

Fort Point Station, Boston, MA: Delivery Operations

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 24-154-2-R25 | December 10, 2024



Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

December 10, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR: DERMOTT G. TUOHY
MANAGER, MASSACHUSETTS-RHODE ISLAND DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph E. Wolski", is centered below the memorandum header.

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

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Fort Point Station, Boston, MA: Delivery Operations
(Report Number 24-154-2-R25)

This report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations at the Fort Point Station in Boston, MA.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Monica Brym, 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, Atlantic Area Retail & Delivery Operations
Director, Retail & Post Office Operations Maintenance
Corporate Audit and Response Management

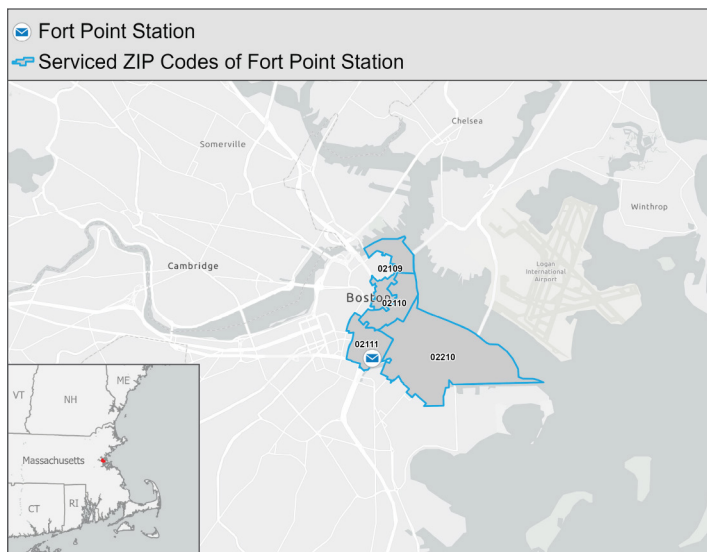
Results

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 self-initiated audit of delivery operations at the Fort Point Station in Boston, MA (Project Number 24-154-2). The Fort Point Station is in the Massachusetts-Rhode Island (MA-RI) District of the Atlantic Area and services about 22,019 people in ZIP Codes 02109, 02110, 02111, and 02210, which are considered urban communities¹ (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. ZIP Codes Served by the Fort Point Station



Source: OIG analysis of ZIP Code data.

This delivery unit has 40 city routes. From July 13 through August 16, 2024, the delivery unit had four supervisors assigned.² There was one employee that was acting in a higher-level supervisor detail at this facility. The Fort Point Station falls under the Boston Post Office for employee availability measurement. As of August 9, 2024,³ the employee availability rate for the Boston Post Office was 91.7 percent year-to-date, which is under the Postal Service's retail and delivery operations employee availability goal of 93.6 percent for fiscal year (FY) 2024. The Fort Point Station is one of three delivery units⁴ the OIG reviewed during the week of September 16, 2024, that are serviced by the Boston Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC).

We assessed all units serviced by the Boston P&DC based on the number of Customer 360⁵ (C360) delivery-related inquiries,⁶ Informed Delivery⁷ contacts, stop-the-clock⁸ (STC) scans performed away from the delivery point, and undelivered route information between May 1 and July 31, 2024. We also reviewed first and last mile failures⁹ between May 4 and August 2, 2024.

We judgmentally selected the Fort Point Station primarily based on the number of C360 inquiries related to delivery. The Fort Point Station had an average of 4.2 inquiries per route, slightly higher than the district average of 4.0. The unit was also chosen based on first and last mile failures and undelivered routes.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery operations at the Fort Point Station in Boston, MA.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on the following audit areas: delayed mail, package

- 1 We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.
- 2 According to the Postal Service (PS) Form 50, *Notification of Personnel Action* associated with the unit as of August 16, 2024.
- 3 The last day of Pay Period 17.
- 4 The other two units were the Brookline Branch (Project Number 24-154-1) and the Revere Carrier Annex (Project Number 22-154-3).
- 5 A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.
- 6 A compilation of package inquiry, package pickup, daily mail service, and hold mail inquiries.
- 7 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.
- 8 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."
- 9 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.

