



OFFICE OF
**INSPECTOR
GENERAL**
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

**Survey of Postmasters' Paperwork
and Reporting Requirements**

Management Advisory Report

May 25, 2012

DR-MA-12-001



OFFICE OF
**INSPECTOR
GENERAL**
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

HIGHLIGHTS

May 25, 2012

Survey of Postmasters' Paperwork and Reporting Requirements

Report Number DR-MA-12-001

IMPACT ON:

Delivery and Post Office™ Operations

WHY THE OIG DID THE AUDIT:

There are approximately 22,000 postmasters managing over 200,000 carriers in locations nationwide. Our objective was to evaluate the reporting requirements of postmasters who manage daily operations.

WHAT THE OIG FOUND:

Overall, postmasters' survey responses indicated reporting requirements were appropriate. Sixty-eight percent of postmasters surveyed indicated the report quantities were sufficient and postmasters were generally satisfied with the report data reliability, quality, and usefulness; and time was sufficient to prepare and review reports. However, 32 percent indicated some reports were excessive and contained redundant information. Some postmasters also stated that they never used certain reports and indicated that headquarters, area, and district officials required them to prepare additional reports with information already contained in the daily reports. Excessive reporting requirements reduce the time available to manage daily operations, such as time that could be spent interacting with carriers and identifying opportunities to improve customer service.

WHAT THE OIG RECOMMENDED:

The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) recommended the vice president, Delivery and Post Office Operations, evaluate postmaster required reports to assess duplication and determine whether reports can be combined or modified as necessary to enhance office operations. We also recommended the vice president review and reduce additional reporting requirements at post offices.

WHAT MANAGEMENT SAID:

Management stated they agreed with the concept, however, they implemented actions when the reporting problem surfaced by issuing a directive to field managers to eliminate manual reports and checklists where data was already available. Management also stated they will continue to assess area and district officials' additional reporting requirements to reduce duplicative requests.

AUDITORS' COMMENTS:

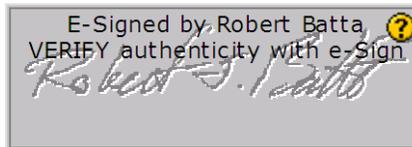
The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations and corrective actions should resolve the issues in the report.

[Link to review the entire report](#)



May 25, 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR: DEAN J. GRANHOLM
VICE PRESIDENT, DELIVERY AND POST OFFICE
OPERATIONS



FROM: Robert J. Batta
Deputy Assistant Inspector General
for Mission Operations

SUBJECT: Management Advisory – Survey of Postmasters’
Paperwork and Reporting Requirements
(Report Number DR-MA-12-001)

This report presents the results of our review of postmasters’ paperwork and reporting requirements (Project Number 11XG027DR000).

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Rita F. Oliver, director, Delivery, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachments

cc: Elizabeth A. Schaefer
Philip F. Knoll
James J. Boldt
Corporate Audit and Response Management

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Introduction

This report presents the results of our review of postmasters' paperwork and reporting requirements (Project Number 11XG027DR000). The objective of this self-initiated review was to evaluate the reporting requirements of postmasters who manage daily operations. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this review.

Conclusion

Overall, postmasters' survey responses indicated that reporting requirements were appropriate for their Post Office™ level. Sixty-eight percent of postmasters surveyed in 400¹ randomly selected level 11 through 24 post offices² indicated daily reports varied and the quantities were sufficient for the Post Office level. Furthermore, postmasters at these offices were generally satisfied with the data reliability, quality, and usefulness to manage daily operations. Generally, time was also sufficient to prepare and review reports; however, 32 percent of the postmasters indicated that there were too many reports. Specifically, postmasters indicated:

- Daily reports were excessive and some contained redundant information.
- They never used some reports because the information was not applicable to their office.
- Headquarters, area, and districts officials required them to provide additional reports, participate in teleconferences, and prepare emails that contained duplicate or similar information already in the daily reports.

Excessive reporting requirements reduce the time available to manage daily operations, such as time that could be spent interacting with carriers and identifying opportunities to improve customer service.

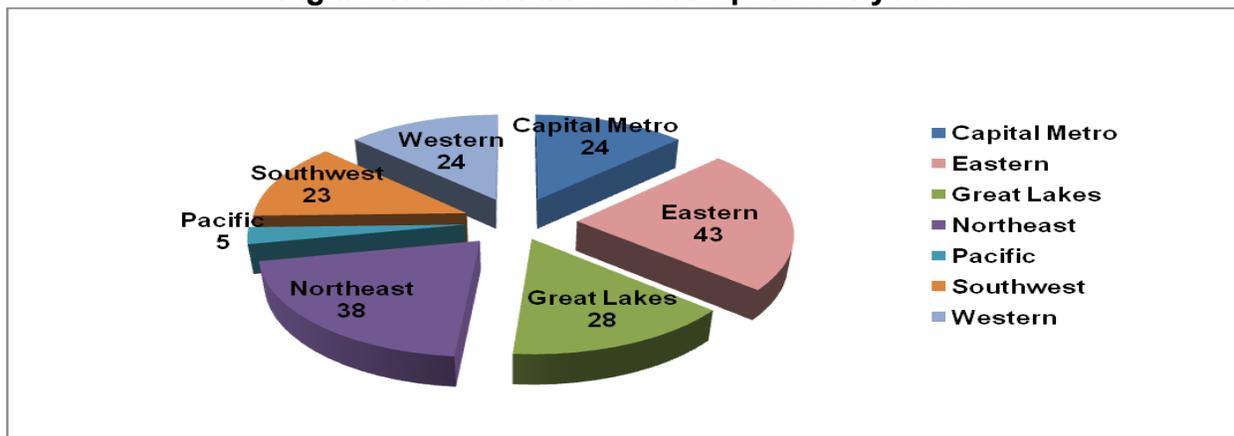
¹ Our survey response rate was 46 percent (185 of 400). Additionally, all questions were not answered because the question was not applicable to some post offices.

