



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

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**Overweight Inbound  
International Mail  
Management Advisory**

September 13, 2011

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**Report Number MS-MA-11-001**



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

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# HIGHLIGHTS

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September 13, 2011

## Overweight Inbound International Mail

Report Number MS-MA-11-001

### **IMPACT ON:**

Handling of overweight international mail.

### **WHY THE OIG DID THE AUDIT:**

Our objective was to determine whether the U.S. Postal Service accepted and processed international mail items over 70 pounds, the weight limit for U.S. mail delivery.

### **WHAT THE OIG FOUND:**

The Postal Service accepted and processed overweight inbound international mail items. By allowing overweight items to enter the mail stream, the Postal Service increases the risk of work-related injuries.

### **WHAT THE OIG RECOMMENDED:**

We recommended the managing director and vice president, Global Business, issue interim guidance to the international service centers stating procedures for handling overweight and oversize inbound international mail items. We also recommended management update Handbook T-5, *International Mail Operations*, to include procedures for handling these items.

### **WHAT MANAGEMENT SAID:**

Management agreed with our recommendations and took action to develop and distribute interim guidance to employees for the handling of overweight and oversized inbound international mail items. In addition, management will update Handbook T-5 to reflect the policy for handling these items by October 14, 2011.

### **AUDITORS' COMMENT:**

The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations and management's actions should resolve the issues identified in the report.

[Link to review the entire report.](#)



September 13, 2011

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** GISELLE E. VALERA  
MANAGING DIRECTOR AND  
VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL BUSINESS

E-Signed by Darrell E. Benjamin, Jr  
VERIFY authenticity with e-Sign  
*Darrell E. Benjamin, Jr.*

**FROM:** Darrell E. Benjamin, Jr.  
Deputy Assistant Inspector General  
for Revenue & Systems

**SUBJECT:** Management Advisory – Overweight Inbound International  
Mail (Report Number MS-MA-11-001)

This interim report presents the results of our review of overweight inbound international mail (Project Number 11RG016MS000). We identified this issue during our ongoing audit of Inbound International Mail (Project Number 11RG008MS000) and are issuing this management advisory report to bring it to the attention of management.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Janet Sorensen, director, Sales and Service, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachments

cc: Paul E. Vogel  
Deborah M. Giannoni-Jackson  
Corporate Audit and Response Management

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
Conclusion .....	1
Overweight Mail Accepted and Delivered.....	1
Recommendations .....	3
Management’s Comments .....	3
Evaluation of Management’s Comments.....	3
Appendix A: Additional Information .....	4
Background .....	4
Objective, Scope, and Methodology .....	4
Prior Audit Coverage .....	5
Appendix B: Management’s Comments .....	7

## Introduction

This report presents an issue identified during our audit of inbound international mail (Project Number 11RG008MS000) and is being issued to address immediate concerns regarding overweight international mail items (Project Number 11RG016MS000). This self-initiated audit addresses operational and financial risk. Our objective was to determine whether the U.S. Postal Service accepted and processed international mail items over 70 pounds, the weight limit for U.S. mail delivery. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this audit.

## Conclusion

The Postal Service accepted and processed overweight inbound international mail items, which is a violation of Postal Service weight restrictions. From October 11, 2010, to June 5, 2011, three<sup>1</sup> of the five International Service Centers (ISC) processed 2,907 overweight items,<sup>2</sup> weighing over 70 pounds. By allowing overweight items to enter the mail stream, the Postal Service increases the risk of work-related injuries.

## Overweight Mail Accepted and Delivered

Records obtained from the Global Business System (GBS)<sup>3</sup> indicated that three ISCs processed 2,907 overweight items from October 11, 2010, to June 5, 2011. Postal Service policy establishes a maximum weight limit for EMS bags of 70 pounds.<sup>4</sup>

[Table 1](#) illustrates the number of overweight EMS bags received at ISCs from October 2010 through June 2011. In addition, the San Francisco ISC has formally tracked and accepted inbound international items<sup>5</sup> weighing more than 70 pounds into mail operations since at least 2005.

As illustrated in [Table 2](#), San Francisco ISC receiving unit clerks processed 600 items weighing from over 70 pounds up to 160 pounds<sup>6</sup>. The New York and Chicago ISCs do not track overweight inbound international mail; however, GBS records<sup>7</sup> indicated they frequently received overweight items. By allowing overweight items to enter Postal Service operations, the Postal Service increases the risk of work-related injuries occurring.

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<sup>1</sup> The three ISC are located in San Francisco, New York, and Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> These overweight items are inbound Express Mail® International Service (EMS) bags from GBS records.

<sup>3</sup> The Postal Service implemented GBS in 2007. This system is divided into three modules: International Dispatch, International Receipt, and International Reconciliation System.

<sup>4</sup> *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, International Mail Manual*, Chapter 221.41, April 17, 2011, updated with *Postal Bulletin* revisions through June 2, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> In 2005, the San Francisco ISC tracked overweight EMS bags and air parcel post to determine if an overweight issue existed. To date, the San Francisco ISC continues this tracking.

