June 9, 2010
ANTHONY C. WILLIAMS
DISTRICT MANAGER, NORTHLAND DISTRICT
SUBJECT: Audit Report - Color-Coding of Standard Mail® and Mail Condition Reporting in the Northland District (Report Number NO-AR-10-006)

This report presents the results of our audit of color-coding of Standard Mail and mail condition reporting in the Northland District (Project Number 10XG029NO000). The objectives were to determine whether employees properly color-coded the mail as well as accurately counted and reported delayed mail volumes. This is the fourth in a series of self-initiated reviews addressing the color-code policy for Standard Mail. This audit addresses operational risk. See Appendix A for additional information about this audit.


For Standard Mail, the color-coding process involves using a series of color tags to ensure efficient processing in a first-in first-out (FIFO) sequence to meet processing, dispatch, and delivery targets. A color-coded tag represents the day of the week the mail arrives on Postal Service premises and denotes the target clearance date from the facility. Mail condition reports summarize the on-hand and delayed mail volumes of all classes of mail at each mail processing facility.

## Conclusion

The Northland District ${ }^{1}$ was not properly color-coding or reporting delayed mail. We found that:

- Eighty-three percent of the containers were not properly color-coded.
- The correct color was not always maintained throughout processing.
- Delayed mail was not always properly reported. For example, during our first 2 days of observation, employees counted approximately 264,000 mailpieces but did not report it as delayed.
- The date of the oldest mail on-hand was not always accurately reported.

Once we brought proper color-coding and mail condition reporting procedures to management's attention, they took immediate corrective action to have employees properly tag the mail and accurately report mail conditions.

## Color Coding of Standard Mail

Of the 354 staged Standard Mail containers reviewed at both the only 61 (about 17 percent) were properly color-coded and the remaining 293 were not color-coded in accordance with policy. Specifically:

- Tags on 245 containers (69 percent) were missing the time and/or date.
- Color-code tags were missing from 42 containers (12 percent).
- Six containers had the wrong color tags based on the date the mail entered the mail stream.

We also found that when employees processed mail bearing different color-codes together; they did not properly re-color-code some of it. Additionally, employees did not always use the national standardized tag.

These conditions occurred due to:

- Limited color-code training and awareness of the policy.
- Limited oversight by the color-code coordinator.
- Plant personnel failed to tag some containers received at the dock that needed them.

[^0]Without accurate color-coding, the Postal Service cannot ensure timely processing, dispatch, and delivery of Standard Mail. Without a date and time on the tag, the Postal Service cannot determine whether employees processed Standard Mail using the FIFO method. ${ }^{2}$ Additionally, the Postal Service cannot readily track service standards and accurately report mail conditions in the web-based Mail Condition Reporting System (MCRS). Failure to accurately color-code and date the mail could also confuse delivery units about when the mail needs to be delivered. See Appendix B for our detailed analysis of this topic.

We recommend the Northland district manager:

1. Train employees to ensure proper color-coding of Standard Mail according to Postal Service policy.
2. Direct the district color-code coordinator to conduct periodic color-code reviews and provide program oversight.

## Mail Condition Reporting

underreported delayed mail and did not accurately report the date of the oldest mailpiece in some cases. Bringing these matters to the attention of plant management resulted in proper reporting, effective February 25, 2010.

These conditions occurred because:
-
 misinterpreted the policy believing they had until the delivery day to process the mail before reporting it as delayed.

## - <br> $\square$ employees did not adequately oversee the employees performing the mail count.

Not properly reporting delayed volumes may prevent management from making effective operational decisions. This could also impact customer service without management's knowledge. See Appendix B for our detailed analysis of this topic.

We recommend the Northland district manager:
3. Provide mail condition reporting training and oversight to employees.

## Management's Comments

[^1]Management agreed with the findings and recommendations. During the audit, management corrected the deficiencies in the processes. In addition, applicable employees received color-code and mail condition reporting training, and management is conducting periodic reviews of the color-coding process. See Appendix D for management's comments, in their entirety.

## Evaluation of Management's Comments

The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations and management's corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact James L. Ballard, director, Network Processing, or me at 703-248-2100.


Robert J. Batta
Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Mission Operations

## Attachments

cc: Patrick R. Donahoe<br>Steven J. Forte<br>Jordan M. Small<br>Sylvester Black<br>Susan M. LaChance<br>Erica A Brix<br>Sally K. Haring

## APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## BACKGROUND

Standard Mail is essential to the growth of the Postal Service and is a major factor in its economic health. ${ }^{3}$ Standard Mail accounts for approximately 47 percent of all mail volume and 26 percent of the revenue of the U.S. Postal Service per year. ${ }^{4}$ Delivering Standard Mail timely is important for operational efficiency and customer satisfaction.

