



AUDIT REPORT

Property Condition Reviews – Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood Post Offices

February 3, 2021



Report Number 21-046-R21



February 3, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: PAMELA A. DUNAWAY
ACTING, DISTRICT MANAGER, GATEWAY DISTRICT

Lazerick C. Poland

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

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Property Condition Reviews –
Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood Post Offices
(Report Number 21-046-R21)

This report presents the results of Property Condition Reviews at the Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood 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: 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, Central
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 Maplewood (owned), North County (owned), and Brentwood (leased) Post Offices in the Gateway District (Project Number 21-046). 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, security and safety standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.

To accomplish our objective, we developed a checklist of requirements related to building maintenance, security, and safety. We judgmentally selected the Maplewood Post Office based on interior square footage, the number of maintenance requests, and repair and maintenance spending. We selected the North County and Brentwood post offices based on their proximity to the Maplewood Post Office. In addition, we reviewed Postal Service systems to identify maintenance issues and analyzed documentation for deficiencies. We conducted site visits from November 17-19, 2020, and performed observations, completed checklists, and briefed local management on the issues identified.

We relied on computer-generated data from the electronic Facilities Management System. 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 November 2020 through February 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 January 21, 2021 and included their comments where appropriate.

We found that building maintenance, safety, and security at the Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood Post Offices did not meet prescribed standards. We identified

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

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

59 deficiencies at the three facilities that ranged from minor to more serious violations (see [Appendix A](#)).

Building Maintenance

At the Maplewood Post Office, we identified chipped paint (manager's office contains lead paint), holes in walls and ceilings (see [Figure 1](#)), and an unlabeled door that was a men's restroom. There were also plumbing issues such as a continuously running toilet and sink and a leaking hot water handle in the manager's and men's restrooms. In addition, the workroom floors had numerous scratches and scuff marks.

Figure 1. Walls and Ceilings with Chipped Paint and Holes



Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) photos taken on November 18, 2020.

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

- Burnt out light bulbs in the lobby and workroom floor.
- Rusted utility sink basin in men's restroom.
- Dirty heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) and duct work.
- Dirty window air conditioning unit in the window clerk area.
- Missing and broken blinds on workroom floor and retail counter.
- Chipped paint on outdoor railings in the rear and front of the building.
- Debris in outside stairwell.

At the North County Post Office, we identified a stained wall from a previous roof leak in the workroom area, stained ceiling tiles (see [Figure 2](#)), and a portable directional exit stand in lobby that was broken and secured with Priority Mail tape (see [Figure 3](#)). In addition, the outdoor fencing was leaning and not connected in some sections (see [Figure 4](#)).

Figure 2. Stained Ceiling Tiles



Figure 3. Broken Lobby Sign



Figure 4. Outdoor Fencing



Source: OIG photos taken on November 17, 2020.

We also identified the following issues at the North County Post Office:

- Cobwebs in lobby window.
- Dirty HVAC vents and walls.
- Burnt out light bulbs throughout the facility.
- Broken concrete border in employee parking lot.
- An empty Postal Service hamper that was outside and filled with standing water.
- Excessive leaves, trash, and debris around the facility.

During our site visit, management took corrective action and removed the trash and debris around the building and emptied the water in the hamper.

At the Brentwood Post Office, we identified potential mold below the window near an exposed pipe in the workroom area (see [Figure 5](#)); signs of a water leak in the workroom area; dead bugs on window ledges and in bait boxes (see [Figure 6](#)); walls that were cracked, marred with holes, and scuffed (see [Figure 7](#)); and a cracked entry tile in the lobby and dirty floors with grooves on the workroom floor (see [Figure 8](#)).

Figure 5. Potential Mold and Pipe



Source: OIG photo taken on November 19, 2020.

Figure 6. Dead Bugs



Figure 7. Damaged Walls



Source: OIG photo taken on November 19, 2020.

