

## Audit Report

# Efficiency of Selected Processes - Select Units, Georgia District



Report Number 22-125-R22 | September 23, 2022





OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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September 23, 2022

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** KEITH A. PIERLE  
DISTRICT MANAGER, GEORGIA DISTRICT

*Michelle Lindquist*

**FROM:** Michelle Lindquist  
Director, Financial Controls

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Capping Report – Efficiency of Selected Processes at Select Retail Units, Georgia District (Report Number 22-125-R22)

This capping report presents the results of our audits of the Efficiency of Selected Processes in the Georgia District.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Gregory M. Williams, Audit Manager, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General  
Corporate Audit and Response Management

# Results

## Background

This report presents a summary of the results of our self-initiated audits assessing the efficiency of selected processes at three selected retail units in the Georgia District (Project Number 22-125). These retail units include the Atlanta, GA Main Post Office (MPO), the Marietta, GA MPO, and the Stone Mountain, GA Post Office (PO) in the Southern Area. We previously issued interim reports<sup>1</sup> to district management for each of these retail units regarding the conditions we identified.

## Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to review cash and stamp inventories, daily reporting activities, clock ring errors, and employee separations at the Atlanta and Marietta MPOs and the Stone Mountain PO in the Georgia District. Our scope period was October 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022.

To accomplish our objective, we reviewed data regarding inventories, daily reporting activities, clock ring errors, and employee separations to identify at risk transactions.<sup>2</sup> We conducted physical counts of all cash, stamp, and money order inventories, reviewed stamp transfers, and evaluated selected internal controls. We also observed daily closing procedures, traced selected transactions to source documentation, and interviewed unit personnel. We determined the cause of clock ring errors and the steps taken to resolve them and reviewed compliance with procedures for separated employees, including timely suspending system access and collecting and protecting accountable property.

The Atlanta and Marietta MPOs and the Stone Mountain PO are the three retail units the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of May 2, 2022. We are issuing this capping report to provide the Postal Service with overall findings and recommendations for all three post offices.

We conducted these audits from May through September 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 discussed our observations and conclusions with management on September 7, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

We relied on computer-generated data from the Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW),<sup>3</sup> Retail Systems Software (RSS)<sup>4</sup> inventory reports, and Time and Collection System (TACS)<sup>5</sup> reports. We did not test the validity of controls over this system; however, we verified the accuracy of the data by reviewing related documentation, tracing selected information to supporting source records, and interviewing knowledgeable Postal Service employees. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of these reports.

1 *Efficiency of Selected Processes – Atlanta Main Post Office, Atlanta GA* (Report Number 22-122-R22, dated July 19, 2022), *Efficiency of Selected Processes – Marietta Main Post Office, Marietta, GA* (Report Number 22-123-R22 dated July 19, 2022), and *Efficiency of Selected Processes – Stone Mountain Post Office, Stone Mountain, GA* (Report Number 22-124-R22, dated July 19, 2022).

2 We did not review city or rural carriers.

3 A repository intended for all data and the central source for information on retail, financial, and operational performance. Mission-critical information comes to EDW from transactions that occur across the mail delivery system, points-of-sale, and other sources.

4 The hardware and software retail transaction system used in post offices.

5 A web-based automated payroll program that collects and processes time and attendance data and provides “real time” workhour data to help run day-to-day operations.

## Results Summary

We identified issues regarding cash and inventory, and daily reporting activities at all three offices. In addition, we identified issues regarding clock ring errors at the Atlanta and Marietta MPOs. Lastly, we identified issues with employee separations at the Atlanta MPO (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Summary of Results**

Audit Area	Deficiencies Identified – Yes or No		
	Atlanta MPO	Marietta MPO	Stone Mountain
Cash and Inventories	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daily Reporting Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clock Ring Errors	Yes	Yes	No
Employee Separations	Yes	No	No

Source: OIG summary of results from fieldwork during week of May 2, 2022.

# Finding #1: Cash and Inventories

## What We Found

Internal controls over cash, stamps, money orders, and other nonmail items were not always managed effectively at all three offices. We identified issues<sup>6</sup> at all three offices reviewed (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Cash and Inventory Issues**

#	Issues	Atlanta MPO	Marietta MPO	Stone Mountain PO	Corrective Action Taken
1	Unsecured/Unrecorded Money Orders <sup>7</sup>	X		X	Partial
2	Stamp Stock Security	X	X		Partial
3	Missing and Inactive Cash Credits	X			Partial
4	Stamp Stock Counts not Properly Conducted	X			Yes
5	Stamp Transfers and Documentation Incorrect/Missing	X	X	X	Yes
6	Sharing RSS Passwords		X		No
7	Duplicate Key, Password, and Combination Envelopes Missing			X	No
8	Nonmail Items Security	X	X		Yes

Source: OIG interim reports issued July 19, 2022.

