# Louisiana District: Delivery Unit Operations

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Lake Forest Station

Central Carrier Station

Bywater Station

Carrollton Station

Elmwood Branch

NEW ORLEANS
LOUISIANA

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# Transmittal Letter

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

October 3, 2023

**MEMORANDUM FOR:**    JULIA G. WILBERT
MANAGER, LOUISIANA DISTRICT

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

**SUBJECT:**    Audit Report – Louisiana District: Delivery Unit Operations
(Report Number 23-113-R24)

This report presents the results of our audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions review at the Louisiana District.

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

Attachment

cc:  Postmaster General
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Executive Vice President
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, Processing and Maintenance Operations
Vice President, Southern Area Retail & Delivery Operations
Director, Retail & Post Office Operations Maintenance
Corporate Audit and Response Management

# Results

## Background

The U.S. Postal Service's mission is to provide timely, reliable, secure, and affordable mail and package delivery to more than 160 million residential and business addresses across the country. To fulfill this role, the Postal Service is committed to ensuring that their delivery platform and services are always a trusted, visible, and valued part of America's social and economic infrastructure. This includes leveraging people, technology, and systems to provide world-class visibility of mail and packages as they move through the Postal Service's integrated system. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviews delivery operations at facilities across the country and provides management with timely feedback in furtherance of this mission.

This report presents a summary of the results of our self-initiated audits assessing mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at five select delivery units in the Louisiana District in the Southern Area (Project Number 23-113). These delivery units included the Bywater Station, Carrollton Station, Central Carrier Station, Elmwood Branch, and Lake Forest Station.

We judgmentally selected these delivery units based on the number of Customer 360[1] (C360) inquiries, Informed Delivery[2] contacts, undelivered route information, and stop-the-clock (STC)[3] scans performed at the unit.

We previously issued interim reports[4] to district management for each of these units regarding the conditions we identified. In addition, we issued a report on the efficiency of operations at the New Orleans Processing and Distribution Center,[5] which services these five delivery units. The selected delivery units have a combined total of 229 city routes and 2 rural routes that serve about 273,215 people in several ZIP Codes (see Table 1), which are considered urban communities.[6]

### Table 1. Service Area and Population

| Delivery Units | Service Area and ZIP Code | Population | City Routes | Rural Routes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bywater Station | 70116, 70117* | 34,743 | 32 | 0 |
| Carrollton Station | 70118, 70125* | 47,721 | 42 | 0 |
| Central Carrier Station | 70119, 70122, 70124 | 81,386 | 81 | 0 |
| Elmwood Branch | 70121, 70123* | 38,472 | 37 | 0 |
| Lake Forest Station | 70126, 70127, 70128, 70129 | 70,893 | 37 | 2 |
| | | 273,215 | 229 | 2 |

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service National Labeling List and Esri data.
*The units also provide PO Box service for ZIP Codes 70177 (Bywater Station); 70185 (Carrollton Station); and 70141, 70181, and 70183 (Elmwood Branch).

## Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Bywater Station, Carrollton Station, Central Carrier Station, Elmwood Branch, and Lake Forest Station in the Louisiana District.

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1    A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.
2    Informed Delivery is a free and optional notification service that gives residential customers the ability to digitally preview their letter-sized mail and submit inquiries for mailpieces that were expected for delivery but have not arrived.
3    A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mailpiece. Examples of STC scans include "Delivered," "Available for Pick-Up," and "No Access."
4    *Bywater Station in New Orleans, LA: Delivery Operations* (Report Number 23-113-1-R23, dated August 17, 2023); *Carrollton Station in New Orleans, LA: Delivery Operations* (Report Number 23-113-2-R23, dated August 17, 2023); *Central Carrier Station in New Orleans, LA: Delivery Operations* (Report Number 23-113-3-R23, dated August 17, 2023); and *Elmwood Branch in New Orleans, LA: Delivery Operations* (Report Number 23-113-4-R23, dated August 17, 2023); and *Lake Forest Station in New Orleans, LA: Delivery Operations* (Report Number 23-113-5-R23, dated August 17, 2023).
5    *Efficiency of Operations at the New Orleans Processing and Distribution Center, New Orleans, LA* (Report Number 23-112-R23, dated August 17, 2023).
6    We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from Esri, which is based on Census Bureau information.

