



Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

## Audit Report

# Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – South Columbus Station, Columbus, OH

Report Number 22-043-R22 | March 16, 2022



# Table of Contents

Cover	
Transmittal Letter .....	1
Results.....	2
Background.....	2
Objective, Scope, and Methodology.....	2
Results Summary .....	2
Finding #1: Delayed Mail.....	3
What We Found .....	3
Why Did It Occur.....	3
What Should Have Happened .....	3
Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers .....	3
Finding #2: Package Scanning .....	3
What We Found .....	3
Why Did It Occur.....	4
What Should Have Happened .....	4
Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers .....	4
Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning.....	5
What We Found .....	5
Why Did It Occur.....	5
What Should Have Happened .....	5
Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers .....	5
Finding # 4: Property Conditions .....	5
What We Found .....	5
Why Did It Occur.....	6
What Should Have Happened .....	6
Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers .....	7
Appendices .....	8
Appendix A: Additional Information.....	9
Appendix B: Management’s Comments.....	10
Contact Information .....	13

# Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

March 16, 2022

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** EDDIE L. BANNER  
MANAGER (A), OHIO-2 DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Bieda".

**FROM:** Adam Bieda  
Director, Field Operations

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property  
Conditions Review – South Columbus Station, Columbus, OH  
(Report Number 22-043-R22)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – South Columbus Station, Columbus, OH.

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

# Results

## Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the South Columbus Station in Columbus, OH (Project Number 22-043). The South Columbus Station is in the Ohio-2 District of the Central Area and services ZIP Code 43207<sup>1</sup> which serves about 45,162<sup>2</sup> people and is considered an urban community.<sup>3</sup> We judgmentally selected the South Columbus Station based on the number of customer inquiries per route that the unit received. From August 1 through October 31, 2021, the unit received 14.94 inquiries per route, which was more than the average of 7.60 inquiries per route for all sites serviced by the Columbus, OH, Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC).

## Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the South Columbus Station in Columbus, OH.

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.<sup>4</sup> During our site visit from January 11-13, 2022, 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” area<sup>5</sup> and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on February 24, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The South Columbus Station is one of three delivery units<sup>6</sup> the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of January 10, 2022, that are serviced by the Columbus P&DC. We issued this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the South Columbus Station. We will issue a separate report<sup>7</sup> that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all three 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 at the South Columbus Station. Specifically, we found deficiencies in all four of the 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 OIG fieldwork during week of January 10, 2022.

<sup>1</sup> The unit also provides PO Box service for ZIP Code 43206.

<sup>2</sup> Within the 43207 Zip Code, about 44,964 people (99.56 percent) live in urban communities while only 198 (0.44 percent) live in rural communities.

<sup>3</sup> We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from ESRI, which is based on 2010 Census Bureau information.

<sup>4</sup> Time of day when clerks have completed distributing mail to carrier routes.

<sup>5</sup> The area of a postal facility where letters or packages that carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

<sup>6</sup> The other two units were East City Annex in Columbus, OH (Project Number 22-044) and Lewis Center Main Post Office in Lewis Center, OH (Project Number 22-042).

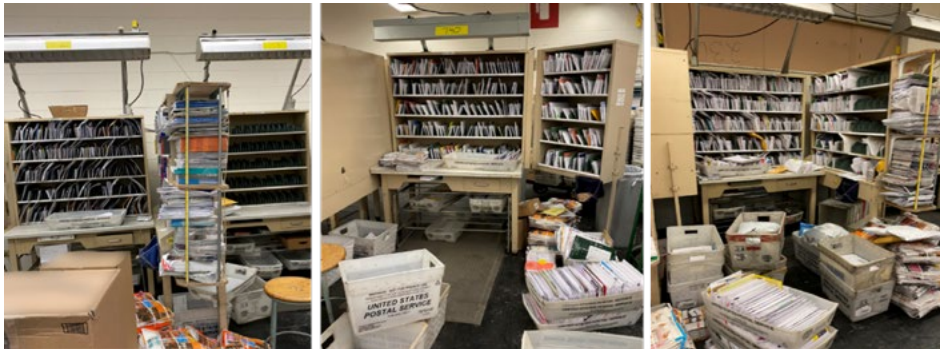
<sup>7</sup> The Project Number for the separate report is 22-052.

## Finding #1: Delayed Mail

### What We Found

We identified about 34,561 pieces of delayed mail,<sup>8</sup> which included about 34,528 letters and flats, and 33 packages at 20 carrier cases on the morning of January 11, 2022. In addition, management did not accurately report this delayed mail in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System (CSDRS).<sup>9</sup> While they reported 9,121 delayed letters and flats, this represented only about 26 percent of the delayed mailpieces we identified at the unit. See Figure 1 for examples of delayed mail found at the carrier cases.

