

Ballwin Main Post Office, Ballwin, MO: Delivery Operations

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 25-100-4-R25 | August 11, 2025



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Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

August 11, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR: JEREMIE SIX
MANAGER, KANSAS-MISSOURI DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Balduff", is centered below the memorandum header.

FROM: Sean Balduff
Director, Field Operations, Central & Southern

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Ballwin Main Post Office, Ballwin, MO: Delivery
Operations (Report Number 25-100-4-R25)

This report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Ballwin Main Post Office in Ballwin, MO.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesy provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ramona Gonzalez, 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, Central Area Retail & Delivery Operations
Director, Retail & Post Office Operations Maintenance
Corporate Audit and Response Management

Results

Background

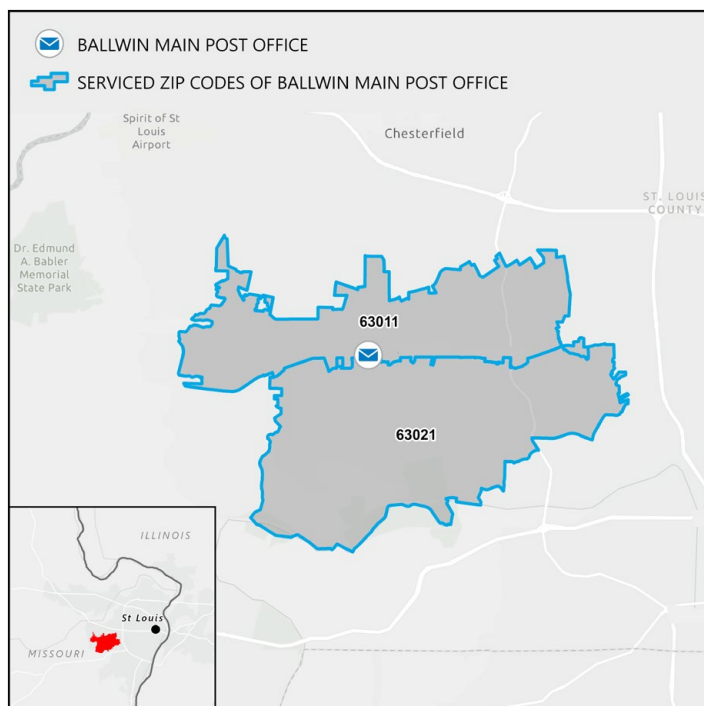
The U.S. Postal Service's mission is to provide timely, reliable, secure, and affordable mail and package delivery to more than 160 million residential and business addresses across the country. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviews delivery operations at facilities across the country and provides management with timely feedback in furtherance of this mission.

This interim report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Ballwin Main Post Office (MPO) in Ballwin, MO (Project Number 25-100-4). We selected the St. Louis area based on a congressional inquiry issued April 1, 2025, from U.S. senators and representatives from Missouri to conduct an audit of post offices and processing facilities in the St. Louis metro area. The Ballwin Main Post MPO is in the Kansas-Missouri (KS-MO) District of the Central Area and serves about 94,150 people in ZIP Codes 63011 and 63021, which are considered a predominantly urban area (see Figure 1). Specifically, 92,390 (98 percent) live in urban communities and 1,760 (2 percent) live in rural communities.¹

This delivery unit has 63 city routes and four rural routes. From March 22 through April 18, 2025, the delivery unit had six supervisors and one postmaster.² During our site visit, the unit had four supervisors and one acting supervisor. As of May 2, 2025,³ the year-to-date employee availability rate for the Ballwin MPO was 90.6 percent, which is under the Postal Service's retail and delivery operations employee availability goal of 93.7 percent for fiscal year 2025. The Ballwin MPO is one of seven delivery units⁴ the OIG reviewed

during the week of June 2, 2025, that is serviced by the St. Louis Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) and the St. Louis Network Distribution Center (NDC).

Figure 1. ZIP Codes Served by the Ballwin MPO



Source: OIG analysis of ZIP Code data.