The Postal Service uses a system of color-coding to facilitate timely movement of Standard Mail. The color-coding process requires employees to assign a color to mailpieces based on the day of the week. This enables easy processing of mail using the FIFO method. Management updated the color-coding policy on June 17, 2008, with an effective date of August 29, 2008. In December 2008, management made an additional update to the policy clarifying reporting requirements. The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006 requires delivery standards be established for all classes of mail. While standards have not changed, the policy maintains the integrity of the color-code from processing to delivery. The service standard for Standard Mail is 3-10 calendar days.


Policies and procedures for the color-coding system are set forth in Section 458 of the Postal Operations Manual (POM). The Postal Service is revising the POM to reflect changes in the new color-coding policy.

In support of the updated policy, management also made changes to the MCRS categories. Categories such as Plan Failure, Delayed Processing, and Delayed

[^2]Dispatch are no longer reported for Standard Mail. The term "Delayed Mail Flow for Standard Mail" is a new MCRS definition and occurs when mail is not processed, finalized, or dispatched from a specific operation or facility to ensure delivery by the programmed delivery day.

## OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our objectives were to determine whether the mail was properly color-coded as well as whether it was accurately counted and reported.

This is the fourth in a series of audits addressing color-coding and mail reporting at P\&DCs nationwide. We selected the Northland District based on historical delayed mail reporting volumes.

To determine whether color-coding procedures conformed to the national color-coding policy, we observed color-coding of Standard Mail at both the P\&DCs during the week of February 22, 2010. We observed mail color-coded at other facilities, including the Minneapolis Network Distribution Center (NDC) ${ }^{5}$ and Minneapolis Hub. Additionally, we verified mail counts and reviewed count data reported in MCRS. We interviewed Postal Service officials and employees, photographed operations, and observed conditions.

We used computer-processed data from the following systems:

- Web Enterprise Information System
- Web Mail Condition Reporting System (webMCRS also referred as simply MCRS)
- Enterprise Data Warehouse

We did not test controls over these systems. However, we checked the reasonableness of results by confirming our analysis and results with Postal Service managers and multiple data sources. We conducted this performance audit from February through June 2010 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 objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management officials on February 25, 2010 and included their comments where appropriate.

[^3]
## PRIOR AUDIT COVERAGE

| Report Title | Report Number | Final Report Date Rep | Results |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Color-Coding of Standard Mail and Mail Condition Reporting at the Albany Processing and Distribution Center | NO-AR-10-005 | March 31, 2010 | Opportunities exist for the Albany P\&DC to improve color-coding as well as the counting and reporting of delayed mail. Management agreed with the report recommendations. |
| Color-Coding of Standard Mail and Mail Condition Reporting at the Santa Clarita Processing and Distribution Center | NO-AR-09-008 | August 6, 2009 | Opportunities exist for the Santa Clarita P\&DC to improve color-coding and reporting of delayed mail to reflect the color-coding and delayed mail reporting requirements as of August 29, 2008. Management agreed with the report recommendations. |
| Color-Coding of Standard Mail and Mail Condition Reporting at the West Palm Beach Processing and Distribution Center | NO-AR-09-006 | June 10, 2009 | Opportunities exist for the West Palm Beach P\&DC to improve color-coding and reporting of delayed mail to reflect the color-coding and delayed mail reporting requirements as of August 29, 2008. Management agreed with the report recommendations. |

## APPENDIX B: DETAILED ANALYSIS

## Color-Coding of Standard Mail

During the week of February 22, 2010, we reviewed 354 containers of Standard Mail at the for compliance with the national color-coding policy. We found that only 61 (about 17 percent) were properly color-coded and the remaining 293 were not color-coded in accordance with policy. Specifically:

- Two hundred forty-five containers (69 percent) were missing the time and/or date from the tag.
- Forty-two containers (12 percent) were missing color-code tags.
- Six containers had the wrong color tags based on the date the mail entered the mail stream.

See Appendix C for our observations.


We also found when mail bearing different color-codes was processed together, some of the mail was not properly re-color-coded. Additionally, the did not always use the national standardized tag. See Illustration 3.

Illustration 3:
The small violet piece of paper stuck in the frame of this all-purpose container is intended to act as a color code-tag.


## Causes

These conditions occurred due to:

- Limited supervision and oversight by the color code coordinator.
- First-Class Mail® processing taking precedence over the Standard Mail processing.
- Plant personnel did not tag some containers received at the dock even though they needed tags.
- Limited awareness of the policy because some employees were not trained.

A review of training records indicated not all Minneapolis and St. Paul P\&DC employees involved in these operations had received the national color-code training provided through the Postal Employee Development Center. Specifically:

- 31 of the 42 Minneapolis P\&DC managers and supervisors (about 74 percent) had received documented color-code training.
- 27 of the 33 St. Paul P\&DC managers and supervisors (about 82 percent) had received documented color-code training.


