

September 27, 1999

GEORGE A. BOETTGER  
DISTRICT MANAGER

SUBJECT: Allegation that a Plant Manager in the Western Area Jeopardized the Safety of USPS Employees and the Public  
(Report Number LM-LA-99-003)

This is our advisory report on an allegation that a plant manager in the Western Area jeopardized the safety of United States Postal Service (USPS) employees and the public. The report also discusses our review of the district's compliance with USPS policies and procedures for investigating and resolving the allegation.

An anonymous source submitted a complaint to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) Hotline, requesting we determine what actions USPS management was taking to address the issue. (Project Number 99EF075LM000).

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**Results in Brief**

We determined that the Plant Manager jeopardized the safety of USPS employees and the public. The Plant Manager solicited USPS employees to purchase a pistol for another employee. He brought the loaded pistol to an official USPS function where he displayed it to attendees. While making a speech, the Plant Manager ejected the loaded clip, pointed the pistol toward a wall, and fired it, igniting a cap that had been chambered into the pistol. This resulted in a loud noise that startled several of the attendees.

District management followed the USPS published zero tolerance policy regarding violence and inappropriate behavior in the workplace. District management properly investigated the incident and the Plant Manager was disciplined.

We have no suggestions and plan no more work on this allegation. We discussed the contents of this report with management and they had no comments.

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**Objectives, Scope,  
and Methodology**

In a hotline complaint to the OIG, the complainant, who wished to remain anonymous, requested that we determine what actions the District had taken to address the unsafe behavior of a Plant Manager. Specifically, the complainant alleged that a Plant Manager brought a loaded pistol to an official USPS function and intentionally discharged it in the presence of USPS employees and the public.<sup>1</sup>

The OIG normally does not review individual labor-management disputes, particularly when other formal avenues of resolution exist, such as contractual grievance-arbitration procedures and the Equal Employment Opportunity process. However, we will undertake such reviews when the allegations pertain to violence in the workplace.

Our objectives were to determine whether: (1) the Plant Manager acted in an unsafe manner, and (2) management responded in accordance with established policies and procedures.

We interviewed the District's Senior Labor Relations Specialist and a Postal Inspector. We reviewed documents provided by the OIG Hotline office and the District and Western Area Labor Relations offices. The documents provided included disciplinary action taken against the Plant Manager and a settlement agreement between the Plant Manager and the USPS.

We also reviewed the USPS Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace, Threat Assessment Team Guide, Publication 108, and Poster 158, "Possession of Firearms and Other Dangerous Weapons on Postal Property Is Prohibited By Law."

This review was conducted from December 1998 through September 1999 in accordance with the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency, Quality Standards for Inspections.

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<sup>1</sup> The USPS function was held at a public restaurant, and was attended by employees and their spouses. In addition, a restaurant worker was present when the incident occurred.

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**Observations**

We determined that the Plant Manager jeopardized the safety of USPS employees and the public. He solicited USPS employees to purchase a pistol for another employee. He brought the loaded pistol to an official USPS function and displayed it to attendees at the function. He ejected a loaded clip from the pistol, pointed the pistol toward a wall, and fired it, igniting a cap.

We also determined that District management followed the published USPS zero tolerance policy regarding violence and inappropriate behavior in the workplace. District management properly investigated the incident and the Plant Manager was disciplined.<sup>2</sup>

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**Allegation that the  
Plant Manager  
Engaged in  
Unacceptable  
Conduct**

In an October 16, 1998, hotline complaint to the OIG, the complainant alleged that a Plant Manager “brandished” a loaded 9MM handgun at an official USPS function held at a public restaurant. The official function was a combination USPS meeting and going-away party for two departing employees. The complainant said employees and their spouses were in attendance. The complainant alleged that the loaded gun was to be given to an employee<sup>3</sup> as a going-away gift.

The complainant alleged that the evening started off with an “open bar”<sup>4</sup> whereby attendees socialized for at least an hour. He said that dinner was served and the official USPS meeting followed. After the meeting, the gifts were given out. The complainant alleged that the Plant Manager freely displayed a loaded handgun to attendees. He then ejected a loaded clip from the gun, pointed the gun at the wall, and fired it. The complainant said that the gun had a blank in the chamber and when the gun was fired, it “scared all 30” of the people in attendance.

According to the Inspector who was assigned to the case, the Inspection Service did not conduct an investigation because the incident occurred at a non-Postal facility, and the Plant Manager’s actions were not considered criminal in

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<sup>2</sup> We are not providing the details of the discipline because a settlement agreement between the Plant Manager and the USPS precludes such disclosure.

<sup>3</sup> The employee did not attend the function.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Senior Labor Relations Specialist, alcohol was served at the function.

nature. The inspector added, however, that the incident was a “gross judgement error” on the part of the Plant Manager.