Figure 8. Dirty and Damaged Floors



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

- Cracks on foundation and on building exterior.
- Bricks missing on retaining wall.
- Untidy and cluttered workroom area.
- Unstable/leaning desk in the workroom area.
- Lights out in PO Box section of workroom floor.
- Dirty HVAC vents.
- Trash in janitorial closet/HVAC room.

Furthermore, the Maplewood and Brentwood Post Offices did not perform semiannual housekeeping inspections or maintain Postal Service Form 4851, *Housekeeping Inspection Log*, as required.

Building Security

At the Maplewood Post Office, we did not observe any security issues; however, at the North County Post Office we found an unlocked carrier truck. In addition, at the Brentwood Post Office we found a carrier used the deadbolt lock to prop open the back door. We brought this to the window clerk's attention during our site visit and they took immediate corrective action to secure the door.

Building Safety

At the Maplewood Post Office there was an open electrical panel used to turn the lights on and off on the workroom floor (see Figure 9) and paper emergency exit signs that were not illuminated (see Figure 10). In addition, Poster CA-10, *What a Federal Employee Should Do When Injured at Work* and OSHA Poster 3167, *Job Safety and Health* (Spanish version) were not displayed.

Figure 9. Open Electrical Panel



Source: OIG photo taken on November 18, 2020.

Figure 10. Exit Signs Not Illuminated



Source: OIG photo taken on November 18, 2020.

At the North County Post Office we identified an electrical cord for the Passive Adaptive Scanning System machine anchored to the wall with packaging tape (see Figure 11), an uncovered electrical fixture on the wall with exposed wires (see Figure 12), a blocked Inspection Service door (see [Figure 13](#)), and a fire extinguisher that had not been inspected annually since August 2019.

Figure 11. Unsecured Cord



Source: OIG photo taken on November 17, 2020.

Figure 12. Uncovered Electrical Item



Source: OIG photo taken on November 17, 2020.

**Figure 13. Blocked Inspection
Door**



Source: OIG photo taken on November 17, 2020.

We also identified the following issues at the North County Post Office:

- Cracks in concrete throughout the employee and customer parking lots, creating a potential trip hazard.
- Poster CA-10 and OSHA Poster 3167 (Spanish version) were not displayed.

At the Brentwood Post Office, we found that there had been no monthly fire extinguisher inspection since September 2020, an electrical panel was open, and flammable items were not properly stored. In addition, none of the required posters such as CA-10, OSHA posters 3165 and 3167 (English and Spanish versions), nor the Zero Tolerance Policy and Reporting Procedures were displayed.

We also noted that the custodian or employee assigned to the facility does not perform the necessary cleaning to reduce the spread of influenza and the coronavirus. The custodian is part-time and works one day a week for two hours at the Brentwood Post Office and the remainder of his time at the Maplewood Post Office. Custodial duties at the Brentwood Post Office are emptying the trash, changing the rugs, and mopping the floors. Often the custodian may not go to the Brentwood Post Office or is called back to the Maplewood Post Office before completing the assigned tasks. When this occurs, tasks such as wiping frequently touched surfaces or emptying trash are not officially performed and are the unofficial responsibility of staff.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends routine cleaning of all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace at least daily. Given the concern regarding the spread of viruses through contaminated objects and surfaces, the Postal Service

updated its policy³ and requires the cleaning of frequently touched surfaces either each operating tour or daily to minimize the transmission of viruses.

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, security, and safety at the Maplewood Post Office occurred due to lack of oversight, custodian limitations, and lack of access to additional custodial resources. At the North County Post Office, the conditions occurred due to lack of management oversight. In addition, at the Brentwood Post Office, conditions occurred due to lack of consistent management oversight, custodian availability, inadequate cleaning frequency, and employees not being trained to perform cleaning requirements when custodial resources were not available. Furthermore, managers' and supervisors' failure to complete housekeeping inspections indicates the lack of awareness of the policy and its requirements.

Management's attention to maintenance, security, and safety deficiencies 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 10 issues at the three post offices that could potentially result in \$54,600⁴ of risk exposure.

