

Audit Report

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

Report Number 22-096-R22 | June 7, 2022





OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

June 7, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: PAMELA J. COOK,
MANAGER, WASHINGTON DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph E. Wolski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

FROM: Joseph E. Wolski
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review –
Kent Main Post Office, Kent, WA (Report Number 22-096-R22)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions – Kent Main Post Office, Kent, 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
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Executive VP
Chief Logistics & Processing Operations Office & Executive VP

Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Kent Main Post Office (MPO) in Kent, WA (Project Number 22-096). The Kent MPO is in the Washington District of the WestPac Area and services ZIP Codes 98030, 98031, and 98032,¹ which serves about 105,501 people and is considered to be an urban community.² We judgmentally selected the Kent MPO based on the number of stop-the-clock³ (STC) scans occurring at the delivery unit, rather than at the customer's point of delivery.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Kent MPO in Kent, 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.⁴ During our site visit from April 5-6, 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" area⁵ and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on May 23, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The Kent MPO is one of four delivery units⁶ the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of April 4, 2022, and that is serviced by the Seattle 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 Kent MPO. We will issue a separate report⁷ providing 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 at the Kent MPO. Specifically, we found issues 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 our fieldwork during week of April 4, 2022.

1 The unit also services ZIP Code 98064, 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 A scan event that indicates 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", and "No Access".

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

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

6 The other three units were the Parkland Branch, Tacoma, WA (Project Number 21-095); the Renton MPO, Renton, WA (Project Number 22-097); and the Lacey Branch, Lacey, WA (Project Number 22-098).

7 The Project Number for this report is 22-101.

Finding #1: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees scanned 5,038 packages at the delivery unit between December 2021 and February 2022 (see Table 2). Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed that about 68 percent were scanned “Delivered” and 20 percent were scanned “Delivery

Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location”. Note that this data excludes scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as “Delivered - PO Box” and “Customer (Vacation) Hold”. Rather, the data represents scans performed at the delivery unit that should routinely be made at the point of delivery.

Table 2. Stop-the-Clock (STC) Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	December	January	February	Total	Percentage
Delivered	885	1,156	1,364	3,405	67.59%
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location ⁸	573	358	56	987	19.59%
No Secure Location Available	232	182	139	553	10.98%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	28	31	10	69	1.37%
No Authorized Recipient	2	6	4	12	0.24%
Refused	4	3	1	8	0.16%
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	2	2	0	4	0.08%
Total	1,726	1,738	1,574	5,038	100%⁹

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service’s Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System¹⁰ data.

In addition, on the morning of April 5, 2022, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 60 packages¹¹ to review and analyze scanning and tracking data. Of the 60 sampled packages, 16 (27 percent) had missing or improper scans. Specifically:

- Six had “Held at Post Office at Customer Request” and were scanned at 6:30 P.M. between 0.8 to 3.9 miles from the delivery points.
- Four were missing an “Arrival at Unit” scan, which is required for performance measurement.
- Three in the carrier cases had “Delivered” scans, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer’s point of delivery.
- Two were missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.
- One was scanned as “Insufficient Address” but not returned to the sender.
- Further, six packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned to the sender, as required.¹² These packages ranged from two to 18 days past their return dates.

⁸ For this STC scan type, we only included scans performed Monday through Friday to avoid legitimate scans for businesses closed over the weekend.

⁹ Total percentage does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

¹⁰ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

¹¹ We judgmentally selected 30 packages from the carrier cases and 30 packages from the “Notice Left” area.

¹² *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.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Management stated that they knew they should monitor the scans but focused their attention on covering unstaffed routes instead. Further, packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned due to inadequate management oversight. Management stated that the clerk primarily responsible for the “Notice Left” area also works the retail window, so the “Notice Left” area was not always maintained.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including ensuring that packages 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,¹³ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹⁴ Packages in the “Notice Left” area should have been reviewed 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.

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

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

Finding #2: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Kent MPO did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes¹⁵ as required. The delivery unit receives mail from the South Delivery Distribution Center (DDC) and the Seattle P&DC. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from December 1, 2021 through February 28, 2022 and found that employees did not perform a scan for any of the 239 scheduled trucks.¹⁶ In addition, on the morning of April 5, 2022, we observed that the Postal Service employee did not scan any of the incoming trucks' barcodes.

Why Did It Occur

This occurred because the acting supervisor was unfamiliar with the proper truck scanning requirements and had not instructed employees to scan the truck barcodes.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have instructed employees to scan the trucks and monitored truck scan performance. According to Postal Service policy,¹⁷ employees must scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes for trucks arriving at the delivery unit during local operating hours.

Effect on the Postal Service and its Customers

When employees do not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes, 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.

