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SUBJECT: Audit Report – Postal Service Actions to Locate and Track Employees
After Hurricane Katrina (Report Number HM-AR-06-005)

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the U.S. Postal Service's actions to locate and track employees after Hurricane Katrina (Katrina) (Project Number 06YG020HM000). Our overall objective was to determine the effectiveness of the actions to account for all employees based on whether the Postal Service (1) located employees in the days after Katrina and (2) tracked employees' locations as they changed addresses in the days and months following the hurricane. We also determined what, if any, responsibility employees had to inform the Postal Service of their locations as they moved about the country. We reviewed the facilities in the Southeast Area's Mississippi District¹ and the Louisiana District's New Orleans Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) located in the Southwest Area.

The President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency tasked the Inspectors General community with assuring appropriate oversight of financial and procurement processes and operations regarding Katrina activities. As a result, the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) established a task force composed of auditors and investigators to review the Postal Service's Katrina activities. This report is the second of two reports the OIG Human Capital Team has issued on actions to safeguard employees. The first

¹ The facilities we reviewed in the Mississippi District were in the 395 ZIP Code area.

report² addressed the Postal Service's actions taken to safeguard employees before Katrina made landfall.

In this report, we concluded the Postal Service's actions to initially locate employees in the days after Katrina were timely and effective given the devastation caused to the affected areas. We commend the Postal Service for its efforts that exemplify that the safety and health of its employees are of the utmost importance.

We also determined the Mississippi District's actions to track employees' locations in the days and months following the hurricane were effective, but the Southwest Area's actions needed improvement. In addition, although employees were responsible for informing the Postal Service of their locations as they moved about the country, Katrina's catastrophic effects were so overwhelming they may have precluded many employees from keeping in close contact with their employer. The Postal Service has taken many corrective actions and this report has one recommendation to the Vice President, Emergency Preparedness, to help improve the Postal Service's ability to account for employees after a natural emergency.³

The Vice President, Emergency Preparedness, agreed with the findings and supported the recommendation. Although we had no recommendations for the Southeast Area Vice President, he responded that he agreed with the findings and the actions planned to revise the Mississippi District's Integrated Emergency Management Plan⁴ (IEMP) were implemented as described in the report. The Southwest Area Vice President also responded by stating he concurred with the findings in the report.

Background

The IEMP and Supplemental Hurricane Plans

The Postal Service's IEMP is a comprehensive plan used to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from domestic emergencies that occur at Postal Service sites. The IEMP consolidates facility stand-alone plans, which include the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), the Crisis Management Plan, the EAP, and emergency-specific plans. The IEMP also establishes emergency management teams (EMTs)⁵ and defines team roles and responsibilities. The IEMP further identifies the phases of an emergency response and the responsibilities of the EMT during each phase. In addition, the IEMP identifies the public service addresses related to hurricanes (such as warnings and watches).

² *Postal Service Actions to Safeguard Employees From Hurricane Katrina* (Report Number HM-AR-06-002, dated February 15, 2006).

³ *The Postal Service Emergency Action Plan (EAP)*, Version D-1.2, March 2004, defines a workplace emergency as: human caused, technological, and natural emergencies (such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and winter storms). In this report, we refer to Katrina as either a hurricane or a natural emergency.

⁴ IEMP, Production Version 1.2, *Installation and Districts*, March 2004.

⁵ EMT members include the emergency manager, safety officer, liaison officer, emergency operations section chief, logistics section chief, and information officer.

The Postal Service’s supplemental hurricane plans⁶ and guides are emergency-specific plans used by facility, district, or area operations. The purpose of these plans is to provide procedures and protocols for the protection of Postal Service personnel, their families, and all property and equipment of the Postal Service. The plans also provide for the safe curtailment of Postal Service operations and the evacuation of on- and off-duty employees. They also provide policies to safeguard the mail and Postal Service facilities and vehicles and some include a description of hurricane phases and their corresponding procedures.

