Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service
Audit Report

# Efficiency of Operations at the Milwaukee, WI, Processing and Distribution Center

Report Number 22-154-R22 | August 31, 2022



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## Transmittal Letter



## Results

### Background

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the Efficiency of Operations at the Milwaukee Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) in Milwaukee, WI (Project Number 22-154). We conducted this audit to provide U.S. Postal Service management with timely information on operational risks at this P&DC. We judgmentally selected the Milwaukee P&DC based on a review of clearance times; workhours, mail volume, and productivity; overall scanning performance; late, extra and cancelled trips; overtime and penalty overtime; and trailer utilization. The Milwaukee P&DC is in the Westshores Division, processes letters and flats,<sup>1</sup> and services multiple 3-digit ZIP Codes in urban and rural communities<sup>2</sup> (see Table 1).

#### **Table 1. Population Demographics**

3-Digit ZIP Codes	Urban Population	Rural Population	Total Population
530-532	1,853,816	281,767	2,135,583
534	124,507	2,686	127,193
539	79,171	119,750	198,921
Total	2,057,494	404,203	2,461,697

Source: Postal Service National Distribution Labeling List and Esri

## **Objective, Scope, and Methodology**

Our objective was to evaluate the efficiency of operations at the Milwaukee P&DC. To accomplish our objective, we focused on four audit areas: mail clearance times,<sup>3</sup> delayed mail, late and extra outbound trips, and load scans. Specifically, we analyzed Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW)<sup>4</sup> data for workhours, overtime, and penalty overtime for the time period from March 2022 through May 2022. Additionally, we reviewed Surface Visibility Web (SVWeb)<sup>5</sup> data for late and extra trips, as well as load scans and trailer utilization for fiscal year (FY) 2022. Further, we identified mail clearance times through interviews with Milwaukee P&DC management and compared them with operations shown in the Run Plan Generator report.<sup>6</sup> During our site visit the week of June 27, 2022, we interviewed P&DC management and observed mail processing for clearance times, delayed mail, logistics operations, and trailer utilization.

During the week of June 27, 2022, the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) also audited four delivery units<sup>7</sup> serviced by the Milwaukee P&DC. We will provide the results of those audits to district management in separate reports. See Appendix A for additional information about our scope and methodology.

#### **Results Summary**

We identified deficiencies for two of the four areas we reviewed that affected the efficiency of operations at the Milwaukee P&DC (see Table 2).

<sup>1</sup> The Milwaukee P&DC did not process any parcels. Parcels were processed at the Milwaukee, WI, Mail Processing Annex.

<sup>2</sup> We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from Esri, which is based on 2010 Census Bureau information.

<sup>3</sup> The latest time committed mail can clear an operation for proper dispatch or delivery.

<sup>4</sup> The central source for information on retail, financial, and operational performance. Mission-critical information comes to EDW from transactions that occur across the mail delivery system, points-of-sale, and other sources.

<sup>5</sup> A website dedicated to the Surface Visibility program, which provides real-time transportation updates and reports on the movement of trailers in the surface network. The data captured to identify early, on-time, late, or cancelled trips is also used to evaluate and improve transportations schedules.

<sup>6</sup> An application mail processing facilities use to plan machine utilization based on volume, clearance times, and other criteria.

<sup>7</sup> The four delivery units were North Milwaukee Station, Milwaukee, WI (Project Number 22-147-1); Waukesha Main Post Office, Waukesha, WI (Project Number 22-147-2); Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Station, Milwaukee, WI (Project Number 22-147-3); and Bradley Carrier Annex, Milwaukee, WI (Project Number 22-147-4).

#### Table 2. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Issues Identified		
	Yes	No	
Clearance Times		Х	
Delayed Mail		Х	
Late and Extra Outbound Trips	х		
Load Scans	Х		

Source: Results of OIG review conducted from June 27-30, 2022.

We also identified an issue related to a lack of communication between P&DC and delivery unit management.

