

Audit Report

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Reviews – Select Units, San Diego, CA Region

Report Number 22-077-R22 | May 16, 2022



SAN DIEGO



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Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

May 16, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: JENNIFER VO
MANAGER, CALIFORNIA 6 DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph E. Wolski", is positioned below the "MEMORANDUM FOR:" line.

FROM: Joseph E. Wolski
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Select Units, San Diego, CA Region
(Report Number 22-077-R22)

This capping report presents the results of our audits of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews in the San Diego, CA region.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit and Response Management
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, Regional Processing Operations (Western)
Vice President, Facilities
Vice President, WestPac Area

Results

Background

This report presents a summary of the results of our self-initiated audits assessing mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at three select delivery units in the San Diego, CA, region (Project Number 22-077). These delivery units included the San Diego Downtown and Linda Vista stations in San Diego, CA; and the Ramona Main Post Office (MPO) in Ramona, CA. We issued interim reports¹ to district management for each of these delivery units regarding the conditions we identified. In addition, we issued a report on the efficiency of operations at the Margaret L. Sellers Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC),² which services these three delivery units.

All three delivery units are in the California 6 District in the WestPac Area. The three delivery units have a combined total of 112 city routes and three rural routes. As of December 31, 2021, staffing at the delivery units included 143 full-time city carriers, 31 part-time city carriers, three full-time rural carriers, four part-time rural carriers, 24 full-time clerks, and nine part-time clerks (see Table 1).

The delivery units service about 137,627 people in several ZIP codes which are considered predominantly urban communities³ (see Table 2).

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the San Diego Downtown Station, Linda Vista Station, and Ramona MPO in the San Diego, CA region.

We reviewed delivery metrics including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, number of reported delayed mailpieces, package scanning, and distribution up-time.⁴ In addition, during our site visits from February 1-3, 2022, we reviewed mail conditions and delivery unit safety, security, and maintenance procedures. We analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at or around the carrier

cases and in the “Notice Left”⁵ areas and interviewed delivery unit management and employees.

Table 1. Staffing and Routes

Staffing and Route Types	San Diego Downtown	Linda Vista	Ramona	Totals
Full-Time City Carriers	52	75	16	143
Part-Time City Carriers	10	14	7	31
Full-Time Rural Carriers	0	0	3	3
Part-Time Rural Carriers	0	0	4	4
Full-Time Clerks	8	11	5	24
Part-Time Clerks	4	3	2	9
City Routes	40	57	15	112
Rural Routes	0	0	3	3

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of data from Variance Programs.

Table 2. Demographics of Zip Codes Served

Community	San Diego Downtown	Linda Vista	Ramona	Total
Population	36,785	65,493	26,014/9,335	137,627
Type	Urban	Urban	Urban/Rural	

Source: Esri and 2010 Census Bureau Information.

¹ Linda Vista Station (Report Number 22-059-R22), San Diego Downtown Station (Report Number 22-060-R22), and Ramona MPO (Report Number 22-062-R22).

² Report Number 22-061-R22.

³ We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from Esri (Enterprise License Agreement).

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

⁵ The area of a postal facility where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

We conducted this audit from January through May 2022 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 April 27, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

We relied on computer-generated data from the Product Tracking and Reporting system,⁶ the Surface Visibility⁷ database, and the electronic Facilities Management System.⁸ Although we did not test the validity of the controls over these systems, we assessed the accuracy of the data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Results Summary:

We identified deficiencies affecting mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at all three delivery units. Specifically, we found deficiencies with package scanning, truck arrival scanning, and property conditions (see Table 3). We did not identify delayed mail issues at any of the delivery units.

Table 3. Summary of Results

Controls Reviewed	Deficiencies Identified – Yes or No		
	San Diego Downtown	Linda Vista	Ramona
Unreported Delayed Mail	No	No	No
Package Scanning	Yes	Yes	Yes
Truck Arrival Scanning	Yes	Yes	No
Property Conditions	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: OIG summary of results from fieldwork during week of January 31, 2022.