## Criteria

According to the national color-coding policy for Standard Mail, color-coding procedures provide a guide to help maintain service goals for Standard Mail. All Standard Mail will be color-coded and Standard Mail without color-coded tags will be coded the same color as the oldest mail in the unit at the time of its discovery. Additionally, all color-code tags will comply with a standardized national format which will require employees to enter the date and time of mail entry on each tag. The delivery color-code is based on the original entry date and time of the mail, not the processing date or time. Additionally,
the P\&DC must develop local procedures to ensure they maintain the correct color-code for all mail based on its arrival, even when such mail is entered into mechanized or automated sorting systems.

## Effect

Without accurate color-coding, the Postal Service cannot ensure timely processing, dispatch, and delivery of Standard Mail. Without a date and time on the tag, the Postal Service cannot determine whether employees processed Standard Mail using the FIFO method. Additionally, the Postal Service cannot readily track service standards and accurately report mail conditions in the web-based MCRS. Failure to accurately color-code and date the mail could confuse delivery units about when the mail needs to be delivered.

## Mail Condition Reporting

During our observations the week of February 22, 2010, Northland District employees were not accurately recording and reporting delayed mail.

- On February 23, 2010, the Minneapolis P\&DC's count sheet showed delayed Standard Mail volume of 52,291 pieces, while the actual count showed 201,501 pieces. This resulted in the underreporting of 149,210 pieces of delayed Standard Mail.
- Also, on February 23, 2010, the St. Paul P\&DC reported 391 pieces of delayed Standard Mail, while the actual count showed 5,041 pieces. This resulted in the underreporting of 4,650 pieces of delayed Standard Mail.
- Additionally, when recording the "oldest mail" date in webMCRS, the employee who entered the data did not always accurately record the date from the color-code tag.

We could not verify the accuracy of prior reports at the Minneapolis P\&DC because the count sheets ${ }^{6}$ were destroyed after daily MCRS data input. The St. Paul P\&DC did not document the volume of mail on-hand by delivery day; therefore, we were not able to enumerate the underreported volume prior to our observations. Bringing these issues to the attention of plant management resulted in the proper reporting of delayed mail and retention of the count records. See Tables 1 and 2 below.

[^4]Table 1: Mail Condition Reporting Observations at the Minneapolis P\&DC

| Date | On-Hand <br> Standard Mail <br> Reported |  | Reported Delayed | Actual Delayed | Underreported | Oldest Date Reported | Oldest <br> Date <br> Observed |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 2/23/2010 | 48 | 7 | 52,291 | 201,501 | 149,210 | 2/22/2010 2/20/201 0 |  |
| 2/24/2010 5 | 3,79 | 6 | 13,760 | 89,310 | 75,550 | 2/23/2010 2/21/201 0 |  |
| 2/25/2010 ${ }^{7} 9$ | 0,68 | 9 | 78,372 | 78,372 | 0 | 2/23/2010 | 2/23/2010 |
| Total 2,260 | ,97 | 2 | 144,423 | 369,183 | 224,760 |  |  |

Table 2: Mail Condition Reporting Observations at the Saint Paul P\&DC

| Date | On-Hand <br> Standard <br> Mail <br> Reported | Reported <br> Delayed | Actual <br> Delayed | Underreported | Oldest <br> Date <br> Reported | Oldest <br> Date <br> Observed |
| :---: | :---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: |
| $2 / 23 / 2010478,08$ | 7 | 391 | 5,041 | 4,650 | $2 / 20 / 2010$ | $2 / 20 / 201$ | 0

A comparison of the Minneapolis and St. Paul P\&DCs delayed mail volumes to similarsized sites (Group 1 and 2 plants, respectively) showed large variances. For example, in fiscal year (FY) 2009, the Minneapolis P\&DC's delayed volume totaled 19.7 million pieces, while the average for Group 1 plants totaled over 56.5 million pieces. We believe it is likely that delayed mail at the Minneapolis and St. Paul P\&DC's may have been underreported for several years. See Table 4 for additional information on delayed mail reporting.

[^5]Table 4: Delayed Mail Reporting

| Minneapolis P\&DC |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | ---: | :---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | :---: |
|  | Priority | FCM | Periodicals | Standard | Packages | Total |  |
| FY 2006 | 0444,99 | 1 | 14,596 | $3,554,969$ | 0 | $4,014,556$ |  |
| FY 2007 | $1,680253,09$ | 4 | 7,554 | 836,828 | 0 | $1,099,156$ |  |
| FY 2008 | 075,367 | 0 | $3,302,279$ | 0 | $3,377,646$ |  |  |
| FY 2009 | $1,40021,681$ | 2,134 | $19,687,279$ | 0 | $19,712,494$ |  |  |


| Average Group 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | ---: | :---: |
|  | Priority | FCM | Periodicals | Standard | Packages | Total |  |
| FY 2006 | $77,5374,328,79$ | 3 | $9,124,170$ | $64,075,061$ | 86,848 | $77,674,1$ |  |
| FY 2007 | $36,2823,415,45$ | 0 | $7,905,068$ | $58,395,685$ | 84,706 | $69,825,7$ |  |
| FY 2008 | $24,5081,617,09$ | 5 | $3,372,220$ | $37,172,993$ | 16,010 | $42,197,3$ |  |
|  | 77 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| FY 2009 | $36,6151,680,36$ | 0 | $3,446,147$ | $51,375,671$ | $23,95356,559,1$ | 68 |  |



## Cause

These conditions occurred because:

- The employee counting the mail misinterpreted the policy believing they had until the delivery day to process it before reporting it as delayed.
- In-Plant Support employees did not adequately oversee the employees performing the mail count.


