigging apparatus before using it.
- Report damaged or defective ropes, chains, cables, slings, straps, or other material-handling equipment or components to your supervisor.

- Never lift a load and leave it suspended or unattended. Don't exceed the lifting capacity of hoisting devices for any reason.

## ***C. Portable Utility Platforms***

Use portable utility platforms only if you are authorized to do so.

## ***D. Hand Trucks, Hampers, and Containers***

### ***1. General Rules***

- Don't ride, climb onto, or cross over any manually propelled rolling equipment.
- Push, rather than pull, all hand trucks, containers, hampers, and other such equipment. Your hands must not protrude beyond the sides of the container you are pushing. Don't manually tow containers.
- Never overload equipment or load it so high that it is top heavy.
- Orange-tag defective equipment. Use Form 4707, *Out of Order*, to report all defective equipment. Report defective equipment to your supervisor, and remove it to a designated storage area.

## 2. *Hampers*

- Keep clear of hamper dumpers in use. Avoid placing heavy objects, sacks of mail, or trays of mail in hampers. Place heavy packages on flat-bed trucks, rather than in hampers. If you must remove a heavy package from a hamper, tip the hamper onto its side and lift the package from the floor to avoid excessive strain on your back. Use proper lifting techniques.
- Use a coupler or similar device when towing hampers.
- Tow no more than three hampers, whether loaded or empty. Never attempt to tow hampers by holding them with one hand while you drive the tractor.
- Never stack hampers more than three high, either for storage or transportation. To unstack hampers, always get help from another person. Turn the nested hampers onto their sides before unstacking them.
- Make sure that any vehicle you use to transport a hamper, loaded or empty, is equipped with shoring bars or nylon webbing to prevent the load from shifting or rolling free.

## 3. *Containers*

- The term *containers* refers to general purpose mail containers (GPMC), Eastern Region mail containers (ERMC), BMC over-the-road containers (BMC-OTR), etc.
- When manually loading or unloading a container, set the brake, if one has been provided. If the container does not have brakes, place mail or equipment into the container rather than throw it, because the container may move if



jostled. Use at least two wheel chocks (front and back) to prevent movement when positioning a container on an uneven surface.

- Load the bottom shelf of a GPMC first. Unload it last. Use the restraining bar to hold the top shelf while it is in the raised position. When the container is not in use, store the shelves in the “down” position.
- Secure all containers that you load onto vehicles with shoring bars to prevent the load from shifting and rolling free. Place OTR-container tow pins in the floor sockets of trucks or vans.
- If a load has toppled against the mesh doors of an ERM, get assistance when removing the restraining bar. When pressure is placed against the mesh door, the restraining bar can be extremely dangerous because it acts like a spring when released.
- Always hold restraining bars, doors, and shelves with one hand to prevent them from falling when released, and stand to one side.
- When moving an ERM or GPMC, make sure that the center shelf is in the “down” position. Check the gate latch and shelf latch before loading or moving a container.
- Push containers from the swivel wheel end. Watch constantly for obstructions on both sides of the container.



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## SECTION VIII

# Powered Industrial Vehicles

If you drive a powered industrial vehicle, you are responsible for the safety of the vehicle and for following all safety requirements. You must be trained and authorized to operate powered industrial vehicles, such as fork-lifts, lifting platforms, etc. Reckless operation of powered vehicles is strictly prohibited. Report any accidents involving a powered industrial vehicle to your supervisor immediately.

### ***A. Operating Rules***

#### ***1. General Rules***

- Before using a powered industrial vehicle, check the brakes, steering apparatus, horn, etc. Report any defects to your supervisor immediately.
- The maximum speed limit for powered industrial vehicles is 5 miles per hour (about the speed of a fast walk). Use only the designated vehicle traffic lanes, and keep to the right whenever possible.
- Never use the reverse control as a brake.
- Never allow a passenger to ride on a powered industrial vehicle unless securely attached seating is provided. Never exceed the seating capacity of the unit.
- Never disengage, cover up, or bypass any audible or visual warning devices on powered industrial equipment.

