Audit Report

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

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

June 7, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: PAM J. COOK
MANAGER, WASHINGTON DISTRICT

Joseph E. Wolski

FROM: Joseph E. Wolski
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Renton Main Post Office, Renton, WA (Report Number 22-097-R22)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Facility Condition – Renton Main Post Office, Renton, WA.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact 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 & Exec VP
    Chief Logistics & Processing Operations Office & Exec VP

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Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Renton Main Post Office (MPO) in Renton, WA (Project Number 22-097). The Renton MPO is in the Washington District of the WestPac Area and services ZIP Codes 98055 and 98058, which serves about 68,271 people and is considered to be an urban community.[1] We judgmentally selected the Renton MPO based on the number of customer inquiries per route the unit received. From December 1, 2021, through February 28, 2022, the unit received 23.73 inquiries per route, which was more than the average of 13.52 inquiries per route for all sites serviced from the Seattle Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) and the South Delivery Distribution Center (DDC).

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Renton MPO in Renton 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.[2] During our site visit from April 5-7, 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[3] 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 Renton Post Office is one of four delivery units[4] the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of April 4, 2022, that is serviced by the Seattle P&DC. We issued this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the Renton Post Office and will issue a separate report[5] providing the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all four delivery units. See Appendix A for additional information about our audit scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Renton 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.

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1   We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from Esri, which is based on 2010 Census Bureau information.
2   Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.
3   The area of a postal facility where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.
4   The other three units were the Parkland Branch, Tacoma, WA (Project Number 22-095); the Kent MPO, Kent, WA (Project Number 22-096) and the Lacey Branch, Lacey, WA (Project Number 22-098).
5   The Project Number for the capping report is 22-101.

Finding #1: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees scanned 563 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 49.91 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[6] (STC) Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	December	January	February	Total	Percentage
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location[7]	83	175	23	281	49.91%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	100	40	30	170	30.20%
Delivered	41	9	6	56	9.95%
No Secure Location Available	34	11	5	50	8.88%
No Authorized Recipient	3	0	0	3	0.05%
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	2	0	1	3	0.05%
Total	**263**	**235**	**65**	**563**	**100%[8]**

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System[9] data.

In addition, on the morning of April 5, 2022, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 60 packages[10] to review and analyze scanning and tracking data. We did not find any issues with packages in the "Notice Left" section, but 15 of the 30 packages selected from the carrier cases had handling errors or missing scans. These included:

- Nine had a "Return to Sender" – "Insufficiently Addressed", "Vacant", and "Addressee Unknown" scans. Packages with address issues should have been returned to the sender or redirected to the forwarding or correct address instead of remaining at the carrier's case.

- Five did not have a STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.

- One scanned four houses (245 feet) from the point of delivery.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not properly monitor and enforce package scanning procedures. Delivery unit employees stated that the unit was understaffed and the postmaster was on extended leave, which impacted monitoring the mail scans. District management stated that they noticed and discussed the scanning issues with unit management in January 2022, which resulted in improved scans during February.

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 or some other location. 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]

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6   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".
7   For this STC scan type, we only included scans performed Monday through Friday to avoid legitimate scans for businesses closed over the weekend.
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 judgmentally selected 30 packages from the carrier cases and 30 packages from the "Notice Left" area.
11   *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.
12   *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

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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.

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Finding #2: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Renton MPO did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes[13] 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 scans on any of the 230 scheduled trucks.[14] 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

Management stated that they stopped scanning the incoming trucks because the scanners ceased to function properly due to a system upgrade. Management provided documentation showing that the scanners were not working but did not provide documentation to support elevation of the matter to senior management and steps taken to resolve the issue.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored truck scan performance and followed up on the issues with the scanners to ensure employees could resume scanning the incoming trailer/truck barcodes. According to Postal Service policy,[15] employees must scan the barcode on Postal Service trailer/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.

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13 The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.
14 72 trucks arriving from the Seattle P&DC and 158 from the South DDC.
15 *United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units* (DU).

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Finding # 3: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Renton MPO. Specifically, we identified a blocked door and fire extinguisher (see Figures 1 and 2), five fire extinguishers that had not been inspected[16] (see Figure 3), two damaged lights in the parking lot, and damaged ceiling tiles in the lobby and manager's office[17] (Figure 4).

Why Did It Occur

Management did not effectively monitor and address the safety and maintenance issues. Management stated that they overlooked that the Inspection Service door and one fire extinguisher were blocked and five fire extinguishers had not been inspected. Local management reported the parking lot lighting issue in electronic Facilities Management System (eFMS) in January and October 2020 but did not effectively pursue the repair when the local field maintenance office declined the project. Management also stated that they were more focused on operations issues such as mail delivery and did not consider the damaged tiles a priority.

