

# GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION

INTER-ORGANIZATION LETTERS ONLY

DATE November 19, 1943

SUBJECT Rehabilitation of Employees Returning  
From Military Service

TO

ADDRESS

ALL GENERAL MANAGERS  
AND PERSONNEL DIRECTORS

More than 82,000 General Motors employees are in military service and more are going every day. Already, some of these men are returning to work in the plants after recovering from injuries received while in active service. The problem of placing disabled veterans will become increasingly serious and important throughout the period of the war and afterwards. We feel that it is not too early to make preparations to meet this situation.

As a general policy, we should make every effort to place these handicapped veterans on jobs which are operating which they can perform without harm to themselves or others. To be successful, the placement of handicapped veterans must be on a sound basis both from the standpoint of productivity and economic return to the worker. This means fitting the individual to a necessary job that is operating in the plant. Any attempt to "make work" for a handicapped man will not prove satisfactory either to the individual or Management. This does not preclude technological rearrangement of a job or a reasonable break-in period. A successfully placed handicapped worker ceases to be handicapped from the standpoint of earnings or productivity.

There will be some cases of severe physical handicaps which will require extensive rehabilitation before employability can be restored. The Congress has provided for vocational rehabilitation of disabled veterans under the direction of the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs. However, we should do everything possible to place our own employees on work they can perform and rely on the public rehabilitation facilities only when necessary.

In the event an employee returning from military service is unable to work because of a physical condition, it is important that he be placed in the hands of the nearest Veterans' Administration field office, which is the Governmental agency authorized to handle treatment, pensions and vocational rehabilitation of disabled veterans. (A list of the Veterans' Field Office is attached). If the nearest field office is some distance away the local Red Cross can be of assistance in getting the employee's case to the attention of the Veterans' Administration Office. We should make sure that such employees are actually assisted in every way in making arrangements for contacting the proper agency instead of merely being told the course to pursue.



It is realized that many rehabilitation problems which will arise can be worked out only through experience gained as we go along. However, the attached material should be helpful in formulating your rehabilitation procedure; it includes:

1. A copy of an outline of a suggested procedure for re-hiring and placement of employes returning from military service with physical handicaps.
2. A copy of an Act of Congress providing for vocational rehabilitation of disabled veterans to restore employability. Veterans' Administration Bulletin regarding rehabilitation pursuant to said Act.
3. List of Field Stations of the Veterans' Administration and names of Managers.

The development of a sound rehabilitation program requires a great deal of careful thought and is of such importance as to merit considerable attention of Management. Until such time as the placement procedure is thoroughly organized and functioning in a smooth manner, it is our feeling that each case should have the personal and sympathetic attention of at least the Personnel Director and the plant doctor.

We should be liberal in our policy in rehabilitating our employes returning from Service and we should make every reasonable effort to assist them in re-adjusting themselves to normal plant activity. Experience has demonstrated that the handling of the more difficult cases require unlimited patience and a high degree of ingenuity, factors which should be weighed in selecting the personnel to follow through on the program.

We would appreciate receiving your comments and suggestions and the benefits of your experience with the placement of handicapped service men in order that each Division may properly give each returned soldier every possible consideration.



H. W. Anderson  
Vice President



## PROCEDURE FOR PLACEMENT OF HANDICAPPED EMPLOYEES

### RETURNING FROM MILITARY SERVICE

It can be expected that the majority of men returning from military service will be physically able to perform their regular occupations or any other work available. However, there will be many who will be handicapped in varying degrees as a result of injuries sustained in military service. These men will require special attention with respect to training, placement and follow-up.

#### Coordination of Rehabilitation Activities

It is important that a representative of the Personnel Department coordinate the activities of the medical, employment, training and supervision with respect to reemployment of veterans. The duties of the personnel representative handling veterans' rehabilitation should include:

1. Coordinate the activities of the Medical Department, Employment Department, training facilities, supervision and others concerned with rehabilitation of disabled veterans.
2. Survey jobs in the plant from the standpoint of physical requirements to determine suitability for placement of veterans with various types of physical handicaps.
3. Assist the Employment Department in placing handicapped veterans on jobs they can do in keeping with the recommendations of the plant doctor.
4. Follow up the progress of handicapped veterans to see that they become acclimated to their work, are able to carry the job, and arrange for transfers where necessary.
5. Maintain contact with training facilities available for disabled veterans.
6. Maintain contact with Regional Office of Veterans' Administration and the local Red Cross unit concerned with the handling of disabled veterans.



