

## Highway Contractor Safety

Handbook PO-515

July 2010

- A. Explanation.** Handbook PO-515, *Highway Contractor Safety*, is designed as a ready reference to Postal Service™ policies, practices, and procedures regarding vehicle safety, yard safety, and dock operations.
- B. Availability.** Handbook PO-515 is available on the Postal Service PolicyNet Web site (the internal Web site):
- Go to <http://blue.usps.gov>.
  - Under “Essential Links” in the left-hand column, click on *PolicyNet*.
  - Click on *HBKs*.
- (The direct URL for the Postal Service PolicyNet Web site is <http://blue.usps.gov/cpim>.)
- Handbook PO-515 is also available on the Postal Service PolicyNet Internet Web site:
- Go to [www.usps.gov](http://www.usps.gov).
  - Click on *All Products & Services*, then (in the alphabetical list) on *Publications*, then on *Postal Periodicals and Publications*, and then on *Handbooks*.
- C. Comments**
1. **Content.** Address any comments or questions regarding the content of this handbook to:  
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# 1 Introduction

## 11 Background

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### 111 **The Postal Service Safety Philosophy**

The postmaster general has made safety one of the primary goals of the United States Postal Service®. In 2008, more than 37,000 Americans died in motor vehicle accidents. According to the National Safety Council, most accidents are avoidable. Although it is impossible to estimate what this might mean in terms of unnecessary suffering, if only one accident can be prevented or one injury avoided, then the effort to do so is worthwhile.

The United States Postal Service is dedicated to a goal of zero accidents, and we know that our suppliers and their drivers are dedicated to this same goal. While the information contained in this handbook does not cover all possibilities, we believe it will be useful in reducing the potential for accidents.

### 112 **The Postal Service Transportation Network**

The Postal Service™ operates one of the largest transportation networks in the world. Our highway contractors travel tens of millions of miles annually conducting postal business. Additionally, they drive on all types of road surfaces and in all types of weather and traffic conditions.

### 113 **The Need for a Safety Program**

Because the opportunity for accidents and injuries is great, the need to implement a vigorous motor vehicle safety program also is great. Injuries cost money, reduce efficiency, and cause human suffering. There are no acceptable accidents. When our employees and our suppliers work safely, our customers are safer, and we lead other employers by example.

## 12 Purpose

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These guidelines were developed to help administrative officials (AOs) and Postal Service contractors contribute to an effective industrial and motor vehicle safety program and to implement procedures that will help eliminate unnecessary pain and suffering and accidents.

## 13 Scope

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The guidelines in this handbook apply to all leased and contracted vehicles engaged in Postal Service business. Although the guidelines do not specifically apply to vehicles owned by the Postal Service or Postal Service employees, they can also be incorporated into vehicle safety programs for the Postal Service and Postal Service employees.

## 14 Responsibilities

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### 141 **Headquarters**

#### 141.1 **Vice President of Network Operations**

The vice president of Network Operations develops and implements safety policies that apply to highway contracts, leased fleet contracts, and other transportation and network contracts.

#### 141.2 **Transportation Contracting Officer**

The transportation contracting officer (CO) at the area office ensures contractor compliance with safety requirements.

### 142 **Area**

The vice president of Area Operations ensures Postal Service compliance with safety requirements.

### 143 **Field**

#### 143.1 **Administrative Officials**

Administrative officials (AOs) implement and monitor the day-to-day actions required by these and other safety guidelines.

#### 143.2 **Supervisors**

Supervisors must ensure that their employees follow safety guidelines. Supervisors can help reduce accidents by following these seven keys to safety:

- a. Set a good example. Observe all the rules, and be enthusiastic about the safety program.
- b. Know the operation of your equipment.
- c. Be alert for unsafe conditions or acts.
- d. Inspect often all issues related to safety operations (employee actions, vehicles, equipment, etc.).
- e. Take effective corrective action.
- f. Maintain discipline.
- g. Know your employees.

**143.3 Contractors**

Contractors must ensure that their vehicles meet minimum safety requirements and that they and their employees operate vehicles in a safe manner as specified by these and other safety guidelines.

**143.4 Individuals**

Ultimately, safety is an individual responsibility. Each and every one of us must actively participate in the safety program and perform all duties in a safe manner.

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# 2 Dock Safety

## 21 General

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Safety does not begin at the tailgate of a truck; it begins on the dock. Contractor personnel must adhere to the following guidelines:

- a. Wear proper clothing — if a particular article of clothing is required or prudent, then wear it.
- b. Avoid horseplay, scuffling, and other non-work activity while on Postal Service premises.
- c. Do not throw mail, empty equipment, or other items that will endanger the safety of others.
- d. Do not climb onto or across hand trucks or other rolling equipment.
- e. When passing through double doors, stay to the right, be alert, and obey signs.
- f. Dispose of waste, trash, and other debris in the proper receptacle.
- g. Do not stack mail or equipment in such a manner that vision is restricted or the load is not stable.
- h. Do not block exits.
- i. Do not run on Postal Service premises.
- j. Do not jump from the platform to the ground; use the steps.
- k. Do not smoke in nonsmoking areas. Smoking is prohibited in all Postal Service–owned and contracted buildings and while loading or unloading any vehicle.
- l. When handling sacks, keep the hasps and strings under control.
- m. Watch for low overheads.
- n. Do not use defective (red-tagged) equipment.
- o. Wear protective footwear, and secure loose clothing while working near machinery.
- p. Do not wear jewelry, dangling necklaces, bracelets, earrings, or scarves while working around machinery.
- q. Tie or otherwise secure long hair while working around machinery.
- r. Remember to check and set dock plates before entering a vehicle. Chock wheels when necessary.

- s. Observe dock and traffic markings.
- t. Store dock plates in an anchored, upright position.
- u. When using dock plates, secure them in position to keep them from slipping or sliding away.
- v. Always be aware of moving vehicles and equipment on the dock.

## 22 Lifting

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### 221 Preparation

Lifting is such a part of our everyday jobs that most of us do not give it much thought. However, it is often done incorrectly, resulting in a significant number of injuries. Contractors who lift and carry objects can avoid injuries by taking a few simple precautions:

- a. Before lifting, survey the area around the object and the route to be traveled.
- b. Make sure there is no obstruction or spillage that could cause you to trip or slip.
- c. Size up the load, and do not attempt to lift overly heavy or cumbersome objects without help.

### 222 Procedures for Lifting

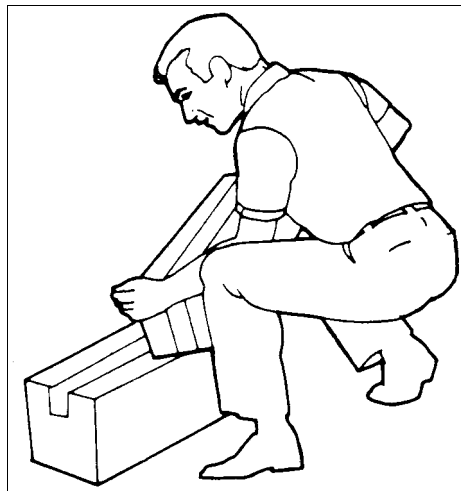
#### 222.1 Lifting Parcels

When lifting parcels, observe the following safety tips:

- a. Straddle the load. To improve stability, comfortably spread your feet (normally shoulder width apart), putting one foot by the front of the parcel (the side facing you) and one foot to the left or right of the parcel. (See [Exhibit 222.1\(a\)](#).)

