

Ward Place Carrier Annex in Washington, DC: Delivery Operations

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 24-065-3-R24 | April 11, 2024



Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

April 11, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR: LORA M. MCLUCAS
MANAGER, MARYLAND DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph E. Wolski", is centered below the recipient information.

FROM: Joseph E. Wolski
Director, Field Operations, Atlantic and WestPac

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Ward Place Carrier Annex, Washington, DC: Delivery
Operations (Report Number 24-065-3-R24)

This report presents the results of our audit of mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Ward Place Carrier Annex in Washington, DC.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ricardo Martinez, Audit Manager, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Executive Vice President
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, Atlantic Area Retail & Delivery Operations
Director, Retail & Post Office Operations Maintenance
Corporate Audit and Response Management

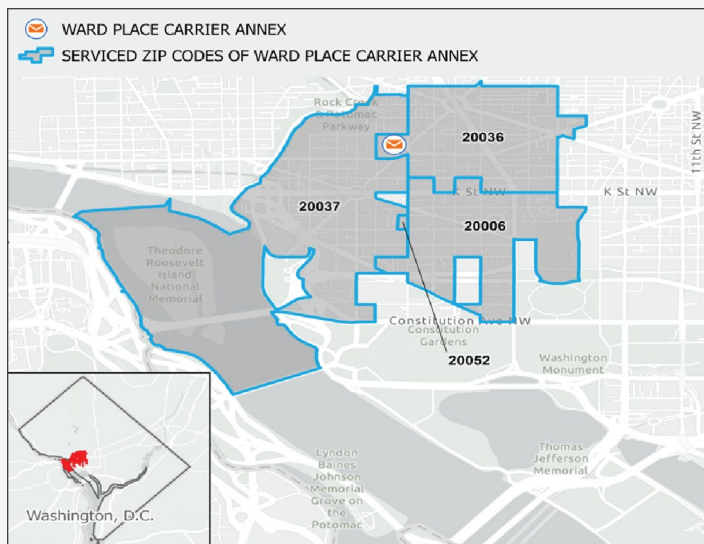
Results

Background

The U.S. Postal Service’s mission is to provide timely, reliable, secure, and affordable mail and package delivery to more than 160 million residential and business addresses across the country. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviews delivery operations at facilities across the country and provides management with timely feedback in furtherance of this mission.

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Ward Place Carrier Annex in Washington, DC (Project Number 24-065-3). The Ward Place Carrier Annex is in the Maryland District of the Atlantic Area and services ZIP Codes 20006, 20036, 20037, and 20052 (see Figure 1). These ZIP Codes serve 26,780 people, which are considered living in urban communities.¹

Figure 1. ZIP Codes Served by the Ward Place Carrier Annex



Source: OIG analysis of ZIP Code data.

This delivery unit has 30 city routes. The Ward Place Carrier Annex is one of three delivery units² the OIG reviewed during the week of February 5, 2024, that are serviced by the Curseen-Morris Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC).

We assessed all units serviced by the Curseen-Morris P&DC based on the number of Customer 360³ (C360) delivery-related inquiries,⁴ Informed Delivery⁵ contacts, stop-the-clock⁶ (STC) scans performed away from the delivery point, and undelivered route information between October 1 and December 31, 2023.

We judgmentally selected the Ward Place Carrier Annex primarily based on the number of C360 inquiries related to delivery and STC scans performed away from the delivery point. The unit was also chosen based on last mile failures⁷ and undelivered routes. See Table 1 for a comparison of some of these metrics between the unit and the rest of the district.

Table 1. Delivery Metric Comparison Between October 1 and December 31, 2023

Delivery Metric	Unit Average per Route	District Average per Route
C360 Delivery Inquiries	8.9	6.1
Scans Performed at the Unit	9.4	7.9
Scans Performed Away from Delivery Point	16.8	6.9

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of Postal Service’s C360,

1 We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.
 2 The other two units were the Brookland Station, Washington, DC (Project Number 24-065-1); and the Lammond Riggs Station, Washington, DC (Project Number 24-065-2).
 3 A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.
 4 A compilation of package inquiry, package pickup, daily mail service, and hold mail inquiries.
 5 Informed Delivery is a free and optional notification service that gives residential customers the ability to digitally preview their letter-sized mail and submit inquiries for mailpieces that were expected for delivery but have not arrived.
 6 A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mailpiece. Examples of STC scans include “Delivered,” “Available for Pickup,” and “No Access.”
 7 Last mile failures occur after the mailpiece has been processed at the P&DC on a final processing operation and is not delivered to the customer on the day it was intended. First and last mile failures can occur due to processing, transportation, or delivery operations.

