

Oversight of the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool Process

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 25-147-R26 | May 6, 2026



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Highlights

Background

The mission of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service is to support and protect the U.S. Postal Service and its employees, infrastructure, and customers. One of the ways it accomplishes its mission is by providing technological support and risk management tools as well as strategy services designed to mitigate risk and prevent criminal attacks.

What We Did

Our objective was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Postal Service's and the Postal Inspection Service's oversight of the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool (VRAT) process and resolution of identified deficiencies. The VRAT is a risk-based model to identify security deficiencies at postal facilities. For this audit, we judgmentally selected samples of three Postal Inspection Service divisions and 12 Postal Service facilities nationwide for review based on VRAT survey and deficiency data. Additionally, we reviewed VRAT processes, procedures, training, and applicable guidance.

What We Found

The Postal Inspection Service did not effectively oversee the VRAT process. Many surveys were not started or incomplete, deficiencies remained unresolved, and the status for resolved deficiencies was not reported in the system. Additionally, while facility security training included a VRAT component, the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service did not ensure that all facility management received this training prior to performing VRAT surveys. Lastly, there were instances where personnel from both the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service duplicated efforts by completing separate VRAT surveys in the same fiscal year at Tier 1 (most critical) and Tier 2 (critical) facilities.

Recommendations and Management Comments

We made six recommendations to strengthen VRAT oversight by improving monitoring and follow-up processes, policies and procedures, and reporting and resolution practices; bolstering facility security training and guidance; and reducing the redundancy of VRAT surveys. Postal Service management agreed with all six recommendations. Management's comments and our evaluation are at the end of each finding and recommendation. See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

May 6, 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR: GARY R. BARKSDALE
CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jan E. Hamm", is centered below the memorandum header.

FROM: Jan E. Hamm
Deputy Assistant Inspector General
for Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Oversight of the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool
Process (Report Number 25-147-R26)

This report presents the results of our audit of the Oversight of the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool Process.

All recommendations require U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General's (OIG) concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. All 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.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesy provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact John Littlejohn, Director, Mail Safety & Security Directorate, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit Response Management

Results

Introduction/Objective

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit, Oversight of the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool (VRAT) Process (Project Number 25-147). Our objective was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Postal Service's and Postal Inspection Service's oversight of the VRAT process and resolution of identified deficiencies. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this audit.

Background

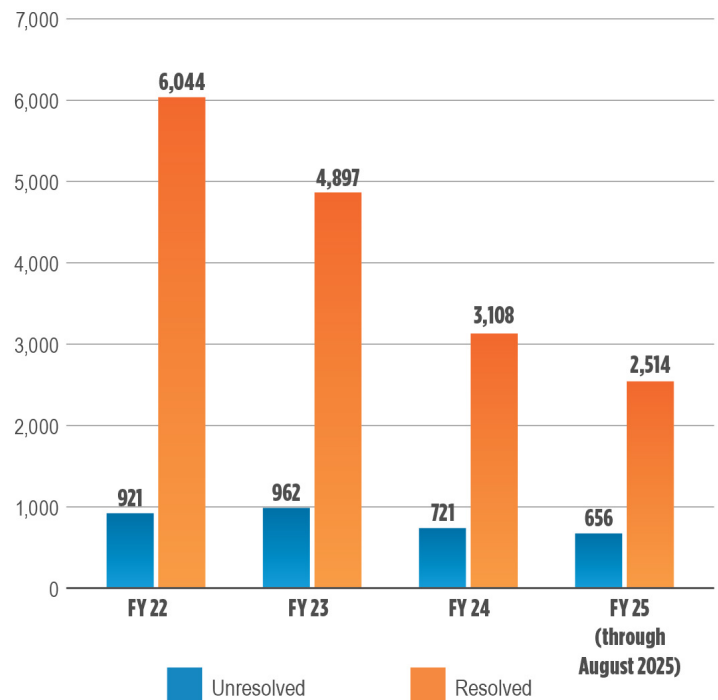
The mission of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service is to support and protect the U.S. Postal Service and its employees, infrastructure, and customers. One of the ways it accomplishes its mission is by providing technological support and risk management tools as well as strategy services designed to mitigate risk and prevent criminal attacks. The Postal Inspection Service also establishes physical security standards meant to protect the interior and exterior of postal facilities, with items such as cameras, physical barriers, facility locks, and keys.

To ensure postal facilities' adherence to the physical security standards, the Postal Inspection Service implemented the VRAT process in fiscal year (FY) 2012 as a comprehensive risk assessment to identify security deficiencies at postal facilities. The VRAT system is an online database that stores the conducted assessments, or surveys, and allows management to monitor compliance with completion requirements. Items reviewed in the VRAT survey include the operational status of a facility's closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, key and badge access control, security of interior and exterior doors, security of high-value items, outdoor lighting, and facility gates and perimeter fencing, among

other areas. Deficiencies identified during the VRAT survey are documented and assigned a priority level (high, medium, or low), based on the judgement of the person completing the survey.

