

Pacific Area

uspsnewsbreak

August 11, 2008

Backing vehicle can be deadly decision

Two motor vehicle accidents (MVAs) last week involved pedestrians being struck by a postal vehicle. One of these incidents resulted in the death of an elderly woman after the vehicle backed into her.

Through July 2008, 270 backing MVAs have been reported in the Pacific Area, demonstrating that they continue to be a major safety concern.

The primary cause of this problem is that there is a blind zone in most vehicles concealing danger from the driver's eyes while the vehicle moves in reverse. The best defense is to avoid backing a vehicle whenever possible. About the only time a postal driver should have to back a vehicle is when maneuvering up to a Post Office dock to load or unload mail. Most other driving should be in a forward direction.

Here are some safe driving tips:

- **Avoid backing unless it is absolutely necessary.** If backing is unavoidable, do the following to be as safe as possible.
- **Get out and get the picture.** Walk around your vehicle and check where you're going. Examine the top and side clearances. Then get back into your vehicle and start backing before the situation changes.
- **Back from the driver's side.** Position is crucial to safe backing. A safe position is one that permits backing from the driver's side.
- **Back slowly.** Your vehicle steers awkwardly in reverse and can easily get out of control and collide with objects on either side.
- **Check both sides before backing.** Use your outside mirrors as often as necessary, but remember they can be deceptive and may not allow you to accurately judge distances to the rear.
- **When unsure of distance, stop the backing maneuver and get out and look.**
- **Use a reliable guide.** Never hesitate to ask someone to help you back. Expert drivers understand and respect the hazards of backing. They use all the help they can get to avoid accidents.

PLEASE COPY AND POST ON EMPLOYEE BULLETIN BOARDS.

PUBLISHED BY CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS, SAN DIEGO CA 92197-0100

USPS EAGLE SYMBOL AND LOGOTYPE ARE TRADEMARKS OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.