September 29, 2000

PATRICK R. DONAHOE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

YVONNE D. MAGUIRE
VICE PRESIDENT, EMPLOYEE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT: Audit Report - Evaluation of Postal Service Criteria for
Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Programs
(Report Number LB-AR-00-003)

This report presents the results of our evaluation of Postal Service criteria for workplace violence prevention and response programs (Project Number 99EA007ER005). This audit report is part of a series for an ongoing review of workplace violence prevention efforts within the Postal Service.

The audit revealed that Postal Service violence prevention and response criteria are adequate to assist management in the implementation of programs, to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace and to effectively respond to work disruptions due to incidents of violence in the workplace. However, we noted opportunities to enhance the program. Specifically, program guidance should be revised to mandate training for craft employees. In addition, we believe the Postal Service should explore the need for recurring workplace violence awareness training for all employees. Finally, the Postal Service needs to include language in the violence prevention and response program criteria to ensure full compliance with the criteria. Management generally agreed with the reports findings and recommendations and provided several suggestions. Management's comments and our evaluation of these comments are included in the report.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff during the review. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Joyce Hansen, director, Labor Management-Rosslyn, or me at (703) 248-2300.

Debra D. Pettitt
Acting Assistant Inspector General
  for Oversight and Business Evaluations

Attachment

cc: Anthony J. Vegliante
      John R. Gunnels

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction	This audit report is one of a series from an ongoing review of workplace violence prevention efforts within the Postal Service. Our overall objective was to determine whether the Postal Service workplace violence prevention and response program criteria provide sufficient guidance to managers to assist them in the implementation of programs to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace, and to effectively respond to work disruptions due to incidents of violence in the workplace.
Results in Brief	Our audit revealed that the Postal Service workplace violence prevention and response criteria are adequate to assist management in the implementation of programs to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace, and to effectively respond to work disruptions due to incidents of violence in the workplace. Some experts considered the Postal Service program to be a model for corporations and organizations developing similar programs.

However, we noted opportunities to enhance the program. Specifically, the Postal Service should revise the program guidance to mandate training for all employees, including craft employees. In addition, the Postal Service should explore the need for recurring workplace violence awareness training for all employees. Finally, the Postal Service should change the language in the guidance to ensure full compliance with all provisions of the violence prevention and response programs. |
| **Summary of Recommendations** | We recommend that the senior vice president for Human Resources revise violence prevention and response program criteria to:

1. Mandate training for all employees, including craft employees.

2. Require violence awareness training on a recurring basis, preferably annually, for all employees.

3. Include language in the violence prevention and response program criteria to ensure full compliance with the criteria. |

Summary of Management's Comments	Management was in general agreement with the report's findings and recommendations and stated that refresher training should be required and clarification of critical portions of the guide was needed to ensure that no one viewed critical programs as optional. We have summarized management's comments in the report and included the full text in Appendix D of this report.
Evaluation of Management's Comments	Management's comments are generally responsive to our recommendations and the actions, taken and planned, should correct the conditions identified in this report. However, we would like to reiterate that full compliance with the entire guide is critical to an effective violence prevention program. Management also provided additional background information suggestions regarding some sections of the report. This information is included is included with their verbatim comments.

INTRODUCTION

Background	In November 1991, the shooting at the Royal Oak, Michigan, Post Office prompted the Postal Service to address the issue of workplace violence. The Postal Service embraced the concept that a viable workplace violence prevention program is the first step in helping to ensure a violence free workplace. From February 1992 until May 1997, the Postal Service took several violence prevention initiatives, including the signing of the <u>Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace</u>, creating and developing the <u>Threat Assessment Team Guide</u>, Publication 108, and the <u>Crisis Management Plan for Incidents of Violence in the Workplace</u>, Publication 107.[1] Together, the joint statement and publications represent the Postal Service's violence prevention program.