scanning, arrow keys,¹⁰ and carrier separations and transfers. Specifically, we reviewed delivery metrics, including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, and carrier complement.¹¹ During our site visit we observed mail conditions; package scanning procedures; arrow key security procedures; and employee separation procedures. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on November 25, 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 Fort Point Station. We will issue a separate capping report¹² that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all three delivery units, as well as the district. The capping report will include actions taken by management to address the issues identified in this interim report. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about our scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting delivery operations at the Fort Point Station. Specifically, we found issues with two of the areas we reviewed (see Table 1). We did not review property conditions at the Fort Point Station.

Table 1. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Deficiencies Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail		X
Package Scanning	X	
Arrow Keys	X	
Separations and Transfers		X

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of September 16, 2024.

- On the morning of September 17, 2024, we observed carrier cases and other areas in the unit for delayed mail and did not identify any in the unit.
- We observed the procedures for safeguarding arrow keys and did not identify any issues, but did identify issues with the management of arrow keys (see [Finding #2](#)).
- We analyzed employee data and did not identify any issues with employee separations and transfers.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ We did not include safety and security conditions since the unit is co-located in the P&DC, and P&DC management is responsible for handling property conditions at the facility.

¹² Project Number 24-154.

Finding #1: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees scanned packages away from the intended delivery point and handled packages incorrectly at the unit.

We reviewed package scans occurring away from the delivery unit and over 1,000 feet¹³ from the intended delivery point between May 1 and July 31, 2024 (see Table 2). We removed scans that could have been performed within policy, such as “Animal Interference” and “Unsafe Conditions.” Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 78.2 percent of them were scanned “Delivered.”

For example, the map below (see Figure 2) shows an instance where a carrier scanned a package as delivered 0.4 miles away from the delivery point.

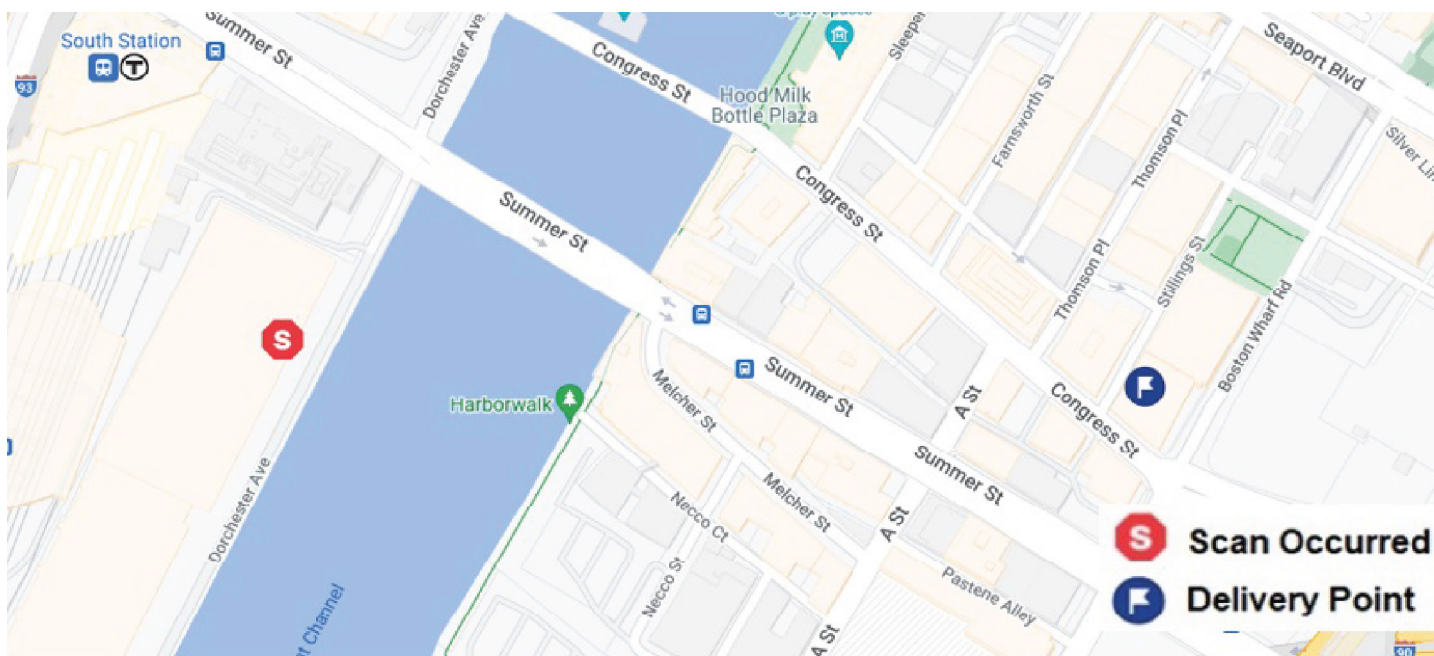
Table 2. STC Scans Over 1,000 Feet Away From the Delivery Point

