



Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

Audit Report

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review - Lewis Center Main Office, Lewis Center, OH

Report Number 22-042-R22 | March 16, 2022



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Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

March 16, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: EDDIE L. BANNER
MANAGER (A), OHIO-2 DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Bieda", is positioned below the recipient information.

FROM: Adam Bieda
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Lewis Center Main Office, Lewis Center,
OH (Report Number 22-042-R22)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Lewis Center Main Office, Lewis Center, OH.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit and Response Management
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, Central Area

Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Lewis Center Main Office in Lewis Center, OH (Project Number 22-042). The Lewis Center Main Office is in the Ohio-2 District of the Central Area and services ZIP Code 43035, which serves about 24,760 people in what is considered an urban community.¹ We judgmentally selected the Lewis Center Main Office based on the number of stop-the-clock (STC)² scans occurring at the delivery unit, rather than at the customer's delivery address.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Lewis Center Main Office in Lewis Center, OH.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on these four audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, and property conditions. Specifically, we reviewed delivery metrics including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, and distribution up-time.³ During our site visit from January 11-13, 2022, we reviewed mail conditions; package and truck arrival scanning procedures; and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the "Notice Left" area⁴ and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on February 24, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The Lewis Center Main Office is one of three delivery units⁵ the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of January 10, 2022, that are serviced by the Columbus Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC). We issued this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the Lewis Center Main Office. We will issue a separate report⁶ providing the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all three delivery units. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about our scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Lewis Center Main Office. Specifically, we found deficiencies with three of the four areas we reviewed (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Results

| Audit Area | Issues Identified | |
|------------------------|-------------------|----|
| | Yes | No |
| Delayed Mail | | X |
| Package Scanning | X | |
| Truck Arrival Scanning | X | |
| Property Conditions | X | |

Source: Results of OIG fieldwork during week of January 10, 2022.

¹ We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from ESRI, which is based on 2010 Census Bureau information.

² A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mail piece. Examples of STC scans include "Delivered," "Available for Pick-up," "No Access," and "Business Closed."

³ Time of day when clerks have completed distributing mail to carrier routes.

⁴ The area of a postal facility where letters or packages that carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

⁵ The other two units were the South Columbus Station, Columbus, OH (Project Number 22-043) and the East City Annex, Columbus, OH (Project Number 22-044).

⁶ The project number for the separate report is 22-052.

Finding #1: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned 1,700 packages at the delivery unit rather than at the customer's address between September and November 2021 (see Table 2). Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed that over 99 percent were scanned as "Delivered."⁷

Table 2. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

| STC Scan Type | September | October | November | Total | Percent |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Delivered | 491 | 486 | 716 | 1,693 | 99.59% |
| No Secure Location | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.12% |
| Receptacle Full/Item Oversized | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.06% |
| No Authorized Recipient | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0.24% |
| Totals | 495 | 486 | 719 | 1,700 | 100%⁸ |

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System⁹ data.

In addition, on the morning of January 11, 2022, we identified 20 packages¹⁰ at the delivery unit to review and analyze scanning and tracking data. Of the 20 packages, five had missing or improper scans. These included four that had "Delivered" scans, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's delivery address, and one that was missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery. Further, one package in the "Notice Left" area was not returned to the sender, as required.¹¹ This package was 15 days past its return date. There were also four additional packages in the "Notice Left" area that had no initials or dates for when the notice was left; therefore, we could not determine how long those packages had been there.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because management did not enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Specifically, carriers were scanning packages as "Delivered" at the delivery unit to save time. Management stated that they were not aware that the packages were being recorded as "Delivered" at the delivery unit.

Further, packages in the "Notice Left" area were not returned due to inadequate management oversight. Management stated that they received automated reminders to return packages after a prescribed number of days. However, if they did not receive an automated notification, management did not ensure that packages were returned according to policy.

⁷ One carrier performed 827 (about 49 percent) of these STC scans.

⁸ Total percentage does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

⁹ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

¹⁰ We analyzed all 17 packages from the "Notice Left" area and the only three packages we found at the carrier cases before carriers arrived for the day.

¹¹ *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, state that domestic packages should be returned to the sender on the 15th calendar day after a notice is left and international packages should be returned to the sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including ensuring that all packages are scanned at the delivery point and not at the delivery unit. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,¹² which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹³ In addition, packages in the Notice Left area should have been reviewed for second notices and returned to the sender if they remained after the prescribed number of days.

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 or properly handle packages in the "Notice Left" area, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning and handling operations, management can potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Finding #2: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Lewis Center Main Office did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes (99T)¹⁴ as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from September 1 through November 30, 2021, and found that employees did not perform scans for any of the 158 scheduled trucks originating from the Columbus P&DC.

