



# AUDIT REPORT

## Mail Delivery Issues – Pleasant Hill Station, Des Moines, IA

July 31, 2019



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Report Number DRT-AR-19-013



July 31, 2019

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** SAMARN S. REED  
DISTRICT MANAGER (A), HAWKEYE DISTRICT

E-Signed by Hilderbrand, Sherry  
VERIFY authenticity with eSign Desktop  
*Sherry A. Hilderbrand*

**FROM:** Sherry A. Hilderbrand  
Director, Delivery and Retail Response Team

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Mail Delivery Issues – Pleasant Hill Station,  
Des Moines, IA (Report Number DRT-AR-19-013)

This report presents the results of our Pleasant Hill Station, Des Moines, IA, Mail Delivery Issues audit (Project Number 19RG027DRT000).

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

Attachment

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

## Background

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of Mail Delivery Issues – Pleasant Hill Station, Des Moines, IA (Project Number 19RG027DRT000). The Pleasant Hill Station is in the Hawkeye District of the Western Area. This audit was designed to provide U.S. Postal Service management with timely information on potential mail delivery risks at the Pleasant Hill Station.

The Pleasant Hill Station has 38 city and seven rural routes delivered by 57 city carriers (50 full-time regular city carriers and seven city carrier associates) and seven rural carriers. We selected the Pleasant Hill Station based on our analysis of carriers returning after 6:00 p.m. data from the Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW).<sup>1</sup>

## Objective, Scope and Methodology

The objective of this audit was to assess mail delivery service at Pleasant Hill Station – Des Moines, IA. To accomplish our objective, we analyzed delivery metrics such as mail arrival time, distribution up time, carrier return to office time, and the number of routes and carriers used to assess performance of delivery operations. In addition, we analyzed Enterprise Customer Care (eCC) case data to assess customer concerns. During our site visit on June 11 and 12, 2019, we interviewed management and employees, conducted delivery unit observations, reviewed scanning procedures on packages, and evaluated the process completed by delivery supervisory personnel in response to eCC cases.

We relied on computer-generated data from EDW and the Delivery Operations Information System.<sup>2</sup> We did not test the validity of controls over these systems; however, we verified the accuracy of the data by testing the completeness and reasonableness of the data, observing operations at the unit, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

We conducted this audit from June through July 2019, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. 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 objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on July 12, 2019, and included their comments where appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> A repository intended for all data and the central source for information on retail, financial, and operational performance. Mission-critical information comes to the EDW from transactions that occur across the mail delivery system, points-of-sale, and other sources.

<sup>2</sup> Delivery Operations Information System provides Postal Service delivery operations improved delivery unit management information on-line, reducing redundant data entry tasks.

## Finding #1: Delayed Mail Flow from the Des Moines P&DC

During our observations at the Pleasant Hill Station on Tuesday, June 11, 2019, the unit was notified by the Des Moines Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) that their delivery point sequence (DPS)<sup>3</sup> mail would be late. When the late DPS mail arrived, it was apparent that the mail volume was unusually low. Specifically, the unit's city carriers received only 18,496 pieces<sup>4</sup> of DPS mail, with several routes having less than 500 pieces. See [Appendix A](#) for additional details on mail volume for routes at the unit.

We visited the Des Moines P&DC to determine the reason for such low mail volume. During our visit, we identified four all-purpose containers full of standard letters (see Figure 1 for an example), which were tagged for DPS processing and dispatch to Pleasant Hill Station for delivery on Tuesday, June 11, 2019, but instead were waiting with other mail scheduled for dispatch on Wednesday.

**Figure 1. Mail Scheduled for Delivery on June 11, 2019,  
But Remaining at the Des Moines P&DC**



Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) photographs taken the morning of June 11, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> An automated process of sorting mail by carrier routes into delivery order, eliminating the need for carriers to sort the mail manually in the delivery unit prior to their departure to the routes.

<sup>4</sup> The unit average currently is 47,470 pieces per day.