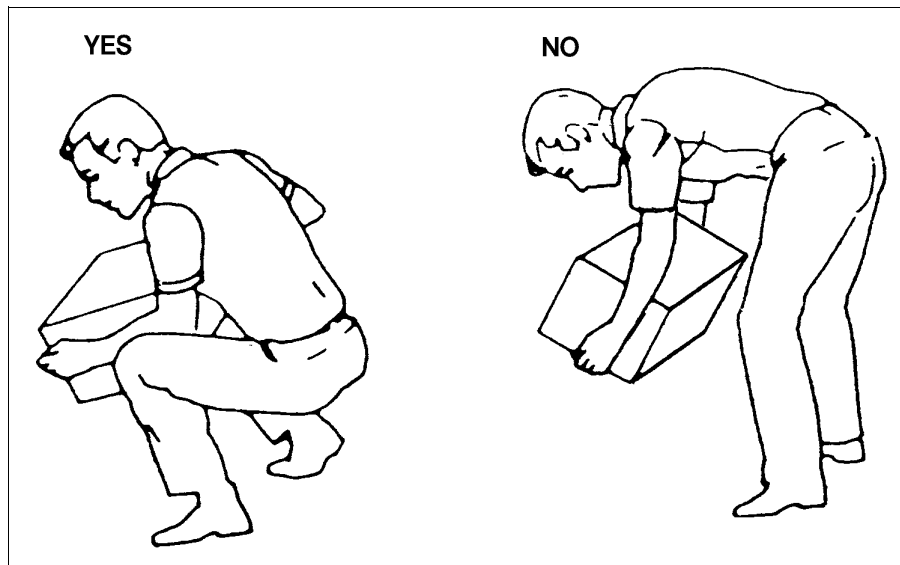
Exhibit 222.1(a)

#### Lifting a Parcel



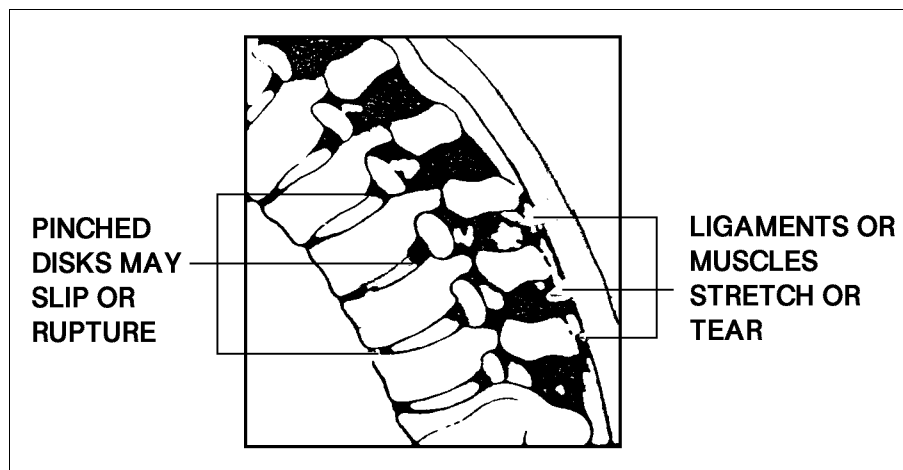
- b. Keep your back straight. Use a squatting position. (See [Exhibit 222.1\(b\)](#).) Remember that “straight” does not mean “vertical.” A straight back keeps the spine, back muscles, and organs in correct alignment.

Exhibit 222.1(b)  
**Proper and Improper Lifting**



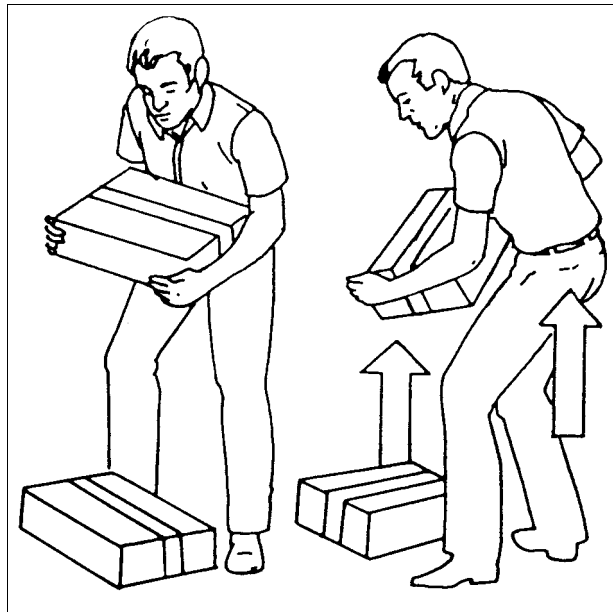
- c. To prevent injuries, use proper lifting procedures. The discs between the spinal vertebrae are pinched when bending. (See [Exhibit 222.1\(c\)](#).) These discs may slip or rupture during improper lifting, causing severe pain or disability. Muscles or ligaments also may stretch or tear during improper lifting. Improper lifting procedures can also compress the stomach, which can cause a hernia.

Exhibit 222.1(c)  
**Pinched Vertebrae**



- d. Draw the load close to your body and keep it there while completing the lift and when carrying the load. Tuck arms and elbows into your sides. When arms are held away from the body, they lose much of their strength, placing more stress on back muscles. Keeping your arms tucked in helps keep body weight centered.
- e. Grasp the parcel near the top of the farthest corner, wrapping your palm around the edge. Hold the opposite bottom in the palm of your other hand. Use the full palm because fingers alone have little strength.
- f. Keep your head upright when lifting and permit it to move freely. This helps maintain balance because the center of gravity changes with load acquisition.
- g. Position your body so that its weight is centered over the feet. This provides a more powerful line of thrust and ensures better balance. Start the lift with a thrust of the rear foot. Begin to lift straight up, smoothly and without stopping, by pushing your legs and keeping your back straight, as shown in [Exhibit 222.1\(g\)](#).

Exhibit 222.1(g)

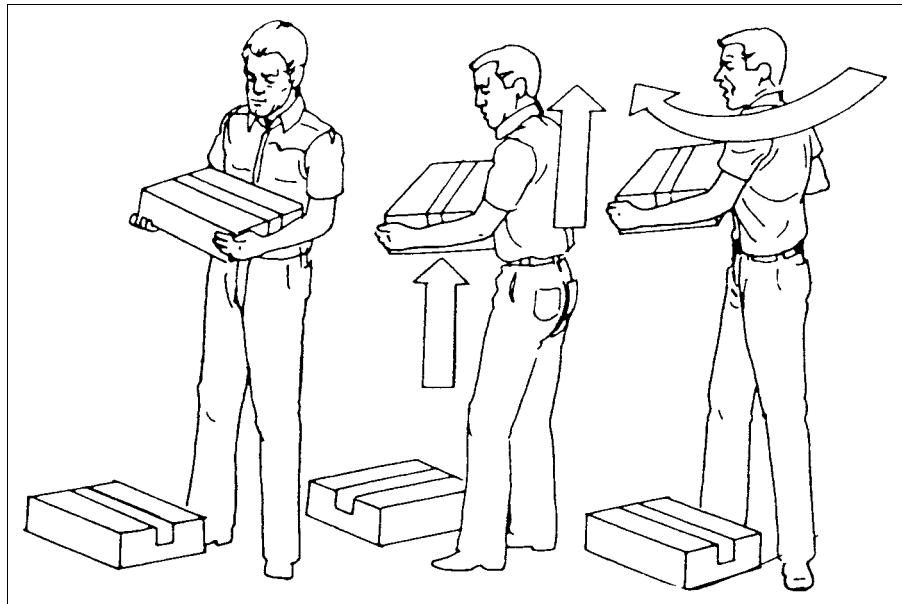
**Beginning a Lift**



- h. Complete the lift to a standing position. Be sure your hold on the parcel is secure before moving. When you have to pivot or turn, use your feet. Do not twist the body trunk, as shown in [Exhibit 222.1\(h\)](#).