Informed Delivery, and Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data extracted January 4, 2024. PTR is the system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Ward Place Carrier Annex in Washington, DC.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys,⁸ carrier complement and timekeeping, and property conditions. Specifically, we reviewed delivery metrics, including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, carrier complement and timekeeping, and distribution up-time.⁹ During our site visit we observed mail conditions; package scanning procedures; arrow key security procedures; timekeeping documentation; and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 2 with management on March 21, 2024, and included their comments, where appropriate.

We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Ward Place Carrier Annex. We will issue a separate report¹⁰ that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all three delivery units. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about our scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting delivery operations and property conditions at the Ward Place Carrier Annex. Specifically, we found issues with four of the five areas we reviewed (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Deficiencies Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail	X	
Package Scanning	X	
Arrow Keys		X
Carrier Complement and Timekeeping	X	
Property Conditions	X	

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of February 5, 2024.

We did not identify any issues with arrow keys and carrier complement. However, we did identify issues with timekeeping management (see [Finding #3](#)).

⁸ A distinctively shaped key carriers use to open mail-receiving receptacles such as street collection boxes and panels of apartment house mailboxes equipped with an arrow lock. Arrow keys are accountable property and are subject to strict controls.

⁹ Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

¹⁰ Project Number 24-065.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of February 6, 2024, we identified about 1,182 delayed mailpieces at 23 carrier cases. Specifically, we identified 1,004 letters, 168 flats, and 10 packages. In addition, management did not report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)¹¹ system. See Figure 2 for examples of delayed mail found at carrier cases. Further, the carriers were not using Postal Service (PS) Form 1571, Undelivered Mail Report,¹² to document the undelivered mailpieces.

Figure 2. Examples of Delayed Mail in the Carrier Cases



Source: OIG photos taken on February 6, 2024.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide adequate oversight to verify that all mail was cleared from the unit and any delayed mail was accurately reported in the DCV system. Management stated that they did not do a walkthrough to check for delayed mail or report delayed mail in DCV because the volume of undelivered mailpieces was small and other duties took priority, such as staffing the unit.

Unit management also acknowledged that it did not ensure carriers were completing PS Forms 1571 documenting the reason why mail or packages could not be delivered.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have conducted an adequate walkthrough of the workroom to verify that all mail was delivered and the reason for undelivered mail brought back from the street properly documented on PS Form 1571. Postal Service policy¹³ states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. In addition, managers are required¹⁴ to report all mail in the delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in DCV. Further, management must update DCV if volumes have changed prior to the end of the business day.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When mail is delayed, there is an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand. In addition, inaccurate reporting of delayed mail in DCV provides management at the local, district, area, and headquarters levels with an inaccurate status of mail delays and can result in improper actions taken to address issues.

¹¹ A tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of daily mail conditions at the point in time when carriers have departed for the street.

¹² A Postal Service form used to document any mail or packages undelivered.

¹³ *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.

¹⁴ *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide*, August 2023.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees scanned packages improperly at the delivery unit, scanned packages away from the intended delivery point, and handled packages incorrectly at the unit.

We reviewed package scanning data for scans that occurred at the unit and removed any potentially accurate scans performed.¹⁵ In total, employees improperly scanned 283 packages at the delivery unit between October and December 2023 (see Table 3). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 98.6 percent of them were scanned “Delivered.”

Table 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	Count	Percentage
Delivered	279	98.6%
Delivery Attempted - No Access to Delivery Location	3	1.1%
No Authorized Recipient	1	0.4%
Total	283	100%*

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service’s Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data.
*Total percentage does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

We also reviewed 82 scans occurring away from the delivery unit and over 1,000 feet¹⁶ from the intended delivery point between October and December 2023 (see Table 4). We removed scans that could have been performed within policy, such as animal interference and unsafe conditions. Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that all but one of them were scanned “Delivered.”

15 This data does not include scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as “Delivered - PO Box” and “Customer (Vacation) Hold.” Additionally, PO Box scans at the unit were only counted when the delivery point was an address away from the unit. This category does not include mail addressed for a PO Box.
16 Packages are expected to be scanned within a designated buffer distance from the delivery point. The OIG evaluates any package that was scanned more than 1,000 feet from the delivery point.
17 We selected all 10 packages from the carrier cases.

