Efficiency of Operations at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center, Kansas City, MO

AUDIT REPORT
Report Number 24-106-R24 | July 15, 2024

OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR
GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Transmittal Letter

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

July 15, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR: KATHY HAND
MIDWEST DIVISION DIRECTOR, PROCESSING OPERATIONS

JOHN DARDEN
MIDWEST DIVISION DIRECTOR, LOGISTICS

FROM: Sean Balduff
Director, Field Operations, Central and Southern

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Efficiency of Operations at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center, Kansas City, MO
(Report Number 24-106-R24)

This report presents the results of our audit of the Efficiency of Operations at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center.

All recommendations require U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General's (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.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Chief Processing and Distribution Officer and Executive Vice President
Chief Logistics Officer and Executive Vice President
Vice President, Processing and Maintenance Operations
Vice President, Logistics
Vice President, Western Regional Processing Operations
Central Regional Director, Logistics
Corporate Audit Response Management

Results

Background

The U.S. Postal Service needs effective and productive operations to fulfill its mission of providing prompt, reliable, and affordable mail service to the American public. It has a vast transportation network that moves mail and equipment among about 330 processing facilities and 31,100 post offices, stations, and branches. The Postal Service is transforming its processing and logistics networks to become scalable, reliable, visible, efficient, automated, and digitally integrated. This includes modernizing operating plans and aligning the workforce; leveraging emerging technologies to provide world-class visibility and tracking of mail packages in near real-time; and optimizing the surface and air transportation network. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviews the efficiency of mail processing operations at facilities across the country and provides management with timely feedback to further the Postal Service's mission.

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the efficiency of operations at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) in Kansas City, MO (Project Number 24-106). We judgmentally selected the Kansas City P&DC based on a review of first and last mile failures;[1] workhours; scanning compliance;[2] and late, canceled, and extra trips. Additionally, we selected this facility based on concerns raised by Senators Josh Hawley and Roger Marshall. The Kansas City P&DC is in the Midwest Division, and processes letters, flats, and parcels. The Kansas City P&DC services multiple 3-digit ZIP Codes in urban and rural communities[3] (see Table 1).

Table 1. Population Demographics

3-Digit ZIP Codes	Urban Population	Rural Population	Total Population
640-641	1,114,072	141,804	1,255,876
644-649	260,760	307,036	567,796
654-658	474,544	491,636	966,180
660-662	935,524	158,658	1,094,182
664-668	324,227	228,951	553,178

Source: Postal Service National Distribution Labeling List and 2020 Census Bureau data.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate the efficiency of operations at the Kansas City P&DC.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: mail clearance times;[4] delayed mail; late, canceled, and extra outbound trips; dock scanning; and security of registry items. We reviewed Surface Visibility Web (SVWeb)[5] data for late, canceled, and extra trips, as well as scan compliance for the period from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. Further, we identified mail clearance time goals for the Kansas City P&DC and compared them with operations shown in the Run Plan Generator report.[6] During our site visit the week of May 13, 2024, we interviewed P&DC management and observed mail processing and dock operations.

During this time, the OIG also audited three delivery units[7] serviced by the Kansas City P&DC. We will provide the results of those audits to Kansas-Missouri District management in separate reports. See Appendix A for additional information about our scope and methodology.

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1   First mile failures occur when a mailpiece is collected and does not receive a processing scan at the origin processing facility on the day that it was intended. Last mile failures occur after the mailpiece has been processed at a processing facility on a final processing operation and is not delivered to the customer on the day it was intended.
2   Scans include load, depart, unload, close, assign, and arrive.
3   We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.
4   The latest time committed mail can clear an operation for proper dispatch or delivery.
5   A website dedicated to the Surface Visibility program, which provides real-time transportation updates and reports on the movement of trailers in the surface network. The data captured to identify early, on-time, late, or canceled trips is also used to evaluate and improve transportation schedules.
6   An application mail processing facilities use to plan machine utilization based on volume, clearance times, and other criteria.
7   The three delivery units were Hickman Mills Station, Kansas City MO, (project number 24-107-1); Robert L. Roberts Station, Kansas City, KS (project number 24-107-2); and Shawnee Mission Post Office, Mission, KS (project number 24-107-3).

