

Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

Audit Report

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Plainfield Main Post Office, Plainfield, IN

Report Number 22-085-R22 | May 26, 2022





OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

May 26, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: CHRISTI M. JOHNSON-KENNEDY
MANAGER, INDIANA DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Bieda", is centered below the memorandum header.

FROM: Adam Bieda
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Plainfield Main Post Office, Plainfield, IN (Report Number 22-085-R22)

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

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
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Executive Vice President
Chief Logistics & Processing Operations Office & Executive Vice President
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 Plainfield Main Post Office (MPO) in Plainfield, IN (Project Number 22-085). The Plainfield MPO is in the Indiana District of the Central Area and services ZIP Code 46168, which serves about 29,744 people and is considered an urban community.¹ We judgmentally selected the Plainfield MPO based on the number of stop-the-clock (STC)² scans occurring at the delivery unit, rather than at the customer's delivery address.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

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

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 the week of March 14, 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" area⁴ and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on April 29, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The Plainfield MPO is one of three delivery units⁵ the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of March 14, 2022, that are serviced by the Indianapolis Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC). We issued this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the Plainfield MPO. We will issue a separate report⁶ that provides the U.S. 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 Plainfield MPO. Specifically, we found deficiencies with 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 OIG fieldwork during week of March 14, 2022.

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

2 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," and "No Access".

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

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

5 The other two units were Carmel MPO, Carmel, IN (Project Number 22-086) and Linwood Station, Indianapolis, IN (Project Number 22-087).

6 The Project Number for the separate report is 22-091.

Finding #1: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. Specifically, employees scanned a total of 3,768 packages at the delivery unit between November 2021 and January 2022 (see Table 2). Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed that over 95 percent were scanned “Delivered”. Note that this data excludes scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as “Delivered - PO Box” and “Customer (Vacation) Hold” but, rather, represents scans performed at the delivery unit that should routinely be made at the point of delivery.

Table 2. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	November 2021	December 2021	January 2022	Total	Percentage
Delivered	757	1,005	1848	3,610	95.81%
Delivery Attempted - No Access To Delivery Location ⁷	33	92	25	150	3.98%
No Authorized Recipient	3	2	1	6	0.16%
No Secure Location Available	1	0	0	1	0.03%
Refused	0	1	0	1	0.03%
Totals	794	1,100	1,874	3,768	100%⁸

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service’s Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System⁹ data.

In addition, on the morning of March 15, 2022, we selected all 35 packages¹⁰ at the delivery unit to review and analyze scanning and tracking data. Of the 10 packages from the carrier cases, seven were incorrectly scanned or improperly handled. Two of these packages had “Delivered” scans, which should only occur when a package is successfully left at the customer’s delivery address. Two other packages were scanned as “No Access” at the delivery unit, which should be performed when the package is attempted to be delivered at the delivery address. Further, three packages with an STC scan were left in the carrier’s case but should have been returned to the sender.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Specifically, one carrier was scanning packages as “Delivered” at the delivery unit to save time. The carrier stated the packages were heavy and bulky, making them difficult to scan at the point of delivery. In addition, management stated packages were also scanned in the office instead of at the point of delivery for businesses with a firm sheet.¹¹

⁷ This scan type includes both “No Access” and “Business Closed” scans and does not differentiate between the two. “Business Closed” scans are often legitimately made at the unit; therefore, some of these scans may have been correct.

⁸ Total percentage does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

⁹ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

¹⁰ We analyzed all 10 packages from the carrier cases before carriers arrived for the day and all 25 packages from the “Notice Left” area.

¹¹ 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.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including ensuring that all packages are routinely 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,¹² which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹³

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.

¹² *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹³ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #2: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Plainfield MPO did not consistently scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes¹⁴ as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from November 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022, and found that employees did not perform a scan for 277 of the 327 (about 85 percent) scheduled trucks originating from the Indianapolis P&DC.

Why Did It Occur

This occurred because management was not monitoring truck/trailer scan performance data and was not sure which system to use to review the scan data.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have performed reviews of the Arrive Depart Tracking Report¹⁵ to ensure that all expected truck scans were being consistently performed. They should have also instructed employees to consistently perform appropriate trailer/truck barcode scans and enforced the requirement. According to Postal Service policy,¹⁶ 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 trailer/truck barcodes consistently, 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.

¹⁴ The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

¹⁵ The report shows if employees perform the scanning of trailers/trucks arrival and departure.

¹⁶ United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units.