While at the P&DC we inquired with facility management as to why the mail was not processed. Management stated they were not aware that any mail had been delayed. When asked, management produced the Daily Facility Summary Report as reported in the Mail Condition Reporting System (MCRS) which showed no mail reported as Delayed Mail Flow<sup>5</sup> for June 11, 2019. After we left the P&DC, management found an internal worksheet showing 324 trays of delayed mail which had not been recorded in the MCRS and updated the report. This mail was not dispatched or properly recorded in a timely manner due to lack of oversight by management.

This delayed mail was processed and dispatched to the unit for delivery on Wednesday, June 12, 2019, in addition to the regular mail (see Table 1). The heavy mail volume on Wednesday resulted in carriers working overtime. As such, the unit incurred \$1,210 in additional overtime hours as a result of the uneven flow of mail caused by this delay.

**Table 1. Comparative Wednesday DPS Volume – Unit Level**

Date	DPS Volume
May 1	40,206
May 8	54,933
May 15	45,022
May 22	55,969
May 29	48,464
June 5	43,192
<b>June 12</b>	<b>83,487</b>
June 19	33,995

Source: OIG analysis of DPS volume data from EDW Delivery Data Mart.

Postal Service<sup>6</sup> policy states that delayed mail flow occurs when standard mail is not processed, finalized, or dispatched from a specific operation or facility in time to provide the subsequent operation or facility the allotted time necessary to ensure delivery by the expected delivery day. In addition, delayed mail flow counts should be input with the MCRS morning report. Customers rely on timely and consistent mail delivery service. When mail is not delivered timely, this could result in negative publicity and impact the Postal Service brand.

**Recommendation #1:** We recommend the **Manager, Hawkeye District**, instruct Des Moines Processing and Distribution Center management to follow procedures for dispatching mail timely and reporting delayed mail in the Mail Condition Reporting System.

<sup>5</sup> Delayed Mail Flow for Destinating DPS Standard Mail distribution level identified with a Delivery Color Code commitment is counted at 0600 on the programmed delivery day and occurs when committed DPS mail is not processed, finalized and dispatched by 0600.

<sup>6</sup> National Policy for Standard Mail Delayed Mail Condition Report, General Principles and Definitions, April 2, 2014.

## Finding #2: Carriers Returning After 6 p.m.

City Carriers at the Pleasant Hill Station returned to the office after 6 p.m. Specifically, during Quarters (Q) 1 and 2 of fiscal year (FY) 2019, about 45 percent of city carriers returned by 6 p.m., 64 percent by 7 p.m., and 81 percent by 8 p.m. (see Table 2). The Postal Service’s goal is to have 100 percent of carriers returning by 6 p.m.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2. Pleasant Hill Carriers Returning By 6 p.m.**

FY 2019 Quarter	Percentage of Carriers Returning By 6 p.m.	Percentage of Carriers Returning By 7 p.m.	Percentage of Carriers Returning By 8 p.m.
1	44.26%	61.96%	79.41%
2	46.33%	65.76%	83.05%
<b>Total Average</b>	<b>45.24%</b>	<b>63.77%</b>	<b>81.14%</b>

Source: OIG analysis of City Carriers After 6 p.m. data from EDW-Delivery Data Mart.

The station manager stated that poor performance during Qs 1 and 2 was the result of three uncommon situations. He was on leave from October through December 2018 and less experienced supervisors were acting for him. There were also multiple carrier retirements resulting in nine vacancies and severe winter weather conditions affected delivery operations. However, he stated that upon his return, he was able to stabilize the unit’s management and fill the carrier vacancies, which improved operations. Our analysis of recent data showed that carrier return times improved dramatically in Q3 (see Table 3); therefore, we are not making a recommendation at this time.

**Table 3. Pleasant Hill Carriers Returning By 6 p.m.**

FY 2019 Quarter	Percentage of Carriers Returning By 6 p.m.	Percentage of Carriers Returning By 7 p.m.	Percentage of Carriers Returning By 8 p.m.
3 (as of 6/8/19)	85.00%	98.5%	100%

Source: OIG analysis of City Carriers After 6 p.m. data from EDW Delivery Data Mart.

