

## Audit Report

# Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Chouteau Station, St. Louis, MO

Report Number 22-115-3-R22 | July 13, 2022





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

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July 13, 2022

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** EDDIE L. BANNER  
MANAGER (A), KANSAS-MISSOURI DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Balduff", is centered below the "MEMORANDUM FOR" section.

**FROM:** Sean Balduff  
Director, Field Operations

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review –  
Chouteau Station, St. Louis, MO (Report Number 22-115-3-R22)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Chouteau Station, St. Louis, MO.

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 Retail & Delivery Operations



# Results

## Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Chouteau Station in St. Louis, MO (Project Number 22-115-3). The Chouteau Station is in the Kansas-Missouri District of the Central Area and services ZIP Code 63110, which serves about 17,235 people and is considered to be urban.<sup>1</sup> We judgmentally selected the Chouteau Station based on the number of Stop-the-Clock<sup>2</sup> (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 Chouteau Station in St. Louis, MO.

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>3</sup> During our site visit, 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 in the "Notice Left" area<sup>4</sup> and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on June 22, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The Chouteau Station is one of four delivery units<sup>5</sup> the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of May 2, 2022 that are serviced by the St. Louis Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC). We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the Chouteau Station. We will issue a separate report<sup>6</sup> that provides 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 Chouteau Station. 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 the week of May 2, 2022.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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".

<sup>3</sup> Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

<sup>4</sup> The area of a delivery unit where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

<sup>5</sup> The other three units were St. Peters Main Post Office, St. Peters, MO (Project Number 22-115-1); Maryville Gardens Station, St. Louis, MO (Project Number 22-115-2); and Marian Oldham Station, St. Louis, MO (Project Number 22-115-4).

<sup>6</sup> Project Number 22-115.

# Finding #1: Package Scanning

## What We Found

Employees scanned 172 packages at the delivery unit between January and March 2022 (see Table 2). Further analysis of STC scan data for these packages showed that about 60 percent of the packages were scanned “Delivered.” This data excludes scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as “Delivered - PO Box” and “Customer (Vacation) Hold” and, instead, 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	January	February	March	Total	Percentage
Delivered	60	10	34	104	60.47%
Delivery Attempted - No Access to Delivery Location*	16	42	5	63	36.63%
Delivery Exception - Animal Interference	3	0	0	3	1.74%
Refused	1	0	1	2	1.16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*For this STC scan type, we only included scans performed Monday through Friday to avoid legitimate scans for businesses closed over the weekend. Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service’s Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data. PTR is the system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

In addition, on the morning of May 3, 2022, we selected all eight packages from the “Notice Left” area to review

and analyze scanning and tracking history.<sup>7</sup> Of the eight packages, two (25 percent) had improper scans. Specifically, one had a “Delivered” scan, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer’s point of delivery. The other package had a “Delivery Attempted- No Access to Delivery Location” scan performed 1.3 miles from the delivery point. All packages are required to be scanned at the point of the delivery attempt.

Further, four packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned to the sender, as required.<sup>8</sup> These packages ranged from nine to 94 days past their return dates. In addition, we identified nine postage due packages on the shelves in the Post Office Box area dating back to March 8, 2021. After we brought this to management’s attention, the unit manager started returning packages to senders.

## Why it Happened

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Management stated that they instructed employees to scan packages at the point of delivery; however, they were more focused on ensuring carriers delivered mail than always monitoring and enforcing scanning and handling procedures. In addition, some carriers thought they should scan packages for caller service<sup>9</sup> customers as “Delivered” and place them aside for the customer to pick up, even though the packages had the customer’s street address on them.

In addition, packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned due to inadequate management oversight. The “Notice Left” area was managed by a clerk who did not have this responsibility as part of her normal duties due to another clerk’s medical leave. The backup clerk had not been adequately trained in “Notice Left” procedures.

<sup>7</sup> We did not find any packages at the carrier cases.

<sup>8</sup> *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.

<sup>9</sup> A premium service available for a fee to customers who receive more mail than can be delivered to the largest post office box offered by the postal facility where the caller’s (customer) mail is addressed.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have enforced scanning compliance, including ensuring all packages were scanned at the delivery point and not at the delivery unit. Caller service mail without a box number should have been delivered to the street address if shown on the mailpiece.<sup>10</sup> The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,<sup>11</sup> which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.<sup>12</sup> Packages in the "Notice Left" area should have

been reviewed for second notices and returned to senders 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, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning operations, management could potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

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<sup>10</sup> *Postal Operation Manual*, 842 Caller Service, November 30, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

<sup>12</sup> *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

## Finding #2: Truck Arrival Scanning

### What We Found

Employees at the Chouteau Station did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes<sup>13</sup> as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from January 1 to March 31, 2022, and found that employees did not perform a scan for 202 of 304 scheduled trucks (about 66.45 percent) arriving from the St. Louis P&DC (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Truck Arrival Scans from January 1 through March 31, 2022**

Month	Count of Inbound Trips	Count of Missed Scans	Percentage Missing
January	92	58	63.04%
February	89	59	66.29%
March	123	85	69.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>66.45%</b>

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from the Postal Service's Surface Visibility (SV) System. 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.

### Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide adequate oversight of scan performance data or enforce scan procedures for trailer/truck barcodes because they were primarily focused on getting mail delivered. A supervisor stated that he was not aware of the requirement to scan the trailer/truck barcodes. The acting manager stated that she was aware of the requirement, but prioritized mail delivery over monitoring the scans.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored trailer/truck scanning data to ensure all expected truck scans were being performed. According to Postal Service policy,<sup>14</sup> employees must scan the trailer barcodes 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 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.

