

July 28, 2003

W. C. MINER  
MANAGER, BALTIMORE DISTRICT

SUBJECT: Audit Report – City Carrier Productivity – Letter Carrier Delays in the  
Baltimore District (Report Number TD-AR-03-011)

### **Background**

On November 19, 2001, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) announced an audit of carrier productivity to determine whether letter carrier operations were effective, and to identify opportunities for cost savings (Project Number 02YG003TD001). The audit responded to a request from the postmaster general. This interim audit report is part of a series of reports.



**Letter carriers delivering mail to cluster boxes in Baltimore, Maryland.**

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

The purpose of this report is to notify Postal Service officials of letter carrier delays we observed in the Baltimore District. During our work we interviewed Postal Service officials; visited seven delivery units; interviewed employees and managers; observed and photographed letter carrier operations; examined relevant data, including data from the Delivery Operations Information System; and analyzed applicable Postal Service policies and procedures. Work associated with this report was conducted from February through July 2003, in accordance with generally accepted government

auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as were considered necessary under the circumstances. We discussed our conclusions and observations with appropriate management officials, and included their comments, where appropriate.

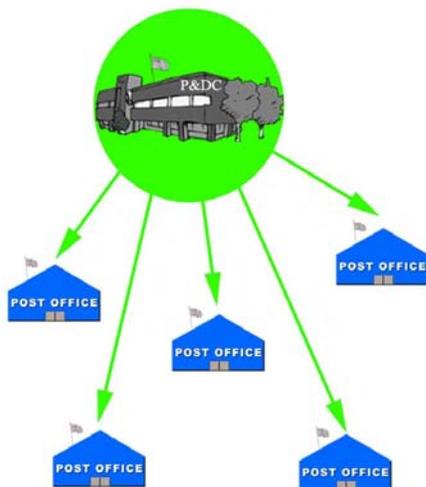
## Prior Report Coverage

Our report, Delayed Letter Carrier Operations in the Capital Metro Area (Report Number TD-MA-02-005, dated August 29, 2002), revealed that letter carriers in Northern Virginia and Baltimore, who were prepared to begin their delivery routes, were substantially delayed while waiting for “missent” mail, which processing and distribution centers had distributed to the wrong post office. Our analysis of Capital Metro Area records indicated that the cost of making carriers wait for missent mail may have included unnecessary overtime. We made two recommendations to address the issues we identified. Management’s comments were responsive to our recommendations.

## Results

### Letter Carrier Delays

Letter carriers we observed during morning visits to various Baltimore post offices were delayed because mail they were scheduled to deliver was not yet available to them. Everyday, Postal Service processing and distribution centers distribute mail to local



Everyday, processing and distribution centers distribute mail to local post offices, where clerks sort it, then distribute it to letter carriers who further sort or “case” it in preparation for delivery.



Letter carrier at a sorting case. Postal Service policy requires that carrier schedules coincide with receipt of mail, and specifies that 80 percent of a carrier’s mail should be at the carrier’s case when the carrier reports for work.

post offices where clerks sort it, and then distribute it to letter carriers who further sort or “case” it, in preparation for delivery. Postal Service Handbook, M-39, Management of Delivery Services, dated March 1, 1998, requires carrier schedules to coincide with receipt of mail, and specifies that 80 percent of the carrier’s mail should be at the carrier’s case when the carrier reports for work. However, during visits to seven Baltimore District delivery units where carriers reported at 7:00 a.m., we noted that 80 percent of the unit’s mail was not consistently distributed by clerks to the carrier’s case and available to carriers before the carriers reported for work. Instead, we noted a daily range from 7 to 52 percent of mail was not available when carriers reported. Since carriers reported at 7:00 a.m. and mail did not arrive until later, we observed carriers “slowing down,” “pacing” themselves, or reading magazines while waiting. Our examination revealed that this occurred because management changed carrier reporting times from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. without coordinating with processing and distribution centers regarding mail dispatch and arrival schedules. Local supervisors explained that this was done because the Baltimore postmaster wanted carriers to complete work before dark or before 5:00 p.m. and verbally instructed local supervisors to make the change. The Baltimore postmaster acknowledged the verbal instructions, but stipulated that the guidance was not a directive and should only be applied as assessed locally. We noted that early reporting wasted carrier’s morning time, and exposed the Baltimore District to potential unnecessary evening overtime costs. Finally we noted supervisors were not using the Delivery Operations Information System to manage carrier schedules, and consequently, could not use the system to evaluate carrier scheduling or take corrective action.