Exhibit 222.1(h)

**Completing a Lift**



- i. When raising a parcel above shoulder height, follow the procedures just described to waist height. Then rest the edge of the parcel on a ledge, a stand, or your hip. Shift your hand position, so the parcel can be boosted after your knees are bent. Straighten your knees as you lift the parcel to your shoulder.

**222.2 Lifting Sacks**

When lifting sacks, use the same general lifting procedures used for lifting parcels. Also observe the following precautions:

- a. The position of the hands varies somewhat; grasp opposite diagonal corners as shown in [Exhibit 222.2](#).
- b. If the sack is to be carried any distance, rest it against your hip and stomach once it is waist high. Shift your hand position so the sack can be boosted after your knees are bent. Lift the sack to one shoulder, stoop lightly, with your hand on your hip, and rest the sack partly on your shoulder, arm, and back. Hold the sack at the front corner.
- c. When putting the sack down, swing it against your hip and stomach. If placing it on the floor or ground, bend your legs and lower the sack, keeping your back straight.

Exhibit 222.2

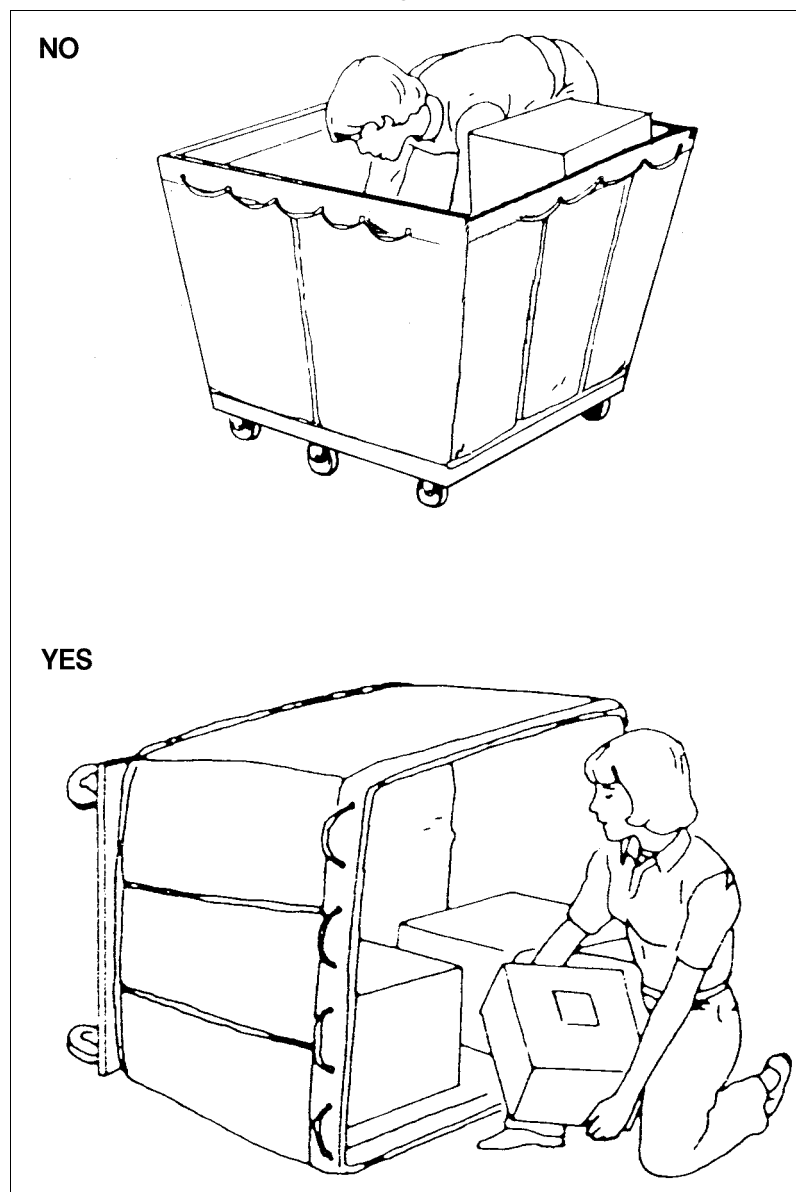
**Lifting a Sack**

## 23 Procedures for Unloading Hampers

Avoid bending at the waist when loading or unloading hampers. Some hampers are equipped with bungee-cord systems to raise or lower the load. Use hamper dumpers, lifts, or other such equipment when available. When manual unloading is necessary, unload the hampers until they are half emptied, and then tip the hampers over to unload the remainder. (See [Exhibit 23](#).) Do not place heavy objects in hampers because employees cannot lift them without placing excessive strain on the back.

Exhibit 23

### Proper and Improper Unloading



## 24 Procedures for Loading and Unloading Containers and Vehicles

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### 241 **General**

Loading and unloading containers and vehicles are other critical elements of safety. Improper loading and unloading techniques can result in accidents and costly expenses. Contractor employees must abide by the guidelines in the sections [242](#) and [243](#).

### 242 **Containers**

The Postal Service makes extensive use of containerization. Contractors who handle containers on a dock or transport them should use common sense and must abide by the following guidelines:

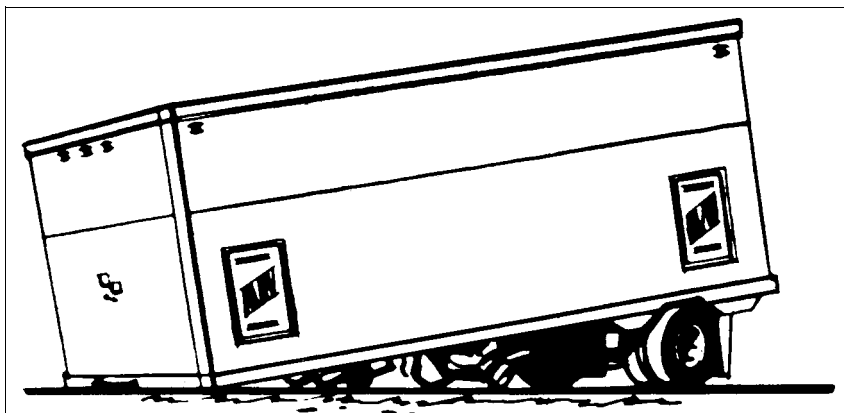
- a. Push, do not pull, containers.
- b. If moving containers manually, move only one at a time.
- c. If a container is particularly heavy, get help.
- d. Be sure that you can see to the front and sides of a container while moving it.
- e. Always set the brake on a container when leaving it unattended.
- f. Do not park your vehicle on an incline when loading or unloading bulk mail center (BMC) containers.
- g. Do not load any container higher than the top of the container.
- h. Keep your feet clear of the container's wheels.
- i. Secure rolling stock containers so they do not move when the vehicle is in transit. This includes setting the brake and pin on every container that has them, and securing rolling containers including hampers with the proper number of shoring bars or straps. Also secure stacks of bed-loaded items such as tubs, trays, sacks, and outsides with a proper number of shoring bars or straps to keep them from sliding.
- j. Load pallets and pallet-based boxes in a pinwheel fashion. Secure the load with shoring straps or bars when possible.
- k. Close and lock trailer/vehicle doors. On swing-out doors, be sure all locking pins are properly engaged.

