Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service



Audit Report Property Condition Review Capping Report

Report Number 22-019-R22 | June 2, 2022



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Highlights

Background

The post office lobby is the principal business office of the U.S. Postal Service. There are over 30,000 leased and owned Postal Service retail facilities nationwide. For most customers, the lobby is their only closeup view of Postal Service operations; therefore, its appearance directly affects the Postal Service's public image. The Postal Service must maintain a safe environment for both employees and customers, including adherence to federal safety laws enforced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and internal policies and procedures regarding the appearance of lobbies and facilities, safety, and security of its facilities.

What We Did

Our objective was to summarize the results of prior property condition reviews of Postal Service retail facilities, identify systemic issues, and assess the effectiveness of management's corrective actions.

What We Found

The property condition review audits collectively determined that the Postal Service did not maintain its facilities as required. We found systemic issues with management's oversight to consistently address recurring maintenance issues. Although corrective actions were taken to address the issues found in our prior reviews, these actions were not effective at ensuring that employees followed policies and procedures to maintain the appearance, health and safety, and security standards at retail and delivery facilities.

We identified a total of 728 issues across the 46 facilities visited. These included 416 maintenance and appearance, 284 health and safety, and 28 security issues. We made 51 recommendations to address the issues identified, which included unclean lobbies, damaged ceilings and lighting, tripping hazards, possible mold, and blocked electrical panels and exit doors. During follow up visits to selected districts, we found new deficiencies as well as some previously identified deficiencies that management reported as corrected but were not remedied. These issues occurred because the Postal Service does not have a formal and consistent process to assess if building maintenance and appearance, health and safety, and security standards are followed at retail and delivery facilities.

Recommendations

We recommend the Chief Retail and Delivery Officer and Executive Vice President, develop and implement a standardized internal inspection program to identify and address property condition issues at retail and delivery facilities.

Transmittal Letter

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GE UNITED STATES POSTAL S	
June 2, 2022	
MEMORANDUM FOR:	JOSHUA COLIN CHIEF RETAIL & DELIVERY OFFICER AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
	WESpinoze
FROM:	Wilvia Espinoza Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Supply Management and Facilities
SUBJECT:	Audit Report – Property Condition Review – Capping Report (Report Number 22-019-R22)
This capping report prese Condition Review Audit R	nts the results of our fiscal years 2020 and 2021 Property eports.
questions or need addition	ration and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any nal information, please contact Shirian Holland, Director, Supply es, or me at 703-248-2100.
Attachment	
cc: Corporate Audit Resp Postmaster General	onse Management

Results

Introduction/Objective

This capping report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the fiscal years (FY) 2020 and 2021 Property Condition Review (PCR) reports (Project Number 22-019). Our objective was to summarize the results of prior PCRs of U.S. Postal Service retail facilities, identify systemic issues, and assess the effectiveness of management's corrective actions. See Appendix A for additional information about this audit.

During FYs 2020 and 2021, we issued 15 audit reports and one management alert which assessed interior and exterior conditions at 46 retail and delivery facilities. These audits occurred at 24 leased and 22 Postal Service owned facilities across 15 districts within the four Postal Service Retail and Delivery areas. Specifically, the audits assessed adherence to building maintenance and appearance, health and safety, and security standards.

Background

The post office lobby is the principal business office of the Postal Service. There are over 30,000 leased and owned Postal Service retail facilities nationwide. For most customers, the lobby is their only close-up view of Postal Service operations; therefore, its appearance directly affects the Postal Service's public image. The Postal Service must maintain a safe environment for both employees and customers, including adherence to federal safety laws enforced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)¹ and internal policies and procedures regarding the appearance of lobbies and facilities, safety, and security of its facilities.²

Summary of Property Condition Review Audits

The PCR audits collectively determined that the Postal Service did not maintain its facilities as required. In addition, we found systemic issues with management's oversight to consistently address recurring maintenance issues. We identified 728 issues across all of the 46 facilities we visited. These included 416 maintenance and appearance issues, 284 health and safety issues, and 28 security issues.

We made 51 recommendations to Postal Service management to address the issues identified in the reports, many of which focused on housekeeping tasks, fire extinguisher inspections, and other general maintenance actions that management could complete quickly. At the time of this report, we confirmed that management had taken corrective actions on all of the recommendations.

To help address these issues and mitigate their associated risks, the prior audit reports recommended training on how to identify, report, document, and follow-up on building maintenance, safety, and security issues to reduce the Postal Service's exposure to OSHA fines.

