



AUDIT REPORT

Property Condition Reviews – Smithville, Leander, and Kyle Post Offices

January 11, 2021



Report Number 20-321-R21



January 11, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: STEVEN HERNANDEZ
DISTRICT MANAGER, RIO GRANDE DISTRICT

Lazerick C. Poland

FROM: Lazerick C. Poland
Director, Property Condition Review Team

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Property Condition Reviews –
Smithville, Leander, and Kyle Post Offices
(Report Number 20-321-R21)

This report presents the results of Property Condition Reviews at the Smithville, Leander, and Kyle Post Offices.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit Response Management
Chief Retail and Delivery Officer and Executive Vice President
Chief Commerce and Business Solutions Officer and Executive Vice President
Vice President, Area Retail and Delivery Operations, Southern
Vice President, Retail and Post Office Operations
Vice President, Facilities

Introduction

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of property conditions at the Smithville (owned), Leander (owned), and Kyle (leased) post offices in the Rio Grande District (Project Number 20-321). This audit was designed to provide U.S. Postal Service management with timely information on potential risks related to property conditions. The Postal Service is required to maintain a safe and healthy environment for both employees and customers in accordance with its internal policies and procedures¹ and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)² safety laws.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.

To accomplish our objective, we developed a checklist of requirements related to building maintenance, safety, and security. We judgmentally selected the Smithville Post Office based on interior square footage, the number of maintenance requests, and repair and maintenance spending. We selected the Leander and Kyle post offices based on their proximity to the Smithville Post Office. In addition, we reviewed Postal Service systems to identify maintenance issues and analyzed documentation for deficiencies. We conducted site visits from October 20-22, 2020, and performed observations, completed the checklists, and briefed local management on the issues identified.

We relied on computer-generated data from the Safety Toolkit and electronic Facilities Management System (eFMS). We assessed the reliability of the extracted data by reviewing the documentation and comparing it to our observations for completeness, validity, and accuracy. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

We conducted this performance audit from October 2020 through January 2021 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on December 17, 2020 and included their comments where appropriate.

¹ Handbook MS-47, *Facility Cleaning*, TL-5, June 27, 2014.

² OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

We found that building maintenance, safety, and security at the Smithville, Leander, and Kyle post offices did not meet prescribed standards. We identified 62 deficiencies at the three facilities that ranged from minor to more serious violations (see [Appendix A](#)).

Building Maintenance

At the Smithville Post Office, we identified cobwebs and chipped paint throughout the facility, and dirty HVAC filters (see Figure 1). In addition, the postmaster's restroom was inoperable (see Figure 2). These issues were not previously reported in eFMS or on Postal Service (PS) Form 4805, *Maintenance Work Order Request*.

Figure 1. Dirty HVAC Filters



Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) photo taken on October 22, 2020.

Figure 2. Inoperable Restroom Located in the Postmaster's Office



Source: OIG photos taken on October 22, 2020.

We also identified the following issues at the Smithville Post Office:

- General housekeeping issues (e.g., trash in the basement).
- Dirty sinks in the bathroom.
- Burnt out light bulbs throughout the facility.
- Evidence of a roof leak.
- Dirty blinds.
- Faulty light switch and torn screen in the basement.

- Missing, rotted, or damaged exterior wood trim on windows and doors.

At the Leander Post Office, we identified stained and missing ceiling tiles (see Figure 3); stained walls (see Figure 4); burnt out light bulbs; dirty floors; and a ceiling leak caused by HVAC issues. In addition, the gutter near the employee entrance was damaged (see Figure 5), the toilets in the women’s restroom leaked, and the urinal in the men’s restroom was slow to drain.

Figure 3. Stained/Missing Ceiling Tile



Figure 4. Stained Walls



Figure 5. Damaged Gutter



Source: OIG photos taken on October 21, 2020.

The gutter and toilet issues at the Leander Post Office were reported in eFMS on April 17 and 26, 2019; however, these issues were not corrected during our visit. Management reported the urinal issue on a PS Form 4805, before our visit on October 19, 2020.

At the Kyle Post Office, we identified cobwebs in the lobby; dirty floors throughout the facility (see [Figure 6](#)), a dirty and severely stained water fountain (see [Figure 7](#)), missing bumper replaced by a traffic drum used to prevent vehicles from backing into the platform (see [Figure 8](#)), and missing concrete near a walkway, causing the railing to be unstable (see [Figure 9](#)).

Figure 6. Dirty Floors



Source: OIG photo taken on October 20, 2020.

Figure 7. Dirty Water Fountain



Source: OIG photo taken on October 20, 2020.