### 243 **Weight and Distribution Limitations**

#### 243.1 **Weight Distribution**

Weight distribution is essential for safe and efficient vehicle operation. Heavy loads concentrated over the rear axle may cause lightening of the front axle, resulting in loss of steering control, steering "play," front-axle bounce, brake chatter, and front-wheel lockup. Heavy loads on one side can result in damaged springs, excessive tire wear, and steering pull. Excessive weight in the nose has caused trailers to tip. (See [Exhibit 243.1](#).)

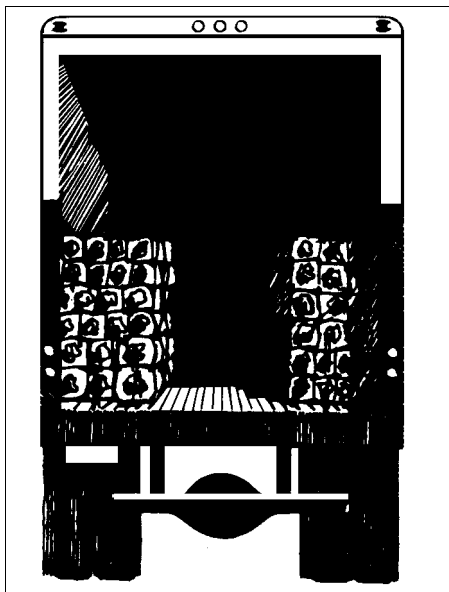
Exhibit 243.1  
**Improper Weight Distribution**



243.2 **Weight Limitations**

You must know and follow the weight limitation of your vehicles. Publications, magazines, catalogs, and similar items may weigh up to 50 pounds per cubic foot, and may far exceed the weight capacity of the vehicle. Limit loads of this nature to one-half of the vertical inside height of the vehicle. Exceeding this limitation can break springs, bend frames, split floors, and blow out tires, as well as dangerously change the center of balance. An example of balanced loading is shown in [Exhibit 243.2](#).

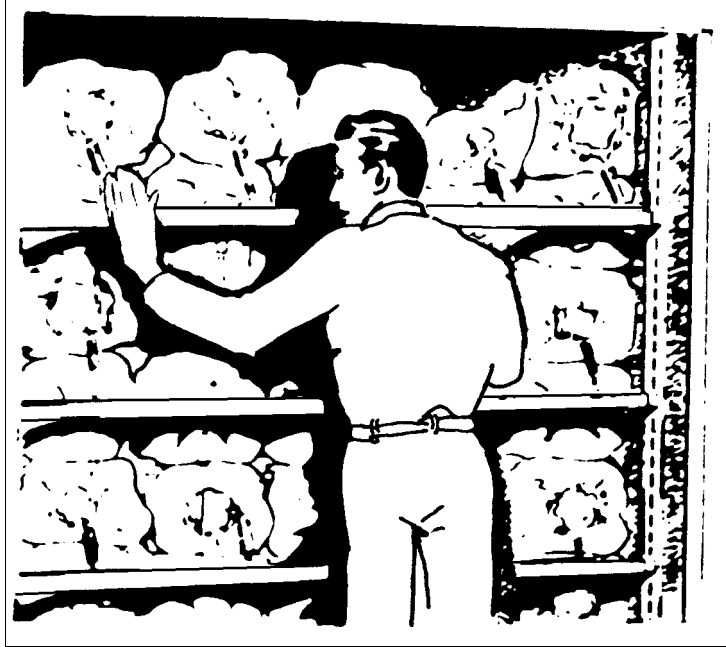
Exhibit 243.2  
**Balanced Load**



**243.3 Bed-Loaded Sacks**

Secure bed-loaded sacks with shoring bars or shoring straps to prevent them from shifting during transit and wedging against doors. (See [Exhibit 243.3](#).)

Exhibit 243.3

**Securing Bed-Loaded Sacks with Shoring Bars**

# 3 Yard Safety

## 31 General

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Because of congestion and traffic, caution and common sense must prevail at all times. Accidents can occur, and they occasionally result in personal injuries.

## 32 Vehicle Operations

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Contractors must consider the following procedures when operating vehicles in the yard:

- a. Observe posted speed limits, usually 5 miles per hour (mph).
- b. Follow one-way directional signs in traffic lanes.
- c. Watch for pedestrian and other vehicular traffic.
- d. Park only in designated locations.
- e. Observe all stop and yield signs.
- f. Confirm the dock/door assignment before parking or removing a trailer/vehicle.
- g. Check that the trailer/vehicle number of the trailer/vehicle that you have been instructed to move is the actual trailer/vehicle at the dock/door assigned. If the trailer/vehicle number is not correct, contact the dispatcher.
- h. If available, get help when backing up to the dock/door.
- i. Do not allow any unauthorized passengers. Unauthorized passengers are prohibited.
- j. Set hand and parking brakes when the vehicle is parked.
- k. Observe other safety regulations as directed by the AO (for example, some facilities require the use of wheel chocks).
- l. Wheels must be chocked at docks/doors.
- m. Shut off the tractor/vehicle engine when parked.
- n. Place support bars under both sides of 26- to 28-foot pups *before* disconnecting the tractor.
- o. Place a tractor under 26- to 28-foot pups *before* removing the support bar or jack-stands. Do not go underneath a trailer, under any

- circumstance, while the trailer is supported only on jack-stands or is resting on its landing gear.
- p. Dispose of all wire twist-ties, cables, and bolts in the proper receptacle.
  - q. Be alert for falling parcels and sacks when opening trailer or truck doors.
  - r. Before moving a vehicle, make sure that no one is in it and that equipment is properly secured. Ensure that extendable conveyors and other equipment (such as a forklift or pallet-jack) have been removed and that the cargo doors are locked.
  - s. Verify the green light is on (where applicable) before moving the trailer/vehicle.
  - t. Do not perform routine servicing (e.g., oil changes and filter replacements) of contractor vehicles on Postal Service premises.
  - u. Do not perform major vehicle repairs on Postal Service premises.
  - v. Notify the appropriate Postal Service officials before making emergency minor repairs on Postal Service premises.
  - w. Thoroughly clean up all spills resulting from repairs and leaks.
  - x. Report any hazard or unsafe condition or practice using PS Form 1767, *Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice*. (See [Exhibit 32](#).) These forms are available from a Postal Service supervisor.

