

# 1 Accident Prevention

## 1-1 Supervisor's Responsibilities

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The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to provide a safe and healthful workplace free of recognized hazards and to follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. Employers' responsibilities also include providing training, medical examinations, and record keeping.

As a Postal Service supervisor, you are the backbone of our Safety and Health Program. You are in a highly visible leadership position that requires setting the standard for accident prevention. You are responsible for implementing written programs and action plans, monitoring employees' safety performance, and preventing operational safety errors. To properly exercise your responsibility, you must know Postal Service safety rules and regulations and the rights and responsibilities of the employees you supervise. (Employee rights and responsibilities are explained in [1-4](#).)

You can find safety rules and regulations in this handbook and in:

- a. Handbook EL-814, *Postal Employee's Guide To Safety*.
- b. Chapter 8 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* (ELM).
- c. Handbook EL-803, *Maintenance Employee's Guide To Safety*.
- d. Publications listed in appendix D.

## 1-2 Postal Service Safety Philosophy

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The Postal Service's position is that:

- a. Any injury can be prevented. This goal is realistic, not just theoretical. Supervisors or managers having primary responsibility for the well-being of employees must fully accept this principle.
- b. Management, including all levels through the initial-level supervisor, is responsible and accountable for the prevention of accidents and control of resultant losses. Just as the line organization is responsible for attaining production levels, ensuring quality of performance, maintaining good employee relations, and operating within cost and budget guidelines, supervisors and managers must likewise accept their share of responsibility for the safety and health of employees.
- c. It is possible to safeguard all operating exposures that can result in accidents and injuries, but it is better to eliminate the sources of

danger. However, where this is not practical, management must use protective measures, such as machine guards, safety devices, and personal protective equipment, and take administrative actions.

- d. All employees must be trained in proper work procedures and must be educated to work safely and to understand that they are responsible for doing so. Management is responsible for the adequate safety training and education of employees. However, all employees must be convinced that they are responsible for working safely, and that in doing so, they benefit not only their organization but also themselves.
- e. From the standpoint of both efficiency and economy, preventing personal injuries on and off the job is good business practice. Injuries cost money, reduce efficiency, and cause human suffering.

## 1-3 Good Safety Supervision

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Carefully review Exhibit 1-3, Seven Keys to Good Safety Supervision, to reduce or eliminate accidents in your work unit.

## Exhibit 1-3

**Seven Keys to Good Safety Supervision****Seven Keys to Good Safety Supervision****Key #1 Set a Good Example**

The phrase “actions speak louder than words” is an excellent guide. The example you set must reflect your sincere belief in good safety practices and alertness for hazards. Some specific suggestions are:

- a. Observe all safety and fire protection rules. If you make exceptions to such rules for your own convenience, regardless of the reason, you will seriously undermine the safety effort in your area.
- b. Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) where required; this is a good way to “sell” wearing PPE and demonstrates that it’s the smart thing to do. This is true even if you are not exposed to the same degree of hazard as your employees.
- c. Discuss some aspect of safety with your employees every day. The discussion doesn’t need to be a formal safety talk; it can simply be an informal mentioning of some aspect of safety. But the discussion makes safety a part of each day’s activities and demonstrates your own interest in safety.
- d. Be enthusiastic about safety. The enthusiasm you display will generate enthusiasm in your employees.
- e. Give safety priority. Don’t ever let quality, production, or cost considerations compromise safety or fire protection.

**Key #2 Know the Operation**

To be able to understand and evaluate fully the safety and fire hazards involved, you must thoroughly understand the entire process or operation for which you are responsible.

**Key #3 Be Alert to Unsafe Conditions**

Make every trip through your workplace an impromptu inspection tour; identify and correct hazards that might cause injuries.

**Key #4 Inspect Often and Intelligently**

Safe working conditions can be achieved only by finding and eliminating unsafe conditions and practices. Inspections help do this. While safety personnel and inspection committees should do some inspections, there is no substitute for a supervisor’s first-hand look. Include some of your employees on an inspection team to show them that they have a part in the safety effort. This gives you a chance to illustrate the standards of performance you expect.

