



March 29, 2007

ELLIS A. BURGOYNE
VICE PRESIDENT, SOUTHWEST AREA

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Handling of a Potentially Explosive Ordnance at the
Dallas Bulk Mail Center (Report Number SA-AR-07-001)

This report presents the results of our audit of the handling of a potentially explosive ordnance at the Dallas Bulk Mail Center (BMC) (Project Number 06YR004SA000). While the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) was conducting an audit at the Dallas BMC, a U.S. Postal Service employee informed OIG auditors of a potentially explosive ordnance found in the mailstream at the Dallas BMC. (See Appendix A.) As a result, the OIG reviewed the policies, procedures, and practices of the Postal Service for handling suspicious mail. Our review focused on events surrounding the discovery of the ordnance and the actions of Postal Service personnel during the incident.

Background

On May 2, 2006, at around 4:00 p.m., a Postal Service employee at Station No. 3 of East Primary at the Dallas BMC saw an object protruding from a box. The employee asked another employee, a distribution mail clerk at Station No. 5 to examine the object. The distribution mail clerk believed the object was “some sort of artillery shell” and pulled it out through a hole in the box. The distribution mail clerk took the object and the box to an area supervisor and asked the area supervisor whether “someone could come to determine if it was real [live] or not.” The Manager, Distribution Operations, and a Supervisor, Maintenance Operations, were called to inspect the object.

The Manager, Distribution Operations, arrived at East Primary and observed an empty package and a large shell that had burst through the package. The Supervisor, Maintenance Operations, also arrived at East Primary and, after inspection, believed the object was an antique training round used for army tank and artillery practice drills. The Supervisor, Maintenance Operations, called the Manager, Maintenance Operations, who instructed him to take the object to a special package handling location outside the building. The Supervisor, Maintenance Operations, moved the object to the special package handling location as instructed. The Manager, Maintenance Operations, informed his manager and called the Postal Inspection Service.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to determine whether the Postal Service handled the potentially explosive ordnance appropriately. We interviewed Postal Service officials to obtain policies and procedures for handling suspicious mail. We reviewed documentation and statements obtained from Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service officials involved in the incident. We also reviewed training records to determine whether personnel received training and guidance on handling suspicious mail.

We conducted this audit from August 2006 through March 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management officials on November 9, 2006 and November 14, 2006 and included their comments where appropriate.

Prior Audit Coverage

We did not identify any prior audits or reviews related to the objective of this audit.

Results

Dallas BMC employees mishandled the potentially explosive ordnance found on the premises. Also, Dallas BMC management had not established a site-specific Integrated Emergency Management Plan (IEMP) to ensure they could effectively respond to bombs and suspicious mail.

Actions of Postal Service Personnel. A *Postal Bulletin* dated August 2005¹ provides the following guidance for dealing with suspicious mail. (See Appendix B.) The bulletin states, in part:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| PACKAGE | Don't handle it. Isolate it. |
| PEOPLE | Clear the area of people and notify your supervisor. |
| PLAN | Contact the Postal Inspection Service and follow your facility emergency plan. |

Dallas BMC management informed us that this *Postal Bulletin* insert was posted at the facility at the time of the incident. Additionally, management informed us they had given stand-up talks on handling suspicious mail to employees on January 18, February 6, and April 19, 2006, before the incident occurred. However, Postal Service employees, including managers, did not follow established procedures for handling suspicious mail.

¹ *Immediate Response Actions – Suspicious Mail and Unknown Powders or Substances*, August 2005.

Although management provided stand-up talks and posted bulletins at the facility, managers and employees need continuous, mandatory training and practice drills to ensure employees fully understand the procedures for handling suspicious or dangerous mail. Employees at the Dallas BMC did notify a supervisor, however they handled the potentially explosive ordnance, did not isolate it timely, did not clear the area of people, and moved it to the special package handling unit before contacting the Postal Inspection Service. Because established procedures were not followed, employees, customers, and critical assets were not appropriately safeguarded.

Integrated Emergency Management Plan. Dallas BMC management did not establish a site-specific IEMP to respond effectively to potentially explosive ordnance.

A Postal Service memorandum dated January 13, 2004, established the IEMP as the one plan for the Postal Service to use to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from any natural disaster or man-made hazard. The IEMP establishes a standardized emergency management process that incorporates Postal Service incident-specific and planning efforts into a single comprehensive document that serves as the core guide for emergency management.

Additionally, the Office of Emergency Preparedness has developed a standard IEMP template to use as a guide for emergency management. Installations are required to tailor the IEMP template to address specific processes and procedures and other information pertinent to a site. Although the Postal Service does not have a specific policy requiring the Dallas BMC to establish an IEMP, according to guidance from the Office of Emergency Preparedness,² all level 24 and above facilities should have site-specific IEMPs, and the Dallas BMC is in this category.

In June 2006, Dallas BMC management initiated action to establish a site-specific IEMP and planned to include appropriate annexes to address bombs and suspicious mail. Establishing a site-specific IEMP with procedures for handling suspicious mail, providing IEMP training to employees, and conducting practice drills should facilitate more effective responses to suspicious mail incidents.

