



# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

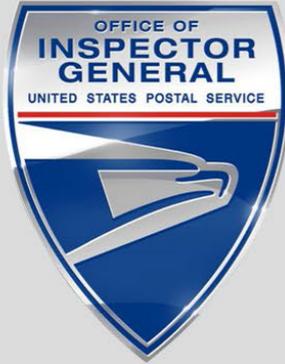
## Packages Suspected of Containing Marijuana

### Audit Report

Report Number  
HR-AR-17-001

October 12, 2016





# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

## UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

### Highlights

***The Postal Inspection Service conducts investigations of individuals attempting to use the mail for drug trafficking. In fiscal year 2015, the Postal Inspection Service seized about 34,000 pounds of marijuana from the mailstream.***

### Background

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service’s narcotics program is intended to protect U.S. Postal Service employees at nearly 32,000 facilities from the dangers of handling packages containing illegal narcotics and ensuring public trust in the mail. The Postal Inspection Service conducts investigations of individuals attempting to use the mail for drug trafficking. In fiscal year 2015, the Postal Inspection Service seized about 34,000 pounds of marijuana from the mailstream.

When postal employees suspect a package contains marijuana or any illegal drug, they must [REDACTED], inform a supervisor, and contact the Postal Inspection Service for guidance. [REDACTED]

We initiated this audit to address allegations regarding postal employees’ handling of packages suspected of containing marijuana at seven post offices in the Capital Metro, Great Lakes, Pacific, and Western areas.

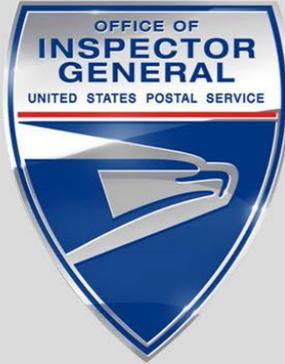
Our objective was to assess the Postal Inspection Service’s and Postal Service’s handling of packages suspected of containing marijuana.

### What The OIG Found

Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service officials did [REDACTED]

Postal Inspection Service procedures allowed packages [REDACTED]. Specifically;

- The Postal Inspection Service instructed employees at four post offices to [REDACTED]. In at least one instance, [REDACTED].



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**Postal Inspection Service  
did not have clear and  
comprehensive guidance for**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- Postal inspectors [REDACTED].
- Lastly, although postal facilities were secured, employees at three post offices [REDACTED]. All three facilities took corrective actions by providing additional security for these packages.

These conditions occurred because the practice that allows postal inspectors discretion [REDACTED]. Postal Inspection Service did not have clear and comprehensive guidance for [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]. Further, post office personnel were not always sufficiently trained to provide additional security for packages suspected of containing marijuana.

Insufficient controls over handling and tracking packages suspected of containing marijuana from initial retrieval from the mail to final disposition increases the risk these packages could be lost, stolen, mishandled, or undetected. This could expose employees to harm or danger, foster criminal activity, adversely affect drug investigations and prosecutions, and negatively impact the Postal Service's brand, and the integrity of the mail.

### What The OIG Recommended

We recommended management implement a nationwide policy for handling, tracking, and providing additional security for packages suspected of containing marijuana to reduce the risk of these packages being lost or stolen; and develop training to ensure responsible personnel understand their roles and responsibilities.

# Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

October 12, 2016

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** GUY J. COTTRELL  
CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

DAVID E. WILLIAMS JR.  
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AND EXECUTIVE  
VICE PRESIDENT

E-Signed by Charles Turley   
VERIFY authenticity with eSign Desktop

**FROM:** Charles L. Turley  
Deputy Assistant Inspector General  
Supply Management and Human Resources

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Packages Suspected of Containing Marijuana  
(Report Number HR-AR-17-001)

This report presents the results of our audit of Packages Suspected of Containing Marijuana (Project Number 16YG001HR000).

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Monique P. Colter, director, Human Resources and Support, or me at 703-248-2100.