Finding #3: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety, security, and maintenance issues at the Plainfield MPO, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected,¹⁷ blocked electrical panels in the boiler room, and a toilet in the men's restroom that did not flush properly (see Figure 1).

We also identified missing ceiling tiles in the locker room area and a hole above the window in the Business Mail Entry Unit office (see Figure 2). In addition, we identified there was no signage posted in the employee parking lots stating that "vehicles may be subject to search".¹⁸ During our audit, management took corrective action and fixed a pothole.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide adequate oversight to ensure that property condition issues were corrected. Management stated it thought the ceiling tiles and the hole above the window would be fixed by maintenance once the roof leaks were fixed. Therefore, a follow-up request was never submitted to get the items fixed. Management also stated the urinal was flushing slowly due to a bad pipe.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight of facility maintenance, reported safety, security, and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up to ensure resolution. The Postal Service is required to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers. In addition, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards.¹⁹

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management's attention to safety, security, 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.

Figure 1. Examples of Safety and Maintenance Issues

Blocked Electrical Panels



Toilet Issues



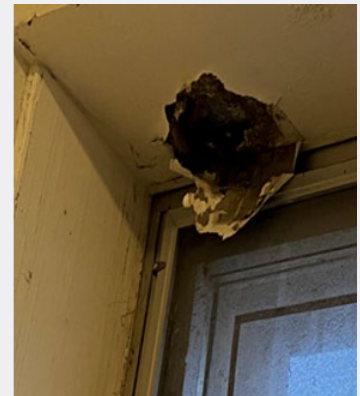
Source: OIG photos taken on March 15, 2022.

Figure 2. Examples of Maintenance Issues

Missing Ceiling Tiles



Damaged Wall



Source: OIG photos taken on March 15, 2022.

Management's Comments

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

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Handbook RE-5, *Building and Site Requirements*, 2 Site Security, 2-2.4 Site Signage.

¹⁹ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from March through May 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 Visibility²⁰ database, and eFMS.²¹ 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.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ 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.

Appendix B: Management's Comments



May 10, 2022

JOHN CIHOLTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Draft Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review
Plainfield Main Post Office, Plainfield, IN (Project Number 22-085)

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 – Select Units, Indiana Region (Project Number 22-085). Indiana District understands the importance of providing visibility to our customers when packages are scanned properly. Lastly, the safety, security and USPS brand are of utmost importance.

Greater Indiana District management conditionally agrees with the report.

Finding 1: Package Scanning

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. Specifically, employees scanned a total of 3,768 packages at the delivery unit between November 2021 and January 2022. Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed that over 95 percent were scanned "Delivered". Note that this data excludes scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as "Delivered - PO Box" and "Customer (Vacation) Hold" but, rather, represents scans performed at the delivery unit that should routinely be made at the point of delivery.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Manager, Greater Indiana District agrees with the finding. Indiana district MPOO's receive CRDO reports for all offices which identify scanning integrity concerns and are required to report findings for all offices in Indiana, that is identified as having a potential issue. The district Integrated Operations Planning Specialist [REDACTED] is responsible for daily follow-up and the reporting of consolidated findings summary to the District Manager and Manager Operations Integration for any additional follow-up or action.

The Plainfield Post Office has conducted training with their clerks to address the deficiencies identified. The manager Post Office Operations Group O is the responsible official for ensuring all tasks are completed timely for the Plainfield Post Office.

Finding 2: Truck Arrival Scanning

Employees at the Plainfield MPO did not consistently scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from November 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022, and found that employees did not perform a scan for 277 of the 327 (about 85 percent) scheduled trucks originating from the Indianapolis P&DC.

Management Response/Action Plan:



Manager, Greater Indiana District agrees with the finding. The Plainfield Post Office has been instructed to follow applicable Postal Service scanning procedures for all trucks arriving and departing at retail and delivery units.

The manager at the Plainfield Post Office conducted training with the clerks to address the deficiencies identified.

Finding 3: Property Conditions

We found safety, security, and maintenance issues at the Plainfield MPO, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected, and a toilet in the men's restroom that did not flush properly, blocked electrical panels in the boiler room and a toilet in the men's room did not flush properly.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Manager, Greater Indiana District agrees with the finding. The Carmel Post Office has been instructed to perform regular housekeeping inspections and provide copies to their MPOO. The Postmaster has been instructed on the proper procedures and schedule for fire extinguisher inspections.


Christi Johnson-Kennedy
District Manager
Indiana District

Cc: Chief Retail & Delivery Officer
Vp Area Retail & Delivery Operations
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@uspsig.gov or call 703-248-2100