Why Did It Occur

Management stated that they did not monitor 99T scan performance data or enforce 99T scan procedures because they were more focused on getting mail delivered. However, the clerks responsible for making the scans stated they were unaware of the requirement to scan the 99T label inside the truck.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have performed reviews of the Arrive Depart Tracking Report to ensure that all expected truck scans were being performed. They should also have instructed employees to perform appropriate 99T scans and enforced the requirement. According to Postal Service policy,¹⁵ employees must scan the trailer barcode on Postal Service trailer/trucks and Highway Contract Route trucks arriving at the delivery unit during local operating hours.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When employees do not scan the 99T barcode, the Postal Service does not receive timely transportation information and is unable to address issues that may be causing mail delays, which could affect customer service.

Finding #3: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Lewis Center Main Office, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected¹⁶ and a damaged wooden panel in the loading dock area. We also identified blocked electrical panels in the custodian room (see [Figure 1](#)), fallen signage in front of the unit (see [Figure 2](#)), a hanging light cover in the men's restroom (see [Figure 3](#)), and stained ceiling tiles in the workroom area (see [Figure 4](#)). During our audit, the custodian took corrective action and unblocked the electrical panels.

¹² *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹³ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

¹⁴ The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

¹⁵ United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units.

¹⁶ Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 29CFR 1910.157, (e)(2) and 29CFR 1910.157, (e)(3) requires that fire extinguishers be inspected monthly and annually.

Figure 1. Blocked Electrical Panels



Source: OIG photo taken January 11, 2022.

Figure 2. Fallen Signage



Source: OIG photo taken January 11, 2022.

Figure 3. Hanging Light Cover



Source: OIG photo taken January 11, 2022.

Figure 4. Stained Ceiling Tiles



Source: OIG photo taken January 11, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide adequate oversight to ensure that property condition issues were corrected. For example, unit personnel were aware that access to the electrical panels should be unblocked but stated that there was insufficient space in the unit to store cleaning items. Management was also aware of the fallen signage in front of the delivery unit and stated that a work order was entered in the electronic Management System (eFMS)¹⁷ in December 2021. However, as of February 4, 2022, we did not find any record of such an entry.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight for maintaining the facility, reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up to ensure resolution. The Postal Service is required to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers. In addition, OSHA requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards.¹⁸

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management's attention to safety and maintenance deficiencies can reduce the risk of injuries to employees and customers; reduce related costs, such as workers' compensation claims, lawsuits, and OSHA penalties; and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

¹⁷ A custom-built Postal Service system used to manage work orders, contracts, and payments for facility construction, repairs, and alteration contracts, along with real estate contracts.

¹⁸ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

Appendices

Click on the appendix title below to navigate to the section content.

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Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from January through March 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 relied on computer-generated data from the PTR system, the Surface Visibility¹⁹ database, and eFMS. Although we did not test the validity of the controls over these systems, we assessed the accuracy of the data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

¹⁹ Surface Visibility collects end-to-end data by linking multiple scans of a single asset to create visibility data to support planning, management, and optimization of the surface network.

Appendix B: Management's Comments



March 11, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review –
Lewis Center Main Post Office, Columbus OH Project Number 22-042-DRAFT

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Lewis Center Main Post Office, Columbus OH

Following are our comments on each of the three findings.

Finding #1:

Employees improperly scanned 1,700 packages at the delivery unit rather than at the customer's address between September and November 2021. Further analysis of the scan data for these packages showed that over 99 percent were scanned as "Delivered."

Management Response:

Management agrees to the findings.

The Lewis Center management agrees with the findings noted in number one. Since the audit management has given standard work instructions to all carriers on how to scan packages on point of delivery. Right now, we are in forcing the redline process to keep the process inline to prevent future occurrences.

Finding #2:

Employees at the Lewis Center Main Office did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes (99T) as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from September 1 through November 30, 2021, and found that employees did not perform scans for any of the 158 scheduled trucks originating from the Columbus P&DC.

Management Response:

Management agrees with this finding.

Management at the Lewis Center post office agrees with finding. (99T) or trailer/truck barcodes currently are inconsistent. we have retrained our clerks to scan all (99T) or trailer/truck barcodes. They have also been instructed to report to management any trips with no barcode or barcode that is not scannable.

Finding #3:

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Lewis Center Main Office, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected, fallen signage in front of the unit, a hanging light cover in the men's restroom, and stained ceiling tiles in the workroom area and a damaged wooden panel in the loading dock area. We also identified blocked electrical panels in the custodian room.

Management Response:

Management agrees with this finding.

Management at Lewis has been abated the following issues, replaced fire extinguishers with new ones and closed hanging light cover in the men's restroom. We currently waiting on three items to be abated which are the fallen signage (3310038), ceiling tiles (3310010) and damaged wooden panel (3310091). Management has included work order numbers next to items waiting for abatement. Lewis Center management has also cleared the room and placed signage to inform all future staff not to block electrical panels.

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Eddie Banner
District Manager, Columbus OH

cc: Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, Central Area
Corporate Audit Response Management

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