

Vehicle repairs and maintenance



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This month's column is intended to assist shop stewards and branch officers who are investigating vehicle fires or vehicle equipment failures that may have led to or could have caused an accident.

As background, letter carriers recognize that many of our LLVs and CRVs are worn out and in need of repair. Some managers act as if this fact is not true. Those repairs should be prompted by your daily inspection of the vehicle, which is your responsibility in accordance with Section 832 of the *M-41*, using the checklist found on Notice 76 (in the *M-41* at your case). When you discover defects, including fluid leaks, they should be reported on Form

4565. If you do *your* job, the burden shifts to management to do *its* job.

Separately, management is required to have your vehicle serviced and repaired on an ongoing basis.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) issued a report dated June 10, 2014, highlighting the high cost of vehicle maintenance and the need to begin replacing our fleet. The OIG issued an additional report on Feb. 10, 2015, concluding that management had been cutting corners and did not always conduct preventative maintenance inspections (PMIs) in compliance with the established schedules as found in *Handbook PO-701, Fleet Management*.

The *PO-701*, at Section 111, states:

The purpose of this handbook is to provide the information necessary to support an aggressive, yet operationally efficient, fleet management program.

Section 123-f also emphasizes that it is management's responsibility to ensure that preventative maintenance programs are followed.

At Section 132, management is reminded that:

...Vehicle maintenance encompasses selecting and training mechanics, providing garages, tools, and equipment, **and monitoring and maintaining preventive maintenance standards....** (Emphasis added.)

Section 341 instructs that:

The maintenance year commences on the first week of the fiscal year. A systematic schedule for the performance of scheduled maintenance is of paramount importance. If a vehicle is in the shop for unscheduled repair maintenance within two weeks prior to the scheduled maintenance date, perform the scheduled maintenance in conjunction with the

repair action to preclude unnecessary shuttle and downtime. **Scheduled services that are more than two weeks in arrears during any maintenance period are considered excessive and must be corrected.**" (Emphasis added.)

This section also explains that if your vehicle is used fewer than 500 miles per month, it is to undergo servicing twice a year (26-week cycle) and if driven more than 500 miles per month, it is to undergo servicing three times a year (17-week cycle).

When you encounter a vehicle fire or equipment failure that you believe should be investigated, we offer the following information, which we believe will prove helpful in determining what went wrong and then determining how to correct the problem:

1. Request and review the vehicle maintenance records for the vehicle involved in the fire/mishap, then determine whether USPS failed to conduct a required PMI.
2. Request copies of the relevant Inspection Form 4546 for the involved vehicle. Review the forms and compare them with the PMI guidelines for Light Delivery Vehicles beginning on page 22 of the *Vehicle Maintenance Bulletin V-07-98*.
3. If necessary, interview the mechanics (postal or contractor) to make sure that the inspection/PMI was done correctly.
4. Interview our carrier(s) to determine what he/she recalls of the events leading up to the fire or equipment failure.
5. Prior to the fire or equipment failure, were we conducting thorough vehicle inspections? If so, did we report any items on the vehicle repair tags?
6. Was the vehicle properly serviced? If not, what did management do with the vehicle? If not serviced, did we initiate a grievance and if so, what was the outcome? Request copies of any and all repair tags submitted and resulting repairs.

Information that may prove helpful in your investigation:

- Letter dated Aug. 5, 2014, from Phil Knoll (Manager, Delivery Programs at USPS Headquarters) on proper maintenance and vehicle fire prevention, noting what the mechanics (USPS employees or contractors) should be looking for.
- OIG report dated Feb. 10, 2015, noting management's failure to properly maintain vehicles. Pages 7-8 include a letter from USPS HQ affirming that they will issue a memo to the field advising of the importance of not deferring maintenance.
- Letter dated April 3, 2015, from Phil Knoll (New Title: Manager, Fleet Management, USPS HQ) on proper maintenance and vehicle fire prevention.
- Letter dated Sept. 30, 2016, from Kevin McAdams (Vice President, Delivery Operations) on vehicle inspections and maintenance.

All these items are available for you to download from the NALC website on our Safety page in the "Vehicle Maintenance Investigation" section.