We assessed all units serviced by the St. Louis P&DC and the St. Louis NDC based on the number of Customer 360 (C360)⁵ delivery-related inquiries,⁶ Informed Delivery⁷ contacts, stop-the-clock (STC)⁸ scans performed away from the delivery point and at the unit, undelivered route information, and first and last mile failures⁹ between February 1 and April 30, 2025. We judgmentally selected the Ballwin

¹ We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.

² According to the Postal Service's Web Complement Information System (webCOINS). The webCOINS application provides management with timely and accurate complement information.

³ The last day of Pay Period 10.

⁴ The other six units were Creve Coeur Branch, St. Louis, MO (Project Number 25-100-1); O'Fallon MPO, O'Fallon, MO (Project Number 25-100-2); St. Charles MPO, St. Charles, MO (Project Number 25-100-3); Maryville Gardens Station, St. Louis, MO (Project Number 25-100-5); Southwest Station, St. Louis, MO (Project Number 25-100-6); and Clayton Branch, St. Louis, MO (Project Number 25-100-7).

⁵ A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.

⁶ A compilation of package inquiry, package pickup, daily mail service, and hold mail inquiries.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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 Pickup," and "No Access."

⁹ First mile failures occur when a mailpiece is collected and does not receive a processing scan at the P&DC on the day that it was intended. Last mile failures occur after the mailpiece has been processed at the P&DC on a final processing operation and is not delivered to the customer on the day it was intended.

MPO based on the first and last mile failures and undelivered routes.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Ballwin MPO in Ballwin, MO.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on the following audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys,¹⁰ carrier separations and transfers, property safety and security conditions, and package separations. Specifically, we reviewed delivery metrics, including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, and carrier complement. During our site visit June 3–5, 2025, we observed mail conditions; package scanning procedures; arrow key security procedures; carrier separation procedures; package separation procedures; and unit safety and security conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on July 18, 2025, and included its comments, where appropriate.

We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Ballwin MPO. We will issue a separate capping report¹¹ that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all seven delivery units, as well as the district. The capping report will include actions taken by management to address the issues identified in this interim report. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about our scope and methodology.

¹⁰ 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.
¹¹ Project Number 25-100.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting delivery operations and property conditions at the Ballwin MPO. Specifically, we found issues with three of the areas we reviewed (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Deficiencies Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail	X	
Package Scanning	X	
Arrow Keys	X	
Carrier Separations and Transfers		X
Property Conditions		X
Package Separations		X

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of June 2, 2025.

- We observed the procedures for safeguarding arrow keys and did not identify any issues, but did identify issues with the reporting of missing keys (see [Finding 3](#)).
- We analyzed employee data from March 8 through April 18, 2025. All carriers assigned to the unit either reported to work or were accounted for by management during this time, indicating no issues with employee separations and transfers.
- We observed property conditions related to safety and security and did not identify any issues.
- We observed package separation procedures on June 4, 2025, and determined the unit was properly separating Priority Mail from non-Priority Mail packages.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of June 3, 2025, we identified 26,992 delayed mailpieces¹² at 55 carrier cases, the hot cases,¹³ the workroom floor, and in collections. Specifically, we identified 23,509 letters and 3,455 flats and 28 packages. Management did not report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition

Visualization (DCV)¹⁴ system. See Table 2 for the number of pieces for each mail type and Figure 2 for an example of delayed mail found at the unit. Further, the carriers did not complete Postal Service (PS) Forms 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*,¹⁵ to document undelivered mailpieces.

Table 2. Types of Delayed Mail Identified

Type of Mail	Carrier Cases	Hot Cases	Workroom Floor	Collections	Total Count of Delayed Mail
Letters	8,659	8,494	6,356	0	23,509
Flats	1,507	108	1,840	0	3,455
Packages	0	0	0	28	28
Totals	10,166	8,602	8,196	28	26,992

Source: OIG count of delayed mailpieces identified during our visit June 3, 2025.

Figure 2. Example of Delayed Mail at Hot Cases



Source: OIG photo taken June 3, 2025.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not verify that all mail was cleared from the unit and that any mail not delivered was properly reported in the DCV system. These conditions occurred due to an increase in manual mail sortation and limited clerk availability.