From FYs 2022 to 2025 (through August 2025), there were 19,823 deficiencies reported in the VRAT system. Additionally, for that same period, 3,260 (16.4 percent) of those deficiencies were unresolved¹ nationwide as of August 2025 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. VRAT Unresolved and Resolved Deficiencies by Fiscal Year



Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Inspection Service VRAT system data from FYs 2022 to 2025 (through August 2025).

The Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service assign a tier level to each postal facility based on its risk structure with accompanying surveys based on criticality (see [Table 1](#)).

¹ The OIG considered VRAT deficiencies with the resolution status of "in progress" and "deferred" as unresolved.

Table 1. Facility Tier Levels

Facility Tier Levels	Count of Facilities in Tier	Description of Risk Survey Performed
Tier 1 (Most Critical)	16	Most thorough of the risk surveys. The loss of operations would have national implications, or loss would have detrimental effects on the Postal Service to operate effectively.
Tier 2 (Critical)	231	Requires thorough surveys concentrating on physical security and procedural practices. The loss of operations would have Area - or District-wide implications, or loss would have detrimental effect on mail operations in a local area.
Tier 3 (Least Critical)	30,687	Evaluated with quick and simple surveys to capture major physical security and procedural vulnerabilities. The loss of operations would have a minimal effect on postal operations. While this tier encompasses all postal facilities not in the first two tiers, all facilities also use the Tier 3 survey as a foundation and incorporate additional items based on the assigned criticality level.

Source: VRAT facility counts as of August 26, 2025.

Table 2. VRAT Survey Schedule

Facility Tier Level	VRAT Survey Level	VRAT Survey Frequency	Party Responsible for Completing VRAT Survey
Tier 1	Tier 1	Every two years	Postal Inspection Service Headquarters Subject Matter Experts
	Tier 3	Annually	Postal Service SCO
Tier 2	Tier 2	Every two years	Postal Inspection Service Division Inspectors and Physical Security Specialists
	Tier 3	Annually	Postal Service SCO
Tier 3	Tier 3	Annually	Postal Service SCO

Source: Postal Inspection Service Tiered Facility Risk Assessments.

The Postal Inspection Service is required to oversee the VRAT process and provide general security guidance, training, and oversight for security control officers (SCO)² at postal facilities. Postal Inspection Service personnel and SCOs within the Postal Service complete the surveys depending on the facility tier level (see Table 2).

In addition to the Tier 3 annual VRAT surveys, SCOs may also perform a VRAT survey when newly assigned as an SCO (or as a newly assigned officer-in-charge), or when there is a change in management. Lastly, if an incident occurs at a postal facility, such as a burglary, Postal Inspection Service personnel complete a VRAT survey to identify any security deficiencies.

After completing a Tier 1 or Tier 2 VRAT survey, the Postal Inspection Service submits a formal report with security enhancement recommendations to the facility SCO for review and remediation. The SCOs are responsible for identifying and implementing corrective action within 30 days. For Tier 3 VRAT surveys with findings, the SCOs who performed the surveys are responsible for resolving identified deficiencies.

To gain a nationwide view of the VRAT process, we selected three Postal Inspection Service Divisions – Denver, Atlanta, and Houston – and visited four facilities in each division with varying tier levels in December 2025 and January 2026 (see Table 3).

² The installation head or designee acts as the SCO for each facility and is responsible for safety of on-duty employees and the security of mail, postal funds, property, and records. The SCO is also the liaison with the Postal Inspection Service on all security matters and the individual responsible for implementing security recommendations reported by the Postal Inspection Service.

Table 3. Postal Inspection Service Divisions and Facilities Included in This Audit

Postal Inspection Service Divisions	Postal Service Facilities and Tier Level
Atlanta	Processing and Distribution Center Raleigh, NC [REDACTED]
	Local Processing Center Duluth, GA [REDACTED]
	East Point Branch Atlanta, GA [REDACTED]
	Greenville Main Post Office Greenville, SC [REDACTED]
Denver	Material Distribution Center Building 303 Topeka, KS [REDACTED]
	Network Distribution Center Kansas City, KS [REDACTED]
	Material Distribution Center Building 7 Topeka, KS [REDACTED]
	Centropolis Finance Station Kansas City, MO [REDACTED]
Houston	Processing and Distribution Center Montgomery, AL [REDACTED]
	Processing and Distribution Center Birmingham, AL [REDACTED]
	Huntsville Main Post Office Huntsville, AL [REDACTED]
	Mastin Lake Post Office Huntsville, AL [REDACTED]

Source: VRAT reporting and deficiency data as of August 26, 2025.

Findings Summary

We found that the Postal Inspection Service did not effectively oversee the VRAT process. Specifically, the Postal Inspection Service did not timely complete VRAT surveys, follow up on unresolved deficiencies, or report and resolve deficiencies. Additionally, we found that the Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service did not ensure that all facility management received training prior to performing VRAT surveys.

Furthermore, facility management did not receive sufficient guidance from the Postal Inspection Service regarding the VRAT system and survey. Lastly, we identified instances whereby Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service personnel completed multiple VRAT surveys in the same fiscal year for Tier 1 and Tier 2 postal facilities.

