

Audit Report

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews – Select Units, Columbus, OH Region



Report Number 22-052-R22 | April 13, 2022



East City Annex

Lewis Center Main PO

South Columbus Station

Table of Contents

Cover		Recommendation #2	6
Transmittal Letter	1	Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning	6
Results	2	What We Found	6
Background	2	Why Did It Occur	6
Objective, Scope, and Methodology	3	What Should Have Happened	6
Results Summary	3	Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers	7
Finding #1: Delayed Mail	4	Recommendation #3	7
What We Found	4	Finding #4: Property Conditions	7
Why Did It Occur	4	What We Found	7
What Should Have Happened	4	Why Did It Occur	7
Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers	4	What Should Have Happened	8
Recommendation #1	5	Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers	8
Finding #2: Package Scanning	5	Recommendation #4	8
What We Found	5	Management's Comments	8
Why Did It Occur	5	Evaluation of Management's Comments	8
What Should Have Happened	6	Appendix A: Management's Comments	9
Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers	6	Contact Information	12

Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

April 13, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: EDDIE L. BANNER
MANAGER, OHIO 2 DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Bieda", is positioned below the recipient information.

FROM: Adam Bieda
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Condition Reviews – Select Units, Columbus, OH Region
(Report Number 22-052-R22)

This capping report presents the results of our audits of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews in the Columbus, OH Region.

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 report presents a summary of the results of our self-initiated audits assessing mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at three select delivery units in the Columbus, OH, region (Project Number 22-052). These delivery units include the Lewis Center Main Post Office (MPO) in Lewis Center, OH, and the South Columbus Station and East City Annex in Columbus, OH. We previously issued interim reports¹ to district management for each of these delivery units regarding the conditions we identified. In addition, we issued a report on the efficiency of operations at the Columbus, OH, Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC),² which services these three delivery units.

All three delivery units are in the Ohio 2 District of the Central Area. The three delivery units have a combined total of 74 city routes and 20 rural routes. Staffing at the delivery units during our audit included 82 full-time city carriers, 12 part-time city carriers, 17 full-time rural carriers, 14 part-time rural carriers, 12 full-time clerks, and 11 part-time clerks (see Table 1).

Table 1. Staffing and Routes

Staffing and Route Types	Lewis Center MPO	South Columbus	East City	Totals
Full-Time City Carriers	0	32	50	82
Part-Time City Carriers	0	6	6	12
Full-Time Rural Carriers	17	0	0	17
Part-Time Rural Carriers	14	0	0	14
Full-Time Clerks	2	3	7	12
Part-Time Clerks	4	2	5	11
City Routes	0	32	42	74
Rural Routes	20	0	0	20

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of data from Variance Programs.

¹ *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review - Lewis Center Main Post Office, Lewis Center, OH* (Report Number [22-042-R22](#), dated March 16, 2022), *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review - South Columbus Station, Columbus, OH* (Report Number [22-043-R22](#), dated March 16, 2022), and *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review - East City Annex, Columbus, OH* (Report Number [22-044-R22](#), dated March 16, 2022).

² Report Number [22-041-R22](#), dated March 25, 2022.

The delivery units service about 134,416 people in several ZIP codes which are considered predominantly urban communities³ (see Table 2).

Table 2. Demographics of ZIP Codes Served

Community	Lewis Center MPO	South Columbus	East City	Total
Population	24,760	45,162	64,494	134,416
Type	Urban	Urban	Urban	

Source: ESRI and 2010 Census Bureau Information.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Lewis Center MPO, South Columbus Station, and East City Annex in the Columbus, OH, region.

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.⁴ In addition, during our site visits from January 11 through January 13, 2022, we reviewed mail conditions and delivery unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at or around the carrier cases and in the “Notice Left”⁵ areas and interviewed delivery unit management and employees.

We conducted this audit from January through April 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

³ We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from ESRI.

⁴ Time of day when clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

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

⁶ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

⁷ The system that unit management uses to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of the daily mail conditions at the point in time when carriers have departed for the street.

⁸ SV 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.