These initiatives were taken to provide guidance to managers in responding to and assessing the seriousness of violent and potentially violent situations in the workplace. Specifically, the <u>Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace</u> constitutes a pledge by Postal Service management, nationally elected officers of the management associations, and the various employee unions, that employees at all levels will be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. The <u>Threat Assessment Team Guide</u> addresses the workplace violence prevention strategies and focuses on the preparation of the zero tolerance policy statement and the establishment of the threat assessment team and process. The <u>Crisis Management Plan for Incidents of Violence in the Workplace</u> provides guidance on how to respond to and manage work disruptions due to incidents of workplace violence.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	Our objectives were to determine if the Postal Service workplace violence prevention and response criteria:

1. Provide adequate guidance to assist management in the implementation of a violence prevention program.

2. Provide adequate guidance to assist management in the implementation of a violence response program.

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[1] The Postal Service's manager of Employee and Organizational Assistance Services authorized a team of postal specialists, with the assistance of an outside expert in workplace violence prevention, to create a model for a threat assessment program and a crisis management plan.

To establish benchmarks for what is adequate guidance for the implementation of workplace violence prevention and response programs, we conducted a comprehensive search of literature available on the Internet and from other sources related to criteria for workplace violence prevention. From March through September 1999, we identified, reviewed, and analyzed a total of 30 documents. Six of these documents were obtained from the Postal Service, and seven from other federal government agencies, including the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. The remaining 17 documents were obtained from the private sector. Appendices A, B, and C provide a detailed list of the specific documents reviewed, from the Postal Service, other federal government agencies, and the private sector respectively.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management is the federal government's human resources agency which supports government program managers in their personnel management responsibilities. We considered the agency's publication, <u>Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners</u>, to be the most comprehensive guide available to federal agencies on this subject.

Using the information gathered, we identified the following five elements that appear to be the most important elements of a viable workplace violence prevention program:

1. A zero tolerance policy.

2. Organizational strategies for reducing workplace violence.

3. A threat assessment team and a guide which outlines the team's composition, purpose, goals, tasks, process, and performance measures.

4. Employee workplace violence prevention education.

5. A crisis management preparedness plan, including crisis management training through the completion of post-crisis management evaluation.

We then identified the following three documents as the Postal Service's primary guidance for developing workplace violence prevention and response programs and determined whether this guidance contained the elements discussed above:

- <u>Threat Assessment Team Guide</u> (Publication 108).

- <u>Crisis Management Plan for Incidents of Violence in the Workplace</u> (Publication 107).

- <u>Joint Statement On Violence and Behavior in the Workplace</u>.

We also attended two symposiums which addressed violence prevention programs: (1) the Symposium on Employee and Labor Relations held in Hershey, Pennsylvania, in March 1999 and (2) the National Symposium on Workplace Violence held in Washington, D.C. in April 1999. Expert speakers who provided information at the second symposium included two federal employees with whom we interviewed to help identify important elements of a workplace violence prevention program. The first was the coordinator for the Postal Service Workplace Violence Prevention Program, and the second was an expert on workplace violence and threat assessment from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime.

This audit was conducted from March 1999 through September 2000 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards, and included such tests of internal controls as we reconsidered necessary under the circumstances. We discussed our conclusions and observations with appropriate management officials and included their comments, where appropriate.

AUDIT RESULTS

Our audit revealed that the Postal Service violence prevention and response criteria is adequate to assist management in the implementation of programs to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace and to effectively respond to work disruptions due to incidents of violence in the workplace. In fact, recent articles in human resources literature referred to the Postal Service program as a model for corporations and organizations developing similar programs.

However, we believe that the program guidance should be revised to mandate training for craft employees. In addition, the Postal Service should explore the need for recurring workplace violence awareness training for all employees. Finally, we believe the Postal Service should revise the language in the guidance to ensure mandatory compliance.

Important Elements of a Workplace Violence Prevention Program

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has cited employers with violence-prone workplaces under the Occupational Safety and Health Act's General Duty Clause, which requires employers to provide a safe workplace for all employees. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management, through its Interagency Working Group on Violence in the Workplace, published Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners, in February 1998 for use by federal agencies. Although it is not mandatory that agencies use this document, it is the only federal criteria available.

Our analysis of the Office of Personnel Management's guide and information collected from other federal agencies, the private sector, and the Postal Service indicated that there are five primary elements that should be present in an effective workplace violence prevention program. These elements are as follows:

1. A zero tolerance policy.

2. Organizational strategies for reducing workplace violence.

3. A threat assessment team and a guide which outlines the team's purpose, goals, tasks, composition processes, and performance measures.

4. Employee violence prevention education on a recurring basis.

5. A crisis management preparedness plan, which includes a number of activities from crisis management training through the completion of a post-crisis management evaluation.

