



Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

Audit Report

Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Carrier Sections, Cleveland, OH

Report Number 21-147-R21 | June 15, 2021



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Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

June 15, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR: SUSAN A. TAYLOR
MANAGER, OHIO 1 DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean Balduff", is written in a cursive style.

FROM: Sean Balduff
Director, Delivery and Retail Response Team

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery and Customer Service
Operations – Carrier Sections, Cleveland, OH
(Report Number 21-147-R21)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations - Carrier Sections, Cleveland, OH.

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, Central Area

Results

Background

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations at the Carrier Sections in Cleveland, OH (Project Number 21-147). The Carrier Sections is in the Ohio 1 District of the Central Area. This audit was designed to provide U.S. Postal Service management with timely information on potential scanning, mail delivery, and customer service operations risks at the Carrier Sections.

The delivery unit has 34 city routes delivered by 37 full-time carriers, one part-time carrier, and 11 city carrier assistants. The Carrier Sections has 16 clerks including 13 full-time and three postal support employees. We selected the Carrier Sections for review based on the number of customer inquiries the unit received. Specifically, there were 1,239 inquiries recorded in the Customer 360 (C360)¹ system from December 2020 through February 2021. Most of the inquiries (1,086, or 87.65 percent) were related to package tracking and delivery. During our visit we determined that these inquiries were often related to packages that were still at the processing plant.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate select mail delivery and customer service operations and determine whether internal controls were effective at the Carrier Sections, Cleveland, OH.

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 carriers return to office time, C360 inquiries, and truck arrival scan data. During our site visits from April 20-21, 2021, we reviewed

unit safety and security procedures, mail conditions, arrow lock key³ security procedures, truck arrival scanning procedures, and COVID-19 safety procedures. We also 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 April through June 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 May 26, 2021 and included their comments where appropriate.

We relied on computer-generated data from the Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) system. Although we did not test the validity of controls over this system, we assessed the reliability of the data by reviewing existing information, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Finding #1: Package Delivery Scanning and Handling

Delivery unit employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit rather than at the delivery point. We analyzed scans performed between December 2020 and February 2021 and found that 4,443 packages received a stop-the-clock⁶ (STC) scan at the unit (see [Table 1](#)). Most of these packages were scanned “Delivered” (see [Table 2](#)).

1 A cloud-based application which enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.

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 employees we interviewed had from nine months to 36 years of service.

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

Table 1. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

December	January	February	Total
1,421	1,582	1,440	4,443

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of Postal Service PTR system data.

Table 2. STC Scan Types at the Delivery Unit

Scan Type	Count	Percentage of Scans
Delivered	4,304	96.87%
Receptacle Full	67	1.51%
Refused	54	1.22%
No Secure Location	11	0.25%
No Authorized Recipient	7	0.16%
Total	4,443	100%⁷

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service PTR system data.

Further analysis showed that one carrier made about 46 percent of the scans at the unit. We spoke to the carrier and she claimed to have had scanner issues, saying that her scanner would get stuck in the wrong mode. However, management stated they had recently coached her about improperly scanning packages at the unit.

Based on interviews with other employees who scanned packages at the unit, we found that the majority⁸ of the remaining scans were made for customers with

⁷ Total percentage does not equal exactly 100 percent due to rounding.

⁸ We reviewed 1,102 scans at addresses that made up the top 25 percent of the scans at the unit. We compared the addresses to the list of firm holdout customers provided by management and found that 862 (78 percent) were firm holdout customers.

⁹ Firm holdout service allows a customer to pick up street-addressed mail at the delivery unit when the customer normally receives 50 letters or more on the first delivery trip, or when the customer is a news agent or publisher's representative and receives publications that qualify for newspaper treatment.

¹⁰ We only found two packages at the carrier cases and they were scanned correctly.

¹¹ This includes nine of the 16 packages previously cited with improper scans.

¹² *Notice Left and Return Guidelines* dated July 2007, states that domestic packages should be returned to sender on the 15th calendar day and international packages should be returned to sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.

firm holdout service.⁹ We determined that the carriers correctly scanned these packages as delivered and set them aside for customers to pick up daily.

We also conducted on-site observations at the unit on the morning of April 20, 2021, before carriers arrived for the day. During our observations, we judgmentally selected 32 packages (30 from the “Notice Left” area and two from the carrier cases¹⁰) to review and analyze their scanning and tracking data.

