

AUDIT REPORT

Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Holiday City Station, Memphis, TN

March 16, 2021



Report Number 21-089-R21



UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

March 16, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR:

CHRISTOPHER L. ALEXANDER MANAGER, TENNESSEE DISTRICT

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FROM:

Sean Balduff Director, Delivery and Retail Response Team

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Holiday City Station, Memphis, TN (Report Number 21-089-R21)

This report presents the results of our audit of the Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Holiday City Station, Memphis, TN.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General

Corporate Audit and Response Management Vice President, Delivery Operations Vice President, Retail and Post Office Operations Vice President, Area Retail & Delivery Operations, Southern Area

Background

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations at the Holiday City Station in Memphis, TN (Project Number 21-089). The Holiday City Station is in the Tennessee District of the Southern Area. This audit was designed to provide U.S. Postal Service management with timely information on potential scanning and mail delivery risks at the Holiday City Station.

The delivery unit had 19 city routes and two rural routes delivered by 23 full-time city carriers, two full-time rural carriers, and one rural carrier associate.¹ The unit also had four clerks including three full-time and one postal support employee (PSE).² We chose the Holiday City Station based on the number of customer inquiries recorded for the delivery unit. Specifically, there were 662 inquiries recorded in the Customer 360 (C360)³ system from September to November 2020.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate select mail delivery and customer service operations and determine whether internal controls were effective at the Holiday City Station in Memphis, TN.

To accomplish our objective, we reviewed delivery metrics including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, distribution up-time (DUT),⁴ carriers return to office time, and C360 data. During our site visit on January 26-28, 2021, we reviewed station safety and security measures, mail conditions, Voyager Fleet card and arrow lock key⁵ security procedures, and COVID-19 safety practices. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the "Notice Left"⁶ area and interviewed unit management and employees.⁷

We conducted this audit from January through March 2021, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. 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.

¹ Rural carrier associates are responsible for the safe and efficient delivery and collection of mail, working part time when regular rural carriers have scheduled days off or take vacation days.

² Non-career temporary clerk position.

³ A cloud-based application which enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.

⁴ Time of day clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

⁵ 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 lock keys are accountable property and subject to strict controls.

⁶ The area of a postal facility where undeliverable letters or packages are stored for customer pickup.

⁷ The city and rural carriers we interviewed had from two to 23 years of service.

conclusions with management on March 3, 2021 and included their comments where appropriate.

We relied on computer-generated data from the Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR)⁸ system, Customer Service Daily Reporting System (CSDRS),⁹ and the Fuel Asset Management System.¹⁰ Although we did not test the validity of controls over these systems, we assessed the accuracy of the data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data; therefore, we determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

We found a total of 2,487 delayed mailpieces at the unit during our site visit on the morning of Tuesday, January 26, 2021 (see Table 1). Specifically, we found delayed mail for all 19 city routes and both rural routes and in the staging,¹¹ "Return to Sender", and "Postage Due" areas of the unit (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). Packages found in the "Return to Sender" and "Postage Due" areas had scans dating back to October 5, 2020 and November 13, 2020, respectively.

Mail Type	Carrier Cases	Return to Sender Area	Staging Area	Postage Due Area	Total Number of Pieces
Letters and Flats	1,424	0	265	0	1,689
Packages	53	704	0	41	798
Total	1,477	704	265	41	2,487

Table 1. Delayed Mail by Location in Unit

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis based on conducted mail counts.

⁸ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes. ⁹ A delivery unit-based system that provides a snapshot of the daily condition of the mail at the point in time when the carriers have departed for the street. The data in this system is used to provide management with a formal delayed mail reporting tool.

¹⁰ A cost management tool used for managing and controlling fuel costs.

¹¹ A staging area in a delivery unit is a temporary storage area where mail is placed before clerks process it.

Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations-Holiday City Station, Memphis, TN

Figure 1. Example of Delayed Mail in one Carrier Case



Source: OIG photos taken on January 26, 2021.



Figure 2. Delayed Mail Found in the Staging Area

Source: OIG photos taken on January 26, 2021.

Figure 3. Delayed Mail Found in the Return to Sender and Postage Due Areas



Source: OIG photos taken on January 26, 2021.