² Post offices are categorized by numerical level based on annual revenue and mail volume.

Postmasters' Paperwork Survey Results

We randomly selected 400 postmasters, levels 11 through 24 to participate in the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) survey.³ The 185 responses included postmasters in all seven areas (see Figure 1).

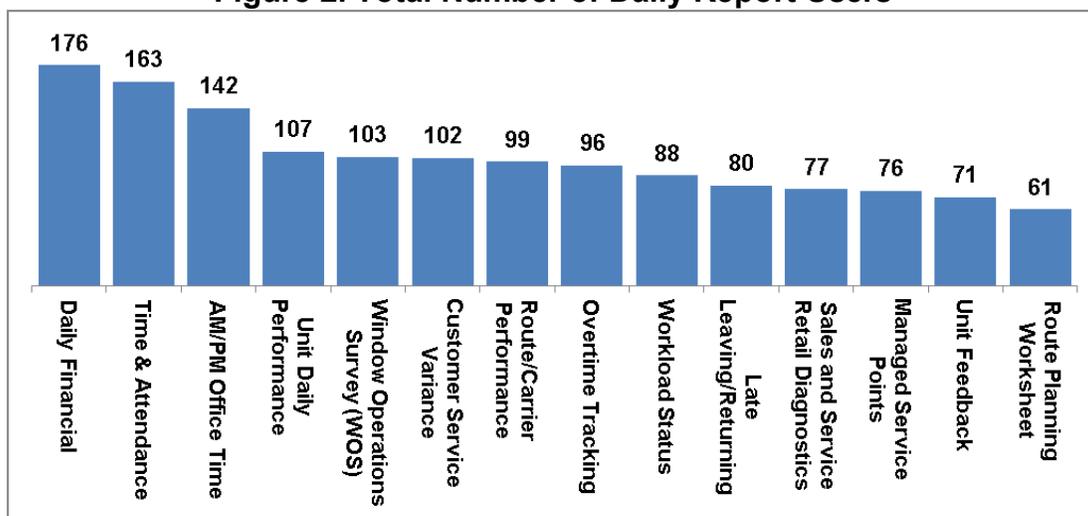
Figure 1. Total Number of Responses by Area



Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

Daily reports prepared by the 185 respondents varied based on the Post Office level.⁴ Respondents indicated they did not use all 14 daily reports included in the OIG survey (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Total Number of Daily Report Users



Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

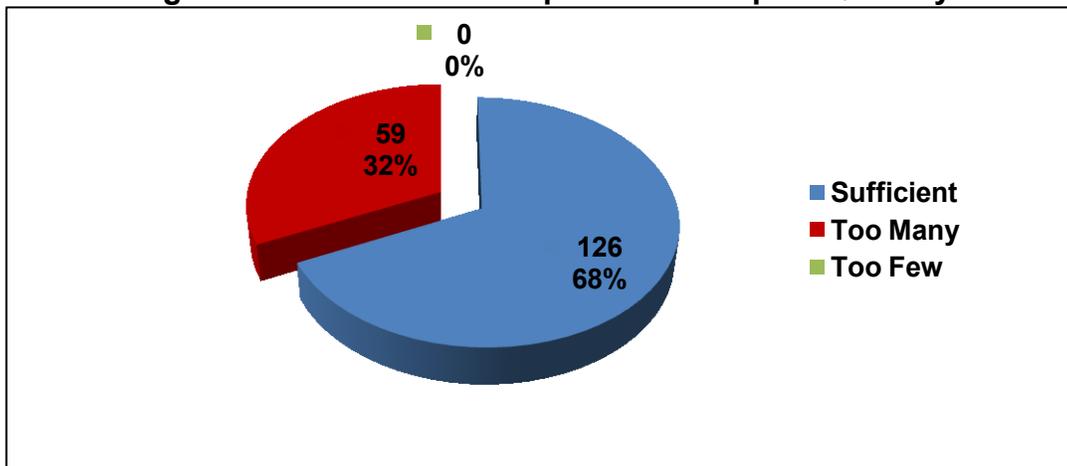
³ The OIG survey included 14 of the most commonly used standardized reports required to manage daily operations. The survey contained questions regarding the quantity, usage, data reliability, quality, and usefulness of the required reports, as well as the time needed to prepare and review reports. The survey results reflect the total number of responses for all 14 reports included in the document.