## Management’s Comments

Management agreed with the findings, recommendation, and monetary impact. See [Appendix B](#) for management’s comments in their entirety.

Regarding the recommendation, management stated they held a discussion with the Des Moines P&DC to ensure that all mail has been processed and dispatched timely or reported correctly. Also, management stated the new Mail Condition Visualization (MCV) system will replace the MCRS as of August 1, 2019 and any delays will be

<sup>7</sup> *Staffing and Scheduling Tool, Function 4 Applications User Guide*, 2016.

automatically reported in the MCV system via scan data. The target implementation date for corrective action is August 1, 2019.

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

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

The recommendation requires OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective action is completed. The recommendation should not be closed in the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendation can be closed.

### Appendix A: Pleasant Hill Station DPS Volume by Route

Inconsistent mail flow, resulting from delayed DPS mail in the Des Moines P&DC, resulted in carriers at the Pleasant Hill Station receiving DPS volume that significantly exceeded their averages on Wednesday June 12, 2019.

**Average and Observed DPS Mail Volume by Route**

Route Number	Average DPS (Previous 12 Days) <sup>8</sup>	Tuesday, June 11 (Date of Observation)	Wednesday June 12
09001	1,840	616	3,030
09002	1,022	413	1,597
09003	2,045	759	4,024
09004	1,298	483	2,620
09005	1,707	550	2,999
09006	870	270	1,446
09007	1,815	573	3,425
09010	1,746	698	2,945
17021	984	320	1,635
17024	1,482	396	2,292
17026	1,007	268	1,612
17027	1,030	237	1,934
17028	1,012	460	1,644
17029	1,202	801	2,445
17032	950	292	1,461
17033	794	238	1,614
17034	1,084	660	1,768
17035	1,071	234	1,785
17037	1,073	551	2,727
17039	960	442	1,666
17040	1,153	776	2,407
17041	1,417	1,023	2,530
17042	1,540	480	2,361
17043	865	279	1,362
17044	1,144	406	2,274
17046	1,087	358	1,631
17047	1,700	830	2,672
17048	1,221	326	2,001
17051	707	521	1,286
17054	924	245	1,792
17056	720	210	1,233

<sup>8</sup> June 12 through June 24, 2019

Route Number	Average DPS (Previous 12 Days)	Tuesday, June 11 (Date of Observation)	Wednesday, June 12
17060	1,580	680	2,751
17061	887	397	1,784
17062	1,040	416	1,743
27025	1,540	532	2,454
27036	1,576	457	3,047
27050	1,738	711	2,532
27053	1,639	458	2,958
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,470</b>	<b>18,366</b>	<b>83,487</b>

Source: OIG analysis of DOIS-DPS Analysis report.

## Appendix B: Management's Comments

LAZERICK POLAND  
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery Issues – Pleasant Hill Station, Des Moines, IA (DRT-AR-19-DRAFT)

Management agrees with the OIG findings, as well as with the monetary calculations.

**Recommendation #1:**

We recommend the Manager, Hawkeye District, instruct Des Moines Process and Distribution Center management to follow procedures for dispatching mail timely and reporting delayed mail in the Mail Condition Reporting System.

**Management Response/Action Plan:**

Management agrees.

Discussion with P & DC management to make sure that all mail has been processed and dispatched timely or reported correctly. Management reviewed MCRS processing with operations to report delayed processing and delayed dispatch. The new MCV (Mail Condition Visualization) mail condition reporting process will replace webMCRS as of August 1st 2019. Any delays will be automatically in MCV via scan data.

Instructions have been completed with management, setting expectations for proper mail dispatch and reporting of delayed mail. WebMCRS will be used daily starting August 1, 2019

**Target Implementation Date:**

August 2019

**Responsible Official:**

Senior Plant Manager



Sam S. Reed  
A/District Manager Hawkeye District

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management