

Southwest Station, St. Louis, MO: Delivery Operations

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 25-100-6-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 and Southern

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Southwest Station, St. Louis, MO: Delivery Operations
(Report Number 25-100-6-R25)

This report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Southwest Station in St. Louis, 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

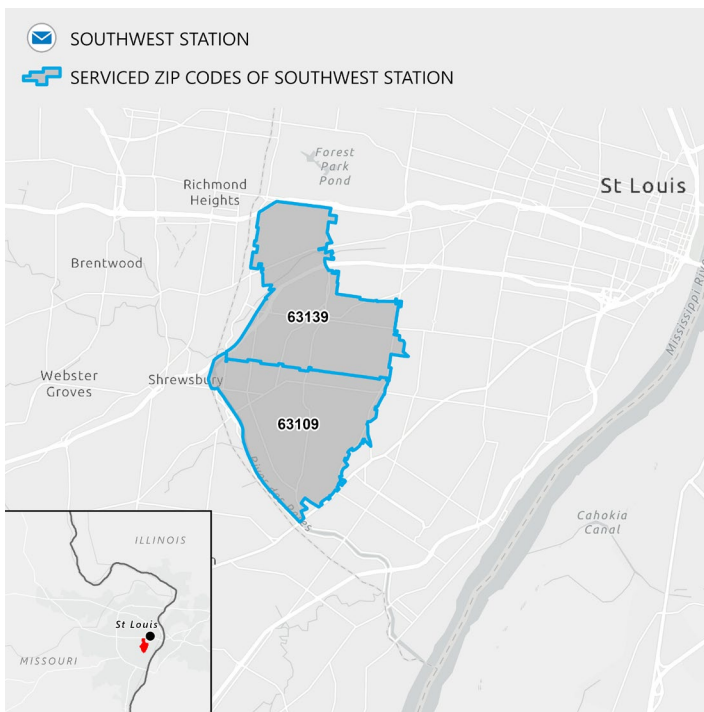
Results

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 Southwest Station in St. Louis, MO (Project Number 25-100-6). 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 distribution centers in the St. Louis metro area. The Southwest Station is in the Kansas–Missouri (KS–MO) District of the Central Area and serves about 48,897 people in ZIP Codes 63109 and 63139, which are considered urban areas¹ (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. ZIP Codes Served by the Southwest Station



Source: OIG analysis of ZIP Code data.

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

This delivery unit has 46 city routes. From March 22 through April 18, 2025, the delivery unit had five supervisors assigned.² During our site visit, the management team consisted of a station manager and three supervisors. The Southwest Station falls under the St. Louis Post Office for employee availability measurement. As of May 2, 2025,³ the year-to-date employee availability rate for the St. Louis Post Office was 86.3 percent, which is under the Postal Service’s retail and delivery operations employee availability goal of 93.7 percent for fiscal year 2025. The Southwest Station is one of seven delivery units⁴ the OIG reviewed during the week of June 2, 2025, that are serviced by the St. Louis Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) and the St. Louis Network Distribution Center (NDC).

We assessed all units serviced by the St. Louis P&DC and 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 Southwest Station primarily because the unit had 5.4 C360 inquiries per route, which was higher than the district average of 5.0 inquiries per route. The unit was also chosen based on 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 Southwest Station in St. Louis, 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 their comments, where appropriate.

We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Southwest Station. 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.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting delivery operations at the Southwest Station. Specifically, we found issues with four of the areas we reviewed (see [Table 1](#)).

² According to the Postal Service’s Time and Attendance Collection system (TACS). TACS is the system used by the Postal Service to automate the collection of employee time and attendance 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 Main Post Office (MPO), O’ Fallon, MO (Project Number 25-100-2); St. Charles Main Post Office (MPO), St. Charles, MO (Project Number 25-100-3); Ballwin MPO, Ballwin, MO (Project Number 25-100-4); Maryville Gardens Station, St. Louis, MO (Project Number 25-100-5); 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.

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.

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 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 at the unit and did not identify any significant issues.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of June 3, 2025, we identified 15,597 delayed mailpieces¹² at 34 carrier cases, the hot case,¹³ the workroom floor, and in collections. Specifically, we identified 11,728 letters, 3,817 flats, and 52 packages. In addition, management did not accurately report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)¹⁴ system. While they reported 1,365 delayed mailpieces, this only represented 8.8 percent of the delayed mail we identified at the unit. See Table 2 for the number of pieces for each mail type and Figures 2 and 3 for examples of delayed mail found at the unit.