Timeline of Hurricane Katrina’s Landfall in Louisiana and Mississippi

Katrina created a human tragedy that left hundreds of thousands of people without power, water, or a way to communicate. It materialized into a Category 5⁷ storm that affected millions of lives and caused significant damage in both Louisiana and Mississippi. The following is a timeline of events/actions related to Katrina’s landfall in those states.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event/Action</u>
August 29, 2005 (Monday)	Katrina made its second landfall ⁸ at 6:10 a.m. Central Daylight Time (CDT) as a Category 4 ⁹ storm near Buras, Louisiana, with winds near 145 mph.
August 29, 2005 (Monday)	Katrina made a third landfall near Pearlington, Mississippi, at 10:00 a.m. CDT as a Category 3 ¹⁰ hurricane, with winds up to 125 mph. Another set of storms and hurricane winds stretched from near Biloxi, Mississippi, to the western most barrier islands along the state line of Alabama and Mississippi. ¹¹

Postal Service Areas in the Path of Katrina

Katrina was predicted to significantly impact hundreds of Postal Service facilities and thousands of employees in the Southeast and Southwest Areas of Postal Service Operations. The numbers of employees impacted in the Mississippi District and at the New Orleans P&DC are shown in Table 1:

⁶ The Mississippi District followed the *Southeast Area Hurricane/Tropical Storm Procedure*, dated June 1, 2005; and the New Orleans P&DC followed the *Louisiana District’s Hurricane Guide*, 2005.

⁷ A Category 5 hurricane sustains winds of 155 miles per hour (mph) or more with flooding up to 10 miles inland and is accompanied by a storm surge of 18 feet or higher. (Source: The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, Department of Commerce Natural Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)).

⁸ Katrina made its first landfall in Florida on Thursday, August 25, 2005.

⁹ A Category 4 hurricane sustains winds of 131 to 155 mph and is accompanied by a storm surge of 13 to 18 feet. Terrain lower than 10 feet above sea level may be flooded, requiring massive evacuation of residential areas as far inland as 6 miles. (Source: The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, NOAA).

¹⁰ A Category 3 hurricane sustains winds of 111 to 130 mph with flooding inland of 8 miles or more and is accompanied by a storm surge of 9 to 12 feet. (Source: The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, NOAA).

¹¹ Weather Underground article titled *Hurricane Katrina – Category 4 Hitting Gulfport/Biloxi Now*, August 29 – 10:05 CDT from website (www.wunderground.com/blog/SteveGregory/comment.html).

Table 1: Total Numbers of Employees Impacted in the Mississippi District and New Orleans P&DC

Postal Service		
Area Operation	District/P&DC	Employees
Southeast *	Mississippi District (395 ZIP Code)	735
Southwest **	New Orleans P&DC (Louisiana District)	1,328
Total		2,063

* Source: Southeast Area Human Resources Manager

** Source: OIG Computer Assisted Assessment Techniques Staff (CAATS)

Table 2 shows that the Postal Service incurred approximately \$3,222,579 in administrative leave¹² costs for 1,813 Mississippi District and New Orleans P&DC employees who were impacted by Katrina. These costs were primarily the result of displaced employees unable to work at their permanent duty stations. According to Postal Service records, however, by September 17, 2005, almost all of these employees had reported to work at a Postal Service facility.

Table 2: Total Number of Mississippi District and New Orleans P&DC Employees on Administrative Leave as a Result of Hurricane Katrina

District/P&DC Administrative Leave	Number of Employees	Cumulative Percentage	Amount of Administrative Leave Used
Mississippi District (395 ZIP Code)	600	33	\$ 657,005
New Orleans P&DC	1,213	67	2,565,574
Total	1,813	100	\$3,222,579

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

We conducted our review at the Mississippi District and the New Orleans P&DC. We discuss our objectives, scope, and methodology in detail in Appendix B.

Prior Audit Coverage

Postal Service Actions to Safeguard Employees From Hurricane Katrina (Report Number HM-AR-06-002, dated February 15, 2006). The OIG concluded the Postal Service took appropriate actions as described in the IEMPs and supplemental hurricane plans related to effective notification to employees prior to Katrina’s landfall. We also found the Postal Service identified lessons learned from other hurricanes, which helped them to safeguard employees prior to Katrina’s landfall. As a result, the Postal Service safeguarded its employees and there were no reported injuries to employees prior to Katrina’s landfall. We commended the Postal Service for its efforts, which exemplified that the safety and health of its employees are of the utmost concern to management.

¹² Administrative leave is an absence from duty authorized by appropriate Postal Service officials without charge to annual or sick leave and without loss of pay. (Source: *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* (ELM) 17.11, Section 519, Administrative Leave, July 7, 2005).

