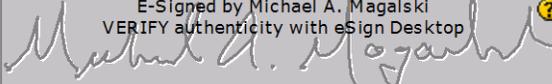




February 27, 2014

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

E-Signed by Michael A. Magalski  
VERIFY authenticity with eSign Desktop 



**FROM:** Michael A. Magalski  
Deputy Assistant Inspector General  
for Support Operations

**SUBJECT:** Management Alert – Watch Desk Notifications  
(Report Number HR-MA-14-005)

This management alert presents the results of our review of U.S. Postal Inspection Service Watch Desk Notifications (Project Number 14YR001HR000).

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

Attachment

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management

## Introduction

The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated a review to gain an understanding of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's Watch Desk notification process. The Postal Inspection Service's Headquarters Watch Desk receives information about critical events that may have national implications and require immediate action. The Watch Desk is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by the National Law Enforcement Communication Centers (NLECC)<sup>1</sup> and is meant to be an instant notification system. When an event occurs, local Postal Inspection Service personnel contact the Watch Desk to report information for dissemination to Postal Service officials for appropriate action. The OIG assistant inspector general for investigations is on the Watch Desk distribution list.

The Postal Inspection Service is responsible for investigating crimes of violence, including homicides of or committed by Postal Service employees or contractors when the crimes are related to employment. The chief postal inspector and the deputy chief inspector, Headquarters Operations, determine notification requirements for the postmaster general, deputy postmaster general, chief operating officer, members of the Board of Governors, the inspector general, and other executive officers. The OIG has oversight responsibility for all activities of the Postal Inspection Service and the chief postal inspector is required to timely report to the OIG<sup>2</sup> the significant activities being carried out by the Postal Inspection Service.

On November 23, 2013, a city carrier assistant<sup>3</sup> was fatally shot while working a route after dark in Cheverly, MD. This incident received significant media attention but was not reported to the Postal Inspection Service's Watch Desk, and the Postal Inspection Service did not notify the OIG until 6 days after the incident occurred. According to Postal Inspection Service officials, sensitive incidents are usually reported from the field through various methods, including face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, and email, and no one outside the Postal Inspection Service should rely on Watch Desk reporting for every single incident. In addition, information may be held several days before it is sent out through a Watch Desk notification, and a description of the incident without sensitive information may be issued through the Watch Desk to provide notification to personnel on the distribution list.

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<sup>1</sup> The NLECC provides centrally managed radio and alarm monitoring and after-hours emergency telephone coverage and has access to law enforcement and intelligence information databases.

<sup>2</sup> *Inspector General Act of 1978*, 5 U.S.C. App. 3, Section 8G(f)(2), updated October 2008.

<sup>3</sup> A part-time Postal Service employee hired to relieve regular mail carriers of excess work on their routes.

## Conclusion

The Postal Inspection Service does not create Watch Desk notifications for every sensitive incident<sup>4</sup> affecting the Postal Service or provide timely information to the OIG regarding such incidents when a Watch Desk notification is not created. As a result, the OIG may not receive the information necessary to fulfill its oversight and law enforcement responsibilities. The Postal Inspection Service should timely report all sensitive incidents affecting the Postal Service to the OIG.

## Watch Desk Notifications

Postal Inspection Service guidelines<sup>5</sup> require personnel to immediately report to the Watch Desk employee homicides that occur on- or off-duty and any other incident that may generate significant media attention. However, Postal Inspection Service officials stated that they are not required to report all incidents to the Watch Desk due to the sensitive nature surrounding certain incidents involving law enforcement investigations and national security. The Postal Inspection Service did not create a Watch Desk notification for the city carrier homicide that occurred on November 23, 2013, in Cheverly, MD, and did not timely inform the OIG of the incident. This occurred because the Postal Inspection Service does not have a formal process to ensure timely notification of sensitive incidents to the OIG, especially those that are not reported through the Watch Desk. Although management stated that Watch Desk notifications are an internal communication tool for field division personnel to notify Postal Inspection Service Headquarters of incidents that may have national implications, no Watch Desk notification was created for this incident because it received significant media attention. Postal Inspection Service management stated they would establish procedures for notifying the OIG of sensitive incidents.

Currently, the Postal Inspection Service notifies the OIG of incidents through multiple channels, including Watch Desk notifications, face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, and emails, but no formal notification process is in place. Postal Inspection Service officials stated that information in emails can be sent easily beyond the initial recipient so the use of multiple communication channels helps maintain the security of the information.

On January 2, 2014, Postal Inspection Service officials issued new Watch Desk reporting guidelines to enhance the Watch Desk reporting process and clarify procedures for sensitive incident reporting. In addition, there will be less reliance on Watch Desk notifications to report sensitive incidents, because they will be reported through a new Executive Committee Incidents 1 (EC1) mailbox. The Postal Inspection Service established the EC1 mailbox for division management to immediately report sensitive incidents or information to the chief postal inspector and deputy chief

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<sup>4</sup> Sensitive incidents may consist of events related to significant dangerous mail incidents, major criminal incidents (such as employee death or homicide), significant or sensitive matters related to Postal Service or Postal Inspection Service employees, and other incidents of national significance.

<sup>5</sup> *Watch Desk Reporting Guidelines*, dated July 2011 and *Inspection Service Manual*, updated January 2012.

inspectors at national headquarters. The OIG is not on the EC1 distribution list. After Postal Inspection Service management at national headquarters is notified of a sensitive incident, they provide further guidance to division management concerning dissemination of information via the Watch Desk or other external reporting methods.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend the chief postal inspector:

1. Establish a formal process to timely notify the Office of Inspector General of sensitive incidents.

### **Management's Comments**

Management agreed with the recommendation and stated they would notify the OIG in a timely manner of all sensitive postal-related incidents not reported through the Watch Desk. Management reviewed a discussion draft of this report and submitted comments. See [Appendix A](#) for management's comments, in their entirety.

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

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendation and the corrective action should resolve the issue identified in the report.

The OIG considers the recommendation significant, and therefore requires OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when the corrective action is completed. This 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: Management's Comments



GUY J. COTTRELL  
CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

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February 19, 2014

Judith Leonhardt  
Director, Audit Operations  
Office of Inspector General  
United States Postal Service  
1735 N Lynn Street  
Arlington, VA 22209

Subject: Discussion Draft - Watch Desk Notifications

Dear Ms. Leonhardt:

In response to the Discussion Draft referenced above, please be advised management agrees with the recommendation. The Chief Postal Inspector, or designee, will notify the designated Office of Inspector General contact in a timely manner of all sensitive postal-related incidents not reported through the Watch Desk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Guy J. Cottrell".

Guy J. Cottrell

cc: Sally K. Haring