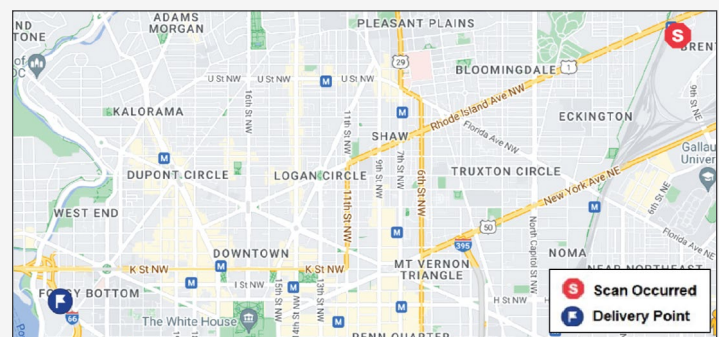
Table 4. STC Scans Over 1000 Feet Away from the Delivery Point

STC Scan Type	Count	Percentage
Delivered	81	98.8%
Delivery Attempted - No Access to Delivery Location	1	1.2%
Total	82	100%

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service’s PTR System data.

For example, the map below (see Figure 3) shows an instance where a carrier scanned a package as delivered about 3.6 miles away from the delivery point.

Figure 3. Scan Away From the Delivery Point in Washington, DC



Source: Postal Service Single Package Look Up.

We also found issues with scanning and handling of packages in the unit. On the morning of February 6, 2024, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 10 packages¹⁷ to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 10 reviewed packages, six (60.0 percent) had improper scans or handling, including:

- Four packages were scanned delivered, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer’s delivery address.

- One package was missing STC scans to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.
- One package was scanned “Insufficient Address” on February 1, 2024, and should have been returned to the sender.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. In addition, management stated that new carriers hired in the last six months were not properly trained, and unit management did not review scanning history reports regularly.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance. The Postal Service’s goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,¹⁸ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹⁹ Further, management should have trained carriers on proper scanning procedures.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Customers rely on accurate scan data to track their packages in real time. When employees do not scan mailpieces correctly, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning operations, management can improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance both the customer experience and the Postal Service brand.

¹⁸ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹⁹ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding # 3: Timekeeping Management

What We Found

We determined that the Ward Place Carrier Annex had 79 disallowed time occurrences and 314 instances of unauthorized overtime for carriers between October 1 and December 29, 2023. Management did not resolve any of these entries in the Time and Attendance Collection System (TACS).²⁰ Specifically, they did not document the reason for the disallowed and unauthorized time occurrences or that they had discussed the issues with the employee.

Further, management did not retain printed copies of PS Form 1017-A, *Time Disallowance Record*,²¹ or PS Form 1017-B, *Unauthorized Overtime Record*,²² for most of these time records. Specifically, management did not have printed copies for all 79 disallowed time and 275 of the 314 unauthorized overtime occurrences. Of the 39 printed 1017-B forms, only eight contained handwritten comments, and the remaining 31 remained unresolved. We also noted that the binder was unsecured in the postmaster's office.

Why Did It Occur

Regarding disallowed time and unauthorized overtime, unit management stated they were unaware of the policies to print Forms 1017-A and 1017-B and to annotate that they had discussed the matter with the employee. They were also unaware of the requirement to place the forms in a notebook binder and keep them in a secure location. Further, they stated they did not know it was a requirement to resolve the entries in the system.

What Should Have Happened

Postal Service policy²³ states that pay adjustment certifications are to be kept on file and attached to supporting documentation for the current calendar year plus the three previous years. Policy²⁴ further states unit personnel must complete PS Form 1017-A

and PS Form 1017-B entries and place them in a notebook binder — secured from unauthorized access — documenting the reason for the disallowed time or unauthorized overtime. Postal guidance²⁵ provides instructions on how to complete the entries in TACS.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When proper documentation of pay adjustments, time disallowance, and unauthorized overtime is not completed, management could incur additional managerial workhours. In addition, the Postal Service risks violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act²⁶ when unit management does not maintain documentation that shows the justifiable reason and employee notification for disallowed time.

²⁰ The system used by the Postal Service to automate the collection of employee time and attendance information.

²¹ Form used only when a supervisor observes, or has reason to know, that an employee did not work, while "on the clock." The supervisor must document the basis for any such disallowance. These forms serve as a cumulative record of disallowed time.

²² Managers and supervisors are required to complete a PS Form 1017-B the first time a non-exempt employee incurs unauthorized overtime. These forms serve as a cumulative record of unauthorized overtime.

²³ *AdjustPay User Guide*, Course No. 31202-25, updated February 9, 2017.

²⁴ Handbook F-21, *Time and Attendance*, Section 146 – Approving Entries, February 2016.

