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Workplace Well-Being in Postal Sector**Introduction**

Workplace well-being in the postal sector refers to the integrated protection and promotion of employees' physical safety, psychosocial health, and enabling organisational practices across mail and parcel processing, last-mile delivery, retail counters, and administration. Operators manage a large, public-facing workforce exposed to outdoor conditions and traffic on delivery routes, manual handling and machinery in plants, and high customer interaction at counters, often under shift patterns and peak-season surges. Global frameworks provide a common language and management architecture: the World Health Organization (WHO)'s guidance on mental health at work emphasises organisational measures such as manager training, worker participation, and evidence-based psychosocial interventions (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024). ISO 45001 provides the occupational health and safety (OH&S) system backbone (International Organization for Standardization [ISO], 2018), while ISO 45003 extends this to psychological health through structured identification, control, and monitoring of psychosocial hazards (ISO, 2021). This report applies those standards to sector realities to assess risks and outline practical, auditable responses.

Section 1 — Sector Risk Profile**Operational Realities**

Postal work combines physically demanding tasks and public service pressures. Letter carriers complete long outdoor routes in all weather, carrying heavy mail and parcels while facing hazards such as traffic and dog attacks. In mail processing plants, staff perform repetitive sorting and lifting under time pressure, often on 24-hour shifts. Customer-facing clerks manage queues and occasional harassment, adding emotional strain. The toll is evident: in financial year 2023, nearly 45,000 U.S. postal employees suffered recordable injuries, one of the highest federal workplace injury rates (APWU, 2024). Maintaining well-being in daily operations is therefore vital to safety and service continuity.

Structural Shifts

E-commerce and digitalisation are reshaping postal work. As letter volumes fall, parcel

deliveries have surged – global parcel volume jumped 150% from 64 billion in 2016 to 161 billion in 2022 (Pitney Bowes, 2023). Routes and facility workflows have been overhauled to handle larger items and higher package counts, often requiring motorised delivery and new logistics planning. Operators have accelerated automation in sorting centres, reducing manual tasks, and restructured delivery rounds to improve efficiency. These changes require staff to adapt to heavier loads, new technologies, and altered schedules. Prioritizing well-being helps manage the associated stress and physical demands (Australia Post, 2023).

Stakeholder Landscape

Workplace well-being in the postal sector is a shared responsibility. Postal operators embed safety and wellness in corporate strategy, while unions insist on enforceable standards – for example, U.S. union contracts mandate “safe working conditions” as a basic right (APWU, 2024). Regulators set and enforce occupational health rules, such as OSHA citations compelling heat safety measures at USPS. ESG reporting and investors increasingly scrutinise employee welfare as part of sustainable business practice. Royal Mail Group’s Health and Safety Policy, for instance, aspires to an “incident-free...working environment” (Royal Mail Group, 2021). Such stakeholder engagement drives stronger policies, training, and accountability.

Risk Taxonomy

Physical risks include injuries from manual handling, slips and falls, road accidents, and environmental exposures such as extreme weather or animal attacks. Psychosocial risks involve job stress, workload pressure, bullying or violence from customers, and isolation on long routes. Organizational risks arise from work design: long or irregular shifts, monotonous tasks, understaffing, and uncertainty from operational changes can erode morale and work-life balance. Each risk domain requires targeted interventions – including safety equipment, supportive management, and job design - to protect health and well-being.

Section 2: Physical Health & Safety

Common Physical Hazards

Postal workers face routine hazards such as slips, trips and falls, dog attacks, and road traffic accidents. Falls may occur on uneven pavements or within sorting facilities, while dog bites remain a well-recognised risk for delivery staff. For example, Australia Post reported that in 2022, one in three dog bites led to a serious injury claim-up from one in five the previous year (Australia Post, 2022). Such trends underline the need for vigilance and preventative measures during delivery and handling tasks.

Ergonomic & Manual Handling Risks

Repetitive lifting of mail bags and heavy parcels, prolonged sorting, and awkward postures contribute to musculoskeletal strain among postal employees. Manual handling remains a leading cause of workplace injuries in the sector. Many operators are introducing ergonomic training and automation to reduce these risks. Australia Post recorded an 18% fall in serious manual-handling injury claims within a year of investing in automation and on-site physiologists (Australia Post, 2022). Improved techniques and reduces repetitive lifting are key to lowering injury rates.