- Don't ride with any part of your body protruding from the vehicle.
- Make sure that there is adequate clearance before you drive under any overhead obstruction.
- Approach all intersecting aisles and tow conveyor crossings slowly and cautiously. Sound your horn to warn pedestrians of your approach.
- Check to be sure there is a clear path to the rear before backing up.
- Stay at least three vehicle lengths behind other vehicles when traveling.
- Check bridge or dock plates for proper stability before you drive across them.
- Stop your vehicle, place the gear in neutral, and turn the ignition off before you dismount.

## 2. *Lift Trucks*

- Lift, lower, and carry loads on a lift truck with the lifting mechanism in a vertical position or tilted back — never forward.
- Face the direction in which you are moving and be careful of rear-end swing when turning corners.
- When approaching or leaving a building where the ramp incline is greater than 10 degrees, turn the lift truck so the load is on the upgrade side and cannot slip off the forks.
- Keep forks on a moving lift truck low (just high enough to clear any floor obstructions and low enough to clear overhead obstructions). Under normal conditions, 3 to 6 inches above floor level should be sufficient.

- Don't raise or lower forks while the fork-lift is in motion. When you park a lift truck, fully lower the forks, put the controls in neutral, shut off the power, set the brake, and remove the key.
- Before entering a truck or trailer with a fork-lift, inspect the floor for damage or decay which might cause the lift to break through.
- Make sure that the truck or trailer wheels are properly checked.

## ***B. Protective Equipment***

- Be sure that any powered industrial vehicle you operate is equipped with a horn and a flashing warning beacon that is in working order.
- Don't operate industrial lift trucks with the overhead guard removed.
- Wear a protective helmet while operating a powered industrial vehicle.

## ***C. Towing***

- Use only approved tow bars or coupling devices for towing. Don't use your hand to hold equipment being towed.
- Tow only three platform trucks, hampers, or containers (GPMC, ERM, BMC-OTR) whether loaded or empty. Attach no more than five containers to a driverless tractor unit.

## ***D. Repairs***

- Repair Postal Service vehicles only if you are a qualified and fully trained maintenance employee.



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## SECTION IX

# Mail Delivery

### ***A. Fingering Mail***

- Never finger mail while driving, walking up and down steps or curbs, crossing streets, or at any other time the practice could create a safety hazard to you or the public.

### ***B. Hazardous Conditions***

- Pay close attention when you are walking to avoid lawn depressions, stones, bits of wood, children's toys, and other tripping hazards.
- You are not required to risk personal injury from icy steps, broken or rotten steps or porches, protruding nails or sharp edges on mailboxes, or similar hazardous conditions. Use Form 1767, *Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice*, to report any of these problems to your supervisor.
- Alert replacement carriers to any hazardous conditions by completing Form 1766, *Hazard Warning Card*.

### ***C. Mail Collection***

- When you are picking up collections from a street box or a mail chute receiving box, or when you are delivering mail to apartment house boxes equipped with an arrow lock, remove the

key from the lock to avoid personal injury or damage to your clothing or keys.

- Keep the chain for your mailbox keys securely fastened to your belt loop and place the keys in your pocket when you are not using them. Dangling, swinging keys can be dangerous.
- Use Form 1767 to report defective, dented, or unanchored collection or relay boxes to your supervisor so that corrective action can be taken. Don't try to force entry to dented or otherwise defective collection or relay boxes.
- Always check the contents of mailboxes for broken glass, bottles, insects, or animals before placing your hands inside.
- Never stand in the street when loading or emptying mailboxes. Don't place mail in or collect mail from any boxes that require you to stand in the street. Use Form 1767 to report such boxes to your supervisor so that corrective action can be taken.