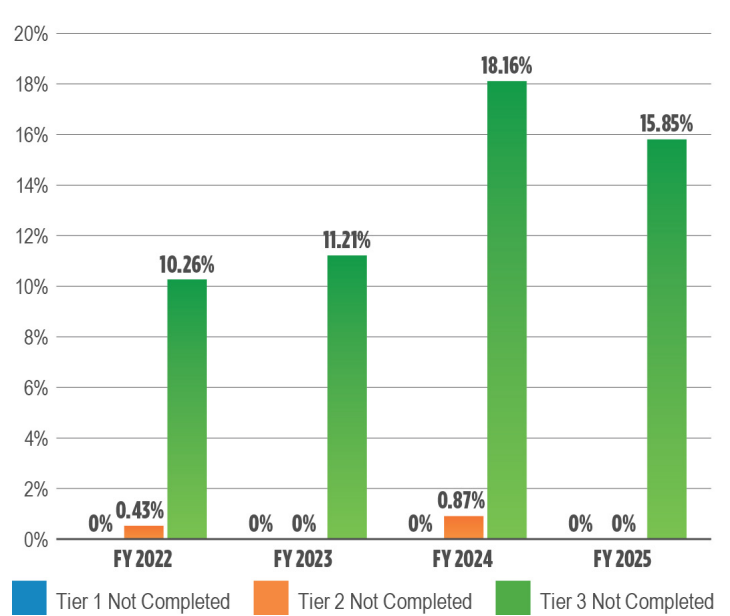
Finding #1: Lack of Oversight on the VRAT Process

The Postal Inspection Service did not effectively monitor VRAT survey completion progress, which resulted in a significant number of surveys either not completed or not started. Furthermore, there was no established procedure for following up on unresolved deficiencies, nor was there a requirement for facilities to update the VRAT status upon resolution of these deficiencies.

Completion of VRAT Surveys

Our review of nationwide VRAT survey data from FYs 2022 to 2025 identified inadequate oversight of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 surveys. According to Postal Inspection Service management, Tier 1 and Tier 2 VRAT surveys should be conducted every two years, while Tier 3 VRAT surveys should be conducted annually for all facility tiers. However, prescribed biennial and annual surveys for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 facilities did not always occur. When we reviewed the status of VRAT surveys of the 15 Tier 1, 231 Tier 2, and 30,687 Tier 3 facilities from FYs 2022 to 2025, we found that 17,028 (13.8 percent) of surveys at all facilities were not completed (see Table 4).

Table 4. Not Completed VRAT Surveys by Tier and Fiscal Year



Source: OIG analysis of Postal Inspection Service VRAT survey data from FYs 2022 to 2025.

Specifically, 378 were “incomplete” and 16,650 were “not started” during our scope period. Additionally, the number of incomplete Tier 3 surveys more than doubled each year of the scope. The number of VRAT “incomplete” or “not started” surveys are summarized by fiscal year in Tables 5 and 6, respectively:

Table 5. Incomplete VRAT Surveys by Fiscal Year

Facility Tier and Survey Type	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	Total
Tier 1	0	0	0	0	0
Tier 2	1	0	2	0	3
Tier 3	17	46	100	212	375
Totals	18	46	102	212	378

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Inspection Service VRAT survey data from FYs 2022 to 2025.

Table 6. Not Started VRAT Surveys by Fiscal Year³

Facility Tier and Survey Type	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	Total
Tier 3	3,130	3,394	5,474	4,652	16,650

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Inspection Service VRAT survey data from FYs 2022 to 2025.

³ The results for Tier 1 and Tier 2 surveys are excluded from this table due to how the data is recorded in the VRAT system.

Table 7. Tier 1 and 2 Facilities Without Tier 3 VRAT Survey by Fiscal Year

Facility Tier and Survey Type	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	Total
Tier 1	1	7	1	11	20
Tier 2	74	59	84	75	292
Totals	75	66	85	86	312

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Inspection Service VRAT survey data from FYs 2022 to 2025.

We also identified 2,854 Tier 3 facilities that did not start a VRAT survey for two consecutive years, 1,924 Tier 3 facilities that did not start a survey for three consecutive years, and 1,330 Tier 3 facilities that did not start a survey for four consecutive years.

Further, our review of the VRAT data for that same time period revealed 312 instances where Postal Inspection Service personnel completed a Tier 1 or 2 VRAT survey, but Postal Service facility management did not complete the required Tier 3 survey during the off year (see Table 7).

Follow-Up on Unresolved VRAT Deficiencies

In our review of nationwide VRAT survey deficiency data, we identified 5,158 unresolved (“in progress” and “deferred”) deficiencies with some going back to FY 2011. The number of unresolved VRAT deficiencies we identified are summarized by fiscal year in Table 8.

