Westside Station, Tallahassee, FL: Delivery Operations

AUDIT REPORT
Report Number 24-085-3-R24 | June 7, 2024

Transmittal Letter

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

June 7, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR: MAGED S. AZIZ
MANAGER, FLORIDA 1 DISTRICT

Joseph E. Wolski

FROM: Joseph E. Wolski
Director, Field Operations, Atlantic & WestPac

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Westside Station, Tallahassee, FL: Delivery Operations
(Report Number 24-085-3-R24)

This report presents the results of our audit of mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Westside Station in Tallahassee, FL.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Executive Vice President
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, Southern Area Retail & Delivery Operations
Director, Retail & Post Office Operations Maintenance
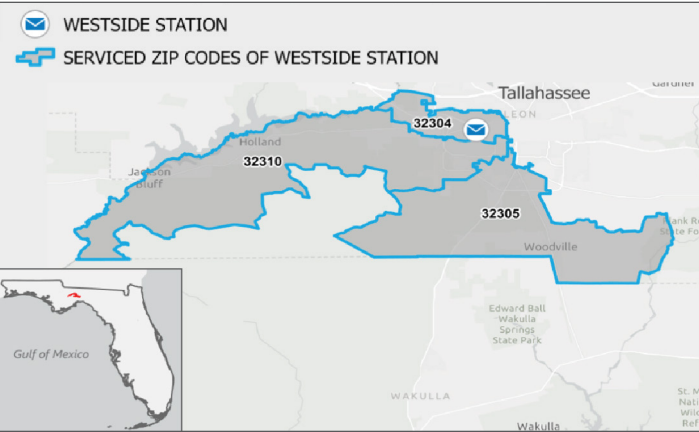Corporate Audit and Response Management

Results

Background

The U.S. Postal Service's mission is to provide timely, reliable, secure, and affordable mail and package delivery to more than 160 million residential and business addresses across the country. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviews delivery operations at facilities across the country and provides management with timely feedback in furtherance of this mission.

This interim report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Westside Station in Tallahassee, FL (Project Number 24-085-3). It responds to concerns raised by U.S. Representative Neil Dunn about delivery operations in the Tallahassee area. The Westside Station is in the Florida 1 District of the Southern Area and services ZIP Codes 32304, 32305, and 32310 (see Figure 1).[1] These ZIP Codes serve 90,069 people in a predominantly urban area. Specifically, 75,736 (84 percent) live in urban communities and 14,333 (16 percent) live in rural communities.[2]

This delivery unit has 22 city, 10 rural, and three highway contract routes. The Westside Station is one of three delivery units[3] the OIG reviewed during the week of April 1, 2024, that are serviced by the Tallahassee Processing and Distribution Facility (P&DF).

We assessed all units serviced by the Tallahassee P&DF based on the number of Customer 360[4] (C360) delivery-related inquiries,[5] Informed Delivery[6] contacts, stop-the-clock[7] (STC) scans performed away from the delivery point, and undelivered route information between December 1, 2023, and February 29, 2024. We also reviewed first and last mile failures[8] between December 2, 2023, and March 1, 2024.

We judgmentally selected the Westside Station primarily based on the number of C360 inquiries related to delivery, Informed Delivery contacts, and STC scans performed away from the delivery point. The unit also had one undelivered route. See Table 1 for a comparison of some of these metrics between the unit and the rest of the district.

Figure 1. ZIP Codes Serviced by Westside Station

Source: OIG analysis of ZIP Code data.

Table 1. Delivery Metric Comparison Between December 1, 2023, and February 29, 2024

Delivery Metric	Unit Average per Route	District Average per Route
C360s Related to Delivery	24.0	7.3
Informed Delivery Contacts	27.1	17.6

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1   The Westside also services ZIP Code 32316, which is used for Post Office Box and business customers.
2   We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.
3   The other two units were the Lake Jackson Station, Tallahassee, FL (Project Number 24-085-1) and the Leon Station, Tallahassee, FL (Project Number 24-085-2).
4   A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.
5   A compilation of package inquiry, package pickup, daily mail service, and hold mail inquiries.
6   Informed Delivery is a free and optional notification service that gives residential customers the ability to digitally preview their letter-sized mail and submit inquiries for mailpieces that were expected for delivery but have not arrived.
7   A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mailpiece. Examples of STC scans include "Delivered," "Available for Pickup," and "No Access."
8   First mile failures occur when a mailpiece is collected and does not receive a processing scan at the P&DC on the day that it was intended. Last mile failures occur after the mailpiece has been processed at the P&DC on a final processing operation and is not delivered to the customer on the day it was intended.

