



Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

Audit Report

Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Southwest Station, Washington, D.C.

Report Number 21-088-R21 | April 12, 2021



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Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

April 12, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: DARRYL MARTIN
MANAGER, CAPITAL DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Balduff", is centered below the "MEMORANDUM FOR" section.

FROM: Sean Balduff
Director, Delivery and Retail Response Team

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery and Customer Service
Operations – Southwest Station, Washington, D.C.
(Report Number 21-088-R21)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Southwest Station, Washington, D.C.

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

Attachment

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

Results

Background

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations at the Southwest Station, Washington, D.C. (Project Number 21-088). The Southwest Station is in the Capital District of the Atlantic Area. This audit was designed to provide U.S. Postal Service management with timely information on potential scanning and mail delivery risks at the Southwest Station.

The Southwest Station has 48 city routes which are delivered by 59 full-time city carriers and 29 city carrier assistants. The Southwest Station also has 15 clerks, including 10 full-time and five postal support employees. We selected the Southwest Station for review based on the number of stop-the-clock¹ (STC) scans occurring at the delivery unit.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate select mail delivery and customer service operations and determine whether internal controls are effective at the Southwest Station, Washington, D.C.

To accomplish our objective, we reviewed delivery metrics, including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, distribution up-time,² and carriers return to office time. During our site visit from January 26-28, 2021, we reviewed unit safety and security procedures, mail conditions, and Voyager card and arrow lock key³ security procedures. We analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the “Notice Left”⁴ area and interviewed unit management and employees.⁵

We conducted this audit from January through April 2021 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. 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 March 26, 2021 and included their comments where appropriate.

We relied on computer-generated data from the Product Tracking and Reporting System, Customer Service Daily Reporting System (CSDRS),⁶ the Maintenance Request System, and the Scan Point Management System. Although we did not test the validity of controls over these systems, we assessed the accuracy of the data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. Therefore, we determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

On the morning of January 26, 2021, we identified 5,132 pieces of delayed mail at the carrier cases (see [Table 1](#)). Specifically, we identified 2,177 letters, 661 pieces of flat mail, 2,217 pieces of sequenced mail, 16 pieces of outgoing mail, and 61 packages (see [Table 1](#) and [Appendix A](#)).

1 A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mailpiece.

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

3 A distinctively shaped key carriers use to open mail-receiving receptacles such as street collection boxes and panels of apartment house mailboxes equipped with an arrow lock. Arrow lock keys are accountable property and subject to strict controls.

4 The area of a postal facility where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

5 The city carriers we interviewed had from 15 months to 34 years of service.

6 A delivery unit-based system that provides a snapshot of the daily condition of the mail at the point in time when the carriers have departed for the street. The data in this system is used to provide management with a formal delayed mail reporting tool.

Table 1: Delayed Mail by Type

Zip Code	Letters / DPS	Flats	Sequenced mail	Outgoing mail	Packages	Totals
20003	1,787	528	2,044	16	56	4,431
20024	390	133	173	-	5	701
Unit Total	2,177	661	2,217	16	61	5,132

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of mail at carrier cases.

Figure 1. Delayed Mail at One Carrier Case



Source: OIG photographs taken at the Southwest Station on January 26, 2021.

Unit personnel stated that mail volume and lack of staffing contributed to the delayed mail. We determined that the unit experienced high mail volume on January 25, 2021 (the day prior to our visit). Compared to the prior three-week average, letter mail volume was 55 percent higher, flats were 10.6 percent higher, and packages were 8.2 percent higher. We also determined that on the day prior to our visit, eight of the 48 routes did not have a carrier assigned and 21 other routes required assistance that day.

7 Delivery Unit Service Talk-Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail, February 2019.

8 Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services, Transmittal Letter 14, Section 111.2.g, June 2019.

9 Linear measurement is used to indicate approximate mail volume based on conversion rates by type of mail. For example, letter sized mail is recorded as about 227 pieces per foot.

Postal Service policy⁷ states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Mail Express are scheduled (committed) for delivery or processing on the day of receipt at the post office. Additionally, policy⁸ states that managers must review all communications that may affect the day's workload and be sure that replacements are available for unscheduled absences. Further, they must develop contingency plans for situations that may interfere with normal delivery service. When mail is delayed, there is an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **District Manager, Capital District**, direct the **Postmaster, Washington, D.C.**, to develop a plan to monitor staffing at the Southwest Station and ensure the unit has adequate staffing to deliver all committed mail on a daily basis.

