

# Preventing vehicle fires



**Manuel L. Peralta Jr.**

I recently received a letter from a carrier expressing concern about two vehicle fires. As we work through this concern, the NALC asks all safety captains, shop stewards and members of safety committees to bring up the subject of vehicle fires as one of the topics for discussion with management.

On April 11, 2011, the USPS issued Vehicle Maintenance Bulletin 04-11 (VMB-04-11), identifying the purpose and the procedures to be followed:

This Vehicle Maintenance Bulletin (VMB) establishes policy and procedures related to the reporting of fires to USPS-owned vehicle.

Current business and safety needs require the USPS to document the number and nature of Postal-owned vehicle fires. This information is necessary to ensure an adequate investigation of the vehicle fire has been completed to document the event, determine the potential root causes, and capture the data necessary to establish trends to support preventive measures.

The servicing Manager Vehicle Maintenance or Vehicle Maintenance Facility (MVM/MVMF) is required to report all postal-owned vehicle fires to the Area Analyst assigned to vehicles. The servicing VMF manager is defined as the VMF manager responsible for the maintenance of the vehicle involved in the fire. This report should include the following:

- Date and time of the vehicle fire.
- Vehicle type and model year.
- Vehicle number.
- Any findings or determinations following immediate examination of the vehicle after the fire.
- The servicing VMF manager must notify the District Manager, Safety to ensure a report is created and submitted using the Employee Health and Safety Application (EHS).

The servicing VMF manager will notify Vehicle Programs of the Incident, sending a copy of all received documentation concerning the vehicle fire to the address identified below. Examples of these documents are, but not limited to PS Form 1769/301 - Accident Report, PS Form 1700 - Accident Investigation Worksheet, pictures of the damages VMF findings and/or PS Form 4543 - Vehicle Work Order, police report if appropriate, local fire investigator findings if appropriate, and any other related reports concerning the vehicle fire.

A copy of the above-referenced Vehicle Maintenance Bulletin is available for downloading from the NALC's Safety and Health page.

**Before you are faced with a fire, make sure that your vehicles are being thoroughly inspected and properly serviced.**

The Postal Operations manual at Section 736 Fleet Maintenance provides as follows:

The VMF is responsible for providing quality and timely maintenance to the Postal Service fleet as outlined in the guidelines established by Vehicle Maintenance, Headquarters.

The USPS created the PS Form 4546-B, which is titled "United States Postal Service Preventive Maintenance Inspection Guidelines Light Delivery Vehicles." The purpose of the form is to identify the required elements of routine maintenance and to document that the maintenance was done. We should be requesting proof that the vehicles are being properly serviced. If this is not taking place, we need to investigate why the vehicles are not being properly maintained.

Among the items listed in the items listed on the form 4546-b are the following:

14. Floor and underdash wiring
34. Fluid leaks and engine mounts
41. Exhaust systems, converter, and muffler
43. Body hold downs, hoses, and wires
56. Fuel lines, fuel system, and linkage
60. Wiring and hoses

The above is a sample of the items required for inspection during routine maintenance. A copy of the 4546-b is available for downloading on the NALC's Safety and Health page.

**If the routine maintenance of your postal vehicles is contracted out to a non-postal mechanic/auto shop, you have the right to make sure that the routine maintenance is taking place, and if it is not, report it to your steward/officers and, if necessary, initiate grievances citing Article 14 and 19.**

If the routine maintenance is supposed to be performed by postal employees, you still have the right to investigate to determine whether the routine maintenance is in fact taking place and, if it is not, we have the right to find out why.

In your investigation, challenge the employer's failure to properly maintain and service vehicles by submitting a 1767, Hazard Report, and by referencing any Vehicle Repair Tags (Form 4565) previously submitted.



**Don't let this happen to your postal vehicle. Make sure that your vehicle is being thoroughly inspected and properly serviced.**