Zero Tolerance Policy Statement	We found that the Postal Service zero tolerance policy statement provides sufficient explanation and guidance to management and employees on how the Postal Service will respond to, and manage threats, assaults, and other inappropriate behavior in the workplace. Specifically, the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace states that "there is no excuse for and will be no tolerance of violence or any threats of violence by anyone at any level of the Postal Service; and…there is no excuse for and will be no tolerance of harassment, intimidation, threats, or bullying by anyone…Those whose unacceptable behavior continues will be removed from their positions." The Postal Service Threat Assessment Team Guide restates the policy and provides examples of zero tolerance policy statements that management can use.
	The Office of Personnel Management guide, Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners, considers it a disadvantage for an agency to use the term "zero tolerance" and to define terms such as violence, threats, and harassment. The guide states that these definitions could discourage employees from reporting incidents that they do not believe fall within the definition.[2] We believe, however, the Postal Service's use of the term "zero tolerance" and definitions are important in helping employees understand when threats, assaults, or other acts of violence occur.

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[2] The Office of Personnel Management's sample policy statement contains language similar to zero tolerance.

Organizational Strategies	We found that the organizational strategies for reducing violence[3] outlined in the Postal Service <u>Threat Assessment Team Guide</u> include many of the same strategies recommended and used by other federal agencies and private organizations. The majority of the non-postal documents we reviewed contained detailed steps on implementing some or all of the six Postal Service prevention strategies to reduce workplace violence. In comparing the non-postal documents with the six Postal Service prevention strategies, we determined that other federal agencies, including the Office of Personnel Management, as well as private organizations, provided similar guidance for their strategies. For example, we found that strategies used by non-postal organizations are similar to the Postal Service strategy designed to create and maintain a workplace environment perceived to be fair and free from unlawful and inappropriate behavior. In addition, non-postal documents indicated that other organizations employed a variety of mechanisms allowing quick and fair resolution of labor-management disputes. Some examples include formal complaint procedures, open communications, and fair treatment for all employees in issuing discipline.
Threat Assessment Team Purpose, Goals, Tasks, and Composition	The Postal Service <u>Threat Assessment Team Guide</u> provides sufficient guidance to assist management in developing and implementing a successful threat assessment team. The guide outlines four components of a threat assessment team: purpose, goals, tasks, and team composition. Our review of the non-postal documents indicated that the majority of documents identified some or all four of these components of a threat assessment team. For example, the Office of Personnel Management guide identifies purposes and strategies for assessing danger and preparing action plans to resolve violent incidents.

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[3] The six strategies are (1) hiring the right people for the right job in the first place, (2) ensuring security of people and property, (3) communicating and enforcing zero tolerance policies consistently, (4) creating a working environment and culture perceived to be fair and free from inappropriate behavior, (5) providing support to employees in dealing with problems of work and daily living, and (6) handling the separation process professionally, including assessment for potential violence.

The <u>Threat Assessment Team Guide</u> provides more detail than most other documents we reviewed, in the form of a checklist for threats and assaults, a list of risk indicators, and potential contributing factors to violent incidents such as environmental factors that could have an impact on violence in the workplace.[4]

Threat Assessment Team Process and Performance Measures	The Postal Service <u>Threat Assessment Team Guide</u> provides sufficient guidance in the areas of threat assessment team process and performance measures. Our review of the non-postal documents revealed that few of those documents addressed both elements. In general, we found that the Postal Service provides managers with a more comprehensive process than the non-postal documents to establish the team's assignments and responsibilities.[5] For example, the Postal Service threat assessment team process consists of quarterly meetings, maintaining minutes, responding to incidents, managing cases, and monitoring troubled work sites. Concerning performance measurement, our review disclosed that the Postal Service provides a list of suggested resources for measuring the team's effectiveness. Few of the non-postal documents addressed similar performance measures.
Employee Education and Communication	With two exceptions, the Postal Service provides sufficient guidance on employee education and communication regarding workplace violence prevention as compared to non-postal organizations. The Postal Service considers education and communication as vital elements of its workplace violence prevention program. Most of the non-postal documents we reviewed also identified employee education and communication as important elements of their program.