Finding #1: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at all three delivery units rather than at the point of delivery. Specifically, employees scanned 15,000 packages at the delivery unit from October through December 31, 2021 (see Table 4). While there may have been instances where some of the packages were correctly scanned at the unit, such as packages scanned “Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location” for a business that was closed for the day, there were many instances where employees improperly scanned the packages.

⁶ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

⁷ Surface Visibility collects end-to-end data by linking multiple scans of a single asset to create visibility data to support planning, management, and optimization of the surface network.

⁸ A custom-built Postal Service system used to manage work orders, contracts, and payments for facility construction, repairs, and alteration contracts, along with real estate contracts.

Table 4. Stop-the-Clock⁹ (STC) Scans by Type

STC Scan Type	San Diego Downtown	Linda Vista	Ramona	Total	Percentage
Delivered	3,160	2,792	1,044	6,996	46.64
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location	1,803	2,219	73	4,095	27.30
Receptacle Full/ Item Oversized	26	127	1,914	2,067	13.78
No Secure Location Available	32	15	1,490	1,537	10.25
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	9	159	9	177	1.18
Refused	4	9	3	16	0.11
No Authorized Recipient	42	23	47	112	0.75
Total	5,076	5,344	4,580	15,000	100¹⁰

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting System.

In addition, on the morning of February 1, 2022, we judgmentally selected 69 packages in or around the carrier's cases and another 82 from the "Notice Left" areas to review and analyze scanning and tracking data. Of the 151 sampled packages, 49 had missing or improper scans including:

- Twenty-two were missing STC scans to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.
- Twenty had "Delivered" scans that should only be made when the package is successfully left at the point of delivery.
- Seven had an STC scan at a location other than the point of delivery.

Further, we found 11 packages in the "Notice Left" areas that were not returned to the sender, as required.¹¹ These packages ranged from one to 67 days past their return dates.

Why Did It Occur

At all three sites, these scanning issues occurred because management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. At the San Diego Downtown Station, management instructed employees to scan packages as "Delivered" at the delivery unit for caller service¹² customers. At the Linda Vista Station, management instructed employees to scan packages as "Delivered" at the delivery unit for mail being held at the unit due to full or broken mail receptacles and for customers with vacation hold requests. At the Ramona MPO, management stated that they thought it was proper for employees to scan packages as "Receptacle Full" or "No Secure

⁹ 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", and "No Access"

¹⁰ Total percentage does not equal 100 due to rounding.

¹¹ *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, state that domestic packages should be returned to the sender on the 15th calendar day after a notice is left and international packages should be returned to the sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.

¹² A premium service available for a fee to customers who receive more mail than can be delivered to the largest post office box offered by the postal facility where the caller's (customer) mail is addressed.

Location Available” at the unit when there was a lack of parcel lockers in a neighborhood. Packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned due to a lack of management oversight.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have known the correct scanning procedures, monitored scan performance, and enforced compliance. The packages for caller service customers should be scanned at the time they are available for customer pick up. Packages should be scanned at the point of delivery either after delivering or attempting to deliver the package, instead of at the delivery unit. The Postal Service’s goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,¹³ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹⁴ Additionally, packages in the “Notice Left” areas should have been reviewed and returned to the sender if they remained at the facility after the prescribed number of days.

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 properly handle packages in the “Notice Left” area, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages and customer service is diminished. By improving scanning and handling operations, management can potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **District Manager, California 6**, develop and execute a plan to ensure that all employees at the San Diego Downtown and Linda Vista stations and the Ramona Main Post Office are trained on standard operating procedures for package scanning and handling and that unit management systematically reviews scan data and enforces compliance.

¹³ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹⁴ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

¹⁵ The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

¹⁶ We did not find truck arrival scanning issues at the Ramona MPO.

Finding #2: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees did not always scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes (99T)¹⁵ as required at the San Diego Downtown and Linda Vista Stations.¹⁶ We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from October 1 through December 31, 2021, and found that employees did not perform scans for 99 of the 410 (24.15 percent) trips arriving from the San Diego P&DC (see Table 5).