**Note:** A contractor may request a review of any local safety requirement through the AO and the transportation CO.



Exhibit 32  
**PS Form 1767, Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice**

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE		Hazard Control Number <i>(Assigned by Safety Office)</i>	
<b>REPORT OF HAZARD, UNSAFE CONDITION OR PRACTICE</b>			
<b>I. Employee's Action</b>			
<i>Area (Specify Work Location)</i>			
Describe Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice. Recommended Corrective Action.			
Employee	Signature	Date and Hour	
<b>II. Supervisor's Action</b>			
<i>Recommend or Describe Specific Action Taken to Eliminate the Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice. (If Corrective Action Has Been Taken, Indicate the Date of Abatement.)</i>			
Supervisor	Signature	Date	
<b>III. Approving Official's Action</b> <i>(Check One and Complete)</i>			
The Following Corrective Action was Taken to Eliminate the Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice <i>(Indicate Date of Abatement)</i> :			
A Work Order Has Been Submitted to the Manager, Plant Maintenance, to Effect the Following Change:			
There Are No Reasonable Grounds to Determine Such a Hazard Exists. This Decision is Based Upon:			
Approving Official	Signature	Date	Date Employee Notified
<b>IV. Maintenance Action</b> <i>(Complete If Necessary)</i>			
Maintenance Supervisor	Signature	Date	Date Hazard Abated

PS Form 1767, Dec. 1982    WHITE—Local Safety Office *(After Abatement)*    PINK—Local Safety Office *(Initial Notice)*  
 YELLOW—Approving Official    BLUE—Employee

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# 4 Vehicle Safety

## 41 General

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Vehicle accidents are a major source of serious personal injury. 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 your vehicle in a dependable, efficient, safe, and courteous manner.

Unsafe operations are forbidden. You must not operate a motor vehicle that is likely to cause an accident or have a breakdown.

## 42 Civil Laws

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You must obey all state and local traffic laws when driving any Postal Service vehicle. You will receive no special privileges or rights as a Postal Service driver.

## 43 Vehicle Inspections

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You must inspect your vehicle daily. If you operate a vehicle requiring a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), you must inspect and test the vehicle in accordance with Department of Transportation (DOT) requirements. [Exhibit 43](#) shows a sample daily checklist for vehicle safety inspection.

Exhibit 43

**Vehicle Safety Inspection Daily Checklist**

<b>Vehicle Safety Inspection Daily Checklist</b>	
Drivers, clerks, or any other vehicle inspector: Place a check mark (✓) next to each item that is satisfactory, and place an "X" next to each item that is unsatisfactory	
For any item you mark as "unsatisfactory," provide an explanation on the reverse of this checklist, and notify the contractor to correct the irregularities.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Check all tires.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Check service and parking brakes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Check seat belts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Check horn.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Check windshield wipers/washers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Check lighting devices and reflectors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Check rear-vision and side mirrors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Check steering.
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Check emergency equipment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Check van body.
<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Check coupling devices (e.g., fifth wheel and connectors).
<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Check wheels and rims.
<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Check cargo compartment door lock(s).
Date: _____	
Signature: _____	

Highway contract route (HCR) vehicles are required by the terms of the contract to meet certain minimum safety requirements. Those requirements, as they pertain to vans, tractors, and trailers, are listed in this chapter. Personnel who are responsible for completing a daily checklist must be thoroughly familiar with subchapters [44](#), [45](#), and [46](#). All equipment, as listed on the checklist, must be fully operational. All HCR vehicles must comply with the appropriate provisions of DOT standards, and federal, state, and local laws.

## 44 Van-Type Vehicles Weighing More Than 10,000 Pounds

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### 441 Tires and Brakes

#### 441.1 Tires

No motor vehicle may be operated on any tire that has fabric exposed through the tread or sidewall.

**441.11 Front Tires**

Front tires must have a tread-groove-pattern depth of at least 4/32 of an inch when measured at any point on a major tread groove. Do not take these measurements where bars, humps, or fillets are located.

**441.12 Rear Tires**

Rear tires must have a tread-groove-pattern depth of at least 2/32 of an inch when measured in a major tread groove. Do not take these measurements where bars, humps, or fillets are located.

**441.2 Brakes**

Vehicles must have a service brake system that can effectively control the movement of the vehicle and stop the vehicle. Vehicles must have a parking-brake system adequate to hold the vehicle under any conditions.

**442 Seat Belts**

Vehicles must have a seat-belt assembly installed at the driver's seat. The motor vehicle may not be driven unless the driver has properly fastened the seat belt.

**443 Horn**

Vehicles must be equipped with a horn and actuating elements that give an adequate and reliable warning signal.

**444 Windshield Wipers**

Vehicles must be equipped with at least two automatic windshield-wiper blades, one on each side of the center line of the windshield, for cleaning rain, snow, or other moisture from the windshield to clear the vision for the driver.

**445 Lighting Devices and Reflectors****445.1 Front of Vehicle**

The front of the vehicle must have the following:

- a. At least two headlamps, with an equal number on each side.
- b. Two turn signals, one on each side.
- c. Two clearance lamps, one on each side (top).
- d. Three identification lamps, mounted on the vertical centerline of the vehicle (top), unless the vehicle is less than 42 inches wide at the front roofline — in this case, a single lamp at the center satisfies this requirement.

**445.2 Rear of Vehicle**

The rear of the vehicle must have the following:

- a. Two tail lamps, one on each side.
- b. Two stop lamps, one on each side.
- c. Two turn signals, one on each side.

- d. Two clearance lamps, one on each side (top).
- e. Three identification lamps, mounted on the vertical centerline of the vehicle (top).
- f. Two reflectors, one on each side (bottom).

#### 445.3 **Side of Vehicle**

The side of the vehicle must have the following:

- a. One side-marker lamp at or near the front of each side.
- b. One side-marker at or near the rear (top).
- c. One reflector at or near the front.
- d. One reflector at or near the rear (bottom) of each side.

#### 446 **Rear-Vision Mirrors**

Vehicles must be equipped with two outside rear-vision mirrors, firmly attached to each side of the motor vehicle. The mirrors must be positioned so they provide the driver a view to the rear, as well as both sides, of the vehicle. However, only one outside mirror (driver's side) is required for vehicles whose interior mirror gives the driver a rear view.

#### 447 **Steering**

Vehicles must not have excessive steering-wheel play.

#### 448 **Van Body and Trailer**

##### 448.1 **General**

Each vehicle must be waterproof and fully enclosed, with solid sides, top, and doors. The inside must be kept clean, free from obstruction, and in good repair. The vehicle flooring must be substantially constructed, free of unnecessary holes and openings, and must not be permeated with oil or gasoline.

##### 448.2 **Securing Doors and Containers**

Roll-up doors must be equipped with safety chains. All doors to the cargo compartment must be equipped with locks and kept locked while en route. All shoring equipment (e.g., full-length E-tracks, shoring bars, shoring straps) must be in good condition. Vehicles transporting BMC containers must have properly located stake pockets or tow pin holes.

#### 449 **Emergency Equipment**

##### 449.1 **Requirements**

Vehicles must be equipped with no less than the following emergency equipment, ready for use:

- a. Fire extinguishers — as required by the terms of the contract.
- b. Spare fuses — one of each type used on the vehicle.

- c. Tire chains — one set for at least one drive wheel on each side. Vehicles operated where conditions do not require chains may be exempted.
- d. Warning devices — one of the following combinations:
  - (1) Three flares (pot torches), three fuses, and two red flags.
  - (2) Three red electric lanterns and two red flags.
  - (3) Three red reflective triangles and two red flags.