Delivery Metric	Unit Average per Route	District Average per Route
STC Scans Performed Away from Delivery Point	22.6	11.0

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of Postal Service's C360, Informed Delivery, Facility Database, and Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data extracted on March 11, 2024. PTR is the system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Westside Station in Tallahassee, FL.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys,[9] inaccurate carrier complement and timekeeping, and property conditions. Specifically, we reviewed delivery metrics, including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, carrier complement and timekeeping, and distribution up-time.[10] During our site visit we observed mail conditions; package scanning procedures; arrow key security procedures; timekeeping documentation; and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the "Notice Left" area[11] and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 2 with management on May 13, 2024, and included their comments, where appropriate.

We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Westside Station. We will issue a separate report[12] that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all three delivery units, as well as the district. See Appendix A for additional information about our scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting delivery operations and property conditions at the Westside Station. Specifically, we found issues with four of the five areas we reviewed. We also identified issues related to the sortation of packages for dispatch to the P&DF (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Issues Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail	X	
Package Scanning	X	
Arrow Keys		X
Carrier Complement and Timekeeping	X	
Property Conditions	X	
Other Issues	X	

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of April 1, 2024

We did not identify any issues with the management or safeguarding of arrow keys or carrier complement. However, we did identify issues with timekeeping management (see Finding #3).

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9   A distinctively shaped key carriers use to open mail-receiving receptacles such as street collection boxes and panels of apartment house mailboxes equipped with an arrow lock. Arrow keys are accountable property and are subject to strict controls.

10   Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

11   The area of a delivery unit where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

12   Project Number 24-085.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of April 2, 2024, we identified 1,539 delayed mailpieces[13] at 29 carrier cases. Specifically, we identified 790 flats, 693 letters and 56 packages. See Figure 2 for examples of delayed mail found at carrier cases. In addition, management did not report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)[14] system. Further, the carriers were not using Postal Service (PS) Forms 1571, Undelivered Mail Report,[15] to document the undelivered mailpieces.

Figure 2. Examples of Delayed Mail in the Carrier Cases

Source: OIG photos taken April 2, 2024.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide adequate oversight to verify that all mail was cleared from the unit. The station manager stated that management relied on carriers to complete their deliveries, as instructed, and as a result, did not verify whether the closing supervisor conducted a walkthrough to check for delayed mail. Unit management did not report delayed mail in the DCV system or require carriers to complete PS Form 1571 because they had not

conducted a walkthrough and were unaware of the undelivered mailpieces.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have conducted an adequate walkthrough of the workroom to verify that all mail was delivered, determined the reason the undelivered mail was brought back from the street, and assured it was properly documented on PS Form 1571. Postal Service policy[16] states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. In addition, managers are required[17] to report all mail in the delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in DCV. Further, management must update DCV if volumes have changed prior to the end of the business day.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When mail is delayed, there is an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand. In addition, inaccurate reporting of delayed mail in DCV provides management at the local, district, area, and headquarters levels with an inaccurate status of mail delays and can result in improper actions taken to address issues.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding. See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

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13   Count of mail included individual piece counts and OIG estimate based on Postal Service conversion factors in Handbook M-32, *Management Operating Data Systems*, Appendix D.
14   A tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of daily mail conditions at the point in time when carriers have departed for the street.
15   PS Form 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*, lists all mail distributed to the carrier for delivery that was left in the office or returned undelivered.
16   *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.
17   *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide*, August 2023.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees scanned and handled packages improperly at the delivery unit.

We reviewed package scanning data for scans that occurred at the unit and removed any potentially accurate scans performed.[18] In total, employees improperly scanned 800 packages at the delivery unit between December 2023 and February 2024 (see Table 3). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 70.3 percent of them were scanned "Delivered."