The delayed mail occurred for the following reasons:

- Staffing Shortage: The manager of Customer Service stated that the unit had two vacant city carrier positions and two full-time city carriers were on extended leave. In addition, the Postmaster, Memphis, stated that the unit did not have any City Carrier Assistants (CCA)¹² assigned during the scope of our audit because other Memphis units had a greater need. Unit management also stated that two full-time clerks retired in December 2020 leaving the unit with only three of the five authorized full-time clerks. Since our site visit, one of the full-time clerk positions was filled and the other two were in the process of being posted. Further, two PSEs have been assigned to the Holiday City Station and are scheduled to start in March 2021.
- Late Arriving Mail: According to unit management, mail was delayed or undelivered due to the unit receiving late arriving mail from the Memphis processing plants.¹³ Specifically, we determined the unit's DUT was late on 24 of 25 delivery days by an average of about 32 minutes¹⁴ from December 9, 2020 to January 8, 2021. Based on the mail arrival profile (MAP),¹⁵ the unit's mail is scheduled to arrive on the first two trucks from the plant each morning by 5:05 a.m.¹⁶ The last morning truck is scheduled at 7:10 a.m. and should only contain Express Mail. During our observation on January 27, 2021, letter and flat mail and non-Express packages arrived on the last morning truck.

¹² A non-career, bargaining unit employee who performs the full range of city carrier duties.

¹³ Holiday City Station is serviced by the Memphis, TN Processing & Distribution Center and Memphis, TN Network Distribution Center.

¹⁴ Late DUTs ranged from three to 75 minutes.

¹⁵ The Postal Service designed MAPs to help stabilize mail flow by setting delivery unit and processing facilities' expectations for the arrival and quality of mail.

¹⁶ The first and second trips from Memphis, TN mail processing are scheduled to arrive at the Holiday City Station at 3:55 a.m. and 5:05 a.m.

Postal Service policy¹⁷ states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. Any committed mail not processed and taken out for delivery on the day of receipt is delayed. In addition, policy¹⁸ states that managers must review all communications that may affect the day's workload and be sure that replacements are available for unscheduled absences. Further, they must develop contingency plans for situations that may interfere with normal delivery service. When mail is delayed, there is an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand.

Recommendation #1: We recommend the **District Manager, Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster, Memphis**, to develop an action plan to fill vacancies at the Holiday City Station and assign additional carriers as necessary to the station until vacancies can be filled.

Recommendation #2: We recommend the **District Manager, Tennessee**, coordinate with the **Manager, Memphis Processing & Distribution Centers**, to ensure mail arrives at the Holiday City Station according to the mail arrival profile.

Finding #2: Reporting of Delayed Mail

Management did not accurately report delayed mail in CSDRS. Specifically, we determined that no delayed mail was reported in CSDRS on January 25, 2021, the day prior to our visit. However, we identified 2,487 delayed mailpieces during our observations at the site on the morning of January 26, 2021.

The station manager stated that customer service supervisors did not know how to report delayed mail in CSDRS, and the PM supervisor stated that he forgot to input the delayed mail the day prior to our visit. Management is required¹⁹ to report all mail that remains in a unit after the carriers have left the office to begin their street duties. Inaccurate reporting of delayed mail in CSDRS 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.

Recommendation #3: We recommend the **District Manager, Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster, Memphis,** to develop a plan to monitor and ensure all delayed mail at the Holiday City Station is reported daily in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System.

¹⁷ Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail stand-up talk, February 2019.

¹⁸ Handbook M-39, *Management of Delivery Services*, Transmittal Letter 14, Section 111.2, June 2019.

¹⁹ Customer Service Daily Reporting System, Guidelines and Definitions, September 2016.

Recommendation #4: We recommend the **District Manager, Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster, Memphis**, to provide Customer Service Daily Report System training to the unit's customer service supervisors.

Finding #3: Package Delivery Scanning

Delivery unit employees improperly scanned packages at the unit rather than at the delivery point. We analyzed package scans performed between September and November 2020 and found 1,260 packages received a stop-the-clock (STC)²⁰ scan at the unit (see Table 2), about 98 percent of which were scanned as "Delivered" (see Table 3).

Table 2. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

September	October	November	Total
638	206	416	1,260

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service's PTR system data.

Table 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	Number of Scans	Percentage of Scans
Delivered	1,234	97.9
Receptacle Full/Item Oversized	15	1.2
No Secure Location Available	10	0.8
No Authorized Recipient Available	1	0.1
Total	1,260	100

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service's PTR system data.