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Results Summary

We identified deficiencies for four of the five areas we reviewed that affected the efficiency of operations at the Kansas City P&DC. We also identified other issues related to safety and security (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Issues Identified	
	Yes	No
Clearance Times	X	
Delayed Mail	X	
Late, Canceled, and Extra Outbound Trips	X	
Scan Compliance	X	
Security of Registry Items		X
Other Issues	X	

Source: Results of OIG data reviewed from fiscal years (FY) 2023 and 2024 and fieldwork conducted from May 13 to 16, 2024.

We observed registry cage conditions and interviewed personnel to determine if procedures over the handling and security of registered mail were being followed. We did not find any systemic issues.

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Finding #1: Clearance Times

What We Found

From January to March 2024, the Kansas City P&DC did not consistently meet its clearance times for letters and flats. Specifically, letter processing went past the clearance time target 18 out of 79 days (22.8 percent) and flat processing went past the clearance time target 13 out of 83 days (15.7 percent). In addition, during our observations, letter processing went past the clearance time target on one of the three days reviewed. Flat processing met the clearance time target during our review.

Why Did it Occur

The missed clearance times were primarily due to employee attendance issues. For example, during the weekend prior to our visit, the plant had a total of 453 unplanned absences, and the plant manager stated they typically average about 10 percent unscheduled absences daily. To put this in perspective, as of May 10, 2024, the Kansas City P&DC had 1,123 Mail Processing Clerks and Mail Handlers on the rolls. According to the Manager, Distribution Operations, who is responsible of attendance control, some supervisors are not properly monitoring employee attendance and reporting absences for further review. In addition, some supervisors did not have access to the systems used to monitor employee attendance.

What Should Have Happened

The Postal Service has established service standards[8] for measuring service performance. Management should verify the mail is processed timely to meet clearance times and the established service standards. In addition, Postal Service policy[9] states that management is responsible for controlling unscheduled absences; including informing employees of leave regulations and discussing attendance records with individual employees when warranted.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Missing clearance times increases the likelihood that mail will not be taken to the dock in time for dispatch to delivery units and will be delayed. This could lead to mail not being delivered to customers on time and adversely affect the Postal Service brand.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **Midwest Division Director, Processing Operations**, provide training to supervisors on the procedures for properly monitoring and reporting employee absences and verify that all supervisors have access to the systems necessary to monitor employee attendance.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding and the associated recommendation. Management's target implementation date is August 31, 2024. See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

OIG Evaluation

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendation.

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8   A stated goal for service achievement for each mail class.
9   *Employee and Labor Relations Manual*, Section 511.42, dated March 2024.

Finding #2: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On each day of our observations from May 14 to 16, 2024, we identified delayed mail in the letter and flat manual operation units (see Figure 1) and on the workroom floor (see Figure 2). We observed delayed letters that had been in the manual operation unit since May 9, 2024. Management properly reported this mail in the Mail Condition Visualization (MCV)[10] system. In total, management reported 96,912 delayed letters and flats in the MCV system during our visit (see Table 3).

Table 3. Delayed Letters and Flats

| Date	Delayed Letters Reported in MCV	Delayed Flats Reported in MCV	Total Reported in MCV
May 14	9,310	31,365	40,675
May 15	10,920	17,666	28,586
May 16	19,370	8,281	27,651
Total	**39,600**	**57,312**	**96,912**

Source: MCV system.

Figure 1. Delayed Mail in the Manual Letters and Flats Areas

Source: OIG photos taken May 14, 2024.

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10 MCV provides near real-time visibility of a facility's on-hand volume, delayed processing volume, delayed dispatch volume, and oldest mail date by mail category and processing operation and stores historical trailer information.

Figure 2. Delayed Mail on the Workroom Floor
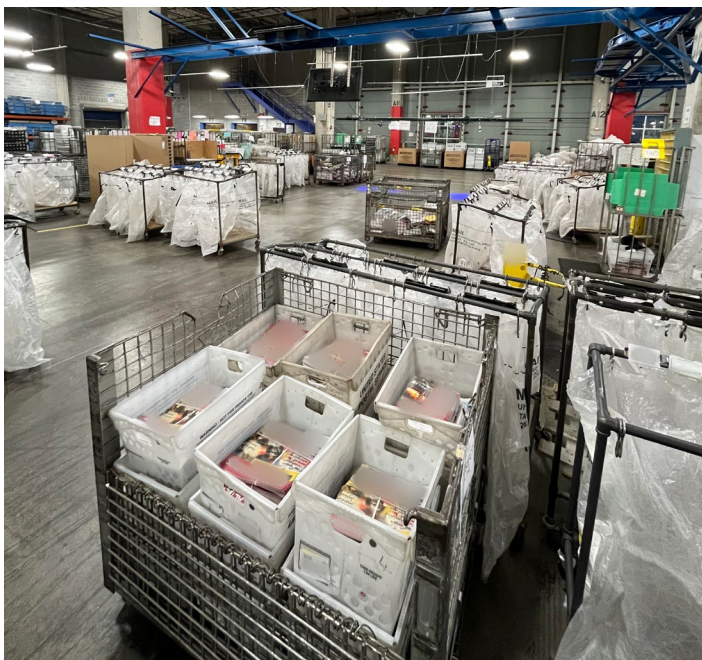
Source: OIG photos taken May 16, 2024.