Building Maintenance and Appearance

We identified a total of 416 building maintenance and appearance issues in the 46 facilities we visited. These issues included:

- Unclean lobbies with dirty floors, dirty or damaged counters, and dead insects on floors and in light fixtures.³
- Damaged ceilings with stained, missing, or misaligned ceiling tiles; walls that needed repair or paint; and damaged floors.
- Lighting issues that included damaged light fixtures and bulbs needing replacement or which had missing covers.
- Roofing issues, including debris and loose, missing, or damaged shingles.

See Figure 1 for examples of building maintenance and appearance issues identified and repaired.

¹ OSHA Act of 1970.

² Maintenance Series (MS) Handbook, MS-110, Field Office Facility Maintenance Guidelines, TL-3, dated October 10, 2018; and Handbook EL-801, Supervisor's Safety Handbook, dated July 2020.

³ Postal Operations Manual (POM), Issue 9, Section 125, Lobby Management, updated November 30, 2021, requires Postal Service managers to allocate and use available resources as necessary to ensure that postal retail services are available and accessible to customers in a timely, efficient manner and in an orderly, clean, and attractive environment.

Figure 1. Corrected Building Maintenance and Appearance Issues



Before

Source: OIG photograph taken April 14, 2021 peeling ceiling - Winchester Post Office.



Before

Source: OIG photograph taken October 8, 2020 broken urinal - Legion Avenue Post Office.



After

Source: Photograph provided by Postal Service

Post Office.

November 4, 2021 - repaired ceiling - Winchester



Before



Source: OIG photograph taken July 9, 2021 - stained Source: Photograph provided by Postal Service and peeling ceiling by skylight - Excelsior Post Office.



Source: OIG photograph taken April 14, 2021 -

broken chain link fence - Winchester Post Office.

January 26, 2022 - repaired ceiling by skylight -Excelsior Post Office.

After



After

Source: Photograph provided by Postal Service

January 21, 2021 - fixed urinal - Legion Avenue Post



Before



After

Source: Photograph provided by Postal Service November 4, 2021 - repaired chain link fence -Winchester Post Office.

Health and Safety Issues

We identified a total of 284 health and safety issues in 100 percent of the facilities we visited (46 of 46), including items such as:

Office.

Possible mold on walls or floors.

- Tripping hazards, including cluttered workroom floors, cracked concrete, extension cords across the workroom floors, holes in the ground, missing cement segments, and potholes in the parking lots.
- Blocked exit doors and electrical panels.⁴

⁴ Handbook EL-801, Supervisor's Safety Handbook, Section 8-7.1 (b) Floors. Never block electric panels, switches, fire protection devices, fire alarm stations, or postal inspector breakout doors; and OSHA Standard 1910.37, Exit Routes and Emergency Planning. Exit routes must be free and unobstructed.

- Plumbing issues, such as exposed pipes, leaking water from toilets and sinks, and clogged drains.
- Numerous uninspected fire extinguishers.⁵
- Electrical system-related problems, including damaged and non-functioning electrical switches.

See Figure 2 for examples of health and safety issues identified and repaired.

Figure 2. Corrected Health and Safety Issues





Before

After

Source: Photograph provided by Postal Service

January 26, 2022 - fixed electrical panel door -

Excelsior Station Post Office.

Source: OIG photograph taken July 9, 2021 – broken electrical panel door - Excelsior Station Post Office.



Before



After

Source: OIG photograph taken April 14, 2021 - faded Source: Photograph provided by Postal Service stop sign - Winchester Post Office.

November 4, 2021 - repaired stop sign - Winchester Post Office.





Before

After

Source: OIG photograph taken April 15, 2021 broken loading dock stairs and railing - Cochituate Post Office.

Source: Photograph provided by Postal Service November 4, 2021 – repaired loading dock stairs and railing - Cochituate Post Office.

Security

We identified 28 building security issues⁶ at 50 percent of the facilities visited (23 of 46). These issues included items such as:

- Unlocked postal vehicles.
- Unlocked or propped open facility doors.
- Broken doors or latches, or missing locks on window grates.
- Inoperable security cameras or non-functional closed-circuit television monitors.
- Electronic gates that did not fully close.

See Figure 3 for examples of security issues found.

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OSHA Standard 1910.157, Portable Fire Extinguishers. 5

⁶ Handbook PO-209, Retail Operations Handbook, Section 6-11, October 2012; and Handbook RE-5, Building and Site Security Requirements, September 2009. Management is responsible for ensuring compliance to afford maximum protection of Postal Service employees, funds, and property.

Figure 3. Examples of Security Issues





Source: OIG photograph taken January 15, 2020 – unlocked postal vehicles – Roseville Post Office.