<sup>6</sup> Other overweight items included air parcel post items.

<sup>7</sup> The Universal Postal Union barcode label on an EMS bag includes its weight. This weight is then recorded into the GBS system when the label is scanned at the Inbound Receiving Unit.

Table 1

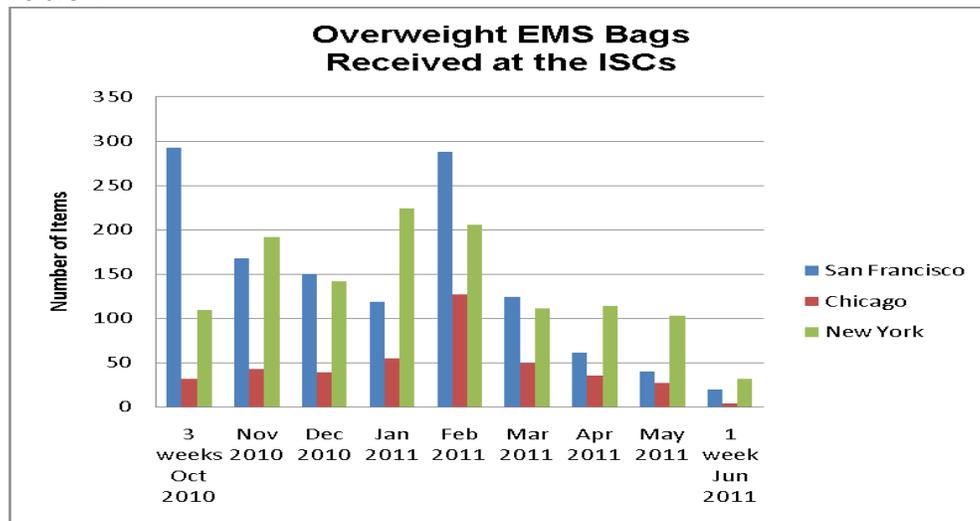
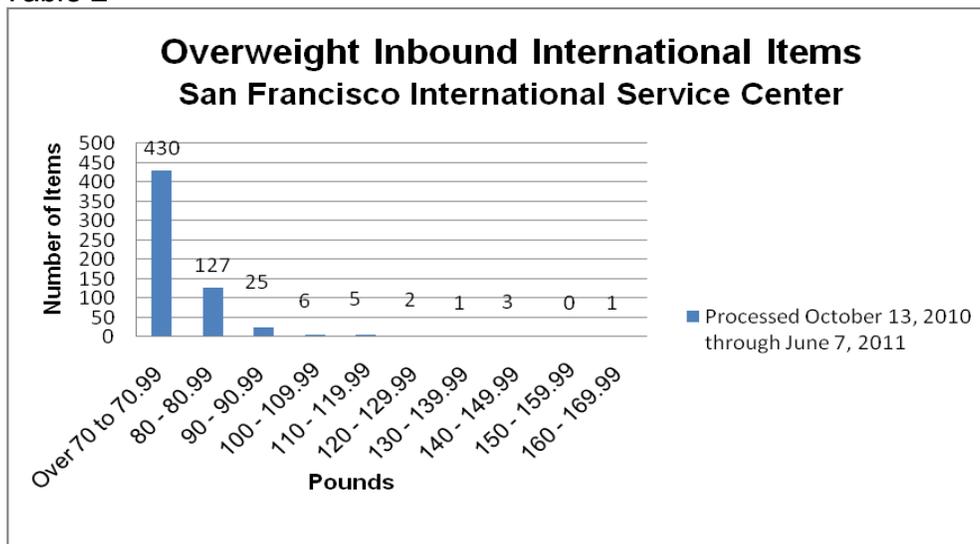


Table 2



The Postal Service does not have a policy in place for processing inbound overweight and oversize items originating from foreign posts, but allows local ISC management to handle these items as they see fit. In June 2005, the Postal Service attempted to identify the frequency with which overweight and oversize items (specifically EMS and air parcel post mail) originated from foreign posts. Specifically, Postal Service Headquarters personnel initiated a survey to trace air EMS and air Parcel Post® mail originating from China and arriving at the San Francisco ISC for a 2- to 4-week period. Headquarters personnel did not share the results of this survey with the ISC at the end of this period,<sup>8</sup> nor did they define a policy to handle prohibited overweight and oversize inbound international mail. Consequently, guidance is needed to instruct employees on

<sup>8</sup> Headquarters personnel involved with this survey are no longer employed with the Postal Service and we could not determine why the study was not shared with the ISCs.

procedures for handling these items in order to mitigate employee injuries and protect revenue.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend the managing director and vice president, Global Business:

1. Issue interim guidance to International Service Centers stating procedures for handling overweight and oversize inbound international mail items.
2. Update Handbook T-5, *International Mail Operations*, to include procedures for handling oversize and overweight inbound international mail items

### **Management's Comments**

Management agreed with our recommendations and took action to develop and distribute interim guidance to employees for handling overweight and oversized inbound international mail items. In addition, management will update Handbook T-5 to reflect the policy for handling these items by October 14, 2011. See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments, in their entirety.