⁹ 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.

objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on March 29, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

We relied on computer-generated data from the Product Tracking and Reporting⁶ (PTR) system, Customer Service Daily Reporting System⁷ (CSDRS), the Surface Visibility⁸ (SV) database, and the electronic Facilities Management System⁹ (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.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at all three delivery units. Specifically, we found deficiencies with delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scanning, and property conditions (see Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of Results

Controls Reviewed	Issues Identified – Yes or No		
	Lewis Center MPO	South Columbus	East City
Delayed Mail	No	Yes	Yes
Package Scanning	Yes	Yes	Yes
Truck Arrival Scanning	Yes	Yes	No
Property Conditions	Yes	Yes	No

Source: OIG summary of results from fieldwork during the week of January 10, 2022.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of January 11, 2022, we identified about 39,909 pieces of delayed mail at the South Columbus Station and East City Annex,¹⁰ which included about 39,642 letters and flats and 267 packages at 30 carrier cases (see Table 4 and Figure 1). In addition, management did not accurately report this delayed mail in CSDRS. While there were 9,121 delayed letters and flats reported for the South Columbus Station, this only represented about 26 percent of the delayed mailpieces we identified at the delivery unit. Further, none of the identified delayed mail at the East City Annex was reported in CSDRS.

Table 4. Delayed Mail

Mail Type	South Columbus	East City	Total
Letters and Flats	34,528	5,114	39,642
Packages	33	234	267
Total	34,561	5,348	39,909

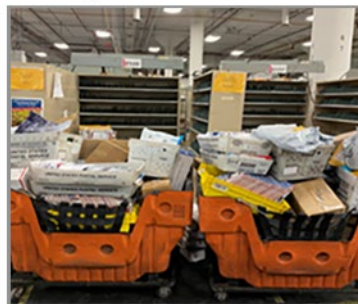
Source: OIG analysis based on conducted mail counts.

Figure 1. Examples of Delayed Mail

South Columbus Station



East City Annex



Source: OIG photos taken January 11, 2022.

¹⁰ OIG estimate based on Postal Service conversion factors in Handbook M-32, *Management Operating Data Systems*, Appendix D.

¹¹ The system serves as a centralized, complete, and accurate source of Postal Service facility information.

¹² Handbook M-39, *Management of Delivery Services*, TL-14, Section 111.2, June 2019.

¹³ *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.

¹⁴ Ohio 2 District management also requires units to report delayed mail in the Delivery Condition Visualization and Facilities Database systems.

¹⁵ *Customer Service Daily Reporting System, Guidelines and Definitions*, September 2016.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not always have enough resources to deliver the mail each day. Management stated that the unit was short-staffed due to carriers being out on COVID-related leave.

Additionally, management did not properly report all the delayed mail in CSDRS because they were not aware of the process. Specifically, at the South Columbus Station, management was not aware that they should be entering the total amount of accumulated delayed mail each day. At the East City Annex, management thought daily delayed mail totals would automatically populate into CSDRS if they were entered into the Operation Impact tab in the Facility Database System.¹¹

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that the delivery units had enough resources to deliver all the mail each day. Postal Service policy¹² 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, policy¹³ 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 CSDRS¹⁴ all mail that remains in a unit after the carriers have left for their street duties.¹⁵

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.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **District Manager, Ohio 2**, develop a plan to ensure that all committed mail is delivered daily, all delayed mail volume is entered into the proper system, and management systematically reviews data and enforces reporting compliance at the South Columbus Station and East City Annex.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned 3,842 packages at all three delivery units rather than at the customer's delivery address between September and November 2021 (see Table 5). Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed 98.72 percent were scanned "Delivered."

Table 5. Stop-the-Clock¹⁶ (STC) Scans by Type

STC Scan Type	Lewis Center MPO	South Columbus	East City	Total	Percent
Delivered	1,693	409	1,691	3,793	98.72
No Secure Location	2	17	13	32	0.83
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	1	1	7	9	0.23
No Authorized Recipient	4	1	3	8	0.21
Total	1,700	428	1,714	3,842	100¹⁷

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's PTR System.

¹⁶ 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."

¹⁷ Total percentage does not equal exactly 100 percent due to rounding.

¹⁸ *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.

¹⁹ A list of packages for delivery to one address documented with a single barcode. Firm sheets are used to link packages sent to one address on a single form.

In addition, on the morning of January 11, 2022, we judgmentally selected 63 packages from the carrier's cases and another 30 packages from the "Notice Left" area to review and analyze scanning and tracking data.

Of the 93 sampled packages, 50 had missing or improper scans including:

- Thirty-six that were missing STC scans to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.
- Eight that were scanned "Delivered", which should only occur when the package is successfully left at the customer's delivery address.
- Three that were scanned as "Forwarded" but were not properly processed in the forwarding system.
- Three that were scanned at a point other than the delivery address.