Why Did it Occur

The delayed mail we identified was partially due to the attendance issues identified in Finding 1. Specifically, when there are employee shortages in letter mail processing, management moves employees from the manual units and flats processing unit to process automated letter mail. Addressing employee attendance issues would also help with the delays in manual operations. We also found that there was machinable mail that could have been processed on automated equipment in the manual letter operations unit. The supervisor over the manual operation unit was responsible for making sure only non-machinable mail entered the unit. However, she stated that the mail often arrived before she did, so no one was reviewing it.

What Should Have Happened

Postal Service policy[11] states that management should continually gauge how well they are managing the flow of mail and have control over the workload, personnel, and equipment needed for a well-run operation.

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.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the **Midwest Division Director, Processing Operations**, implement procedures at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center to verify that mail arriving at the manual letter operations unit does not contain mail that could be processed on automated equipment.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding and the associated recommendation. Management's target implementation date is August 31, 2024.

OIG Evaluation

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendation.

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11   Handbook PO-413, *Platform Operations*, Section 2-1.1, dated December 2013.

Finding #3: Late, Canceled, and Extra Outbound Trips

What We Found

From April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, there was a total of 103,273 outbound trips from the Kansas City P&DC. Of these, 28,026 were late trips, 24,782 were canceled trips, and 2,665 were extra trips. These trips represented about 53.7 percent of all outbound trips at the facility (see Table 4).

Table 4. Outbound Transportation Metrics

Transportation Metric	Number	Percent of Total Trips
Late Trips	28,026	27.1%
Canceled Trips	24,782	24.0%
Extra Trips	2,665	2.6%

Source: SVWeb.

Why Did it Occur

Late and canceled outbound trips occurred primarily because management did not recently complete a full Postal Vehicle Service (PVS)[12] transportation schedule review. While the new logistics manager has been canceling unused trips and updating transportation schedules, there has not been a full PVS transportation schedule review since 2022. In addition, management stated that there were usually about 10 driver call-offs daily, which could cause late trips. While the facility did not show a driver shortage in the Workforce System,[13] management did not remove PVS drivers from the rolls in a timely manner, making it appear that they had more drivers than they actually did. As of May 1, 2024 there were 124 PVS drivers on the rolls, including 10 that had not worked for the previous 13 pay periods.

Regarding extra trips, management stated that most of them were intentional and related to an initiative to increase the transportation of mail volume from air to surface and reduce transportation costs.

What Should Have Happened

According to Postal Service policy,[14] key elements to effective dispatch and routing include evaluating transportation performance to planned schedules and ensuring that planned dispatches are compatible with an effective mail arrival profile at the destination. In addition, management should have removed the inactive PVS drivers so that replacements could be hired to increase the availability of drivers to assist on deliveries.[15]

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When there are late, canceled, and extra trips, there is an increased risk the mail will not be delivered on time, which can adversely affect Postal Service customers, harm the brand, send mailers to competitors, increase operating costs, and cause the Postal Service to lose revenue.

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12   A service Postal Service employees use to transport mail between mail processing facilities, post offices, post office branches, post office stations, detached mail units, various postal customers, and terminals.
13   Workforce is a centralized hub that links to staff planning, insights, and analytics.
14   Handbook M-22, *Dispatch and Routing Policies*, Section 116, dated July 2013.
15   The Postal Service documented that it is critical to process timely separations, to maximize non-career flexibility and reduce costs.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the **Midwest Division Director, Logistics**, complete a review of Postal Vehicle Service transportation schedules and verify related actions are implemented at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center.

Recommendation #4

We recommend the **Midwest Division Director, Logistics**, verify management at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center completes the removal process for Postal Vehicle Service drivers that are no longer working at the facility.