## Criteria

According to the national color-coding policy and the policy for mail condition reporting, reporting delayed mail flow for Standard Mail is necessary to provide an accurate snapshot of daily facility conditions for Standard Mail. Additionally, employees should report destinating 5 -digit non-delivery point sequenced mail ${ }^{10}$ as delayed 1 day before the scheduled delivery day. Finally, the date of the oldest mail for Standard Mail is the date recorded on any color-code tag affixed to a Standard Mail container at the time of the count.

The Postal Service's Network Operations Website, Processing Operations, In-Plant Training, requires Operations support specialists (OSS) to consolidate and review data from operations to ensure the integrity of the information collected. Additionally, the OSS must audit webMCRS by checking volume numbers from the webMCRS report against manual counts (verifying counts with data collectors) and compliance with colorcoding policies.

## Effect

Not properly reporting delayed mail may prevent management from making effective operational decisions. This could also impact customer service without management's knowledge.

[^6]APPENDIX C: COLOR-CODING OBSERVATIONS OF STAGED MAIL

| Date | Time | Location | Containers Observed | Missing Tags | Incomplete Tags | Wrong Color | Tag Origin |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 2/23 | 0540 | Minneapolis P\&DC 3-5L | 2 | 2 |  |  |  |
| 2/23 | 0545 | Minneapolis P\&DC 3-9AC | 2 | 2 |  |  | No Tag |
| 2/23 | 0545 | Minneapolis P\&DC 3-10AC | 1 | 1 |  |  | No Tag |
| 2/23 | 0550 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-16AC | 2 | 2 |  |  | No Tag |
| 2/23 | 0550 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-16A | 2 |  | 2 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 0605 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-10B | 43 |  | 39 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 0610 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-8AB | 8 |  | 8 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 0615 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-5AG | 4 |  | 4 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 0625 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-6AC | 23 |  | 23 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 0630 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-5C | 4 |  | 4 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 0640 | Minneapolis P\&DC 3-9A7 | 2 |  | 2 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 0642 | Minneapolis P\&DC 3-9AM | 11 | 8 | 3 |  | Minneapolis NDC |
| 2/23 | 0642 | Minneapolis P\&DC 3-34 | 1 |  | 1 |  | Minneapolis NDC |
| 2/23 | 0650 | Minneapolis P\&DC Ramp | 54 | 1 | 40 |  | Minneapolis NDC |
| 2/23 | 0655 | Minneapolis P\&DC 3-43 | 11 | 1 |  |  | Minneapolis NDC |
| 2/23 | 0655 | Minneapolis P\&DC 3-62 | 8 | 8 |  |  | No Tag |
| 2/23 | 1530 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-12 | 8 |  |  | 1 | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 1530 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-03 | 1 |  | 1 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 15 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC Automation | 23 |  | 18 |  | Minnea polis P\&DC |
| 2/23 15 |  | Minneapolis P\&DC Automation | 14 | 2 | 11 |  | Minnea polis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 1545 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-1OB | 10 |  | 7 | 1 | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/23 | 1550 | Minneapolis P\&DC 2-6C | 11 |  | 10 | 1 | Minneapolis P\&DC |
| 2/24 | 1600 | St. Paul P\&DC 4-15 | 1 |  | 1 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/24 | 1600 | St. Paul P\&DC 4-35 | 12 | 12 |  |  | No Tag |
| 2/24 | 1600 | St. Paul P\&DC 2-15 | 2 |  | 2 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/24 | 1640 | St. Paul P\&DC 3-Elevator | 25 |  | 25 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/24 | 1640 | St. Paul P\&DC 3-8C | 3 |  | 3 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/24 | 1640 | St. Paul P\&DC 3-6D | 1 |  | 1 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/24 | 1640 | St. Paul P\&DC 3-8D | 1 |  | 1 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/24 16 |  | St. Paul P\&DC LTCS Staging | 7 |  | 7 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/25 |  | St. Paul P\&DC Dock | 12 |  | 12 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/24 | 1625 | St. Paul P\&DC 4-6H | 18 |  |  |  | Minneapolis NDC |
| 2/24 | 1627 | St. Paul P\&DC 4-8G | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | Minneapolis NDC |
| 2/24 | 1630 | St. Paul P\&DC 4-8H | 4 |  | 4 |  | Advanced Flat Sorting Machine Rework |
| 2/24 | 1637 | St. Paul P\&DC 3-8F | 1 |  |  | 1 | Prescott River Falls Post Office |
| 2/25 | 0700 | St. Paul P\&DC 4-Flats | 7 | 2 | 5 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/25 | 0710 | St. Paul P\&DC Auto. Staging | 8 |  | 8 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| 2/25 | 0712 | St. Paul P\&DC Auto. Staging | 2 |  | 1 |  | St. Paul P\&DC |
| Totals |  |  | 354 | 42 | 245 | 6 |  |
|  |  | Error Percent |  | 11.9\% | 69.2\% | 1.7\% |  |