**Key #5 Take Effective Corrective Action**

To be effective, you must translate your observations into effective corrective action. Make it clear that correction of an unsafe practice is not a reprimand, but a step toward improved safety performance. To be effective, you must correct unsafe practices promptly. Act while details of the incident are fresh in everyone’s mind and you will give the impression that you are prompt and decisive.

**Key #6 Maintain Discipline**

When safety performance falls below reasonable levels and there are no extenuating circumstances, you may need to take disciplinary action. Make disciplinary action consistent and fair to keep employee resentment at a minimum. Remember that the objective of disciplinary action is to improve performance. When workers ignore the rules, accidents occur. As a supervisor, you have no choice but to get tough and stay that way.

**Key #7 Know Your Team Members**

The ability of employees to do a specific job depends on their education, training, experience, and general capabilities. To achieve the safest, most efficient performance, you must know each individual employee’s characteristics when you plan job assignments, training programs, and performance reviews.

## 1-4 Employee Rights and Responsibilities

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Employees have the right to:

- a. Become actively involved in the Postal Service Safety and Health Program and be provided a safe and healthful work environment.
- b. Report unsafe and unhealthy working conditions using Postal Service (PS) Form 1767, *Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice*.
- c. Consult with management through appropriate employee representatives on safety and health matters, such as program effectiveness and participation in inspection activities where permissible.
- d. Participate in the Safety and Health Program without fear of restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination, or reprisal.

OSHA requires workers to comply with all safety and health standards that apply to their actions on the job. Therefore, employees must:

- a. Read OSHA Posters, *Job Safety and Health Protection: 3165* (in English), 3167 (in Spanish), or 2203. (Posters 3165 and 3167 supersede Poster 2203, which will eventually be discontinued.)
- b. Follow the employer's safety and health rules and wear or use all required gear and equipment.
- c. Follow safe work practices for their job as directed by their employer.
- d. Report hazardous conditions to a supervisor or safety committee.
- e. Report hazardous conditions to OSHA if the employer does not fix them.
- f. Cooperate with OSHA inspectors.

## 1-5 Your Responsibility When Employees Report Hazards

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Be aware of information from the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) (see [Exhibit 1-5a](#)) concerning employee rights and responsibilities, including the employee responsibility to report hazards.

Exhibit 1-5a

**Excerpt From Title 29, Code of Federal Regulations**

29 CFR (part 1977)

**§ 1977.12 Exercise of any right afforded by the Act.**

(a) In addition to protecting employees who file complaints, institute proceedings, or testify in proceedings under or related to the Act, section 11(c) also protects employees from discrimination because of the exercise "of any right afforded by this Act."...

(b)(1) On the other hand, review of the Act and examination of the legislative history discloses that, as a general matter, there is no right afforded by the Act which would entitle employees to walk off the job because of potential unsafe conditions at the workplace. Hazardous conditions which may be violative of the Act will ordinarily be corrected by the employer, once brought to his attention....

(2) However, occasions might arise when an employee is confronted with a choice between not performing assigned tasks or subjecting himself to serious injury or death arising from a hazardous condition at the workplace. If the employee, with no reasonable alternative, refuses in good faith to expose himself to the dangerous condition, he would be protected against subsequent discrimination. The condition causing the employee's apprehension of death or injury must be of such a nature that a reasonable person, under the circumstances then confronting the employee, would conclude that there is a real danger of death or serious injury and that there is insufficient time, due to the urgency of the situation, to eliminate the danger.... In addition, in such circumstances, the employee, where possible, must also have sought from his employer, and been unable, to obtain a correction of the dangerous condition.