**Figure 1. Examples of Delayed Mail at the Carrier Cases**



Source: OIG photos taken on January 11, 2022.

### Why Did It Occur

Management did not ensure the station had enough resources to deliver the mail each day. Management stated the unit was short-staffed due to carriers being out on COVID-related leave. However, it is still their responsibility to ensure they have adequate coverage for each route.

Additionally, management did not accurately report the delayed mail in CSDRS because they were not aware that they should be entering the total amount of accumulated delayed mail each day. Instead, they were only entering the amount of delayed mail for the current day, not the amount of delayed mail that was still at the carrier cases from previous days.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that the station had enough resources to deliver all the mail each day. Postal Service policy<sup>10</sup> states that managers must review all communications that may affect the day's workload and be sure that replacements are available for unscheduled absences. In addition, policy<sup>11</sup> states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. Managers are required to report in CSDRS<sup>12</sup> all mail that remains in a unit after the carriers have left for their street duties.<sup>13</sup>

### Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When mail is delayed, there is an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand. In addition, inaccurate reporting of delayed mail in CSDRS provides management at the local, district, area, and headquarters levels with an inaccurate status of mail delays and can result in improper actions taken to address issues.

## Finding #2: Package Scanning

### What We Found

Employees improperly scanned 428 packages at the delivery unit rather than at the customer's address between September and November 2021 (see [Table 2](#)). Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed that about 96 percent were scanned "Delivered."

<sup>8</sup> OIG estimate based on Postal Service conversion factors in Handbook M-32, *Management Operating Data Systems*, Appendix D.

<sup>9</sup> A tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of the daily mail conditions of the mail at the point in time when carriers have departed for the street.

<sup>10</sup> Handbook M-39, *Management of Delivery Services*, TL-14, Section 111.2, June 2019.

<sup>11</sup> *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Ohio-2 District management also requires units to report delayed mail in the Delivery Condition Visualization and Facilities Database systems.

<sup>13</sup> *Customer Service Daily Reporting System, Guidelines and Definitions*, September 2016.

**Table 2. Stop-the-Clock<sup>14</sup> (STC) Scans at Delivery Unit**

STC Scan Type	September	October	November	Total	Percent
Delivered	240	49	120	409	95.56%
No Secure Location	9	2	6	17	3.97%
Receptacle Full/Item Oversized	0	0	1	1	0.23%
No Authorized Recipient	0	0	1	1	0.23%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service’s Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System<sup>15</sup> data.

In addition, on the morning of January 11, 2022, we selected 43 packages<sup>16</sup> to review and analyze scanning and tracking data. Of the 43 sampled packages, 24 had missing or improper scans. These included 21 packages that were missing STC scans to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery and three that had “Delivered” scans, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer’s delivery address. Further, seven packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned to the sender, as required.<sup>17</sup> These packages ranged from 17 to 99 days past their return dates.

### Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because management did not enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. For the 428 packages improperly scanned at the unit, management stated that they review the scan tool each evening to identify packages that did not receive an STC scan. When carriers

returned from delivery, management asked if they delivered those packages. Carriers often responded that they delivered the packages and scanned them “Delivered” at the delivery point; however, the scanner either didn’t work or the data were not transmitted. Management then directed the carrier to manually scan the packages as “Delivered.”

In addition, packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned due to inadequate management oversight. The clerk responsible for monitoring them stated that she does not have enough time to review package return dates because she is busy sorting packages in the morning and works the retail window once the retail unit opens.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including ensuring that all packages are scanned at the delivery point and not at the delivery unit. In addition, management should have reported scanner issues to district management. The Postal Service’s goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,<sup>18</sup> which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.<sup>19</sup> In addition, 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.

### 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 or properly handle packages in the “Notice Left” area, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning and handling operations, management can potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

<sup>14</sup> A scan event that indicates that the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mailpiece. Examples of STC scans include “Delivered,” “Available for Pick-up,” “No Access,” and “Business Closed.”

<sup>15</sup> A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

<sup>16</sup> We judgmentally selected 30 packages from the carrier cases before carriers arrived for the day and all 13 packages from the “Notice Left” area.

<sup>17</sup> *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, states that domestic packages should be returned to the sender on the 15th calendar day after a notice is left and international packages should be returned to the sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.

<sup>18</sup> *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

<sup>19</sup> *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

## Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

### What We Found

Employees at the South Columbus Station did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes (99T)<sup>20</sup> as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from September 1 through November 30, 2021, and found that employees did not perform a scan for any of the 237 scheduled trucks originating from the Columbus P&DC.