For the audit areas where issues were not identified, we performed the following:

- Clearance Times We analyzed mail processing schedules and data to verify the plant was meeting the scheduled clearance times. During our visit, we observed the timely processing of mail.
- Delayed Mail During our observations, we did not identify any systemic issues related to delayed mail. We reviewed the morning mail counts provided by plant personnel, which confirmed these observations.

#### Finding #1: Late and Extra Trips

#### What We Found

We determined that the Milwaukee P&DC had 9,902 outbound late trips, 9,214 outbound cancelled trips and 265 outbound extra trips<sup>8</sup> from October 2021 to May 2022 (see Table 3).

#### Table 3. Late, Cancelled, and Extra Outbound Trips

Transportation Metric	Outbound Late Trips	Total Number of Trips	Percentage of Late, Cancelled/Extra Trips
Late Trips	9,902	55,763	17.76%
Cancelled Trips	9,214	55,763	16.52%
Extra Trips	265	55,763	.48%

Source: EDW, SVWeb as of May 31, 2022.

#### Why Did it Occur

These late trips were primarily a result of limited supervision of expeditors in the dock area. During our audit, the Milwaukee P&DC did not have a dedicated Supervisor of Transportation Operations (STO)<sup>9</sup> on the dock area. Management stated they were short one STO and that the current STO is responsible for operations at the Milwaukee, WI, MPA and the Milwaukee P&DC.

Management also stated that several Highway Contract Route (HCR)<sup>10</sup> drivers were showing up late and canceling trips. These cancelled trips may result in extra trips. During our audit, management was in the process of taking steps to correct these issues and provided supporting documentation showing they followed policy<sup>11</sup> by actively assessing contractor performance and holding discussions with the contractor. Since Milwaukee P&DC management was actively following policy, we will not be making a recommendation regarding HCR performance.

<sup>8</sup> Plant management may call for an extra trip when a regularly scheduled trip is cancelled to ensure that mail is delivered timely.

<sup>9</sup> An STO supervises on an assigned tour, the local dispatching and movement and mail transportation vehicles on scheduled and non-scheduled trips; and ensures efficient and timely movement of mail.

<sup>10</sup> A route of travel served by a postal contractor to carry mail in bulk over highways between designated points.

<sup>11</sup> The Postal Service must follow a five-step process if there are issues with an HCR contractor's performance, which includes providing the contractor with a document listing performance issues, completing a review and consulting with the contractor, holding a conference with the contractor, submitting results to the contracting officer for appropriate action, and potentially terminating the contract if the issues persist.

#### What Should Have Happened

Management must anticipate recruitment needs in time to ensure that qualified persons are available for appointment. The Postal Service also has employment processes<sup>12</sup> in place to ensure that recruiting and assigning employees yields the best qualified personnel to carry out the mission of the Postal Service with maximum productivity and economy of operations. According to Postal Service policy, when management cannot fill career vacancies internally by reassigning or promoting employees, changing them to lower level, or converting them to career employees, external hiring may be authorized.<sup>13</sup>

#### Effect on the Postal Service and its Customers

When there are late, cancelled, and extra trips, there is an increased risk the mail will not be delivered on time, which can adversely affect Postal Service customers, harm the brand, send mailers to competitors, increase operating costs, and cause the Postal Service to lose revenue.

#### **Recommendation #1**

We recommend the **Westshores Division Director, Processing Operations**, and the **Westshores Division Director, Logistics Operations**, develop and implement a plan to ensure that Logistics Operations oversees dock operations at the Milwaukee Processing and Distribution Center.

#### Finding #2: Load Scans

#### What We Found

Milwaukee P&DC employees were not performing container load scans consistently before dispatching mail to the next facility.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, from May 2021 through May 2022, scanning performance for load scans at the Milwaukee P&DC was about 90.83 percent, which was below the Postal Service's National Performance Assessment<sup>15</sup> current goal of 92 percent<sup>16</sup> (see Figure 1).