We also conducted on-site observations at the unit on January 26, 2021, prior to the carriers' arrival. We judgmentally selected 60 packages (29 were in carrier cases and 31 were in the "Notice Left" area) for review of scanning and tracking data.

Of the 29 packages in carrier cases, 23 had missing or improper scans and/or improper handling. Specifically:

- Nine packages were scanned as "No Access" at a location other than the delivery point and should have been scanned at the point of delivery attempt.
- Two packages were scanned as "Return to Sender", two other packages were scanned as "No Such Number", and another package was scanned as "Insufficient Address". These scans indicate that the packages should have been returned to sender prior to our arrival.

²⁰ A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mail piece. Examples of STC scans include "Delivered", "Available for Pick-up", "No Access", and "Business Closed".

- Four packages were missing STC scans to alert the customer of the status of the package.
- Two packages were scanned as "Held at Post Office at Customer Request" but were not with the hold mail. These packages were scanned 17 and 24 days prior to our site visit.
- Two packages were missing an "Arrival at Unit" scan, which is a required scan for performance measurement.
- One package was scanned as "Return to Post Office for Address Verification" on December 31, 2020 and should have had the address issue resolved prior to our visit.

Of the 31 mailpieces in the Notice Left section, 18 had missing or improper scans. Specifically:

- Ten mailpieces were scanned at a location other than the delivery point. These
 included six that were scanned as "No Authorized Recipient Available", three that
 were scanned as "No Secure Location Available", and one that was scanned as
 "Receptacle Full/Item Oversized". The scans occurred 1.1 to 7.61 miles from the
 delivery point.
- Three mailpieces were scanned as "Delivered". A "Delivered" scan should only be made when a package is successfully left at the delivery address, in a P.O. Box, or in a parcel locker.
- Three mailpieces were missing a STC scan to alert the customer of the delivery status of the mailpiece.
- Two mailpieces were scanned as "Insufficient Address" but not returned to the sender.

Furthermore, 19 mailpieces in the "Notice Left" area should have been returned to the sender based on the time elapsed since the notice was left.²¹ These mailpieces ranged from two to 236 days past their return dates.

These issues occurred because district and local management did not adequately monitor and enforce package scanning and handling procedures. Unit management stated they did not realize there were any improper scanning and handling issues at the unit. In addition, two carriers with a high number of STC scans occurring at the unit

²¹ Notice Left and Return Guidelines dated July 2007, states that domestic packages should be returned to sender on the 15th calendar day and international packages should be returned to sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.

stated they were making these scans based on prior on-the-job training they received from other carriers at the unit.

Postal Service policy states that each morning station management should review the previous days scanning exceptions.²² The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,²³ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.²⁴ Customers rely on accurate scan data to track their packages in real time. When employees do not scan mailpieces correctly, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning operations, management can potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and the Postal Service brand.

Recommendation #5: We recommend the **District Manager, Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster, Memphis**, to review and monitor scan data for compliance and provide personnel with refresher training on package scanning and handling procedures.

Finding #4: Safeguarding of Assets

Holiday City Station management did not properly manage and safeguard Postal Service assets including Voyager Fleet cards and mail delivery vehicles.

Voyager Fleet Cards

During our site visit, we conducted a physical inventory of the unit's assigned Voyager Fleet cards and found that 12 of the 20 cards were missing. The unit had been operating with only eight cards since October 2020.

These conditions occurred because unit management did not provide sufficient oversight of Voyager Fleet cards. Specifically, unit management did not ensure the cards were turned in daily and accounted for, as required. The carriers stated that since they must share the cards, they routinely keep them at their cases so they do not get lost. The station manager stated that he ordered six cards in October 2020; however, he did not follow up on the status of the cards.

Postal Service policy states every vehicle is assigned a Voyager Fleet card²⁵ and should be accounted for each day. Voyager Fleet cards are accountable items and should be treated as such and they should never be carried by off-duty personnel or left in unattended vehicles or other locations with unrestricted access.²⁶ When there is insufficient oversight and supervision of accountable items such as Voyager Fleet

²² Delivery Management System, Standard Work Instruction Morning Walkthrough Tasks – Prior Day Review.

²³ Delivery Done Right the First-Time stand-up talk, March 9, 2020.

²⁴ Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience stand-up talk, July 17, 2017.

²⁵ Postal Service's eFleet Card: Site Manager online course (code # 2011NTWK1834SS01).

