



# Highway Contractor Safety

Pocket Edition

Handbook PO-516  
October 2007

PSN 7610-03-000-3755

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## Preface

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2006, nearly 43,300 Americans died in motor vehicle accidents. Most accidents are avoidable. While 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, 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 contractors and their drivers are dedicated to this same goal. While the material contained in this handbook does not cover all possibilities, we believe that it will be useful in reducing the potential for accidents.



Tony Pajunas  
Vice President  
Network Operations

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# Emergency Telephone Numbers

(If the line below is blank, then write in the number that you use.)

Contractor: \_\_\_\_\_

Highway Patrol: \_\_\_\_\_

Chemical Spills: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrative Official: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Service Facilities:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Department of Transportation: 202-366-4000

Department of Labor: 1-866-4-USA-DOL

Star Route Association: 202-543-1661

Others:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Dock Safety

Contractor and Postal Service employees must adhere to the following guidelines:

- a. Proper clothing — If a particular article of clothing is required or prudent, then wear it.
- b. Avoid horseplay, scuffling, etc., while on Postal Service premises.
- c. Do not throw mail, empty equipment, etc., 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, etc., in the proper receptacles.
- 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.
- 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.

# Loading and Unloading Safety

Improper loading and unloading techniques can result in accidents and costly expenses. Postal Service and contractor employees must abide by the following guidelines:

## Containers

- 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 it is to be left 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, setting pins, and securing the container with the proper number of shoring bars or straps.

- 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.

## **Weight Limitations and Load Distribution**

You must know the weight limitations of your vehicles. Publications, magazines, and catalogs 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, blow out tires, and dangerously change the vehicle's center of balance.

Secure bed-loaded sacks with shoring bars or straps to keep them from shifting during transit and wedging against doors.



## Yard Safety

Because of congestion and traffic, caution and common sense must prevail at all times. Accidents can occur and result in personal injuries. Contractors are advised to consider the following 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 administrative official (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 jackstands. Do not go underneath a trailer, under any circumstance, while the trailer is supported only on jackstands or 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 extendible conveyors and other equipment (forklift, pallet-jack, and the like) 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. Emergency minor repairs may be made on Postal Service premises after notifying the appropriate Postal Service officials.
- w. Contractors and drivers are responsible for thoroughly cleaning up all spills resulting from repairs, leaks, and so forth.

**Note:** A contractor may request a review of any local safety requirement through the administrative official and the transportation contracting officer (CO). The contractor should also report to them any hazard or unsafe condition or practice using PS Form 1767, *Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice*.

## Vehicle Safety

Highway contract route (HCR) vehicles are required by the terms of the contract to meet certain minimum safety requirements as described in list below. A Vehicle Safety Inspection Daily Checklist is included for both the Postal Service and the contractor. All equipment, as listed on the checklist, must be fully operational. All HCR vehicles must comply with the appropriate provisions of Department of Transportation standards and federal, state, and local laws.

### a. Tires

No motor vehicles may be operated on any tire that has fabric exposed through the tread or sidewall. Front tires must have a tread-groove-pattern depth of at least 4/32 inch when measured at any point on a major tread groove. Rear tires must have a tread-groove-pattern depth of at least 2/32 inch. Do not take these measurements where the bars, bumps, or fillets are located.

### b. 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.

c. Seat belts

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

d. Horn

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

e. 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 vision for the driver.

f. Lighting devices and reflectors

The front of the vehicle must have the following:

- At least two headlamps, with an equal number on each side.
- Two turn signals, one on each side.
- Two clearance lamps, one on each side (top).
- 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 that case, a single lamp at the center satisfies this requirement.

The rear of the vehicle must have the following:

- Two tail lamps, one on each side.
- Two stop lamps, one on each side.
- Two turn signals, one on each side.
- Two clearance lamps, one on each side (top).
- Three identification lamps, mounted on the vertical centerline of the vehicle (top).
- Two reflectors, one on each side (bottom).

Each side of the vehicle must have the following:

- One side-marker lamp at or near the front and one side-marker at or near the rear (top).
- One reflector at or near the front and one reflector at or near the rear (bottom).

g. 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.

h. Steering

Vehicles must not have excessive steering-wheel play.

i. Emergency equipment

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

- Fire extinguisher, as required by the terms of the contract.
- Spare fuses, one of each type used on the vehicle.
- Tire chains where legal and conditions require them.
- Warning devices. Vehicles must have one of the following combinations:
  - Three flares (pot torches), three fuses, and two red flags.
  - Three red electric lanterns and two red flags.
  - Three red reflectors and two red flags.

j. Van body and trailer

Each must be waterproof and fully enclosed with solid sides, top, and doors. The inside 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.

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 vans and trailers modified for transporting containers must have full length E-tracks, shoring bars, and/or shoring straps in good condition. Vehicles transporting BMC containers must have properly located stake pockets or tow-pin holes.



## Disabled Vehicles

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 follows:

- a. 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.
- b. 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.