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**USPS Response to  
Alleged Physical  
Assault**

District management followed the published USPS zero tolerance policy regarding violence and inappropriate behavior in the workplace. District management investigated the incident and the Plant Manager was disciplined.

The Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace states that the Postal Service will not tolerate violence or any threats of violence by anyone at any level of the Postal Service. In addition, the USPS Threat Assessment Team Guide, Publication 108, requires that when an incident occurs, notification be made to the Human Resources Manager, the Inspection Service, Senior Labor Relations Specialist, Employee and Workplace Intervention Analyst, Medical Director, District Manager, or Lead Plant Manager. The Guide further provides that the Human Resources Manager or designee will determine whether a meeting needs to be called or whether the situation may be addressed through other Threat Assessment Team members or ad hoc resources.

In this case, an anonymous source reported the incident to the Inspection Service.<sup>5</sup> The Inspection Service determined it was not a criminal offense and reported it to the Senior Plant Manager. District management conducted an investigation and disciplinary action was taken.

The District’s Senior Labor Relations Specialist told us that the Plant Manager was put on administrative leave beginning October 29, 1998,<sup>6</sup> pending a decision from the Western Area Office as to the appropriate course of action. He said the District had conducted an investigation and that it disclosed the Plant Manager did not violate any “rules.” He said, however, that his actions were viewed as a “stupid stunt” because there was a cap chambered in the gun and the Plant Manager “shot it off.”

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<sup>5</sup> An Inspector from the Inspection Service is a Situational Advisor to the Threat Assessment Team. The Inspector’s responsibilities include conducting a formal investigation and preparing an investigative memorandum and submitting it to Postal management.

<sup>6</sup> The Plant Manager remained on administrative leave from October 29, 1998, through January 22, 1999.

On December 29, 1998, the Senior Plant Manager issued a letter to the Plant Manager, advising him that it was the intent of the USPS to remove him from employment. The letter charged the Plant Manager with unacceptable conduct, which endangered the safety and welfare of USPS employees and a restaurant employee. The letter addressed many of the allegations made by the complainant. Specifically, it stated:

--"You . . . violated safety regulations by bringing a loaded weapon (live ammunition) into a postal function and firing a cap in that weapon."

--". . . you ejected the clip and held up the pistol to the show the attendees. You then pointed the pistol toward a wall and fired it, igniting the cap. This resulted in a loud noise that startled several of the attendees and the restaurant hostess."

The letter also stated that the Plant Manager inappropriately solicited USPS employees while on the clock and on USPS premises, to purchase the gun for another employee. This solicitation included subordinate supervisory employees.

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**Management's  
Comment**

We discussed the contents of this report with management. They had no comments.

We plan no further work on this allegation.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff during the review. If you have any questions, please contact me at (703) 248-2300.

Billy Sauls  
Assistant Inspector General  
for Employee

cc: Anthony J. Vegliante  
Yvonne D. Maguire  
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**Major Contributors to  
This Report**

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# Report Synopsis

## GENERAL INFORMATION

REPORT NUMBER: LMLA99003 REPORT DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

REPORT TITLE: Allegation that a Plant Manager in the Western Area Jeopardized the Safety of USPS  
Employees and the Public

EVALUATOR-IN-CHARGE: Chris Nicoloff DIRECTOR: Chris Nicoloff

## FINDINGS/OBSERVATION

NUMBER OF FINDING/OBSERVATIONS: 2

NONCURRENCES: Mgmt did not agree. NA  
(Indicate finding/observation headings and numbers)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

## RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATION/SUGGESTIONS: 0

NONCURRENCES: Mgmt did not agree. NA  
(Indicate recommendation/suggestion headings and numbers)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

NUMBER OF CORRECTIVE ACTIONS TAKEN DURING AUDIT: NA

TOTAL FUNDS PUT TO BETTER USE: NA

TOTAL QUESTIONED COST: NA



**UNSUPPORTED COST INCLUDED IN QUESTIONED COST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
NA  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Report Summary:**

**Allegation that a Plant Manager in the Western Area  
Jeopardized the Safety of USPS Employees and the Public**

**This allegation was received in correspondence provided to us by a hotline complainant who wishes to remain anonymous.**

**We determined that the Plant Manager jeopardized the safety of USPS employees and the public. The Plant Manager solicited USPS employees to purchase a pistol for another employee. He brought the loaded pistol to an official USPS function where he displayed it to attendees. While making a speech, the Plant Manager ejected the loaded clip, pointed the pistol toward a wall, and fired it, igniting a cap that had been chambered into the pistol. This resulted in a loud noise that startled several of the attendees.**

**District management followed the USPS published zero tolerance policy regarding violence and inappropriate behavior in the workplace. District management properly investigated the incident and the Plant Manager was disciplined.**

**This report contains no suggestions and requires no response from management. (Project Number 99EF075LM000).**