Table 8. VRAT Unresolved Deficiencies by Fiscal Year

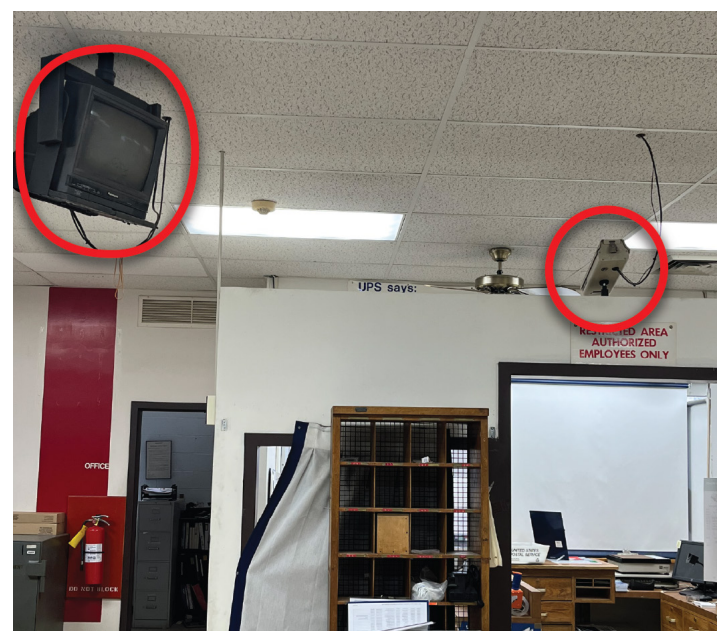
Fiscal Year	Count
2011-2021	1,898
2022	921
2023	962
2024	721
2025	656
Totals	5,158

Source: VRAT reporting and deficiency data as of August 26, 2025.

We also performed onsite visits at selected Tier 1, 2, and 3 postal facilities in three judgmentally selected divisions to review VRAT process implementation, assess the deficiency statuses, and determine the reasons why deficiencies remained unresolved.

Some of the most common unresolved VRAT deficiency types we identified included inoperable cameras (Figure 2), damaged entry gates (Figure 3), unsecured or damaged exterior doors (Figure 4), damaged fencing, inoperable alarm systems, and facility access codes not changed when employees transfer or separate. We also observed an unsecured cash register drawer on a desk with money visibly present (Figure 5).

Figure 2. Inoperable Camera and Monitor



Source: OIG photograph taken at the [redacted] on December 3, 2025.
 Note: Management confirmed that the camera and monitor were inoperable.

Figure 3. Broken Entry Gate



Source: OIG photograph taken at the [redacted] on December 2, 2025.

Figure 5. Unsecured Cash Register Drawer With Money



Source: OIG photograph taken at the [redacted] on December 3, 2025.

Figure 4. Damaged Exterior Dock Door



Source: OIG photograph taken at the [redacted] on December 2, 2025.

For the sites we visited, there were a total of 300 deficiencies that remained unresolved (either “in progress” or “deferred”) in the VRAT system. After discussions and walkthroughs with management to confirm the deficiency statuses, we determined that 154 (51 percent) had been completed, 74 (25 percent) were still in progress,⁴ and 72 (24 percent) could not be verified as documentation could not be provided to support the status. [Table 9](#) highlights deficiency resolution statuses listed in the VRAT system versus the status that we identified during our site visits.

⁴ Reasons why deficiencies were still in progress included equipment installation, repair ticket not yet submitted, lack of funding, awaiting contractor approval for repair, or the facility undergoing conversion.

Table 9. On-site Assessment of VRAT Deficiency Statuses

VRAT System Data		OIG On-site Deficiency Determinations		
System Status	Count	Completed	In Progress	Unverified
Deferred	81	31	44	6
In Progress	219	123	30	66
Total	300	154	74	72

Source: OIG analysis and onsite walkthroughs of VRAT deficiencies data.

For the deficiencies that remained unresolved at Tier 1 and 2 facilities, facility management noted the lack of formal follow-up to obtain the status, or action plans to address all deficiencies due to the biennial frequency that the Postal Inspection Service performs surveys. Postal Inspection Service division management stated that it provides 30-, 60-, and 90-day letters to local management of any deficiencies identified; however, after the letters are sent, little to no other communication occurs. For unresolved deficiencies at Tier 3 facilities, facility management stated that since it conducts its own VRAT survey, it does not receive any formal follow-up from the Postal Inspection Service. The lack of follow-up at Tier 3 facilities can be problematic. For instance, at one Tier 3 facility we visited, management submitted recent VRAT surveys without any noted deficiencies. However, the OIG, accompanied by the SCO, identified several previously unreported issues on-site that should have been reported as deficiencies, such as inoperable cameras, shrubbery on fences, and damaged fencing.

Reporting and Resolution of VRAT Deficiencies

Through discussions and walkthroughs with facility management during our site visits, we learned that many of the deficiencies marked as “in progress” or “deferred” in the VRAT system were in fact resolved. While facility management at Tier 1 and 2 facilities were aware of the requirement to submit an action plan to the Postal Inspection Service within 30 days of the letter, outlining how it will address reported deficiencies, management was unaware of any requirement to update the deficiency status in the

VRAT system when deficiencies were resolved after the initial 30-day window. Facility management also informed the OIG that it was unaware of any requirement or ability to upload supporting documentation (for example, photo, work order) into the VRAT system when a deficiency was resolved.