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[4] Environmental factors in the workplace include problems in labor-management relations as indicated by grievances, Equal Employment Opportunity complaints, and perceptions of preferential treatment or unfair discipline.
[5] The Postal Service guidance provides eight steps for addressing violent or potentially violent incidents or situations: (1) notifying appropriate people, (2) making assignments, (3) collecting information, (4) making a background inquiry, (5) reviewing and analyzing the case, (6) making a final assessment, (7) developing a risk abatement plan, and (8) following up.

The Postal Service Threat Assessment Team Guide mandates that supervisors and managers receive eight hours of workplace violence awareness training and four hours of follow up training. The guide, however, does not mandate this training for craft employees. In an earlier Office of Inspector General report, postal management agreed that mandatory attendance at violence awareness training for all employees was necessary.[6] We believe that an addendum to the guide should be issued so that district threat assessment teams are aware of the requirement.

In addition, we believe that violence awareness training should be provided to all employees on a recurring basis. We found that many other organizations recommended that training be provided on a regular basis. For example, according to a Federal Bureau of Investigation expert, training should be provided on a regular basis to employees, with simulation exercises conducted at least quarterly.

The Postal Service criteria lists a variety of sources that field locations can use to communicate information to its employees, including newsletters, safety talks, wall posters, direct mailings, and new employee orientation. In our comparison, we found that non-postal organizations did not provide as many methods of communication to inform employees of respective workplace violence prevention programs.

Crisis Management Plan Criteria

We believe that the Postal Service exceeded the non-postal organizations we reviewed in providing guidance to manage work disruptions due to incidents of workplace violence. The Postal Service Crisis Management Plan for Incidents of Violence in the Workplace provides a model of a plan that outlines the minimum essential procedures to be followed in the event of a violent incident. The plan is designed to provide advance preparation for managing violent incidents at the crisis and post-crisis stage.

In our comparison with criteria used by non-postal organizations, we found that Postal Service requirements for establishing a crisis management plan contained more

[6] U.S. Postal Service, Office of Inspector General Audit Report, Violence Prevention Policies and Procedures, Milwaukee District Compliance, September 30, 1998 (Report # LM-AR-98-002).

substantive information than criteria applied in non-postal organizations. Only about half of the documents we reviewed provided principles and limited steps for conducting post-crisis evaluation and management following incidents of workplace violence. In contrast, the Postal Service crisis management plan provides various checklists detailing specific duties and responsibilities of key personnel for both crisis management and post-crisis evaluation.

Mandatory Language

We found that some language in the Postal Service violence prevention and response criteria needs to be revised to remove terms such as "should be" and replace them with "shall" or "must." Words such as "should" tend to change the overall intent of the requirements from mandatory compliance to optional compliance.

Recommendations

We recommend that the senior vice president for Human Resources revise violence prevention and response program criteria to:

1. Mandate training for all employees, including craft employees.

2. Require violence awareness training on a recurring basis, preferably annually (like ethics and sexual harassment training), for all employees.

3. Include language in the violence prevention and response program criteria to ensure full compliance with the criteria.

Summary of Management's Comments

Management was in general agreement with the report's findings and recommendations. Management stated that refresher training should be required and noted that such a requirement would differ between managerial and craft employees. Management also stated that they would like to consider the types of training prior to issuing a mandate to the field.

In addition, management stated clarification was required to ensure that no one would view critical programs as optional. Management further stated that they understood the recommendation to require clarifying the language in critical portions of the guide not necessarily just by changing the word 'should.'"

We have summarized management's comments in the report and included the full text in Appendix D of this report.

Evaluation of Management's Comments	Management's comments are generally responsive to our recommendations and the actions, taken and planned, should correct the conditions identified in this report. However, we would like to reiterate that full compliance with the entire guide is critical to an effective violence prevention program. Management also provided additional background information suggestions regarding some sections of the report. This information is included is included with their verbatim comments.

APPENDIX A. POSTAL SERVICE DOCUMENTS

1. U.S. Postal Service, <u>A Violence-Free Workplace</u> (Publication 45), December 1998.

2. U.S. Postal Service, <u>Crisis Management Plan for Incidents of Violence in the Workplace</u> (Publication 107), May 1997.

3. U.S. Postal Service, <u>Postal Bulletin</u>, 21811, page 3, <u>Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace</u>, March 19, 1992.