⁴ The majority of the respondents (122 of 185) managed post offices with total routes of 10 or less. The remaining 63 respondents managed post offices with up to 104 routes.

Report Quantity and Usage

Sixty-eight percent of postmasters surveyed (126 of 185) indicated that daily reports varied and the quantities were sufficient for the Post Office level; however, 32 percent (59 of 185) stated that there were too many reports. Some postmasters indicated that reports were excessive because they contained duplicate information. Additionally, no postmasters indicated there were too few reports (see Figure 3).

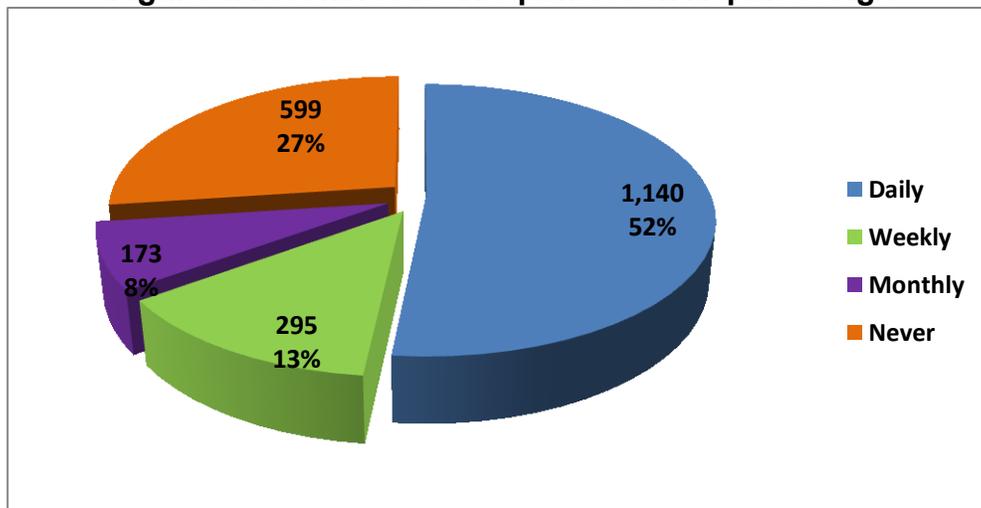
Figure 3. Postmasters' Responses on Report Quantity



Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

The survey results indicated that reports were used daily to manage operations. Specifically, 52 percent of the survey responses (1,140 of 2,207) indicated they use the majority of the daily reports listed in the OIG survey. The remaining 48 percent of the responses (1,067 of 2,207) indicate that report usage varied (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Postmasters' Responses on Report Usage



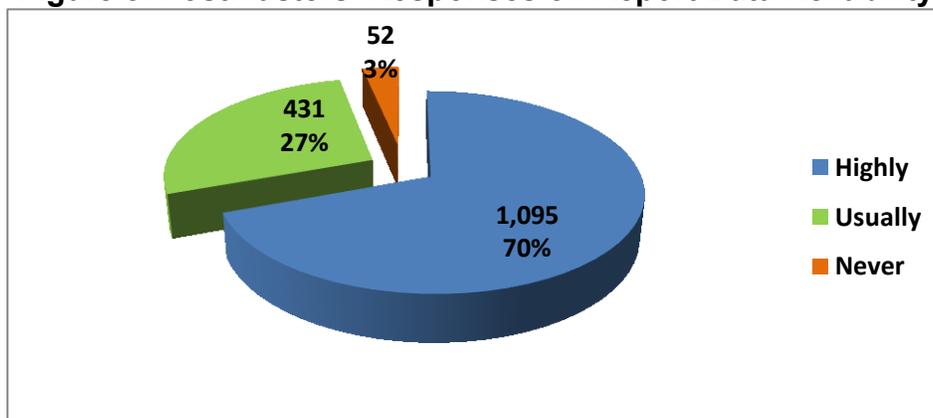
Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

Some respondents indicated never using some reports because they use their operational knowledge of delivery to make daily decisions and that information was often duplicated in other reports. Also, reporting frequencies varied by office level and type of service, delivery, or retail because some reports were not applicable.