Postal Service Response

Management agreed with the finding and associated recommendations. Management's target implementation date for recommendation 3 is October 31, 2024, and for recommendation 4 is August 31, 2024.

OIG Evaluation

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations.

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Finding #4: Scan Compliance

What We Found

The Kansas City P&DC did not consistently meet scanning goals. From April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, the average compliance for load and unload scans did not meet the Postal Service goal. The Postal Service goal for load and unload scans was 92 percent in FY 2023 and 93.25 percent in FY 2024 (see Table 5). These scans help the Postal Service track mail as it flows through the network. Load scans are performed when a container is loaded onto a trailer for dispatch and unload scans are performed when a container is removed from a trailer.

Table 5. Scanning Compliance at the Kansas City P&DC From April 2023 to March 2024

Month	Scan Type	
	Load	**Unload**
March 2024	85.64	81.52
February 2024	82.19	81.52
January 2024	84.05	78.73
December 2023	86.66	84.74
November 2023	88.04	86.01
October 2023	88.14	89.08
September 2023	88.09	85.67
August 2023	91.12	89.94
July 2023	90.42	90.15
June 2023	90.82	89.93
May 2023	90.82	93.44
April 2023	93.14	94.08

Source: SVWeb.

Why Did it Occur

Scans were not being performed consistently due to a lack of management oversight. Specifically, management stated they had lost focus on the monitoring and enforcing of scanning at the facility during a recent change in plant management.

What Should Have Happened

Postal Service policy[16] states that employees are required to perform outbound and inbound scans of containers and trailers to ensure 100 percent mail visibility.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Low scanning compliance contributes to inaccurate utilization data, missent mail, and operational inefficiencies. Management uses scanning data to streamline outbound container operations, enhance dispatch quality, and increase efficiency in the use of transportation containers and trailers. When scans are not made, management may not have the information needed to make accurate operational decisions.

> ### Recommendation #5
> We recommend the **Midwest Division Director, Processing Operations** coordinate with the **Midwest Division Director, Logistics** to develop and implement a plan to verify scanning at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center is consistently completed in accordance with policy.

Postal Service Response
The Postal Service agreed with this finding and the associated recommendation. Management's target implementation date is October 31, 2024.

OIG Evaluation
The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendation.

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16 *Surface Visibility Program User* booklet, updated January 10, 2023

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Finding #5: Safety and Security

What We Found

During our site observations, we noted safety and security issues. Specifically, we observed trucks and trailers parked at the docks without wheel chocks placed next to the tire to prevent them from rolling away (see Figure 3). In addition, drivers were not always securing trailer doors when departing from the facility (see Figure 4).

Figure 3. Trailers Without Wheel Chocks at the Kansas City P&DC

Source: OIG photos taken May 15, 2024.

Figure 4. Unsecured Door on Trailer Departing the Kansas City P&DC

Source: OIG photo taken May 15, 2024.

Why Did it Occur

The inconsistent use of wheel chocks and locks was due to a lack of management oversight. Specifically, supervisors were not monitoring or enforcing the use of wheel chocks or locks. Management also noted that it is difficult to monitor the use of wheel chocks and locks due to the large size of the facility.

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What Should Have Happened

The Postal Service must preserve the security of the mail and ensure drivers comply with security policies regarding the transportation of mail in trailers. Postal Service policy[17] states that all doors to the cargo compartment must be equipped with locks and kept locked while in route. Additionally, Postal Service policy[18] states that drivers must prevent trailers from rolling away from docks by using wheel chocks.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When employees do not observe safe working practices and safety rules, there is an increased risk of employee accidents and injuries. Also, when the Postal Service does not preserve and protect the security of the mail in its custody, there is an increased risk of unauthorized opening, inspection, reading, tampering, delaying, or committing other unauthorized acts.

Recommendation #6

We recommend the **Midwest Division Director, Logistics**, verify management at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center monitors and enforces the use of wheel chocks and locks on trailer doors.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding and the associated recommendation. Management's target implementation date is August 31, 2024.

OIG Evaluation

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendation.

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17   Postal Operations Manual Issue 9, Section 476.2, Item H, updated November 30, 2023, and Handbook PO-515, *Highway Contractor Safety*, Section 448.2, dated July 2010.
18   Handbook EL-803, *Maintenance Employee's Guide to Safety*, Section 1.C, dated July 2020 and Handbook PO-515, *Highway Contractor Safety*, section 32, Item i, dated July 2010.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from May through July 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. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on June 28, 2024, and included their comments where appropriate.