## Why Did It Occur

- For issues 1 through 3 from Table 2, the manager responsible for providing daily oversight at the Atlanta MPO was assigned to manage this unit and one additional retail unit. Management stated they could not confirm the frequency that the manager visited the unit. In addition, management stated that they rely on

the district field accounting analyst to alert them when financial related issues occur at the unit, and they were not aware of the issues until we brought them to their attention. In addition, management stated that it is a daily practice for the opening employee to remove the retail floor stock and leave it unattended. Marietta MPO management stated the lock was broken on the [REDACTED] and did not know how long it had been broken. Stone Mountain PO unit management stated they did not know the correct procedure for managing the unrecorded money orders.

- For issue 4 from Table 2, current personnel at the Atlanta MPO did not know why the retail floor stamp stock was not counted concurrently when the unit reserve stamp stock was counted in October 2021 and January 2022.
- For issue 5 from Table 2, Atlanta and Marietta unit management did not know why PS Forms 17, *Stamp Requisition/Stamp Return*, were not on file. Marietta unit management also stated that they did not have time to input RSS transfers of stamp stock movement daily because they are responsible for multiple offices. Stone Mountain PO unit management did not know what happened to the missing documentation.
- For issue 6 from Table 2, Marietta MPO unit manager did not provide a reason for sharing their password.
- For issue 7 from Table 2, Stone Mountain PO unit personnel stated they were unaware of the requirement regarding completing and maintaining PS Forms 3977, *Duplicate Key, Combination and Password Envelopes*.
- For issue 8 from Table 2, Atlanta MPO management stated they were aware of the policy to return nonmail items to the original owner. However, they were hesitant to return the items because they were unsure of the addresses and did not want to send the items to someone other than the owner. The Marietta MPO manager stated they were unaware of the requirement and proper procedures.

<sup>6</sup> Cash and inventory counts outside of tolerance levels for these three offices can be found in the interim reports.

<sup>7</sup> The Atlanta MPO did not record in the system money orders valued at \$347,000 or lost money orders valued at \$489,000 and had old money orders not recorded in the system valued at \$293,000. The Stone Mountain PO did not record money orders valued at \$367,500.

## What Should Have Happened

- For issues number 1 through 4 from Table 2, Postal Service policy states the postmaster or unit manager is responsible for ensuring that controls are in place for maintaining an accurate inventory for all accountable paper within the postal retail unit. In addition, policy states that the postmaster, manager, or supervisor must provide adequate security for all accountable items, which include Postal Service funds (cash, checks, and money orders) and stamp stock, ensuring proper entry of all financial transactions.<sup>8</sup> If blank money orders are lost or stolen, the postmaster, manager, or supervisor must immediately contact the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and report the serial numbers of the missing money orders.<sup>9</sup> The postmaster, manager, or supervisor is responsible for the required count of the retail floor stock and for resolving any differences between the clerk balance list and the unit's daily financial report.<sup>10</sup>
- For issue 5 from Table 2, Postal Service policy requires a PS Form 17 to be filed locally and retained for two years in addition to the current fiscal year.<sup>11</sup> PS Form 17 is used to document shipments of stock from the unit reserve to retail floor stamp stock and from retail floor stamp stock back to the unit reserve.<sup>12</sup>
- For issues 6 and 7 from Table 2, Postal Service policy states that passwords used to connect to Postal Service information resources must be treated as sensitive information and not be disclosed to anyone other than the authorized user, including system administrators and technical support staff.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Postal Service policy states the field unit manager or supervisor is responsible for providing and monitoring adequate security for all building-related security matters, including compliance with duplicate keys, passwords, combinations for use with safes and vaults, etc.<sup>14</sup>

- For issue 8 from Table 2, Postal Service policy requires nonmail items, including wallets, found in collection boxes or at other points in the Postal Service's jurisdiction to be returned to the appropriate individual, with postage due at the single-piece First-Class Mail rate.<sup>15</sup>

## Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Properly accounting for cash, inventories, and accountable items, physically and in financial records, decreases opportunities for theft to occur and go unnoticed. Not properly securing Postal Service assets increases the risk of loss of cash, money orders, stamp stock, and other assets. We consider issues regarding the safeguarding and recording of money orders as accountable items at risk<sup>16</sup> totaling \$1,496,500.<sup>17</sup> In addition, if controls over nonmail items are not followed, there is an increased risk of identity and property theft.