## APPENDIX D: MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS

May 27, 2010

## LUCINE M. WILLIS <br> DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Northland District response to Transmittal of Draft Audit Report - ColorCoding of Standard Mail(8) and Mail Condition Reporting in the Northland District (Report Number NO-AR-10-DRAFT)

The Northland District agrees with the findings and recommendations identified in the draft audit report, and have taken the following actions to be in full compliance of the policies.

## OIG Observations from Draft Report, pg. 2

Color Coding of Standard Mail
Of the 354 staged Standard Mail containers reviewed at both the Minneapolis and St. Paul P\&DCs, only 61 (about 17 percent) were properly color-coded and the remaining 293 were not color-coded in accordance with policy. Specifically:

- Tags on 245 containers ( 69 percent) were missing the time and/or date.
- Color code tags were missing from 42 containers ( 12 percent).
- Six containers had the wrong color tags based on the date the mail entered the mail stream.

We also found when mail bearing different color-codes were processed together; some of the mail was not properly re-color-coded. Additionally, the Minneapolis P\&DC did not always use the national standardized tag.

We recommend the Northland district manager:

1. Train employees to ensure proper color-coding of Standard Mail according to Postal Service policy.

From pg. 8 - Color-Coding of Standard Mail
A review of training records indicated not all Minneapolis and St. Paul P\&DC employees had received the national color-code training provided through the Postal Employee Development Center. Specifically:

- 31 of the 42 Minneapolis $P \& D C$ managers and supervisors (about 74 percent) had received documented color-code training.
- 27 of the 33 St. Paul P\&DC managers and supervisors (about 82 percent) had received documented color-code training.

OIG Observations from Draft Report, pg. 2
Color Coding of Standard Mail (continued)
2. Direct the district color-code coordinator to conduct periodic color-code reviews and program oversight.

## Northland Actions Taken: Color Coding of Standard Mail

To address observed containers with missing dates and times, missing color code tags, and wrong color code tags, the Senior Plant Manager, Operations, and In-Plant Support initiated the following corrective actions to the above OIG recommendations.

1. Training

- Northland agrees with the training compliance noted in the report as $74 \%$ complete at the Minneapolis P\&DC and $82 \%$ complete in St. Paul P\%DC.
- Records for Color Code Training, course \#5120612, at the Minneapolis P\&DC, St. Paul P\&DC, Twin Cities Metro Hub (TCMH) and the Minneapolis/St. Paul NDC were reviewed. Remaining training for supervisors and managers who have not completed the training or are new to their position will be completed by $6 / 11 / 10$, as outlined below.
- 11 supervisors/managers in the Minneapolis P\&DC
- 2 supervisors/managers in the St. Paul P\&DC
- 4 supervisors/managers in the TCMH
- 1 supervisor in the Minneapolis/St. Paul NDC
- Color code coordinator provided on-site color code refresher training to 7 supervisors and managers at the TCMH on $3 / 1 / 10$.
- Color code coordinator sent refresher color code information to PDFs on 3/1/10 (attachment 1).
- Color code coordinator provided refresher training for all Mpls IPS staff on $3 / 5 / 10$.

2. Conduct Periodic Reviews and Program Oversight:

- IPS added color coding compliance check list items to AM daily walkthrough on $2 / 25 / 10$ for both Minneapolis P\&DC and St. Paul P\&DC (attachment 2 \& 3)
- IPS validated color code signage at Minneapolis, St. Paul, TCMH and NDC to ensure it was current and visible to operations, completed 2/27/10 (attachment 4).