Environmental & Seasonal Exposures

In the Asia-Pacific region, environmental hazards include extreme heat, poor air quality, and severe weather events. Outdoor staff are at risk of heat stress, dehydration, and inhalation of polluted air, while typhoons, floods, and cyclones can disrupt operations. In 2015, Typhoon Eta in Japan caused record rainfall and flooding, temporarily closing 33 post offices (Universal Postal Union, 2016). These examples highlight the value of seasonal contingency plans, protective gear, and real-time monitoring of environmental conditions.

Control Measures & Monitoring

Control measures include personal protective equipment (e.g., sturdy footwear, high-visibility clothing, sun protection), regular safety training, and workplace inspections. Technology is increasingly used to mitigate risks, such as automation for heavy lifting and telematics for safe driving. One postal operator's fleet safety programme, which installed in-cab cameras and introduced driver coaching, reduced potential collision risk by 64% (Australia Post, 2022). Ongoing training in dog-safe delivery and heat illness prevention, alongside regular safety audits, supports a strong organisational safety culture.

Section 3: Psychosocial Risks & Mental Health

Key Psychosocial Hazards

Postal work involves significant psychosocial hazards. The WHO (2024) identifies excessive workloads or work pace, understaffing, unsocial or inflexible hours, and exposure to violence, harassment, or bullying as key mental health risks. Such factors are prevalent across the region; for example, 66% of Asia-Pacific employees report that job stress negatively affects their performance (ADP Research Institute, 2023). Both delivery and administrative staff may face tight deadlines, limited flexibility, and demanding customer expectations.

Mental Health Outcomes

Chronic exposure to these hazards can lead to stress-related disorders. McKinsey &

Company (2022) found that one in four employees worldwide report symptoms of burnout, rising to nearly one in three in Asia. Female employees and frontline workers in the region experience higher rates of burnout, depression, and distress than the global average. The WHO estimates that depression and anxiety cost the global economy 12 billion lost workdays annually—equivalent to around US\$1 trillion in lost productivity (WHO, 2024). This figures highlight the substantial toll of psychosocial risks on individual well-being and organisational performance.

Organisational Drivers

Certain organisational conditions intensify psychosocial risks. Irregular shifts or excessive overtime disrupt work-life balance and cause fatigue (Idris, Shee, & Syed-Yahya, 2023). Unclear roles increase stress, while limited peer support or authoritarian supervision heightens anxiety. Job insecurity stemming from automation and restructuring is another driver (WHO, 2024). In one extreme case in Indonesia, a courier collapsed and died after prolonged work in hot conditions, illustrating the potential physical and psychological dangers of excessive hours (Syok.my, 2023).

Interventions and Frameworks

Effective mitigation requires targeted measures. The WHO recommends manager training to identify distress, mental health literacy programmes to reduce stigma, and individual-level interventions such as stress management training (WHO, 2024). Flexible working arrangements can help maintain balance and reduce burnout. ISO 45003:2021 provides a framework for integrating psychosocial risk management into occupational health systems (ISO, 2021). Australia Post's WorkEsteem PRC-16 Programme targeted psychosocial hazards in People and Culture teams during 2020–21, introducing peer forums, improved communication and rest protocols, and training in handling difficult interactions. Post-intervention surveys recorded measurable improvements in the psychological safety climate (National Mental Health Commission, n.d.).

Section 4 — Systems & Standards

International Standards: ISO 45001 and ISO 45003

International standards provide a structured approach to well-being management in postal operations. ISO 45001:2018 sets out requirements for occupational health and safety (OH&S) management systems, emphasising leadership, risk assessment, and worker participation (ISO, 2018). Notably, the hazard identification clause requires evaluation of work design and organisational factors – including workload, working hours, harassment, and bullying – thereby addressing psychosocial risks. ISO 45003:2021 extends this by offering guidelines for managing psychological health at work (ISO, 2021). These standards

are highly relevant to postal services; for example, Australia Post's safety management system aligns with ISO 45001:2018, covering all workers and activities to integrate well-being into operations (Australia Post, 2023).