### Table 2. Summary of Issues Identified

| Controls Reviewed | Deficiencies Identified | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Bywater Station | Carrollton Station | Central Carrier Station | Elmwood Branch | Lake Forest Station |
| Delayed Mail | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Package Scanning | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Truck Arrival Scanning | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Arrow Lock Keys | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Property Conditions | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Source: Interim OIG reports of select units.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, arrow keys,[7] 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 uptime.[8] During our site visits from June 13–15, 2023, we observed mail conditions; package and truck arrival scanning procedures; arrow key security procedures; and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the "Notice Left" area,[9] and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 2 with management on September 20, 2023, and included their comments, where appropriate. 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 all five delivery units. Specifically, we found delayed mail and deficiencies with package scanning, truck arrival scanning, arrow key controls, and property conditions (see Table 2).

## Finding #1: Delayed Mail

### What We Found

On the morning of June 13, 2023, we identified about 76,223 pieces[10] of delayed mail at the five delivery units. In addition, management at all five units did not report the mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)[11] system. See Table 3 for the number of pieces for each mail type and Figures 1 and 2 for examples of delayed mail found at carrier cases.

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7   A distinctively shaped key carriers use to open mail-receiving receptacles, such as street collection boxes and panels of apartment house mailboxes equipped with an arrow lock. Arrow keys are accountable property and are subject to strict controls.
8   Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.
9   The area of a delivery unit where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.
10   Count of mail included individual piece counts and estimates based on conversion factors in Management Instruction PO-610-2007-1, *Piece Count Recording System*.
11   A tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of daily mail conditions at the point in time when carriers have departed for the street.

## Table 3. Type of Delayed Mail

| Type of Mail | Bywater Station | Carrollton Station | Central Carrier Station | Elmwood Branch | Lake Forest Station | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Letters | 8,109 | 5,718 | 33,662 | 4,965 | 7,919 | 60,373 |
| Flats | 3,470 | 1,757 | 8,620 | 802 | 1,066 | 15,715 |
| Packages | 33 | 0 | 76 | 26 | 0 | 135 |
| **Total** | **11,612** | **7,475** | **42,358** | **5,793** | **8,985** | **76,223** |

Source: OIG count of delayed mailpieces identified during our visit on June 13, 2023.

### Figure 1. Delayed Mail at the Central Carrier Station



Source: OIG photo taken on June 13, 2023.

### Figure 2. Delayed Mail at the Lake Forest Station



Source: OIG photo taken on June 13, 2023.

### Why Did It Occur

Delayed mail primarily occurred due to a lack of management oversight and training. In addition, management was unable to effectively address issues impacting delivery operations, such as unscheduled carrier absences and an insufficient number of arrow keys. Specifically:

- At the Bywater Station, the unit manager and acting supervisors had not been fully trained on how to effectively oversee mail operations.

- Management at the Carrollton Station stated that several unscheduled absences and the extreme heat caused mail delivery delays on Monday, June 12.

- The unit manager at the Central Carrier Station stated that delayed mail occurred because supervisors were not effectively addressing issues affecting street operations and there was an insufficient number of arrow keys at the unit.

- The station manager at the Elmwood Branch stated that he and two supervisors recently transferred to the unit in April 2023, and they were overwhelmed by the carriers' consistent unscheduled absences.

- Management at the Lake Forest Station stated that the station had higher than normal mail volume on Monday, June 12, and attempted to address the higher volume by increasing the number of split routes that day.

At all five delivery units, management did not comply with the requirement to record delayed mail volumes in the DCV system. The PM supervisors were either not aware of the requirement to report delayed mail or were not properly trained on how to report delayed mail into the DCV system.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have addressed issues affecting mail delivery to include unscheduled carrier absences and the insufficient number of arrow keys. Postal Service policy[12] states that managers must review all communications that may affect the day's workload, be sure that replacements are available for unscheduled absences, and develop contingency plans for situations that may interfere with normal delivery service. Management should have verified that all committed mail was processed and delivered daily. Postal Service policy[13] also states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Mail Express are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt.

In addition, management should have verified that all supervisors were adequately trained to enter delayed mail into the DCV system and enforce compliance. Postal Service policy[14] states that managers are required to report all mail in the delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in the DCV system and must update the DCV system if volumes have changed prior to the end of the business day.

## Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When mail is delayed, there is an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand. In addition, inaccurate reporting of delayed mail in the DCV system provides management at the local, district, area, and headquarters levels with an inaccurate status of mail delays and can result in improper actions taken to address issues.

## Management Actions

During our audit, district management provided documentation showing that managers at all five delivery units received training on delivery operations. In addition, district management provided support that they are routinely using a checklist at these five sites to verify that unit managers are entering delayed mail into the DCV system and are checking carriers when they return to the office for any delayed mail.

> **Recommendation #1**
> We recommend the **District Manager, Louisiana District**, verify that the Central Carrier Station obtains enough arrow keys for all carrier routes that need an arrow key for mail delivery.

## Finding #2: Package Scanning

### What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at all five delivery units. In total, employees scanned 1,867 packages at the delivery units instead of at the customers' delivery points between February and April 2023 (see Table 4). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 61.54 percent of them were scanned as "Delivered" and 28.76 percent of them were scanned as "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location." This data does not include scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as "Delivered – PO Box" and "Customer (Vacation) Hold," but rather, represents scans performed at the delivery unit that should routinely be made at the point of delivery.

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12  Handbook M-39, *Management of Delivery Services,* TL-14, Section 111.2, June 2019.
13  *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.
14  *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide*, March 2023.

**Table 4. STC Scans at Delivery Unit**

| STC Scan Type | Delivery Units | | | | | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Bywater Station | Carrollton Station | Central Carrier Station | Elmwood Branch | Lake Forest Station | | |
| Delivered | 634 | 70 | 239 | 140 | 66 | 1,149 | 61.54% |
| Delivery Attempted – No Access | 17 | 133 | 300 | 39 | 48 | 537 | 28.76% |
| Receptacle Full / Item Oversized | 5 | 13 | 62 | 30 | 1 | 111 | 5.95% |
| Delivery Exception – Animal Interference | 1 | 10 | 5 | 26 | 1 | 43 | 2.30% |
| No Secure Location Available | 2 | 0 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 25 | 1.34% |
| Refused | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.05% |
| No Authorized Recipient | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.05% |
| **Total** | **659** | **226** | **615** | **245** | **122** | **1,867** | **100.00%*** |

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.
*Total percentage does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

In addition, on the morning of June 13, 2023, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected a total of 215 packages at the five delivery units to review and analyze for scanning and tracking history. We judgmentally selected 96 packages from the carrier cases and 119 packages from the "Notice Left" areas at these units.[15]

Of the 96 sampled packages at the carrier cases, 41 (42.71 percent) had missing or improper scans. For example, 20 of these packages were scanned "Delivered", which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's point of delivery; and ten were scanned "Missent", even though they were addressed to a delivery address serviced by the unit.

Of the 119 packages sampled from the "Notice Left" area, 38 (31.93 percent) had missing or improper scans. Specifically, 13 had a "Delivered" scan, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's point of delivery; 12 were missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery; seven were scanned

away from the delivery point; three were scanned "Receptacle Full/Item Oversized" at the unit; and three did not have an "Arrival-at-Unit" scan.

In addition, five packages (5.21 percent) from the carrier cases, and three packages (2.52 percent) from the "Notice Left" area had handling issues:

- Two packages from the carrier cases were scanned "Insufficient Address" and should have been returned to sender. Another package was scanned "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location" and should have been moved to the "Notice Left" area. We also found one package was scanned "Addressee Unknown" and had been at the carrier's case for 24 days, and another package was scanned "Returned to Post Office for Address Verification" and should have been returned to sender.

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15   The Central Carrier Station did not have a "Notice Left" area.

- Three packages in the "Notice Left" area were scanned "No Such Number" and should have been returned to sender.

Further, a total of 66 packages (55.46 percent) in the "Notice Left" area at the Elmwood Branch, Carrollton Station, Lake Forest Station, and Bywater Station should have been returned to sender. These packages ranged from one to 95 days past their return dates.[16]

We also identified 37 additional packages at the Lake Forest Station in the unit's package sorting bins with "Delivered" scans from the prior day. Nineteen of the packages were scanned after business hours as "Delivered" with an in-office scanner. Of the remaining 18 packages, one was scanned "Delivery Attempted" and 17 were scanned "Delivered" between 0.2 to 5.1 miles away from their delivery points.

### Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Specifically:

- The manager at the Bywater Station stated that she did not monitor and enforce proper package scanning procedures and had not yet fully trained the acting supervisors how to do so because she was new and still assuming her responsibilities. She said packages were not returned because management did not effectively staff the "Notice Left" area. The unit manager stated that she should have assigned more than one clerk to the "Notice Left" area to ensure full coverage.

- Management at the Carrollton Station was more focused on window operations, dealing with customers, and mail delivery than enforcing proper package scanning. In addition, there was no clerk assigned to regularly monitor the "Notice Left" area.

- Carriers at the Elmwood Branch scanned packages "Delivered" for the caller service customers and placed them aside for the customer to pick up, even though the packages had the customer's street address on them and should have been delivered to the customer's address. In addition, the PM supervisor stated she was trained to scan the packages "Delivered" to make sure they received an STC scan. The station manager stated he was not aware the PM supervisor was making the scans, nor was he aware of her training. He further stated he only monitors scans when there is a problem.

- The Station Manager at the Central Carrier Station stated he knew that carriers sometimes scanned packages as "Delivered" at the unit but did not enforce proper handling procedures. Additionally, he stated that he relies on the PM supervisors, but they were not following the proper carrier check-in process.

- Some carriers at the Lake Forest Station stated that supervisors improperly scanned packages at the unit as "Delivered, Individual Picked Up at Postal Facility" when packages were still in the unit. The Station Manager was unaware of the improper scans made at the unit by supervisors, particularly those scanned in the evening hours. Regarding the overdue packages in the "Notice Left" area, management stated they were short three clerks due to retirement and transfers, and the remaining clerks have been focused on other duties, such as window customer service and mail and package sorting.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including verifying all packages were scanned at the delivery point and not at the delivery unit. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,[17] which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.[18] Packages in the "Notice Left" area should have been reviewed

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16   *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated April 2016, 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.
17   *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.
18   *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

for second notices and returned to sender if they remained after the prescribed number of days.[19]

### Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Customers rely on accurate scan data to track their packages in real time. When employees do not scan mailpieces correctly, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning operations, management can potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and the Postal Service brand.

### Management Actions

During our audit, district management provided documentation showing that carriers at all five units were trained on proper scanning procedures. In addition, management at all five sites were trained on how to review and enforce proper package scanning and handling. Further, district management provided support that they are routinely using a checklist at these five sites to verify that unit managers are reviewing scan performance. Therefore, we are not making any recommendations for these issues.

## Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

### What We Found

Employees did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes[20] at the five delivery units, as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from February 1 through April 30, 2023, and found that employees did not perform a scan for 1,470 of the 1,705 trips (86.22 percent) arriving from the New Orleans P&DC (see Table 5). During our visit on the morning of June 13, 2023, we observed that employees did not scan the incoming trucks at the Bywater Station, Central Carrier Station, and the Lake Forest Station.

**Table 5. Truck Arrival Scans Between February 1 through April 30, 2023**

| Delivery Units | Inbound AM Trips | Missed Arrive Scans | Percentage Missing |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bywater Station | 294 | 294 | 100.00% |
| Carrollton Station | 204 | 121 | 59.31% |
| Central Carrier Station | 380 | 242 | 63.68% |
| Elmwood Branch | 165 | 151 | 91.52% |
| Lake Forest Station | 662 | 662 | 100.00% |
| **Total** | **1,705** | **1,470** | **86.22%** |

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from the Postal Service's Surface Visibility Web (SVWeb) system. SVWeb 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 sufficient oversight of truck arrival scanning. Specifically:

- Management at the Carrollton Station stated they were unaware of the reports available for monitoring truck scanning performance, and that the clerks were, at times, too busy with other tasks to scan the incoming trucks.

- Management at the Central Carrier Station thought it was sufficient to scan the equipment labels unloaded from the trucks.

- Management at the Bywater Station, Elmwood Branch, and Lake Forest Station were unaware of the responsibility to scan the barcodes on arriving trucks.

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19  *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, April 2016.
20  The trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have performed reviews to verify that employees were performing all expected truck scans. According to Postal Service Policy,[21] employees must scan the trailer barcode 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 the truck barcode, 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.

