

- h. Use extreme care and good judgment in any kind of traffic encounter with farm or heavy-duty equipment, especially when attempting to pass. You do *not* have the right of way because you are transporting mail.

## 3-5 Motor Vehicle Safety

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### 3-5.1 Driving Responsibilities

Drivers are responsible for the safe operation of any vehicle they drive during the performance of their duties. Employees driving motor vehicles (whether Postal Service-owned, -leased, or -rented) must carry a valid state license (or commercial driver's license) at all times.

Postal Service drivers are required to obey state and local vehicle laws. While operating motor vehicles, Postal Service drivers must be courteous and considerate of other drivers and pedestrians. The supervisor must enforce traffic-control patterns and traffic regulations on Postal Service premises, especially in the mail-loading dock areas and at entrances or exits.

### 3-5.2 Training Requirements

You, the supervisor, are responsible for ensuring that drivers have the required initial driver's training. You are also responsible for scheduling any additional refresher driver's training for employees with deficient driving skills.

### 3-5.3 Ability to Operate Motor Vehicles

Employees must be physically and mentally fit to operate a vehicle, so monitor your drivers to ensure that they are. If you have any doubt about their physical or mental ability to drive, you must temporarily suspend their driving privileges and contact medical or safety personnel for additional guidance.

### 3-5.4 Motor Vehicle Safety Rules

You must ensure that motor vehicle operators follow all motor vehicle safety rules, including those listed in a through y:

- a. Comply with Notice 76, *Expanded Vehicle Safety Check*, which requires daily vehicle safety checks.
- b. Make certain that every Postal Service vehicle has an Item 087-H, *Accident Report Kit*.
- c. Use PS Form 4565, *Vehicle Repair Tag*, to report all mechanical defects, failures, and vehicle damage.
- d. Comply with Handbook PO-701, *Fleet Management*, 243.1, which requires vehicles one ton or larger and regularly scheduled for intercity and airport runs to have a fire extinguisher and emergency warning device kit. The extinguisher and warning device must also be carried on wreckers, vehicle maintenance facility service vehicles, and plant vehicles.

- e. Wear seat belts (see [3-5.8](#)).
- f. Carry only authorized passengers in Postal Service vehicles.
- g. Shut off the engine before fueling a vehicle.
- h. Do not smoke when fueling a vehicle.
- i. Remember that fingering or holding mail in the hand or hands while driving is prohibited.
- j. Move a vehicle only when absolutely certain that it is safe to do so, especially if children may be nearby. If not absolutely certain, you must dismount, circle the vehicle, and check underneath it to make sure it is safe to move the vehicle.
- k. Yield the right of way and make any other concessions to avoid an accident.
- l. Always maintain a safe stopping distance, being especially careful during adverse weather.
- m. When following another vehicle in clear weather, judge the necessary distance between vehicles by using the 4-second rule, as follows: (1) identify a fixed object; (2) observe the vehicle in front of you passing a fixed object; (3) then count 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004. Your vehicle should not pass the same fixed object location before 1004. Increase the distance when roads are wet or slippery and when visibility is limited.
- n. Use turn signals before turning, changing lanes, or pulling to or away from the curb or shoulder of the road.
- o. Enter all unregulated or unprotected intersections slowly and cautiously.
- p. Before entering any intersection, slow down and look left, then right, and then left again.
- q. Never wear headphones or any other device that can diminish hearing while operating a motor vehicle.
- r. Always drive at a safe speed. Never exceed the speed limit. Keep in mind that under certain conditions the posted speed limit may not be the safe one.
- s. Obey all highway railroad crossing warnings, such as speed limits, lights, and gates or barriers.
- t. Park only in designated or authorized parking spaces.
- u. Follow one-way directional signs in traffic lanes.
- v. Observe traffic signals when entering and leaving Postal Service premises.
- w. Do not throw litter from the vehicle. Use approved receptacles to deposit litter.
- x. Obey all local, state, and federal traffic laws.
- y. Do not use a cell phone while driving. Pull off the road to a safe location before using the phone.

### 3-5.5 Fueling Vehicles

Smoking is not permitted within 25 feet of gasoline pumps or gasoline storage tanks. Post these areas with "No Smoking" signs in plain view and instruct all personnel working or entering such areas to observe this requirement. Vehicle engines must be shut off during fueling operations. You and the operators must be trained on alternative fueling procedures for vehicles powered by compressed natural gas or other similar fuels.

Make sure your drivers know the location of the emergency shut-off switch for the fuel pump on Postal Service premises and the nearest fire extinguisher.

### 3-5.6 Backing Vehicles

Backing accidents are preventable. Drivers must never back a vehicle until they are sure that the way is clear. If necessary, they should get out of the vehicle to check behind it before backing.

### 3-5.7 Parking Vehicles

When parking vehicles, drivers must place the vehicle in parking gear, set the parking brake, turn off the engine, and remove the key. If the vehicle will be out of their sight, they must lock it. When parking a vehicle uphill, they must turn the front wheels away from the curb. When parking downhill, they must turn them into the curb. Train your drivers to remember: "uphill – out," and "downhill – in."

### 3-5.8 Seat Belts and Vehicle Doors

Postal Service drivers must wear seat belts when their vehicles are in motion. When driving a long-life vehicle, they must wear the lap belt and shoulder belt whenever their vehicles are in motion.

**Exception:** When shoulder belts prevent drivers from reaching to deliver to or collect from curbside mailboxes, they may unfasten the shoulder belt, but *never* the lap belt.

Postal Service drivers 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 Carrier Duties and Responsibilities*, 171.5.

When drivers are traveling to and from their routes, when they are moving between park and relay points, and when they are entering or crossing intersecting roadways, they 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.

**Exception:** The Postal Service 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, drivers must keep the rear door closed and close the left door when the vehicle is in motion. They may leave the right door open if the cargo partition

is closed and there are no passengers, mail, or loose equipment in the cab area. When drivers operate vehicles on delivery routes and travel in intervals of 500 feet (1/10 mile) or less at speeds no greater than 15 miles per hour between delivery stops, they may leave the door on the driver's side open. (See [Exhibit 3-5.8](#), Seat Belts and Vehicle Doors.)

Exhibit 3-5.8

#### **Seat Belts and Vehicle Doors**



#### **3-5.9 Safe Driver Award Program**

Postal Service drivers may be eligible for the National Safety Council Safe Driver Award. Consult your servicing safety office for information.

#### **3-5.10 Observation of Driving Practices**

To enforce a high standard of professional driving performance, you must complete PS Form 4584, *Observation of Driving Practices*, for each driver under your supervision twice a year and at other times deemed appropriate. You must familiarize yourself with defensive driving techniques so that you know what the common driving errors are, how they can be detected, and how they can be prevented.