Table 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	Count	Percentage
Delivered	562	70.3%
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location	169	21.1%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	48	6.0%
No Secure Location Available	16	2.0%
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	3	0.4%
Refused	2	0.3%
Total	**800**	**100*%**

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data.
*Total percentage does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

We also found issues with scanning and handling of packages in the unit. On the morning of April 2, 2024, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 60 packages[19] to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 60 sampled packages, 40 (67 percent) had missing or improper scans or handling issues, including:

- Seventeen packages (13 from the carrier cases and four from the "Notice Left" area) were scanned delivered, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's delivery address.

- Eleven packages (six from the carrier cases and five from the "Notice Left" area) were scanned "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location" or "No Secure Location Available" and were scanned away from the delivery point. These scans occurred between 0.5 and 7.3 miles away from the delivery point.

- Five packages from the carrier cases were scanned "Insufficient Address" that should have been returned to the sender.

- Five packages from "Notice Left" area were scanned "No Authorized Recipient Available" that should have been returned to the sender.

- One package from the carrier case was scanned "return to post office for address verification" that should have been returned to the sender.

- One package from the carrier case was missing an "Arrival-at-Unit" scan, which is a required scan for performance measurement.

Further, one package in the "Notice Left" area was not returned to the sender, as required. This package was 11 days past its scheduled return date.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Management explained that competing responsibilities, such as getting the mail out for delivery, prevented them from consistently reviewing scanning integrity reports and following up with carriers.

The packages in the "Notice Left" area were not returned due to inadequate management oversight. Specifically, unit management stated that packages in the "Notice Left" area were not reviewed because

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18   This data does not include scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as "Delivered – PO Box" and "Customer (Vacation) Hold." Additionally, PO Box scans at the unit were only counted when the delivery point was an address away from the unit. This category does not include mail addressed for a PO Box.
19   We judgmentally selected 30 packages from the carrier cases and all 30 packages from the "Notice Left" area.

of retail clerk callouts, limited staff availability, and increased workloads.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,[20] which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.[21] Packages in the "Notice Left" area should have been reviewed for second notices and returned to sender if they remained after the prescribed number of days.[22]

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Customers rely on accurate scan data to track their packages in real time. When employees do not scan mailpieces correctly or return packages timely, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning operations, management can improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance both the customer experience and the Postal Service brand.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

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20 *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.
21 *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.
22 *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, April 2016. Domestic packages should be returned to sender on the 15th calendar day after a notice is left, and international packages should be returned to sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.

Finding # 3: Timekeeping Management

What We Found

We determined that the Westside Station had 18 disallowed time occurrences between December 2, 2023, and March 1, 2024. Further, management did not complete PS Forms 1017-A, *Time Disallowance Record*,[23] or 1017-B, *Unauthorized Overtime Record*,[24] in the Time and Attendance Collection System (TACS)[25] or print and retain hard copies in a secure area.

Why Did It Occur

Regarding disallowed time, the supervisor stated he was unaware of the policies to print Forms 1017-A and 1017-B and to annotate that they had discussed the matter with the employee. Further, he stated he did not know it was a requirement to resolve the entries in the system. The station manager acknowledged that pay adjustments must be completed and the printed forms secured. He attributed it to management oversight as other duties took priority, such as getting the mail out for delivery each day.

What Should Have Happened

Postal Service policy[26] states that pay adjustment certifications are to be kept on file and attached to supporting documentation for the current calendar year plus the three previous years. Policy[27] further states unit personnel must complete PS Form 1017-A and PS Form 1017-B entries and place them in a notebook binder that is secured from unauthorized access, documenting the reason for the disallowed time or unauthorized overtime. Postal guidance[28] provides instructions on how to complete the entries in TACS.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When proper documentation of pay adjustments, time disallowance, and unauthorized overtime is not completed, management could incur additional managerial workhours. In addition, the Postal Service risks violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act[29] when unit management does not maintain documentation that shows the justifiable reason and employee notification for disallowed time.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

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23 Form used only when a supervisor observes, or has reason to know, that an employee did not work, while "on the clock." The supervisor must document the basis for any such disallowance. These forms serve as a cumulative record of disallowed time.
24 Managers and supervisors are required to complete a PS Form 1017-B the first time a non-exempt employee incurs unauthorized overtime. These forms serve as a cumulative record of unauthorized overtime.
25 The system used by Postal Service to automate the collection of employee time and attendance information.
26 *AdjustPay User Guide*, Course No. 31202-25, updated February 9, 2017.
27 Handbook F-21, *Time and Attendance*, Section 146 – Approving Entries, February 2016.
28 TACS Training Page, Training Video 1017-A 1017 B Enhancement Demo.
29 29 USC § 201-219.

