

August 29, 2000

PATRICK R. DONAHOE
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES

SUBJECT: Management Reassignment Actions
(Report Number LB-MA-00-001)

This management advisory presents the results of our review of management reassignment actions (Project Number 99EA008LR000). The Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated a review based on hotline complaints and congressional inquiries alleging that Postal Service managers were reassigned when they failed to maintain good employee relations instead of addressing the situation through discipline or other corrective action. This management advisory report presents the results of our review.

Results in Brief

We found that, in two of the eight cases reviewed, the Postal Service did not discipline managers who failed to maintain good employee relations. Instead, Postal Service officials reassigned the managers. In the remaining six cases we could not determine whether the reassignments were to prevent issuing discipline, because Postal Service officials either did not conduct climate studies or did not complete formal investigations into the situations.

While our review was limited, we believe the two cases illustrate the use of reassignments as a substitute for disciplinary actions or other corrective measures. Accordingly, we suggest the senior vice president, Human Resources, ensure reassignments meet the standards in Postal Service guidance, and utilize tools such as climate assessments and formal investigations to develop and support corrective measures. Management agreed with our suggestions and the actions planned addressed the issues. Management's comments are included, in their entirety, in the appendix.

| | |
|--|---|
| Background | <p>The <u>Employee and Labor Relations Manual</u>, Subchapter 650, identifies disciplinary action procedures for non-bargaining employees. This subchapter states that misconduct requires corrective actions ranging from counseling to removal, depending on the seriousness of the behavior.</p> |
| Supervisory Reassignment | <p>The practice of reassigning supervisors instead of taking disciplinary action was discouraged in two policy letters dated May 4, 1994, and November 3, 1999. The Postal Service acknowledged that arbitrary or punitive involuntary reassignments were inappropriate and should not be used as a substitute for discipline or other processes more appropriate to the circumstances.</p> |
| Objective, Scope, and Methodology | <p>Our objective was to determine whether the Postal Service disciplined managers who consistently failed to maintain good employee relations or reassigned the managers instead of issuing discipline or other corrective actions.</p> <p>We judgmentally selected eight cases where the Postal Service appeared to have reassigned managers to different facilities to prevent having to correct their behavior by using discipline.</p> <p>We obtained documents from the Alabama, Central and South Florida, Atlanta, Dallas, and Fort Worth Districts. We interviewed personnel from the following offices at Postal Service Headquarters: Workplace Environment Improvement, Employee Assistance, and Safety and Risk Management. We also reviewed Postal Service policies and procedures relating to disciplinary actions against supervisors and managers.</p> <p>This review was conducted from January 1999 through August 2000 in accordance with the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency, <u>Quality Standards for Inspections</u>. We discussed our conclusions and observations with appropriate management officials and included their comments, where appropriate.</p> |

Reassignment of Managers

We found that, in two of the eight cases reviewed, the Postal Service did not discipline managers who failed to maintain good employee relations. Instead, Postal Service officials reassigned the managers. In the remaining six cases we could not determine whether the reassignments were to prevent issuing discipline, because Postal Service officials either did not conduct climate studies or did not complete formal investigations into the instances described in these cases.

The following discusses the circumstances of the two cases where managers failed to maintain good employee relations and were not disciplined.

- District officials requested the reassignment of a postmaster who smoked in the office, did not allow employees to use the phones, and put his fist in employees' faces. The employee and workplace intervention analyst performed two climate assessments at the post office on March 10, 1998, and June 2, 1998. Instead of issuing discipline to the postmaster or providing training, the district manager approved the reassignment of the postmaster to another post office on June 11, 1998.
- Postal officials reassigned another supervisor who lacked people skills, continually created a tense and stressful work environment, and was accused of sexual harassment. Postal officials conducted a climate assessment in May 1998 after reassigning the supervisor from a processing and distribution facility to a post office.¹ The climate study revealed that the supervisor talked to employees in a "dehumanizing and humiliating" manner. In addition, the employees described the climate at the processing and distribution facility as a "concentration camp" under the supervisor's leadership. However, we found no evidence that management officials issued discipline or provided training to the supervisor, who according to documentation continued to create a tense and stressful working environment at the post office. District officials conducted another climate assessment in April 1999 and

¹ The supervisor officially requested a lateral transfer from supervisor of distribution operations to supervisor of customer services.

found that the supervisor “governed by intimidation.” District officials suggested that the supervisor attend conflict resolution training.