Recommendations

We recommend the Vice President, Southwest Area:

1. Require Dallas Bulk Mail Center management to participate in and provide continuous, mandatory training and practice drills for employees to ensure they understand the procedures for handling suspicious and dangerous mail.

² From the Office of Emergency Preparedness Knowledge Base, accessed on the Postal Service Intranet.

2. Require Dallas Bulk Mail Center management to complete a site-specific Integrated Emergency Management Plan including procedures for handling suspicious and dangerous mail and implement plan requirements.


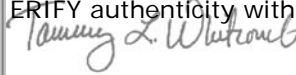
Management's Comments

Management agreed with our finding and recommendations and stated that Dallas BMC management is required to participate in, and provide continuous mandatory training for handling suspicious mail. Management also stated they have provided service talks and conducted table top exercises and practice drills on explosives and suspicious mail. In addition, management stated they have completed a site-specific IEMP. Management's comments, in their entirety, are included in Appendix C.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

Management's comments are responsive to recommendations 1 and 2. Management's actions, taken and planned, should address the issues identified in the finding, and, ultimately, help ensure employees understand procedures for handling suspicious and dangerous mail.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Andrea L. Deadwyler, Director, Inspection Service and Facilities, or me at (703) 248-2100.

E-Signed by Tammy Whitcomb 
VERIFY authenticity with Approve!


Tammy L. Whitcomb
Deputy Assistant Inspector General
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Attachments

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APPENDIX A. PHOTOGRAPH OF POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE



Photograph taken by OIG staff.

APPENDIX B. *POSTAL BULLETIN* FOR HANDLING SUSPICIOUS MAIL



Immediate Response Actions — Suspicious Mail and Unknown Powders or Substances

REMEMBER

- PACKAGE** Don't handle. Isolate it.
PEOPLE Clear the area of people and notify your supervisor.
PLAN Contact the Inspection Service and follow your facility emergency plan.

EMPLOYEES — take the following initial protective actions:

1. Leave the mail piece or substance where it was found. Do not disturb.
2. Clear the immediate area of employees where the mail piece or substance is located and prevent others from entering the area.
3. Immediately notify a supervisor or manager of the situation. If a supervisor is unavailable, contact the Postal Inspection Service.
4. Wash hands and any other exposed skin with soap and water.

SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS — take the following actions:

1. Cordon off the area and keep others away from the mail piece or substance.
2. Refer to and follow the steps outlined in the "Response Checklist for Suspicious Mail and Unknown Powders or Substances"
3. Call the Postal Inspection Service with all available information on the mail piece or substance to conduct a threat assessment.
4. Take appropriate protective actions based on:
 - A. The Inspection Service's threat assessment and instructions.
 - B. Your local emergency action plan.

(Should an emergency situation exist such as smoke, fumes, vapors, or employees exhibiting medical symptoms — evacuate the area and call local emergency responders.) Follow the instructions of local emergency responders and make the appropriate notifications as indicated in your local emergency action plan.

5. Expediently communicate with employees, the local unions and management associations. Limit the information to the known facts and avoid any speculation that may lead to unintended misinformation. To the extent possible, use local first responders to assist in providing information.

APPENDIX C. MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS

VICE PRESIDENT, SOUTHWEST AREA OPERATIONS



February 9, 2007

KIM H. STROUD
DIRECTOR AUDIT REPORTING

Subject: Handling of a Potentially Explosive Ordinance at the Dallas Bulk Mail Center
(Report Number SA-AR-07-DRAFT)

The Dallas Bulk Mail Center response to the finding and recommendations submitted by the Office of Inspector General in their letter dated February 6, 2007, concerning the above subject is as follows.

Recommendations

1. The Dallas Bulk Mail Center management is required to participate in, and provide continuous mandatory training and practice drills for employees, to ensure they understand the procedures for handling suspicious and dangerous mail.

(A) As noted in your letter dated 2/06/07, the Dallas BMC routinely gives service talks to its employees on the handling of suspicious mail, and the process has continued since the incident identified in your letter. The following dates that talks were given to all employees were 7/10/06, 9/08/06, 10/06/06, and 2/12/07. Additionally, each tour did a table top exercise on suspicious mail with the Manager, Emergency Preparedness, Southwest Area, and the Inspection Service during the month of December 6-7, 2006. During that exercise each supervisor and manager received a pocket size "Response Checklist" (Publication 16-7B) to keep on their person at all times to aid them in such an emergency.

Practice drills for the Dallas BMC employees were given during the same month, one for Explosives and one for Suspicious Mail; those drills were also given on all tours in the following areas: Sack Sorters, Parcel Sorters, and NMO.
2. The Dallas BMC management is required to complete a site-specific Integrated Emergency Management Plan (IEMP) including procedures for handling suspicious and dangerous mail, and implement plan requirements.

(A) The Dallas BMC has completed a site-specific IEMP.

The Dallas BMC management will continue to monitor all established procedures so as not to cause harm to its employees and critical assets.


Ellis A. Burgoyne

Attachments

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