



Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

Audit Report

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Vancouver Main Post Office, Vancouver, WA

Report Number 22-032-R22 | February 3, 2022

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON
MAIN OFFICE



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Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

February 3, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: PAMELA J. COOK
MANAGER, WASHINGTON DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lazerick C. Poland", is positioned below the recipient information.

FROM: Lazerick Poland
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Vancouver Main Post Office, Vancouver,
WA (Report Number 22-032-R22)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Vancouver Main Post Office, Vancouver, WA.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ricardo Martinez, 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, WestPac Area

Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Vancouver Main Post Office (MPO) in Vancouver, WA (Project Number 22-032). The Vancouver MPO is in the Washington District of the WestPac Area. The post office services ZIP Codes 98660, 98661, 98663, 98665, 98685, and 98686.¹ There are about 135,114 people living in these ZIP Code areas, with about 133,721 (99 percent) living in urban communities and about 1,393 (1 percent) living in rural communities.² We judgmentally selected the Vancouver MPO based on the number of customer inquiries per route the unit received. From June 1 through August 31, 2021, the unit received 12 inquiries per route, which was more than the average of 10.62 inquiries per route for all sites serviced by the Portland Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC).

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Vancouver MPO in Vancouver, WA.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on these four audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, and property conditions. Specifically, we reviewed delivery metrics including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, and distribution up-time.³ During our site visit from November 30 through December 2, 2021, we reviewed mail conditions; package and truck arrival scanning procedures; and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the “Notice Left” area⁴ and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on January 18, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

¹ The unit also services ZIP Code 98668, which is used for PO Boxes and business customers.

² We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from Esri, which is based on 2010 Census Bureau information.

³ Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

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 other three units were Parkrose Station, Portland, OR (Project Number 22-029); Piedmont Station, Portland, OR (Project Number 22-030); and Beaverton Post Office, Beaverton, OR (Project Number 22-031).

⁶ The project number for the separate report is 22-001.

The Vancouver MPO is one of four delivery units⁵ the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of November 29, 2021, that are serviced by the Portland, OR, P&DC. We issued this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the Vancouver MPO. We will issue a separate report⁶ that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all four delivery units. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about our scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions. Specifically, we found deficiencies in three of the four areas we reviewed (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Issues Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail		X
Package Scanning	X	
Truck Arrival Scanning	X	
Property Conditions	X	

Source: Results of fieldwork during week of November 29, 2021.

Finding #1: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned 2,024 packages at the delivery unit rather than at the customer's delivery address between August and October 2021 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Stop The Clock Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	August	September	October	Total	Percentage
Delivered	424	471	450	1,345	66.45%
No Secure Location	246	142	180	568	28.06%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	49	26	11	86	4.25%
Refused	6	9	3	18	0.89%
No Authorized Recipient	1	3	3	7	0.35%
Total	726	651	647	2,024	100%

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System⁷ data.

In addition, on the morning of November 30, 2021, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 60 packages⁸ to review, including an analysis of their scanning and tracking data. Of the 60 sampled packages, six had missing or improper scans. The six included two that were missing STC scans to let the customer

know the reason for non-delivery, two that had "Delivered" scans, which should only be performed when the package is successfully left at the customer's delivery address, and two that were scanned at a point other than the delivery address.

Further, we found 11 packages from the "Notice Left" area that were not returned to the sender, as required.⁹ These packages ranged from four to 77 days past their return dates.

Why Did It Occur

We determined that these scanning issues occurred because management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Carriers stated that they were scanning packages for broken or vandalized cluster boxes¹⁰ at the delivery unit and were unsure of the appropriate scan event to enter into the scanner. Management did not review scan data for undelivered packages or understand the return guidelines for packages in the "Notice Left" area.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,¹¹ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹² Packages in the "Notice Left" area should have been reviewed for second notices and returned to sender if they remained after the prescribed number of days.

⁷ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

⁸ We judgmentally selected 30 packages from the carrier cases and 30 packages from the "Notice Left" area.

⁹ *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, states that domestic packages should be returned to sender on the 15th calendar day after a notice is left and international packages should be returned to sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.

¹⁰ A centralized unit of individually locked compartments for the delivery and collection of mail.

¹¹ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹² *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

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.

Finding #2: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Vancouver MPO did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes (99T)¹³ as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from September 1 through November 18, 2021, and found that employees did not perform a scan for any of the 215 scheduled trucks arriving from the Portland P&DC.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not monitor 99T scan performance data to ensure all trucks received an arrival scan. Clerks stated they stopped scanning the 99T barcodes because there were several broken scanners and management did not have them repaired.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have reviewed the Arrive Depart Tracking report to ensure that all expected truck scans were being performed. According to Postal Service Policy,¹⁴ employees must scan the trailer barcode on Postal Service trailer/trucks and Highway Contract Route trucks arriving at the delivery unit during local operating hours.

Effect on the Postal Service and its Customers

When employees do not scan the 99T barcode, the Postal Service does not receive timely transportation information and is unable to address issues that may be causing mail delays, which could affect customer service.