## ***D. Animals and Insects***

### ***1. General Rules***

- You are not required to deliver mail when you are threatened by an animal. Use extra care in making deliveries when dogs or other animals are loose on your route.
- Prepare Form 1778, *Dog Warning Card*, and place it in the letter case whenever you observe an animal that may interfere with the delivery of the mail. Place the card in front of the address where the hazard has been observed. In a situation where the dog poses a threat



throughout a segment of the route, case the card at an address most appropriate to provide advanced warning.

- In addition, report any such interference to your supervisor so that the customer may be notified that the animal must be restrained.
- Neither antagonize nor attempt to pet dogs. If a dog rushes toward you or takes you by surprise, don't run. Retreat very slowly, facing the dog. Keep your mail satchel between you and the dog as a first line of defense. Be careful not to stumble over objects as you retreat.
- Use dog repellent spray only if you are attacked. Spray it directly at the dog's nostrils. Don't use dog repellent indiscriminately or when there is a danger of spraying children or adults.
- When delivering mail through a door slot, keep your fingers out of the slot; an animal may be on the other side.
- When delivering mail at a customer's door, keep your foot on the door so that a dog cannot unexpectedly rush out at you.
- If rabies has been officially reported in the community where you are delivering mail, be especially observant of any dogs, cats, or wild animals.

## *2. Medical Treatment of Animal Bites or Insect Stings*

- If you are bitten, get medical treatment immediately, regardless of the severity of the injury. Even small bites or contact with animal saliva can transmit rabies. Wash the area with soap and water as soon as possible.
- If you have severe or allergic reactions to insect stings, you must inform your supervisor and, if available, the medical or health unit. Use caution in removing mail from mail receptacles to avoid stings from any insects hidden inside.

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## *SECTION X*

# **Motor Vehicles**

Vehicle accidents are a major source of serious personal injury for postal employees. Defensive driving is the best way to prevent vehicle accidents because it involves both the desire and the ability of a driver to control accident-provoking situations. You are expected to drive all Postal Service vehicles in a dependable, efficient, safe, and courteous manner.

### ***A. Licenses***

- Only authorized personnel can operate Postal vehicles. You must have in your possession a valid state driver's license when operating a postal vehicle or any vehicle on postal business. (State driver's licenses are not required for operating powered industrial vehicles on postal premises.)
- Inform your supervisor immediately if your state driver's license is revoked or suspended.

### ***B. Civil Laws***

- Obey all state and local vehicle codes when driving any Postal Service vehicle. You will receive no special privileges or rights as a postal driver. Police citations for traffic violations are your personal responsibility. Promptly report to your supervisor all traffic violations committed while on duty.

## ***C. Reporting Accidents***

If you are involved in an accident:

- Stop at the scene.
- Aid or assist any injured person.
- Have someone call for an ambulance or the police, if necessary.
- Safeguard the scene against any further accidents.
- Safeguard the mail.
- Try to identify several witnesses.
- Promptly notify your supervisor.
- Follow the instructions in your *Accident Report Kit*, Item 087-H, and any local accident reporting instructions.

## ***D. Vehicle Regulations***

### ***1. Vehicle Safety Inspections***

- Make a daily safety check of your assigned vehicle as outlined in Notice 76, *Expanded Vehicle Safety Check*, before leaving the post office parking lot or garage. Rural carriers are not required to perform this inspection except when they are using a postal-owned or -leased vehicle.
- Check to make sure that a sealed *Accident Report Kit* (Item 087-H) is provided inside your assigned vehicle.
- Use Form 4565, *Vehicle Repair Tag*, to report all mechanical defects, failures, and vehicle damage to your supervisor.

- Handbook PO-701, *Fleet Management*, 243.1 requires that vehicles of one ton or larger regularly scheduled for intercity or airport runs, or vehicles regularly scheduled for use as wreckers, must carry a fire extinguisher and emergency warning device kits.