Source: OIG photograph taken October 20, 2020 – side door propped open - Kyle Post Office.

Finding #1: Effectiveness of Management's Corrective Actions

Although corrective actions were taken to address the issues found in our prior reviews, these actions were not effective at ensuring that employees followed policies and procedures to maintain the appearance, health and safety, and security standards at retail and delivery facilities.

To assess the effectiveness of management's implemented corrective actions, we conducted follow-up audits in two districts. We judgmentally selected the Maryland (MD) and Indiana (IN) districts based on the status of prior recommendations. During our follow-up visits, we conducted a limited review to verify whether management corrected the issues identified in the prior audit reports.

In addition, we conducted a full review at one additional facility in each of the two districts — Baltimore Franklin Station (MD) and Garfield Station (IN) — to determine if similar issues were occurring at these selected locations.⁷ We completed these reviews using the same audit checklists used in the original reviews to document the facility's maintenance and appearance, health and safety, and security conditions.

We identified new issues at all the revisited facilities, and similar issues at the two new sites. See Figure 4 for examples of new issues found.

Figure 4. Examples of New Issues Found





Source: OIG photograph taken September 15, 2021 – damaged wall behind window counter- Columbia Post Office.



Source: OIG photograph taken October 26, 2021 – blocked exit door and fire extinguisher – Greenfield Post Office.



Source: OIG photograph taken October 27, 2021 – blocked electrical panels – New Palestine Post Office.

Source: OIG photograph taken October 27, 2021 – damaged vinyl flooring – Maxwell Post Office.

Additionally, we found systemic issues with management not consistently addressing recurring maintenance issues. Specifically, we identified issues management stated were remediated in response to previous audits had not been corrected. Many of these issues were related to general upkeep and

⁷ The follow-up audits included 4 leased and 2 owned facilities. The new facilities, both leased, were selected after a review and analysis of Postal Service systems identifying maintenance issues or deficiencies, along with their proximity to the other selected facilities.

maintenance that could have been addressed yet persisted despite our prior audit visits. For example, we found dirty lobbies and work areas, blocked electrical panels and exit doors, trip hazards, fire extinguishers missing required inspections, and unlocked carrier vehicles. See Table 1 for issues observed at each facility.

Table 1: Revisited Facility Issues

Facility	Total Issues			
Maryland District	Maintenance	Safety	Security	
Annapolis Main Office	2	2	0	
Annapolis Legion Avenue Station	3	1	0	
Columbia Main Office	9	0	1	
Baltimore Franklin Station	18	10	1	
Indiana District	Maintenance	Safety	Security	
Greenfield Post Office	27	16	1	
Maxwell Post Office	5	10	0	
New Palestine Post Office	9	8	1	
Garfield Station	16	15	1	
Total	89	62	5	

Source: OIG analysis.

The Postal Service must maintain a clean, safe, and healthy environment for both employees and customers under its internal policies and procedures. Postal Service managers are required to ensure that retail services are available and accessible to customers in a timely, efficient manner and in an orderly, clean, and attractive environment.⁸ Handbooks EL-801 and RE-5, and OSHA Standards specify policies and procedures for ensuring that Postal Service customers and employees are not exposed to safety and security risks.⁹

We discussed the results of prior PCR audit reports and follow-up actions with 12 district managers¹⁰ and found that they used inconsistent processes to communicate and hold installation heads accountable for the maintenance and appearance, health and safety, and security of their facilities. For example, most district managers indicated that they have increased communication about and awareness of property condition requirements since the initial OIG audits, including daily or weekly meetings and emails sent to their local leadership. We also found that two districts recently started efforts to focus on maintenance and housekeeping issues through self-assessment surveys and weekly checklists. Three district managers stated that they require the Managers, Post Office Operations, to conduct physical inspections noting property conditions for offices they oversee. Others stated that in addition to onsite visits, they conduct video inspections as part of operating condition reviews to spot problems with the condition of retail facilities. However, there is no established standardized process or procedure defining what to include during these reviews.

Headquarters management stated that they include observations of a facility's cleanliness, lobby presentation, and safety-related items when conducting periodic reviews of operating conditions. However, these reviews are not performed at all retail and delivery facilities. Additionally, the facilities review portion did not include all maintenance and appearance, health and safety, or security standards. Management also indicated that the recently implemented Safety and Health Management Tool will aid in identifying sites that do not complete safety and health inspections as required.¹¹ However, due to the timing of the tool's release, we were not able to determine its overall effectiveness in addressing health and safety issues.