Figure 8. Missing Dock Bumper



Source: OIG photo taken on October 20, 2020.

Figure 9. Broken Concrete Near Railing



Source: OIG photo taken on October 20, 2020.

We also identified the following issues at the Kyle Post Office:

- Stained and broken ceiling tiles throughout the facility.
- Cracks on walls in the lobby.
- Missing blinds on the workroom floor (windows were covered with cardboard).
- Stained walls and rusted partitions in the men's and women's restrooms.
- Stained toilets in the women's restroom.
- Missing fascia on the front and trim hanging on the side of the building.

Furthermore, none of the three post offices performed semiannual Housekeeping Inspections or maintained Postal Service Form 4851, Housekeeping Inspection Log, as required. However, management took corrective action at the Kyle and Leander post offices and performed the inspections while we were onsite.

Building Safety

At the Smithville Post Office we identified open and blocked electrical panels (see Figure 10); an emergency exit sign not illuminated (see Figure 11); a faded stop sign facing the wrong direction (see Figure 12); and a drainage hole that created a potential trip hazard (see Figure 13).

Figure 10. Open and Blocked Electrical Panel



Source: OIG photo taken on October 22, 2020.

Figure 11. Exit Sign Not Illuminated



Source: OIG photo taken on October 22, 2020.

Figure 12. Faded Stop Sign



Source: OIG photo taken on October 22, 2020.

Figure 13. Drainage Hole



Source: OIG photo taken on October 22, 2020.

We also identified the following issues at the Smithville Post Office:

- Fire extinguishers not inspected monthly and annually.
- Poster CA-10, *What a Federal Employee Should Do When Injured at Work* not displayed.
- OSHA posters 3165 and 3167, *Job Safety and Health* (English and Spanish versions) not displayed.

At the Leander Post Office, we identified multiple areas with exposed wires (see Figure 14); exposed pipes; a blocked Inspection Service door; and fire extinguishers not inspected annually or monthly since 2005 and 2012, respectively.

Figure 14. Exposed Wires



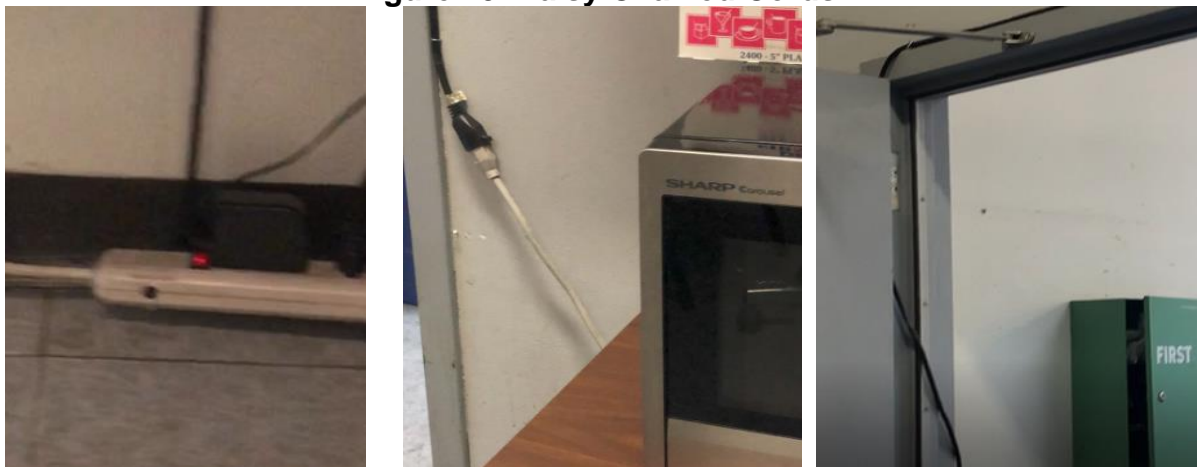
Source: OIG photo taken on October 21, 2020.

We also identified the following issues at the Leander Post Office:

- Blocked fire extinguishers.
- Pothole in the parking lot.
- Poster CA-10, *What a Federal Employee Should Do When Injured at Work* not displayed.
- OSHA poster 3167, *Job Safety and Health* (Spanish version) not displayed.

At the Kyle Post Office, we identified an outside electrical outlet missing a cover, daisy chained surge protectors and extension cords (see Figure 15), and a cluttered workroom floor that limited the space available for sorting and preparing mail for delivery.

Figure 15. Daisy Chained Cords



Source: OIG photo taken on October 20, 2020.

We also identified the following issues at the Kyle Post Office:

- One fire extinguisher not mounted.