Audit Results

Actions to Locate Employees Were Effective

The Postal Service's actions to initially locate employees in the Mississippi District and the New Orleans P&DC were timely and effective because they were able to account for all 2,063 employees within 23 days after Katrina made landfall. According to the Mississippi District Human Resources Manager, the Mississippi District located 735 employees in the impacted area (395 ZIP Code) by September 8, 2005 — 10 days after Katrina made landfall. The Southwest Area located all 1,328 employees who worked at the New Orleans P&DC by September 21, 2005 — 23 days after Katrina made landfall. Given the devastation Katrina caused to these areas, we believe the Postal Service's actions are commendable and exemplify that the safety and health of its employees are of the utmost importance.

Several facilities in the Mississippi District suffered damage as a result of Katrina. For example, the Gulfport Processing and Distribution Facility (P&DF) was the largest facility in the Mississippi District and sustained extensive damage, such as a collapsed ceiling and flooding (3 to 6 inches of water) throughout the plant. According to the Mississippi District Emergency Preparedness Manager, the Gulfport P&DF lost power and was shut down for 8 days. Some of the damages to the facility and grounds are shown in Figures 1 through 3.

Figure 1. Debris at the Gulfport P&DF



Source: Southeast Area Emergency Preparedness Manager

Figure 2. Collapsed Ceiling at the Gulfport P&DF



Source: Southeast Area Emergency Preparedness Manager

**Figure 3. Watermark on a Fence at the Gulfport P&DF
(Showing How High the Flood Waters Were)**



Source: Southeast Area Emergency Preparedness Manager

The Mississippi District followed the IEMP and the Southeast Area supplemental hurricane plan, and thus, it promptly located its employees. The district established the Employee Accountability Unit (EAU)¹³ to account for employees from the Louisiana and Mississippi Districts. The EAU was a temporary 24-hour call center, which received telephone calls¹⁴ from employees reporting their locations. Postmasters also used the EAU to report their employees' locations and provide information regarding displaced employees who reported to their facilities. In addition, the EAU updated a "missing employee list" using daily reports received from the Postal Service Headquarters' toll-

¹³ EAU members included the Mississippi District Personnel Services Manager, Post Office Operations Manager, Injury Compensation Manager, Labor Relations Manager, Labor Relations Specialist, four human resources specialists, and the Gulfport P&DF Acting Plant Manager.

¹⁴ The EAU call center temporary telephone numbers were (601) 351-7260, (601) 351-7110, and (601) 351-7379.

free national Employee Service Line (1-877-477-3273).¹⁵ EAU members also telephoned employees and canvassed door-to-door to locate employees who did not call in or report to an installation.

In addition to establishing the EAU, the Mississippi District:

- Displayed banners and sign-in-sheets at every Postal Service facility in the impacted area advising employees how to contact the district and to call the Employee Service Line to report their status.
- Tasked postmasters and supervisors with daily accounting for and reporting of all employees assigned to their installation.
- Tasked postmasters and managers with informing displaced employees they needed to call the EAU.

The New Orleans P&DC also suffered significant damage as a result of Katrina. It was severely flooded and had no running water or electricity. The floodwaters inundated the basement with over 14 million gallons of water, wiping out the electrical grid for the entire facility.¹⁶ According to the Louisiana District Safety Specialist, the P&DC was shut down for 8 months – from August 2005 to April 2006 – and all 1,328 employees were displaced to 38 states across the U.S. Figures 4 through 6 show the water damage in the basement and the outside of the New Orleans P&DC.

Figure 4. Floodwaters Outside the New Orleans P&DC



Source: Southeast Area Emergency Preparedness Manager

¹⁵ This is the same toll-free number used for *PostalEASE*. *PostalEASE* is an automated Postal Service system that replaced labor-intensive, paper processing of employee benefits and other transactions.

¹⁶ Source: Postal Service Press Release, *Re-opening Ceremony of the Postal Service New Orleans P&DC*, April 27, 2006, 10:19 a.m. Eastern Standard Time.