**§ 1977.22 Employee refusal to comply with safety rules.**

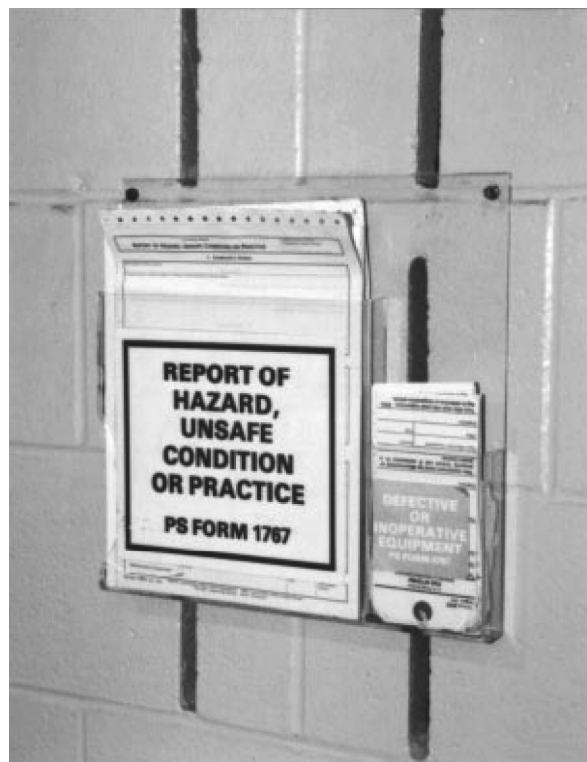
Employees who refuse to comply with occupational safety and health standards or valid safety rules implemented by the employer in furtherance of the Act are not exercising any rights afforded by the Act. Disciplinary measures taken by employers solely in response to employee refusal to comply with appropriate safety rules and regulations, will not ordinarily be regarded as discriminatory action prohibited by section 11(c). This situation should be distinguished from refusals to work, as discussed in § 1977.12.

When reporting hazards, your employees are encouraged to complete PS Form 1767, *Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice* (see [Exhibit 1-5b](#)). You must ensure that a supply of PS Forms 1767 is available in your work unit so that employees can obtain them while maintaining their anonymity. The purpose of PS Form 1767 is to provide a channel of communication between employees and management that ensures prompt analysis and corrective action in response to reports of alleged hazards, unsafe conditions, or unsafe practices.

Just as your employees have a responsibility to file reports of hazards, you have a responsibility to promptly (within your tour of duty) investigate the alleged hazard and respond to your employees using the blue copy of PS Form 1767.

Resolve the hazard, unsafe condition, or practice issues if possible. Complete a work order and attach it to the top copy of PS Form 1767. Follow up to see that the hazard, unsafe condition, or practice has been corrected. Notify the employee of the results.

Exhibit 1-5b  
**PS Form 1767**



## 1-6 The Role of the Safety Professional

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As a supervisor, you need to be in close contact with the safety professional in your district or plant. It is very important that you understand the role of the

safety professional. In addition to performing the functions found in ELM Chapter 8, Safety and Health, the safety professional does the following:

- a. Provides advice and technical knowledge to all levels of management about safety, health, and fire protection matters.
- b. Reviews safety, health, and fire protection plans.
- c. Recommends actions and solutions to resolve safety and health problems.
- d. Helps to train supervisors so they can better fulfill their safety responsibilities.
- e. Helps to orient new employees by informing them of their safety responsibilities.
- f. Develops, administers, and promotes safety and health programs.
- g. Provides management with an analysis of accidents so action plans can be developed.
- h. Coordinates with appropriate environmental professionals on environmental issues that affect employee health.

## 1-7 Safety Talk Requirements

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Scheduled safety talks are intended to promote safety awareness. All line supervisors are required to conduct safety talks at least once a week with their employee groups, including temporary, casual, and relief personnel.

It is important to make the topics of safety talks relevant to your work situation and interesting to your employees. Involve them in developing topics and provide an opportunity for discussion and demonstration when applicable. Publication 129, *Safety Talks*, is an excellent resource.

Your talks can be an effective method of maintaining interest in safety. Review these keys to making a good safety talk:

- a. Prepare your talk carefully.
- b. Try to confine each talk to one major subject; avoid rambling.
- c. Choose a general or specific safety policy or subject, but keep the talk interesting and targeted.
- d. Be specific whenever possible. For example, if you discuss housekeeping, highlight the danger of loose objects on the floor.
- e. Use visual aids or demonstrations to make your talk more interesting.

You must keep a record of all safety talks on file for 3 years, including the following:

- a. The date, time, and unit where the safety talk was given.
- b. The name of the person giving the talk.
- c. The subject of the talk.
- d. The names of employees attending the safety talk. An annotated unit roster or other automated attendance document is acceptable.