# Color-Coding of Standard Mail and Mail Condition Reporting in the Northland District 

- Color code coordinator posted signage at AFSMs to clarify acceptable color code placards. No scraps of paper or color dots are to be used. Completed 3/5/10 (attachment 5).
- Color code coordinator started weekly color code audits for Minneapolis, TCMH, and St. Paul on $3 / 1 / 10$. Each facility is audited by IPS once a week with results tracked for continued compliance (attachments 6 \& 7).
- On IPS daily walkthrough and audit result spreadsheets, IPS replicated the compliance measuring method used by the OIG team. The method includes a total of all containers checked, the number non-compliant containers for each item checked, and the calculated percent to compliance. The information will provide more clarity and identify improvement areas for supervisors and managers. (attachment 7 shows total container section added as of $5 / 4 / 10$ )
- Added color code validation to supervisor's daily checklist on 5/7/10. (attachments 8 \& 9)
- NDC replicated the Minneapolis weekly audit plan and tracking process starting 5/10/10.
- Color Code coordinator continues to work daily with MIPS and Sr. Management to hold all EAS accountable to the results of the audit and walkthrough results for compliance. All new EAS will be provided training on the National Color Code Policy. (on-going action)
- Sr. Plant manager sent a letter on $5 / 5 / 10$ to EAS at Minneapolis, St. Paul, TCMH, and NDC facilities regarding their roles and responsibilities to comply with National Color Code Policies. (attachment 10)


## Current Compliance Improvement:

- Minneapolis and St. Paul combined have improved color code compliance by $68 \%$ from the February OIG audit. The OIG report (pg. 2) identified 61 of 354 containers in compliance ( $17 \%$ ). Current compliance for the last four weeks is 2307 containers out of 2714 containers checked for total compliance of $85 \%$.
- Minneapolis daily walkthroughs for the past 4 weeks show $82 \%$ compliance.
- St. Paul daily walkthroughs for the past 4 weeks show $87 \%$ compliance.
- TCMH audits show 90\% compliance.


# Color-Coding of Standard Mail and Mail Condition <br> Reporting in the Northland District 

Northland District

## OIG Observations from Draft Report, pg. 3 <br> Mail Condition Reporting

The Minneapolis and St. Paul P\&DCs underreported delayed mail and did not accurately report the date of the oldest mailpiece in some cases. Bringing these matters to the attention of plant management resulted in proper MCRS reporting effective February 25 , 2010.

These conditions occurred because:

- The employee counting the mail misinterpreted the policy believing they had until the delivery day to process the mail before reporting it as delayed.
- In-Plant Support employees did not provide adequate oversight to the employees performing the mail count.

Not properly reporting delayed volumes may prevent management from making effective operational decisions. This could also impact customer service without management's knowledge. See Appendix B for our detailed analysis of this topic.

We recommend the Northland district manager:
3. Provide mail condition reporting training and oversight to employees.

## Northland Actions Taken: Mail Condition Reporting

To address underreported delayed mail and improper identification of the oldest mail the Senior Plant Manager, Operations, and In-Plant Support initiated the following corrective actions to the above OIG recommendations:
3. Provide Mail Condition Reporting training and oversight to appropriate employees.

- Minneapolis IPS modeled the St. Paul count sheet, as recommended by the OIG team, for Minneapolis and the TCMH, starting with MCRS reported on $2 / 27 / 10$ (attachment 11). Past practice in Minneapolis used hand written count sheets, verbal or email messages to communicate daily count to supervisor inputting daily MCRS report. Daily count sheets and message documents were not kept on file for future reference.
- Minneapolis IPS created file system for daily MCRS documents and manual count sheet from operations. Starting with MCRS reported on $2 / 27 / 10$, daily reports are printed and filed for both Minneapolis and the TCMH daily in the Minneapolis IPS office. (attachment 12)
- Monthly audits for Minneapolis, St. Paul, TCMH, and NDC facilities are conducted by IPS to validate MCRS reporting procedures and accuracy between reported volume from operations and IPS count. Based on IPS

MCRS audits, accuracy and integrity of reporting is currently compliant. Audits are filed with daily MCRS documents.

- Color Code coordinator will train supervisors on reporting MCRS as needed due to staffing changes.


## Management Summary of OIG draft audit results

All non-compliant items identified in the OIG draft audit report have been taken seriously by Northland Management and have been abated, as noted in the above response. The Sr Plant Manager, along with management and support staff at all Northland plant facilities will continue to ensure the National Color Code policies are strictly adhered to for a sustained compliance target of $95 \%$ or greater. The results will ensure the Postal Service provides timely processing, dispatch, and delivery of Standard Mail.