²⁵ TACS Training Page, Training Video 1017-A 1017 B Enhancement Demo.

²⁶ 29 USC § 201-219.

Finding # 4: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Ward Place Carrier Annex.

Property Safety:

- All six fire extinguishers were missing monthly and annual inspections; last monthly inspection was performed on October 30, 2023, and last annual inspection was performed in November 2022.
- One fire extinguisher was blocked and inaccessible in the workroom area on the second floor, near the supervisor's desk, (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Blocked Fire Extinguisher in Workroom



Source: OIG photo taken on February 6, 2024.

Property Maintenance:

- One sink was inoperable in both men's (with bucket underneath to capture water) and women's restrooms – first floor. Also, one sink was inoperable in women's restroom on second floor (see Figure 5). There were two workorders submitted almost a year ago, on February 27, 2023, and unit management did not follow up on them.

Figure 5. Inoperable Sinks in Men's and Women's Restrooms



Source: OIG photos taken on February 6, 2024.



Source: OIG photo taken on February 6, 2024.

- Multiple ceiling tiles were stained in the Caller Services office (see Figure 6) and the women’s restroom on the second floor. Management submitted a work order for new ceiling tiles on September 15, 2023, but had not followed up.
- Multiple ceiling tiles were missing in the Caller Services office (see Figure 7), men’s locker room, and postmaster’s office.

Figure 6. Stained Ceiling Tiles in Caller Services Office



Source: OIG photo taken February 6, 2024

Figure 7. Missing Ceiling Tiles in Caller Services Office



Source: OIG photo taken February 6, 2024

- One vent was dirty in workroom area.
- No hot water in men’s restroom on first and second floors, or in women’s restroom on first floor.
- One inoperable faucet in the workroom area’s sink.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight and take the necessary actions to identify and follow up on property condition issues because other duties, such as getting the mail out for delivery each day, took priority over addressing maintenance issues.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight of personnel responsible for maintaining facilities, reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up for completion. The Postal Service requires management to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers.²⁷

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management’s attention to maintenance, safety, and security deficiencies can reduce the risk of injuries to employees and customers; reduce related costs, such as workers’ compensation claims, lawsuits, and penalties; and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Management’s Comments

Management agreed with all the findings in the report. See [Appendix B](#) for management’s comments in their entirety.

²⁷ Postal Service Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor’s Safety Handbook*, July 2020.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from January through April 2024 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

In planning and conducting the audit, we obtained an understanding of the Ward Place Carrier Annex delivery operations internal control structure to help determine the nature, timing, and extent of our audit procedures. We reviewed the management controls for overseeing the program and mitigating associated risks. Additionally, we assessed the internal control components and underlying principles, and we determined that the following three components were significant to our audit objective:

- Control Activities
- Information and Communication
- Monitoring

We developed audit work to ensure that we assessed these controls. Based on the work performed, we identified internal control deficiencies related to all three components that were significant within the context of our objectives. We will issue a separate report that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for the Brookland Station, Lammond Riggs Station, and the Ward Place Carrier Annex. These recommendations, if implemented, should correct the weaknesses we identified.

We assessed the reliability of PTR, DCV, TACS, and the electronic Facilities Management System²⁸ data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

²⁸ A custom-built Postal Service system used to manage work orders, contracts, and payments for facility construction, repairs, and alteration contracts, along with real estate contracts.

Appendix B: Management's Comments



March 22, 2024

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Ward Place Carrier Annex, Washington, DC: Delivery Operations (Report Number 24-065-3-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Ward Place Carrier Annex, Washington, DC: Delivery Operations*.

Management generally agrees with the four findings in the report on delayed mail, package scanning, timekeeping, and property conditions.

Management has begun taking steps to address the four findings.

Delayed Mail: Management will conduct a service talk on proper handling and recording of delayed mail in DCV. Management will also reiterate the requirement to use PS Form 1571 *Undelivered Mail Report*. Reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Package Scanning: Management will provide a service talk on proper scanning procedures and conduct reviews to monitor compliance.

Timekeeping Management: Management will be retrained on proper record keeping for disallowed time, and unauthorized overtime. Management has placed binders in a secure location and will monitor to ensure 1017-A and 1017-B forms are completed accurately.

Property Conditions: Management has begun addressing the property conditions related to safety and maintenance.

E-SIGNED by Lora Mclucas
on 2024-03-21 18:39:03 EDT

Lora McLucas
District Manager, Maryland/DC District

cc: Vice President, Area Retail & Delivery Operations (Atlantic)
Corporate Audit Response Management

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