## Management Actions

During our audit, district management provided supporting documentation showing that clerks and managers at all five sites were trained on proper truck arrival scanning procedures. Further, district management provided support showing that they are routinely using a checklist at these five sites to verify that unit managers are reviewing truck arrival scan performance. Therefore, we are not making any recommendations for this issue.

## Finding #4: Arrow Keys

### What We Found

Management at all five delivery units did not properly manage their arrow keys. Specifically, unit management could not locate 28 arrow keys that were listed on their facilities' inventory logs and could not provide any documentation showing these keys had been reported as missing to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Further, we found 45 keys that were not listed on the inventory logs across all five delivery units (see Table 6). In addition, unit management did not safeguard arrow keys at the Carrollton Station, Central Carrier Station, Elmwood Branch, and Lake Forest Station. Specifically, we observed that the arrow keys were not always stored in secured locations at the facilities and found keys that were left in ███████████ located on the workroom floor or in ████████████.

### Table 6. Arrow Key Inventory

| Delivery Units | Keys on Inventory Log | Missing Keys | Keys Found at the Unit | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | Listed on Log | Not Listed on Log |
| Bywater Station | 26 | 4 | 22 | 6 |
| Carrollton Station | 36 | 9 | 27 | 5 |
| Central Carrier Station | 9 | 0 | 2 | 19 |
| Elmwood Branch | 23 | 7 | 16 | 9 |
| Lake Forest Station | 27 | 8 | 19 | 6 |
| **Total** | **121** | **28** | **86** | **45** |

Source: OIG analysis of arrow key inventory during our visit the week of June 15, 2023.

### Why Did It Occur

These issues occurred due to insufficient management oversight and because some managers were not aware of their responsibility to secure arrow keys. For example, station managers at the Bywater Station, Carrollton Station, Elmwood Branch, and Lake Forest Station stated some unit supervisors were not properly trained or aware of the procedures for managing arrow keys. In addition, carriers at the Central Carrier Station did not turn their keys in daily because they were afraid their key would not be available for them to use the next day.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,[22] management must keep an accurate inventory of all keys and conduct a semiannual physical survey of all building keys. Missing keys must be immediately reported to the Postal Inspection Service. In addition, policy states that arrow keys must remain secured until they are individually assigned to personnel. A supervisor or clerk must supervise employees signing out keys

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21  *United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units (DU).*
22  *Standard Work: Arrow Key Accountability,* January 2022 and *USPS Arrow Key Standard Work,* January 2022.

on the inventory log. Upon return, arrow keys should be deposited in a secure location and a supervisor or clerk must verify all keys have been returned and accounted for daily.

## Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When there is insufficient oversight and supervision of accountable items, such as arrow keys, there is increased risk of mail theft. These thefts damage the Postal Service's reputation and diminish public trust in the nation's mail system. Additionally, because arrow keys open mail receptacles, lost or damaged keys can result in undelivered mail.

## Management Actions

During our audit, district management provided documentation showing that clerks and managers at all five sites were trained on proper arrow key management. In addition, management at the Bywater Station, Carrollton Station, Elmwood Branch, and Lake Forest Station, provided support that they reported their missing keys to the Postal Inspection Service. Management at the Bywater Station, Elmwood Branch, and Lake Forest Station also provided updated arrow key logs. Further, district management provided support that they are routinely using a checklist at these five sites to verify that arrow keys are properly secured.

> **Recommendation #2**
> We recommend the **District Manager, Louisiana District**, verify that the Central Carrier Station and Carrollton Station conduct an arrow key inventory and update their arrow key log accordingly.

## Finding # 5: Property Conditions

### What We Found

We found safety, security, and maintenance issues across the five delivery units.

Property Safety:

- At the Bywater Station, we found fire extinguishers missing monthly inspections and a cracked window on the workroom floor.

- At the Carrollton Station, we found fire extinguishers missing monthly and annual inspections, and a blocked electrical panel.

- At the Central Carrier Station, we found fire extinguishers missing monthly and annual inspections, and a broken manual fire alarm pull (see Figure 3).

- At the Elmwood Branch, we identified a Postal Inspection Service door blocked by an electrical wire (see Figure 4).