Finding # 4: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety, security, and maintenance issues at the Westside Station.

Property Safety

- Thirteen fire extinguishers missing monthly and annual inspections. Four fire extinguishers were missing monthly tags, three were not mounted, and one was blocked.

- Three unsecured ladders on the workroom area.

- Handicap rail concrete support in front of the customer entrance deteriorating and posing a potential fall hazard to customers (see Figure 3).

- Several electrical sockets and light switches missing plate covers or broken (see Figure 4). Several junction boxes also missing covers.

Figure 3. Deteriorating Handrail in Front of Building

Source: OIG photo taken April 3, 2024.

Figure 4. Missing Electrical Plate Covers
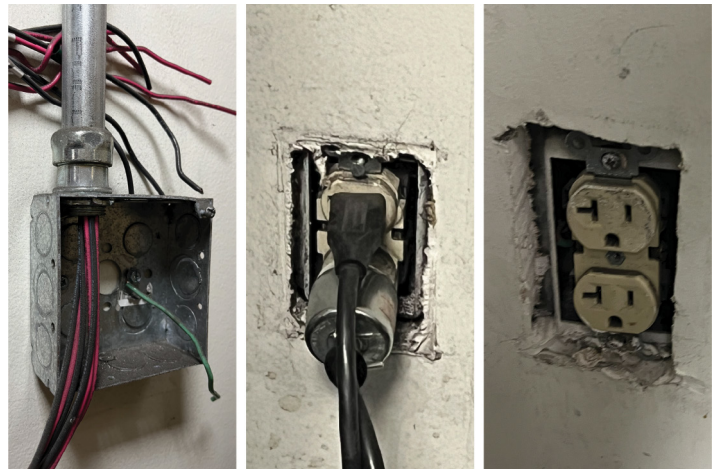
Source: OIG photos taken April 3, 2024.

Property Security

- Faded parking lot sign indicating all vehicles are subject to search not legible.

- No "US Property No Trespassing" signs around the facility perimeter.

Property Maintenance

- Walls throughout the facility such as lobby and workroom floor needed repainting.

- Several lights on the workroom floor not working due to numerous leaks from the roof.

- Loading dock area with damaged gutter allowing rain to trickle down where carriers load their vehicles.

- Parking lot needed resurfacing and parking bumpers deteriorating.

- Multiple stained, missing, broken, and misaligned ceiling tiles throughout the facility (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Stained and Missing Tile in Men's Restroom and Workroom Areas

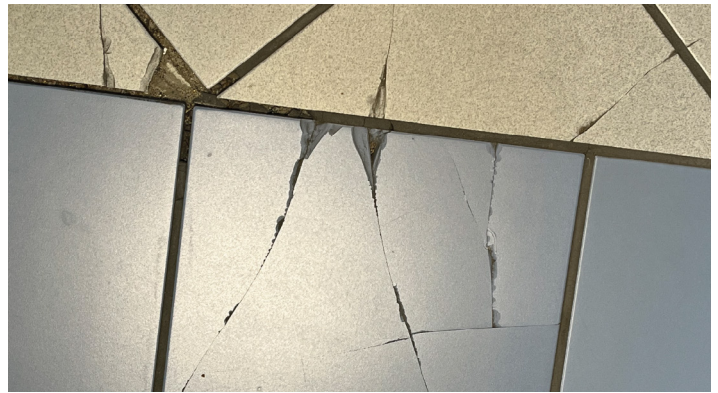Source: OIG photos taken April 3, 2024.

- A loose water pipe socket in men's bathroom (see Figure 6).
- Broken floor tiles in customer lobby (see Figure 7).

Figure 6. Loose Water Pipe Socket in Men's Restroom

Source: OIG photo taken April 3, 2024.