Recommendation #1: We recommend the **Manager, Gateway District**, address all building maintenance, security, and safety issues identified at the Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood Post Offices.

Recommendation #2: We recommend the **Manager, Gateway District**, inspect and document fire extinguishers monthly and annually as required at the North County, and Brentwood Post Offices.

Recommendation #3: We recommend the **Manager, Gateway District**, reiterate the policy to perform and document housekeeping inspections and provide necessary training for managers and supervisors at the Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood Post Offices and verify that the facilities conduct the inspections at the required frequency.

³ Maintenance Management Order – MMO-031-20, dated February 3, 2020.

⁴ Based on average fine amount the Postal Service paid for post office OSHA violations from 2017 to 2019.

Recommendation #4: We recommend the **Manager, Gateway District**, instruct non-custodial personnel at the Brentwood and Maplewood Post Offices to meet Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cleaning requirements when custodial resources are not available.

Management's Comments

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

Regarding recommendations 1 and 2, management stated that although several deficiencies have been abated, some building maintenance infrastructure items depend on action from the Facilities Office. Individual facility managers with oversight from the St. Louis postmaster will be responsible for initiating actions to correct all deficiencies. Management also stated the postmaster will hold weekly virtual meetings with each manager to monitor progress and inspect each facility to validate that all identified items have been corrected. The target implementation date is May 31, 2021.

Regarding recommendations 3 and 4, management stated that the lead maintenance manager will provide training on performing housekeeping inspections and cleaning requirements no later than February 28, 2021. Individual facility managers with oversight from the St. Louis postmaster will be responsible for initiating actions to correct all deficiencies. Management also stated the postmaster will hold weekly virtual meetings with each manager to monitor progress and inspect each facility to validate that all identified items have been corrected. The target implementation date is May 31, 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 and corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report.

Regarding recommendation 1, management provided photos of some of the corrective actions taken at the Maplewood Post Office, including displaying required posters, cleaning HVAC vents, labeling doors, and replacing bulbs. Management did not provide evidence of abated items at the North County and Brentwood post offices. Management needs to provide supporting documentation and/or photos of corrective actions taken to address the remaining building maintenance, safety, and security deficiencies at the Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood post offices.

Regarding recommendation 2, management should provide evidence of monthly and annual fire extinguisher inspections at the North County and Brentwood post offices when completed.

Regarding recommendation 3, management provided copies of completed housekeeping inspections conducted at the North County Post Office. Management indicated they would provide necessary training for managers and supervisors on performing and documenting housekeeping inspections by February 28, 2021. Management needs to provide documentation of completed inspections conducted at the Maplewood and Brentwood post offices.

Regarding recommendation 4, management indicated that they would provide non-custodial personnel at the Maplewood and Brentwood post offices with training on cleaning requirements by February 28, 2021. Management needs to provide supporting documentation or other evidence that the training or instruction was completed.

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

Appendix A: Facility Deficiency Summary

	Facility	Maplewood	North County Branch	Brentwood	Total Deficiencies
Building Maintenance Issues					
1	Rusty utility sink in restroom	D	✓	✓	1
2	Broken sign in lobby	✓	D	✓	1
3	General housekeeping (dust, clutter)	✓	D	D	2
4	Plumbing not functioning properly (leaking water, clogged drains)	D	✓	✓	1
5	Equipment filled with standing water	✓	D	✓	1
6	Damaged floor	D	✓	D	2
7	Lighting Issues	D	D	D	3
8	Damaged/stained, dirty walls	D	D	D	3
9	Damaged ceiling/missing tile	D	D	✓	2
10	Potential mold	✓	✓	D	1
11	Damaged work desk	✓	✓	D	1
12	Chipped handrails (rusty, broken)	D	✓	✓	1
13	Landscaping issues (downed tree branch, leaves, trash, debris)	✓	D	✓	1
14	Insect infestation	✓	✓	D	1
15	Uncovered pipes	✓	✓	D	1
16	Water leak	✓	✓	D	1
17	Broken concrete border	✓	D	✓	1
18	Cracks on building	✓	✓	D	1
19	Bricks on retaining wall missing	✓	✓	D	1
20	Outdoor fencing issues	✓	D	✓	1
21	Trash in HVAC area	✓	✓	D	1
22	HVAC duct work (dirty)	D	D	D	3
23	Housekeeping Inspection (PS Form 4851)	D	✓	D	2
24	Window blind missing on workroom floor	D	✓	✓	1
25	Missing HVAC vent cover	D	✓	✓	1
26	Debris in stairwell (lower window area)	D	✓	✓	1
27	Window AC front open and dirty	D	✓	✓	1