Source: SVWeb.

#### Why Did it Occur

Load scans were not being performed consistently because there was a lack of oversight by Processing Operations. Specifically, management was not monitoring employees performing load scans on the dock. According to local management, this occurred because they do not have a dedicated supervisor on the platform to monitor scanning performance. As described in Finding 1, management stated they were short one STO. In addition, the Milwaukee P&DC had one Supervisor of Distribution Operations (SDO)<sup>17</sup> vacancy as of June 30, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Employee Labor Manual, Section 311.11.

<sup>13</sup> Handbook ELM-312, Employment and Placement, Section 212.1.

<sup>14</sup> Mail departing from the Milwaukee P&DC may be routed to a post office, station, delivery unit, or P&DC.

<sup>15</sup> A web-based system that collects performance-related metrics such as on-time delivery, revenue generation, efficiency, safety, and employee satisfaction, from source systems across the organization. These metrics are translated into balanced scorecards used to monitor the entire enterprise and individual units across the nation.

<sup>16</sup> For FY 2022, the goal was dropped from 95.5 percent to 92 percent for Logistics and 93.25 for Processing.

<sup>17</sup> Supervises an assigned group of automated, mechanized, and/or manual processing and distribution operations at a mail processing center/facility.

#### What Should Have Happened

Postal Service policy<sup>18</sup> states that management should ensure that employees are scanning containers before loading them onto a trailer. The Postal Service also has employment processes in place to ensure that recruiting and assigning employees yields the best qualified personnel to carry out the mission of the Postal Service with maximum productivity and economy of operations. According to postal policy, when management cannot fill career vacancies internally by reassigning or promoting employees, changing them to lower level positions, or converting them to career employees, external hiring may be authorized.<sup>19</sup>

#### Effect on the Postal Service and its Customers

When containers do not receive a load scan, management is unable to determine trailer utilization. According to SVWeb, the Milwaukee P&DC trailer utilization for network trips departing from the plant was about 38.88 percent from October 2021 through May 2022, which was lower than the Postal Service's goal of 65 percent.<sup>20</sup> However, due to data integrity issues related to missing load scans, management could not rely on this data to accurately measure trailer utilization and make operational decisions.

#### **Recommendation #2**

We recommend the **Westshores Division Director, Processing Operations**, and the **Westshores Division Director, Logistics**, review daily load scan reports and document discussions about proper scanning procedures with personnel not performing load scans.

#### **Recommendation #3**

We recommend the **Westshores Division Director, Processing Operations**, fill the remaining Supervisor of Distribution Operations position at the Milwaukee Processing and Distribution Center.

# Other Matters – Communication Between Plant and Delivery Management

#### What We Found

During our audit, we consistently found collection mail that should have been processed and dispatched the previous day in the cancellation area. The bulk of these mailpieces were coming from the Milwaukee, WI, MPA, which improperly received them from delivery units.

Additionally, on June 29, 2022, the Milwaukee P&DC loaded and sent mail to the Martin Luther King Jr. Station with incorrect placards. When the mail arrived at the station, delivery unit staff determined that it should have gone to the Hilltop Station. Additionally, the Hilltop Station received mis-placarded mail from the Martin Luther King Jr. Station.

#### Why Did it Occur

Collection mail issues occurred due to a lack of coordination between the plant manager and delivery units. Some delivery units were not sending all of their collection mail to the Milwaukee P&DC. Instead, they were sending unsorted collection mail to the Milwaukee, WI MPA, which should receive Priority Mail. However, Milwaukee P&DC management did not inform the delivery units that this issue was occurring.

In addition, supervisors were not monitoring and comparing whether mail containers had the correct placards before loading them into the trailers. Because of this, the mis-placarded containers went to incorrect delivery units. Management at the delivery units resolved the issue on their own without informing plant management of the error.

