

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews – Select Units, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District



AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 23-076-R23 | June 21, 2023



Lewiston MPO

Southern Maine
Carrier Unit

Main Office
Carrier Section

Sanford MPO

Industrial Park
Annex

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Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

June 21, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: REGINA M. BUGBEE
MANAGER
MAINE-NEW HAMPSHIRE-VERMONT DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Balduff", is positioned below the recipient information.

FROM: Sean Balduff
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition
Reviews – Select Units, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District
(Project Number 23-076-R23)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews – Select Units, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District.

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

Attachment

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

Results

Background

This report presents a summary of the results of our self-initiated audits assessing mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at five select delivery units in the Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District in the Atlantic Area (Project Number 23-076). These delivery units included the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office (MPO), Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford MPO, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit.

This report responds to a request from Senator Susan Collins to audit the Lewiston MPO and responds to Representative Chellie Pingree’s interest in mail operations in the Portland, ME, area. In addition to the Lewiston MPO, we judgmentally selected four

delivery units within the Portland, ME, area based on the number of Customer 360¹ and Informed Delivery² contacts associated with the unit, undelivered route information, and stop-the-clock (STC)³ scans performed at the unit.

We previously issued interim reports⁴ to district management for each of these units regarding the conditions we identified. In addition, we issued a report on the efficiency of operations at the Southern Maine Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC),⁵ which services these five delivery units. The delivery units have 208 city routes and 57 rural routes that serve about 270,151 people in several ZIP Codes (see Table 1), which are considered urban communities.⁶

Table 1. Service Area and Population

Delivery Units	Service Area ZIP	Population	City Routes	Rural Routes
Industrial Park Annex	04005, 04064, 04072	50,345	32	12
Lewiston MPO	04240	36,592	22	5
Main Office Carrier Section	04092, 04101, 04102, 04103, 04105, 04107, 04108, 04110	105,135	113	11
Sanford MPO	04002, 04027, 04073, 04083	34,174	12	11
Southern Maine Carrier Unit	04074, 04106	43,905	29	18
Total		270,151	208	57

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of Postal Service National Labeling List and Esri data.

1 A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.
 2 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.
 3 A scan event that indicates the U.S. Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mailpiece. Examples of STC scans include “Delivered,” “Available for Pick-up,” and “No Access.”
 4 *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Industrial Park Annex, Saco, ME* (Report Number 23-076-1-R23, dated May 10 2023); *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Lewiston Post Office, Lewiston, ME* (Report Number 23-076-2-R23, dated May 10, 2023); *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Main Office Carrier Section, Portland, ME* (Report Number 23-076-3-R23, dated May 10, 2023); *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Sanford Main Post Office, Sanford, ME* (Report Number 23-076-4-R23, dated May 10, 2023); *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Southern Maine Carrier Unit, Scarborough, ME* (Report Number 23-076-5-R23, dated May 10, 2023).
 5 Efficiency of Operations at the Southern Maine Processing and Distribution Center, Scarborough, ME (Report Number 23-075-R23, dated May 10, 2023).
 6 We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from Esri, which is based on 2010 Census Bureau information.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston MPO, Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford MPO, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit in the Maine–New Hampshire–Vermont District.

We reviewed delivery metrics, including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, and distribution up-time.⁷ In addition, during our site visits the week of March 13, 2023, we reviewed mail conditions; package and truck arrival scanning procedures; arrow key⁸ security procedures; and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at and around carrier cases and in the “Notice Left” area.⁹ Finally, we interviewed unit management and employees.

We conducted this audit from March through June 2023 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. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on June 2, 2023, and included their comments, where appropriate.

We assessed the reliability of the Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR)¹⁰ system, the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV) tool,¹¹ the Surface Visibility Web (SVWeb)¹² database, and data from the electronic Facilities Management System (eFMS)¹³ by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Results Summary

We assessed issues affecting mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at all five delivery units. Specifically, we found delayed mail and deficiencies with package scanning, truck arrival scanning, arrow key controls, and property conditions (see Table 2).

We did not review truck arrival scanning and property conditions at the Southern Maine Carrier Unit because it is co-located with the Southern Maine P&DC.