Report Reliability and Quality

Delivery operations reports provide information required for daily workload management, unit performance reviews, planning, scheduling, and route management. Ninety-seven percent of survey responses (1,526 of 1,578) showed that the data in daily reports are generally accurate. Only 3 percent of the responses (52 of 1,578) indicated that some reports were never accurate (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Postmasters' Responses on Report Data Reliability

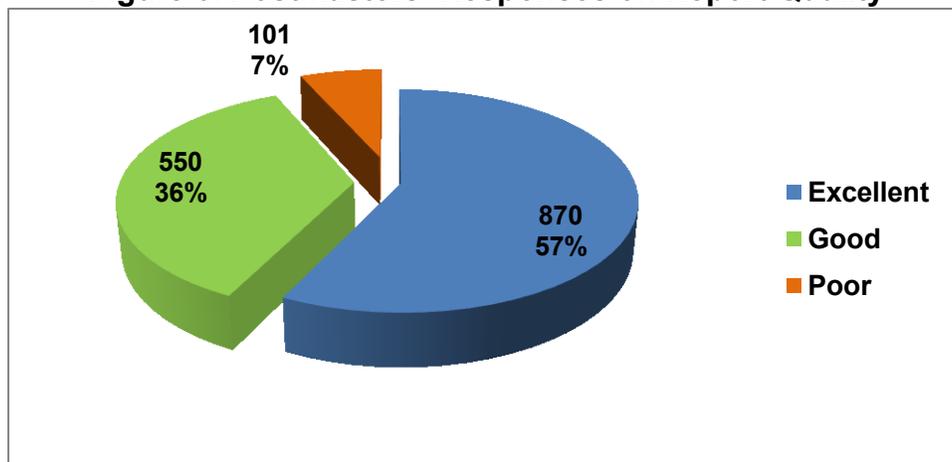


Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

Fifty-seven percent of the survey responses (870 of 1,521) indicated the data quality was excellent and only 7 percent of the responses (101 of 1,521) show that some reports had poor quality. Some postmasters stated that consolidating certain reports and improving data entry would improve the quality of these reports. For example, to reduce reporting requirements, some postmasters suggested combining the Unit Daily Performance and the Workload Status Reports⁵ (see Figure 6).

⁵ The OIG issued a prior report in March 2009, recommending reducing Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS) reports to aid supervisors in managing carrier performance. Management stated that there are ongoing discussions concerning potential changes; however, there are no fiscal year 2012 funds to enhance DOIS.

Figure 6. Postmasters' Responses on Report Quality

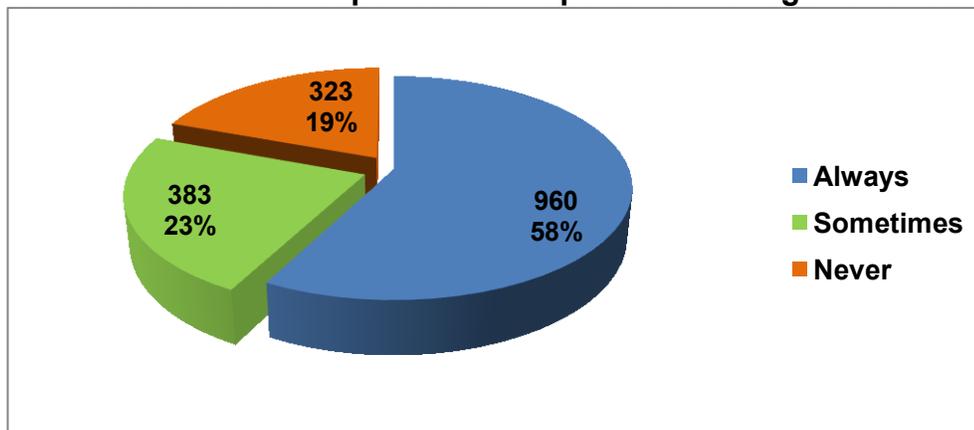


Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

Report for Management Decisions

Postmasters are responsible for maintaining their units at a high degree of efficiency and following U.S. Postal Service standards.⁶ To maintain efficiency, operational data is critical when making management decisions. Fifty-eight percent of survey responses (960 of 1,666) indicated that postmasters generally use the reports to make management decisions. However, 19 percent of the responses (323 of 1,666) indicated that some reports are never used to facilitate management decisions (see Figure 7). Examples of reports which were not used to facilitate management decisions include the Sales and Service Retail Diagnostics, Managed Service Point, and Unit Feedback reports.

Figure 7. Postmasters' Responses on Reports for Management Decisions



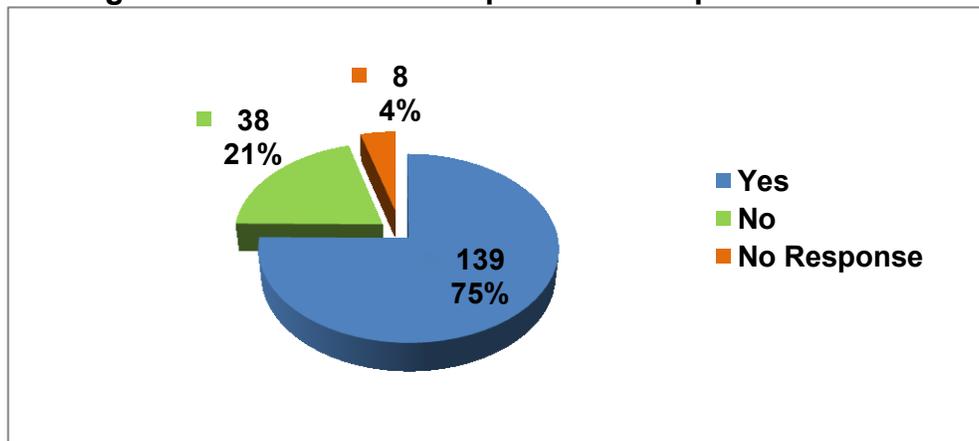
Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

⁶ *Postal Service Delivery Standard Operating Procedures*, dated March 2005.