<sup>18</sup> Surface Visibility Program User booklet.

<sup>19</sup> Handbook ELM-312, Section 212.1.

<sup>20</sup> On March 15, 2022, the Postal Service added a National Performance Assessment trailer utilization goal of 40 percent.

#### What Should Have Happened

Plant management should have communicated collection mail issues to the delivery units to resolve the issue. Postal Service policy requires delivery units to send all collection mail, except express mail, to the processing plant on the same day it is received.<sup>21</sup>

Regarding incorrect placards, delivery unit management should have contacted plant management when identifying the placarding issues.

#### Effect on the Postal Service and its Customer

When there is a lack of communication between plant and delivery unit management, recurring issues may not be identified and addressed. This could lead to increased operating costs and delayed mail, which can adversely affect Postal Service customers.

#### **Recommendation #4**

We recommend the **Westshores Division Director, Processing**, and the **Westshores Division Director, Logistics Operations**, coordinate with the District Manager, Wisconsin, to develop a plan for communicating and resolving mail processing issues as they are identified.

#### **Management's Comments**

Management agreed with finding 2 and recommendations 2 and 3; and partially agreed with findings 1 and 3 and recommendations 1 and 4. See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

Regarding recommendation 1, processing operations management stated that they will develop and implement a plan and provide an SDO to oversee the mail processing duties of dock operations. Logistics management stated that all STO positions were fully occupied at the time of the audit and attributed late trips cited during the period of the audit to several different factors, including traffic, late processing, and dock congestion. Logistics management also stated that Logistics Operations and the SDO share responsibility for dock operations. The target implementation date is September 10, 2022.

Efficiency of Operations at the Milwaukee, WI, Processing and Distribution Center Report Number 22-154-R22 Regarding recommendation 2, Processing Operations management stated that they will ensure scan performance will be a topic of team huddles on all tours. In addition, management will review scan performance and meet weekly with craft employees to identify opportunities for improvement. Management will also take appropriate action toward employees who are not performing load scans. Logistics management stated that they will review PVS scan performance on a regular basis and address non-compliance. The target implementation date is September 10, 2022.

Regarding recommendation 3, Processing Operations management provided documentation showing that they posted a vacancy for an SDO and made a selection on August 8, 2022. The target implementation date is September 10, 2022.

Regarding recommendation 4, Processing Operations management stated that they met with the Customer Service Integration team to discuss roles and improve communication. In addition, they will continue communicating issues to the district manager, logistics team, the post office operations manager, and the Wisconsin Integration team on a daily basis. Logistics management stated that they do not play a role in resolving mail processing issues but will participate in reporting and responding to transportation issues as they are identified during meetings with the district manager and plant manager. The target implementation date is September 10, 2022.

#### **Evaluation of Management's Comments**

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

Regarding Logistic management's disagreement with recommendation 1, we observed expeditors operating on the docks without supervision and Logistics management agreed during our interviews that there was a lack of supervision in the dock area. This lack of supervision contributed to the late trips that we identified. While management provided documentation demonstrating the reasons for some late trips were outside of Logistics management's control, other late trips were under the control of Logistics. The intent of our recommendation

<sup>21</sup> POM Issue 9 – Postal Operations Manual, 313.13 Collection Schedule Standards, April 30, 2022.

was to increase supervision of the dock area. Processing Operations management has agreed to provide an SDO on the dock, which will address the intent of our recommendation.

Regarding Logistics management's disagreement with recommendation 4, the intent of the recommendation was for management in all areas of the plant and delivery units to communicate issues that may be causing mail delays. Logistics management's plan to report and respond to transportation's issues identified during meetings with the district and plant managers will address the intent of our recommendation.

We consider recommendation 3 closed with the issuance of the report. Recommendations 1, 2, and 4 require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. 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.