Table 2. Summary of Results

Controls Reviewed	Deficiencies Identified – Yes or No				
	Industrial Park Annex	Lewiston MPO	Main Office Carrier Section	Sanford MPO	Southern Maine Carrier Unit
Delayed Mail	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Package Scanning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Truck Arrival Scanning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Arrow Keys	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Property Conditions	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of March 13, 2023.

⁷ Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

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 The area of a delivery unit where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

¹⁰ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

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 SVWeb collects end-to-end data by linking multiple scans of a single asset to create visibility data to support planning, management, and optimization of the surface network.

¹³ 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.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of March 14, 2023, we identified about 150,148¹⁴ pieces of delayed mail at the five delivery units (see Table 3). Management at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston MPO, Main Office Carrier Section, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit misreported the amount of delayed mail in DCV, and management at the Sanford MPO did not record any delayed mail. See Figure 1 and Figure 2 for examples of delayed mail we found.

and Southern Maine Carrier Unit misreported the amount of delayed mail in DCV, and management at the Sanford MPO did not record any delayed mail. See Figure 1 and Figure 2 for examples of delayed mail we found.

Table 3. Delayed Mail

Type of Mail	Industrial Park Annex	Lewiston MPO	Main Office Carrier Section	Sanford MPO	Southern Maine Carrier Unit	Total
Letters	22,643	10,020	41,975	1,849	6,268	82,755
Flats	20,930	774	35,551	1,050	4,343	62,648
Packages	268	64	2,587	1,282	544	4,745
Total	43,841	10,858	80,113	4,181*	11,155	150,148

*Includes 368 pieces of delayed collection mail that were not dispatched to the Southern Maine P&DC for processing on the previous night.

Source: OIG count of delayed mailpieces identified during our visit March 14, 2023.

Figure 1. Delayed Mail at the Main Office Carrier Section



Source: OIG photo taken on March 14, 2023.

Figure 2. Delayed Mail at the Industrial Park Annex



Source: OIG photo taken on March 14, 2023.

¹⁴ Count of mail included individual piece counts and estimates based on conversion factors.

Why Did It Occur

Delayed mail occurred for multiple reasons, including insufficient staffing to accommodate mail volume and competing priorities. In addition, the delayed mail was not reported in DCV because of a lack of training and management oversight. Specifically:

- Management at the Industrial Park Annex stated they did not have enough employees to deliver the mail each day. We analyzed vacancy data provided by the Maine–New Hampshire–Vermont District Manager of Field Human Resources and determined the unit was understaffed by nine part-time carriers¹⁵ as of March 24, 2023. In addition, management stated that they did not know how to properly report delayed mail in the DCV system and had not received proper training.
- Management at the Lewiston MPO stated they did not have enough employees to deliver the mail each day. Vacancy data showed that the Lewiston MPO was understaffed by four part-time city carriers and two part-time rural carriers as of March 24, 2023. Further, management stated that the unit faced medical restrictions for 12 city carriers and had a vacant rural auxiliary¹⁶ route. These vacancies, medical restrictions, and the vacant auxiliary route made it difficult to cover the existing workload. Management stated that competing responsibilities prevented them from monitoring and verifying that all mail was taken out for delivery and from updating the DCV system prior to the end of the business day.
- Management at the Main Office Carrier Section stated they did not have enough resources to deliver all the mail each day. The postmaster and station manager both stated they had significant staffing issues, including a shortage of carriers, carriers on extended leave, and carriers with work restrictions limiting the number of hours they can work or duties they can perform. The unit shares part-time carriers with the Southern Maine Carrier Unit. We analyzed vacancy data and determined the two units were understaffed by 31 part-time carriers as of March 24, 2023. In addition, the Main Office Carrier Section was understaffed by seven full-time carriers. Management also did not accurately report delayed mail in DCV because they were more focused on delivering the mail, which limited their ability to properly perform their managerial duties.
- Unit management at the Sanford MPO did not provide proper oversight to verify that all mail was taken out for delivery. The AM supervisor stated that he did not expect any delayed mail because the unit was fully staffed on Monday, March 13, 2023. However, he further stated that he did not perform a thorough walk-through of the carrier cases and workroom area after carriers departed for their routes. In addition, the PM supervisor stated she did not know how to report undelivered mail in the DCV system.
- Management at the Southern Maine Carrier Unit stated they did not have enough resources to deliver all the mail each day. The acting station manager stated they had significant staffing issues, including a shortage of carriers, carriers on extended leave, and carriers with work restrictions limiting the number of hours they can work or duties they can perform. As we confirmed with the Main Office Carrier Unit, the two units were understaffed by 31 part-time carriers as of March 24, 2023. In addition, management did not accurately report delayed mail in the DCV system because they were more focused on mail delivery, which limited their ability to properly perform their managerial duties.