Figure 5. Water Damage Inside the New Orleans P&DC



Source: Postal Service OIG

Figure 6. Flooded Basement at the New Orleans P&DC



Source: Postal Service OIG

While the Southwest Area located all 1,328 P&DC employees within 23 days after Katrina made landfall, they located the vast majority of these (over 80 percent) by September 10, 2005, – 12 days after Katrina’s landfall. The following timeline shows the dates New Orleans P&DC employees were located and the number and percentage of employees located.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Number Located</u>	<u>Cumulative Percentage Located</u>
September 10, 2005	1,079	81
September 13, 2005	1,097	83
September 14, 2005	1,171	88
September 15, 2005	1,190	90
September 16, 2005	1,216	92
September 17, 2005	1,254	94
September 18, 2005	1,261	95
September 19, 2005	1,278	96
September 20, 2005	1,293	97
September 21, 2005	1,328	100

The Louisiana District Office, which is responsible for locating New Orleans P&DC employees in times of emergency and disaster, was colocated at the New Orleans P&DC. As a result of their inability to respond to the situation, the Southwest Area assumed their responsibilities which included locating approximately 4,270¹⁷ employees in the district. The Southwest Area established the following procedures in accordance with the Louisiana District's supplemental hurricane plan and the New Orleans P&DC's IEMP:

- Created a list of all employees affected by Katrina using the Time and Attendance Collection System (TACS) and DataKeeper.¹⁸
- Obtained employees' current mailing addresses and emergency contacts using the Human Resources Information System.
- Used the media to instruct employees to contact the national emergency hotline number (1-888-363-7462) to obtain information on the status of their home offices. When employees called the number, they were prompted to enter the first three digits of the ZIP Code where they worked. A voice recording provided them information about facility openings and closings, changes in reporting times, and

¹⁷ According to the Southwest Area Human Resources Manager, Katrina impacted approximately 4,270 Postal Service employees in Louisiana.

¹⁸ DataKeeper is an online system that allows access to a collection of databases extracted from the personnel and payroll files that the Integrated Business Systems Solution Center maintains.

other workplace information specific to their district. The districts were responsible for updating the messages specific to their district. Since the hotline only facilitated one-way communication, the voice recording was modified on September 1, 2005, advising employees to call the Employee Service Line which facilitated two-way communications.

- Modified the Employee Service Line telephone menu options to obtain information from Katrina's victims. The Postal Service incorporated a script that prompted callers (employees) to state what they were "impacted by" and then forwarded calls to a special section which collected information on their work location, address, Social Security number, and status of their safety and welfare and that of their families. In addition, employees were offered the use of the Employee Assistance Program.
- Updated the list of all employees affected by Katrina using daily reports from employees calling the Employee Service Line.
- Engaged the help of the Postal Inspection Service to canvass door-to-door. Also, engaged the help of OIG special agents who made calls to facilities, supervisors, co-workers, and employees' relatives in an effort to confirm employees' well-being and locations.
- Participated in employee accountability list-sharing with the Craigslist,¹⁹ two of the Postal Service's major unions,²⁰ the OIG, the Red Cross, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The IEMP states that during times of emergency and disaster installations must account for all personnel. The Louisiana District and the Southeast Area supplemental hurricane plans require the Postal Service to inform all employees to call the national emergency hotline number for work-related instructions.

The Mississippi District and Southwest Area followed policies and procedures (such as establishing an EAU and having employees call the national emergency hotline and the Employee Service Line) and ensured all employees were initially accounted for in the days after Katrina. The Postal Service accounted for all employees because it was concerned about their safety and health.

Mississippi District's Actions to Track Employees' Locations Were Effective, But Southwest Area's Needed Improvement

The Mississippi District's actions to track employees' locations as they moved about the country were effective because the EAU remained in contact with employees after their initial contact. The Mississippi District reported that of the 735 employees in the

¹⁹ Craigslist is a website used to share information on communities throughout the U.S. For example, it includes information on employment, housing, services, missing persons, as well as Katrina survival.

²⁰ The two unions are the National Association of Letter Carriers and the American Postal Workers Union.

impacted area (395 ZIP Code), only 53 were displaced after Katrina made landfall. Of those, 50 went back to their original workplace and the remaining three are currently working in Fairhope, Alabama; Dallas, Texas; and Vicksburg, Mississippi. Table 3 shows the number of employees contacted and the number of times contact was made to track employees' locations as they moved.