Finding #2: Inaccurate Reporting of Mail Conditions

Management at the Southwest Station did not accurately report delayed mail in CSDRS. We reviewed the unit's delayed mail reporting for January 25, 2021 and found that no delayed mail was reported in the appropriate fields by the unit the day before our visit. The unit did state in the Comments section that two feet⁹ of mail did not get delivered on two different routes due to safety concerns. However, this is far less than the 5,132 pieces we identified at the unit on the morning of January 26, 2021.

Unit management stated they were previously instructed not to report values in the appropriate fields of CSDRS but rather only enter data in the Comments section. District management stated that all data should be entered in the appropriate fields and that the comments are to provide specific details or identify conditions. Postal Service policy¹⁰ states that all mail remaining at a unit after the carriers have left to begin their street duties must be reported in CSDRS. If mail is not delivered as scheduled, management must enter revised information and appropriate comments into CSDRS as soon as the delayed situation is realized.¹¹ When mail conditions are reported inaccurately, management at the local, district, area, and headquarters levels are unable to take the appropriate actions to mitigate the issues.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the **District Manager, Capital District**, direct the **Postmaster, Washington, D.C.**, to develop a plan to monitor and ensure all delayed mail at the Southwest Station is reported daily in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System.

Finding #3: Improper Scanning

Employees at the Southwest Station improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit instead of the delivery point. We used geolocation data to analyze scan performance for the period of September through November 2020 and identified 131,697 STC scans that occurred at the delivery unit (see Table 2). STC scans for packages should occur at the point of delivery.

Table 2. Stop-The-Clock Scans at Delivery Unit

September	October	November	Total
41,308	47,189	43,200	131,697

Source: OIG analysis of product tracking and reporting data.

Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed multiple instances where packages were scanned in batches at the same time. Station management stated that carriers had been making the scans as they loaded their vehicles to go out for delivery. The manager stated that in December 2020, she instructed carriers to scan all items at the point of delivery after the district provided data showing that scans were being made at the unit. Subsequent review of scan data for the month of January 2021 showed that the percentage of STC scans at the unit decreased from 25.57 percent during our scope period to just 3.64 percent in January 2021.

We also conducted on-site observations at the unit on the morning of January 26, 2021, before the carriers arrived for the day. During our observations, we judgmentally selected 151 packages (140 from the carrier cases and 11 from the “Notice Left” area) to review and analyze their scanning and tracking data. Of the 151 packages that we reviewed, 85 were either missing a scan or had improper scans and two were handled incorrectly. Specifically:

- Sixty-four packages were scanned as “Delivered”. A “Delivered” scan should only be made when a package is successfully left at the delivery address. The oldest package was first scanned “Delivered” on December 3, 2020.
- Sixteen packages did not have an “Arrival At Unit” scan, which is a required scan for performance measurement.
- Five packages were scanned “No Access” at either the delivery unit or at a place other than the delivery address.
- Two packages were scanned as “Forwarded” but were not properly processed in the forwarding system.

¹⁰ CSDRS Users Guide, dated September 30, 2016

¹¹ Delivery Management System, Standard Work Instruction, *PM ALL Clear Tasks* requires that management check the station and vehicles to ensure all mail was delivered.

Unit management stated they did not have the ability to identify and review questionable scans. However, we determined they had access to scanning exceptions maintained in the Delivery Management System, which they are required to review as part of the daily morning walkthrough process.¹² The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,¹³ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹⁴

Customers rely on accurate scan data to track their packages in real time. When employees do not scan mailpieces correctly, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning operations, management can potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and the Postal Service brand.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the **Manager, Capital District**, direct **management at the Southwest Station** to review and monitor scan data for compliance and provide unit personnel with refresher training on proper package scanning and handling procedures.

Finding #4: Safeguarding of Assets

Southwest Station management did not properly manage and safeguard Postal Service assets including arrow lock keys, Voyager cards, and mail delivery vehicles.

Arrow Lock Keys

On the morning of January 26, 2021, we reviewed the unit's inventory log for arrow lock keys and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. Ten of the 38 keys on the inventory log were missing and one key was not included on the

inventory log. The keys were kept inside the registry cage, which was often left open and unattended throughout our visit.

This condition occurred due to insufficient management oversight. Specifically, there were times when a supervisor or clerk was not available to assign keys to the carriers. During these times, the carriers were allowed to obtain their keys from the registry cage without signing them out.