In planning and conducting the audit, we obtained an understanding of the mail processing 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 control activities, information and communication, and monitoring that were significant within the context of our objectives. Our recommendations, if implemented, should correct the weaknesses we identified.

We assessed the reliability of Web End of Run (WebEOR),[19] MCV, SVWeb, and Workforce 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.

Prior Audit Coverage

Report Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact
Kansas City Delayed Mail	To evaluate mail delivery operations at selected locations in the Kansas-Missouri District.	23-085-R23	August 31, 2023	None

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19   WebEOR is a Web-based application used in collecting operational data from automated and mechanized mail processing equipment.

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Appendix B: Management's Comments

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

July 5, 2024

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Efficiency of Operations at the Kansas City
Processing and Distribution Center, Kansas City, M0. (Report Number 24-106-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Efficiency of Operations at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center, Kansas City, MO.*

Management agrees with the five findings in the report on clearance times, delayed mail, late, canceled, and extra trips, scan compliance, and other issues.

Following are our comments on each of the six recommendations.

Recommendation 1: We recommend the Midwest Division Director, Processing Operations, provide training to supervisors on the procedures for properly monitoring and reporting employee absences and verify that all supervisors have access to the systems necessary to monitor employee attendance.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will train supervisors on proper procedures for monitoring and reporting employee absences. Additionally, reviews will be conducted to monitor compliance and ensure all required personnel has the appropriate access.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2024

Responsible Official:
Midwest Division Director, Processing

Recommendation 2: We recommend the Midwest Division Director, Processing Operations, implement procedures at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center to verify that mail arriving at the manual letter operations unit does not contain mail that could be processed on automated equipment.

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Management Response/Action Plan: Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management has an existing procedure in place. Stand-Up talks will be conducted with bargaining employees reiterating instructions to process all machinable mail on automated equipment. Additionally, management will evaluate the need for a gatekeeper in manual operations and conduct reviews to monitor for compliance.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2024

Responsible Official:
Midwest Division Director, Processing

Recommendation 3: We recommend the Midwest Division Director, Logistics, complete a review of Postal Vehicle Service transportation schedules and verify related actions are implemented at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management agrees with this recommendation.

Logistics will complete review of all PVS schedules; adjust frequency, remove excess and redundant trips.

Target Implementation Date: 10/31/2024

Responsible Official:
Midwest Division Director, Logistics

Recommendation 4: We recommend the Midwest Division Director, Logistics, verify management at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center completes the removal process for Postal Vehicle Service drivers that are no longer working at the facility.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management agrees with this recommendation.

Management will take the required administrative actions to ensure PVS drivers are formally removed from the rolls.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2024

Responsible Official:
Midwest Division Director, Logistics

Recommendation 5: We recommend the Midwest Division Director, Processing Operations coordinate with the Midwest Division Director, Logistics to develop and

implement a plan to verify scanning at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center is consistently completed in accordance with policy.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management agrees with this recommendation.

Standard Work Instructions will be provided to all employees with scanning responsibilities. Additionally, reviews will be conducted to monitor compliance. The expected results are upward trends.

Target Implementation Date: 10/31/2024

Responsible Official: Midwest Division Director, Processing
Midwest Division Director, Logistics

Recommendation 6: We recommend the Midwest Division Director, Logistics, verify management at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center monitors and enforces the use of wheel chocks and locks on trailer doors.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management agrees with this recommendation.

Local Management will conduct stand up talks with all PVS drivers, to reiterate mail transportation safety and security policies. We will also conduct daily yard audits. HCR Suppliers will be reissued via email yard instructions around proper use of wheel chocks and locks. Additionally, management will monitor for compliance.

Target Implementation Date: 08/31/2024

Responsible Official:
Midwest Division Director, Logistics

E-SIGNED by KATHY.J HAND
on 2024-07-09 11:10:32 EDT

Kathy Hand
Division Director, Midwest Processing Operations

E-SIGNED by John.A Darden
on 2024-07-08 08:43:22 EDT

John Darden
Division Director, Midwest Logistics Operations

cc: Vice President, Regional Processing Operations (Central)
    Corporate Audit Response Management

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

1735 North Lynn Street, Arlington, VA 22209-2020
(703) 248-2100

For media inquiries, please email press@uspsoig.gov or call (703) 248-2100

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