Maryland District: Delivery Operations

OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR
GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Salisbury Post Office

Easton Post Office

Cambridge Post Office

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Transmittal Letter

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

January 17, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR: DAVID C. GUINEY
MANAGER, MARYLAND DISTRICT

[signature: Joseph E. Wolski]

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

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Maryland District: Delivery Operations
(Report Number 23-156-R24)

This report presents the results of our audit of mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Maryland District.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Monica Brym, 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. To fulfill this role, the Postal Service is committed to ensuring that their delivery platform and services are always a trusted, visible, and valued part of America's social and economic infrastructure. This includes leveraging people, technology, and systems to provide world-class visibility of mail and packages as they move through the Postal Service's integrated system. 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 report presents a summary of the results of our self-initiated audits of delivery operations and property conditions at three select delivery units in the Maryland District (Project Number 23-156). These delivery units included the Cambridge Post Office, Easton Post Office, and Salisbury Post Office (see Figure 1).

We previously issued interim reports[1] 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 Eastern Shore Processing and Distribution Facility,[2] which services these three delivery units.

Figure 1. Delivery Units Audited in the Maryland District
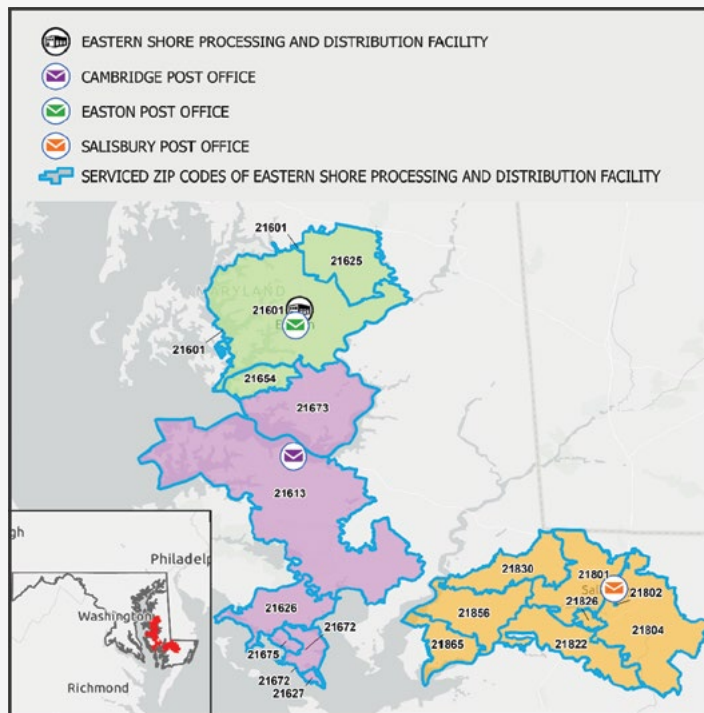
Source: OIG.

We judgmentally selected these three delivery units primarily based on the number of Informed Delivery[3] contacts associated with the unit or stop-the-clock (STC)[4] scans performed at or away from the unit (see Table 1). The units were also chosen based on first and last mile failures[5] and undelivered routes.

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1   *Cambridge Post Office in Cambridge, MD: Delivery Operations* (Report Number 23-156-1-R24), dated November 10, 2023; *Easton Post Office in Easton, MD: Delivery Operations* (Report Number 23-156-2-R24), dated November 10, 2023; *Salisbury Post Office in Salisbury, MD: Delivery Operations* (Report Number 23-156-3-R24), dated November 10, 2023.
2   *Efficiency of Operations at the Eastern Shore Processing and Distribution Facility, Easton, MD* (Report Number 23-155-R24), dated November 10, 2023.
3   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.
4   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 Pick-Up," and "No Access."
5   A first mile failure occurs when a mailpiece is collected and does not receive a processing scan at the P&DC on the day that it was intended. A last mile failure occurs 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.

Table 1. Site Selection Data (Per Route)

Delivery Units	Delivery Related C360s	Informed Delivery Contacts	STC Scans at the Unit	STC Scans Away from the Delivery Point
Cambridge Post Office	0.3	4.7	10.9	44.9
Easton Post Office	0.6	3.6	20.6	30.8
Salisbury Post Office	0.7	11.5	1.2	6.8
District Average	**1.0**	**10.2**	**5.9**	**10.5**

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service's C360, Informed Delivery, Facility Database, and Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data extracted on August 25, 2023. PTR is the system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

The three delivery units have a combined total of 43 city routes and 62 rural routes that serve about 133,852 people in several ZIP Codes (see Table 2), which are considered predominantly urban communities.[6] Specifically, out of the people in these ZIP Codes, about 103,271 (77.2 percent) are considered to live in urban communities and about 30,581 (22.8 percent) are considered to live in rural communities.