Figure 7. Broken Floor Tiles in Lobby Area

Source: OIG photo taken April 3, 2024.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight and take the necessary actions to verify that property condition issues were corrected because other duties, such as getting the mail out for delivery each day, took priority over addressing maintenance issues. Additionally, management was in the process of working with the landlord to fix some building issues.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight of personnel responsible for maintaining facilities, reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up for completion. The Postal Service requires management to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers.[30]

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management's attention to maintenance, safety, and security deficiencies can reduce the risk of injuries to employees and customers; reduce related costs, such as workers' compensation claims, lawsuits, and penalties; and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand. In addition, some of the stained ceiling tiles, indicating water leaks, were above sorting equipment in the facility, which could damage the machine.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

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30 Postal Service Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*, July, 2020.

Finding # 5: Sortation of Packages for Dispatch

What We Found

Employees at the Westside Station did not properly separate packages destined for the Jacksonville Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC). Specifically, on April 3, 2024, during the unit's evening operations, we observed that Ground Advantage[31] and Priority Mail[32] were commingled in the containers.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide oversight to ensure that employees properly separated packages for dispatch to the P&DC. Specifically, the PM supervisor and closing clerk stated they did not know that the current policy required them to separate the Priority Mail and the Ground Advantage packages.

What Should Have Happened

In July 2023, the Postal Service made significant changes to its parcel processing operations. Specifically, delivery and retail units changed the way they separated packages dispatched to facilitate the introduction of a new package service. On September 26, 2023, the Postal Service implemented[33] additional changes for the preparation and dispatch of packages to processing facilities by delivery units of a specified level.[34] Postal Service requires these units to separate certain classes of packages when dispatching this mail to the processing facility and identifies the placards to be used for the proper separation.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Proper mail preparation is required for visibility throughout the Postal Service network. When mail is not properly separated for dispatch to the processing facility, in accordance with procedures, there is an increased likelihood that mail will require additional processing steps. Furthermore, this can result in delays and service failures and an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand.

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31   A service providing an affordable and reliable way to send packages inside the U.S. Packages under 70 pounds arrive in two to five business days.
32   An expedited service that may contain any mailable matter weighing no more than 70 pounds.
33   *Mail Preparation (MTEL) Changes Level 22 and Above Only*, September 2023.
34   All level-22 units and higher are required to follow these package separation requirements.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from March through June 2024 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 objective.

In planning and conducting the audit, we obtained an understanding of the Westside Station delivery operations internal control structure to help determine the nature, timing, and extent of our audit procedures. We reviewed the management controls for overseeing the program and mitigating associated risks. Additionally, we assessed the internal control components and underlying principles, and we determined that the following three components were significant to our audit objective:

- Control Activities
- Information and Communication
- Monitoring

We developed audit work to ensure that we assessed these controls. Based on the work performed, we identified internal control deficiencies related to all three components that were significant within the context of our objectives. We will issue a separate report that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for the Westside, Lake Jackson, and Leon Stations, as well as the district. Our recommendations, if implemented, should correct the weaknesses we identified.

We assessed the reliability of PTR, DCV, and TACS data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Appendix B: Management's Comments

May 13, 2024

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Management Response: Westside Station, Tallahassee, FL: Delivery Operations –
Congressional (Report Number 24-085-3-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the
findings contained in the draft audit report, *Westside Station, Tallahassee, FL: Delivery
Operations*

Management agrees with the five findings in the report on delayed mail, package scanning,
timekeeping management, property conditions, and mail separations.

Management has begun taking steps to address the five findings.

Delayed Mail: Management will conduct a standup talk on the proper use of PS Form 1571 to
identify any mail left at carrier cases. A service talk will also be given to local management on the
proper handling of delayed mail and recording in DCV. Additionally, management at the district
level will conduct reviews to monitor for compliance.

Package Scanning: Management will provide a service talk on proper handling and package
scanning procedures and conduct reviews to monitor compliance.

Timekeeping Management: Local management will be given a service talk on proper recording of
disallowed time and unauthorized overtime. Additionally, reviews will be conducted to monitor
compliance.

Property Conditions: Management has begun abating the property condition issues and will
submit work orders for repairs required by other resources.

Sortation of Packages for Dispatch: Management will conduct a standup talk explaining the
process for properly separating Ground Advantage and Priority Mail and monitor for compliance.

E-SIGNED by MAGED.S AZIZ
on 2024-05-16 11:32:23 EDT
_____
Maged S. Aziz
Manager, Florida 1 District

Cc: Corporate Audit & Response

Contact us via our Hotline and FOIA forms. Follow us on social networks. Stay informed.

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