



BACKGROUND:

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) provides various benefits to civilian federal employees who sustain injuries or an occupational disease as a result of their employment. The U.S. Postal Service is the largest FECA participant compared to other federal agencies. In 2011, the Postal Service paid \$1.2 billion in workers' compensation claims. Additionally, there are about 16,497 employees with disabilities that are expected to be permanent or prolonged who are currently receiving workers' compensation benefits.

A rehabilitation assignment is provided when the effects of an employee's injury are considered permanent and/or the employee has reached maximum medical improvement. The Postal Service developed the Rehabilitation Program to fulfill its legal obligation to provide work for employees injured on duty. The program facilitates the proper placement and accommodation of employees injured on duty.

The objectives of our audit were to review Postal Service policy on rehabilitation assignments for employees injured on duty and determine whether these employees could perform certain contract work.

WHAT THE OIG FOUND:

The Postal Service has contract work that can potentially be made available as rehabilitation assignments to employees injured on duty. Specifically, we identified a contract that provides auto services, including transporting vehicles in need of repair and maintenance, to 28 vehicle maintenance facilities (VMFs) or repair garages. We found that employees who have been injured on the job and are able to return to work could perform some of this work at 10 of the 28 aforementioned VMFs. There is also the potential for other VMFs to provide similar rehabilitation assignments.

WHAT THE OIG RECOMMENDED:

We recommended that management establish and implement a plan (that includes staffing and training) to allocate a portion of the vehicle transport services performed at the 28 VMFs to employees injured on duty. We also recommended assessing the feasibility of providing similar rehabilitation assignments at the remaining 281 VMFs.