Report Relevance, Preparation, and Review Time

Seventy-five percent of surveyed postmasters (139 of 185) indicated the reports provided relevant data to manage today's modern delivery environment. However, 21 percent (38 of the 185) indicated the reports were not relevant to manage operations. Some postmasters stated that certain reports reflect a snapshot of operations and the data did not include situational changes (see Figure 8).

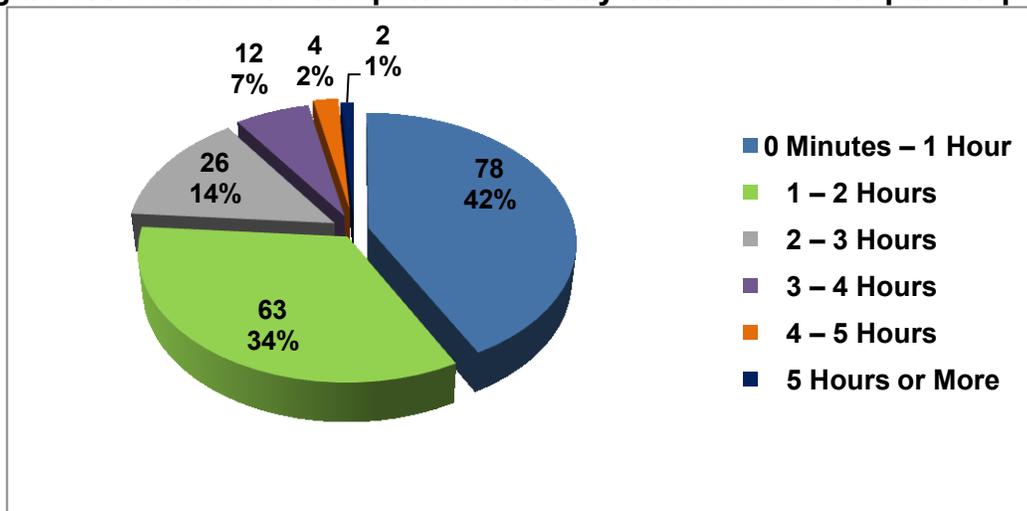
Figure 8. Postmasters' Responses on Report Relevance



Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

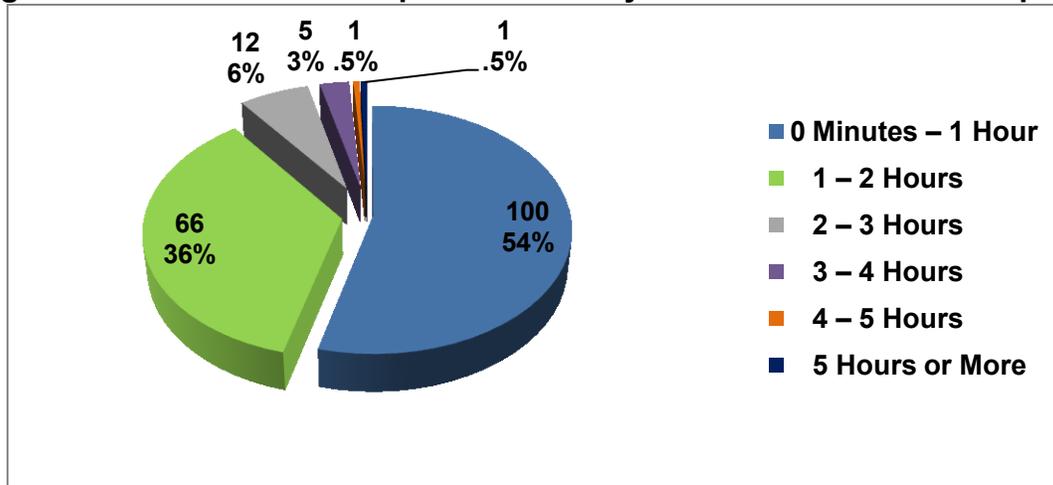
Reviewing and preparing operational reports are essential for managing modern delivery units' daily operations. Postmasters generally indicated that daily report preparation and review time were sufficient. Specifically, 58 percent of postmasters (107 of 185) used more than 1 hour to prepare reports, while 54 percent (100 of 185) indicated using less than 1 hour to review reports (see Figures 9 and 10).