	Facility	Maplewood	North County Branch	Brentwood	Total Deficiencies
28	Unlabeled door	D	✓	✓	1
Building Safety Issues					
29	Open electrical panel	D	✓	D	2
30	Electrical outlets (exposed wires, and missing covers etc.)	✓	D	✓	1
31	Exit signs not illuminated	D	✓	✓	1
32	Fire extinguishers not inspected annually	✓	D	✓	1
33	Fire extinguishers not inspected monthly	✓	✓	D	1
34	Flammable items improperly stored	✓	✓	D	1
35	English version – OSHA poster, <i>Job Safety and Health</i>	✓	✓	D	1
36	Spanish version – OSHA poster, <i>Job Safety and Health</i>	D	D	D	3
37	CA-10 - What a Federal Employee Should Do When Injured at Work	D	D	D	3
38	Zero Tolerance Policy and Reporting Procedures	D	✓	D	2
39	Unsecured electrical cord	✓	D	✓	1
40	Cracks in concrete (trip hazard)	✓	D	✓	1
41	Blocked Inspection Service door	✓	D	✓	1
Building Security Issues					
42	Unsecured door	✓	✓	D	1
43	Postal vehicles not secured	✓	D	✓	1
Total Deficiencies		19	18	22	59

Source: OIG analysis based on property reviews.

✓ – No deficiency; D – Deficiency

Appendix B: Management's Comments

DISTRICT MANAGER, CUSTOMER SERVICE & SALES
GATEWAY PERFORMANCE CLUSTER



Date: January 29, 2021

JOSEPH E. WOLSKI
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Property Condition Reviews – Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood Post Offices (21-046-DRAFT)

The draft report on the deficiencies noted in each respective facility fall under three defined categories. Those being...1) Building Maintenance, 2) Building Security and 3) Building Safety. Our response summary is therefore outlined in category sequence.

Building Maintenance

1. **Maplewood** – Management agrees with all deficiencies identified in the report and the local Facility Manager has initiated FSSP request or local maintenance work orders as appropriate, with several items already abated. Deficiencies involving the condition of building walls, indoor / outdoor painting and the plumbing concerns still require approval from the Facilities office (FSSP). We anticipate abatement of all building maintenance issues by April 2021.
2. **North County** – Management agrees with all deficiencies identified and the local Facility Manager has initiated action to abate with exception of the broken concrete border in the employee parking lot. We are waiting on FSSP response on that item and requires follow-up. We currently project abatement of all issues by May 2021.
3. **Brentwood** – Management agrees with all deficiencies identified. The local Facility Manager has taken action to abate the general custodial deficiencies noted. However, we also wait FSSP response on the building infrastructure concerns with cracks on foundation and building exterior. This is a facility that is leased from the city of Brentwood and the lessor will be responsible for the repairs. We currently project abatement of all issues by May 2021.

Building Security

1. No deficiencies noted at Maplewood. Management agrees with items identified at North County and Brentwood, and the local Facility Manager has taken appropriate measures to address. All items abated.