#### 449.2 **Disabled Vehicle**

##### 449.21 **General**

Whenever a motor vehicle becomes disabled and cannot be removed from the traveled portion of the highway or the shoulder and is not clearly discernible to persons on the highway at a distance of 500 feet, the driver must immediately set out emergency signals as described in sections [449.22](#) and [449.23](#).

##### 449.22 **During Daylight Hours**

Place red flags in the center of the traffic lane 100 feet in front of and 100 feet to the rear of the vehicle.

##### 449.23 **When Lighted Lamps Are Required**

Place flares, lanterns, or reflective triangles 100 feet in front of, 100 feet to the rear of, and along the side of the vehicle. When necessary (for example, if there is a curve, a crest of a hill, or some other visual obstruction), place signals at least 100 feet, but no farther than 500 feet, from the vehicle to give other drivers ample warning.

## 45 Trucks and Tractors

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### 451 **General**

All HCR trucks and tractors must comply with applicable DOT requirements. Where applicable, the driver must ensure that coupling devices and connectors are inspected for proper alignment, lubrication, and function.

### 452 **Tires and Brakes**

#### 452.1 **Tires**

No motor vehicle may be operated with any tire that has fabric exposed through the tread or sidewall.

#### 452.11 **Front Tires**

Front tires must have a tread-groove-pattern depth of at least 4/32 of an inch when measured at any point on a major tread groove. Do not take these measurements where bars, humps, or fillets are located.

**452.12 Rear Tires**

Rear tires must have a tread-groove-pattern depth of at least 2/32 of an inch when measured in a major tread groove. Do not take these measurements where bars, humps, or fillets are located.

**452.2 Brakes****452.21 Service Brake System**

Vehicles must have a service brake system that can effectively control the movement of and stop the vehicle.

**452.22 Parking Brake System**

Vehicles must have a parking-brake system adequate to hold the vehicle on any grade on which it is operated, under any loading condition.

**453 Seat Belts**

Vehicles must have a seat-belt assembly installed at the driver's seat. The motor vehicle may not be driven unless the driver has properly fastened the seat belt.

**454 Horn**

Vehicles must be equipped with a horn and actuating elements that give an adequate and reliable warning signal.

**455 Windshield Wipers**

Vehicles must be equipped with at least two automatic windshield-wiper blades, one on each side of the centerline of the windshield, for cleaning rain, snow, or other moisture from the windshield to clear the vision for the driver.

**456 Lighting Devices and Reflectors****456.1 Front of Vehicle**

The front of the vehicle must have the following:

- a. At least two headlamps, with an equal number on each side.
- b. Two turn signals, one on each side.
- c. Two clearance lamps, one on each side (top).
- d. Three identification lamps, mounted on the vertical centerline of the vehicle (top), unless the cab is less than 42 inches wide at the front roofline — in this case, a single lamp at the center complies with this requirement.

**456.2 Rear of Vehicle**

The rear of the vehicle must have the following:

- a. One tail lamp and one stop lamp on each side.
- b. Two reflectors, one on each side.



- c. Two turn signals on the rear of the cab, one on each side, unless the turn signals on the front are double-faced and visible to passing drivers.

#### 457 **Rear-Vision Mirrors**

Vehicles must be equipped with two outside rear-vision mirrors, firmly attached to each side of the vehicle. The mirrors must be located so they provide the driver a view to the rear, as well as both sides, of the vehicle. However, only one outside mirror (driver's side) is required for vehicles whose interior mirror provides the driver a rear view.

#### 458 **Steering**

Vehicles must not have excessive steering-wheel play.

#### 459 **Emergency Equipment**

##### 459.1 **Requirements**

Vehicles must be equipped with no less than the following emergency equipment, ready for use:

- a. Fire extinguishers — as required by the terms of the contract.
- b. Spare fuses — one of each different kind used on the vehicle.
- c. Tire chains — one set for at least one drive wheel on each side. Vehicles operated where conditions do not require chains may be exempted.
- d. Warning devices — one of the following combinations:
  - (1) Three flares (pot torches), three fuses, and two red flags.
  - (2) Three red electric lanterns and two red flags.
  - (3) Three red reflective triangles and two red flags.

##### 459.2 **Disabled Vehicle**

###### 459.21 **General**

When a motor vehicle becomes disabled and cannot be removed from the traveled portion of the highway or the shoulder and is not clearly discernible to persons on the highway at a distance of 500 feet, the driver must immediately set out emergency signals as described in sections [459.22](#) and [459.23](#).

###### 459.22 **During Daylight Hours**

Place red flags in the center of the traffic lane 100 feet in front of and 100 feet to the rear of the vehicle.

###### 459.23 **When Lighted Lamps Are Required**

Place fuses, flares, lanterns, or reflective triangles 100 feet in front of, 100 feet to the rear of, and along the side of the vehicle. When necessary (for example, if there is a curve, a crest of a hill, or some other visual obstruction), place signals at least 100 feet, but no farther than 500 feet, from the vehicle to give other drivers ample warning.

## 46 Semi-Trailers

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### 461 **General**

All HCR semi-trailers must comply with applicable DOT requirements. Where applicable, the driver must ensure that coupling devices and connectors are inspected for proper alignment, lubrication, and function.

### 462 **Tires**

#### 462.1 **Exposed Fabric**

No motor vehicle may be operated on any tire that has fabric exposed through the tread or sidewall.

#### 462.2 **Tread-Groove-Pattern Depth**

Tires must have a tread-groove-pattern depth of at least  $2/32$  of an inch when measured in a major tread groove. Do not measure where bars, humps, or fillets are located.

### 463 **Lighting Devices and Reflectors**

#### 463.1 **Front of Trailer**

The front of the trailer must have two lamps, one on each side (top).

#### 463.2 **Rear of Trailer**

The rear of the trailer must have the following:

- a. Two tail lamps, one on each side.
- b. Two stop lamps, one on each side.
- c. Two turn signals, one on each side.
- d. Two clearance lamps, one on each side (top).
- e. Three identification lamps, mounted on the vertical centerline of the trailer (top).
- f. Two reflectors, one on each side (bottom).

#### 463.3 **Side of Trailer**

The side of the trailer must have the following:

- a. One side-marker lamp at or near the front of each side.
- b. One side-marker at or near the rear (top).
- c. One reflector at or near the front.
- d. One reflector at or near the rear (bottom) of each side.

An intermediate side-marker lamp (top) and reflector (bottom) are required only on trailers measuring 30 feet or more in overall length. The height of the side-marker lamp is optional.

## 464 **Semi-Trailer Body**

### 464.1 **General**

Vans must be waterproof and fully enclosed, with solid sides, top, and doors. The inside of the van body must be kept clean, free of obstruction, and in good repair. The vehicle flooring must be substantially constructed, free of unnecessary holes and openings, and must not be permeated with oil or gasoline.

### 464.2 **Securing Doors and Containers**

Roll-up doors must be equipped with safety chains. All doors to the cargo compartment must be equipped with locks and kept locked while en route. All shoring equipment (e.g., full-length E-tracks, shoring bars, shoring straps) must be in good condition. Vehicles transporting BMC containers must have properly located stake pockets or tow-pin holes.

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# 5 Safe Driving Techniques

## 51 General

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The key to accident-free operations is defensive driving. Drive properly yourself, and anticipate that others may not. Learning to recognize dangerous situations and taking advance corrective actions will help prevent accidents. If you observe any unsafe driving by a Postal Service contractor or employee, report it immediately to the facility manager.