Figure 9. Postmasters' Responses on Daily Time Used to Prepare Reports



Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

Figure 10. Postmasters' Responses on Daily Time Used to Review Reports



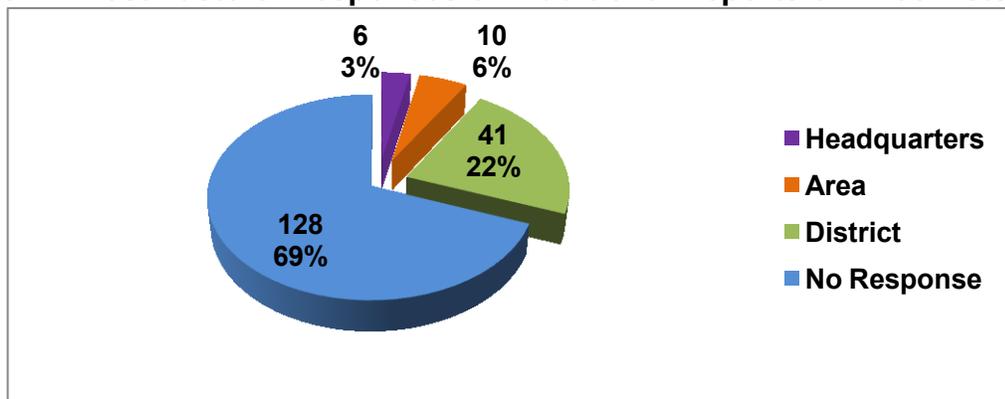
Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

The time to prepare and review reports varied based on office level, total routes managed, and type of delivery service. Generally, Post Office levels 11 through 18 used less time to prepare and review reports than Post Office levels 20 through 24. Additionally, some offices with as many as 104 routes use 5 hours or more to prepare and review reports.

Additional Reporting Concerns

Thirty-one percent (57 of 185) of postmasters surveyed indicated that headquarters, area, and district officials required them to provide additional reports and participate in teleconferences. They were also required to prepare emails that contained duplicate or similar information contained in the 14 daily reports listed on page 2 of this report. Excessive reporting could impact their daily office supervision. The remaining 69 percent (128 of 185) did not provide a response (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Postmasters' Responses on Additional Reports or Checklists



Source: OIG Survey Analysis Results.

Additional reports postmasters completed include:

- Automated Vehicle Utilization System.
- Electronic Uncoded Address Resolution Service.
- Backdoor Log.
- Postal Automated Redirection System Log.
- Post Office Box Accuracy Log.
- Express Mail.
- Mail Volume.
- Scan Point Management System.
- Undeliverable Bulk Business Mail.
- Supervisors Daily Checklist.
- Random Vehicle Inspection.
- Bait Money Order Log.
- Collection Box Scan Log.
- Dispatch Barcode Report.

Excessive reporting requirements reduce the time available to manage daily operations, such as time that could be spent interacting with carriers and identifying opportunities to improve customer service.

Recommendations

We recommend the vice president, Delivery and Post Office Operations:

1. Evaluate postmaster required reports to assess duplicate information and determine whether reports can be combined or modified to enhance office operations.
2. Continue to assess additional reporting request made by area and district officials to reduce duplicative request for information.

Management's Comments

Management generally agreed with our findings and recommendations.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated they agreed with the concept, however, they implemented the corrective actions in June 2010 when the reporting problem surfaced. They issued a directive to field managers to eliminate manual reports and checklists where data was already available. They also developed the AM-PM Web report for local reporting requirements, which is available to all areas and districts.

For recommendation 2, management stated headquarters and Delivery Operations management will continue to respond to complaints from the Management Associations and field managers regarding area and district level requests for duplicate information.

Management also stated the survey and audit conclusion seems to suggest the OIG audited mostly reports received by Post Office personnel and not manual and redundant daily reports prepared. They stated the complaint from the Management Associations concerned postmasters, managers, and supervisors having to report out on data that was already in a database and electronically available. They stated the OIG concluded that some reports were not used because they were not applicable; however it is doubtful that postmasters would spend time on reports that were not applicable to them. Management also stated the mixture of reports listed in the survey and the reports listed as additional reports seem to indicate that the OIG did not differentiate between valid operational requirements and reports. In addition, they viewed the results of the survey differently than the OIG. They concluded that, based on the activities already underway to resolve the issues and the fact that 54 percent of the postmasters did not respond to the survey, the redundant and manual reports are no longer an issue. See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The U.S. Postal Service OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations and corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report. Major reporting issues surfaced in 2010 prior to the audit and management directed area managers to eliminate the use of manual logs and checklists in post offices, standardize the reporting information submitted to area and headquarters officials, and use the AM-PM Web verification process.

Regarding the reports included in the survey, OIG identified reports that management indicated they used daily to manage operations. The survey was the vehicle used to capture redundant reports, identify the method of reporting, and assess how the reports were used. We also provided respondents the opportunity to list any additional reports in the survey and additional issues regarding reports used for daily operations. In addition, the 54 percent of the postmasters that did not respond to the survey does not necessarily correlate to reducing redundancy and manual reporting.

Our conclusions are reflective of the survey results. We recognized in the report that corrective actions were taken in 2010 and agree the survey results indicate management has made significant progress in addressing these issues. However, based on the survey results, we believe management needs to periodically evaluate reporting requirements and continue to respond to complaints involving duplicate information.