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# Findings

***The Postal Inspection Service's narcotics program is intended to protect Postal Service employees at nearly 32,000 facilities from the dangers of handling packages containing illegal narcotics and ensuring public trust in the mail.***

***Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service officials did not always properly handle and provide additional security for packages suspected of containing marijuana at the seven post offices we reviewed.***

## Introduction

This report presents the results of our audit of packages suspected of containing marijuana (Project Number 16YG001HR000). This self-initiated audit addresses allegations regarding U.S. Postal Service employees' handling of packages suspected of containing marijuana at seven post offices in the Capital Metro, Great Lakes, Pacific, and Western areas. Our objective was to assess the Postal Inspection Service's and Postal Service's handling of packages suspected of containing marijuana. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this audit.

The Postal Inspection Service's narcotics program is intended to protect Postal Service employees at nearly 32,000 facilities from the dangers of handling packages containing illegal narcotics and ensuring public trust in the mail. Postal Inspection Service conducts investigations of individuals attempting to use the mail for drug trafficking. In fiscal year (FY) 2015, the Postal Inspection Service seized about 34,000 pounds of marijuana from the mailstream.

When Postal Service employees encounter a package suspected of containing marijuana or any illegal drug, they [REDACTED]

## Summary

Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service officials did not always properly handle and provide additional security for packages suspected of containing marijuana at the seven post offices we reviewed. Postal Inspection Service procedures allowed [REDACTED]. Although postal facilities were secured, employees [REDACTED], which placed these packages at risk for theft or loss. Specifically:

- The Postal Inspection Service instructed employees at four post offices to [REDACTED] by postal inspectors.
- Postal inspectors [REDACTED] at another Post Office.
- Lastly, employees at three post offices [REDACTED] for packages suspected of containing marijuana.

## Suspected Packages Found in the Mailstream

The Postal Inspection Service did not always properly handle packages suspected of containing marijuana. Postal inspectors instructed Postal Service employees at the [REDACTED] post offices to [REDACTED]. In addition, postal inspectors [REDACTED] from the [REDACTED] Post Office. These actions lowered the security and accountability of suspected packages.



1 Publication 52, Section 216, and Poster 205-B.

**Postal inspectors placed packages suspected of containing marijuana at risk by instructing responsible officials at the [REDACTED] Post Office; the [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] suspected of containing marijuana to the Postal Inspection Service and to allow packages suspected of containing marijuana to [REDACTED] by postal inspectors.**

### Mailing Packages Suspected of Containing Marijuana to the Postal Inspection Service

Postal inspectors placed packages suspected of containing marijuana at risk by instructing responsible officials at the [REDACTED]



For example, in October 2015, [REDACTED] Post Office employees discovered a suspicious package thought to contain marijuana and notified the Postal Inspection Service, as required<sup>2</sup>, who told them to [REDACTED]. The employees [REDACTED]. The [REDACTED] postmaster reported the incident to the Postal Inspection Service, which stated it [REDACTED]. The Postal Inspection Service contacted the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) regarding this incident, as required<sup>3</sup>, by reporting the incident to the mail theft task force at the International Service Center in Chicago, IL.

At the [REDACTED], the station manager stated they were instructed to [REDACTED]. They were also instructed to [REDACTED].

Postal Inspection Service officials in the [REDACTED] stated they instructed officials at the [REDACTED]. However, postal inspectors were [REDACTED].

### [REDACTED] Packages Suspected of Containing Marijuana From [REDACTED]

Postal Inspection Service officials [REDACTED] Post Office. [REDACTED] Post Office personnel stated that they found the package in the mail in late November or early December 2015, and notified Postal Inspection Service personnel, who [REDACTED], after the postmaster notified the OIG's Office of Investigations.



These incidents occurred because of [REDACTED]

<sup>2</sup> Postal Operations Manual (POM) Issue 9, Section 139.117, July 2002, updated with revisions through February 1, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Employee and Labor Relations Manual, Section 665.14, Reporting Violations, states that allegations of violations of postal laws by postal employees, including mail theft, must be reported immediately to the OIG.