### Physical Examination

The first step in placement of returning veterans is a thorough physical examination by the plant physician. Based on the findings of the physical examination, the doctor may classify the men into five broad classifications as follows:

Group #1. Those who have no physical impairments and are able to resume their usual occupations or any other work in the plant.

This group presents no particular problem and can be rehired in the regular routine manner.

Group #2. Those who are still affected by some physical or mental condition which makes them unsuited for certain types of work, but who are able to perform other types of work efficiently.

This group may be classified according to their individual physical limitations. The purpose of the classification is to assist in proper placement. Each Medical Director may wish to develop the detailed method of classifying various disabilities. The following is one method of classification in use:

#### Class I NO HAZARDOUS MACHINERY

This group will consist primarily of individuals having serious visual defects, diabetes, heart disease, or hand and arm disabilities, which increase the hazard when working with power machinery such as rotary saws, band saws, punch presses, power trucks, cranes, etc.

#### Class II NO HEAVY LIFTING

Individuals with various disabilities such as old back injuries, deformities, hernias, etc., will be placed in this category.

#### Class III GROUND-LEVEL WORK ONLY

Individuals susceptible to vertigo from any cause, or having deformities or limitations of the extremities should not be allowed on ladders, scaffolds, cranes, etc.



Class IV AVOID DUSTS, FUMES, AND SKIN IRRITANTS

Selected individuals with chronic bronchial conditions should be restricted from occupations such as dry grinding, sandblasting, and spray painting. Individuals who are subsequently found to be sensitive to zinc chromate paint, cleaning solvents, etc., will be placed in this class.

Class V NO EXTENSIVE WALKING OR STANDING

Back lesions, varicose veins, lower extremity disability, artificial limbs, heart disease, etc., will fall in this category.

Class VI RESTRICT TO NOISE-FREE AREAS

Individuals with chronic ear conditions and partial deafness may have these conditions aggravated by exposure to sound levels of high intensity such as that associated with airplane motors, speed hammers, riveting, band saws, etc.

Group #3. Those who have a severe handicap which requires individual special attention for safe placement.

This group presents the greatest problem. The representative of the Personnel Department handling rehabilitation should select the job for which the individual can be fitted, based upon the requirements of the job and the physical condition of the individual as indicated by the doctor's examination.

Many of these cases will require close follow-up to insure that the handicapped employee becomes acclimated to the work and becomes able to carry the full job within a reasonable "break in" period. In some cases, a shift to another job will be indicated.

Group #4 Those who are temporarily unable to work because of a physical condition.

These cases will include contagious disease, unhealed tuberculosis and other conditions from which the individual may fully recover with proper care without permanent disability.

The Veterans' Administration has the authority and responsibility for providing medical care, handling applica-



tions for pensions and providing vocational rehabilitation of disabled veterans. (See attached copy of law and procedure) Employees in Group #4 and Group #5 should be referred to the nearest field office of the Veterans' Administration. (See attached list) Where the nearest field office is some distance from the plant, the individual should be referred to the local Red Cross unit for assistance in reaching the field office of the Veterans' Administration.

Group #5. Those who require extensive vocational rehabilitation before they can perform any kind of work in the plant.

In spite of all efforts to place returning disabled veterans, it can be expected that there will be some who cannot be fitted to any necessary job that is operating in the plant without extensive vocational rehabilitation. In such cases, the disabled veteran should be referred to the proper representative of the Veterans' Administration to arrange for rehabilitation. (See #4 above)

#### Confidential Medical Records

The findings from a physical examination are usually confidential between the doctor and the person examined and are not disclosed to others. However, in the placement of handicapped persons, it is necessary to obtain the consent of the individual to discuss his situation with the representative of the Personnel Department who handles placement of employees and with supervision so that necessary attention to physical impairments can be made in the job assignments.

#### Mental Health Problems

It should be recognized that an individual with a severe handicap is not likely to have the same confident mental attitude of the normal healthy person. He may doubt his ability to overcome his handicap. He may worry unduly about his future security. This factor should be understood by supervision and should be borne in mind by those who train and direct the work of the handicapped.



### Medical Supervision

After the handicapped individuals have been placed, it is important that they not be moved to other essentially different jobs whose characteristics would be harmful to the individual's condition. When they are transferred to an essentially different type of occupation, they should receive a supplemental placement examination by the plant doctor.

### Wages

A handicapped worker should be paid the rate for the job to which he is assigned, since it is a requirement that he be able to carry a full job.