While Postal Inspection Service personnel generally conducted Tier 1 and 2 VRAT surveys every two years (see Table 5) as a standard practice, we found that there is no written requirement for biennial completion of Tier 1 and 2 VRAT surveys in policy guidelines. The Postal Inspection Service’s manual⁵ requires comprehensive security surveys for business-critical facilities every two years, but it does not specifically mention a biennial completion of Tier 1 and Tier 2 VRAT surveys. Additionally, each Postal Inspection Service division has a yearly plan⁶ that outlines the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 VRAT surveys the division intends to complete each fiscal year, but no official policy or guidance that outlines that the frequency requirement exists.

Although the Postal Inspection Service’s Security Group has implemented some monitoring practices, it does not have an ongoing process for continuous review of VRAT system data to identify all facilities with incomplete or not started VRAT surveys and follow-up on all unresolved deficiencies. Postal Inspection Service division personnel send out reminders to local Postal Service management to complete VRAT surveys; however, the responsibility still falls on local postal management to ensure that the surveys are completed.

5 United States Postal Inspection Service Manual Section 5.7.3.2.1 Comprehensive Security Survey (June 2025).

6 Postal Inspection Service: FY 2025 Comprehensive Division Plan National Initiatives Section and FY 2026 Comprehensive Division Plan National Priorities Section.

“Incomplete and not started VRAT surveys mean that potential security deficiencies will not be identified or resolved. Without any follow-up on unresolved VRAT deficiencies, these items will continue to go unaddressed.”

Lack of oversight and completion of VRAT surveys occurred for several reasons. For some of the facilities we visited that were not conducting Tier 3 VRAT surveys, local postal management stated that it was not made aware of the annual requirement to complete the survey as no guidance or training was provided. Some Postal Inspection Service division personnel followed up with local postal management on unresolved deficiencies; however, division personnel included only deficiencies reported in the last VRAT survey and did not provide a comprehensive list. Further, there are no documented requirements or procedures for facility management to update the status of a deficiency in the VRAT system or to upload documentation, such as photos or work orders, to confirm that the deficiency has been addressed.

The weaknesses identified pose a significant risk to the overall effectiveness of the VRAT process. Incomplete and not started VRAT surveys mean that potential security deficiencies will not be identified or resolved. Without any follow-up on unresolved VRAT deficiencies, these items will continue to go unaddressed. These two areas leave the Postal Service vulnerable to potential security risks to the facility, employees, mail and packages, and assets. Additionally, if facility management is not required to update the VRAT system promptly upon resolving deficiencies, inflated unresolved deficiency counts due to resolved items remaining marked as outstanding may result. This limits the Postal Inspection Service’s ability to maintain an accurate

nationwide view of facilities posing higher security risks and those requiring greater attention. Finally, without requiring facility management to upload or maintain supporting documentation confirming that a deficiency has been resolved, the Postal Inspection Service is unable to efficiently verify that a deficiency has been fully addressed in accordance with requirements.

Recommendation #1:

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, update policy to include the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool survey completion requirements for Tier 1 and Tier 2 postal facilities.

Recommendation #2:

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, develop a process to identify postal facilities that did not complete a Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool survey and ensure that those facilities meet survey completion requirements.

Recommendation #3:

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, establish a process to monitor unresolved Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool survey deficiencies across all tier levels to ensure timely resolution and verify accurate status and prioritization.

Recommendation #4:

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, revise policies and procedures related to the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool process to require facility management to update deficiency statuses, upon resolution, and communicate these changes to the field, once finalized.

Postal Service Response

Management agreed with our finding, all four recommendations, and our other impact.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated that it will update the VRAT User Guide to clearly state that both Tier 1 and Tier 2 surveys must be completed every two years. The target implementation date is September 30, 2026.

While management agreed with recommendation 2, it stated that the Postal Inspection Service cannot ensure that the facilities meet survey completion requirements. Management will implement a report that can be sent on a regular cadence to local Postal Inspection Service divisions; Chief, Retail and Delivery Operations; and Chief, Processing and Distribution Operations. Management can remind SCOs to conduct surveys; however, responsibility for meeting survey completion requirements rests with local management. The target implementation date is January 29, 2027.

Regarding recommendation 3, management stated that it will develop a report listing all open deficiencies from the VRAT application and send it to postal stakeholders on a regular cadence. The target implementation date is April 15, 2027.

Regarding recommendation 4, management stated that it will update language to note SCOs' requirement to update deficiency statuses in the amended VRAT User Guide, which will be posted on the VRAT application. Management will also update the required training to reflect this change. The target implementation date is April 15, 2027.

OIG Evaluation

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

Finding #2: Lack of Training and Guidance

Based on our review of all Postal Service personnel with access to the VRAT system and facility security⁷ training records, we identified 16,510 of 19,839 (83 percent) employees who had access to the VRAT system but did not complete the required training,⁸ 5,095 (31 percent) of which were SCOs. Additionally, 953 of the 3,207 (30 percent) who completed the training were SCOs, but 906 of the 953 (95 percent) SCOs completed their training over five years ago. Table 10 summarizes the training status for personnel with access to the VRAT system.