<sup>4</sup>  
<sup>5</sup>

***There are inherent risks that suspected packages could be lost or stolen when the Postal Inspection Service instructs postal employees [REDACTED] suspected packages containing marijuana or postal inspectors [REDACTED] suspected packages [REDACTED]***

***Our analysis revealed that***

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

In addition, there is [REDACTED]. There are inherent risks that suspected packages could be lost or stolen when the Postal Inspection Service instructs postal employees [REDACTED] suspected packages containing marijuana or postal inspectors [REDACTED] suspected packages [REDACTED].

We reviewed Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service policies to determine whether the instructions provided sufficient information about employees', supervisors', and managers' roles and responsibilities for handling and accounting for suspected packages containing marijuana. Our analysis revealed that [REDACTED]

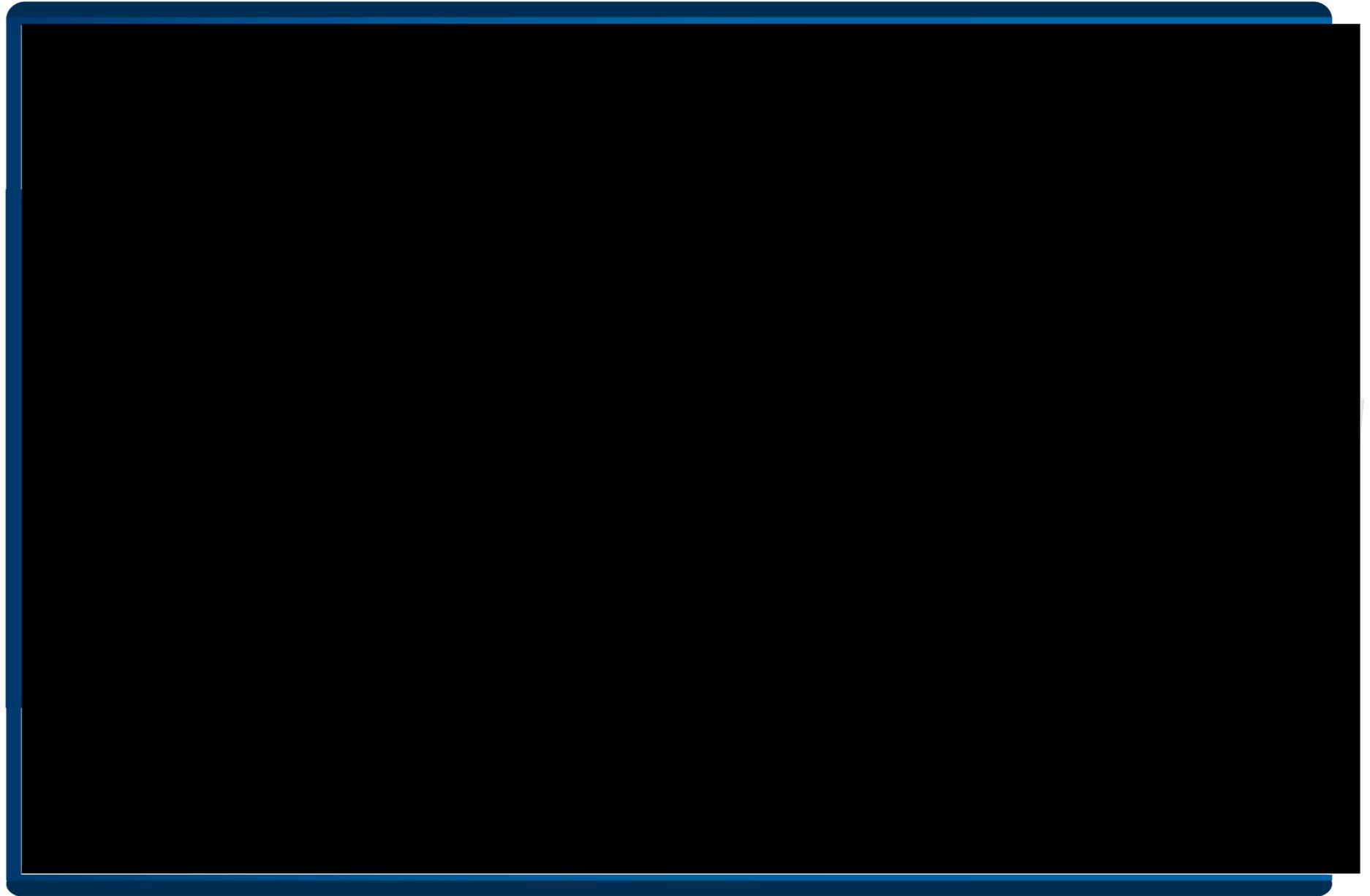
[REDACTED] For example, Postal Inspection Service Headquarters' guidance [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Further, Postal Service Posters 205-B<sup>8</sup> and 84<sup>9</sup> only provide general instructions for responding to suspicious mail and unknown powders or substances; however, neither the posters nor Postal Inspection Service policy includes guidance for Post Office personnel to properly secure [REDACTED]. Lastly, the Postal Inspection Service's [REDACTED] divisions' guidance also increased the risk of the theft and loss of suspected mail packages by instructing Postal Service employees to [REDACTED]. See [Table 1](#).