²⁶ Standard Work Instruction (Quick Reference): U.S. Bank Voyager Fleet Card Management for Site Managers, Revision February 25, 2019.

cards, there is an increased risk of theft. Furthermore, management cannot prevent potentially fraudulent charges and unauthorized purchases.

Delivery Vehicles

We inspected delivery vehicles on the morning of January 26, 2021 and found that three of the 23 unattended vehicles (13 percent) were not secured.

Management did not follow the PM Unit Review checklist which includes verifying that vehicles are locked and secured. Unit management stated they forgot to check the vehicles the previous day. When vehicles are left unlocked, there is an increased risk that they could be vandalized or stolen.

Recommendation #6: We recommend the **District Manager, Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster, Memphis**, to ensure all delivery vehicles are assigned a Voyager Fleet card, and follow procedures to ensure Voyager Fleet cards and delivery vehicles are safeguarded and properly managed.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with all findings and recommendations in the report. See Appendix A for management's comments in their entirety.

Regarding recommendation 1, the district manager stated that on March 9, 2021 he directed the Postmaster, Memphis, to assign the necessary number of employees to Holiday City Station to ensure the timely processing and delivery of all mail. In subsequent communications, the Postmaster, Memphis, provided documentation showing that one carrier vacancy was filled on February 13, 2021, and another clerk vacancy was posted on March 10, 2021. He also provided documentation showing two PSEs were assigned to the unit and one clerk vacancy was filled on March 13, 2021.

Regarding recommendation 2, the district manager stated that on March 3, 2021 he notified the Southeast Director, Processing Operations; the Southeast Director, Logistics; and the Memphis, TN, Processing & Distribution Center Plant Manager, of the need to improve compliance with the established MAP for Holiday City Station. In subsequent communications, the Postmaster, Memphis, stated that the district manager instructed post office operations managers and metropolitan postmasters to review and update MAPs for their units as needed. Holiday City Station will be part of this review.

Regarding recommendation 3, the district manager stated that on March 9, 2021, he directed the Postmaster, Memphis, to develop a plan to monitor and ensure delayed mail at Holiday City Station is reported daily in CSDRS. In subsequent communications, the Postmaster, Memphis, stated that he will visit Holiday City Station weekly and conduct virtual visits to the unit to ensure delayed mail is properly reported.

Regarding recommendation 4, the district manager stated on March 9, 2021, he directed the Postmaster, Memphis, to provide CSDRS training to the unit's customer service supervisors. In subsequent communications, the Postmaster, Memphis, stated he will provide the customer service manager and customer service supervisors at the unit with CSDRS refresher training by March 19, 2021.

Regarding recommendation 5, the district manager stated that on March 9, 2021, he directed the Postmaster, Memphis, to review and monitor scan data for compliance and provide unit personnel with refresher training on package scanning and handling procedures. In subsequent communications, the Postmaster, Memphis, stated that he receives scanning integrity reports, STC reports, and Parcel Select reports daily and follows up with Holiday City Station as needed. He also stated the unit's customer service manager will conduct a stand-up talk on proper scanning and handling practices by March 19, 2021.

Regarding recommendation 6, the district manager stated that on March 9, 2021, he directed the Postmaster, Memphis, to ensure all delivery vehicles are assigned a Voyager Fleet card and follow procedures to ensure Voyager Fleet cards and delivery vehicles are safeguarded and properly managed. In subsequent communications, the Postmaster, Memphis, stated that district management had requested a full audit of Voyager Fleet card procedures for all Memphis stations. He also stated that supervisors at Holiday City Station are verifying all arrow lock keys and Voyager Fleet cards are signed out and back in daily.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments and subsequent communications responsive to the recommendations in the report. Management did not describe actions taken or planned to address our recommendations in their written comments, as we requested. Therefore, we contacted the Postmaster, Memphis, to obtain more information regarding specific steps management has taken or planned.

All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. We reviewed management's subsequent documentation and found it adequate to resolve recommendation 1. This recommendation will be closed with the issuance of this report. However, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed for recommendations 2 through 6. 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.

APPENDIX A. MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS



March 11, 2021

Joseph E. Wolski Director, Audit Operations

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Holiday City Station, Memphis TN (Project Number 21-089 Draft)

The following is provided in response to your audit of Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Holiday City Station, Memphis TN. The Tennessee District remains committed to providing timely and efficient service to our customers and to protecting assigned assets. We appreciate the review and identification of opportunities for improvement within the district.