As part of our analysis of these units, we conducted text analysis on all Customer 360 (C360)[7] inquiries submitted to the units between October 1, 2021, and August 31, 2023. In total we reviewed 2,856 inquires, which is low compared to other regions we have audited. Package delivery, scanning issues, and forwarding mail issues were the most common inquiries.

Table 2. Service Area and Population

Delivery Units	Service Area ZIP Code	Population	City Routes	Rural Routes
Cambridge Post Office	21613, 21626, 21627, 21672, 21673, 21675	21,351	11	10
Easton Post Office	21601, 21625, 21654	27,563	8	16
Salisbury Post Office	21801, 21802, 21804, 21822, 21826, 21830, 21856, 21865	84,938	24	36
Total		**133,852**	**43**	**62**

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service National Labeling List and Census data.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Cambridge, Easton, and Salisbury post offices.

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 work hours and time adjustments, and distribution uptime.[9] During our site visits from September 12 – 14, 2023, we observed mail conditions; package scanning procedures; arrow key security procedures; timekeeping documentation;

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6   We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.
7   A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.
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.

and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the "Notice Left" area,[10] and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 3 with management on January 4, 2024, and included their comments, where appropriate. See Appendix A for additional information about our scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting delivery operations and property conditions at all three delivery units. Specifically, we found delayed mail and deficiencies with package scanning, arrow key controls, carrier complement and timekeeping, and property conditions (see Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of Issues Identified

Controls Reviewed	Deficiencies Identified – Yes or No		
	Cambridge Post Office	Easton Post Office	Salisbury Post Office
Delayed Mail	No	Yes	Yes
Package Scanning	Yes	Yes	Yes
Arrow Keys	Yes	Yes	No
Carrier Complement and Timekeeping	Yes	Yes	No
Property Conditions	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: OIG interim reports of the select units.

At the Cambridge Post Office, we did not find instances of delayed mailpieces on the morning of September 12, 2023. We identified issues with the management of arrow keys at the Cambridge Post Office and with the safeguarding of arrow keys at the Easton Post Office (see Finding 3). At the Cambridge and Easton Post Offices, we did not identify issues with carrier complement, but they did have issues with timekeeping management at both offices (see Finding 4). At the Salisbury Post Office, we did not identify issues with the management or safeguarding of arrow keys and carrier complement and timekeeping management.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of September 12, 2023, we identified about 591 pieces[11] of delayed mail at the Easton and Salisbury Post Offices. For the Salisbury Post Office, this included 68 Business Reply Mail pieces.[12] In addition, management at both units did not report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)[13] system. See Table 4 for the number of pieces for each mail type and Figure 2 for examples of delayed mail found in carrier cases at the unit.

Table 4. Type of Delayed Mail

Type of Mail	Easton Post Office	Salisbury Post Office	Total
Letters	182	115	297
Flats	275	0	275
Packages	2	17	19
Total	459	132	591

Source: OIG count of delayed mailpieces identified on September 12, 2023.

In addition, at the Salisbury Post Office we identified about 568 Certified Mail letters that had not been returned to the sender timely.

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10   The area of a delivery unit where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.
11   Count of mail included individual piece counts and estimates based on conversion factors in Management Instruction PO-610-2007-1, *Piece Count Recording System*.
12   Business Reply Mail service enables qualified mailers to provide a recipient with a convenient, prepaid method for replying to a mailing.
13   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.

Figure 2. Delayed Mail at the Easton Post Office

Source: OIG photo taken on September 12, 2023.

Why Did It Occur

Delayed mail primarily occurred because management did not provide adequate oversight to ensure that all mail was delivered and verify that the delayed mail was entered into the DCV system. Specifically, at both Easton and Salisbury post offices, supervisors were not conducting reviews, often called sweeps, of carrier cases. Because of this, management was unaware of delayed mail at the carrier cases and did not enter it in the DCV system. In addition, Business Reply Mail was delayed at the Salisbury Post office because management assumed it could be delivered the next day, after the mail was received and processed.