6 [REDACTED]  
7 [REDACTED]  
8 *Immediate Actions, Suspicious Mail & Unknown Powders or Substances*, August 2006.  
9 *Suspicious Mail or Packages*, September 2006.

**Table 1. Analysis of Postal Service and Postal Inspection Service Policies**



Source: OIG analysis.

In addition, management should establish controls such as [REDACTED], to mitigate those risks.

As a result of current procedures for postal inspectors to instruct responsible post office employees to [REDACTED]. This could expose employees to harm or danger, foster criminal activity, adversely affect drug investigations and prosecutions, and negatively impact the Postal Service's brand and the integrity of the mail.



**As a result of Post Office employees [REDACTED]**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Finally, there were no records of stand-up talks on suspicious mail being conducted at any of the facilities, as required.<sup>12</sup> We also reviewed the contents of the Postal Service's current stand-up talks and videos related to suspicious mail and none of the stand-up talks or videos addressed how to properly secure packages suspected of containing marijuana.

As a result of Post Office employees [REDACTED] This could expose employees to harm or danger, foster criminal activity, adversely affect drug investigations and prosecutions, and negatively impact the Postal Service's brand and the integrity of the mail.

<sup>12</sup> *Management Instruction* EL-810-2006-3, dated March 27, 2006, states that all employees must be trained periodically for handling suspicious mail and unknown powders or substances.

# Recommendations

We recommend the chief postal inspector, in coordination with the chief operating officer and executive vice president:

1. Implement a nationwide policy for handling, tracking, and providing additional security for packages suspected of containing marijuana to reduce the risk of these packages being lost or stolen. The tracking should be comprehensive to include initial retrieval from the mail to final disposition and reporting all packages suspected of being lost or stolen and related employee misconduct to the Office of Inspector General.
2. Develop training to ensure responsible personnel understand their roles and responsibilities for identifying, handling, tracking, and providing additional security for packages suspected of containing marijuana.

## Management's Comments

Management partially agreed with the findings and recommendations.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated that post offices are secure facilities and mail processing areas are not accessible to the general public. Protocols exist for admitting non-postal personnel to restricted areas for valid business purposes and postal employees, in general, are trained to ensure the integrity and security of all mail. However, management stated they will develop and implement internal nationwide guidance by October 1, 2017, for handling and tracking mail suspected of containing marijuana.

Regarding recommendation 2, management stated that procedures currently exist for handling mail suspected of containing marijuana. Suspicion that a mailpiece may contain marijuana is just that — the suspicion of a Postal Service employee, such as a clerk, carrier, or supervisor. Management also stated that, without additional attention, they cannot make a determination with respect to the contents of a mailpiece; however, they will continue to provide and, when necessary, develop enhanced training for employees who handle packages which one can reasonably suspect contain marijuana. Finally, management will review and revise, as appropriate, training policies with respect to postal facility security protocols and the security and integrity of the mail, by October 1, 2017.

See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

## Evaluation of Management's Comments

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

These recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. All 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.

# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Additional Information

### Background

The Postal Inspection Service's narcotics program is intended to protect Postal Service employees at nearly 32,000 facilities from the dangers of handling packages containing illegal narcotics and ensuring public trust in the mail. Its investigations target drug rings and attempts to illegally use the mail for drug trafficking. In FY 2015, the Postal Inspection Service seized about 34,000 pounds of marijuana from the mailstream.