4. U.S. Postal Service, <u>Postal Life</u>, Vol. 29, No.1, January/February 1997.

5. U.S. Postal Service, <u>Threat Assessment Team Guide</u> (Publication 108), May 1997.

6. U.S. Postal Service, Midwest Area, <u>A Safe Workplace, My Right, My Responsibility</u>, 1996 Edition.

APPENDIX B. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

1. U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Office of Workforce Relations, <u>Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners</u>, February 1998.

2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, <u>Understanding and Responding to Violence in the Workplace, HHS Guidelines</u>, November 1996.

3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, <u>Current Intelligence Bulletin 57: Violence in the Workplace: Risk Factors and Prevention Strategies</u>, June 1996.

4. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Human Resources, <u>A Supervisor's/Manager's Guide to Dealing with Crisis in the Workplace</u>, [no date].

5. Robert A. Fein and Bryan Vossekuil, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, <u>Protective Intelligence Threat Assessment Investigations: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement Officials</u>, July 1998.

6. Robert A. Fein, Ph.D., Bryan Vossekuil, and Gwen A. Holden, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, <u>Threat Assessment: An Approach To Prevent Targeted Violence</u>, July 1995.

7. U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management, <u>Responding to and Preventing Violence in the Workplace</u>, 1997.

APPENDIX C. PRIVATE SECTOR DOCUMENTS

1.   Anthony Baron, Ph.D., Psy.D., "Workplace Violence: 12-Step Program for Preventing Workplace Violence," Baron Center, Inc., 1996. (www.baroncenter.com/workplac.html)

2.   Larry J. Chavez, B.A., M.P.A., "Workplace Violence: An Overview," Critical Incident Associates, 1999. (www.members.aol.com/endwpv/index.html)

3.   Judith A. Green-Slaughter, "A Strategic Plan to Prevent and Manage Workplace Violence," Center for Workplace Health and Safety, Inc., October 7, 1996. (www.bsos.umd.edu/cesar/violence.html)

4.   "Critical Incidents and Personal Threats Assistance," Iowa State University, Department of Public Safety, last modified February 16, 1999. (www.1.iastate.edu/~dps_info/homepage.html)

5.   Rebecca A. Speer, "What Employers Can Do About Workplace Violence," The Law Offices of Rebecca Speer, 1997-98. (www.workplacelaw.com/todo.htm)

6.   Jurg W. Mattman, CPP, "Preventing Violence in the Workplace," Workplace Violence Research Institute, 1998. (www.noworkviolence.com/articles/preventing_violence.htm)

7.   "Fact Sheet: Workplace Violence," Transport Workers Union of America, [no date]. (www.twu.org/index.html)

8.   "Violence in the Workplace Plan," Southeastern Louisiana University, [no date]. (www.selu.edu/police/viwp.htm)

9.   "Workplace Violence Policy," Medical College of Georgia, Public Safety Division, Administrative Polices and Procedures, No 1.6.22, March 1997. (www.mcg.edu/policies/1622.html)

10.   "Guidelines for Workplace Violence Prevention Programs for Health Care Workers in Institutional and Community Settings," National Security Institute, Draft #5, June 21,1995. (www.nsi.org/library/work/violenc1.html)

11.   "Preventing Workplace Violence," Parlay International, #1920, 1997.

12.   "Occupational Violence: A Hazards Management Approach to Violence in the Workplace, A Focus on: Physical Violence Management Training," [no date]. (www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Loge/1954/occviol.htm)

13.   "Preventing Workplace Violence For Health Care And Social Service Workers," Gilliland and Associates, Attorneys and Counselors at Law, November 29, 1997. (www.gilliland.com/violence.htm)

14.   Robert Dorsey, and Rebecca A. Speer, Esq., "Workplace Violence: Preparedness Guide for County Employers," 1998. (www.growing.com/nonviolent/protocol/wv_pgce.htm)

15.   John Brenner and Betsy Summerfield, "Building a Workplace Violence Plan," from VCCA Journal, Volume 10, Number 2, Summer 1996,31-35. (www.br.cc.va.us/vcca/brenn.html)

16.   Thomas D. Harpley, Ph.D., and Paula J. Swink, CEAP, "Dealing with Violence in the Workplace," Krames Communications, 1994.

17.   Defense Personnel Security Research Center, for the Private Sector Liaison Committee of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Combating Workplace Violence: Guidelines for Employers and Law Enforcement, [no date].