Table 2. Types of Delayed Mail Identified

Type of Mail	Carrier Cases	Hot Case	Work Room Floor	Collection Mail	Total Count of Delayed Mail
Letters	10,685	756	0	287	11,728
Flats	2,983	210	621	3	3,817
Packages	25	0	0	27	52
Totals	13,693	966	621	317	15,597

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

Figure 2. Example of Delayed Mail at a Carrier Case



Source: OIG photo taken June 3, 2025.

Figure 3. Examples of Delayed Mail from the Workroom Floor



Source: OIG photos taken June 3, 2025.

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*, and Handbook M-32, *Management Operating Data Systems*, Appendix D.

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.

Why Did It Occur

The manager stated the clerk who sorts packages on Sundays was on scheduled leave, therefore those packages accumulated with Monday's packages, which increased the volume of packages to be sorted. The manager also stated one of the four clerks was on unscheduled leave the day prior to our visit. Since the clerks did not complete sorting packages until 1 p.m., management instructed carriers to return to the unit to retrieve the packages and prioritize package delivery, which resulted in undelivered letters and flats.

In addition, effective May 17, 2025, management stated all the city routes were adjusted due to a decrease in mail volume. The route adjustments reduced the number of city routes from 59 to 46. Due to the route changes, mail received from the plant was often improperly sorted, requiring clerks to manually sort the mail at the hot cases. For example, we identified flats received from the plant that were not sorted to reflect the new route adjustments and Delivery Point Sequence¹⁵ mail that was not sorted to the correct route or in the correct delivery order. However, management did not use the Mail Arrival Quality/ Plant Arrival Quality (MAQ/PAQ)¹⁶ tool to communicate these issues with the St. Louis P&DC for correction.

Unit management did not deliver the collection mail to the plant the night before our visit because management could not make it to the plant before 8 p.m. Management stated it was instructed not to bring mail to the plant after 8 p.m.; however, it could not provide documentation to support this instruction. The plant manager stated delivery units can drop off collection mail after 8 p.m. as long as they coordinate with plant management.

Furthermore, the delayed mail was not properly reported in the DCV system because the new closing supervisor did not have access and was instructed

to send the delayed mail count to the manager. The manager stated that due to connectivity issues, she was not able to update the delayed mail into the DCV system.

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 management should use the MAQ/PAQ system to communicate and resolve issues with mail conditions. In the event collection mail does not make it on the final dispatch truck to the plant, management must initiate procedures for ensuring the mail is transported to the processing plant.²⁰ Further, managers are required²¹ 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. Management 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.

Postal Service Response

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

¹⁵ An automated process of sorting mail by carrier routes into delivery order, eliminating the need for carriers to sort the mail manually in the delivery unit prior to their departure to the routes.

¹⁶ The MAQ/PAQ system facilitates communication and resolution of issues with the movement of mail, including collection mail, between postal facilities.

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 MAQ/PAQ Discrepancy Process - Standard Work Instructions.

²⁰ Standard Operating Procedure, *Dispatch Deviation Policy*, July 19, 2024.

²¹ *DCV Learn and Grow*, August 1, 2024.

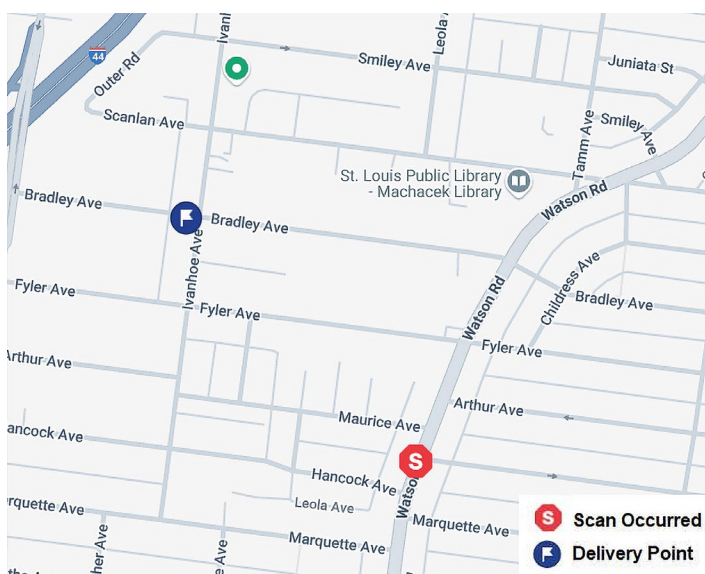
Finding #2: Package Scanning

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, five (17 percent) had improper scans or handling issues, including:

- Three packages were scanned “Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location” between .2 and .5 miles away from the delivery point. See Figure 4 for an example. Scans should be made as close to the delivery point as possible.
- One package did not receive a STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.
- One package arrived at the unit in February 2025 but was missing an “Arrival-at-Unit” and STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.