Erica A. Brix

Senior Plant Manager
Northland District

## Attachment 1 - Email to P\&DF Managers, Color Code Refresher



## Attachment 2 - AM Walkthrough Check Sheet - Minneapolis P\&DC

| Date: | MPLS P \& D |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Date | Reviewer Name(s): |  |
| ALL quastiona | IN-PLANT MORNING WALK THRU MPLS P\&DC - FY 2010 | $\mathrm{Y} / \mathrm{N}$ |
| 1 | BABEMENT aPBe(Bin 100), Elevator staging Area - Are oontainere proporly Identifled and oommitted mall oleared? |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 2 | BABEMENT Open and Dietribute staging Aresc, -Are ctaging areac oisar of sommiltted open and dictribute oontaherc Areac to review 3 PEs West Wall, PMOD pouoh on WUC, Open and Dictribute dump belt, sub bacoment belte and Exprece Mall Wuec Open and Dictribute Tap e1 properly coanned? Roport any Improper coans found |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 3 | PRIORITY sUB BA3EMENT 654 "High", 664 "Low", dump boite 39A, 42A \& 44A, Exprote WUC, Dump belte C$2 \mathrm{a} \mathrm{C}-3$ - Are thece areas oleared of committed mall? |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 4 | Box 2eotion: - Is the Box aeotion mall corted on time ( 08:00 A.M.)? |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 5 | 16t Floor Dook \& Dump Beitc C-2, C-3; LCTS ataging - Are oontainere properiy ldentified and oleared of oommitted mall? |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 6 | 2nd Fioor DB ctaging arese (IDF-203 overhead, Elevator 5, Column 2-12AC/2-14AB) - Are oontainerc properlyIdent flod and oolor oodec ourrent?Comments: |  |
|  |  |  |
| 7 | 2nd Fioor Culling Dump Beitc 24,25 - Has all Committed Mall bsen eloarsd? |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 8 | 2nd Fioor 030,044 Manual - Has Priority Holdout (Tub) In APC, any ctaged as Bonent oheoke, nlxiec, toar-upe 8. poctage due all been oleared? is $\mathbf{Q}$-maohine olear? if not inelude number of trayc. |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 9 | 2nd Fioor Loop Mall ctaging Area - Ic, If any, Loop mall found, Identified and properly cegregated for proper prooecting? |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 10 | 2nd Floor LAMM etaging area - Do oentalnere have dated plasorde for LAMM arriving after previoue nighte CET? |  |
|  | Commente: |  |
| 11 | 2nd Floor toar Upe Area - Are the Tear Up containers dato ourrent? Report any oontainerc over 2 daye old. |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 12 | 2nd Fioor standard Mall ctaging Under VFs \% overhead - Are the Color Coded APC's ourrent? |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 13 | 2nd Fioor West End DECs ctandard mall ctaging areas( 898, 918 (high), 918 (low), 893, 886, 891) - Are the Plaoarde ourrent oelor oode? |  |
|  | Comments |  |
| 14 | 2nd Floor Elevator 3 ctaging area, Postage due, Tear Up, Nixiec - Do the oentalnere have ourrent dates? Report volume over 2 daye old. |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 15 | 2nd Floor PARs staging: CIOSs 1,2, Between oolumn 2.7D and 2-7E - Do oontainore have dated Plasardc?Report any PARs over 2 days old or oontalnere not identifiedComments: |  |
|  |  |  |
| 16 | 3rd Floor Manual Flate - Have all oommilted flate been oleared from oacee in the 000,073, 80747 |  |
|  | Comments: |  |
| 17 | 3rd Floor standard Flatc etmaling ares (Between 3-8A and 3-1TC oolumne. Elovator 6 ctaging Ares - Are oontainerc identined and ourrent oolor oode? |  |
|  | Comments |  |
| 18 | All units throughout the bullding must use fall, oorreot Coler Code Plaoard. aorape or atrips of oolored paper are not asoeptable - Are unite using proper Color Code Plaoarde? |  |
|  | Comments: |  |

Attachment 3 - AM Walkthrough Check Sheet - St. Paul P\&DC


## Attachment 4 - Color Code Signage


$\frac{\text { New Color Code Policy Changes }}{\text { Mail Processing Operators }}$
What are the changes to the DESTINATING STANDARD mail?
 entitisacha mill


| PLANT | STAMOATD MAML COLOT CODE |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| STANDARD MAL |  | outacina | ENOD ETATES nesioue | $\begin{aligned} & \text { ARDC, ADC, } \\ & \text { OCR, } 3 \text {-DIOIT, } \\ & \text { S-DIGit } \end{aligned}$ |
| COLOR CODE | trpe | $\begin{aligned} & \text { ONEDAY } \\ & \text { CLEARANCE } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} \text { TWO DAY } \\ \text { procrsoing } \end{gathered}$ | TVELED DAY DELIVERY |
| meceipt time | Day or necept | colon code applieo | colon coot APPLIED | colon code APPLED |
| FWi 16:0t-2.3T 15:00 | SAT | Whate-siad |  | OMANOE-TUE |
| BAT TEOH-OUN 16:00 | Cum |  | Crumge-Tue | GIEEM-WED |
| BuN 10:01 - Mow 1e:00 | MON | ORMUOE-TUE | OfLED-WCD | VIOLET-TIU |
| MON 16:01-TUE 16:00 | TUE | Oncen-wED | WIOLET-TIIU | YELLOW - Tre |
| TUE 16.01-WICD 16:00 | WED | VIOLET - TIJ | VELLOW - Pm | Flowas |
| WED 16:OH - TIU 16:05 | THU | YELLOW - Mal |  |  |
| THU 10:00 + Fil 16.50 | Fl1 | [1] + | EWiticesion |  |