According to Postal Service policy,¹⁵ key inventories should be completed semiannually and management must ensure accountable items are properly handled. Further, Postal Service policy¹⁶ states that keys must remain secured until they are individually assigned to personnel. A supervisor or clerk must supervise employees signing out or use a "key check" system to receive keys. Insufficient oversight of arrow lock keys could increase the risk of mail theft.

Voyager Fleet Cards

We were unable to verify the unit's Voyager Fleet cards during our site visit. Management stated they secured the cards assigned to the unit in a floor safe in November 2020 and had been unable to open the safe ever since. The station manager stated she requested maintenance to open the safe in November 2020, but could not provide us documentation of the submitted request. The station manager stated there were two available cards that were not in the safe and planned to allow the carriers to use them for all 51 vehicles until the safe could be opened. She called the issuing bank to request a limit increase and management drove the cards to the carriers while they were delivering their routes to allow everyone the opportunity to fuel their vehicles. We reviewed Southwest Stations Voyager Fleet card transactions for December 2020 and found that 16 cards recorded gas purchases for the month of December. This indicates that management did not realize 14 other cards were being used and, therefore, were not in control of them.

¹² Delivery Management System, Standard Work Instruction, Morning Walkthrough – DMS Dashboards Tasks – Prior Day Review.

¹³ *Delivery Done Right the First-Time* stand-up talk, March 9, 2020.

¹⁴ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 17, 2017.

¹⁵ Handbook M-39, *Management of Delivery Services*, Section 111.2, Daily Operations, March 2004.

¹⁶ *Arrow/Mail Key Accountability Guide*, August 2017.

Postal Service policy states that every vehicle is assigned a Voyager Fleet card¹⁷ which should be accounted for each day. Voyager Fleet cards are accountable items and should be treated as such and they should never be carried by off-duty personnel or left in unattended vehicles or other locations with unrestricted access.¹⁸ Further, Postal Service policy states that the servicing VMF manager is the only person who has the authority to change the limits for cards.¹⁹ When there is insufficient oversight and supervision of accountable items such as Voyager Fleet cards, there is an increased risk of theft. Furthermore, management cannot prevent potentially fraudulent charges and unauthorized purchases.

Unsecured Vehicles

On January 26, 2021, we identified 32 unsecured vehicles, four of which had mail left inside and one of those four also had a scanner left in it. When we brought this to unit management’s attention, they stated the vehicles had been left open overnight to allow for a contractor to sanitize them. We checked the vehicles again on January 27, 2021, and found 31 were unsecured, with three having mail left inside (see Table 3). We discussed this with district management and were told that under no circumstances were the vehicles to be left unsecured. Instead, the unit should have someone available to unlock the vehicles when the sanitization company is onsite.

Table 3. OIG Analysis of Unlocked Vehicles

Day of Observation	Unlocked Vehicles	Vehicles With Mail Left Inside	Total Vehicles Inspected
January 26	32	4	51
January 27	31	3	51

Source: OIG observations.

Postal Service policy states that all vehicle doors must be secured when vehicles are left unattended and out of the driver’s immediate sight.²⁰ These conditions occurred because unit management did not follow the PM Verification of Activity Checklist. The checklist requires managers to verify that vehicles are free of mail and trash and are locked and secure. Unit management stated they did not complete the PM Verification of Activity Checklist because there is a district-specific checklist that they are required to complete. District management refuted this statement and said that there is no District-specific checklist. When vehicles are left unlocked, there is an increased risk that they could be vandalized or stolen.

Recommendation #4

We recommend the **Manager, Capital District**, direct the **Postmaster, Washington, D.C.**, to ensure that managers at Southwest Station follow the daily PM Verification of Activity Checklist and properly manage and safeguard Postal Service assets.

Finding #5: Safety and Security Concerns

The facility was not consistently maintained in accordance with applicable building safety, maintenance, and security standards. During our site visit we identified several significant safety issues. Specifically, we identified holes in the perimeter fence, concertina (razor) wire loose on the ground of the parking lot, a non-functional emergency exit, and a damaged dock lift (see Figure 2). We also identified maintenance issues such as carrier case lights held together by straps and toilets that would not flush properly.

¹⁷ Postal Service’s eFleet Card: Site Manager online course.

¹⁸ Standard Work Instructions (Quick Reference): U.S. Bank Voyager Fleet Card Management for Site Managers, Revision February 2019.