Management at the Salisbury Post Office acknowledged they did not verify if Certified Mail was processed daily because they trusted clerks to proactively share the responsibility when their other duties permitted.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified the delivery of all committed mail and accurately accounted for and reported any delayed mail delivery into the DCV system. Postal Service policy[14] states that all types of First-Class Mail and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. This policy also states that Business Reply Mail is due for delivery the day of receipt. In addition, managers are required[15] to report all mail in the delivery 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.

Postal Service policy states that Certified Mail, if not picked up by the customer or redelivered, must be returned to the sender after 15 calendar days.[16]

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When mail is delayed, or not returned to the sender timely, 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, Maryland District**, verify that management at the Easton Post Office and Salisbury Post Office conducts mail sweeps and enters all delayed mail into the Delivery Condition Visualization system accurately.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the **District Manager, Maryland District**, develop a plan to provide for the timely return to sender of Certified Mail at the Salisbury Post Office.

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14   *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.
15   *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide*, August 2023.
16   *Postal Operations Manual*, Certified Mail Section 813.25 Notice of Arrival, outlines that if Certified Mail is not called for (by the customer) within 5 calendar days, a final notice should be issued and the mailpiece must be returned after 15 calendar days.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

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

In total, employees improperly scanned 1,275 packages at the delivery units instead of at the customers' delivery points between May and July 2023 (see Table 5). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 72.1 percent of them were scanned as "Delivered" and 10.2 percent of them were scanned as "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location." This data does not include scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as "Delivered – PO Box" and "Customer (Vacation Hold," but rather, represent scans performed at the delivery unit that should routinely be made at the point of delivery.

In addition, employees at all three delivery units improperly scanned 547 packages greater than 1,000 feet away from the delivery point between May and July 2023. (See Table 6), The STC scan data for these packages showed that 93.4 percent of them were scanned "Delivered". We removed scans that could have been performed within policy, such as "Unsafe Conditions".

Table 5. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	Delivery Units			Total	Percent
	Cambridge Post Office	Easton Post Office	Salisbury Post Office		
Delivered	135	734	50	919	72.1%
Delivery Attempted – No Access	49	63	18	130	10.2%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	3	57	0	60	4.7%
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	11	2	6	19	1.5%
No Secure Location Available	74	56	0	130	10.2%
Refused	1	3	0	4	0.3%
Business Closed	0	6	0	6	0.5%
Tendered to Agent	0	1	0	1	0.1%
Addressee Unknown	0	1	0	1	0.1%
No Authorized Recipient	0	5	0	5	0.4%
Total	**273**	**928**	**74**	**1,275**	**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.

Table 6. Scans Over 1,000 Feet Away From the Delivery Point

STC Scan Type	Delivery Units			Total	Percent
	Cambridge Post Office	Easton Post Office	Salisbury Post Office		
Delivered	4	207	300	511	93.4%
Delivery Attempted - No Access	16	0	4	20	3.7%
Tendered to Agent for Final Delivery	0	1	3	4	0.7%
Business Closed	0	6	2	8	1.5%
No Such Number	0	0	1	1	0.2%
Animal Interference	1	0	0	1	0.2%
No Authorized Recipient Available	0	0	2	2	0.4%
Total	**21**	**214**	**312**	**547**	**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 2.2 miles away from the delivery point.

Figure 3. Scan Away From the Delivery Point in Easton, MD
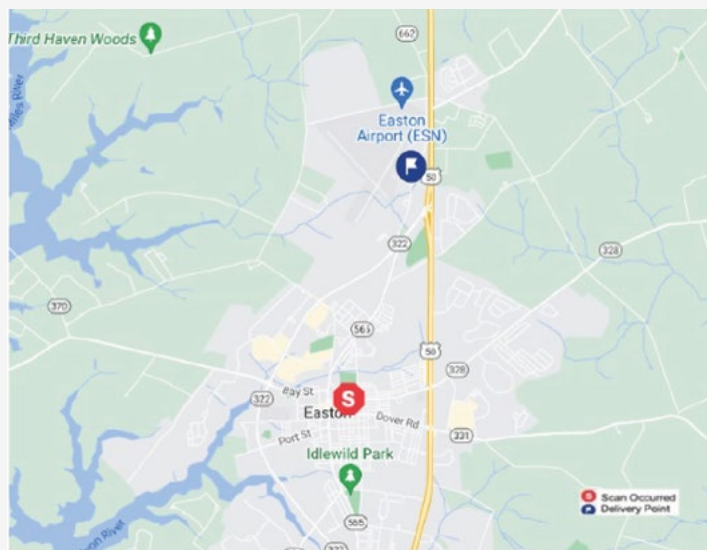
Source: Postal Service Single Package Look Up.