Although our sample was limited in size, we believe the two cases presented are persuasive and illustrate where reassignments were used as a substitute for disciplinary actions or other corrective measures.

| | |
|--|--|
| Suggestion | <p>We offer the following suggestions:</p> <p>The senior vice president, Human Resources should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure that reassignments meet the standards identified in Postal Service guidance and are not used as a substitute for disciplinary actions or other corrective measures. |
| Management's Comments | <p>The senior vice president, Human Resources agreed that all reassignments should meet the Postal Service guidelines as contained in the <u>Employee and Labor Relations Manual</u>. The vice president stated that every decision as to reassignment or discipline is based upon review of the individual situation. Management does not as a matter of policy reassign a manager in lieu of taking appropriate disciplinary action. The vice president agreed to take the necessary steps to remind senior management of the reassignment policy.</p> |
| Suggestion | <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Utilize tools such as climate assessments and formal investigations to develop and support corrective measures. |
| Management's Comments | <p>The senior vice president, Human Resources agreed that the Postal Service utilized the appropriate tools, such as climate surveys and formal investigations to look into management practices and behavior. Based upon the findings from these activities, appropriate corrective actions are taken when warranted.</p> |
| Evaluation of Management's Comments | <p>Management's actions taken and planned are responsive to our suggestions.</p> |

We appreciated the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff during the review. If you have any questions, please contact Joyce Hansen, director, Labor Management (Rosslyn) at (703) 248-2170 or me at (703) 248-2300.

Debra D. Pettitt
Acting Assistant Inspector General
for Oversight and Business Evaluation

cc: Yvonne D. Maguire
Anthony J. Vegliante
Robert T. Davis
George L. Lopez
Robin M. Stewart
Martha J. Kyle
John R. Gunnels

APPENDIX. MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS

YVONNE D. MAGUIRE
VICE PRESIDENT
EMPLOYEE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



August 4, 2000

BILLY SAULS

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Draft Management Advisory

This memorandum is a followup to the June 30 reply from Mr. Donahoe relative to the Transmittal Draft Management Advisory – Management Reassignment Actions report.

Based upon the Tuesday, August 1 telephone conversation between Joyce Hanson, director Labor Management of your office, and Stephen A. Leavey, manager, Corporate Personnel, we are providing our responses to your two suggestions.

Suggestion We offer the following suggestions:

The senior vice president, Human Resources should:

1. Ensure that reassignments meet the standards identified in Postal Service guidance and are not used as a substitute for disciplinary actions or other corrective measures.
- In response to suggestion 1, we agree that all reassignments meet the postal guidelines as contained in the Employee and Labor Relations Manual. We do not as a matter of policy reassign a manager in lieu of taking appropriate disciplinary action. Every decision as to reassignment or discipline is based upon review of the individual situation. We will take the necessary steps to remind senior management of our reassignment policy.

Suggestion We offer the following suggestions:

2. Utilize tools such as climate assessments and formal investigations to develop and support corrective measures.
- In response to suggestion 2, the Postal Service does utilize the appropriate tools, such as climate surveys and formal investigations to look into management practices and behavior. Based upon the findings from these activities, appropriate corrective actions are taken when warranted.

If you need additional information, please contact Mr. Leavey at 202-268-3643.



Yvonne D. Maguire

cc: Mr. Donahoe

475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW
WASHINGTON DC 20260-4200
202-268-3783
FAX: 202-268-3803

**Major Contributors to
This Report**