WHO and EU-OSHA Frameworks

The WHO's *Healthy Workplace* model promotes a holistic approach, combining safe physical conditions with attention to psychosocial factors and worker engagement (WHO, 2010). Likewise, EU-OSHA frameworks emphasise that psychosocial risks arise from poor work design and organisation, as well as negative social environments (Eurofound & European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2014). Royal Mail (UK) applied this guidance by introducing a group-wide stress risk assessment based on the Health and Safety Executive's Management Standards, developed jointly with unions, to identify and mitigate work-related stress (Communication Workers Union, 2021).

Governance Structures and Accountability

Effective well-being management requires clear governance and accountability. Internal safety committees at facility, district, and national levels monitor hazards, implement controls, and review performance. For instance, the United States Postal Service has joint safety committees that track inspections, accident trends, and corrective actions (United States Postal Service [USPS], n.d.-a). USPS policy mandates that managers maintain a safe, healthy work environment and holds them accountable for compliance (United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, 2011). These governance structures embed well-being targets in business plans and require continuous reporting on safety outcomes.

Integration with ESG and Compliance

Postal worker well-being is increasingly embedded within Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) objectives and compliance frameworks. Operators align OH&S programmes with sustainability reporting to meet stakeholder expectations and legal requirements, including psychosocial risk assessment regulations. Metrics are tracked and disclosed to demonstrate progress; for example, Royal Mail reports its Lost Time Accident Frequency Rate in annual sustainability disclosures, maintaining 0.49 per 100,000 hours worked (Royal Mail, 2017). Such transparency reinforces organisational commitment to employee well-being while fulfilling legal and ESG obligations.

Section 5 — Measurement, Targets & Business Case

Key indicators

Postal operators monitor both physical health and psychosocial well-being through defined key performance indicators (KPIs). Physical metrics include workplace injury rates such as

the Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR). Psychosocial metrics are often assessed via employee surveys on stress, engagement, or satisfaction – for example, the UK Health and Safety Executive’s *Management Standards Indicator Tool* is widely applied (Guidi et al., 2012)). In the Asia-Pacific region, Singapore Post recorded a 23.7% year-on-year improvement in its Total Recordable Injury Frequency Rate (Singapore Post, 2022), demonstrating measurable safety gains.

Targets and data governance

Many postal organisations set formal well-being targets and embed them in corporate governance structures. Singapore Post has made employee well-being a sustainability priority, aiming for zero major injuries alongside continuous injury rate reductions (Singapore Post, 2022). A Workplace Safety and Health Committee reviews performance data and incident reports, ensuring oversight. These results are disclosed in annual ESG reports, reinforcing transparency and accountability.

Economic framing

Well-being initiatives can deliver significant business value through productivity gains and risk mitigation. Royal Mail (UK) reduced sickness absence from 7% to 4% over four years, saving approximately £230 million in lost-time costs (Active Black Country, n.d.). This outcome shows a strong return on investment, with healthier, engaged employees contributing to greater efficiency and reduce operational costs.

Section 6 — Conclusion & Implementation Roadmap

Postal well-being is a strategic imperative: combining physical safety, psychosocial health, and robust management systems reduces harm and enhances performance. Actions should be grounded in the WHO’s *Healthy Workplaces* guidance and ISO 45001/45003 standards to embed psychosocial risk management within occupational health and safety systems (WHO, 2024; ISO, 2018, 2021). Lessons can be drawn from operator practice – for example, Australia Post’s psychosocial programme delivered measurable improvements in psychological safety climate (National Mental Health Commission, n.d.).

Implementation Roadmap — *First 90 days*: conduct baseline assessments (injury and stress data), implement quick-win controls, and provide training for managers and workers. *Within 12 months*: develop an ISO-aligned management system, rollout psychosocial risk initiatives, and mature KPI and survey processes. *Ongoing Governance*: established tiered committees and hold quarterly performance reviews (USPS, n.d.-a).

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