- Fire extinguishers not inspected monthly or annually.
- Poster CA-10, *What a Federal Employee Should Do When Injured at Work* not displayed.
- OSHA posters 3165 and 3167, *Job Safety and Health* (English and Spanish versions) not displayed.

At all three facilities, management took corrective action while we were onsite by posting the CA-10 and OSHA posters 3165 and 3167. At the Leander Post Office, management took corrective action and unblocked the Inspection Service door.

Building Security

At the Smithville and Leander Post Offices, we did not observe any security issues. However, at the Leander Post Office, management expressed concern regarding the lack of fencing to secure the fleet of new Postal Service vehicles. They were also concerned there were no outside security cameras around the building and stated that an employee's car had been vandalized.

At the Kyle Post Office, we found two of 11 postal carrier trucks unlocked in an unsecured parking lot. In addition, we observed a side door propped open (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Side Door Propped Open



Source: OIG photograph taken October 20, 2020.

The Postal Service is required to maintain a safe environment for both employees and customers. In addition, OSHA requires employers to provide a safe and healthful workplace free of recognized hazards. More importantly, these issues could jeopardize the health, safety, and well-being of Postal Service employees and customers. Further, it could create an environment that dissuades customers from doing business in these offices. If management does not address workplace hazards, the Postal Service could potentially incur fines.

Conditions related to building maintenance, safety, and security occurred due to competing priorities or lack of management oversight to address general maintenance and repair issues. Specifically, maintenance issues included stained and missing ceiling tiles, damaged walls, and dirty air vents were not given top priority by maintenance personnel. Also, safety issues included exposed electrical wires and outlets, fire extinguisher inspections,³ and housekeeping inspections⁴ were not addressed due to lack of management oversight.

Furthermore, management at the Kyle Post Office did not ensure carrier trucks were locked due to lack of oversight. Postal Service policy requires carriers to lock vehicle doors if they will be out of direct sight of the vehicle.⁵

OSHA requires the inspection, maintenance, and testing of all portable fire extinguishers, including monthly and annual inspections.⁶ Management is also required to ensure electrical panels are unblocked,⁷ a requirement that management at the Smithville Post Office overlooked due to space constraints.

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. We identified 18 issues at the three post offices that could potentially result in \$98,280⁸ of risk exposure.

Recommendation #1: We recommend the **Manager, Rio Grande District**, address all building maintenance, safety, and security issues identified at the Smithville, Leander, and Kyle post offices.

Recommendation #2: We recommend the **Manager, Rio Grande District**, inspect fire extinguishers monthly and annually as required at the Smithville, Leander, and Kyle post offices.

Recommendation #3: We recommend the **Manager, Rio Grande District**, perform and document housekeeping inspections at the Smithville Post Office and verify that all facilities conduct the inspections at the required frequency.

³ Occupational Safety and Health Standards (OSHA) - 29 CFR 1910.157, Portable Fire Extinguishers.

⁴ *Custodial Team Cleaning Handbook*, Section 4.6, March 13, 2019.

⁵ Handbook M-41, *City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*, Section 822, June 2019.

⁶ OSHA, 29 CFR 1910.157 (e)(1), (e)(2), and (e)(3).

⁷ OSHA, 29 CFR 1910.303 (b)(1).

⁸ Based on average fine amount the Postal Service paid for post office OSHA violations from 2017 to 2019.

Other Matter – Space Constraints

The southern and western regions of the U.S. have experienced rapid population growth in recent years. According to U.S. Census data, Leander, TX was ranked number one in the state and number two nationally in population growth over the last decade.⁹ Leander's population grew 126 percent (27,709 to 62,608) during the period 2010 through 2019.

Kyle, TX experienced population growth of 69 percent (28,683 to 48,393) during this period. Regarding the cluttered workroom floor, the postmaster stated the number of postal routes serviced from the Kyle Post Office increased from 10 routes to 30 routes over the last two years, and the existing space was reconfigured several times to accommodate the additional routes. Management also stated that they conducted a space constraint study of the Kyle Post Office because of the increase in mail delivery caused by the population growth. Expansion of the post office was approved; however, no action regarding expansion had been taken during our review.

Workspace availability can ultimately have a significant impact on productivity and the safety of employees. Sufficient space can also help prevent unforeseen hazards that could result from crowded working conditions. The rate of growth in these cities suggests that management should consider population growth in determining future expansion to accommodate increases in business.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with the report's findings, recommendations, and other impact amount.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated they have directed the assigned Manager, Post Office Operations and Installation Postmasters to coordinate the abatement of the violations and safety concerns. Additionally, with a few exceptions, where specialized work is needed, immediate abatement of some violations and deficiencies was completed. Issues related to repainting walls in the basement and repairing/replacing rotted wood trim at the Smithville Post Office and repairing/replacing the damaged gutter at the Leander Post Office were reported to Facilities. The Manager, Post Office Operations will follow up on the remaining abatements. The target implementation date is April 30, 2021.