We agree with the findings and recommendations. Responses to individual findings are provided below.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

"We found a total of 2,487 delayed mailpieces at the unit during our site visit on the morning of Tuesday, January 26, 2021 (see Table 1). Specifically, we found delayed mail for all 19 city routes and both rural routes and in the staging, "Return to Sender", and "Postage Due" areas of the unit (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). Packages found in the "Return to Sender" and "Postage Due" areas had scans dating back to October 5, 2020 and November 13, 2020, respectively."

Recommendation #1: We recommend the **District Manager, Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster, Memphis**, to develop an action plan to fill vacancies at the Holiday City Station and assign additional carriers as necessary to the station until vacancies can be filled.

Management Response/Action Plan:

I have directed the Postmaster, Memphis TN to assign such employee resources as necessary to ensure timely processing and delivery of all mail at the Holiday City Station.

Completion Date: March 9, 2021

Responsible Official: Postmaster, Memphis TN

<u>Recommendation #2</u>: We recommend the **District Manager, Tennessee**, coordinate with the **Manager, Memphis Processing & Distribution Centers**, to ensure mail arrives at the Holiday City Station according to the mail arrival profile.

Management Response/Action Plan:

I have notified the Southeast Director, Processing Operations, Southeast Director, Logistics, and Plant Manager, Memphis P&DC, of the need to improve dispatch discipline and compliance with the established IOP agreement for Holiday City Station.

Completion Date: March 3, 2021

Responsible Official: Plant Manager, Memphis P&DC

Finding #2: Reporting of Delayed Mail

"Management did not accurately report delayed mail in CSDRS. Specifically, we determined that no delayed mail was reported in CSDRS on January 25, 2021, the day prior to our visit. However, we identified 2,487 delayed mailpieces during our observations at the site on the morning of January 26, 2021."

Recommendation #3: We recommend the **District Manager**, **Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster**, **Memphis**, to develop a plan to monitor and ensure all delayed mail at the Holiday City Station is reported daily in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System.

Management Response/Action Plan:

I have directed the Postmaster, Memphis TN to develop a plan to monitor and ensure all delayed mail at Holiday City Station is reported daily in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System.

Completion Date: March 9, 2021

Responsible Official: Postmaster, Memphis TN

Recommendation #4: We recommend the **District Manager**, **Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster**, **Memphis**, to provide Customer Service Daily Reporting System training to the unit's customer service supervisors.

Management Response/Action Plan: I have directed the Postmaster, Memphis TN to provide Customer Service Daily Reporting System training to the unit's customer service supervisors.

Completion Date: March 9, 2021

Responsible Official: Postmaster, Memphis TN

Finding #3: Package Delivery Scanning

"Delivery unit employees improperly scanned packages at the unit rather than at the delivery point. We analyzed package scans performed between September and November 2020 and found 1,260 packages received a stop-the-clock (STC) scan at the unit (see Table 2), about 98 percent of which were scanned as "Delivered" (see Table 3)."

Recommendation #5: We recommend the **District Manager**, **Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster**, **Memphis**, to review and monitor scan data for compliance and provide personnel with refresher training on package scanning and handling procedures.

Management Response/Action Plan:

I have directed the Postmaster, Memphis TN to review and monitor scan data for compliance and provide personnel with refresher training on package scanning and handling procedures.

Completion Date: March 9, 2021

Responsible Official: Postmaster, Memphis TN

Finding #4: Safeguarding of Assets

"Holiday City Station management did not properly manage and safeguard Postal Service assets including Voyager Fleet cards and mail delivery vehicles."

<u>Recommendation #6</u>: We recommend the **District Manager, Tennessee**, instruct the **Postmaster, Memphis**, to ensure all delivery vehicles are assigned a Voyager Fleet card, and follow procedures to ensure Voyager Fleet cards and delivery vehicles are safeguarded and properly managed.

Management Response/Action Plan:

I have directed the Postmaster, Memphis TN to ensure all delivery vehicles are assigned a Voyager Fleet card and to follow procedures to ensure Voyager Fleet cards and delivery vehicles are safeguarded and properly managed.

Completion Date: March 9, 2021

Responsible Official: Postmaster, Memphis TN

Christopher Alexander District Manager, Tennessee District

cc: Kristin A. Seaver Timothy R. Costello Sally K. Haring