We also found issues with scanning and handling of packages at the units. On the morning of September 12, 2023, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected a total of 106 packages at the three delivery units to review and analyze for scanning and tracking history. Specifically, we judgmentally selected 20 packages from the carrier cases and 86 packages from the "Notice Left" areas at these units.[17]

- Of the 20 sampled packages at the carrier cases, 11 (55 percent) had missing or improper scans. Specifically, four of these packages were scanned "Delivered", which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's point of delivery; four were scanned "Return to Post Office for Address Verification" and should have been returned to sender; two were scanned "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location" away from the delivery point; and one was scanned "No Such Number".

- Of the 86 packages sampled from the "Notice Left" area, 32 (37.2 percent) had missing or improper scans. Specifically, 18 were missing a STC scan to let the customer know the status of their package; five were scanned "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location"; four were scanned "Delivered", which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's point of delivery; two were scanned "no authorized recipient"; two did not receive an "Arrival-at-Unit" scan; and one was scanned "Return to Post Office for Address Verification."

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- Of the sampled packages from both the carrier cases and the "Notice Left" area, 15 (14.2 percent) from the carrier cases had handling issues. Eight were scanned "Addressee Unknown" and should have been returned to sender; five were scanned "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location"; and two were scanned "No Such Number – Address Unknown".

Further, 26 packages (30.2 percent) in the "Notice Left" area across all three locations, should have been returned to sender. These packages ranged from one to 99 days past their return dates.

Why Did It Occur

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

- Management at the Cambridge Post Office did not monitor STC scans made away from the delivery point. For example, a carrier stated that she scans packages in the office as "Delivered" for one of her business customers who brings and picks up packages at the unit. Further, unit management stated that packages in the "Notice Left" section were not regularly reviewed because there was no designated clerk to review them, and the clerks only reviewed the packages if they had extra time.

- Management at the Easton Post Office was not aware of the high number of "Delivered" scans at the unit and said they reviewed reports primarily focused on scans occurring after 3 p.m. Carriers admitted that they scanned packages as "Delivered" at the unit prior to transporting the packages to a remotely managed post office.[18] In addition, management did not verify that the clerk assigned to the "Notice Left" section was monitoring the area daily for packages that should be returned.

- Management at the Salisbury Post Office did not review scanning history reports regularly because they focused on other priorities, such as

ensuring that all mail was delivered. Management stated they did not verify if the "Notice Left" section was worked daily because they instructed and trusted clerks to proactively share the responsibility when their other duties permitted.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including verifying all packages were scanned at the delivery point and not at the delivery unit. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,[19] which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.[20] Packages in the "Notice Left" area should have been reviewed for second notices and returned to sender if they remained after the prescribed number of days.[21]

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 the Postal Service brand.

> **Recommendation #3**
> We recommend the **District Manager, Maryland District**, verify unit management systematically reviews package scanning performance data daily and enforces compliance at the Cambridge, Easton, and Salisbury Post Offices

Finding #3: Arrow Keys
What We Found

Management did not properly manage arrow keys at the Cambridge Post Office. At the Cambridge Post Office, we located all 19 keys listed on the inventory log but found two spare keys that were not accounted for on the log. Unit management had not updated the inventory log to reflect the two spare keys and had not updated the arrow key inventory log since August 2023.

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18   The packages were for Remotely Managed Post Office PO boxes that have street addresses instead of PO Box Numbers on the label.
19   *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.
20   *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.
21   *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, April 2016.

Management at the Easton Post Office did not properly safeguard arrow keys. We observed that the ████████████████, where the arrow key ████ was stored, was left unlocked and open during our visit. We observed the arrow key ████████████████████████ ██████████████████████ to the workroom floor in the morning. During this time, the keys were not secured and were left unattended until distributed to carriers later in the morning.

Why Did It Occur
Management did not provide sufficient oversight to properly manage arrow keys at the Cambridge Post Office, and prioritized mail delivery over keeping the arrow key inventory log updated. At the Easton Office, management did not provide sufficient oversight to properly safeguard the arrow keys. Specifically, unit management was not aware that the ████ should not be left unlocked and unattended throughout the day, nor that the arrow keys should not be left unsecured in the ████████████████████ on the workroom floor.