Appendix A: Additional Information

Background

Postmasters are responsible for maintaining their offices⁷ at a high degree of efficiency and following Postal Service standards. There are approximately 22,000 postmasters managing over 200,000 carriers in locations nationwide. The Postal Service designed systems in delivery and retail to improve unit management. The DOIS reports provide information on daily workload management, performance, planning and scheduling, and route management. To fulfill their responsibilities, postmasters monitor various reports.⁸

Postmasters and other delivery managers review daily performance reports to evaluate how effective delivery supervisors manage the unit's daily activities. This information also allows managers and postmasters to conduct quality assessments to evaluate supervisors' ability to balance workload among available resources. These assessments are generally conducted in delivery units where managers need to encourage more effective use of DOIS.

In January 2010, the National League of Postmasters issued a letter to the Oversight and Government Reform Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives expressing concerns regarding nonproductive, repetitious reports and paperwork requirements. In June 2010, the vice president, Delivery and Post Office Operations, required area managers of Operations to eliminate the use of manual logs and checklists in post offices and standardize the reporting information submitted to area and headquarters officials. Further, postmasters were required to use the AM-PM Web verification process.⁹

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

We conducted this review from February 2011 through May 2012 in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*. Our objective was to evaluate the reporting requirements of postmasters who manage daily operations. To accomplish our objective we:

- Reviewed applicable documentation, policies, and procedures, such as Delivery Standard Operating Procedures, Redundant Manual Logs Reduction memorandum, Delivery Daily AM Supervisor Checklist, and the Delivery Supervisor Roadmap to Success.
- Interviewed appropriate delivery operations officials at headquarters, areas, and districts to obtain information on postmasters daily reporting requirements.

⁷ Postmasters manage clerks and carriers in offices with routes ranging from fewer than 10 employees to over 100.

⁸ Additional reports monitored by postmasters include daily retail window operations, employee proficiency, performance, and daily financial reports. Reports are generated from the Enterprise Data Warehouse, Retail Data Mart, Point-of-Service, ONE WOS, and WOS Daily Scheduler.

⁹ This is a web-based tool that electronically records and communicates daily conditions within the local delivery unit and standardizes the daily information submitted to area and headquarters officials.

- Developed and issued a survey to 400 randomly selected postmasters at post offices levels 11 through 24 to assess the quantity and effectiveness of reports prepared and reviewed to manage daily Post Office operations.
- Conducted site visits to test the survey in the Philadelphia Metro, South Jersey, and Central Illinois Districts.

We reviewed, analyzed, and summarized the survey results; however, we did not test the usefulness or accuracy of the reporting requirements. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on March 21, 2012, and with the National League of Postmasters and National Association of Postmasters on April 9, 2012. We included their comments where appropriate.

We assessed the reliability of the survey data by reviewing and analyzing the survey results. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

Report Title	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact	Report Results
<p>Management Advisory – <i>Management of City Letter Carriers' Street Performance</i></p>	<p>DR-MA-09-001</p>	<p>3/26/2009</p>	<p>\$1,040,235</p>	<p>Opportunities exist for delivery unit management to effectively use available controls, such as performing street observations and reviewing operational reports. We recommended management reduce the number of required reports, modify DOIS, reinforce importance of performance discussions, consider converting city carriers to evaluated routes and deploy additional Global Positioning Systems. Management disagreed with recommendations 1 and 2. However, management stated there were ongoing discussions for changes to DOIS because of declining mail volume and changing operational needs. Management agreed with recommendations 3 and 4 and partially agreed with recommendation 5.</p>

Appendix B: Management's Comments

DEAN J. GRANHOLM
VICE PRESIDENT
DELIVERY AND POST OFFICE OPERATIONS



May 8, 2012

Lucine M. Willis
Director, Audit Operations

SUBJECT: Survey of Postmasters' Paperwork and Reporting Requirements
Draft Management Advisory Report – DR-MA-12-DRAFT

This response is in regards to the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) April 23, 2012 Draft Management Advisory Report DR-MA-12-DRAFT entitled Survey of Postmasters' Paperwork and Reporting Requirements. The OIG arrived at conclusions on this report based on a survey conducted of Postmasters in 400 randomly selected Post Offices ranging from level 11 through 24. Based on a 46 percent return rate (185 of 400), 68 percent (126 of 185) of the postmasters responded that the quantity of daily reports were sufficient for their Post Office level. Furthermore, these postmasters were generally satisfied with the data reliability, quality, and usefulness of these reports to manage operations. Only 59 Postmasters (32 percent of the 185 respondents) indicated that there were too many reports and that the reports they reviewed contained redundant information and/or were not applicable to their office. They also indicated that headquarters, area, and district officials required them to provide additional reports or participate in teleconferences that contained duplicate or similar information already contained in the daily reports.

Early in fiscal year 2010, the management associations advised the Postmaster General (PMG) that postmasters and supervisors were complaining that they spent a large portion of their day filling out checklists, signing off on daily tasks, and completing daily and weekly manual reports for their district and area managers, often on issues where electronic data was readily available. As a result, the PMG directed me as Vice President, Delivery and Post Office to investigate and eliminate unnecessary and redundant manual reports.