“We identified 16,510 of 19,839 (83 percent) employees who had access to the VRAT system but did not complete the required training.”

Table 10. Training Completion Status for VRAT Users

VRAT User Report	Training Completion Status			
	Completed	In Progress	Not Started	Total
Users With Active Status	3,207	122	16,510	19,839
Percentage of Total	16.2%	0.6%	83.2%	

Source: OIG analysis of current Postal Service personnel facility security training and VRAT system user access records.

At the facilities we visited, most managers reported that they were not aware of the training. Other managers noted that the training cited in the VRAT guidance references an obsolete postal training system. Further, several postal personnel stated that they learned to conduct VRAT surveys through informal on-the-job training.

In addition to not being provided with the required training, facility management reported receiving little to no guidance from Postal Inspection Service division and Postal Service district offices regarding the VRAT process. Most facility management noted that guidance was limited to discussions during VRAT surveys about potential options to correct deficiencies. Additionally, current VRAT guidance was issued in 2016 and does not reflect Delivering for America network conversions and other facility changes. For example, within our sample, two locations were actively converting facilities due

to changes in network operations. Specifically, processing and distribution centers were transitioning to local processing centers, and main post offices were transitioning to sorting and delivery centers; however, the 2016 VRAT guidance predated these facility changes. This resulted in a gap in facility security coverage, as new construction activities and operational adjustments were not fully accounted for in the outdated guidance.

Facility management similarly reported receiving no guidance on how to determine appropriate priority levels (high, medium, low) for each identified deficiency during the VRAT reporting process, per requirements. As a result, officials rely on personal judgment, leading to subjective surveys and inconsistencies in prioritizing deficiencies within the VRAT process.

Postal Service policy⁹ states that all SCOs are required to complete facility security training. However,

⁷ The facility security training includes a module on the VRAT process.

⁸ Our review was based on the training course listed in the *Administrative Support Manual* and the *VRAT User Guide*.

⁹ *Administrative Support Manual* 271.341 Security Reviews – The SCO performs a VRAT each fiscal year, when newly assigned as SCO, or as a newly assigned officer in charge, or when there is a change in management. Every SCO is required to take LMS Course 1920269 INSP: Facility Security 1 WBT.

the Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service did not verify that all personnel performing Tier 3 VRAT surveys completed the required training. Additionally, Postal Service management stated that this training is not tracked nationally; recording of completed training is left to local management to track. Further, neither the Postal Service nor the Postal Inspection Service established a process to provide clear guidance to all SCOs and other officials responsible for conducting VRAT surveys. Specifically, no framework existed for the distribution and communication of training materials, such as user guides, nor had training requirements for those performing VRATs been established. Lastly, the training referenced in the current VRAT policies and procedures¹⁰ was outdated. Recently, it was communicated that a SCO training was now available; however, the SCO training was not documented nor required in any guidance.

Without proper training and support from the Postal Inspection Service, SCOs and other postal staff may not be fully equipped to identify and mitigate security risks. Further, VRAT deficiency reporting may be incomplete or inconsistent, thereby increasing the risk of security breaches and harm to personnel, mail, and packages at facilities.

Recommendation #5:

We recommend that **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, 1) verify and track that all personnel involved in Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool surveys have completed the most updated, required training, and 2) update applicable Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool guidance and provide it to all postal personnel responsible for completing the surveys.

Postal Service Response

Management agreed with our finding and recommendation.

Regarding recommendation 5, management stated that it will establish an annual process to identify SCOs and will send twice-yearly reminders to personnel about the SCO training requirement. will also update the VRAT User Guide to reflect the required training. The target implementation date is April 15, 2027.

OIG Evaluation

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendation as the corrective actions should resolve the issue identified in the report.

¹⁰ Postal Inspection Service Policy: *VRAT User Guide* (Revised June 2016); *Administrative Support Manual 271.341 Security Reviews* (January 2024).

Finding #3: Redundancy in VRAT Surveys

In our review of VRAT survey data, we identified 95 instances where Postal Inspection Service personnel completed a Tier 1 or Tier 2 VRAT survey (performed biennially), and Postal Service personnel completed an annual Tier 3 VRAT survey in the same fiscal year. Table 11 lists the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 postal facilities where this occurred from FYs 2022 to 2025.

In addition to this data review, we compared the survey questions listed on the Tier 1 (383 questions), Tier 2 (221 questions), and Tier 3 (139 questions) VRAT surveys for similarities. We found that all 139 Tier 3 VRAT survey questions were included in the Tier 1 and Tier 2 surveys. Although the Tier 1 and Tier 2 VRAT surveys include more questions than the Tier 3 survey, Postal Inspection Service personnel did not significantly distinguish between the biennial Tier 1 and Tier 2 surveys and the annual Tier 3 survey at the same facilities. Consequently, every two years, all Tier 3 questions will be reviewed twice because they all appear on the Tier 1 or Tier 2 surveys.