### Why Did It Occur

Management stated that they did not monitor 99T scan performance data or enforce 99T scan procedures because they were more focused on getting mail delivered. One clerk we spoke with was aware of the requirement to scan the 99T barcode, but said when she tried in the past, she received an error message on the scanner. She stated that this happened a few years ago and she had not attempted to scan the 99T since then.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have performed reviews of the Arrive Depart Tracking Report to ensure that all expected truck scans were being performed. They should also have instructed employees to perform appropriate 99T scans and enforced the requirement. According to Postal Service policy,<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

<sup>21</sup> *United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure* – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units.

<sup>22</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 29 CFR 1910.303.

## Finding # 4: Property Conditions

### What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the South Columbus Station, including blocked electrical panels in the boiler room<sup>22</sup> (see Figure 2) and exposed wiring below the customer counter in the lobby (see Figure 3). During our audit, the custodian took corrective action to unblock the electrical panel in the boiler room. We also identified several issues in the customer parking lot, including damaged/misaligned wheel stops and potholes (see Figure 4).

**Figure 2. Blocked Electrical Panels**



Source: OIG photo taken January 12, 2022.

**Figure 3. Exposed Wiring**



Source: OIG photo taken January 12, 2022.

**Why Did It Occur**

Management did not provide adequate oversight to ensure that all property condition issues were corrected. Unit personnel did report the damaged wheel stop in the electronic Facilities Management System (eFMS)<sup>23</sup> on November 24, 2021. This request was marked complete on December 30, 2021; however, the repair was not made, and unit management did not follow-up on the request.

**What Should Have Happened**

Management should have provided sufficient oversight for maintaining the facility, reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up to ensure 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.<sup>24</sup>

**Figure 4. Customer Parking Lot Issues**



Source: OIG photos taken January 12, 2022.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.



---

### **Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers**

Management's attention to safety and maintenance 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.

# Appendices

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

<a href="#">Appendix A: Additional Information</a>	9
<a href="#">Appendix B: Management’s Comments</a>	10

# Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from January through March 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, CSDRS, the Surface Visibility<sup>25</sup> database, and 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.

---

<sup>25</sup> 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



March 11, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA  
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review –  
South Columbus Station, Columbus, OH Project Number 22-043-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 – South Columbus Station, Columbus OH

Following are our comments on each of the four findings.

**Finding #1:**

We identified about 34,561 pieces of delayed mail,<sup>9</sup> which included about 34,528 letters and flats, and 33 packages at 20 carrier cases on the morning of January 11, 2022. In addition, management did not accurately report this delayed mail in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System (CSDRS). While they reported 9,121 delayed letters and flats, this represented only about 26 percent of the delayed mailpieces we identified at the unit.

**Management Response:**

Management agrees with this finding.

Agrees, local management has been retrained to properly count mail to enter into CDRS and DCV

**Finding #2:**

Employees improperly scanned 1,714 packages at the delivery unit rather than at the customer's delivery address between September and November 2021. Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed that about 96 percent were scanned "Delivered."

**Management Response:**

management agrees with the finding

Carriers were retrained on the standard work instructions to scan all packages at the point of delivery, Management is using the scanning tool to make sure the instructions are being followed.

**Finding #3:**

Employees at the South Columbus Station did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes (99T) as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from September 1 through November 30, 2021, and found that employees did not perform a scan for any of the 237 scheduled trucks originating from the Columbus P&DC.

**Management Response:**

Management agrees with this finding.

Clerk are retrained to scan bar codes and inform me if any issues occurs. The trucks are inconsistent with the bar code and management will inform the plant if a truck come through without bar code.


**Finding #4:**

We found safety and maintenance issues at the South Columbus Station, including blocked electrical panels in the boiler room and exposed wiring below the customer counter in the lobby. During our audit, the custodian took corrective action to unblock the electrical panel in the boiler room. We also identified several issues in the customer parking lot, including damaged/misaligned wheel stops and potholes.

**Management Response:**

Management Agrees with the finding

Management has placed a sign on the electrical panel to make sure that it is not block.  
The parking lot is still an issue with a work order has not been addressed yet.

  
Eddie Banner  
District Manager, Columbus OH

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

OFFICE OF  
**INSPECTOR  
GENERAL**  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Contact us via our [Hotline](#) and [FOIA](#) forms.  
Follow us on social networks.  
Stay informed.

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

For media inquiries, please email  
[press@uspsoig.gov](mailto:press@uspsoig.gov) or call 703-248-2100