⁸ POM, Section 125, Lobby Management.

⁹ Handbook EL-801, Section 8; Handbook RE-5, Section 2; and OSHA Standard 1910.

¹⁰ At the time of our report, only seven of 16 district managers remained at the same districts as during the original reports.

¹¹ The Postal Service implemented this online database for reporting of safety hazards accidents and safety inspections on October 1, 2021.

"The Postal Service does not have a formal standardized and consistent process to assess building maintenance and appearance, health and safety, and security standards." Overall, these issues occurred because the Postal Service does not have a formal standardized and consistent process to assess whether employees at retail and delivery facilities are following building maintenance and appearance, health and safety, and security standards. In addition, we found systemic issues with management's oversight to consistently address recurring maintenance issues. Management cited several reasons for local personnel not reporting and addressing the building maintenance issues, including competing priorities with retail and delivery functions. Management also indicated that concerns with employee availability

to staff operations functions during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to local management overlooking these facility conditions areas.

In a prior PCR capping report,¹² we recommended developing a robust training program to holistically address facility condition awareness, protocols, monitoring, and reporting; and a communication plan to disseminate the training to all employees. The Postal Service trained all employees with responsibilities for housekeeping and maintenance on the monitoring and reporting duties in 2018. However, this was a one-time effort and there was no process for continually training employees on these duties. Further, the training program does not

appear to have been effective because we continued to find building maintenance and appearance, health and safety, and security issues not being reported or addressed when we conducted subsequent property condition reviews. Management currently provides webinar-based training on retail and delivery operations and includes other custodial and maintenance related items; however, attendance and participation in these sessions is not required.

Without effective and consistent management oversight, local management will continue to focus on and give priority to operations functions and overlook the condition needs of their facility. Further, when the Postal Service does not implement corrective actions or those actions are inadequate, the Postal Service will continue to be exposed to safety and security issues, increasing the risks of OSHA fines and injuries to employees and customers. These issues affect the Postal Service's public image, brand loyalty, and financial health.

"Without effective and consistent management oversight, local management will continue to focus on and give priority to operations functions."

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **Chief Retail and Delivery Officer and Executive Vice President** develop and implement a standardized internal inspection program to identify and address property condition issues at retail and delivery facilities.

¹² Facility Condition Review-Capping Report (Report Number SM-AR-18-005, dated June 21, 2018).

Management's Comments

Management agreed with the recommendation but disagreed in part with Finding 1. Management stated that while the OIG identified 728 issues at 46 facilities, some of the items recorded were minimal. Management felt the report did not differentiate between lesser issues and those that were potentially more significant, ultimately skewing the perspective of the draft and numbers of notable instances. Management acknowledged that the OIG confirmed they took immediate corrective actions and resolved the deficiencies identified in the report.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated that they will work with appropriate Postal Service stakeholders to reinforce existing standardized internal inspection methods that all retail and delivery facilities will conduct in the same manner to identify property condition issues. The target implementation date is April 30, 2023.

See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendation in the report.

Regarding management's disagreement with the finding, the OIG reported all issues equally as having occurred. There was no dollar value allocated to those issues and in most cases, the Postal Service resolved the deficiencies identified in the report.

All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. Recommendation 1 should not be closed in the Postal Service's followup tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendation can be closed.

Appendices

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Appendix A: Additional Information

Scope and Methodology

The scope of our audit included all property condition review reports issued in FYs 2020 and 2021.

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Summarized issues and observations from 16 OIG PCR audits conducted in FYs 2020 and 2021. The team reviewed and analyzed the findings and data to identify correlations with factors such as leased or owned facilities, interior, and exterior square footage, and length of time the Postal Service has occupied those facilities.
- Revisited a judgmental selection of facilities with the most egregious conditions to determine if the identified deficiencies were addressed.
- Performed observations at two additional judgmentally selected sites and completed checklists with requirements related to building maintenance, safety, and security.
- Reviewed and analyzed electronic Facilities Management System data to identify new or recurring maintenance issues and determine if correlations exist with prior findings.
- Reviewed and analyzed results from OSHA's search database to identify any OSHA inspections after the initial site visit that may have resulted in fines.

 Discussed results of prior reports with Postal Service management to gain an understanding of efforts to address prior recommendations. The team also discussed responsibilities and the communication of results to all facility leadership.

We conducted this performance audit from October 2021 through June 2022 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 May 9, 2022 and included their comments where appropriate.