To address carrier staffing issues in the district, management authorized Industrial Park Annex and Lewiston MPO to convert all CCAs to PTF carrier status and hire additional PTFs in the future. PTF carriers receive additional benefits and higher starting pay than CCAs. Management stated they also implemented other recruitment strategies, including job fairs, handing out pamphlets at retail counters, sending recruitment mailings, and hanging outside banners. However, management stated they still experience challenges with hiring and retaining carriers.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that all mail was processed and delivered daily, and that there were enough resources to deliver all the mail each day. Postal Service policy¹⁷ states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt.

¹⁵ For the purposes of this report, part-time carriers refer to city carrier assistants (CCAs) and part-time flexible (PTF) carriers. A CCA is a non-career, bargaining unit employee who performs the full range of city carrier duties. A PTF is a career hourly rate employee who is available to work flexible hours, as assigned by the Postal Service, during the course of a service week.

¹⁶ A route that takes less than eight hours to deliver.

¹⁷ *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.

In addition, managers are required¹⁸ to report all mail that remains in a unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in the DCV system. Further, management must update the DCV system 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 the DCV system 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.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** coordinate with Atlantic Area and Headquarters Human Resources to conduct an analysis to determine whether converting city carrier assistants to part-time flexible carriers improved retention or increased hiring for carriers at the Lewiston Main Post Office and the Industrial Park Annex, and, if successful, apply to the Main Office Carrier Section and Southern Maine Carrier Unit.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** coordinate with Atlantic Area and Headquarters Human Resources to identify and implement additional strategies to fill carrier vacancies at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** develop and execute a plan so that all committed mail is delivered daily, and that management conducts a daily sweep to identify delayed mail at the Sanford Main Post Office.

Recommendation #4

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** develop and execute a plan to verify that all delayed mail volume is entered into the proper system, and management systematically enforces reporting compliance at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford Main Post Office, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at all five delivery units. Specifically, employees scanned 3,100 packages at the delivery units instead of at the customers' delivery points between November 2022 and January 2023 (see [Table 4](#)). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 27.10 percent were scanned "Delivered." This data excludes scans that could properly be made at the unit, such as "Delivered - PO Box" and "Customer (Vacation) Hold," but rather represents scans performed at the delivery unit that should be made at the point of delivery.

In addition, on the morning of March 14, 2023, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 187 packages to review and analyze for scanning and tracking history. We judgmentally selected 146 packages from the carrier cases and 41 packages from the "Notice Left" area.

Of the 146 sampled packages at the carrier cases, 18 (12.33 percent) had missing scans, improper scans, or handling issues. For example, eight of these packages were scanned "Delivered," which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's point of delivery. In addition, two packages, one scanned "Forwarded" and one "Forward Expired," should have been returned to sender.

Of the 41 sampled packages in the "Notice Left" area, nine (21.95 percent) had missing or improper scans, or handling issues. For example, five packages were missing STC scans to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery. In addition, one package was not returned to the sender, as required,¹⁹ and was 38 days past the return date.

¹⁸ *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide*, March 2022.

¹⁹ *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, states that domestic packages should be returned to sender on the 15th calendar day after a notice is left, and international packages should be returned to sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.