Further, we found eight packages in the "Notice Left" area that were not returned to the sender, as required.¹⁸ These packages ranged from 15 to 99 days past their return dates.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Specifically, Lewis Center MPO carriers scanned packages as "Delivered" at the delivery unit to save time. At the South Columbus Station, management stated that carriers often told them they scanned packages as "Delivered" at the delivery point, but the scanner either didn't work or the data did not transmit. Management then directed carriers to manually scan the packages as "Delivered." In addition, management at the East City Annex explained that they allowed employees to scan firm sheets¹⁹ as "Delivered" at the delivery unit for university facilities that receive many packages each day.

Furthermore, packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned due to inadequate management oversight. Specifically, management at the Lewis Center MPO stated that if they did not receive an automated notification, they did not ensure that packages were returned according to policy. At the South Columbus Station, the clerk stated that she did not have enough time to review package return dates.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced package scanning compliance, including ensuring that all packages and firm sheets were scanned at the delivery point and not at the delivery unit. The Postal Service’s goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,²⁰ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.²¹ 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.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the **District Manager, Ohio 2**, develop and execute a plan to ensure that employees at the Lewis Center Main Post Office, South Columbus Station, and East City Annex follow standard operating procedures for package scanning and handling, and that unit management systematically reviews scan data and enforces compliance.

²⁰ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

²¹ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

²² The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

²³ *United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units.*

²⁴ A service operated by Postal Service employees to transport mail between mail processing facilities, post offices, post office branches, post office stations, detached mail units, various postal customers, and terminals.

²⁵ A contractor provided service to transport mail between postal facilities by land, air, water, and rail.

Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Lewis Center MPO and South Columbus Station did not always scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes²² as required. We reviewed data relating to morning truck arrival scans from September 1 through November 30, 2021, and found that employees did not perform scans for any of the 395 trips (100 percent) originating from the Columbus P&DC (see Table 6).

Table 6. Truck Arrival Scans on Incoming AM Trips

Delivery Units	Inbound AM Trips	Missed Arrive Scans	Missed Scan Percentage
Lewis Center MPO	158	158	100
South Columbus	237	237	100
Total	395	395	100

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from the Postal Service’s SV System.

Why Did It Occur

Management stated that they did not monitor truck/trailer scan performance data or enforce the scan procedures because they were more focused on getting mail delivered.

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,²³ employees must scan the trailer barcode on Postal Service trailers/trucks²⁴ and Highway Contract Route²⁵ trucks arriving at the delivery unit during local operating hours.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When employees do not scan the truck/trailer 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.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the **District Manager, Ohio 2**, develop and execute a plan to ensure management at the Lewis Center Main Post Office and South Columbus Station reviews truck/trailer arrival scanning performance daily and enforces compliance.

Finding #4: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Lewis Center MPO and South Columbus Station. Specifically:

- At the Lewis Center MPO, we identified fire extinguishers that had not been inspected²⁶ and a damaged wooden panel in the loading dock area. We also identified blocked electrical panels in the custodian's room, fallen signage in front of the unit, a hanging light cover in the men's restroom, and stained ceiling tiles in the workroom area (see Figure 2). During our audit, the custodian took corrective action and unblocked the electrical panels.
- At the South Columbus Station, we identified blocked electrical panels in the boiler room, exposed wiring below the customer counter in the lobby, and several issues in the customer parking lot, including damaged/misaligned wheel stops and potholes (see Figure 3). During our audit, the custodian took corrective action to unblock the electrical panel in the boiler room.

Figure 2. Lewis Center MPO

Fallen Signage



Stained Ceiling Tile



Source: OIG photos taken January 11, 2022.

Figure 3. South Columbus Station

Damaged/Misaligned Wheel Stops



Potholes



Source: OIG photos taken January 12, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Delivery unit management did not provide adequate oversight to ensure that property condition issues were corrected. For example, unit personnel at the Lewis Center MPO were aware that access to the electrical panels should be unblocked but stated that there was insufficient space in the unit to store cleaning items. Management was also aware of the fallen signage in front of the delivery unit and stated that they entered a work order in eFMS in December 2021. However, as of February 4, 2022, we did not find any record of such an entry.

²⁶ Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 29CFR 1910.157, (e)(2) and 29CFR 1910.157, (e)(3) requires that fire extinguishers be inspected monthly and annually.

At the South Columbus Station, unit personnel did report the damaged wheel stop in eFMS on November 24, 2021. This request was marked as 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 to personnel responsible for maintaining facilities, reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up on 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.²⁷

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management's attention to maintenance and safety 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.

Recommendation #4

We recommend the **District Manager, Ohio 2**, address all building maintenance and safety issues identified at the Lewis Center Main Post Office and South Columbus Station.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with the findings and recommendations in this report. Based on subsequent conversations, management agreed to move the target implementation date for all of the recommendations to April 29, 2022. See [Appendix A](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated that they will provide direct oversight and ensure that they send available resources to units when there is potential delayed volume. In addition, information on mail conditions at delivery units will be entered into the Facilities Database and Delivery Conditions Visualization and management will review it for accuracy. Furthermore, district

management will have a daily telecom where local management will report whether any units have not accurately reported delayed mail conditions.