Table 3: Total Number of Displaced Mississippi District Employees and Number of Times Employees were Contacted as They Moved

Displaced Employees	
Number of Employees Contacted	Number of Contacts Made
53	1
32	2
13	3
2	4
1	5

Source: Mississippi District Human Resources Manager

According to the Mississippi District Emergency Manager, (1) employees called the EAU and the Employee Service Line to report their initial locations and status, (2) EAU members contacted and remained in contact with employees, and (3) postmasters and supervisors from other Postal Service facilities called the EAU to report displaced employees reporting to their facilities or informed displaced employees to contact the EAU.

The Southwest Area's actions to track the New Orleans P&DC employees were not fully effective because after the initial contact with the 1,328 employees, the Southwest Area was not able to maintain contact with (track) some employees as they changed addresses in the days and months following Katrina's landfall. This occurred because some New Orleans P&DC employees did not inform the Postal Service of their locations as they moved. In those instances when employees made contact with the Southwest Area, the area did not maintain complete records of the contact information.

The Southwest Area began to track New Orleans P&DC employees by obtaining a list of emergency names and telephone numbers from the Postal Service's Complement Management System (CMS).²¹ The area then divided the list and distributed it among its seven districts,²² which then made contact with employees. In addition, the Southwest Area relied on the Employee Service Line to obtain information from employees (Katrina victims) who called to report their locations. However, the number only facilitated one-way communication — from the Postal Service to the employee. As a result, on September 1, 2005 (3 days after Katrina made landfall), Postal Service Headquarters corrected this at the request of the Southwest Area by modifying the Employee Service Line telephone script, which enabled two-way communications. This allowed call center

²¹ CMS houses a historical record of employees' personnel actions throughout their Postal Service career and it interfaces with other applications such as eAccess, Payroll, *PostalEASE*, and TACS.

²² The Southwest Area Districts are Albuquerque, Arkansas, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Oklahoma, and Rio Grande.

personnel in the seven district offices to obtain employees' locations and to determine if they were safe on a daily basis.

Although employees were responsible for keeping the Postal Service informed of their current mailing address, employees did not all follow the policy and report their address changes. In addition, the Postal Service did not remind employees of this responsibility. Also, when call center personnel called employees back, some of their telephone numbers were not operational and some were incorrect. In other cases, employees had moved.

The IEMP²³ requires the Postal Service to account for all employees. The Southeast Area and Louisiana District supplemental hurricane plans require the Postal Service to ensure all employees are informed to call the hotline number (such as the national emergency hotline number) for work-related instructions.

In addition, both the IEMP and supplemental hurricane plans require the Postal Service to maintain records regarding a hurricane. The IEMP states the district emergency manager must document emergency activities until they are transferred to the district documentation unit leader. The Southeast Area hurricane plan requires district safety managers to keep a hurricane log concerning the various phases of a hurricane emergency. It states managers will maintain the log from Phase I²⁴ (approximately 36 hours in advance of the hurricane making landfall) through Phase IV (when it is "all clear" – the hurricane has passed and is no longer a threat). The log is to include the date of execution of the steps outlined in each phase and the names of personnel present and their hours worked. Further, Postal Service policy²⁵ requires retention of safety documents²⁶ for a period of 5 years.

Finally, the ELM²⁷ requires advance approval for annual leave; however, there is an exception to the policy for emergencies. The policy states that in emergency situations, the employee must notify appropriate Postal Service authorities and specify the expected duration of the absence as soon as possible. The ELM²⁸ also states employees must keep the installation head informed of their current mailing addresses using a PS Form 1216, Employee's Current Mailing Address, the "Self Service" screen on the Postal Service's blue page, or other Postal Service-approved methods (such as *PostalEASE*).

The Mississippi District's actions to track employees' locations were effective because they established the EAU and maintained contact with employees as they changed

²³ IEMP, Production Version D-1.2, *Mississippi District*, March 2004, and Draft Final IEMP, Production Version I-1.2, *New Orleans P&DC*, March 2004.

²⁴ There are four phases as follows: Phase I/Hurricane Watch, Phase II/Hurricane Warning, Phase III/Imminent Danger of Hurricane Impact, and Phase IV/After the Emergency.

²⁵ *Administrative Support Manual* - Issue 13, Section 89, Records Retention, July 1999 (updated with *Postal Bulletin* revisions through December 22, 2005).