## **Appendix A: Additional Information**

We conducted this audit from June through August 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 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 August 17, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

We relied on computer-generated data from the EDW and Surface Visibility Web 2.0.<sup>22</sup> Although we did not test the validity of 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. Therefore, we determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

<sup>22</sup> A website dedicated to the Surface Visibility program. Provides real time transportation updates and reporting on the movement of trailers in the surface network. The data captured to identify early, on time, late or cancelled trips is also used to evaluate and improve transportation schedules.

## Appendix B: Management's Comments

Date: 08/25/2022 JOHN CIHOTA DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES SUBJECT: Management Response: Efficiency of Operations at the Milwaukee, WI, Processing and Distribution Center (Project Number 22-154-DRAFT) Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the finding and recommendation contained in the draft audit report, Efficiency of Operations at the Milwaukee, WI, Processing and Distribution Center. Finding #1: Late and Extra Trips, Recommendation #1: Operations Management Agrees Logistics Management Disagrees Finding #2: Load Scans, Recommendation #2 and #3: · Operations and Logistics Management Agrees Other Matters: Communication Between Plant and Delivery Management. Recommendation #4: Operations Management Agrees Logistics Management Disagrees The responses for each of the four recommendations are detailed below: Recommendation [1]: We recommend the Westshores Division Director, Processing Operations, and the Westshores Division Director, Logistics Operations, develop and implement a plan to ensure that Logistics Operations oversees dock operations at the Milwaukee Processing and Distribution Center. Management Response/Action Plan: Operations Management Agrees with this recommendation. Operations response: The Plant Manager at Milwaukee P&DC will develop and implement a plan to oversee the mail processing duties of the dock operations, including providing a Supervisor of Distribution Operations. Target Implementation Date: 09/10/2022 Responsible Official: Senior Plant Manager, Milwaukee PDC Manager In-Plant Support, Milwaukee PDC Management Response/Action Plan: Logistics Management Disagrees with this recommendation.

At the time of the audit all earned and authorized Supervisor of Transportation Operations positions were fully occupied (see attachment). Additionally, 204B hours were utilized to cover planned and incidental leave within the logistical operations. Late trips cited during the period of the audit were attributed to several different factors including traffic, late processing, dock congestion (see attachment).

The supervision of dock operations is not the sole responsibility of Logistics Operations. The Supervisor of Distribution Operations, "Coordinates work operations across multiple functional areas, including plant operations, tours changes, dock operations, logistics and delivery units" (See attached job description). Supervisor of Transportation Operations, "Supervises the assignment, movement and dispatching of Motor Vehicle Service" (See attached job description).

#### Recommendation [2]:

We recommend the Westshores Division Director, Processing Operations, and the Westshores Division Director, Logistics, review daily load scan reports and document discussions about proper scanning procedures with personnel not performing load scans.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management Agrees with this recommendation.

The Plant Manager and the Manager of In-Plant Support at Milwaukee PDC will ensure scan performance is presented at all operations team huddles throughout the building on all tours. Milwaukee P&DC reviews scan performance with an emphasis on load scans with data from In-Plant Support and the Senior MDO/Plant Manager. Additionally, we have weekly Surface Visibility calls on T3 and T1 that involved management and craft employees. This meeting is led by our Surface Visibility team lead in Logistics and In-Plant Support and includes analysis from operations leadership on our opportunities. Appropriate action will be taken with employees not performing loads scans. Scanning is a condition of employment; service talks have been given to all employees detailing scanning requirements.

The Logistics Manager and Supervisors will review Postal Vehicle Service scan performance with the TTO and MVO drivers on a regular basis and address non-compliance.

Target Implementation Date: 09/10/2022

Responsible Official: Senior Plant Manager, Milwaukee PDC Logistic Manager, Milwaukee PDC

#### Recommendation [3]:

We recommend the **Westshores Division Director, Processing Operations,** fill the remaining Supervisor of Distribution Operations position at the Milwaukee Processing and Distribution Center.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management Agrees with this recommendation.







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