Headquarters (HQ) Delivery Operations surveyed all of the areas, districts, and randomly selected offices, collecting all daily and weekly reports and sign-offs required of post offices supervisors, managers, and postmasters.

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After categorizing all of the reports and identifying electronic databases where much of the data was already available, HQ Delivery created a WEB site for those few service and safety protection issues where no comparable database was available. The use of this tool (AM/PM reporting) is not mandated by headquarters but was offered for use for any area and/or district that wanted to use it. In June 2010, Delivery Operations directed all areas and districts to cease the use of mandatory sign-offs and redundant reporting. For the next year, the management associations communicated any complaints of continuation of such reports to HQ Delivery. We, in turn, immediately investigated and ensured that unnecessary reporting was stopped.

In April 2012, the management associations approached Labor Relations and expressed that we had done a good job of eliminating unnecessary reporting requirements. They further stated that it was time for them to return to registering their concerns locally as they felt any issues that arise could be taken care of at that level. Delivery and Post Office Operations sent a letter to the field to that effect, directing district management to meet with the management associations' local lead to address and correct issues locally.

Despite the cited objective of this audit, much of the survey conducted as well as the stated conclusion seems to suggest that the OIG audited mostly reports *received* by post office personnel and not manual and redundant daily and weekly reports *completed* by post office personnel. The audit states that a minority of postmasters responding to the OIG's survey felt that reports were excessive and that some contained redundant information. Available reports sometimes contain the same datasets as others due as differing types of analyses that are necessary dependent upon local needs and situations. The receipt of reports *containing* redundant information was never the complaint of the management associations in the first place. Their complaint concerned postmasters, managers, and supervisors having to *report out* on data that already existed in a database and was electronically available to the district and area personnel asking for the reports.

Another conclusion by the OIG is that postmasters never use "some reports" as the information is not applicable to their offices. It is doubtful that postmasters spend much valuable time using reports that are not applicable to them. In addition, it is not harmful to make information available as those postmasters looking to enhance their careers may learn from information that is relevant to larger offices.

The final conclusion states that headquarters, areas, and districts require them to provide additional reports and/or emails and to participate in telecons. As explained before, since early in 2010, HQ Delivery has worked closely and successfully with the management associations to stop those reporting requirements that were unnecessary or redundant.

- 3 -

The OIG has listed reports both used by postmasters (page 2) and additional reports completed by postmasters under the heading of "additional concerns" (page 8). From the mixture of reports listed in both of these categories, it does not seem that the OIG has differentiated between what are valid operational requirements and what is a report. As many of the items listed in these categories are operational tools required for correcting addresses missing from the address database, scoring of performance, and daily time and attendance records necessary for pay.

In an effort to share information in an organization as large as the USPS, it would be expected that some managers would feel that the information received does not apply to them. However, it is often necessary to share information in order that our employees get an idea of the operation of the organization as a whole. If we did not share information, it almost certainly would be cause for negative responses from these same managers. One must also consider that a potential reason some of these managers feel that the information contained in the teleconferences they have been invited to attend is duplicate or redundant may be that their attendance was required as a discussion regarding their performance. Often these telecons discuss information already available to managers as an educational tool when poor performance indicates that the information had not been used or had not been used correctly.

From a HQ Delivery Operations perspective, we view the results of this survey differently than the OIG portrays. Four hundred postmasters had the opportunity to address what was not too long ago a very hot issue. This issue was such an irritant to them that they asked their representatives to complain to the PMG. As indicated earlier, the PMG directed me as Vice President, Delivery and Post Office Operations to resolve the issue of too many manual and duplicative reports. We think it is telling that provided an anonymous opportunity to respond to this high interest topic that only 185 responded. We conclude based on the activity already underway on resolving this issue that given the opportunity to respond to this once very touchy subject, 215 or nearly 54 percent of postmasters did not deem this survey relevant enough to even respond to it and the minority that responded negatively becomes the vast minority at just fewer than 15 percent of the total surveyed. If redundant or manual reports were still the major irritant they once were to postmasters we feel confident that nearly 100 percent of those surveyed would have taken the opportunity to share their opinion with the OIG however, that is not the case and in our opinion this survey supports that.

Audit recommendations are addressed in the following narrative and, where adopted, our courses of actions are described. We provide the following response to the OIG recommendations numbers one and two. This report and management's response do not contain information that may be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

- 4 -

Recommendation 1

Evaluate Postmaster required reports to assess duplicate information and determine whether reports can be combined or modified to enhance office operations.

Response

This task was completed in the months leading up to the June 2010; directive to field managers essentially eliminating manual reports and checklists where data was already readily available. We also developed and offered the AM/PM WEB report for local reporting requirements. Reporting out on this WEB site requires only a keystroke and is available for any area or district that wants to use it.

Recommendation 2

Continue to assess additional reporting request made by area and district officials to reduce duplicative request for information.

Agree: While the management associations now feel that they can handle any remaining few issues or those that may arise at the local level, HQ Delivery Operations will continue to respond to any Management Associations and/or field manager complaints relative to district and area level duplicative requests for information.



Dean J. Granholm