



# POSTAL NEWS

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## PARTNERSHIP PROMOTES ERGONOMIC WORKPLACE

WASHINGTON DC – The U.S. Postal Service, two of its major unions and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) today signed a historic agreement to improve safety and reduce risk factors in the postal workplace.

At a signing ceremony at USPS Headquarters, Postmaster General John E. Potter joined John L. Henshaw, Assistant Secretary, OSHA; William Burrus, President, American Postal Workers Union; John F. Hegarty, President, National Postal Mail Handlers Union; to sign an ergonomic strategic partnership (ESP). The partners will work cooperatively to implement an Ergonomic Risk Reduction Process for the early identification of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and control the associated risk factors that can cause illness and injuries to postal employees.

“The Postal Service believes that every postal employee has the right to a safe workplace. We are committed to working with our partners to achieve this goal,” said Postmaster General Potter.

This ergonomic strategic partnership is a voluntary cooperative relationship established to encourage and assist the Postal Service in the reduction of injuries and elimination of ergonomic related hazards. The partnership allows labor and management at the Postal Service and OSHA to identify common goals develop plans for achieving those goals, and cooperate in the implementation of strategies that will reduce the pain and suffering caused by MSDs.

The agreement does not preclude union represented employees from exercising any right provided under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, nor does it modify current national agreements between the Postal Service and the unions. The agreement may be extended by mutual agreement of the parties and any party may withdraw from the partnership with 30 days notice.

Initially ten sites will participate in the three-year agreement: Richmond, VA; Providence, RI; Mid-Island, NY; Phoenix, AZ; Pittsburgh, PA; Nashville, TN; Ft. Worth, TX; Portland, OR; Minneapolis, MN; and South Suburban, IL.

Ten additional sites will be added later this year: Portland, ME; Cincinnati, OH; Buffalo, NY; San Diego, CA; Indianapolis, IN; Austin, TX; Birmingham, AL; Philadelphia, PA; Tampa, FL; and Oakland, CA.

## **– BACKGROUND –**

### **Musculoskeletal Disorders**

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are injuries caused by excessive wear and tear on the muscles, tendons and joints. The symptoms include pain, soreness, numbness, weakness, tingling and limited range motion. These types of injuries are common to most of us and can be caused by activities at work, home or play. Most of the time the pain is mild and temporary, but repeated incidents can lead to a disabling injury.

Ergonomics provides information on the capabilities of people and allows better design of jobs and equipment. Ergonomic design also makes jobs more adapted to an aging workforce. Today the average postal employee is 47 years old and 44 percent of the postal workforce is over 45 years old.