APPENDIX D. MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS

YVONNE D. MAGUIRE
VICE PRESIDENT
EMPLOYEE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE

July 20, 2000

Billy J. Sauls
Assistant Inspector General
    for Oversight and Business Evaluations
1735 N. Lynn Street
Arlington, VA 22209-2020

Re: Draft Audit Report Number LC-AR-OO-DRAFT
    Evaluation of Postal Service Criteria for Workplace Violence Prevention and Response

Dear Mr. Sauls:

This constitutes management's response to the above-referenced audit report. As explained further below, we are in general agreement with the report's findings and recommendations but have several suggestions.

First, we suggest that the Postal Service's employee education programs (particularly the eight-hour training for supervisors) be included in the description of our guidance and programs for prevention of workplace violence. The report recognizes these programs and includes recommendations to improve them, and we think it logical to reference them in the Background section (page 1) and in the Objectives, Scope, and Methodology section (page 3). Similarly, our six strategies for violence prevention are part of our program and should be included in the description of our program, particularly given the report's finding that such strategies are a necessary component of an effective program.
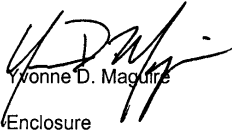
Next, regarding the section that addresses the Zero Tolerance Policy Statement, we suggest adding a reference at the end of the first paragraph of that section on page 5 to periodic messages from the postmaster general concerning violence prevention and zero tolerance that reinforce the policy. A new message is currently being drafted for Mr. Henderson's signature for release this summer. We attach a copy of a prior message from Mr. Runyon released in 1995 that focused on firearms but also referenced a violence-free workplace.

Next, regarding the section that addresses the employee education program, we suggest that some additional detail be included about our current activities for employee education. During fiscal year 2000, we released to the field a video and materials for training craft employees in violence prevention and awareness and stated that such training was mandatory for craft employees. Seven of the eleven areas will complete this training for all craft employees by the end of fiscal year 2000. For fiscal year 2001, we are reiterating to the areas that all craft employees who have not been trained must receive the training in fiscal year 2001. We do not object to amending the Threat Assessment Team (TAT) guide to include a requirement for craft training but believe our current activities should be referenced.

Regarding the recommendation that training of all employees be mandated on a recurring basis, we do not object to exploring that requirement as the report states in the executive summary. We agree that refresher training should be required, but that such requirements will differ between managerial employees and craft employees. Similarly, we believe the requirements for simulation exercises referenced on page 8 may vary between craft and management, and we would like to explore those issues prior to issuing a mandate to the field.

Finally, regarding the recommendation to amend our guidelines to make it clear that activities are mandatory, we agree that some clarification is required to ensure that no one views critical programs as optional. However, we understand the recommendation to require that we review the guidance and make such changes in critical portions of the guide, not necessarily by eliminating every use of the word "should" in our guidance.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you our views. Please contact Suzanne Milton, manager, Workplace Environment Improvement at (202) 268-2039 if you have questions or require further information.

Yvonne D. Maguire

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Donahoe
    Mr. Ocasio
    Mr. Vegliante

POSTAL BULLETIN

CONTENTS
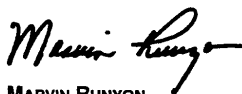
MESSAGE FROM THE POSTMASTER GENERAL

Policy Statement on Firearms in the Workplace

It is the policy of the United States Postal Service to provide a safe, secure, and violence-free workplace for all of our employees and customers. Violence in the workplace has developed over the last decade into a significant societal problem. These seemingly relentless episodes have indiscriminately plagued workplaces large and small throughout the country. We can take little solace in the fact that our workplace has been determined by the Centers for Disease Control to be two and one-half times safer from violence precipitated homicides than other workplaces nationwide, when we are still confronted by intolerable acts such as that which occurred in California on July 9.

The Postal Service is unequivocal in its pronounced opposition to all forms of violent behavior including those involving firearms. Accordingly, it is well established that postal policy and federal law prohibit the possession of a firearm within postal installations. In order to ensure the effective and uniform application of that prohibition, the bringing, storing or in any way possessing of a firearm within postal installations is cause for immediate removal from postal employment without regard to past record or other elements of progressive discipline. This applies to all bargaining unit employees and supervisors and managers alike with the obvious exceptions of Postal Inspectors and uniformed postal police officers.

Marvin Runyon

MARVIN RUNYON
POSTMASTER GENERAL AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

UNITED STATES
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