Regarding recommendation 2, management stated that they are holding mandatory service talks on scanning accuracy and integrity with employees for seven consecutive days to ensure proper scanning. Management will also be responsible for giving the service talk once per week after that. Further, management will review scanning data daily and use it to address any scanning issues with employees.

Regarding recommendation 3, management stated that they are holding service talks on bundle visibility procedures for a week to ensure proper truck arrival scanning. Management will also monitor and ensure that scanning is completed and will report to Managers, Customer Service Operations, that correct scans have been completed.

Regarding recommendation 4, management stated that they have abated all safety issues at the delivery units except for the Postal Service display sign at the Lewis Center Main Post Office; however, they have placed a work order to reinstall the sign.

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.

²⁷ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

Appendix A: Management's Comments



April 1, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Management Response: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews – Select Units, Columbus, OH, Region (Project Number 22-052-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft audit report, Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews in the Columbus, OH, Region.

Management agrees with Finding #1: Delayed Mail

Management agrees with Finding #2: Package Scanning

Management agrees with Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

Management agrees with Finding #4: Property Conditions

Following are our comments for each of the four recommendations.

Recommendation [1]:

We recommend the District Manager, Ohio 2, develop a plan to ensure that all committed mail is delivered daily, all delayed mail volume is entered into the proper system, and management systematically reviews data and enforces reporting compliance at the South Columbus Station and East City Annex.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. To ensure mail is delivered timely, the Columbus Postmaster and Managers of Customer Services Operations will provide direct oversight and ensure available resources are sent to units with potential delayed volume to eliminate the delays. Mail conditions for delivery units will be entered into the Facilities Database (FDB) and Delivery Conditions Visualization (DCV) websites and reviewed by management daily for accuracy. In addition, the district has created a Compliance Close-Out telecon held daily. Local management will report if they have units within their scope that has not accurately reported in FDB and DCV.

Target Implementation Date: 04/1/2022 See attachment 1 for daily unit schedules.

Responsible Official:

Postmaster, Columbus, Managers, Customer Service Operations, and Postmaster, Lewis Center

Recommendation [2]:

We recommend the District Manager, Ohio 2, develop and execute a plan to ensure that employees at the Lewis Center Main Post Office, South Columbus Station, and East City Annex follow standard operating procedures for package scanning and handling, and that unit management systematically reviews scan data and enforces compliance.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Management has made it mandatory that the Delivering with Accuracy and Integrity Service Talk be given to employees within the units seven consecutive days to ensure proper scanning is done at the correct location and at the correct time. Thereafter, management will give this service talk once per week. The scanning integrity data is reviewed daily down to the employee level through Informed Visibility. Management will use this data to address employees concerning any scanning anomalies found.

Target Implementation Date: 04/04/2022 See attachment 2

Responsible Official:

Postmaster, Columbus, Managers, Customer Service Operations Columbus, and Postmaster, Lewis Center

Recommendation [3]:

We recommend the District Manager, Ohio 2, develop and execute a plan to ensure management at the Lewis Center Main Post Office and South Columbus Station reviews truck/trailer arrival scanning performance daily and enforces compliance.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. The Bundle Visibility Procedures Service talk will be given to units for a consecutive week to ensure proper scanning is completed upon truck/trailer arrival. Local management will monitor truck/trailer arrival through RIMS to ensure the correct scans are completed and will report to Managers, Customer Service Operations. See attachment 3

Target Implementation Date: 04/01/2022

Responsible Official:

Postmaster, Columbus, Managers, Customer Service Operations Columbus, and
Postmaster, Lewis Center

Recommendation [4]:

We recommend the District Manager, OHIO 2, address all building maintenance and safety issues identified at the Lewis Center Main Post Office and South Columbus Station.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Management abated all safety issues at the Lewis Center Main Post Office and South Columbus Station. Management has placed a work order to reinstall the Postal display sign.

Target Implementation Date: 04/01/2022 See attachment 4

Responsible Official:

Postmaster, Columbus, Managers, Customer Service Operations Columbus, and
Postmaster, Lewis Center

Eddie L. Banner Digitally signed by Eddie L. Banner
Date: 2022.04.05 09:31:35 -04'00'

Eddie L. Banner
A/ District Manager
Ohio 2 District

cc: *Manager, Corporate Audit Response Management*

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