On May 6, 2022, at the Atlanta MPO, management initiated corrective action regarding the saleable and nonsaleable stamp stock. They conducted a count of the saleable and nonsaleable stamp stock items and old blank money orders, added the items to the unit reserve stock inventory, and prepared the stock for destruction.

District management stated in their management comments on the interim reports that they have completed corrective actions and, in subsequent communication, provided some supporting documentation relating to recording money orders, disposition of some of the money orders, returning nonmail items, and establishing a file system for PS Forms 17. However, there are some remaining issues the Postal Service needs to address and provide supporting documentation.

8 Handbook F-101, Sections 11-3.1 and 3-1.1, January 2022.

9 Handbook F-101, Section 3-3.3, January 2022.

10 Handbook F-101, Sections 14-2.4 and 14-2.6, January 2022.

11 Handbook F-101, Section 14-2.2 and Appendix D. Fiscal year is October 1 through September 30.

12 Handbook F-101, Section 14-2.2, January 2022.

13 Handbook AS-805, *Information Security*, Section 9-6.1.9, June 2021.

14 Handbook F-1, *Accounting and Reporting Policy*, Section 2-5.2.2.2, January 2015.

15 *Domestic Mail Manual*, Section 507.1.9.1a, January 26, 2020.

16 Assets or accountable items at risk of loss is a category due to lack of inadequate internal controls. Examples include, but are not limited to cash, stamps, or money orders.

17 Accountable items at risk calculation, Atlanta unrecorded and lost money orders value at \$1,129,000. Stone Mountain PO unrecorded money orders value at \$367,500.

### **Recommendation #1**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct Atlanta and Stone Mountain Main Post Office (MPO) unit management to properly destroy old blank money orders and provide disposition information for the remaining 119 of the 396 unsecured money orders identified at the Stone Mountain Post Office.

### **Recommendation #2**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct Marietta Main Post Office unit management to fix the broken lock where [REDACTED] is stored.

### **Recommendation #3**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct Atlanta Main Post Office unit management to properly close inactive cash drawers and report missing cash drawers to the appropriate authorities.

### **Recommendation #4**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, reiterate policy to Marietta Main Post Office management and personnel not to share Retail Systems Software passwords.

### **Recommendation #5**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct Stone Mountain Post Office management to update PS Form 3977, Duplicate Key, Combination and Password Envelopes, for employees.

## Finding #2: Daily Financial Reporting Process

### What We Found

At all three sites we identified issues relating to accuracy and timeliness of financial reporting activities. Specifically, we found the following issues:

- Atlanta and Marietta MPO management did not review the PS Form 1412, Daily Financial Report<sup>18</sup> to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of financial reporting.
- At the Marietta MPO, none of the judgmentally selected bank deposit slips contained a separate witness signature.
- At the Stone Mountain PO and Atlanta MPO, we found retail associates (RA) did not include supporting documentation for judgmentally selected transactions.
  - Stone Mountain PO was missing refund documentation for nine postage validation imprinter (PVI) labels and one PS Form 3533, *Application for Refund of Fees*.
  - Atlanta MPO was missing refund documentation for 15 PVI refunds, one PS Form 3533, and supporting documentation for four payroll adjustment forms.

### Why Did it Occur

Atlanta MPO management stated that they do not review the daily financial reports because there is not a manager scheduled to perform the review when the unit closes.

Marietta MPO unit management was unaware that they need to review final PS Form 1412 documentation daily. In addition, unit personnel performing daily closing procedures, including preparing the bank deposit, stated that they never had a witness sign the bank deposit because a former supervisor instructed the preparer to sign in both locations.

Stone Mountain PO unit management stated that they did not know why the support was missing for the refund or PVI voided transactions, or why the responsible RA did not obtain a signature on the PVI voids.

### What Should Have Happened

Postal Service policy states field unit managers must review supporting documentation for all entries included on the PS Form 1412 and concur with the overall presentation of the report each day.<sup>19</sup> Further, a witness must verify the unit's bank deposit whenever possible. When a witness is not available, the preparer signs the deposit ticket on the "Verifier" line and the "Witness" line is left blank.<sup>20</sup>

Postal Service policy states that RAs, at time of closing, verify the PS Form 1412 entry amounts match supporting documentation.<sup>21</sup> In addition, policy states the closeout employee must confirm all required supporting documentation is submitted and follow closing procedures which require a PS Form 1412 is filed with the supporting documentation.<sup>22</sup>

### Effect on the Postal Service

When unit management does not review financial reports, including verifying supporting documentation, the Postal Service has an increased risk of undetected theft, lost revenue, and fraudulent activity.

