

Vehicle cleaning and safety



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Recently I was asked about management's responsibility to wash vehicles. I have written about this subject in the past, so in preparing this month's column, I noted that the regulation has been updated or, better said, downgraded.

Chapter 7 of the *Postal Operations Manual* covers postal vehicle service.

Section 712.5, Vehicle Appearance, provides that:

The clean and uniform appearance of postal vehicles is essential to projecting a positive image of the Postal Service. Postal vehicles must be washed as needed, but not less than once each month. Vehicles must be constantly scrutinized by managers at all levels for paint deterioration; missing, torn, or faded markings; and corrosion or damage to the body. Managers should schedule immediate repairs, as needed.

The above passage used to require twice-a-month "washing" of each vehicle in the fleet. The new wording does not limit the washing to only once a month. Rather, it now requires a monthly washing and more as needed.

This same passage also places a responsibility on your managers to "constantly scrutinize" (to examine in detail with careful or critical attention) the appearance and safety of the vehicles and to schedule immediate repairs to meet the obligation written into the above passage.

If your managers are not doing their job, we should address this with them or file a grievance if they refuse to do what is required. After all, this affects our working conditions.

Sometimes vehicle safety is negatively affected by a lack of proper cleaning. Take, for example, what happens when no one keeps the windshield or other windows clean. Not just on the outside, but on the inside as well.

How often have you uttered words to yourself while driving, because your ability to see through the windshield is obstructed by glare that may be magnified when the window is dirty. Your ability to pay attention to your driving tasks and the hazards ahead of you are inhibited. Take the time to write up your vehicle if your view is obstructed to a degree that you feel is unsafe. If you remain silent, you just pass the hazard on to the

next driver and your inaction is putting their safety at risk.

The matter of glare does not end when the sun sets. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also cautions that glare continues as a safety factor when driving at night.

We know well that our craft is on the road delivering at night. How is your vision of the road affected when your windows are not as clean as they should be?

"If you remain silent, you just pass the hazard on to the next driver and your inaction is putting their safety at risk...Ignoring a dirty windshield is no different than any other hazard that can cause or contribute to an accident."

Many a time we escape harm on our routes or in our vehicles, not because we are being safe, but rather because we know what to avoid. It could be a low hanging limb over your path to the next house, faulty emergency brakes, unsafe drive patterns, or that dog that you have not reported.

Ignoring a dirty windshield is no different than any other hazard that can cause or contribute to an accident.

Every hazard that you fail to report might harm one of your fellow workers, if not yourself. Turn in a hazard report (1767) or vehicle repair tag (4565).

In closing out this year, I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Be safe and keep an eye on each other.