Building Safety

1. **Maplewood** – Management agrees with all items identified and the local Facility Manager has initiated actions to abate each item. All items abated.
2. **North County** – Management agrees with all items identified. The local Facility Manager has taken measures to all items noted with exception of the electrical cord for the Passive Adaptive Scanning Machine. FSSP submission has been made to install a power source in

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the ceiling with a drop cord to power the PASS machine. Anticipated abatement is February 2021.

3. **Brentwood** – Management agrees with all items identified. Local Facility Manager has taken the appropriate measures to correct / abate all items noted in the report. All items abated.

Recommendation #1 – We recommend the Manager Gateway District, address all building maintenance, security, and safety issues identified at the Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood offices.

- **Management Response/Action Plan:**
Management agrees with this recommendation with modification of responsible party as indicated in “Responsible Official” section below.
- **Target Implementation Date:**
Although several of the deficiency items identified have been corrected and/or abated, some of the building maintenance infrastructure items are dependent on FSSP action from our Facilities Office. Final abatement of all items identified in the report is projected for May 2021.
- **Responsible Official:**
Although individual Facility Managers at each respective office are responsible for initiating actions to correct all deficiencies, they will do so with oversight from the Postmaster, St. Louis MO in the Gateway District. The St. Louis Postmaster will hold weekly “virtual” meetings with each manager to monitor progress and then conduct a personal inspection of each facility to validate all identified items have been corrected.

Recommendation #2 – We recommend the Manager Gateway District, inspect and document fire extinguishers monthly and annually as required at the North County and Brentwood Post Offices.

- **Management Response/Action Plan:**
Management agrees with this recommendation with modification of responsible party as indicated in “Responsible Official” section below.
- **Target Implementation Date:**
Although several of the deficiency items identified have been corrected and/or abated, some of the building maintenance infrastructure items are dependent on FSSP action from our Facilities Office. Final abatement of all items identified in the report is projected for May 2021.
- **Responsible Official:**
Although individual Facility Managers at each respective office are responsible for initiating actions to correct all deficiencies, they will do so with oversight from the Postmaster, St. Louis MO in the Gateway District. The St. Louis Postmaster will hold weekly “virtual” meetings with each manager to monitor progress and then conduct a personal inspection of each facility to validate all identified items have been corrected.

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Recommendation #3 – We recommend the Manager Gateway District, reiterate the policy to perform and document housekeeping inspection and provide the necessary training for managers and supervisors at the Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood offices.

- **Management Response/Action Plan:**
Management agrees with this recommendation with modification. This training will be provided by the Lead Manager, Maintenance no later than February 28, 2021.
- **Target Implementation Date:**
Although several of the deficiency items identified have been corrected and/or abated, some of the building maintenance infrastructure items are dependent on FSSP action from our Facilities Office. Final abatement of all items identified in the report is projected for May 2021.
- **Responsible Official:**
Although individual Facility Managers at each respective office are responsible for initiating actions to correct all deficiencies, they will do so with oversight from the Postmaster, St. Louis MO in the Gateway District. The St. Louis Postmaster will hold weekly “virtual” meetings with each manager to monitor progress and then conduct a personal inspection of each facility to validate all identified items have been corrected.

Recommendation #4 – We recommend the Manager Gateway District, instruct non-custodial personnel at the Maplewood and Brentwood offices to meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cleaning requirements when custodial resources are not available.

- **Management Response/Action Plan:**
Management agrees with this recommendation with modification. This training will be provided by the Lead Manager, Maintenance no later than February 28, 2021.
- **Target Implementation Date:**
Although several of the deficiency items identified have been corrected and/or abated, some of the building maintenance infrastructure items are dependent on FSSP action from our Facilities Office. Final abatement of all items identified in the report is projected for May 2021.
- **Responsible Official:**
Although individual Facility Managers at each respective office are responsible for initiating actions to correct all deficiencies, they will do so with oversight from the Postmaster, St. Louis MO in the Gateway District. The St. Louis Postmaster will hold weekly “virtual” meetings with each manager to monitor progress and then conduct a personal inspection of each facility to validate all identified items have been corrected.



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