



January 31, 2006

USPS Commission on a Safe and Secure Workplace

In 1998, Postmaster General William J. Henderson created an independent commission to

- Detail concrete steps to make Post Offices and related facilities the safest possible environment;
- Make USPS the gold standard for safe and secure workplaces for all American workers.

The Commission, led by Chairman Joseph A. Califano Jr., issued the report in August 2000 after conducting the most comprehensive survey ever of workplace violence in our nation. The study included, but was not limited to, focus groups with postal employees, a detailed review of postal policies and practices, and extensive analyses of national databases.

Key Findings:

- “‘Going Postal’ is a myth, a bad rap. Postal workers are no more likely to physically assault, sexually harass, or verbally abuse their coworkers than employees in the national workforce.”
- “Postal workers are only a third as likely as those in the national workforce to be victims of homicide at work ('92 – '98).”
- “The level of violence throughout the American workplace is unacceptably high.”
- “Male veterans no more likely than other male postal employees to be perpetrators in homicides.”

At the time of the study, the USPS had comprehensive violence prevention programs in place, but there were some recommendations for improvement that the Postal Service has subsequently implemented. They include:

- The Postal Service and Inspection Service jointly developed a Threat Assessment Team Approach to workplace behavior. The team comprises Postal Service personnel from Human Resources and Labor Relations, a medical director, an employee and workplace improvement analyst, a district manager, and a lead plant manager. The Team addresses incidents of extreme high-priority risk and can draw upon a number of resources to assess threatening dilatations.

- The Team might: review employees' records; review gun registrations; meet with current or former employees; conduct intensive background checks of potential hires, including fingerprinting, previous employment references, and drug tests; conduct an investigation; and based on findings, prepare a presentation letter of the US attorney or district attorney.
- The Postal Service has educated supervisors, union representatives, and all Postal Employees on workplace violence prevention strategies to decrease the incidence of violence in the workplace.
- All assaults or threats against employees on the job are promptly investigated, with criminal charges initiated when applicable.
- Detailed information on these threats and assaults are entered into a national database designed to assist in analyzing the information for preventive and investigative purposes.
- The Postal Service has procedures for hiring employees that call for extensive background checks of potential hires, including fingerprinting, previous employment references, and drug tests.
- The Inspection Service conducts semi-annual reviews at the hiring districts to ensure that pre-employment screening is being applied.
- The Milwaukee area has initiated a Carrier cell phone program in high-crime areas, and is in the process of working to obtain a nationwide program through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- The Postal Service has instructed managers on how to handle professionally the process of separation, including assessing inappropriate behavior and potentially violent circumstances.