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



Source: Postal Service Single Package Look Up.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Management stated it monitored the district integrity report, which detailed scans completed after 3 p.m. in the unit, and the daily administrative email, which identified scanning issues. However, it did not know about other reports that showed where scans were occurring.

In addition, the new PM supervisor stated she did not review all packages brought back by carriers because she had competing priorities, such as answering phone inquiries and handling accountable items.

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,²² which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.²³

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.

²² *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

²³ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #3: Arrow Keys

What We Found

Unit management did not properly update the arrow key inventory log and safeguard arrow keys. On the morning of June 5, 2025, we reviewed the unit's arrow key certification list in the Retail and Delivery Applications and Reports (RADAR)²⁴ system and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. Unit management reported 79 keys in RADAR as "In-Use," "Damaged," or "In-Vault." Based on our physical review of arrow keys at the unit, 41 of the 79 keys were missing, and an additional four keys found at the unit were not recorded in RADAR. Unit management also recorded four keys in RADAR as "Lost." However, unit management had not reported any of these keys, nor the 41 keys we identified as missing, to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

In addition, arrow keys were not always kept secure. Specifically, supervisors were not verifying that carriers were returning their assigned keys at the end of the day and one arrow key was found unsecured at a [REDACTED]

Why Did It Occur

The manager stated she conducted the arrow key certification on June 2, 2025, by verifying the keys to RADAR. She stated she did not return some of the keys to the vault because she had to tend to personnel matters, and as a result, she stated she misplaced the keys. In addition, the new PM supervisor did not verify that all arrow keys were returned to the accountable cart when carriers returned from their

routes due to competing duties such as answering phone inquiries and handling vehicle issues. Furthermore, management stated it was not aware of the proper procedure for reporting lost or stolen arrow keys.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,²⁵ management must keep an accurate inventory of all arrow keys. Any 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 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.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

²⁴ The arrow key certification in RADAR provides a national platform for all facilities to verify current inventory and account for all arrow keys.

²⁵ *Arrow/Modified Arrow Lock (MAL) Key Accountability Standard Work Instruction*, dated May, 2024.

Finding # 4: Separation of Packages for Dispatch

What We Found

Employees at the Southwest Station did not properly separate packages destined for the processing facility. Specifically, on June 4, 2025, during the unit's evening operations, we observed Priority Mail and non-Priority Mail packages comingled in the same containers for dispatch (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Comingled Outgoing Packages



Source: OIG photo taken June 4, 2025.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide oversight to ensure that employees properly separated packages for dispatch. Management stated it was not aware of the policy regarding the additional separation of packages.

What Should Have Happened

The Postal Service requires all level 22 units and above to separate Priority Mail from non-Priority Mail packages and use a specific placard when dispatching to the processing facility.²⁶

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Proper mail preparation is required for visibility throughout the Postal Service network. When mail is not properly separated for dispatch to the processing facility, in accordance with procedures, there is an increased likelihood that mail will require additional processing steps. Furthermore, this can result in delays and service failures and an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

²⁶ Learn and Grow RDC/RSC Updates, 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 Southwest Station, Creve Coeur Branch, O' Fallon MPO, St. Charles MPO, Ballwin MPO, Maryville Gardens Station, and Clayton Branch, as well as the district.

We assessed the reliability of Product Tracking & Reporting system²⁷ 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.

²⁷ 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: Southwest Station, St. Louis, MO: Delivery Operations
(Report Number 25-100-6-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Southwest Station, St. Louis, MO: Delivery Operations*.

Management generally agrees with the findings related to delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys, and separation of packages for dispatch.

Management has begun taking steps to address the four 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*. Additionally, the use of the Mail Arrival Quality/Plant Arrival Quality (MAQ/PAQ) discrepancy process will be reiterated to management. Reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance. The one new closing supervisor identified as not having access to DCV now has access.

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. Management will also conduct training on proper management and security of arrow keys. Additionally, reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Separation of Packages for Dispatch: Management will provide service talks to reinforce package separation practices to ensure Priority Mail is not comingled with non-priority mail. Reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

E-SIGNED by JEREMIE SIX
on 2025-07-18 17:21:15 EDT

Jeremie Six
District Manager, KS-MO District

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

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



This document contains sensitive information that has been redacted for public release. These redactions were coordinated with USPS and agreed to by the OIG.

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