²⁶ Examples of safety forms are: Postal Service (PS) Form 1764, Accident Analysis Summary; PS Form 1767, Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice; PS Form 1769, Accident Report; PS Form 1772, Accident Log; PS Form 1773, Report of Hazard Log; and PS Form 1783, On-the-Job Safety Review/Analysis.

²⁷ ELM 17.11, Section 512.41, Requests for Annual Leave, 512.412, Emergencies, July 7, 2005.

²⁸ ELM 17.11, Section 665.5, Furnishing Address, July 7, 2005.

addresses in the days and months following Katrina. In addition, employees followed policies and procedures and remained in contact with the EAU if they changed addresses. As a result, all employees returned to work and the Mississippi District was aware of the employees' addresses and contact information following Katrina.

The Southwest Area's actions to track New Orleans P&DC employees' locations were not fully effective after the initial contacts because: (1) telephone lines were inoperable; (2) initially, the hotline number did not allow for two-way communication; (3) the Southwest Area did not maintain complete records of employee contact information; and (4) employees did not follow policy and advise the Postal Service of address and contact information changes. This resulted in the Southwest Area not knowing the location of some employees in the days and months following Katrina's landfall.

According to a Southwest Area Labor Relations Specialist, New Orleans P&DC employees probably did not always inform the Postal Service of their address changes because the catastrophic effects of Katrina overwhelmed them, their city, and state, and they were not able to deal with the stress it caused. We agree with this observation given the fact that New Orleans was evacuated and employees may have been moved to shelters as far away as Houston, Texas. In addition, shortly after Katrina's landfall, Hurricane Rita forced the evacuation of some Texas shelters where Katrina victims were housed. This caused further chaos and confusion.

Corrective Actions

According to Postal Service officials and memorandums,²⁹ the following corrective actions were taken as a result of lessons learned³⁰ following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita:

- Management reviewed and updated employees' contact information in the Southwest and Southeast Areas and requested employees to list (1) contacts **outside** their local commuting area and (2) their current email addresses.
- Management supplied employees in the Southwest and Southeast Areas³¹ with stickers,³² magnets, and key tags with the national emergency hotline numbers and Employee Assistance Program information. See Figure 7 for the approved key tag.

²⁹ Human Resources Southwest Area Memorandum, May 15, 2006, Subject: Emergency Preparedness — Updating Employee Contact Information; District Manager Louisiana District, October 7, 2005; and the Human Resources Mississippi District Memorandum, June 13, 2006, Subject: Employee Emergency Contact Information.

³⁰ The Postal Service held a Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Lessons Learned/After Action Review meeting in Dallas, Texas, March 14 and 15, 2006. These actions were discussed at the meeting.

³¹ According to Postal Service officials, all employees, regardless of their location, will eventually receive the stickers, magnets, and key tags.

³² Management placed stickers on employees' Postal Service identification badges.

Figure 7: Approved Key Tag



Other actions taken by Postal Service Headquarters, the Mississippi District, and the Southeast and Southwest Area offices include:

- Postal Service Headquarters utilized the national emergency hotline as a nationwide call center to establish employee accountability and the operational status of postal facilities. The hotline/call center allowed call center personnel to document employees' information on spreadsheets as they change addresses and will continue to do so for future emergencies. The Postal Service can generate a tracking log from the spreadsheets that detail employees' current mailing addresses, phone numbers, emergency contact information, and the date and location of the Postal Service facility where the employees return to work.
- The Southeast and Southwest Areas and districts are educating employees via safety talks and letters on the appropriate measures they should take to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a hurricane.
- According to the Southeast and Southwest Area Emergency Preparedness Managers, during times of disaster, they provide frequent updates on the toll-free national emergency hotline advising, reminding, and informing employees about required actions for themselves and the Postal Service. The Mississippi District's IEMP policy and procedure contain this provision.

Recommendation

In accordance with Postal Service policy concerning the retention of safety and hurricane records, we recommend the Vice President, Emergency Preparedness:

1. Maintain the information and documentation from the national emergency hotline/call center tracking log for a period of 5 years.