# Safe Driving Techniques

The key to accident-free operations is defensive driving. Drive properly yourself, but anticipate that others may not. Keep in mind the following checklists:

## Before Departing

- a. No driver is to operate a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, drugs, medications, or any substance that may impair driving capabilities.
- b. Drivers should recognize the symptoms of stress, anxiety, fatigue, and other personal conditions; understand that they can be dangerous; and learn to compensate for them.
- c. No driver is authorized to operate a motor vehicle without a valid state driver's license. As required by federal or state law and to operate a motor vehicle on Postal Service contracts, a driver must have a commercial driver's license.
- d. Remove all clutter and debris (e.g., coffee cups and paper) from the vehicle.
- e. All windows, windshields, mirrors, and the like must be clean, both inside and out.
- f. Check to ensure that the defrosters are in good working condition. Do not depart until snow, mist, ice, and the like are fully cleared from the windshield and

side windows, and the rear window if applicable.

- g. Wear seat belts at all times when the vehicle is in motion.
- h. Unauthorized passengers are not permitted on Postal Service contract trips or Postal Service premises.

## **While Driving**

- a. Obey all traffic regulations.
- b. Observe posted speed limits.
- c. Yield the right-of-way.
- d. Use proper caution when approaching school zones and children's play areas.
- e. Learn to recognize and adjust for the following potentially dangerous places, conditions, or situations:
  - Intersections.
  - Tailgating.
  - Rural roads.
  - Passing.
  - Being passed (do not insist on the right-of-way).
  - Inclement weather.
  - Changing lanes.
  - Night driving.
  - Hazard-signal flashers.
  - Fueling.
  - Braking.

- Parking.
  - Railroad crossings.
  - Construction zones.
- f. Use defensive driving techniques.

## **In Case of an Accident**

Drivers should take the following actions if involved in an accident:

- a. Take prudent steps to ensure that no injuries take place after the initial accident. Use signal devices, such as flares and reflectors, to warn other motorists.
- b. To the extent practical, do not leave mail unprotected.
- c. Notify the police. Notify fire department as appropriate. At the first opportunity, notify the appropriate Postal Service administrative official. In the event of a fatality, notify the transportation contracting officer.
- d. Take the names and addresses of witnesses or other parties to the accident.
- e. Record the circumstances of the accident as soon as possible.
- f. If a police report has been filed, obtain a copy.
- g. Learn from your mistakes.

## **Contract Delivery Service Route Safety**

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. Observe the following rules:

**a. Replenishing the mail supply**

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.

**b. 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 and pets are at a safe distance.

**c. Backing up**

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

**d. Road and weather conditions**

Be aware of road and weather conditions at all times. Watch for frozen surface conditions and blowing snow.

**e. Overgrown bushes**

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

**f. Signals**

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

**g. 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.

**h. Rules of the road**

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

**i. Vehicle markings**

Properly mark your vehicle to inform other motorists that you will make frequent stops. Top flashing amber lights with an optional removable "U.S. Mail" sign are required on all vehicles used for contract delivery service.

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## Accident Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver License No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Carrier: \_\_\_\_\_

Vehicle License Plate No. and State:

\_\_\_\_\_

Vehicle Identification No. (VIN):

\_\_\_\_\_

Vehicle Make/Model: \_\_\_\_\_

*(continued on reverse)*

Description of Accident:

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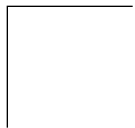
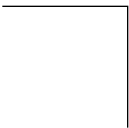
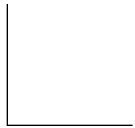
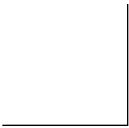
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[Editor's Note: The printed version of Handbook PO-516 contains duplicates of the "Expense Record" sheet on pages 32-54, but this electronic file shows only the first sheet.]

# Vehicle Safety Inspection Daily Checklist

1. Check all tires.. . . . .
2. Check service and parking brakes. . . . .
3. Check seat belts. . . . .
4. Check horn. . . . .
5. Check windshield wipers/washers. . . . .
6. Check lighting devices and reflectors. . . . .
7. Check rear-vision and side mirrors. . . . .
8. Check steering. . . . .
9. Check emergency equipment. . . . .
10. Check van body. . . . .
11. Check coupling devices . . . . .   
(e.g. fifth wheel and connectors).
12. Check wheels and rims. . . . .
13. Check cargo compartment door lock(s). . . . .

Drivers, clerks and any other vehicle inspector should (✓) items that are satisfactory and (X) items that are unsatisfactory.

An explanation of the defect (X) items must be listed on the reverse of the checklist, and the contractor notified to correct the irregularities.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

[Editor's Note: The printed version of Handbook PO-516 contains duplicates of the "Vehicle Safety Inspection Daily Checklist" sheet on pages 55–99 (odd pages only, with the reverse side of each page left blank), but this electronic file shows only the first sheet. The printed version ends with page 99, with the reverse side of the page left blank.]