What Should Have Happened
Management should have verified that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,[22] management must keep an accurate inventory of all keys. Missing keys must be immediately reported to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. In addition, the same policy 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.

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 open mail receptacles, lost or damaged keys can result in undelivered mail.

Management Actions
During our audit, the Cambridge Post Office accounted for the extra arrow keys in its log and district management verified arrow keys were properly managed.

> **Recommendation #4**
> We recommend the **District Manager, Maryland District**, train management and assigned staff at the Easton Post Office on proper arrow key security.

Finding #4: Timekeeping Management

What We Found
We identified timekeeping issues at the Cambridge and Easton Post Offices. Specifically, the Cambridge Post Office did not print and retain Postal Service (PS) Forms 1017-A, *Time Disallowance Record*[23] for seven disallowed time occurrences between May 21 and August 12, 2023. At the Easton Post Office, unit management did not have a binder or any file system to securely retain printed copies of PS Forms 1017-A and PS Forms 1017-B, *Unauthorized Overtime Record*.[24] Between May 1 through July 31, 2023, the unit had five disallowed time occurrences, but management did not retain copies of the PS Forms 1017-A to support these disallowed time occurrences.

Why Did It Occur
Management did not provide sufficient oversight of timekeeping records or processes primarily because they were unaware of the requirement to retain physical copies of these forms.

What Should Have Happened
Postal Service policy[25] states unit personnel must complete PS Form 1017-A and PS Form 1017-B entries and place them in a notebook binder that is secured from unauthorized access, documenting the reason for the disallowed time or unauthorized overtime.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers
When proper documentation of time disallowance, and unauthorized overtime is not completed,

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22 *USPS Arrow Key Standard Work Instructions*, updated August 2023.
23 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. The form serves as a cumulative record of disallowed time.
24 Managers and supervisors are required to complete a PS Form 1017-B when a non-exempt employee incurs unauthorized overtime. The form serves as a cumulative record of unauthorized overtime.
25 Handbook F-21, *Time and Attendance*, Section 146 – Approving Entries, February 2016.

management could incur excess administrative time. In addition, the Postal Service risks violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act[26] when unit management does not maintain documentation that shows the justifiable reason and employee notification for disallowed time.

Management Actions

During our audit, district management established folders for documenting timekeeping records at the Cambridge Post Office. In addition, district management has conducted reviews at both offices to ensure compliance with proper record keeping of timekeeping records.

> **Recommendation #5**
> We recommend the **District Manager, Maryland District**, provide training to management at the Cambridge and Easton Post Offices of timekeeping record requirements and establish files for documenting timekeeping records at the Easton Post Office.

Finding # 5: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety, security, and maintenance issues across the three delivery units.

Property Safety:

- At the Cambridge Post Office, we found 11 fire extinguishers were missing annual and monthly inspections, five were not clearly marked with proper signage and paint, and three were blocked and inaccessible; a Postal Inspection Service door was blocked; and a container with approximately one gallon of flammable liquid was stored in the loading dock area.

- At the Easton Post Office, we found an inspection door blocked by miscellaneous equipment; all 15 fire extinguishers were missing monthly and yearly inspections, two of the 15 were blocked by building material, and another two were not mounted to the wall properly; damaged concrete and a broken handrail post on the loading dock platform; electrical cords were connected on top of or between carrier cases; and dislodged parking blocks in the employee parking lot.

- At the Salisbury Office, we found a fire alarm pull in the customer lobby was loose, and the maintenance room was disorganized and contained excess items.

Property Security:

- At the Cambridge Post Office, we found one broken key lock located on the outside door of the loading dock platform used to enter the workroom area. There is an additional key lock installed on the door which secures the unit.

- At the Easton Post Office, we found the employee parking lot did not have a sign stating the vehicles may be subject to search.

- At the Salisbury Post Office, we found several trees along the fence line at the rear of the dock area that were overgrown. Also, "this is not an exit" door signs needed to be replaced with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) compliant signs.[27]

Property Maintenance:

- At the Cambridge Post Office, we observed one inoperable toilet in the women's bathroom (out-of-service due to water leaks) and excess water in the men's bathroom due to adjacent toilet leaking in the women's bathroom.

- At the Easton Post Office, we observed damaged drywall in two areas of the workroom; flooring damage in the workroom area; stained, missing, and damaged ceiling tiles in the workroom; a ceiling bulge above the retail windows; and multiple light fixtures were missing light tubes. In addition, an inspection service door was missing a doorknob, a lobby door did not properly close, and an employee bathroom in the basement was in unusable condition.