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

The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations and management's actions should resolve the issues identified in the report.

## Appendix A: Additional Information

### Background

Inbound international mail is foreign-originating mail destined for delivery within the U.S. ISCs process, manage, and reconcile international mail entering the U.S. using the GBS web-based applications. Receiving units located at ISCs record receipt of inbound international mail using the Global Business Receipt System. In fiscal year 2010, the Postal Service processed 289 million Competitive International transactions consisting of 291 million pounds of international mail items, resulting in approximately \$1.49 billion in competitive international revenue.

According to Postal Service policy, the maximum weight for EMS mailpieces is 70 pounds;<sup>9</sup> however, lower country-specific weight limits may apply. Individual Country Listings provide the maximum weight limit for each country.

### Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to determine whether the Postal Service accepted and processed mail items over 70 pounds, the weight limit for U.S. mail delivery. To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed and summarized guidance pertaining to inbound international mail and oversized and overweight items.
- Obtained current and historical data on inbound international mail weight and dimensions for all five ISCs.
- Interviewed Postal Service officials regarding procedures for handling overweight and oversize inbound international mail.
- Conducted site visits to the San Francisco ISC to observe operations and gather information.
- Reviewed overweight survey forms at the San Francisco ISC for the period October 13, 2010, through June 7, 2011.

We conducted this review from June through September 2011 in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation*. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on August 9, 2011, and included their comments where appropriate.

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<sup>9</sup> *Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, International Mail Manual*, Chapter 221.41, April 17, 2011, updated with *Postal Bulletin* revisions through June 2, 2011.

We assessed the reliability of data on overweight and oversize items by interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. 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
<i>St. Louis Information Technology and Accounting Service Center</i>	FT-AR-11-009	3/31/2011	None	The Chicago ISC record unit supervisor did not review inbound verification notes created by the record unit clerks and was unaware of the documented control <sup>10</sup> to review verification notes created for inbound dispatches. As a result of our audit, management implemented the control and the record unit supervisor began reviewing inbound dispatches in August 2010.
<i>Miami International Service Center – Inbound International Mail</i>	FT-AR-08-012	9/3/2008	\$2,084,620	Data used to bill foreign postal administrations (FPA) for inbound international Express Mail service was not complete. We determined that 1,058 manually entered dispatches were not billed to the FPAs. Management took corrective action during the audit to address the issue.

<sup>10</sup> Effective May 11, 2009.

<p><i>New York International Service Center – Inbound International Mail</i></p>	<p><a href="#">FT-AR-08-005</a></p>	<p>1/24/2008</p>	<p>\$13,700,604</p>	<p>Volume data used to bill FPAs for inbound Express Mail service was not always accurate. We found errors in 97 of 120 items reviewed for China. For all other countries, we found errors in 57 of 78 items reviewed. Management agreed with our recommendation to establish and communicate policies and procedures to address the complete processing and billing cycle for inbound international mail.</p>
<p><i>San Francisco International Service Center – Inbound International Mail</i></p>	<p><a href="#">FT-AR-07-012</a></p>	<p>3/30/2007</p>	<p>\$922,478</p>	<p>ISC personnel in the record unit did not properly process letter class inbound international mail documents and timely enter the information into the international web-based application. Management agreed with our recommendation to implement a procedure requiring adequate management oversight to ensure proper processing of inbound international letter class documents.</p>

## Appendix B: Management's Comments

GISELLE VALERA  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, GLOBAL BUSINESS  
AND VICE PRESIDENT



September 7, 2011

SHIRIAN B. HOLLAND  
ACTING DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Draft Management Advisory – Overweight Inbound International Mail  
Report Number MS-MA-11-DRAFT

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the subject draft audit report dated August 23, 2011 which contained two recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1:**

Issue interim guidance to International Service Centers stating procedures for handling overweight and oversize inbound international mail items.

**Response:** Concur

We agree with the OIG's recommendation to issue interim guidance to the International Service Centers (ISC) regarding procedures for handling overweight and oversize inbound international mail items. As such, a SOP has been developed and implemented at each ISC. Please reference attached SOP.

### **Recommendation 2:**

Update Handbook T-5, *International Mail Operations*, to include procedures for handling oversize and overweight inbound international mail items.

**Response:** Concur

We agree with the OIG's recommendation to update Handbook T-5, *International Mail Operations*, to include procedures for handling oversize and overweight inbound international mail items. The process to update the T-5 is currently underway with a target completion date of October 14, 2011.

- 2 -



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Giselle Valera", written over a horizontal line.

Giselle Valera  
Managing Director, Global Business & Vice President

Attachment

CC: Paul Vogel  
Deborah M. Giannoni-Jackson  
Corporate Audit and Response Management