- At the Lake Forest Station, we found fire extinguishers missing monthly and annual inspections, a large fan blocking a Postal Inspection Service door, three blocked fire extinguishers, a light pole in the customer parking lot with exposed electrical wires (see Figure 5), multiple electrical cords daisy chained on top of carrier cases, and a handicap ramp with crumbling asphalt (see Figure 6).

**Figure 3. Broken Manual Fire Alarm Pull**
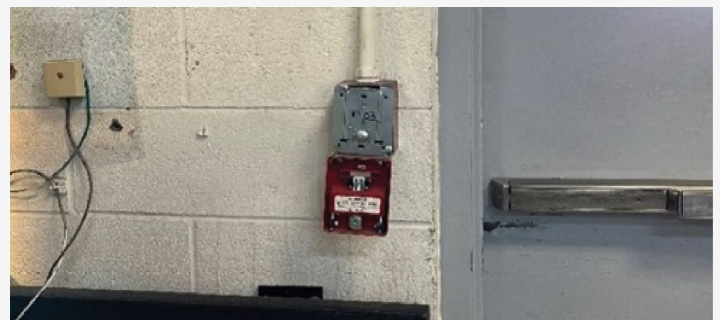


Source: OIG photo taken on June 14, 2023.

**Figure 4. Inspection Door Blocked by Electrical Wiring**
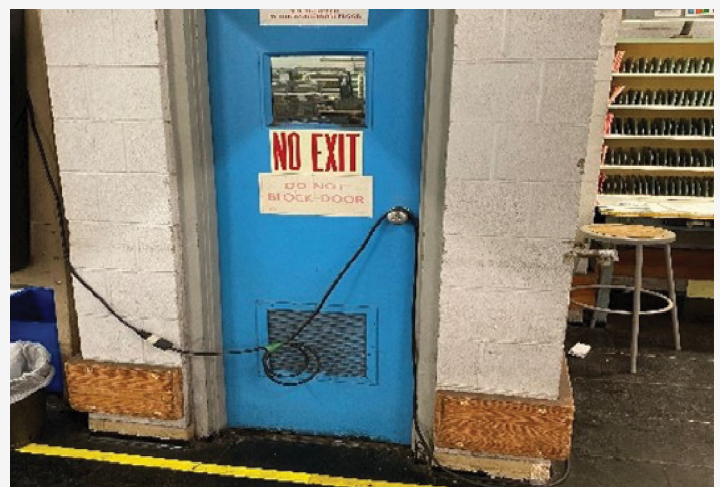


Source: OIG photo taken on June 14, 2023.

**Figure 5. Light Pole in Customer Parking Lot With Exposed Wiring**



Source: OIG photo taken on June 14, 2023.

**Figure 6. Handicap Ramp With Crumbling Asphalt**



Source: OIG photo taken on June 14, 2023.

Property Security:

- At the Elmwood Branch, there was no posted signage in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

- At the Lake Forest Station, we did not observe any posted signage in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

In addition, one area of the security perimeter fencing was missing barbed wire and an interior lobby glass door did not properly close and could not be locked (see Figures 7).

**Figure 7. Unlockable Lobby Door**



Source: OIG photo taken on June 14, 2023.

Property Maintenance:

- At the Bywater Station, there was crumbling concrete near the loading dock, along with graffiti on the front, retail side of the facility (see Figure 8). In addition, a toilet in the women's bathroom was not working and was blocked off.

- At the Central Carrier Station, we found peeling paint, damaged baseboards, a loose faucet in the women's bathroom, and a sink in the men's bathroom that was not draining. We also observed maintenance issues around the unit dock area, including overgrown weeds and grass, scattered trash, and dirty ceiling vents and filters in the breakroom.

- At the Elmwood Branch, we observed missing and damaged ceiling tiles near the entrance door from the dock.

- At the Lake Forest Station, we identified a damaged loading dock railing with exposed metal edges, a stop sign at the employee parking lot exit was twisted and leaning, and an exterior storage room door was rusted and damaged (see Figure 9).

**Figure 8. Graffiti on the Front, Retail Side of the Facility**



Source: OIG photo taken on June 15, 2023.

**Figure 9. Rusted and Damaged Exterior Storage Room Door**



Source: OIG photo taken on June 14, 2023.