Further, during our interviews with Postal Service facility management at Tier 1 and Tier 2 facilities, we discussed whether there were similarities in VRAT deficiency results when two different surveys were performed in the same fiscal year. Facility management performing Tier 3 surveys indicated that – aside from a few security deficiencies identified by Postal Inspection Service personnel on the Tier 1 and Tier 2 surveys – due to their expertise, most deficiencies identified were similar.

Facility management also noted that some deficiencies take time to resolve due to factors such

“The duplication of effort may reduce the surveys’ effectiveness and divert SCOs from their primary duties, causing additional personnel costs for the Postal Service.”

as availability of funds, identification of a suitable contractor for the repairs, or obtaining materials needed for the repairs. Therefore, instead of reporting the same deficiency twice in a fiscal year, facility management suggested that it would be sufficient to just perform a VRAT survey every two years to allow time to resolve more complex deficiencies. Lastly, management at a Tier 1 facility stated that due to the building size, the Tier 3 VRAT survey can take several days to complete and keeps them away from their primary duties.

The survey redundancies we found exist because the annual VRAT survey requirement is not only for Tier 3 facilities but also applies to all facilities that receive a Tier 1 or Tier 2 VRAT survey every two years. Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service policies¹¹ state that the SCO or designee must conduct Tier 3 VRAT surveys at facilities each fiscal year. However, while a Postal Inspection Service division plan lists the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 VRAT surveys that will be completed in a given fiscal year, the requirements to complete these surveys every two years does not appear to be official policy or guidance.

Table 11. Tier 1 and Tier 2 Postal Facilities With Both Surveys in Same Fiscal Year

Facility and Survey Type	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	Total
Tier 1 – Tier 1 & Tier 3 Survey	3	2	5	0	10
Tier 2 – Tier 2 & Tier 3 Survey	12	29	15	29	85
Totals:	15	31	20	29	95

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Inspection Service VRAT survey data from FYs 2022 to 2025.

¹¹ Postal Service Policy: Administrative Support Manual Section 271.341 Security Reviews (January 2024); Postal Inspection Service Policy: VRAT User Guide (Revised June 2016).

If both Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service personnel continue to conduct VRAT surveys within the same fiscal year, the duplication of effort may reduce the surveys' effectiveness and divert SCOs from their primary duties, causing additional personnel costs for the Postal Service.

Recommendation #6:

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, update guidance for Tier 1 and Tier 2 facilities to require Postal Service personnel to perform Tier 3 VRAT surveys only in the off years that the Postal Inspection Service performs the Tier 1 and Tier 2 VRAT surveys.

Postal Service Response

Management agreed with our finding and recommendation.

Regarding recommendation 6, management stated that it will update the VRAT User Guide and postal policy to specify that, for Tier 1 and Tier 2 facilities, Postal Service personnel should perform Tier 3 VRAT surveys only in the years when the Postal Inspection Service is not conducting Tier 1 and Tier 2 surveys. The target implementation date is April 15, 2027.

OIG Evaluation

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendation as the corrective actions should resolve the issue identified in the report.

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Appendix A: Additional Information

Scope and Methodology

The scope of our audit included a review of the Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service oversight of the VRAT process to include policies and procedures, tracking and reporting of VRAT surveys and deficiencies, follow-up processes for outstanding VRAT surveys and deficiencies, deficiency resolution processes, and training and guidance provided to personnel in the field. We selected 12 Postal Service facilities from the three VRAT tier levels for review. We selected the following facilities:

- Material Distribution Center Building 303, Topeka, KS
- Material Distribution Center Building 7, Topeka, KS
- Network Distribution Center, Kansas City, KS
- Centropolis Post Office, Kansas City, MO
- Local Processing Center, Duluth, GA
- Processing and Distribution Center, Raleigh, NC
- Greenville Main Post Office, Greenville, SC
- East Point Branch, Atlanta, GA
- Processing and Distribution Center, Birmingham, AL
- Processing and Distribution Center, Montgomery, AL
- Huntsville Main Post Office, Huntsville, AL
- Mastin Lake Post Office, Huntsville, AL

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Interviewed Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service Headquarters, division, and local management to understand their roles and responsibilities, policies, procedures, guidance, tracking and follow-up processes for outstanding surveys and deficiencies, and applicable training as it relates to the VRAT.

- Reviewed policies and procedures related to the VRAT process.
- Reviewed VRAT data for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 surveys from FYs 2022 to 2025.
- Reviewed VRAT data for unresolved deficiencies from FY 2011 to FY 2025 (through August 2025).
- Conducted on-site status reviews for unresolved deficiencies at 12 facilities located within three Postal Inspection Service divisions.
- Performed reviews of VRAT Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 survey questions for similarities.
- Performed reviews of Postal Service personnel with access to the VRAT system and compared to those that have completed required training courses.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2025 through May 2026 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. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on April 6 and 10, 2026, and included its comments where appropriate.

In planning and conducting the audit, we obtained an understanding of the VRAT 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 five components were significant to our audit objective:

- Control Environment
- Risk Assessment
- 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 control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring that were significant within the context of our objectives. Our recommendations, if implemented, should correct the weaknesses we identified.