## 52 Before Departing

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### 521 **General**

Just as drivers must check various items on the vehicle before entering the cab, so too must they take a personal inventory, both physical and mental, before departing. Include in this inventory the issues outlined in sections [522](#) through [529](#).

### 522 **Driving While Impaired**

No driver is to operate a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, medications, or any substance that may impair driving capabilities.

### 523 **Stress**

Drivers must learn to recognize the symptoms of stress, anxiety, fatigue, and other personal conditions, understand that they can be dangerous, and learn to compensate for them.

### 524 **License**

A driver must have a current and valid state driver's license to operate a motor vehicle for the Postal Service. If required by federal or state law or by Postal Service contracts, a driver must have a commercial driver's license (CDL).

### 525 **Clutter**

Remove from the vehicle all clutter and debris (e.g., coffee cups and paper).

**526 Windows**

All windows, windshields, mirrors, and other glass must be clean, both inside and out, before departing.

**527 Defroster**

Check to ensure that the defrosters are in good working condition. Do not depart until snow, mist, ice, and other obstacles to clear vision are fully cleared from the windshield and side windows, and also the rear window, if applicable.

**528 Seat Belts**

Wear seat belts at all times when the vehicle is in motion.

**529 Passengers**

Unauthorized passengers are not permitted on Postal Service contract trips or Postal Service premises.

## 53 While Driving

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**531 Traffic Regulations**

All commercial motor vehicle operators must be familiar with the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act and with Title 49 of the United States Code, Chapter 313 (49 U.S.C. 313). Know the traffic regulations of the area in which you are operating, and obey them at all times. Pay particular attention to the following instructions:

- a. Observe posted speed limits. Postal Service policy is not to schedule trips that require a driver to exceed posted speed limits.
- b. Yield the right-of-way. Remember that yielding the right of way in an uncertain situation may be safer than taking the right of way.
- c. Use proper caution when approaching school zones and children's play areas. Reduce speed and increase your awareness when entering these areas. Remember that children often are unpredictable.

**532 Potential Dangers**

Learn to recognize and adjust for the following potentially dangerous places, conditions, or situations:

- a. Intersections. Professional drivers are responsible for being prepared to avoid accidents that might occur due to the actions of other drivers when approaching, entering, and crossing intersections.
- b. Tailgating. Allow a safe distance between you and the vehicle in front of you. For good driving conditions, a 4-second gap for every 10 miles per hour is recommended for large trucks. For other conditions, extend this gap accordingly. Be aware of vehicles that may be tailgating you. Avoid sudden stops.

- c. Rural Roads. National statistics indicate that more than two-thirds of the annual motor vehicle accidents occur on rural roads even though less than one-half of the annual miles driven are on rural roads.
- d. Passing. Pass only in properly marked areas, and carefully monitor all traffic before passing.
- e. Being Passed. Do not insist on the right-of-way. Yield to passing vehicles either by slowing down or moving to the right if possible.
- f. Inclement Weather. Recognize that driving in rain, snow, fog, and other inclement weather poses special problems. Reduce speed accordingly.
- g. Changing Lanes. Rarely change lanes, and use extreme caution when changing lanes. Signal well in advance (100 feet minimum).
- h. Night Driving. Recognize that driving in the twilight or at night significantly reduces vision. Adjust speed accordingly.
- i. Hazard-Signal Flashers. Use hazard-signal flashers whenever the vehicle is stopped on the traveled portion of a highway or the shoulder of a highway for any cause other than necessary traffic stops. Also use hazard-signal flashers when traveling at speeds that are significantly lower than the posted speed limit.
- j. Fueling. Drivers may not do any of the following:
  - (1) Fuel a vehicle with the engine running.
  - (2) Smoke or expose an open flame in the vicinity of a vehicle being fueled.
  - (3) Fuel a vehicle unless the nozzle of the fuel hose is in continuous contact with the intake pipe of the fuel tank.
  - (4) Permit, within practical limits, anyone else to engage in the activities listed above in j(1)–j(3).
- k. Braking. Brake well in advance of the anticipated stopping point. Avoid sudden stops.
- l. Parking. Set parking and emergency brakes. If the vehicle is parked on an incline, curb the wheels.
- m. Railroad Crossings. Pay attention at railroad crossings. Come to a complete stop and check before proceeding across an ungated railroad crossing.
- n. Construction Zones. Slow down and be prepared to stop when driving into and through a construction zone. Traffic and signage is not routine, and an unexpected action could require your immediate response.

### 533 **Defensive Driving Course**

Use defensive driving techniques. Defensive driving courses are available through the National Safety Council and a number of other organizations (e.g., insurance companies). Taking a defensive driving course can result in lower insurance premiums. Contractors might wish to consider this option.

## 54 In Case of an Accident

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If you are involved in an accident, take the following actions:

- a. Stop at the scene.
- b. Aid or assist any injured person.
- c. Call or have someone else call for an ambulance or the police, if necessary.
- d. Safeguard the scene against and further accidents. Take prudent steps to ensure that no injuries take place after the initial accident. Use signal devices, such as flares or reflectors, to warn other motorists.
- e. Safeguard the mail. To the extent practical, do not leave the mail unprotected.
- f. Notify the police. Notify the fire department as appropriate. At the first opportunity, notify the appropriate Postal Service AO. In the event of a fatality, notify the transportation CO.
- g. Take the names and addresses of witnesses or other parties in the accident.
- h. Record the circumstances of the accident as soon as possible.
- i. If a police report has been filed, get a copy.
- j. LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES.



# 6 Contract Delivery Service Route Safety

## 61 General

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Contract delivery service routes pose special safety problems. Rural roads are the most hazardous to drive on, and contract delivery service route drivers spend most of their driving time along rural roads. Surface conditions differ greatly, and the roads often need repair. In addition, contract delivery service routes require frequent stops and starts, increasing the potential for accidents. *Use extreme caution at all times.*

## 62 Safe Driving Techniques

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### 621 Replenishing the Mail Supply

Never finger mail or hold it in your hands while you drive. When the mail supply from which you are making deliveries has to be replenished, pull safely off the road, dismount, and transfer the mail from storage into the back of the truck.

### 622 Children

When approaching and servicing a mailbox, always insist that children stand well behind it. Also insist that children wait until after you have left before they remove the mail from the box. Before moving, thoroughly survey the area around your vehicle, and make sure that children as well as pets and other potential hazards are at a safe distance.

### 623 Backing Up

Avoid backing up. If you must back up, check carefully and, when possible, get help.

### 624 Road and Weather Conditions

Be aware of road and weather conditions at all times. For example, watch for frozen surface conditions and blowing snow.

**625 Overgrown Bushes**

Notify the postmaster or another Postal Service official of the location of overgrown bushes that cause blind spots or other hazards.

**626 Signals**

Always give proper signals when slowing for a mailbox and when pulling back onto the roadway.

**627 Hazard-Signal Flashers**

Use hazard-signal flashers when traveling at a slower rate of speed than normal traffic, when using the road shoulder, and when visibility is limited.

**628 Rules of the Road**

Obey all traffic signs and posted speed limits. Practice defensive driving and try to anticipate the actions of other drivers.

**629 Vehicle Markings**

Properly mark your vehicle to inform other motorists that you will make frequent stops. Top flashing amber light(s), which comply with state laws, with an optional removable "U.S. Mail" sign, are required on all vehicles used for contract delivery service.