Finding # 3: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Vancouver MPO, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected as required,¹⁵ water-stained ceiling tiles above computer equipment, and an inoperable urinal (see [Figure 1](#)) and toilet in the men's restroom that were not reported in the electronic Facilities Management System (eFMS).¹⁶ We also identified damaged asphalt in the customer and employee parking lots (see [Figure 2](#)) that was reported in eFMS in June 2019, but the repairs were still pending. During our audit, management took corrective action for the fire extinguishers as they attached monthly inspection tags to all 15 extinguishers and assigned one of the custodians to perform monthly inspections.

¹³ The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

¹⁴ *United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units (DU)*.

¹⁵ Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), 29CFR 1910.157(e)(2) requires that fire extinguishers be inspected monthly.

¹⁶ A custom-built Postal Service system used to manage work orders, contracts, and payments for facility construction, repairs, and alteration contracts, along with real estate contracts.

Figure 1. Broken Urinal



Source: OIG photo taken November 30, 2021

Why Did It Occur

Unit management did not take the necessary actions to ensure that property condition issues were corrected because other duties took priority such as addressing customer inquiries and ensuring carriers returned on time. Unit management stated they were unaware of the monthly inspection requirement for fire extinguishers and that they relied on district maintenance management to input the broken urinal and toilet maintenance requests in eFMS.

¹⁷ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight to personnel responsible for maintaining facilities, reported maintenance and safety issues as they arose, and followed up through completion. The Postal Service is required to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers. In addition, OSHA requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards.¹⁷

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

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.

Figure 2. Damaged Asphalt



Source: OIG photo taken November 30, 2021.

Appendices

Click on the appendix title below to navigate to the section content.

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Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from November 2021 through February 2022, 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 relied on computer-generated data from the PTR system, the Surface Visibility¹⁸ database, and the eFMS. Although we did not test the validity of the 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. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

¹⁸ Surface Visibility collects end-to-end data by linking multiple scans of a single asset to create visibility data to support planning, management, and optimization of the surface network.

Appendix B: Management's Comments



January 28, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review -
Vancouver Main Post Office, Vancouver, WA Project Number 22-032-DRAFT

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review - Vancouver Main Post Office, Vancouver, WA

Following are our comments on each of the three findings.

Findings #1:

Employees improperly scanned 2,024 packages at the delivery unit rather than at the customer's delivery address between August and October 2021. Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed a significant percent were scanned "Delivered".

Management Response:

Management agrees with this finding.

Management stated that due to COVID, the apartment buildings changed their mode of delivery, some packages were scanned at the delivery unit and some were scanned at the address. Now all the packages are scanned once delivered.

- Scanning at the delivery unit – 5 carriers scanned 1/3 of the parcels. follow up with each employee.
- Attached are STC scans for 1/26/2022
 - carrier was instructed to scan all deliveries at point of delivery on 1/12/22
 - carrier was instructed to scan all deliveries at point of delivery on 1/12/22
 - carrier was instructed to scan all deliveries at point of delivery on 1/12/22
 - carrier was instructed to scan all deliveries at point of delivery on 1/12/22
 - carrier was instructed to scan all deliveries at point of delivery on 1/12/22

See attachment for scanning report dated January 26, 2022 for carriers have been instructed to scan where they stand.

Finding #2:

Employees at the Vancouver MPO did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes (99T) as required.

Management Response:

Management agrees with this finding.

Management in Vancouver now have scanners accessible and have been scanning the 99T.

See attachment for evidence of improvement, and a stand up to be conducted on 01/28/2022 to reiterate the process.

Finding #3:

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Vancouver MPO, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected as required. One area in the building has water-stained ceiling tiles above computer equipment, and an inoperable urinal and toilet in the men's restroom that were not reported in the electronic Facilities Management System (eFMS). There is damaged asphalt in the customer and employee parking lots, that was reported in eFMS in June 2019, but the repairs were still pending.

Management Response:

Management agrees with this finding.

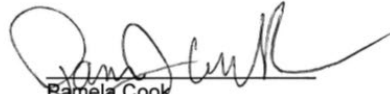
Management stated that they have requested a new urinal, instead of fixing the current one. They had a contractor come out to give them a quote, which is being handled by the field manager for INO. Management stated they will send all supporting documents and or a date for repair completion with the management response. As indicated in OIG's report immediate action was taken during the visit: "During our audit, management took corrective action for the fire extinguishers as they attached monthly inspection tags to all 15 extinguishers and assigned one of the custodians to perform monthly inspections."

See attachment showing:

- Fire extinguishers with required inspections.
- Water stained tiles were replaced on 1/18/2022.
- Parking lot repairs to begin 01/28/2022, as indicated in the email confirmation.

As the District Manager, Vancouver, WA, I will ensure that we begin to address the findings identified in the report.

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Pamela Cook
Washington District Manager

cc: Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, WestPac Area
Corporate Audit Response Management

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