Effective April 19, 2025, all city routes in the unit were adjusted due to a decrease in mail volume. The route adjustments reduced the number of city routes from 75 to 63. Due to the consolidation of delivery points and changes to the routes, mail from the commercial mailers was not sorted to the correct route, which increased the amount of mail that had to be sorted manually. The postmaster stated that mailers have 90 days from the effective date of the adjustments to update their mailing lists.

Additionally, the postmaster stated they continuously receive large amounts of mail from the St. Louis P&DC

¹² Count of mail included individual piece counts and OIG estimate based on Postal Service conversion factors in Management Instruction PO-610-2007-1. Piece Count Recording System.
¹³ A case designated for final withdrawal of mail as carriers leave the office.
¹⁴ 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.
¹⁵ PS Form 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*, lists all mail distributed to the carrier for delivery that was left in the office or returned undelivered.

that was not sorted to the carrier route. This mail was automation compatible – meaning it could have been sorted by the plant for easier distribution to the carriers for delivery. For example, during our audit, the unit received two rolling containers of unsorted mail that appeared to be automation compatible (see Figure 3). When this occurs, clerks have to take extra time to sort the mail to each route, delaying its delivery. We made a recommendation addressed to the processing regional director related to this issue in our associated report, *Efficiency of Operations at the St. Louis Processing & Distribution Center, St. Louis MO*.

Figure 3. Automation Compatible Letters



Source: OIG photo taken June 4, 2025.

Compounding the unsorted mail problem, on the day prior to our visit, there were three clerks on unscheduled leave and one on scheduled leave. In

addition, the unit had three vacant clerk positions. The postmaster stated that Monday was a heavy mail day, and he did not ask for help from the district because he could see that multiple other units had already requested help. As a result, the unit was not able to manually sort all the working mail in time for carriers to take it out for delivery. The postmaster also stated that there were no clerks with scheme knowledge¹⁶ to expedite the mail sortation.

Regarding the 28 pieces of delayed collection mail, the closing supervisor stated that he did not verify that all the packages from the retail counter were sent to the plant due to an oversight.

Furthermore, the postmaster stated they have not used or enforced the use of PS Form 1571 since he became the postmaster four years ago. He stated it was not common practice and was not sure if they had any of the forms in the unit. Additionally, management did not report delayed mail in the DCV system because an acting supervisor replaced the regular morning supervisor and did not report delayed mail due to other morning duties, such as staffing and carrier assignments. The closing supervisor stated that he depended on the morning supervisor to submit any delayed mail and was unaware that he should be updating DCV for any changes.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that all mail was processed and delivered daily. Postal Service policy¹⁷ states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Mail Express are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. Management must also review all communications that may affect the day's workload and be sure that replacements are available for unscheduled absences.¹⁸

Postal Service policy¹⁹ also states delivery units must complete a PS Form 1571 for any undelivered mail carriers bring back to the delivery unit. In addition, managers are required²⁰ to report all mail in the

¹⁶ The memorization of street addresses and their associated carrier route.

¹⁷ Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail stand-up talk, February 2019.

¹⁸ Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services, June 2019.

¹⁹ Standard Operating Procedure, Redline Policy.

²⁰ DCV Learn and Grow, August 1, 2024.

delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in DCV. Further, management must update DCV 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 DCV 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.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding. See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages away from the intended delivery point and handled packages incorrectly at the unit. On the morning of June 3, 2025, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 30 packages from the carrier cases to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 30 sampled packages, 10 (33.3 percent) had improper scans or handling issues, including:

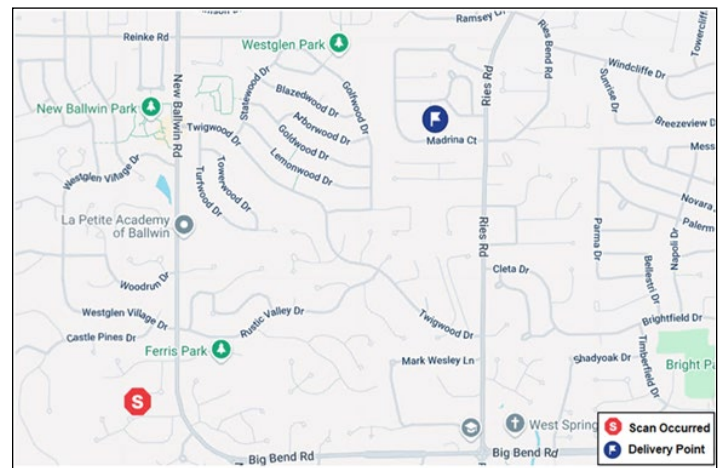
- Five packages were scanned “Delivered,” which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer’s delivery address.
- Three packages were scanned “No Such Number,” “Forwarded,” or “Available for Pickup” between May 30 and June 2, 2025. The carriers should have placed these packages in the correct area to be returned to sender, forwarded to the new address on file, or held for customer pickup.
- Two packages were scanned “Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location,” or “No Such Number” between 0.6 and 1.8 miles away from the delivery point. See Figure 4 for an example. Scans should be made as close to the delivery point as possible.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. The postmaster stated the supervisors did not review the carrier cases for undelivered packages due to other priorities, such as managing employees and making sure the mail was sorted and distributed to the carriers.

The postmaster also stated that the supervisors are monitoring the package tracking tool every night to ensure the packages receive an STC scan but were not familiar with any reports that monitor where the scans took place.

Figure 4. Scan Away From the Delivery Point in Ballwin, Missouri



Source: Postal Service Single Package Look Up.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance. The Postal Service’s goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address,²¹ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.²²

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 improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and the Postal Service brand.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

²¹ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

²² *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #3: Arrow Keys

What We Found

Unit management did not properly report lost arrow keys. Specifically, unit management recorded eight keys in the Retail and Delivery Applications and Reports (RADAR)²³ system as “Lost.” However, unit management had not reported any of these keys to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

On the morning of June 5, 2025, we also reviewed the unit’s arrow key certification list in RADAR and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. We did not identify any significant issues.

Why Did It Occur

The postmaster stated he was not aware of the current policy to contact the Postal Inspection Service for missing keys.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,²⁴ any missing keys must be immediately reported to the Postal Inspection Service.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When there is insufficient oversight of arrow keys, there is an 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.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

²³ The arrow key certification in RADAR provides a national platform for all facilities to verify current inventory and account for all arrow keys.

²⁴ *Arrow/Modified Arrow Lock (MAL) Key Accountability Standard Work Instructions*, dated May 2024.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from May through August 2025 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 related to all three components that were significant within the context of our objectives. We will issue a separate report that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for the Creve Coeur Branch, O'Fallon MPO, St. Charles MPO, Ballwin MPO, Maryville Gardens Station, Southwest Station, and Clayton Branch, as well as the district.

We assessed the reliability of Product Tracking & Reporting system²⁵ and DCV data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

²⁵ The system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

Appendix B: Management's Comments



July 18, 2025

VICTORIA SMITH
ACTING DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Ballwin Main Post Office, Ballwin, MO: Delivery Operations
(Report Number 25-100-4-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Ballwin Main Post Office, Ballwin, MO: Delivery Operations*.

Management generally agrees with the findings related to delayed mail, package scanning, and arrow keys.

Management has begun taking steps to address the three findings.

Delayed Mail: Management will conduct a service talk on proper handling and recording of delayed mail in DCV. Management will also reiterate the requirement to use PS Form 1571 *Undelivered Mail Report* and follow the *Redline* process. Reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Package Scanning: Management will provide a service talk on proper scanning procedures and conduct reviews to monitor compliance.

Arrow Keys: Management will update the inventory log to reflect all arrow keys on hand and report all missing keys to the US Postal Inspection Service. Additionally, reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

E-SIGNED by JEREMIE SIX
on 2025-07-18 17:19:43 EDT

Jeremie Six
District Manager, KS-MO District

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

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