## Attachment 5 - Signage on using proper color code tags



Attachment 6 - Color Code Audit Form


Attachment 7 - Color Code Audit Tracking Form


Attachment 8 - SDO daily checklists, letters ( $3^{\text {rd }}$ floor)

MACHINE CHECK / WALK THRU VERIFICATION 3rd Floor DATE: $\qquad$

Machine wak includes: Machine tops, Stackers, Racks, stray APCs / nuttings, tray line \& overflow belts

| 3rd Floor | sD0 |
| :---: | :---: |
| DBCS II\# 32 |  |
| DBCS II\# 33 |  |
| DBCS II\# 34 |  |
| DBCS II\#35 |  |
| DBCS II\# 36 |  |
| DBCS II\#37 |  |
| DBCS II\#38 |  |
| DBCS VI-EC \# 65 |  |
| DBCS I\# 25 |  |
| DBCS I\# 11 |  |
| DBCS I\#12 |  |
| DBCS I\#13 |  |


| Committed mail check | soo |
| :--- | :---: |
| Staged containers - 2:00 |  |
| Staged containers - 4:00 |  |
| 2nd floor rework bresk-up - 3:30 |  |
| 2nd floor rework break-up - 6:30 |  |
|  |  |



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Attachment 8 (continued) - SDO daily checklists, letters (East end)
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## MACHINE CHECK / WALK THRU VERIFICATION <br> East End

DATE: $\qquad$
Machine walk incluces: Machine tops, Stackers, Racks, stray APCs / nuitings, tray ine \& overflow belts

| OUTGOING | SDO |
| :--- | :--- |
| DBCS I \# 20 |  |
| DBCS I\# 21 |  |
| DBCS II OSS \# 27 |  |
| DBCS II OSS \# 29 |  |
| DBCS II \# 31 |  |
| DBCS IV OSS \# 45 |  |
| DBCS III LCOCR \#54 |  |
| DIOSS \# 56 |  |
| DIOSS \# 57 |  |
| DIOSS-EC \# 58 |  |
| DIOSS-EC \# 59 |  |
| DIOSS-EC \# 60 |  |
| DIOSS-EC \# 61 |  |
| DIOSS-EC \# 62 |  |


| Outgoing Belt Checks | SDO |
| :--- | :--- |
| OSS side |  |
| OCR side |  |
| Overllow |  |
| Area 51 |  |
| Strapper |  |

Call MDO on radio with "outgoing al clear" once all machines, racke, belts have boon vorfiad.

| END TOUR | SDO | Firal Bot Checks | SDO |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| DBCS I\# 20 |  | OSS side |  |
| DBCS 1 \# 21 |  | OCR side |  |
| DBCS Il OSS \# 27 |  | Overflow |  |
| DBCS II OSS \# 29 |  | Strapper |  |
| DBCS II \# 31 |  |  |  |
| DBCS IV OSS \# 45 |  |  |  |
| DBCS III LCOCR \# 54 |  | Committed mail check | SDO |
| DIOSS \# 56 |  | Staged containers - 3:00 |  |
| DIOSS \# 57 |  | Staged containers - 6:00 |  |
| DIOSS-EC \# 58 |  |  |  |
| DIOSS-EC \# 59 |  |  |  |
| DIOSS-EC \# 60 |  |  | SDO |
| DIOSS-EC \# 61 |  | STD MAIL PROPERLY COLOR-CODED |  |

## Attachment 8 (continued) - SDO daily checklists, letters (West end)



Attachment 9 - SDO daily checklist, flats


## Attachment 10 - Letter from Sr. Plant Manager to EAS



Attachment 11 - MCRS count sheet


## Attachment 12 - MCRS documents on file in IPS




[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ We performed reviews at the Minneapolis and St. Paul Processing and Distribution Centers (P\&DC).

[^1]:    ${ }^{2}$ Mail is staged and processed based on order of receipt.

[^2]:    ${ }^{3}$ Standard Mail weighs less than 16 ounces and includes circulars, pamphlets, catalogs, newsletters, direct mail, and merchandise.
    ${ }^{4}$ U.S. Postal Service Annual Report, 2009.

[^3]:    ${ }^{5}$ Formerly the Minneapolis Bulk Mail Center (BMC).

[^4]:    ${ }^{6}$ There is no requirement to retain the daily count sheets. However, the Postal Service Headquarters is considering requiring count sheets be retained for up to 1 year.

[^5]:    ${ }^{7}$ Bringing OIG observations to the attention of plant management resulted in proper MCRS reporting as of February 25, 2010.
    ${ }^{8}$ The Oldest Date Reported and the Oldest Data Observed were the same, so we noted no problems.
    ${ }^{9}$ Bringing OIG observations to the attention of plant management resulted in proper MCRS reporting as of February 25, 2010.

[^6]:    ${ }^{10}$ Destinating 5-digit mail requires additional sorting to the carrier route.