## Why Did It Occur

Management at all five units did not provide proper oversight and take the necessary actions to verify that property condition issues were identified, reported, and corrected. Management was unaware of the issues we identified, and other duties, such as getting the mail out for delivery, took priority. Specifically:

- Management at the Bywater and Lake Forest stations do not routinely walk around the facility to look for property issues like the ones we found and depended on the full-time custodian to be aware of and repair minor issues.

- Management at the Carrollton Station forgot to have the fire extinguishers inspected and was unaware of the blocked electrical panel.

- The manager at the Elmwood Branch was not aware of his oversight responsibility for property conditions.

- The manager at the Central Carrier Station stated she overlooked some of the facility issues we identified and should have provided additional management oversight of custodial staff.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight of personnel responsible for maintaining facilities, reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up for completion. The Postal Service requires management to maintain a safe environment for employees.[23] In addition, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards.[24]

## 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 Actions

During our audit, district management provided supporting documentation showing that managers

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23  Postal Service Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook.*
24  Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970.

at all five units were trained on how to identify and report property condition issues. In addition, management provided support showing that they have addressed all issues identified at the five sites. Therefore, we are not making a recommendation.

## Management's Comments

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

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated that additional keys have been ordered for the Central Carrier Station. The expected completion date is November 30, 2023.

Regarding recommendation 2, management stated they conducted an inventory of all keys at the Carrollton Station and created a new inventory log. For the Central Carrier Station, management stated that the arrow key log will be updated upon receipt of the ordered arrow keys. The expected completion date is November 30, 2023.

## Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations, and the corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report.

Both recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. The OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. These 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.

# Appendices

# Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from June through September 2023 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.

In planning and conducting the audit, we obtained an understanding of the delivery operations internal control structure to help determine the nature, timing, and extent of our audit procedures. We reviewed the management controls for overseeing the program and mitigating associated risks. Additionally, we assessed the internal control components and underlying principles, and we determined that the following three components were significant to our audit objective:

- Control Activities

- Information and Communication

- Monitoring

We developed audit work to ensure that we assessed these controls. Based on the work performed, we identified internal control deficiencies in all three components that were significant within the context of our objective. Our recommendations, if implemented, and the actions taken by management during our audit should correct the weaknesses we identified.

We assessed the reliability of data from the PTR system, the DCV system, the SVWeb database, and the electronic Facilities Management System[25] by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

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25   A custom-built Postal Service system used to manage work orders, contracts, and payments for facility construction, repairs, and alteration contracts, along with real estate contracts.

# Appendix B: Management's Comments

**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE**

September 22, 2023

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Capping Report - Louisiana District: Delivery Unit Operations (23-113-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendationd contained in the draft audit report, *Louisiana District: Delivery Unit Operations*.

Management generally agrees with the five findings in the report related to: Delayed Mail; Package Scanning, Truck Arrival Scanning, Arrow Keys, and Property Conditions.

Management immediately implemented action plans to address all the findings in the report and shared their results with the OIG prior to issuance of the report. Only two issues remain unresolved for which management requires additional time to implement. The following recommendations address the two issues.

**Recommendation 1:**
We recommend the **District Manager, Louisiana District**, verify that the Central Carrier Station obtains enough arrow keys for all carrier routes that need an arrow key for mail delivery.

Management Response/Action Plan:
Management agrees with this recommendation. Additional keys have been ordered and the order approved. Upon receipt the inventory log will be updated.

Target Implementation Date: 11/30/2023

Responsible Official: Postmaster

**Recommendation 2:**
We recommend the **District Manager, Louisiana District**, verify that the Central Carrier Station and Carrollton Station conduct an arrow key inventory and update their arrow key log accordingly.

Management Response/Action Plan:
Management agrees with this recommendation. Management has conducted an inventory of all keys at the Carrolton Station and created a new inventory log. Once the additional arrow keys are received at Central Carrier Station, the inventory log will be updated to account for all keys.

Target Implementation Date: 11/30/2023

Responsible Official: Postmaster


_Julia G. Wilbert_
Julia G. Wilbert
Acting Manager, Louisiana District


cc: Vice President, Area Retail & Delivery Operations (Southern)
    Corporate Audit Response Management

Contact us via our Hotline and FOIA forms. Follow us on social networks. Stay informed.

1735 North Lynn Street, Arlington, VA 22209-2020
(703) 248-2100

For media inquiries, please email press@uspsoig.gov or call (703) 248-2100