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

¹⁶ 167 trucks arriving from the Seattle P&DC and 72 trucks arriving from the South DDC.

¹⁷ *United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units (DU)*.

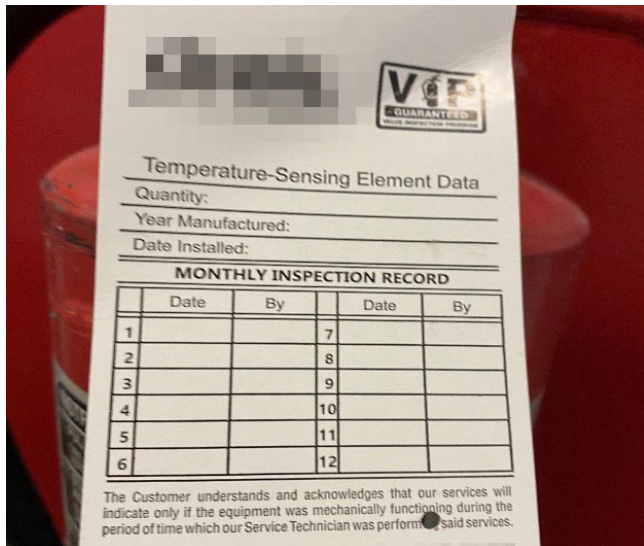
Finding #3: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Kent MPO. Specifically, we identified:

- Missing monthly inspections on all eight fire extinguishers and annual inspections on two extinguishers (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Fire Extinguishers Missing Monthly Inspections



Source: OIG photo taken April 6, 2022.

Figure 2. Cracked Flooring in Men's Restroom



Source: OIG photo taken April 6, 2022.

- Cracked flooring alongside the toilet in the men's restroom (see Figure 2).
- Holes in walls in various locations (see Figure 3).
- Dirty air vents in the retail post office box area and workroom floor (see Figure 4).

Figure 3. Holes in Walls

Location: Workroom Floor



Location: Inside Dock Area



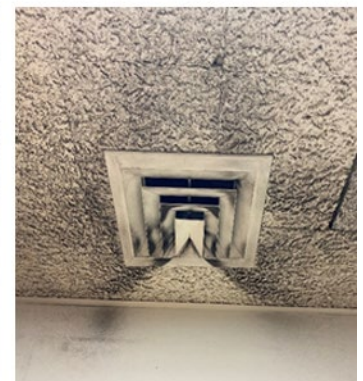
Source: OIG photos taken April 6, 2022.

Figure 4. Dirty Air Vents

Location: Post Office Box Retail Area



Location: Workroom Floor



Source: OIG photos taken April 6, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight to ensure the facility issues we identified were corrected. The prior supervisor responsible for overseeing property safety and maintenance issues left last year and did not address the issues before departing. The current supervisor was not aware that the fire extinguishers need to be inspected and stated that other duties, such as addressing customer inquiries and getting the mail out each day, impacted the timing of addressing the maintenance issues.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight to ensure that fire extinguisher inspections are performed as required, and other maintenance issues were reported as they arose and followed up for completion. The Postal Service is required to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers. In addition, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards.¹⁸

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.

Management's Comments

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

¹⁸ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from March through June 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, Customer Service Daily Reporting System,¹⁹ Delivery Condition Visualization,²⁰ the Surface Visibility²¹ database, and the electronic Facilities Management System.²² 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.

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- 19 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 the carriers have departed for the street.
- 20 The Delivery Condition Visualization replaced the legacy system (CSDRS) and allows users to manually input delayed and curtailed mail volume.
- 21 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.
- 22 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



June 1, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review -
Kent Main Post Office, Kent, WA Project Number 22-096-Kent

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 - Kent Main Post Office, Kent, 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 December 2021 and February 2022. 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 inclement weather some packages were scanned at the delivery unit, and some were scanned at the address. Now all the packages are scanned once delivered.

- Follow up with all carriers in the form of a Stand up
 - Carriers were instructed to scan all deliveries at point of delivery
 - Standard Work Instructions as posted in the unit

Finding #2:

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

Management Response:

Management agrees with this finding.

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

- Kent Main post office did a stand up on truck scanning
- Kent participated in a learn and grow on truck scanning

Finding #3:

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Kent MPO, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected as required. Cracked flooring along the toilet in the men's room, holes in walls in various locations and dirty air vents

Management Response:

Management agrees with this finding.

- Management states the fire extinguisher inspections have been updated.
- Crack in the floor and holes in the wall will be completed by Friday June 3, 2022.
- On June 2, 2022, contractor from Capital Duct will be at the Kent Main Post Office to provide an estimate and schedule work.

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



Ramela 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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GENERAL**
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