



Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

Audit Report

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review - East City Annex, Columbus, OH

Report Number 22-044-R22 | March 16, 2022



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Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

March 16, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: EDDIE L. BANNER
MANAGER(A), OHIO 2 DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Adam Bieda", is positioned below the recipient information.

FROM: Adam Bieda
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – East City Annex, Columbus, OH (Report
Number 22-044-R22)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – East City Annex, Columbus, OH.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit and Response Management
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, Central Area

Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the East City Annex in Columbus, OH (Project Number 22-044). The East City Annex is in the Ohio 2 District of the Central Area. The carrier annex services ZIP Codes 43201, 43203, 43205, and 43210. There are about 64,494 people living in these ZIP Codes, which are considered urban communities.¹ We judgmentally chose the East City Annex based on the number of stop-the-clock² (STC) scans occurring at the delivery unit, rather than at the customer's delivery address.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the East City Annex in Columbus, OH.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on these four audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, 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, and distribution up-time.³ During our site visit from January 11 through January 13, 2022, we reviewed mail conditions; package and truck arrival scanning procedures; 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 1 with management on February 24, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The East City Annex is one of three delivery units⁴ the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of January 10, 2022, that are serviced by the Columbus Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC). We

issued this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the East City Annex. We will issue a separate report⁵ 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 mail delivery and customer service at the East City Annex. Specifically, we found deficiencies with two of the four areas we reviewed (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Issues Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail	X	
Package Scanning	X	
Truck/Trailer Arrival Scanning		X
Property Conditions		X

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of January 10, 2022.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

We identified about 5,348 pieces of delayed mail⁶ located at 10 carrier cases on the morning of January 11, 2022. In addition, the mail was not reported as

¹ We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from ESRI and Census Bureau 2010 information.

² A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mail piece. Examples of STC scans include "Delivered", "Available for Pick-up", "No Access", and "Business Closed".

³ Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

⁴ The other two units were South Columbus Station in Columbus, OH (Project Number 22-043); Lewis Center Main Post Office in Lewis Center, OH (Project Number 22-042).

⁵ The Project Number for the separate report is 22-052.

⁶ OIG estimate based on Postal Service conversion factors in Handbook M-32, *Management Operating Data Systems*, Appendix D.

“Undelivered” in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System (CSDRS).⁷ See Table 2 for the number of pieces for each mail type and Figure 1 for examples of delayed mail found at carrier cases.

Table 2. Delayed Mail by Type

Mail Type	Number of Pieces
Letters	4,241
Flats	873
Packages	234
Total	5,348

Source: OIG analysis based on conducted mail counts.

Figure 1. Examples of Delayed Mail



Source: OIG photos taken January 11, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not ensure the station had enough resources to deliver the mail each day. Management stated the unit was short-staffed due to carriers being out on COVID-related leave. However, it is still their responsibility to ensure they have adequate coverage for each of the routes.

Additionally, management did not report delayed mail in CSDRS because they were not aware of the process. For example, they thought daily delayed mail totals would automatically populate into CSDRS if they were entered into the Operation Impact tab in the Facility Database System.⁸

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that the station had enough resources to deliver all the mail each day. Postal Service policy⁹ states that managers must review all communications that may affect the day’s workload, and be sure replacements are available for unscheduled absences.

Postal Service policy¹⁰ also requires the supervisor to certify in the Delivery Management System that the station is clear of committed mail for that day’s delivery and that carriers did not return deliverable mail to the station. Managers are then required¹¹ to report all mail in CSDRS¹² that remains in a unit after the carriers have left for their street duties.

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 CSDRS 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.

⁷ A tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of the daily mail conditions of the mail at the point in time when the carriers have departed for the street.

⁸ The system serves as a centralized, complete, and accurate source of Postal Service facility information.

⁹ Handbook M-39, *Management of Delivery Services*, TL-14, Section 111.2, June 2019.

¹⁰ Delivery Management System, Standard Work Instruction.

¹¹ *Customer Service Daily Reporting System, Guidelines and Definitions*, September 2016.

¹² Ohio 2 District Management also requires units to report delayed mail in the Delivery Condition Visualization and Facilities Database systems.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned 1,714 packages at the delivery unit rather than at the customer's delivery address between September and November 2021 (see Table 3). Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed about 99 percent were scanned "Delivered."

Table 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	September	October	November	Total	Percent
Delivered	344	1,331	16	1,691	98.66%
No Secure Location Available	9	3	1	13	0.76%
Receptacle Full/Item Over	4	0	3	7	0.41%
No Authorized Recipient Available	0	0	3	3	0.18%
Totals	357	1,334	23	1,714	100%

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting System¹³ data.

In addition, on the morning of January 11, 2022, before carriers arrived for the day, we judgmentally selected 30 packages from the carrier cases to review and analyze scanning and tracking data. Of the 30 sampled packages, 21 packages had missing or improper scans. These included 14 packages that were missing STC scans to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery; three packages that were not scanned at the delivery address; three packages that were scanned

"Forwarded" but were not properly processed in the forwarding system; and one package that had a "Delivered" scan, which should only be performed when the package is successfully left at the customer's delivery address.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. For the 1,714 packages improperly scanned at the unit, management explained that they have several university facilities on firm sheets¹⁴ that receive many packages each day. Previous management had an agreement that allowed carriers to perform the "Delivered" scan at the unit rather than at the customer's delivery address to ensure the scan was made. We requested a copy of the agreement, but unit management was not able to provide it.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance. The employee that delivered the packages to the university should have scanned the firm sheets at the customer's delivery address when the packages were delivered instead of scanning them at the delivery unit. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,¹⁵ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹⁶

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

¹³ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

¹⁴ A list of packages for delivery to one address documented with a single barcode. Firm sheets are used to link packages sent to one address on a single form.

¹⁵ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹⁶ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Appendices

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Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from January through March 2022 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 relied on computer-generated data from the PTR system. Although we did not test the validity of the controls over these systems, we assessed the accuracy of the data 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.

Appendix B: Management's Comments



March 11, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review –
East City Annex, Columbus, OH Project Number 22-044-DRAFT

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – East City Annex, Columbus OH

Following are our comments on each of the two findings.

Finding #1:

Identified about 5,348 pieces of delayed mail located at 10 carrier cases on the morning of January 11, 2022. In addition, the mail was not reported as "Undelivered" in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System (CSDRS).

Management Response:

Management agrees with this finding.

Management is now well trained on the proper way to enter data into the CSDRS program. And going forward will be sure that all information will be timely in recordings.

Finding #2:


Employees improperly scanned 1,714 packages at the delivery unit rather than at the customer's delivery address between September and November 2021. Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed about 99 percent were scanned "Delivered."

Management Response:

Management agrees with this finding.

- 2 -

Management agrees about the finding, however this was a process establish with the NALC and we will change the process by having the carriers scan on site.


Eddie Banner
District Manager, Columbus OH

cc: Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, Central Area
Corporate Audit Response Management

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