During our work, and after our discussions with district officials and local supervisors, officials told us that they were in the process of gathering and evaluating carrier schedules. In addition, supervisors told us that the district issued guidance to change 7:00 a.m. carrier report times to 7:30 a.m. effective March 8, 2003.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend the manager, Baltimore District:

1. Coordinate with processing and distribution centers, consider planned dispatch and arrival times, and schedule carrier reporting times to coincide with mail flow.

### **Management’s Comments**

Management agreed with the recommendation. They stated that issues related to the recommendation were currently being discussed in weekly meetings between the Baltimore plant manager, the Baltimore postmaster, and Baltimore Customer Service managers; a meeting would be held with plant managers; postmasters would review routes and carrier starting times; and corrections would be made to coordinate mail arrival with carrier reporting time to ensure 80 percent of mail arrived prior to the time

carriers reported. Management's comments, in their entirety, are included in the appendix of this report.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend the manager, Baltimore District:

2. Ensure the Delivery Operations Information System is used to manage carrier operations, or document why the system is not effective for that purpose.

### **Management's Comments**

Management agreed with the recommendation. They stated that headquarters provided Delivery Operations Information System training on May 27, 2003; that all managers and delivery supervisors would receive follow-up training within 90 days; and that the Baltimore cluster understood the Delivery Operations Information System was a viable tool in scheduling carrier hours.

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

In his management response dated June 9, 2003, the Baltimore District manager thanked the OIG for helping Baltimore delivery units run successful operations. He also requested an exit conference.

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

Management's comments are responsive to recommendations 1 and 2. We consider the actions taken and planned sufficient to address the issues identified in this report. The exit conference requested by the Baltimore District manager was held July 15, 2003. As a result of discussions held during that conference, we made minor corrections to the text of this report.

The OIG considers recommendations 1 and 2 significant and, therefore, requires OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. These recommendations should not be closed in the follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendations can be closed.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff during the audit. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Joe Oliva, director, Transportation and Delivery, at 703-248-2100, or me at (703) 248-2300.

Mary W. Demory  
Deputy Assistant Inspector General  
for Core Operations

Attachment

cc: John A. Rapp  
Henry A. Pankey  
Michael F. Spates  
Jerry D. Lane  
Susan M. Duchek

## APPENDIX. MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS

DISTRICT MANAGER



June 9, 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR MARY W DEMORY  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT INSPECTOR GENERAL  
FOR CORE OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report/Management Advisory - City Carrier Productivity  
Letter Carrier Delays in the Baltimore District (Report Number TD-AR-03-DRAFT)

The Baltimore Cluster thanks the OIG for their findings and recommendations in helping our delivery units run a successful operation. Some starting times were changed immediately back to 7:30 a.m. The Postmaster will review the other routes as recommended in response to Recommendation #1.

### Recommendation #1

Coordinate with processing and distribution centers, consider planned dispatch and arrival times, and schedule carrier reporting times to coincide with mail flow.

### Response

1. A meeting will be held with the Plant to review current IOP's. Corrections will be made to the IOP's to improve 80% of the mail arriving prior to carriers' reporting times.
2. All carriers' starting times will be reviewed, with the exception of the Downtown Delivery Annex, 21202/01, and some business routes. This is to ensure timely delivery to our business customers. We will review these particular routes to ensure that 80% of caseable mail is available when the carriers arrive.
3. Any issues related to the above are currently discussed in weekly meetings between the Baltimore Plant; Postmaster, Baltimore; and Managers, Customer Service Operations.

### Recommendation #2

Ensure the Delivery Operations Information System is used to manage carrier operations, or document why the system is not effective for that purpose.

### Response

1. Headquarters provided DOIS training to higher level managers on May 27, 2003. The training enabled everyone to have a clear understanding of the DOIS reports and how delivery supervisors should utilize these reports to make their daily decisions. The District Manager, Customer Service and Sales; Postmaster, Baltimore; Manager, Operations Programs Support; Managers, Post Office Operations; and Managers, Customer Service Operations were all present.

2. All Managers and Delivery Supervisors will receive DOIS follow-up training within the next 90 days. The Baltimore Cluster understands that DOIS is a viable tool in maintaining Function 2 workhours.

We look forward to receiving the final OIG report and are requesting an exit conference to discuss specific issues from the findings in the report.



W. C. Miner  
District Manager  
Customer Service and Sales

cc: Manager, Capital Metro Operations