When Postal Service employees encounter a package suspected of containing marijuana, they must [REDACTED]. Based on the Postal Inspection Service's assessment, location of the package, and postal inspector availability, the postal inspector will [REDACTED]. The Postal Inspection service seized 34,000 pounds of marijuana in 2015.

### Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to assess the Postal Service's and Postal Inspection Service's handling of packages suspected of containing marijuana.

To accomplish our objective we:

- Reviewed applicable Postal Inspection Service and Postal Service policies and procedures.
- Conducted site visits and interviews at the Postal Service's [REDACTED] and the seven post offices listed below to understand the roles and responsibilities of personnel receiving, handling, tracking, and transporting marijuana found in the mail.

- [REDACTED]

- Conducted site visits and interviews with responsible Postal Inspection Service officials at the following four Postal Inspection Service field offices to understand their oversight roles and responsibilities:

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- Assessed controls to monitor, track, and safeguard packages suspected of containing marijuana.
- Reviewed FY 2013 through January 2016 training records for managers at the seven facilities reviewed to determine if they received sufficient training to properly handle packages suspected of containing marijuana.

We conducted this performance audit from January through October 2016, 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 objectives. We will discuss our observations and conclusions with management on September 28, 2016, and will include their comments where appropriate.

We assessed the reliability of information contained in the Postal Service's Learning Management System by reviewing existing information about the data and interviewing agency officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

### Prior Audit Coverage

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Appendix B: Management's Comments



September 30, 2016

LORI LAU DILLARD  
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Packages Suspected of Containing Marijuana  
(Report Number HR-AR-16-DRAFT)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the recommendations contained in the draft audit report, Packages Suspected of Containing Marijuana. Management partially agrees with the findings and recommendations associated with the draft report and will address each separately below.

### **OIG Recommendations**

We recommend the Chief Postal Inspector, in coordination with the Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President:

**Recommendation 1:** Implement a nationwide policy for handling, tracking, and providing additional security for packages suspected of containing marijuana to reduce the risk of these packages being lost or stolen. The tracking should be comprehensive to include initial retrieval from the mail to final disposition, and reporting all packages suspected of being lost or stolen and related employee misconduct to the Office of Inspector General.

**Management Response/Action Plan:** Management agrees, in part, with this recommendation. Post Offices are, in the course of daily operations, secured facilities and mail processing areas are not accessible to the general public. Protocols exist for admitting non-Postal personnel to these restricted areas for valid business purposes. Postal employees, in general, are trained to ensure the integrity and security of all mail. The Postal Inspection Service will however develop and implement an internal nationwide guidance document for handling and tracking mail suspected of containing marijuana.

**Target Implementation Date:** October 1, 2017

**Responsible Official:** Inspector in Charge, Criminal Investigations Group

**Recommendation 2:** Develop training to ensure responsible personnel understand their roles and responsibilities for identifying, handling, tracking, and providing additional security for packages suspected of containing marijuana.

**Management Response/Action Plan:** Management agrees, in part, with this recommendation. Procedures currently exist for handling mail matter suspected of containing marijuana. Suspicions of mail matter containing marijuana are just that, suspicions made by various Postal personnel, including clerks, carriers and supervisors.

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WASHINGTON DC 20260  
WWW.USPS.COM

Without additional attention, when appropriate, a determination with respect to the contents of mail matter cannot be made. We agree, however, that Postal Service management and Postal Inspection Service personnel will continue to provide and, in appropriate circumstances, develop enhanced training for Postal Service personnel who handle packages reasonably suspected of containing marijuana. Training policies with respect to the security protocols for Postal facilities, as well as the security and integrity of mail matter, will be reviewed and revised, as appropriate.

**Target Implementation Date:** October 1, 2017

**Responsible Official:** Inspector in Charge, Criminal Investigations Group



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Guy J. Cottrell  
Chief Postal Inspector



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David E. Williams  
Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President

cc: Manager, Corporate Audit Response Management



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