## 2. *Safety Belts*

- You must wear safety belts at all times the vehicle is in motion. When driving a long life vehicle (LLV), you must wear the lap belt and shoulder belt whenever the vehicle is in motion. **Exception:** When shoulder belts prevent you from reaching to deliver or collect from curbside mailboxes, you may unfasten the shoulder belt, but never the lap belt.
- You may carry only authorized passengers. All passengers must remain seated and wear a lap belt and shoulder harness whenever the vehicle is in motion.
- Rural carriers must follow the policy outlined in Handbook PO-603, *Rural Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*, 171.5.

## 3. *Doors*

- When you are traveling to and from your route, when you are moving between park and relay points, and when you are entering or crossing intersecting roadways, you must be sure that all vehicle doors are closed.
- All vehicle doors must be secured when the vehicle is left unattended and out of the driver's immediate sight.

## Exceptions

- The Postal fleet includes a number of 1-ton, 2-ton, and 2.5-ton “step-van” style vehicles that have left-hand drive cab compartments with sliding doors, and closed cargo areas. When driving these vehicles, keep the rear door closed, and close the left door when the vehicle is in motion. You may leave the right door open, however, if there is no passenger, mail, or loose equipment in the cab area and the cargo partition is closed.
- When you are operating a vehicle on delivery routes and traveling in intervals of 500 feet (1/10 mile) or less at speeds no greater than 15 miles per hour between delivery stops, you may leave the door on the driver’s side open.

## 4. *Fueling*

- Shut off the motor before fueling a vehicle.
- Don’t smoke within 25 feet of gasoline pumps or gas or oil storage tanks.
- Be sure the nozzle of the pump hose touches the edge of the tank to avoid static sparking.
- Know where the emergency shut-off switch for the fuel pump is located.
- Be sure that a fire extinguisher is located nearby.

## 5. *Engine Exhaust*

- The gas released by internal combustion engines, carbon monoxide, is odorless, tasteless, colorless, and deadly. Therefore, hook up exhaust hoses to vehicles before you run an engine inside a building, or make sure there is adequate ventilation.

- Check exhaust hoses periodically for splits, cracks, or other deterioration.

## ***6. Tire Safety Cages***

- To inflate or deflate tires mounted on split rims, place them in an approved tire safety cage. Mount or dismount split rim wheels only if you have been trained to do so.
- When inflating a tire in the safety cage, use a clip-on air chuck with a remote valve so that you can stand clear.

## ***E. Driving Regulations***

### ***1. General Rules***

- Never finger mail or hold it in your hands while you drive.
- Move your vehicle only when you are absolutely certain that it is safe to do so, especially if children may be nearby. If necessary, get out, circle your vehicle, and check underneath it to make sure.
- Yield the right of way and make any other concessions necessary to avoid an accident.
- Always maintain a safe stopping distance, being especially careful during adverse weather.
- When following another vehicle in clear weather, you can judge the necessary distance between it and your vehicle by using the 2-second rule. Choose a landmark. When the vehicle ahead of you passes it, begin to count, "One thousand and one, one thousand and two." If you pass the landmark before you reach "one thousand and two," you are following too closely. During

adverse weather, stay farther behind the vehicle in front of you. If you are following larger trucks (1-ton or more), increase the time lapse to 4 seconds.

- Use your turn signal before turning, changing lanes, or pulling to or away from the curb or shoulder of the road.
- Enter all unregulated or unprotected intersections slowly and cautiously. Slow down and don't enter the cross street until you are sure you can do so safely.
- Before entering any intersection, slow down and look left, then right, then left again. Remember that danger is always closer from the left when the roadway is two directional.
- Never wear headphones or any other device that can diminish your hearing while you are operating a motor vehicle.

## 2. *Speed*

- Always drive at a safe speed. Never exceed the speed limit, but keep in mind that under certain conditions the posted speed limit may not be the safe one.