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 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.

Figure 1. Inspection Door Blocked
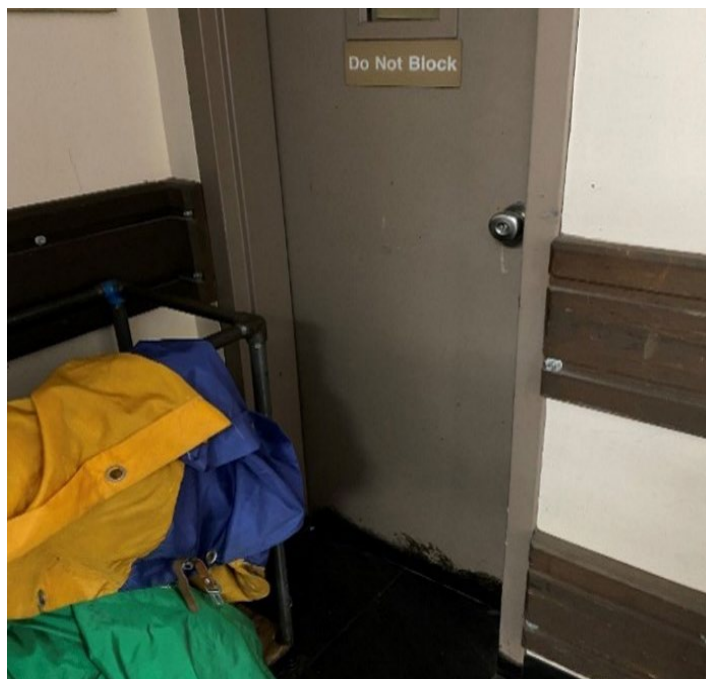
Source: OIG photo taken April 6, 2022.

Figure 2. Blocked Fire Extinguisher

Source: OIG photo taken April 6, 2022.

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16 Last monthly inspection was performed in December 2021.
17 The unit had stained ceiling tiles in the lobby and cracked ceiling tiles in the manager's office.
18 OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, Supervisor's *Safety Handbook*.

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Figure 3. Fire Extinguisher not Inspected Monthly

Source: OIG photo taken April 6, 2022.

Figure 4. Damaged Ceiling Tiles in the Lobby

Source: OIG photo taken April 6, 2022.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with all findings in the report. See
Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

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Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from April 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,[19] the Surface Visibility[20] database, and the 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.

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

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Appendix B: Management's Comments

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

June 1, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review -
Renton Main Post Office, Renton, WA Project Number 22-097-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 - Renton Post Office, Renton, WA

Following are our comments on each of the three findings.

Findings #1:

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees
scanned 563 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 49.91 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.

Management Response:
Management agrees with this finding.

Management states that due inclement weather that impacted the navigation of streets
with snow and ice from about the week of December 27, 2022 to roughly the week of
January 23, 2022. Some packages were scanned at the delivery unit and some were
scanned at the address. Now all the packages are required to be scanned at the
delivery location. Scans that are made in the office require additional follow up with the
individual employee being given an official discussion and follow the progression to
corrective action if necessary.

See attachment showing:
- Official discussion utilized to document talks with each employee that failed to
  "scan where you stand"

Finding #2:

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

Management Response:
Management agrees with this finding.

Management at Renton Post Office have provided training and instruction on scanning the trailer/trucks upon arrival and departure.

WA District conducted a Learn & Grow providing instructions on the daily requirements of Truck Scanning:

See attachment showing:
- RIMS report of Arrival and Depart scans from May 18, 2022 to June 1, 2022

Finding #3:

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Renton MPO. Specifically, we identified a blocked door and fire extinguisher, five fire extinguishers that had not been inspected, two damaged lights in the parking lot, and damaged ceiling tiles in the lobby and manager's office.

Management Response:
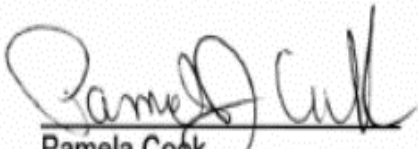Management agrees with this finding.

Management states that all blocked doors and fire extinguisher are abated and in compliance:

Management states that all 5 fire extinguishers have been checked by ▮▮▮ and have been assigned to the custodian to perform monthly inspections are now being checked monthly and in compliance:

Management states that 2 damaged lights in the parking lot are abated and in compliance:

Management states that the damaged ceiling tiles in the lobby and managers office are abated and in compliance:

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

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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