Table 4. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	Delivery Units					Total	Percent
	Industrial Park Annex	Lewiston MPO	Maine Office Carrier Section	Sanford MPO	Southern Maine Carrier Unit		
Delivered	105	364	149	129	93	840	27.10%
Delivery Attempted - No Access	135	797	79	152	150	1,313	42.35%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	2	15	1	127	2	147	4.74%
Animal Interference	1	4	0	2	2	9	0.29%
No Secure Location Available	18	278	0	410	0	706	22.77%
Refused	1	0	1	0	0	2	0.06%
No Authorized Recipient	4	8	1	6	3	22	0.71%
Delivery Exception-Local Weather Delay	4	0	0	57	0	61	1.97%
Total	270	1,466	231	883	250	3,100	100.00%

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

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Specifically:

- The postmaster at the Industrial Park Annex explained that he did not instruct the interim PM supervisor to check the carriers for packages that are brought back from the street for proper scanning.
- Management at the Lewiston MPO stated that they routinely scanned packages “Delivery Attempted – No Access” in the office following inclement weather when carriers anticipated uncleared sidewalks, and scanned others as “Delivered” for customer holds. Management further explained that competing responsibilities prevented them from consistently reviewing package scan integrity reports and following up with carriers.
- Management at the Main Office Carrier Section stated they did not adequately monitor package scanning because they were more focused on mail delivery. In addition, unit management receives a daily report from the district showing STC scans made at the unit; however, this report is limited to STC scans made after 3 p.m.
- The AM supervisor at the Sanford MPO stated that they monitored and discussed scan performance with employees but did not strictly enforce the scanning procedures. The PM supervisor stated that she did not review the package tracking tool because she is new to the position and was more focused on supervising mail delivery. Additionally, employees said they scanned the 410 packages “No Secure Location Available” at the unit due to unsafe driving conditions. The postmaster acknowledged that employees should have scanned packages “Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location” at the delivery point. The AM supervisor stated that no one was assigned to review packages in the “Notice Left” area; therefore, a package was not returned promptly due to inadequate management oversight.
- Management at the Southern Main Carrier Unit stated they did not adequately monitor package scanning because they were more focused on mail delivery. The acting station manager stated that staffing challenges were impacting mail delivery operations, and he did not have time to monitor package scanning on a regular basis.

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,²⁰ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.²¹ Packages in the “Notice Left” area should have been reviewed for second notices and returned to sender after the prescribed number of days.

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 potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Recommendation #5

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** develop and execute a plan to verify all employees at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford Main Post Office, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit are trained on standard operating procedures for package scanning and handling and that unit management systematically reviews package scanning performance data daily and enforces compliance.

Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes²² at four of the delivery units, as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from November 1, 2022, to January 31, 2023, and found that employees did not perform a scan for 1,159 of the 1,271 trips (91.19 percent) arriving from the Southern Maine P&DC (see Table 5). We did not review truck arrival scanning at the Southern Maine Carrier Unit because it is co-located with the Southern Maine P&DC.

Table 5. Truck Arrival Scans from November 1, 2022, through January 31, 2023

Delivery Units	Count of Inbound Trips	Missed Scans	Percentage Missing
Industrial Park Annex	160	48	30.00%
Lewiston MPO	135	135	100.00%
Main Office Carrier Section	689	689	100.00%
Sanford MPO	287	287	100.00%
Total	1,271	1,159	91.19%

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from SVWeb.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not monitor scan performance data to ensure that all trucks received an arrival scan. Specifically:

- Management at the Industrial Park Annex stated that they did not monitor scan performance because they thought the clerks were performing them. They also stated that they were unaware of how to access the truck arrival tracking reports to monitor the daily scans.
- Management at the Lewiston MPO stated that they did not monitor scan performance data to verify that trucks received an arrival scan because they were unaware of truck scanning procedures. Specifically, the AM supervisor stated he was unaware of the scan requirement, and management stated that they had not instructed employees to perform the scans.
- Management at the Main Office Carrier Section stated that they were unaware of the policy requiring employees to scan the trailer barcode on mail trucks arriving at the delivery unit and had not instructed employees to perform the scans.
- Management at the Sanford MPO stated that they were unaware of the policy to scan trailer/truck barcodes on incoming trucks arriving at the delivery unit and did not monitor scan performance data to verify that trucks received an arrival scan.