Management's Comments

The Vice President, Emergency Preparedness, agreed with the findings and recommendation. He acknowledged that during Katrina the call center was utilized to route displaced employees' calls to a live operator. He said the call center recorded the

employees' contact information and then sent it to the Southeast and Southwest Areas' Human Resource Managers. The Vice President stated that in the future, and in support of the OIG's recommendation, calls from displaced employees to the national emergency hotline number (1-888-363-7462) will be routed to the call center, and the call center information will be transmitted to the area human resource manager, who will retain the physical records for a period of 5 years. Management's comments, in their entirety, are included in Appendix C.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

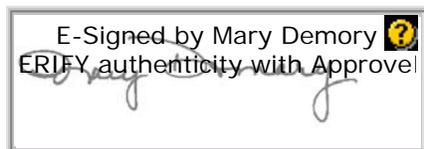
Management's comments are responsive to the recommendation and the planned action should address the issue identified in the report.

Additional Management's Comments

Although we had no recommendations for the Southeast or Southwest Area Vice Presidents, they provided comments. The Southeast Area Vice President said he agreed with the findings and that the actions planned to revise the Mississippi District's IEMP have been implemented as described in the report.

The Southwest Area Acting Vice President stated, in general, the Southwest Area concurs with the findings, with a few clarifying comments. He said while the report gives the Southwest Area high grades for its timely efforts in locating and accounting for displaced Louisiana District P&DC employees, it describes some deficiencies regarding the tracking of some employees as they moved about the country. The Acting Vice President said he cannot disagree and concedes there was difficulty in tracking some employees who moved several times trying to find a temporary home for themselves and their families. He said the fact that some employees had to move more than once, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and did not keep their addresses and numbers updated, made it extremely difficult to track a minimal number of the original 4,270 displaced employees. Further, the Acting Vice President said in the context of the enormous devastation, the Southwest Area is confident it did the best it could under the circumstances, but also agrees there is room for improvement. He said to that end, the Southwest Area has already put in place measures that the OIG agrees are appropriate to better the area's results in future similar events.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Chris Nicoloff, Director, Human Capital, or me at (703) 248-2300.



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APPENDIX A. ABBREVIATIONS

CAATS	Computer Assisted Assessment Techniques Staff
CDT	Central Daylight Time
CMS	Complement Management System
COOP	Continuity of Operations Plan
EAP	Emergency Action Plan
EAU	Employee Accountability Unit
ELM	Employee and Labor Relations Manual
EMT	Emergency Management Team
IEMP	Integrated Emergency Management Plan
mph	miles per hour
NOAA	Natural Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OIG	U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General
P&DC	Processing and Distribution Center
P&DF	Processing and Distribution Facility
PS	U.S. Postal Service
TACS	Time and Attendance Collection System
U.S.	United States

APPENDIX B. OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our overall objective was to determine the effectiveness of the actions to account for all employees after Katrina based on whether the Postal Service (1) located employees in the days after Katrina and (2) tracked employees' locations as they changed addresses in the days and months following the hurricane. We also determined what, if any, responsibility employees had to inform the Postal Service of their locations as they moved about the country.

We reviewed the facilities in the Southeast Area's Mississippi District³³ and the Louisiana District's New Orleans P&DC, located in the Southwest Area.

We interviewed Postal Service representatives in the Southeast and Southwest Areas and the Mississippi and Louisiana Districts to determine the number of employees and facilities impacted per district and to get their perspectives on Katrina's impact on the Postal Service. We also reviewed the Postal Service's news links, press releases, email correspondence, After Action Review meeting minutes, and employee accountability spreadsheets, and the congressional response on the Postal Service's role in preparing for and responding to Katrina.

In addition, we reviewed Postal Service policies and procedures on emergency planning to determine the actions that should be taken to (1) locate employees after natural emergencies such as Katrina and (2) track employees' locations as they move about the country. Specifically, we reviewed the IEMP which describes the EMT responsibilities in the response stage for personnel accountability. We interviewed Postal Service representatives in the Southeast and Southwest Areas and the Mississippi and Louisiana Districts to determine the actions they took to locate and track employees.

We also reviewed supplemental hurricane plans, which contain guidance on what the Postal Service should do to ensure they communicate with employees in the event of a hurricane or tropical storm.