Regarding recommendation 2, management directed the assigned Manager, Post Office Operations and Installation Postmasters to coordinate the abatement of fire extinguisher access, mounting, and inspection issues. Management stated they have removed obstacles to fire extinguisher access, relocated extinguishers, and properly mounted and tagged extinguishers. Management also stated that monthly and annual inspections have been scheduled. The target implementation date is January 30, 2021.

⁹ U.S. Census report on city and town population totals for the period 2010-2019.

Regarding recommendation 3, management stated they have directed the assigned Manager, Post Office Operations, and Installation Postmasters, to coordinate the completion and documentation of the periodic housekeeping inspections. The Postmaster of each identified office will be responsible for completing PS Form 4851, Housekeeping Inspection. The target implementation date is January 15, 2021.

See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

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

Regarding recommendation 1, management provided a list of completed and remaining items for each post office, along with photos of completed items. Management also implemented a plan to address the remaining maintenance and safety issues, including repainting walls, repairing/replacing rotted wood trim, and abating the lead paint issue at the Smithville Post Office; and repairing the damaged gutter at the Leander Post Office. Management needs to provide supporting documentation and/or photos of corrective actions taken to address these remaining deficiencies.

Regarding recommendation 2, management provided photos of corrective actions taken related to the fire extinguishers at each facility, including properly mounting an extinguisher, unblocking access, and completing monthly inspections. Management stated in separate correspondence that the district is investigating the purchase of contractor services to complete annual inspections at all three post offices. Management needs to provide supporting documentation of the service contract or other evidence of annual fire extinguisher inspections at the Smithville, Leander, and Kyle post offices.

Regarding recommendation 3, management provided copies of PS Forms 4851, showing inspections were completed at the Smithville, Leander, and Kyle post offices. We consider management's action taken to be sufficient to address the recommendation.

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

Recommendations 1 and 2 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. We consider recommendation 3 closed with the issuance of this report.

Appendix A: Facility Deficiency Summary

Facility		Smithville	Leander	Kyle	Total Deficiencies
Building Maintenance Issues					
1	General housekeeping (dust, trash, clutter)	D	✓	✓	1
2	Plumbing not functioning properly (leaking water, clogged drains)	D	D	✓	2
3	Cobwebs throughout the facility	D	✓	D	2
4	Dirty fixtures in bathroom (toilet, partitions, sinks, wall tiles etc.)	D	✓	D	2
5	Lighting issues (missing covers/bulbs)	D	D	D	3
6	Outdoor flood light not working	✓	D	✓	1
7	Dirty floors throughout the facility	✓	✓	D	1
8	Damaged or dirty walls	D	D	D	3
9	Damaged ceiling/missing tile	D	D	D	3
10	Dirty windows and blinds	D	✓	✓	1
11	Cardboard covering window	✓	✓	D	1
12	Broken/damaged gutter	✓	D	✓	1
13	Dirty, stained water fountain	✓	✓	D	1
14	Faulty light switch	D	✓	✓	1
15	Crumbling concrete or chipped cement	✓	✓	D	1
16	Dock area (missing bumpers)	✓	✓	D	1
17	Torn window screens	D	✓	✓	1
18	HVAC issues (dirty filters, leaks, etc.)	D	D	✓	2
19	Exterior wood trim on doors and windows rotted, damaged, or missing	D	✓	D	2
20	Housekeeping Inspection (PS Form 4851)	D	D	D	3
Building Safety Issues					
21	Faded or rusted signage	D	✓	✓	1
22	Hole in ground (trip hazard)	D	✓	✓	1
23	Cluttered workroom floor (trip hazard)	✓	✓	D	1
24	Electrical outlets (cracked, exposed wires, and missing covers)	✓	D	D	2
25	Electrical panels missing covers, blocked, open, or have broken locks	D	✓	✓	1
26	Daisy chained cords	✓	✓	D	1
27	Exposed plumbing/pipes	✓	D	✓	1
28	Exit signs not illuminated	D	✓	✓	1
29	Fire extinguishers not inspected monthly	D	D	D	3
30	Fire extinguishers not inspected annually	✓	D	D	2
31	Fire extinguisher not mounted	✓	✓	D	1
32	Blocked fire extinguisher	✓	D	✓	1
33	Pothole in parking lot (trip hazard)	✓	D	✓	1
34	OSHA poster 3165, <i>Job Safety and Health</i> (English version) not displayed	D	✓	D	2