We assessed the reliability of Facilities Database and electronic Facilities Management System by reviewing documentation and comparing it to our observations for completeness, validity, and accuracy. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

We used data analytics and other methods to identify facilities with potential risks related to building maintenance, safety, and security, and employee working conditions at post offices.

Prior Audit Coverage

Report Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Other Impact
Property Condition Review - Menlo Park, Excelsior, and Sutter Street Post Offices in California	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	21-200-R21	9/15/2021	\$73,918
Property Condition Reviews - Center Ossipee, East Wakefield, and Conway Post Offices in New Hampshire	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	21-187-R21	8/12/2021	\$39,802
Property Condition Reviews - North Royalton, Willoughby, and Jesse C. Owens Post Offices in Ohio	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	21-138-R21	6/21/2021	\$73,918
Property Condition Reviews - Cochituate, Winchester, and John F. Kennedy Post Offices in Massachusetts	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	21-144-R21	6/17/2021	\$62,546
Property Condition Reviews - Garyville, North Kenner, and Lake Forest Post Offices in Louisiana	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	21-093-R21	4/14/2021	\$96,662
Property Condition Reviews - Greenville Station A, Simpsonville, and Easley Post Offices in South Carolina	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	21-091-R21	3/29/2021	\$56,860
Property Condition Reviews - Maplewood, North County, and Brentwood Post Offices	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	21-046-R21	02/03/2021	\$54,600
Property Condition Reviews - Martinsburg, Gerrardstown, and Ranson Post Offices	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	21-044-R21	1/25/2021	\$32,760
Property Condition Reviews - Smithville, Leander, and Kyle Post Offices	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	20-321-R21	1/11/2021	\$98,280
Property Condition Reviews - Annapolis, Columbia, and Legion Avenue Post Offices	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	20-320-R21	12/10/2020	\$60,060

Report Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Other Impact
Management Alert - Property Condition Issues at Spring Garden Station	Provide Postal Service officials immediate notification of the issues identified during the ongoing audit.	20-293-R20	10/2/2020	\$54,600
Facility Condition Reviews - Miami Springs, Promenade, and Doral Post Offices	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	20-212-R20	5/26/2020	\$32,760
Facility Condition Reviews - Short Hills, Roseville, and Wood Ridge Post Offices	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	20-159-R20	4/2/2020	\$120,120
Facility Condition Reviews - Belmar, Normandy Beach, and Spring Lake Post Offices	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	20-160-R20	3/20/2020	\$21,840
Facility Condition Reviews - Greenfield, Maxwell, and New Palestine Post Offices	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	20-071-R20	1/30/2020	\$49,140
Facility Condition Reviews - Waynesville, Lake Junaluska, and Clyde Post Offices	Determine if Postal Service management is adhering to building maintenance, safety and security standards, and employee working condition requirements at post offices.	20-070-R20	1/30/2020	\$5,460
Facility Condition Review - Capping Report	Identify trends or systemic issues identified from previous OIG FCRs of Postal Service retail facilities and assess the effectiveness of management's corrective actions.	SM-AR-18-005	6/21/2018	None

Appendix B: Management's Comments

POSTAL SERVICE

May 26, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Property Condition Review – Capping Report (Project Number 22-019-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service the opportunity to review and comment on the single finding and recommendation contained in the draft audit report, Property Condition Review – Capping Report. Management is fully aware that any breaches in the condition of its facilities could negatively affect the Postal Service's public image, brand loyalty, and financial health. It is committed to providing continued standardized processes that address facility conditions and reporting mechanisms to ensure all deficiencies are immediately addressed upon awareness.

Management disagrees in part with Finding #1: Effectiveness of Management's Corrective Actions.

While the OIG identified 728 issues at the 46 facilities visited, some of the items recorded as infractions were as minimal as "dead insects on floors and in light fixtures". Management felt the report failed to differentiate between lesser issues and those that were potentially more significant - ultimately skewing the perspective of the draft and the numbers of notable instances. Even so, the OIG confirmed that Management took immediate corrective action and resolved all deficiencies identified in the report.

Recommendation [1]:

We recommend the Chief Retail and Delivery Officer and Executive Vice Fresident develop and implement a standardized internal inspection program to identify and address property condition issues at retail and delivery facilities.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management agrees with this recommendation. Management will work with appropriate USPS stakeholders to reinforce existing standardized internal inspection methods that all facilities will conduct in the same manner to identify and address property condition issues at retail and delivery facilities.

Target Implementation Date: 04/30/2023

Responsible Official Director, Retail and Post Office Operations

Joshua D. Colin, Ph.D. Chief Retail & Delivery Officer and Executive Vice President

cc: Manager, Corporate Audit Response Management



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