Of the 30 packages in the “Notice Left” area, 16 were missing an STC scan, had improper scans, or were scanned at a location other than the destination. Specifically:

- Ten were scanned “No Secure Location Available”, “No Authorized Recipient Available”, or “Receptacle Full/Item Oversized” away from the delivery point. Two of these were scanned at the delivery unit.
- Five were scanned “Delivered”. One of these was scanned away from the delivery point. Four of these packages received a “Delivery Attempted” scan shortly after the “Delivery” scan, indicating that the carrier was anticipating the delivery before attempting delivery. A “Delivered” scan should only be made when a package is successfully left at the delivery address.
- One was missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.

Further we observed 16 packages¹¹ in the “Notice Left” area that should have been returned to sender.¹² These packages ranged from four to 79 days past their return dates. Management stated the clerk who handled packages in the “Notice Left” area recently retired, so they are in the process of training a new clerk.

These package scanning issues occurred because management did not adequately monitor scan performance and enforce compliance. 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 Postal Service brand.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **District Manager, Ohio 1 District**, instruct the **Postmaster, Cleveland**, to develop and implement a plan to ensure that employees follow standard operating procedures for scanning and handling packages, monitoring scan data for compliance, and providing remediation actions for employees with recurring scanning errors.

Finding #2: Customer Inquiry Log

The unit did not maintain a log to track inquiries from walk-in and call-in customers or enter the inquiries into the C360 system. This occurred due to insufficient management oversight. Specifically, management stated that they had a log in the past but did not enforce the use of it. Postal Service policy¹⁵ states that the unit should maintain a log or create service requests in C360 for walk-ins or phone calls that need follow up. If customer inquiries are not properly tracked, there is a chance that they may not be addressed in a timely manner, which could adversely impact customer service and the Postal Service brand. While we were

on site, management created and provided an example of the log that they now use to track inquiries from walk-in and call-in customers. As a result, we are not making a recommendation regarding this issue.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with both findings and the recommendation in the report. See [Appendix A](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Regarding recommendation 1, management developed a plan that includes requiring the opening supervisor to review the "Notice Left" area daily to ensure that no mailpiece is older than 15 days. The closing supervisor must also verify that a proper scan was made on all "Notice Left" packages. In addition, the district manager and postmaster will conduct random reviews to ensure unit management and employees are following standard operating procedures for scanning and handling packages. In subsequent communications, management stated their target implementation date is July 30, 2021.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

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

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

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

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

¹⁵ *C360 Service Request Quality Review Worksheet*, September 2019.

Appendix A: Management's Comments

 UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE
June 4, 2021

JOSEPH WOLSKI
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Carrier Sections,
Cleveland, OH (Project Number 21-147)

Finding # 1: Package Delivery Scanning and Handling

Delivery unit employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit rather than at the delivery point.

Finding #2: Customer Inquiry Log

The unit did not maintain a log to track inquiries from walk-in and call-in customers or enter the inquiries into the C360 system.

Recommendation #1: We recommend the **District Manager, Ohio 1 District**, instruct **Carrier Sections Management** to develop and implement a plan to ensure that employees follow standard operating procedures for scanning and handling packages, monitoring scan data for compliance, and providing remediation actions for employees with recurring scanning errors.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management Agrees with the findings and recommendations.

For finding #1, Cleveland management has devised the following action plan:

1. Opening Supervisor will check the Left Notice area daily to verify that no mail piece is older than 15 days.
2. Closing Supervisor will pull up all left notices packages that is returned to the office and verify what scan was place on the package. The Supervisor will attach the tracking & confirmed sheet to the package.
3. District Manager, Ohio 1 District and the Cleveland Postmaster will conduct random GEMBA walks to ensure that Carrier Sections Management and their employees are following the standard operating procedures for scanning and handling packages.

Finding #2 was addressed while the OIG Official was onsite (please see the remark form the audit):

1. "While we were on site, management created and provided an example of the log that they now use to track inquiries from walk-in and call-in customers. As a result, we are not making a recommendation regarding this issue."

District Manager, Ohio 1 District has followed the recommendation (recommendation #1) from the unit review.

Target Implementation Date:

The abating actions were implemented immediately.

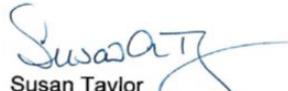
Responsible Official:

The responsible officials to ensure that the actions are carried out are:

Cleveland Postmaster, Rose Spraggins

Manager, Customer Services/Operations, [REDACTED]

Manager, Customer Services (Carrier Sections), [REDACTED]



Susan Taylor
District Manager, Ohio 1 District

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management
Postmaster, Cleveland
Manager, Customer Services/Operations
Executive Manager, Finance and Budget
Manager, Delivery Programs Support (Central Area)
file

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1735 North Lynn Street
Arlington, VA 22209-2020
(703) 248-2100

For media inquiries please email
press@uspsoig.gov or call 703-248-2100.