¹⁹ U.S. Bank Voyager Fleet Card – At a Glance for Site Managers, February 25, 2019.

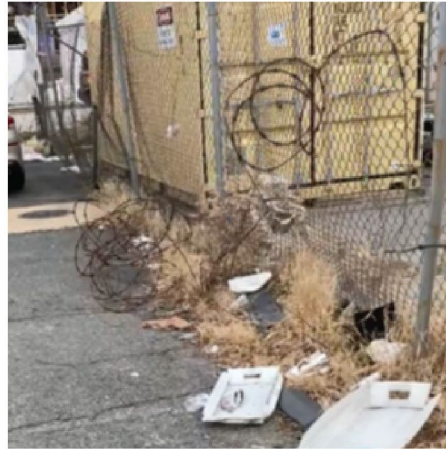
²⁰ Handbook EL-814, Postal Employee’s Guide to Safety, Section X, E, 4, Parking.

Figure 2: Examples of Safety and Security Concerns

Holes in the Perimeter Fence



Concertina Wire Loose on the Ground



Non-Functional Emergency Exit



Damaged Dock Lift



Source: OIG photographs taken on January 26, 2021.

District management stated that they were unaware of all but one of the conditions we identified. They stated there had been a request in December 2020 to replace the dock lift, but the manager had not yet requested a quote for the replacement. District management also stated they would send the district maintenance manager to the unit to assess the other issues.

During our audit, district management began abating some of the safety and security concerns we identified. Specifically, they relabeled the non-functional emergency exit as “Not an Exit”, submitted an Exception Request Form for emergency replacement of the dock lift, and repaired exposed wiring on carrier case lights.

Postal Service policy²¹ states that it is necessary to maintain a safe, pleasant, and healthy working environment and to maintain all plant and postal equipment in good operating condition. By properly maintaining postal equipment and facilities and addressing safety and security issues as they arise, management can provide a proper working environment and avoid employee and customer injuries.

Recommendation #5

We recommend the **Manager, Capital District**, direct the **Postmaster, Washington, D.C.**, to ensure repairs are completed for all the safety issues identified during the audit.

Management’s Comments

Management agreed with all findings and recommendations in the report. See [Appendix B](#) for management’s comments in their entirety.

Regarding recommendation 1, district management stated that the postmaster’s office is reviewing daily staffing at all units and maximizing overtime and resource reallocation to address unscheduled absences. District management provided us with documentation showing the daily report that is sent to the postmaster and two senior managers to forecast staffing needs by unit. Management implemented these actions on April 2, 2021.

²¹ *Administrative Support Manual*, Chapter 53, Maintenance.

Regarding recommendation 2, district management stated that the postmaster will train all responsible management employees on how to identify delayed mail and properly report it in CSDRS. Management's target implementation date is April 9, 2021.

Regarding recommendation 3, district management stated they are requiring all responsible management employees to review daily scan reports and take necessary actions for any inappropriate scans. In addition, unit management will receive training on proper package and handling procedures. Management stated they implemented these actions on April 2, 2021.

Regarding recommendation 4, district management stated they are reiterating the procedures regarding the PM Verification of Activity Checklist, including verifying the security of vehicles. Additionally, they are putting a process in place to ensure proper issuance and return of Voyager cards, vehicle keys, and arrow lock keys. The postmaster's office will also perform random validations of data recording. Management's target implementation date is April 30, 2021.

Regarding recommendation 5, district management will either take local action or request assistance from the Facilities Services Organization to address the safety

issues we identified during the audit. Management's target implementation date is May 30, 2021.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations in the report.

We consider recommendation 1 closed with the issuance of this report.

Regarding recommendation 3, district management provided us with documentation showing that they provided training to unit management. However, they did not provide sufficient documentation showing a daily review of scan reports was being performed.

Recommendations 2 through 5 require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requires written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. Therefore, these 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.

Appendices

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Appendix A: Delayed Mail Totals By Route

During our site visit, we identified 5,132 pieces of delayed mail on 27 of 48 routes. See Table 4 for specific details by route.