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

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

22 The trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have performed reviews of truck arrival tracking reports to ensure that employees were performing all expected truck scans. According to Postal Service Policy,²³ employees must scan the trailer barcode on Postal Service trailer/trucks and Highway Contract Route trucks arriving at the delivery unit during local operating hours.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When employees do not scan the truck barcode, the Postal Service does not receive timely transportation information and is unable to address issues that may be causing mail delays, which could affect customer service.

Recommendation #6

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** develop and execute a plan that requires management to review truck/trailer arrival scanning performance data daily and enforce compliance at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, and Sanford Main Post Office.

Recommendation #7

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** train responsible personnel on standard operating procedures for truck/trailer arrival scanning at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, and Sanford Main Post Office.

Finding #4: Arrow Keys

What We Found

Management did not properly manage arrow keys at all five of the delivery units. Specifically, management could not locate 18 keys that were listed on the inventory logs across three of the units. Only one of these keys had been reported as missing to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. We also found 17 keys not listed on the inventory logs across three of the units (see Table 6). Additionally, at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston MPO, and Sanford MPO, management did not properly safeguard arrow keys. Specifically, distribution of the keys to the carriers and the return of the keys was often unsupervised, or keys were not appropriately signed out.

Why Did It Occur

These issues occurred because unit management did not properly manage and safeguard arrow keys. Specifically:

- Management at the Industrial Park Annex stated that they used an outdated arrow key log to assign keys to carriers. Although the clerk stated that she had developed a corrected copy, it was not used or provided to the audit team during our visit. In addition, management stated that they do not have enough personnel to oversee key return when carriers come back in the evening.

Table 6. Arrow Key Inventory

Delivery Units	Keys on Inventory Log	Missing Keys	Keys Found at the Unit	
			Listed on Log	Not Listed on Log
Industrial Park Annex	48	0	48	0
Lewiston Main Post Office	36	0	36	0
Main Office Carrier Section	152	12	140	3
Sanford Main Post Office	36	2	34	10
Southern Maine Carrier Unit	161	4	157	4
Total	433	18	415	17

Source: OIG analysis of the arrow key inventory during our visit week of March 16, 2023.

²³ United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units (DUs).

- Management at the Lewiston MPO stated that they did not provide proper arrow key management since the person previously responsible retired in 2021. Additionally, management stated that they had not reassigned the arrow key responsibilities to a clerk because the unit is currently understaffed.
- Management at the Main Office Carrier Section stated that they did not prioritize the management of arrow keys. Specifically, a clerk who had previously managed the arrow keys and maintained the inventory log retired three years ago, and management had not updated the inventory since that time. The station manager was aware of the requirement to report missing keys to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, but stated she was unaware any keys were missing.
- Management at the Sanford MPO stated that they did not properly manage and safeguard arrow keys because they prioritized other duties, such as scheduling staff and getting the mail delivered. Specifically, the AM supervisor acknowledged that the [REDACTED] containing arrow keys should have been secured at all times.
- Management at the Southern Maine Carrier Unit stated that they rely on the clerk to oversee the arrow keys because their focus was on mail delivery operations. Specifically, a clerk stated that he tried to keep the log current but missed the unrecorded arrow keys due to an oversight. Additionally, the clerk stated that the missing keys had been listed on the log since he took over managing the keys, but he did not know if they had been reported to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The PM supervisor stated that he was aware of the requirement to report missing keys, but he was not aware of any missing keys.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,²⁴ management must keep an accurate inventory of all keys and conduct semiannually a physical survey of all building keys. In addition, policy²⁵ states that arrow keys must remain secured until they are individually assigned to personnel. A supervisor or clerk must supervise employees signing out keys on the inventory log. Upon return, arrow keys should be

deposited in a secure location, and a supervisor or clerk must verify all keys have been returned and accounted for daily. In addition, policy states that missing arrow keys must be immediately reported to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When there is insufficient oversight and supervision of accountable items, such as arrow keys, there is increased risk of mail theft. These thefts damage the Postal Service's reputation and diminish public trust in the nation's mail system. Additionally, because arrow keys are used to open mail receptacles, lost or misplaced keys could impact mail delivery.