Table 5. Truck Arrival Scans on Incoming AM Trips

Delivery Units	Inbound AM Trips	Missed Arrival Scans	Missed Scan Percentage
Downtown	156	30	19.23
Linda Vista	254	69	27.17
Total	410	99	24.15

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from the Postal Service’s Surface Visibility System.

Why Did It Occur

At the San Diego Downtown and Linda Vista stations, truck arrival scans did not occur because management did not properly monitor 99T scan performance data to ensure that staff followed truck arrival scanning procedures. Linda Vista Station management stated that they had not assigned the task or communicated the scanning policy to new employees and that scans might not be made if employees were busy conducting other duties and San Diego Downtown Station management added that they did not know how to access the Arrive Depart tracking report to identify the missing scans.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that they properly trained all new employees on truck scanning procedures and reviewed scan performance to ensure that all expected truck scans were being performed. According to Postal Service policy,¹⁷ employees must scan the trailer barcode on Postal Service trailers/trucks¹⁸ and Highway Contract Route¹⁹ trucks arriving at the delivery unit during local operating hours.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When employees do not scan the 99T barcode, the Postal Service does not receive timely transportation information and is unable to address issues that may be causing mail delays, which could affect customer service.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the **District Manager, California 6**, develop and execute a plan to ensure management at the San Diego Downtown and Linda Vista stations instruct staff on the truck/trailer arrival scanning procedures, reviews scanning performance daily, and enforces compliance.

Finding #3: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety issues at all three delivery units, maintenance issues at two delivery units, and a security issue at one delivery unit. Specifically:

- At the San Diego Downtown Station, we identified fire extinguishers that had not been inspected, an exit door without an illuminated exit sign, an unsecured gate leading to the dock, a microwave connected to a power surge protector, and peeling paint on lobby and workroom walls (see Figure 1).

- At the Linda Vista Station, we identified two ladders on the workroom floor that were unsecured and facing in a way that could tip over and injure an employee.
- At the Ramona MPO, we identified a large broken tree branch hanging over the customer parking lot and sidewalk (see Figure 2), a hole in a wall near the PO Box area in the retail lobby (see Figure 3), and missing floor tiles and a large hole in the workroom floor near an exit door (see Figure 4).

Figure 1. San Diego Downtown Station

Peeling Paint in the Lobby and Workroom



Source: OIG photos taken February 1, 2022.

¹⁷ United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units.

¹⁸ A service operated by Postal Service employees to transport mail between mail processing facilities, post offices, post office branches, post office stations, detached mail units, various postal customers, and terminals.

¹⁹ A contractor-provided service used to transport mail between postal facilities by land, air, water, and rail.

Figure 2. Ramona MPO

Branches Hanging Over Customer Parking Lot



Source: OIG photo taken February 2, 2022.

Figure 3. Ramona MPO

Hole in Wall Near PO Box Section of the Retail Lobby



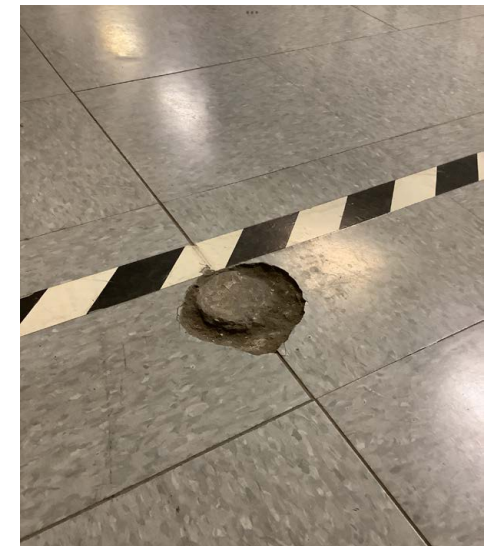
Source: OIG photos taken February 2, 2022.