<sup>13</sup> The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

<sup>14</sup> United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units (DU).

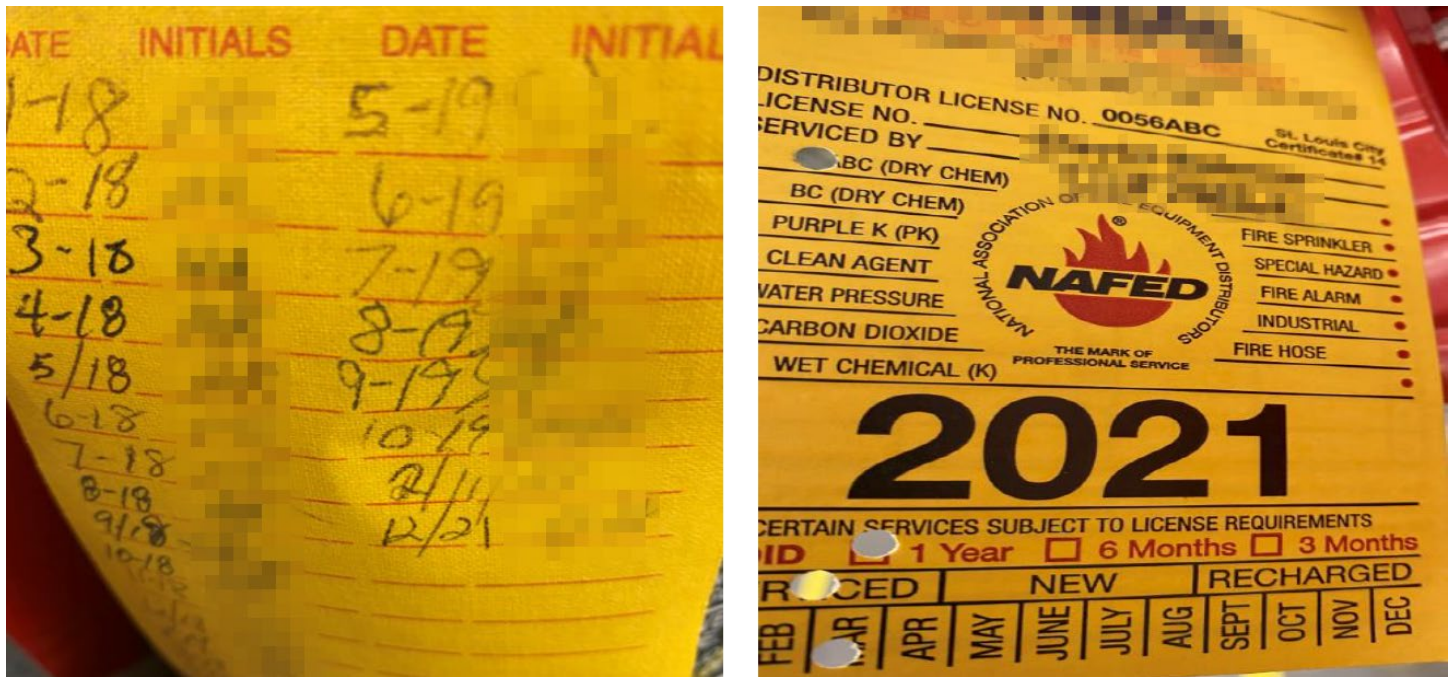
# Finding # 3: Property Conditions

## What We Found

We found maintenance, security, and safety issues at the Chouteau Station, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected.<sup>15</sup> Monthly inspections were last completed in December 2021, and annual inspections were last

completed in March 2021(see Figure 1). We also found walls with possible water damage (see Figure 2), and dusty air vents throughout the facility (see Figure 3). Further, there was no signage posted around the facility stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

**Figure 1. Fire Extinguishers Missing Inspections**



Source: OIG photos taken May 4, 2022.

**Figure 2. Damaged Wall**



Source: OIG photo taken May 4, 2022.

**Figure 3. Dusty Vents**



Source: OIG photos taken May 4, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), 29 CFR 1910.157(e)(2) and 29 CFR 1910.157(e)(3) requires that fire extinguishers be inspected monthly and annually.



### **Why Did It Occur**

Management did not always provide adequate oversight to ensure all property condition issues were identified and corrected timely because they were more focused on other duties, such as addressing customer inquiries and getting the mail delivered each day.

### **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 to ensure the issues were addressed. 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.<sup>16</sup>

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

Management's attention to maintenance, safety, and security 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.

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<sup>16</sup> OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, Supervisor's Safety Handbook.



# Appendix A: Additional Information

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We conducted this audit from April through July 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 and the SV database. 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.

# Appendix B: Management's Comments



June 27, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA  
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property  
Conditions Review – Choteau Station, St. Louis, Mo (Report Number 22-  
115-3-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service an opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft audit report, *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Choteau Station, St. Louis Mo.*

Management agrees with the three findings in the report on package scanning, truck arrival scanning and property conditions.

Management has begun taking steps to address the three findings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eddie L. Banner", written over a horizontal line.

Eddie L. Banner  
District Manager, Kansas-Missouri District

cc: *Vice President, Area Retail and Delivery Operations (Central)*  
*Manager, Corporate Audit Response Management*

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