Recommendation #8

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** develop and execute a training plan to ensure management at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford Main Post Office, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit understand and implement the arrow key inventory process.

Recommendation #9

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** establish a schedule to periodically review arrow keys to ensure they are properly logged and accounted for at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford Main Post Office, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit.

Finding # 5: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety, security, and maintenance issues at three of the five delivery units.

At the Industrial Park Annex, we identified one fire extinguisher that was not mounted or clearly marked on the wall; two unsecured ladders; one electrical outlet in the carrier loading area that was broken and unsecured (see [Figure 3](#)); five areas with missing, damaged, and stained ceiling tiles; a hole in the wall in the custodian's closet (see [Figure 4](#)); and no signage posted in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

²⁴ *Administrative Support Manual* Issue 13, Sections 273.461, 273.464, and 273.471, July 1999 - updated through March 31, 2022.

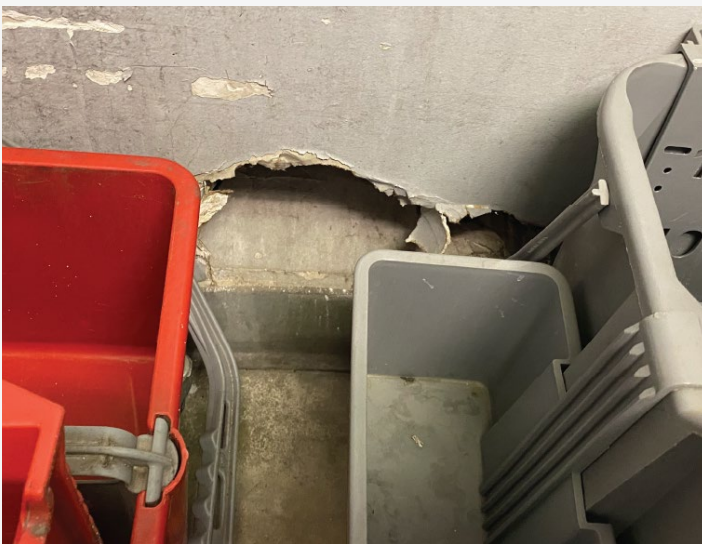
²⁵ *Standard Work: Arrow Key Accountability*, January 2022 and *USPS Arrow Key Standard Work*, January 2022.

Figure 3. Broken and Unsecured Electrical Outlet at Industrial Park Annex



Source: OIG photo taken March 15, 2023.

Figure 4. Hole in Wall in Custodian Closet at Industrial Park Annex



Source: OIG photo taken March 15, 2023.

At the Lewiston MPO, we identified issues including missing monthly and annual fire extinguisher inspections, a broken toilet in the men's restroom, peeling paint throughout the facility, and stained and missing ceiling tiles (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Example of Stained and Missing Tiles at the Lewiston MPO



Source: OIG photo taken March 15, 2023.

At the Sanford MPO, we identified nine fire extinguishers that were missing inspections. Specifically, four were missing monthly and annual inspections. The last monthly inspections were completed March 1, 2019, and the last annual inspections were in August 2020. In addition, five were missing inspection tags. We also noted a blocked Postal Inspection Service door.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not take the necessary actions to ensure that property conditions were identified, reported, and corrected because other duties, such as addressing customer inquiries and getting the mail out for delivery each day, took priority. Specifically:

- Unit management at the Industrial Park Annex stated they did not take the necessary actions to verify that property condition issues were corrected because they were unaware of the issues identified, except for the ceiling tiles. Management also stated that they had fixed the roof leak, which caused the stained ceiling tiles, but had not prioritized replacing the tiles. Management stated that they do not routinely walk around the facility to check for issues.

- Management at the Lewiston MPO stated they did not take the necessary actions to verify that property condition issues were corrected because they prioritized staffing and other duties.
- Management at the Sanford MPO stated that they were unaware of the issues identified and thought the fire extinguishers were all new.

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 is required to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers. In addition, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards.²⁶

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 OSHA penalties; and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Management Actions

During our audit, management addressed all the issues we identified at the Industrial Park Annex and Sanford MPO. Management at the Lewiston MPO addressed all the issues except for the fire extinguisher annual inspections.