# 7 Driver Screening

## 71 General

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As part of its strategy to optimize transportation and distribution networks, the Postal Service entrusts highway transportation contractor personnel to handle mail and operate vehicles on its behalf. Postal Service policy requires that all such contractor personnel be screened to determine their eligibility as drivers and to allow them access to the mail and mail-processing facilities.

Screening includes a requirement that contract delivery services suppliers must provide certification that each driver has passed a screening test for the following controlled substances:

- a. Cocaine.
- b. Marijuana.
- c. Amphetamine/methamphetamine.
- d. Opiates.
- e. Phencyclidine (PCP).

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has identified these controlled substances as the five most abused substances. The screening test must be performed by a SAMHSA-approved and -certified laboratory and must meet the cut-off levels established by SAMHSA. Additional requirements apply per Postal Service Management Instruction [\(MI\) PO-530-2009-4](#), *Screening Highway Transportation Contractor Personnel*.

## 72 Authority

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The transportation CO and the United States Postal Inspection Service are responsible for deciding whether a contractor or contract employee is denied access to the mails or precluded from operating a motor vehicle transporting mail.

## 73 Access to the Mail and Postal Service Facilities

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Applicants will not be allowed access to the mail or Postal Service facilities under the following circumstances:

- a. If they are the subject of an outstanding warrant.
- b. If they have been convicted of illegally using, possessing, selling, or transferring controlled substances within the past 5 years.
- c. If they have been convicted of a felony criminal charge within the past 5 years.
- d. If they have been convicted of offenses involving dishonesty, moral turpitude, financial gain, or assault within the past 5 years.
- e. If they are on parole, probation, under a suspended sentence, or have pending charges for any criminal activity listed in items b, c, or d.
- f. If they have an established pattern of criminal conduct that could undermine the efficiency of the Postal Service or the safety of its employees.
- g. If they have been convicted of, under investigation for, or under indictment for stealing mail or other postal crimes.

**Note:** Other postal crimes may include a cease and desist order for mail fraud activity, a temporary restraining order, or a final restraining order for mail fraud activity.

Applicants may not be allowed access to the mail or to Postal Service facilities if the Postal Service is unable to obtain results from a criminal history inquiry through local agencies (in this preferred order: state, county, city) where the applicant resided and was employed during the 5-year period before submitting the application.

If the applicant is not a U.S. citizen, he or she must be legally authorized to work in the United States and must have resided continuously in the United States for 5 years before submitting an application. The applicant must include his or her resident alien number in Block 19c on [PS Form 2025](#), *Contract Personnel Questionnaire*. The Postal Service will not grant an applicant access to the mail or to Postal Service facilities if a full 5-year criminal history cannot be obtained for the applicant.

The inspector in charge of Security and Crime Prevention may consider exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

## 74 Additional Grounds for Denial of Access to the Mail and Postal Service Facilities

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The Postal Inspection Service may deny or revoke an individual's nonsensitive clearance based on information gathered during either the initial investigation or during an investigation to update a clearance. Denial or revocation may be based on an appraisal of circumstances surrounding serious incidents involving the individual, related to the following situations, regardless of when the incident occurred:

- a. Refusal to furnish information pursuant to applicable laws, rules, and regulations that would aid in determining qualifications for a security clearance.
- b. Dismissal from prior employment for cause.
- c. Intentional false statements, deception, or fraud in an application for clearance or in a submission of information furnished incidental to a contract with the Postal Service.
- d. Habitual use of intoxicating beverages or drinking to excess.
- e. Use of narcotics or dangerous drugs.
- f. Any other circumstance that makes the individual unfit to do business with the Postal Service.

## 75 Eligibility to Drive

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Applicants whose driving records reflect offenses or patterns noted in [Exhibit 75](#) will not be allowed to drive under a Postal Service contract. A driver must be at least 18 years old and have 2 years' driving experience.

Exhibit 75

**Driver Disqualifications**

<b>General Disqualifying Factors</b>		
1.	Applicant lacks adequate driving experience over the type of terrain and weather to be experienced on the route.	
2.	Applicant is not 18 years old and does not have 2 years driving experience.	
3.	Applicant has a pending proceeding for suspension of driver's license or has had his or her license suspended for any moving violation within the last 3 years.	
4.	Applicant has had his or her driver's license revoked for other than administrative reasons, within the last 5 years.	
5.	Applicant has pending driving under the influence (DUI).	
<b>Specific Disqualifying Factors</b>		
<b>Type of Violation</b>	<b>More than the indicated number of convictions within the last:</b>	
	<b>3 years</b>	<b>5 years</b>
Reckless or careless driving.	1	2
Any driving conviction involving use of drugs, alcohol, or other controlled substances.	0 (none permitted)	0 (none permitted)
Any driving conviction involving drugs, alcohol, or other controlled substances while operating a vehicle under Postal Service contract.	0 (none permitted)	0 (none permitted)
At-fault accidents (i.e. accidents for which the driver was convicted of a moving violation).	2 or any at-fault accident resulting in a fatality.	2 or any at-fault accident resulting in a fatality.
Leaving the scene of an accident.	0 (none permitted)	0 (none permitted)
All other moving traffic offenses (includes speeding violations).	3 (or more than 1 in the last year)	5 (or 3 or more for same offense)
<b>Notes:</b>		
For purposes of determining disqualifying violations, the Postal Inspection Service considers only offenses for which there was a conviction, except for pending DUIs.		
Timeframes for disqualification are measured from the date of the offense, not the date of the conviction.		
The "3 years" column applies only if the 5-year driving record is unavailable.		

## 76 Report of Recent Arrests or Convictions

Suppliers must report to the AO any arrests or convictions that fall within the criteria of the disqualifying factors stated in [Exhibit 75](#) or that occur during the contract term.

## 77 Highway Contract Transportation Employees Used During Emergencies

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When suppliers' personnel are used on an emergency basis, the supplier must complete [PS Form 2081](#), *Contractor Employee Assignment Notification*, for each employee and submit the form to the AO.

The AO provides the contract employee with [PS Form 5139](#), *Non-Postal Service Temporary Employee*, and retrieves the form at the end of the emergency. If the emergency extends beyond 15 days, the screening procedures outlined in subchapters [71](#) through [76](#) of this handbook, subject to new screening procedures that might be published in a future update to [MI PO-530-2009-4](#), must be performed for each emergency contract employee.

## 78 Separation of Highway Contractor Personnel

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### 781 Separated Within 1 Year

Security clearances apply to an individual, not a contract. If a driver who has been separated works for another supplier within 1 year of the date of separation, the current supplier must provide the AO with an updated [PS Form 2025](#) and a motor vehicle record. The AO forwards the information to the Postal Inspection Service, noting any changes on the transmittal cover sheet. A Form FD 258 (fingerprint card) is required if the driver has never been screened by the Postal Inspection Service.

### 782 Separated After 1 Year

If more than 1 year has elapsed since a driver separated from a supplier and is hired by another supplier, the driver is considered a new driver, and the supplier must begin a new screening application.

## 79 Further Screening Requirements

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For further screening requirements, see Management Instruction [MI PO-530-2009-4](#), *Screening Highway Transportation Contractor Personnel*. The screening requirements in this handbook would be superseded by any revised screening requirements published in an update to [MI PO-530-2009-4](#).

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