- At the Salisbury Post Office, we observed stained and misaligned ceiling tiles throughout the unit; weeds and trash scattered around the grounds of the unit; the door to the women's restroom was improperly fitted and difficult to open; and excessive equipment stored in a shed. In addition, signs on the property were faded and neglected;

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26 United States Code §8.
27 Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.

and the dock awning, support poles, and stair railings were in disrepair.

Why Did It Occur
Management at all three offices did not provide sufficient oversight and take the necessary actions to verify that property condition issues were identified, reported, and corrected due to competing priorities. Management at the Cambridge and Salisbury Post Offices prioritized mail delivery over addressing maintenance or property issues. Management at the Easton Post Office was unaware of the issues we identified.

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.[28]

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, district management provided documentation showing that they have addressed all property condition issues identified at the three sites. Subsequently, we will not be making any recommendations for this finding.

Management's Comments
Management agreed with all findings and recommendations in the report and has begun to take actions to address the findings. See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety. The target implementation date for all recommendations is February 29, 2024.

Evaluation of Management's Comments
The U.S. Postal Service OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations in the report.

All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. All 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.

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28 Postal Service Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*, July 2020.

Appendices

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from October 2023 through January 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 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 in all three components that were significant within the context of our objective. Our recommendations, if implemented, and the actions taken by management during our audit should correct the weaknesses we identified.

We assessed the reliability of data from the PTR system, the DCV system, Time and Collection System, and the electronic Facilities Management System[29] 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.

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29   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

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

January 8, 2024

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: *Management Response*: Capping Report - Maryland District: Delivery Unit Operations *(Report Number 23-156-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, *Maryland District: Delivery Unit Operations.*

Management agrees with the findings in the report on delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys, timekeeping management, and property conditions.

Following are our comments on each of the five recommendations.

Recommendation #1:

We recommend the District Manager, Maryland District, verify that management at the Easton Post Office and Salisbury Post Office conducts mail sweeps and enters all delayed mail into the Delivery Condition Visualization system accurately.

Management Response/Action Plan:
Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management at the district level will conduct reviews to monitor compliance with proper handling of committed mail and recording of delayed mail in DCV. Additionally, management will conduct a service talk with relevant personnel on the proper handling and recording of committed and delayed mail.

Target Implementation Date: 02/29/2024

Responsible Official: Manager Post Office Operations

Recommendation #2:
We recommend the District Manager, Maryland District, develop a plan to provide for the timely return to sender of Certified Mail at the Salisbury Post Office.

Management Response/Action Plan:
Management agrees with this recommendation.

Local management has begun using visual aids, i.e., *Return Timeframe Reference Sheet* (posted on certified case) and a *Sign Off* sheet indicating all certified mail that is due for return has been completed by the clerk. Management at the district level will conduct reviews to ensure compliance with timely returns of certified mail and utilization of visual aids.

Target Implementation Date: 02/29/2024

Responsible Official: Manager Post Office Operations

Recommendation #3:
We recommend the District Manager, Maryland District, verify unit management systematically reviews package scanning performance data daily and enforces compliance at the Cambridge, Easton, and Salisbury Post Offices.

Management Response/Action Plan:
Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management at the district level will provide a service talk on proper scanning procedures. Additionally, management will perform site reviews to monitor for compliance.

Target Implementation Date: 02/29/2024

Responsible Official: Manager Post Office Operations

Recommendation #4:

We recommend the District Manager, Maryland District, train management and assigned staff at the Easton Post Office on proper arrow key security.

Management Response/Action Plan:
Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will conduct a service talk with employees at Easton Post Office on proper procedures for arrow key security.

Target Implementation Date: 02/29/2024

Responsible Official: Manager Post Office Operations

Recommendation #5:
We recommend the District Manager, Maryland District, provide training to management at the Cambridge and Easton Post Offices of timekeeping record requirements and establish files for documenting timekeeping records at the Easton Post Office.

Management Response/Action Plan:
Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management established binders to store support documentation for timekeeping actions. Management at the district level will conduct reviews to ensure compliance with proper record keeping for disallowed time.

Target Implementation Date: 02/29/2024

Responsible Official: Manager Post Office Operations

E-SIGNED by DAVID.C GUINEY
on 2024-01-09 18:35:14 EST
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David C. Guiney
Acting Manager, Maryland District

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

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