We assessed the reliability of VRAT surveys, VRAT deficiencies, VRAT system access, and facility security training data by performing tests for completeness, reasonableness, accuracy, and validity. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

Report Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact
<i>U.S. Postal Inspection Service's Oversight of Facility Security and Access Control</i>	To assess whether the Postal Inspection Service's facility security and access control policies align with federal standards and best practices and how identified security deficiencies are addressed.	22-037-R22	September 19, 2022	None
<i>Property Condition Review – San Francisco, CA Processing and Distribution Center</i>	To determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at mail processing facilities.	21-158-R22	October 27, 2021	None

Appendix B: Management's Comments



UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Date: 4/28/2026

Laura Lozon
Director, Audit Services
Office of the Inspector General

SUBJECT: Management Response: Oversight of the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool Process, 25-147-DRAFT

Thank you for providing the Postal Inspection Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft audit report, Oversight of the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool Process.

Finding #1: Lack of Oversight on the VRAT Process

The Postal Inspection Service did not effectively oversee the VRAT process. Specifically, the Postal Inspection Service did not timely complete VRAT surveys, follow up on unresolved deficiencies, or report and resolve deficiencies.

Management Response:

Management **agrees** with Finding #1. While management does not describe the number of surveys not completed nor started as "significant", we do agree there is no procedure to follow up on unresolved deficiencies. We also agree there is no requirement for the Security Control Officer (SCO) to update the VRAT status upon resolution of these deficiencies.

Finding #2: Lack of Training and Guidance

The Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service did not ensure that all facility management received training prior to performing VRAT surveys. Furthermore, facility management did not receive sufficient guidance from the Postal Inspection Service regarding the VRAT system and survey.

Management Response:

Management **agrees** with Finding #2.

Finding #3: Redundancy in VRAT Surveys

OIG identified instances whereby Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service personnel completed multiple VRAT surveys in the same fiscal years for Tier 1 and Tier 2 postal facilities.

Management Response:

Management **agrees** with Finding #3.

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Other Impact Statement:

Finding #1: The Postal Inspection Service did not effectively monitor VRAT survey completion progress, which resulted in a significant number of surveys either not completed or not started.

Management Response:

Management **agrees** with Finding #1.

Recommendation #1

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, update policy to include the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool survey completion requirements for Tier 1 and Tier 2 postal facilities.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management **agrees** with this recommendation.

Management will update our VRAT User Guide to clearly state how often Tier 1 and Tier 2 surveys must be conducted. Both Tier 1 and Tier 2 surveys will be completed every two years.

Target Implementation Date: 9/30/2026

Responsible Official: Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group

Recommendation #2

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, develop a process to identify postal facilities that did not complete a Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool survey and ensure that those facilities meet survey completion requirements.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management **agrees** with this recommendation.

Management believes the wording of the recommendation should be changed from "...and ensure that those facilities meet survey completion requirements" to "...to ensure that those facilities meet survey completion requirements." The Inspection Service cannot ensure the facilities meet survey completion requirements.

Management will implement a report that can be sent on a regular cadence to local Inspection Service divisions, CRDO, and CPO. Management can remind SCOs to conduct surveys, but local management is responsible for the completion requirements.

Target Implementation Date: 1/29/2027

Responsible Official: Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group

Recommendation #3

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, establish a process to monitor unresolved Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool survey deficiencies across all tier levels to ensure timely resolution and verify accurate status and prioritization.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will develop a report to be sent to postal stakeholders on a regular cadence. This report will list all open deficiencies from the VRAT application.

Target Implementation Date: 4/15/2027

Responsible Official: Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group

Recommendation #4

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, revise policies and procedures related to the Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool process to require facility management to update deficiency statuses, upon resolution, and communicate these changes to the field once finalized

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will update the VRAT User Guide and will state SCOs are required to update deficiency statuses. The updated User Guide will be posted on the VRAT application. Management will also update the required training to reflect this change.

Target Implementation Date: 4/15/2027

Responsible Official: Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group

Recommendation #5

We recommend that **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, 1) verify and track that all personnel involved in Vulnerability Risk

Assessment Tool surveys have completed the most updated, required training, and 2) update applicable Vulnerability Risk Assessment Tool guidance and provide it to all postal personnel responsible for completing the surveys.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will develop a process to identify Security Control Officers (SCOs) yearly. Twice a year Inspection Service will send messaging to all Postal Service personnel advising the requirement for SCOs to complete the training. The VRAT User Guide will be updated to reflect the required Security Control Officer training.

Target Implementation Date: 4/15/2027

Responsible Official: Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group

Recommendation #6

We recommend that the **Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group**, update guidance for Tier 1 and Tier 2 facilities to require Postal Service personnel to perform Tier 3 VRAT surveys only in the off years that Postal Inspection Service performs the Tier 1 and Tier 2 VRAT surveys.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will update the VRAT User Guide and postal policy to notate the update.

Target Implementation Date: 4/15/2027

Responsible Official: Inspector in Charge, Postal Inspection Service, Security Group

Sincerely,



Gary L. Neff

(A) Inspector in Charge
Security Group

CC: Corporate Audit & Response Management

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES



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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