Recommendation #10

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** verify the annual fire extinguisher inspections are completed at the Lewiston Main Post Office.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with the findings and recommendations in the report. See [Appendix A](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated they completed an analysis to determine whether CCA conversions improved retention or increased hiring at the Industrial Park Annex and the Lewiston MPO. As of April 2023, the Portland Main Office and the South Portland Carrier Annex are also covered under the MOU and have converted CCAs to part-time flexibles. Their analysis shows positive trends at each location. This action was completed in April 2023.

Regarding recommendation 2, management stated in addition to the numerous strategies already in effect throughout the district, that management and HR work collaboratively to increase the recruitment efforts in the areas where hiring is most difficult. This action was completed in May 2023.

Regarding recommendation 3, management stated they reissued the Dispatch Deviation standard operating procedure to local management at the Sanford MPO. Additionally, management will conduct periodic unannounced virtual or physical site visits to ensure compliance with policy for reporting delayed mail. The target implementation date is August 31, 2023.

Regarding recommendation 4, management stated they send early morning email reminders to local management with reporting expectations and instructions. They also have late morning follow-up calls and send email reminders to offices with missing or incomplete entries in the system until fully compliant. Additionally, management will conduct periodic, unannounced virtual or physical site visits to ensure compliance with policy for reporting delayed mail. The target implementation date is August 31, 2023.

Regarding recommendation 5, local management has been retrained on standard operating procedures for package scanning and handling. Management stated that operations managers will review the scanning integrity report daily and follow-up with the appropriate action for non-compliant offices. The target implementation date is July 31, 2023.

Regarding recommendation 6, local management has been retrained on proper scanning of inbound

²⁶ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

trips. The district will monitor scans at these locations and take the appropriate action for non-compliance. This action was completed in May 2023.

Regarding recommendation 7, management stated they retrained responsible personnel at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston MPO, Main Office Carrier Section, and Sanford MPO on proper procedures for truck arrival scans. Management also stated they will monitor for compliance. The target implementation date is August 31, 2023.

Regarding recommendation 8, management received mandatory arrow key compliance training in March 2023 and were retrained in May 2023. Standard work procedures will be reissued regularly. The target implementation date is August 31, 2023.

Regarding recommendation 9, management stated they will conduct periodic reviews to ensure arrow keys are managed properly. The target implementation date is August 31, 2023.

Regarding recommendation 10, management stated that new fire extinguishers were recently installed and tagged at the Lewiston MPO. A qualified contractor will conduct the annual inspections. The target implementation date is July 31, 2023.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations, and the corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report.

Recommendations 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 require OIG concurrence before closure. The OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. These recommendations should not be closed in the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendations can be closed.

Regarding recommendation 8, management stated they provided the OIG with training records related to arrow key compliance. However, as of June 14, 2023, we have not received any training records related to arrow key compliance.

Management provided us with a Memorandum of Understanding, dated April 4, 2023, for staffing adjustments and examples of various recruitment and retention strategies they implemented for May and June 2023. In addition, management provided documentation showing that they monitored and enforced daily truck scanning for May and June 2023, and sent a picture of a tagged inspected fire extinguisher dated March 2023. After reviewing this documentation, we consider recommendations 1, 2, 6, and 10 closed with the issuance of this report.

Appendix A: Management's Comments



June 8, 2023

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews – Select Units, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District (Project Number 23-076-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft audit report, *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews – Select Units, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District*.

Management agrees with the five findings in the report related to delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scanning, arrow keys, and property conditions.

Following are our comments on each of the ten recommendations.

Recommendation 1:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** coordinate with Atlantic Area and Headquarters Human Resources to conduct an analysis to determine whether converting city carrier assistants to part-time flexible carriers improved retention or increased hiring for carriers at the Lewiston Main Post Office and the Industrial Park Annex, and, if successful, apply to the Main Office Carrier Section and Southern Maine Carrier Unit.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Management has completed their analysis to determine whether CCA conversions improved retention or increased hiring at Industrial Park Annex, and the Lewiston MPO. As of April 2023, the Portland Main Office and the South Portland Carrier Annex are also covered under the MOU and have converted CCAs to part-time flexibles. The analysis shows positive trends at each location. Results of the analysis and MOUs are provided to support closing this recommendation with issuance of the final report.