District management stated in their management comments on the interim reports that they have completed corrective actions, and in subsequent communication, they provided some supporting documentation that unit management is now performing the daily financial review at all three locations. However, there is one remaining issue relating to the Marietta MPO that still needs to be addressed and supporting documentation needs to be provided.

### Recommendation #6

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct the Marietta Main Post Office unit manager to instruct close out personnel to follow procedures for witnessing bank deposits.

<sup>18</sup> All postal retail units, regardless of size or revenue, must report their financial activity to Accounting Services electronically at the close of each business day.

<sup>19</sup> Handbook F-101, Section 2-4.1, January 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Handbook F-101, Section 9-1.2.2, January 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Handbook F-101, Section 5-3.1.c, January 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Handbook F-101, Section 5-3.2.b, January 2022.



## Finding #3: Clock Ring Errors and Warnings

### What We Found

Generally, at all three offices, unit management corrected fatal clock ring errors<sup>23</sup> timely, avoiding payroll adjustments.<sup>24</sup> However, at the Atlanta MPO, we found 587 clock rings listed, considered to be warnings,<sup>25</sup> on the Clock Ring Error Report for our scope period that we consider to have been avoidable. Specifically, unit employees did not always adhere to scheduled start times. We found that 28 of the warnings (5 percent) represented four retail unit personnel starting their workday outside of the five-minute allowance period. Additionally, lead clerks at both the Atlanta and Marietta MPOs did not perform TACS duties.

### Why Did It Occur

Atlanta MPO unit management stated that they discussed the clock ring errors with applicable employees but did not always enforce the policy because the unit is short staffed, and they did not want to risk losing more employees.

In addition, management at Atlanta and Marietta MPOs stated that the lead clerks had not attended TACS training. Management at the Atlanta MPO stated that the lead clerk is registered to attend the training session in June 2022.

### What Should Have Happened

Postal Service policy states that, upon arrival, employees required to use time clocks must clock in at their scheduled reporting time. Employees must not be permitted to clock in more than five minutes before or after their scheduled reporting time. Supervisors must take all necessary actions to restrict employee access to timecards before the scheduled tour begins.<sup>26</sup> At six minutes after the scheduled

reporting time, the supervisor must withdraw timecards or badges for scheduled employees who do not report for duty. Employees arriving after their scheduled reporting time must report directly to their supervisor to obtain their timecard. The employee may be required or permitted to make up the time by extending his or her regular work schedule for the tour, providing the period of tardiness is without pay. Alternatively, the tardiness can be charged to annual leave (if available), leave without pay or absence without leave. If the tardiness is not excused, appropriate disciplinary action, in addition to leave charge, may be taken.<sup>27</sup>

Lead clerks should be assigned TACS duties, including correcting daily clock ring errors.<sup>28</sup> On July 16, 2021, multiple headquarters' officials issued a letter to all district managers stating all units must have trained lead clerks who are assigned TACS timekeeping duties.

### Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When managers do not enforce policies for clocking in, employees may receive improper pay and management could incur excess administrative time with the TACS Help Desk validating the accuracy of clock ring entries.

When the lead clerk is not trained and assigned TACS duties, the Postal Service could be exposed to financial liability resulting from grievance settlements.

District management stated in their management comments on the interim reports that they have completed corrective actions and, in subsequent communication, provided supporting training documentation; therefore, we are not making a recommendation.

23 Are errors that appear in red in the system and they prevent the employee from being paid correctly for that day.

24 Clock rings include time entries that are recorded electronically, mechanically (using a time clock), or manually (written in).

25 Messages which address issues other than fatal errors but should also be reviewed. They may be informational only (i.e., "Nonscheduled Begin Tour") or may require action (i.e., an instance of "Missing OT Transaction" that needs to be addressed with a Code 91 entry (overtime transaction). Unlike fatal errors, which disappear when the error is corrected, most warning messages do not disappear (i.e., "Nonscheduled Begin Tour/End Tour").

26 Handbook F-21, *Time and Attendance*, Section 142.21, February 2016.

27 If the employee's tour is extended solely because of tardiness, they are not entitled to out-of-schedule premium or Sunday premium, which would otherwise be paid because of the tour extension.