	Facility	Smithville	Leander	Kyle	Total Deficiencies
35	OSHA poster 3167, <i>Job Safety and Health</i> (Spanish version) not displayed	D	D	D	3
36	CA-10, <i>What a Federal Employee Should Do When Injured at Work</i> not displayed	D	D	D	3
37	Blocked Inspection Service door	✓	D	✓	1
Building Security Issues					
38	Unlocked postal vehicles	✓	✓	D	1
39	Unsecured door	✓	✓	D	1
Total Deficiencies		21	18	23	62

Source: OIG analysis based on property reviews.

✓ – No deficiency; D – Deficiency

Appendix B: Management's Comments

DISTRICT MANAGER, CUSTOMER SERVICE & SALES
RIO GRANDE DISTRICT



January 4, 2021

JOSEPH E. WOLSKI
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Property Conditions Review Smithville, Leander, and Kyle Post Offices (Report Number [20-321])

Rio Grande District Management agrees with the OIG's findings, observations, other impacts statement, and recommendations.

Recommendation #1:

We recommend the Manager, Rio Grande District, address all building maintenance, safety, and security issues identified at the Smithville, Leander, and Kyle Post Offices.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Rio Grande District agrees with recommendations to improve identified facilities maintenance, safety and security deficiencies.

The District Manager directed the assigned Manager, Post Office Operations and Installation Postmasters to coordinate the abatement of the violations and safety concerns. With a few exceptions, where substantially expanded specialized work must be completed, immediate abatement of violations and deficiencies has taken place. Repainting walls in basement – Smithville Post Office, repairing/replacing rotted wood trim – Smithville Post Office, and Repairing/replacing damaged overhanging gutter – Leander Post Office have been reported to Facilities. Follow up for the abatements will be the next higher level official, Post Office Operations Manager (Centx).

Target Implementation Date:

April 30, 2021

Responsible Official:

Postmaster, Smithville, Leander, and Kyle respectively.

Recommendation #2:

We recommend the Manager, Rio Grande District, inspect fire extinguishers monthly and annually as required at the Smithville, Leander, and Kyle Post Offices.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Rio Grande District agrees with recommendations to ensure fire extinguishers are routinely inspected to meet safety & health standards.

The District Manager directed the assigned Manager, Post Office Operations and Installation Postmasters, to coordinate the abatement of the fire extinguisher access, mounting, and inspection issues. Obstacles to fire extinguishers access have been removed or the fire extinguishers have been relocated. All fire extinguishers are now properly mounted and identified. All fire extinguishers have been equipped with proper tags for recording of routine inspections. Monthly and Annual inspections have been scheduled. Follow up for the abatements will be the next higher level official, Post Office Operations Manager (Centx).

ONE POST OFFICE DRIVE
SAN ANTONIO, TX 78284-9998
210-368-5548 OFFICE

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Target Implementation Date:
January 30, 2021.

Responsible Official:
Postmaster, Smithville, Leander, and Kyle respectively.

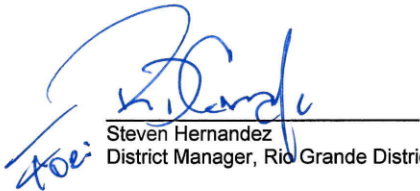
Recommendation #3:
We recommend the Manager, Rio Grande District, perform and document housekeeping inspections at the Smithville Post Office and verify that all facilities conduct the inspections at the required frequency.

Management Response/Action Plan:
Rio Grande District agrees with recommendations to ensure the performance and documentation of housekeeping inspections at all facilities is conducted as required.

The District Manager directed the assigned Manager, Post Office Operations and Installation Postmasters, to coordinate the completion and documentation of the periodic housekeeping inspections. The Postmaster of each identified office will be responsible for the completion of PS-form 4851, "Housekeeping Inspection." These inspections will also ensure that the safety department is consulted in the proper execution and compliance. Follow up for the housekeeping inspections will be the next higher level official, Post Office Operations Manager (Centx) responsibility.

Target Implementation Date:
January 15, 2021

Responsible Official:
Postmaster, Smithville, Leander, and Kyle respectively.


Steven Hernandez
District Manager, Rio Grande District

cc: *Kristin Seaver, Chief Retail and Delivery Officer*
Jakki Krage Strako, Chief Commerce & Business Solution
Timothy Costello, VP, Southern Area Retail & Delivery Operations