We also reviewed the Postal Service's policies and procedures to determine employees' responsibilities to inform the Postal Service of their locations as they moved about the country. Specifically, we reviewed the COOPs, IEMPs, and supplemental hurricane plans.³⁴ In addition, we reviewed the Postal Service's ELM.³⁵

We conducted this audit from February through August 2006 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. We discussed our observations and conclusions with Postal Service management officials and included their comments where appropriate.

³³ The impacted facilities in the Mississippi District were in the 395 ZIP Code area.

³⁴ According to the Southeast Area Emergency Preparedness Manager, they updated the August 1, 2005, supplemental hurricane plans to incorporate lessons learned from Katrina. The updates took effect May 30, 2006.

³⁵ ELM 17.11, Section 512.41, Requests for Annual Leave and 512.412, Emergencies, July 7, 2005; and ELM 17.11, Section 665.5, Furnishing Address, July, 7, 2005.

APPENDIX C. MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS

HENRY A. PANKEY
VICE PRESIDENT, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



August 18, 2006

KIM H. STROUD, DIRECTOR, AUDIT REPORTING

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report – Postal Service Actions to Locate and Track Employees After
Hurricane Katrina (Report Number HM-AR-06-DRAFT)

This is in response to your request for comments on the referenced report concerning Postal
Service actions to locate and track employees after Hurricane Katrina.

Recommendation

Maintain the information and documentation from the national emergency hotline call center
tracking log for a period of five years.

Response

During Hurricane Katrina, the customer care call center was utilized to route employees
who were displaced to a live operator. The customer care center recorded contact
information that was sent to headquarters who sent the information to the Southeast
Area and Southwest Area Human Resources Managers.

We will support this recommendation based on this procedure.

Calls from displaced employees to 1-888-363-7462 number will be routed to a call
center and the call center information will be transmitted to the area human resources
manager who will retain the physical records for a period of five years as recommended.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry A. Pankey".

Henry A. Pankey

cc: Mr. Brown
Mr. Burgoyne
Mr. Wilson

475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW
WASHINGTON DC 20260-3901
202-268-5394
FAX 202-268-2024
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APPENDIX C. MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS (CONTINUED)

WILLIAM J. BROWN
VICE PRESIDENT, AREA OPERATIONS
SOUTHEAST AREA

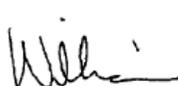


August 18, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR: Ms. Kim H. Stroud
Director, Audit Reporting

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report – Postal Service Actions to Locate
and Track Employees After Hurricane Katrina
(Report Number HM-AR-06-DRAFT)

Thank you for the opportunity to review the subject report. We agree with the findings.
We also would like to respond that the actions planned to revise the Mississippi District
IEMP have been implemented as described in the report.


William J. Brown



APPENDIX C. MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS (CONTINUED)

ELLIS A. BURGOYNE
(A) VICE PRESIDENT, SOUTHWEST AREA OPERATIONS



August 21, 2006

KIM H. STROUD
DIRECTOR, AUDIT REPORTING
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report – Postal Service Actions to Locate and Track Employees
After Hurricane Katrina (Report Number HM-AR-06-DRAFT)

This is the Southwest Area's response to the above OIG draft report of the audit of the "Postal Service Actions to Locate and Track Employees After Hurricane Katrina". In general, the Southwest Area concurs with the findings of the report, with the following few clarifying comments.

While the report gives the Southwest Area high grades for its timely efforts in locating and accounting for displaced Louisiana District P&DC postal service employees in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it also describes some deficiencies regarding the ongoing tracking of some of the employees as they moved about the country.

The Southwest Area cannot disagree and concedes that there was difficulty in tracking some of the employees who moved several times trying to find a temporary home for themselves and their families. The fact that some had to move more than once, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and did not keep their addresses and numbers updated, made it extremely difficult to track a minimal number of the original 4,270 displaced employees.

In the context of the enormous devastation as a result of this event, we are confident we did the best we could under the circumstances, but also agree that there is room for improvement. To that end, and as also noted in the report, the Southwest Area has already put in place measures that the OIG agrees are appropriate to better our results in future similar events.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this audit. We very much appreciate your hard work and the information this has provided to help us improve our efforts in the future.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me or Peter Sgro at 214-819-8660.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellis A. Burgoyne".

Ellis A. Burgoyne

cc: Steve Phelps

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(214) 819-8650
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