28 As a result of a February 2016 grievance settlement with the American Postal Workers Union.

## Finding #4: Employee Separations

### What We Found

Atlanta MPO unit management did not always follow Postal Service policies for processing separated employees. Specifically, the unit's financial records showed that two of three employees who separated from the Postal Service between October 8, 2021, and April 22, 2022, had a cash retained credit balance, assigned blank money orders, and had active roles in the RSS data system. In addition, two of the missing cash credits reported in finding #1 are assigned to two of the separated employees. Further, unit management did not change the safe combination and locks after each employee's separation and could not confirm if Postal Service work identification badges<sup>29</sup> were surrendered upon the employees' separations.

### Why Did It Occur

Atlanta MPO management stated they did not receive confirmation from Human Resources of the final removal status for the separated employees.

### What Should Have Happened

Postal Service policy states a final count of a cash retained credit must be conducted when the RA separates from the Postal Service.<sup>30</sup> The funds are included in the nightly deposit and the blank money orders are transferred to the unit reserve custodian for reassignment.<sup>31</sup> An employee's role must be removed (terminated) from RSS no later than the employee's last day of work when they separate from the Postal Service.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, management must change the safe's combination whenever a person knowing a combination of a safe or vault is separated or transferred.<sup>33</sup> Further, management must maintain a Postal Service ID log to record the badge's date of return and the initials of the employee clearing the badge back into the office.<sup>34</sup>

### Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Cash, blank money orders, and other Postal Service assets could be stolen or used for unintended purposes when policies are not followed. Failure to change a combination is considered contributory negligence by the responsible employee if property is stolen from a safe and vault without force.<sup>35</sup>

District management stated in their management comments on the interim reports they completed corrective actions for these issues and, in subsequent communication, provided supporting documentation. In addition, during our exit conference, management stated the employees with the RSS access user IDs had been suspended and while the employees had been separated from the unit, they had not been officially terminated from the Postal Service. Therefore, we will not be making a recommendation on this issue, but may pursue separately at a later time.

### Management's Comments

Management agreed with all the findings and recommendations. The target implementation date is September 30, 2022, for all recommendations.

See [Appendix A](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

### 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. The 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.

29 ID badges are accountable items.

30 Handbook F-101 (Draft), 13-8.4, October 2020.

31 Handbook F-101 (Draft), 13-7.6, October 2020.

32 Handbook F-101, 2-4.8, January 2022.

33 Handbook F-101, 3-9.2, January 2022.

34 Handbook F-101, 3-10.4, January 2022.

35 Handbook F-101, 3-9.2, January 2022.

# Appendix A: Management's Comments



Date: September 22, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA  
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Capping Report – Efficiency of Selected Processes at Select Retail Units, Georgia District (22-125)

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, *Efficiency of Selected Processes at Select Retail Units, Georgia District*.

**Recommendation [1]:**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct Atlanta and Stone Mountain Main Post Office (MPO) unit management to properly destroy old blank money orders and provide disposition information for the remaining 119 of the 396 unsecured money orders identified at the Stone Mountain Post Office.

**Management Response/Action Plan:**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

**Target Implementation Date:** 09/30/2022

**Responsible Official:**

Postmaster Atlanta, Ga  
Postmaster Stone Mountain, Ga

**Recommendation [2]:**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct Marietta Main Post Office unit management to fix the broken lock where [REDACTED]

**Management Response/Action Plan:**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

**Target Implementation Date:** 09/30/2022

**Responsible Official:**

Postmaster Marietta, Ga

**Recommendation [3]:**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct Atlanta Main Post Office unit management to properly close inactive cash drawers and report missing cash drawers to the appropriate authorities.

**Management Response/Action Plan:**

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Target Implementation Date: 09/30/2022

Responsible Official:  
Postmaster Atlanta, Ga

**Recommendation [4]:**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, reiterate policy to Marietta Main Post Office management and personnel not to share Retail Systems Software passwords.

Management Response/Action Plan:  
Management **agrees** with this recommendation.

Target Implementation Date: 09/30/2022

Responsible Official:  
Postmaster Marietta, Ga

**Recommendation [5]:**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct Stone Mountain Post Office management to update PS Form 3977, *Duplicate Key, Combination and Password Envelopes*, for employees.

Management Response/Action Plan:  
Management agrees with this recommendation.

Target Implementation Date: 09/30/2022

Responsible Official:  
Postmaster Stone Mountain, Ga

**Recommendation [6]:**

We recommend the **Manager, Georgia District**, direct the Marietta Main Post Office unit manager to instruct close out personnel to follow procedures for witnessing bank deposits.

Management Response/Action Plan:  
Management agrees with this recommendation.

Target Implementation Date: 09/30/2022

Responsible Official:  
Postmaster Marietta, Ga



Keith A. Pierle  
District Manager, Georgia District

cc: *Manager, Corporate Audit Response Management*

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