## 3. *Backing Up*

- Avoid backing up whenever possible. If you can, park where you will not have to back up to pull away from a parking place. If you must back up, first walk around your vehicle to make sure there are no pedestrians, children, obstructions, etc., in your way.
- When backing a large vehicle, have someone guide you whenever possible. The guide should stand to the side and rear of the vehicle and use



hand signals, not oral directions. Never allow the guide to get out of your vision, especially behind your vehicle; you might unknowingly crush the guide against some object. Even when you use a guide, it is your responsibility to back up safely. Use both rear view mirrors and have them properly adjusted.

- Drivers who are required to turn a vehicle around in one continuous operation (such as rural carriers making turnarounds) must use extreme caution when backing up.
- Look, listen, and *live* at all railroad crossings.
- Obey all highway rail crossing warnings.

#### 4. *Parking*

- Whenever you park your vehicle, turn off the engine, remove the key, place the gear selector in park, and set the parking brake. If the vehicle will be out of your sight, lock it.
- When parking a vehicle uphill, turn the front wheels away from the curb. When parking downhill, turn them into the curb.  
**Remember:** “uphill-out,” and “downhill-in.”

#### 5. *Passengers*

- Ride in postal-owned, GSA-owned, rental, or contract vehicles (including employees’ privately owned vehicles when used in postal operations) only if you are authorized to do so. All passengers must use safety belts.
- If conventional passenger seats are not provided, use an approved auxiliary seat which faces forward and is equipped with a backrest and safety belts. Never stand in a vehicle that is in motion.

## 6. *Loading*

- Make sure that any mail you load into a vehicle will pose no hazard to the operator when the vehicle is started, stopped, turned, or otherwise operated on a mail delivery route. Don't place large parcels, bulky items, or bundles of mail on the tray or ledge to the extent that they can obscure your vision or break the windshield during a sudden stop.
- Always use proper lifting techniques when loading mail into a vehicle.

## 7. *Parking Lots*

- Park in designated parking spaces only.
- Use designated traffic lanes only.
- Observe posted speed limits. Unless posted otherwise, the maximum speed is 10 mph.
- Follow one-way directional signs in traffic lanes.
- Observe traffic signals when entering and leaving postal premises.
- Don't throw litter in parking lots. Use receptacles that are provided.
- Obey all posted signs in the parking and access road areas.
- Don't park in or block fire lanes.

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## *SECTION XI*

# **Air Mail Facilities**

The complex nature of airport operations can pose special dangers to postal employees. Learn to recognize and be aware of hazards that may arise from aircraft, intense noises, and fueling operations. These hazards can be overcome by proper training and constant awareness.

## ***A. General Rules***

- Move Postal Service vehicles at airports only if you have been specially trained, qualified, and authorized to do so.
- Smoking is not permitted in Postal facilities including air mail facilities. Don't smoke on airport service ramps or in the vicinity of pouch racks. Smoke only in designated areas at airports.

## ***B. Operator and Vehicle Regulations***

- Before leaving your post office facility, make sure that your vehicle contains at least one-half tank of gas, a fully charged fire extinguisher, and any required emergency equipment.
- You must yield to all emergency vehicles responding to an alert. This includes crash and rescue vehicles, fire trucks, security or police cars, etc.
- Use only the exact travel route designated by your supervisor to reach the point of entry to an airport service ramp.

- Approach an aircraft only after all engines and propellers have been completely stopped. Your vehicle may come no closer than 5 feet to any part of an aircraft at any time.
- Never drive across passenger loading lanes while an aircraft is at a gate position.
- Don't drive under any part of an aircraft.
- Always wear ear protection devices in the presence of operating aircraft.
- The tail end of an aircraft can be as hazardous as the front. Running engines blast dirt, debris, and other solid objects with a force strong enough to break windshields and to cause eye injury or bone fracture. Take immediate shelter if you are about to be caught by a blast from the engines of an arriving or departing aircraft.





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