Table 4. Delayed Mail Totals by Route

Route	Letters / DPS	Flats	Sets or EDDM (in pieces)	Outgoing Mail	Parcels
301		34	276	3	1
303	703	117			16
304	28	6	92		1
306					1
307					1
308	116	34			2
312			522		
313	78	37			3
314		55			8
316	30	4			
317			732		
320	92	54			
330					1
331					5
332					1
335			422		

Route	Letters / DPS	Flats	Sets or EDDM (in pieces)	Outgoing Mail	Parcels
337	8				
338	67	15		13	6
339	224	3			9
341	117	7			1
Zip 20003 Totals	1,787	528	2,044	16	56
2401	15	1			
2402	73	10			
2403	42	1			3
2404	2	1			
2405	258	120			
2407			173		
2431					2
Zip 20024 Totals	390	133	173	-	5
Unit Totals	2,177	661	2,217	16	61

Appendix B: Management's Comments



April 2, 2021

JOSEPH E. WOLSKI
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Response to Draft Audit Report – Mail Delivery and Customer Service
Operations – Southwest Station, Washington DC
(Project Number 21-088-DRAFT)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) draft audit report, "Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Southwest Station, Washington DC".

Management agrees with the findings noted in the audit report.

Management does agree with the recommendations as outlined in the audit per the responses below.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the District Manager, Capital District direct the Postmaster, Washington, DC, to develop a plan to monitor staffing at the Southwest Station and ensure the unit has adequate staffing to deliver all committed mail on a daily basis.

Management Response/Action Plan

Management agrees with this recommendation and has implemented by directing the postmaster to plan staffing based on knowledge on the prior day of the upcoming workday, monitoring unscheduled absences and maximizing overtime and reallocating resources as needed from other Washington, DC offices based on workload. This process is reviewed daily. To request closure of this recommendation sample copies of the situational report being used will be provided.

Target Implementation Date

April 2, 2021

Responsible Official

Postmaster, Washington, DC

Recommendation #2

We recommend the District Manager, Capital District direct the Postmaster, Washington, DC to develop a plan to monitor and ensure all delayed mail at the Southwest Station is reported daily in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System.

Management Response/Action Plan

Management agrees with this recommendation and has implemented by directing the postmaster to train all responsible management employees on the process to identify delayed mail and to properly record in CSDRS. HERO Training Course "2012CITY1399SS01" will be utilized. To request closure, training records for the five EAS employees at Southwest Station will be provided.

Target Implementation Date

April 9, 2021

Responsible Official

Postmaster, Washington, DC

Recommendation #3

We recommend the Manager, Capital District, direct management at the Southwest Station to review and monitor scan data for compliance and provide unit personnel with refresher training on proper package scanning and handling procedures.

Management Response/Action Plan

Management agrees with this recommendation and has implemented by requiring responsible EAS employees to review daily scan reports and take action as necessary for any inappropriate scans/ findings. All management employees will receive a copy of standard work along with service talks on the subject. To request closure of this recommendation documentation for the training conducted at Southwest Station will be provided.

Target Implementation Date

April 2, 2021

Responsible Official

Postmaster, Washington, DC

Recommendation #4

We recommend the Manager, Capital District, direct the Postmaster, Washington, DC, to ensure that managers at Southwest Station follow the daily PM Verification of Activity Checklist and properly manage and safeguard Postal Service assets.

Management Response/Action Plan

Management agrees with this recommendation and has implemented by reiterating the procedures regarding the PM Verification of Activity Checklist as required, including unsecured vehicles. Regarding vehicle fuel cards, a process to issue and return vehicle keys along with the fuel card will be put in place to monitor daily. Arrow keys will also be issued and returned as needed and verified daily by management that all are accounted, otherwise appropriate procedures will be followed. The postmaster's office will put in place a process to randomly validate that data recorded is accurate. To request closure of this recommendation, documentation examples of the random audits will be provided.

Target Implementation Date

April 30, 2021

Responsible Official

Postmaster, Washington, DC

Recommendation #5

We recommend the Manager, Capital District, direct the Postmaster, Washington, DC, to ensure repairs are completed for all the safety issues identified during the audit.

Management Response/Action Plan

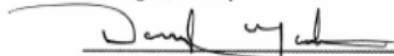
Management agrees with this recommendation and has implemented by addressing each finding from the audit by either taking action locally or requesting assistance from Facilities Services Organization. To request closure of this recommendation a PowerPoint presentation showing before and after pictures of each issue identified and addressed will be submitted.

Target Implementation Date

May 30, 2021

Responsible Official

Manager, Safety



Darryl Martin
Maryland District Manager

cc: Manager, Corporate Audit & Response Management

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**INSPECTOR
GENERAL**
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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