Figure 4. Ramona MPO

Missing Floor Tiles



Large Hole



Source: OIG photos taken February 2, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Delivery unit management did not take the actions necessary to ensure that property condition issues were corrected. Specifically, management at all three locations stated that they overlooked or were unaware of some of the issues. Ramona MPO management reported, but did not follow-up on the hanging branch issue to determine the next action to take. Further, management at the San Diego Downtown Station and the Ramona MPO stated that other duties, such as addressing customer inquiries and ensuring mail delivery operations were followed, impacted the timing of addressing maintenance 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 is required to maintain a safe environment for its employees and customers. In addition, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards.²⁰

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management's attention to maintenance and safety deficiencies can reduce the risk of injuries to employees and customers; reduce related costs, such as workers' compensation claims, lawsuits, and OSHA penalties; and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Management Actions

During our audit, management at the Linda Vista Station repositioned the ladders and secured them to the wall.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the **District Manager, California 6**, address all remaining building safety, security, and maintenance issues identified at the San Diego Downtown and Linda Vista stations and the Ramona Main Post Office.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with the findings and recommendations in this report. Based on subsequent conversations, management agreed to make the target implementation date for recommendations 1 and 2 May 31, 2022. See [Appendix A](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated that they will review standard work instructions on proper handling and scanning of all items requiring scans. Employees have been properly retrained and management will provide continuous communication on scanning standard work instructions. The target implementation date is May 31, 2022.

Regarding recommendation 2, management stated that all clerks at the listed facilities have been retrained, including all managers and supervisors, to ensure proper surface visibility scanning on each truck. In addition, management will provide continuous communication to facility employees. The target implementation date is May 31, 2022.

Regarding recommendation 3, management stated that a work order has been submitted to remove low hanging branches at the Ramona facility and that all other deficiencies have been corrected. Management oversight will remain in place to ensure OSHA compliance. The target implementation date is November 4, 2022.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations in the report. All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. 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.

²⁰ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

Appendix A: Management's Comments



May 5, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Select Units
San Diego CA Region (Project Number 22-077)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft audit report, Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Select Units San Diego CA Region (Project Number 22-077). California 6 District understands the importance of providing visibility to our customers when packages are scanned. The majority of these packages were scanned at point of delivery but acknowledges that there were instances that packages were scanned improperly. Lastly, the safety, security and USPS brand are of utmost importance.

California 6 District agrees with each of the findings and recommendations contained in the draft report. Following are our comments on each of the three recommendations.

Recommendation #1: We recommend the District Manager, California 6, develop and execute a plan to ensure that all employees at the San Diego Downtown and Linda Vista stations and the Ramona Main Post Office are trained on standard operating procedures for package scanning, handling and that unit management systematically reviews scan data and enforces compliance.

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

The review of standard work instructions on proper handling and scanning of all items requiring scans to be applied. Employees have been retrained properly and continuous communication will be given regarding scanning standard work instructions.

Target Implementation Date:
Target has been implemented and completed.

Responsible Official:
Manager, Operations Integration

Recommendation #2: We recommend the District Manager, California 6, develop and execute a plan to ensure management at the San Diego Downtown and Linda Vista stations instruct staff on the truck/trailer arrival scanning procedures, reviews scanning performance daily, and enforces compliance.

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

- 2 -

All clerks within the listed facilities have been retrained to include all managers and supervisors to ensure proper surface visibility scanning on each truck. Continuous communication will be given.

Target Implementation Date:

Target has been implemented and completed.

Responsible Official:

Manager, Operations Integration

Recommendation #3: We recommend the District Manager, California 6, address all remaining building safety, security, and maintenance issues identified at the San Diego Downtown and Linda Vista stations and the Ramona Main Post Office.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation

Work order has been submitted to remove low hanging branches at the Ramona facility. All other deficiencies have been corrected. Management oversight will remain in place to ensure OSHA compliance and will monitor all maintained repairs to improve the property conditions.

Target Implementation Date: 11/04/2022

Responsible Official:

Manager, Operations Integration



Jennifer T. Vo
District Manager, California 6 District

cc: Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, WestPac Area
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Exec VP
Corporate Audit Response Management

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

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