Target Implementation Date: 07/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District

Recommendation 2:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** coordinate with Atlantic Area and Headquarters Human Resources to identify and implement additional strategies to fill carrier vacancies at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. In addition to the numerous strategies already in effect throughout the district, management, and HR work collaboratively to increase the recruitment efforts in the areas where hiring is most difficult. Management will provide documents to support closing this recommendation with issuance of the final report.

Target Implementation Date: 07/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District

Recommendation 3:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District**, develop and execute a plan so that all committed mail is delivered daily, and that management conducts a daily sweep to identify delayed mail at the Sanford Main Post Office.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Management reissued the Dispatch Deviation standard operating procedure to local management at the Sanford Main Post Office. Additionally, management will conduct periodic unannounced virtual or physical site visits to ensure compliance with policy for reporting delayed mail.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District

Recommendation 4:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District**, develop and execute a plan to verify that all delayed mail volume is entered into the proper system, and management systematically enforces reporting compliance at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford Main Post Office, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Management sends early morning email reminders to local management with reporting expectations and instructions. Late morning follow-up calls and email reminders are sent to offices with missing or incomplete entries in the system until fully compliant. Additionally, management will

conduct periodic unannounced virtual or physical site visits to ensure compliance with policy for reporting delayed mail.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District

Recommendation 5:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** develop and execute a plan to verify all employees at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford Main Post Office, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit are trained on standard operating procedures for package scanning and handling and that unit management systematically reviews package scanning performance data daily and enforces compliance.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Local management has been retrained on standard operating procedures for package scanning and handling. Operations managers will review the scanning integrity report daily and follow-up with the appropriate action for non-compliant offices.

Target Implementation Date: 07/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District

Recommendation 6:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** develop and execute a plan that requires management to review truck/trailer arrival scanning performance data daily and enforce compliance at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, and Sanford Main Post Office.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Local management has been retrained on proper scanning of inbound trips. The district will monitor scans at these locations and take the appropriate action for non-compliance.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District

Recommendation 7:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** train responsible personnel on standard operating procedures for truck/trailer arrival

scanning at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, and Sanford Main Post Office.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Management retrained responsible personnel at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, and Sanford Main Post Office on proper procedures for truck arrival scans. Management will monitor for compliance.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District

Recommendation 8:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** develop and execute a training plan to ensure management at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford Main Post Office, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit understand and implement the arrow key inventory process.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Management received mandatory arrow key compliance training in March 2023 and were retrained in May 2023. Standard work procedures will be reissued regularly. Training documentation is provided to support closing this recommendation with issuance of the final report.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District

Recommendation 9:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** establish a schedule to periodically review arrow keys to ensure they are properly logged and accounted for at the Industrial Park Annex, Lewiston Main Post Office, Main Office Carrier Section, Sanford Main Post Office, and Southern Maine Carrier Unit.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Management will conduct periodic reviews to ensure arrow keys are managed properly.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District

Recommendation 10:

We recommend the **District Manager, Maine-New Hampshire-Vermont District** verify the annual fire extinguisher inspections are completed at the Lewiston Main Post Office.

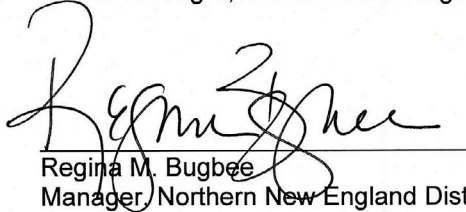
Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. New fire extinguishers were recently installed and tagged at the Lewiston Main Post Office. A qualified contractor will conduct the annual inspections. Supporting documentation has been provided to close this recommendation with issuance of the final report.

Target Implementation Date: 07/31/2023

Responsible Official:

District Manager, Northern New England District



Regina M. Bugbee
Manager, Northern New England District

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

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UNITED STATES



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