STC Scan Type	Count	Percentage
Delivered	68	78.2%
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location	9	10.3%
Delivered to Agent for Final Delivery	9	10.3%
Held at Post Office at Customer Request	1	1.1%
Total	87	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.

Figure 2. Scan Away From the Delivery Point in Fort Point, MA



Source: Postal Service Single Package Look Up.

¹³ Packages are expected to be scanned within a designated buffer distance from the delivery point. The OIG evaluates any package that was scanned more than 1,000 feet from the delivery point.

We also found issues with scanning and handling of packages in the unit. On the morning of September 17, 2024, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected all 27 packages from the carrier cases to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 27 packages, 11 (41 percent) had improper scans or handling issues, including:

- Ten packages found at the carrier case were scanned delivered, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's delivery address. Specifically, five packages were scanned "Delivered to Front Desk Receptionist," three were scanned "Delivered in/at Mailbox," and two were scanned "Delivered to Agent."
- One package was scanned "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location." This package was scanned 0.4 miles away from the delivery point. Scans should be made as close to the delivery point as possible.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Station management did not regularly verify the scans were completed and performed in the correct location. In addition, the PM supervisor had instructed the carriers to scan all packages,

before returning to the unit, to provide a STC scan to all packages. He stated he was instructed by management that all packages needed a STC scan by the end of the day. The station manager said he will monitor to make sure the PM supervisor is in alignment with scanning procedures. In addition, he stated that the supervisor and carriers may need a refresher training on proper scanning procedures.

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,¹⁴ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹⁵

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, 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 the customer experience and the Postal Service brand.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding. See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

¹⁴ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹⁵ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #2: Arrow Keys

What We Found

Unit management did not properly manage arrow keys. On the morning of September 18, 2024, we reviewed the unit's arrow key certification list in the Retail and Delivery Applications and Reports (RADAR)¹⁶ system and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. We determined 57 of the 205 keys located at the unit were not on the list and 30 of the 178 keys on the list could not be located. Unit management had not reported any of the missing keys to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not properly manage the arrow keys. Specifically, management did not verify the list in the RADAR system matched the physical inventory at the unit. The station manager completed the last semi-annual arrow key certification without verifying the list of keys in RADAR matched the keys at the unit. The PM supervisor completed the last three months of arrow key certification in RADAR but also did not verify the arrow keys at the unit against the list in the RADAR system. In addition, the PM supervisor stated he was new to the process and, although he had taken the computer-generated training to enter the certification in RADAR, he was unaware that the list of arrow keys in the RADAR system differed from the list of arrow keys the unit maintained in the registry cage. The station manager and supervisor did not report the missing arrow keys to the U.S. Inspection Service because they were unaware the unit was missing arrow keys.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,¹⁷ management must keep an accurate inventory of all arrow keys. Any missing keys must be immediately reported to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When there is insufficient oversight and supervision of accountable items, such as arrow keys, there is increased risk of mail theft. These thefts damage the Postal Service's reputation and diminish public trust in the nation's mail system. Additionally, because arrow keys open mail receptacles, lost or damaged keys can result in undelivered mail.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

¹⁶ The arrow key certification in RADAR provides a national platform for all facilities to verify current inventory and account for all arrow keys.

¹⁷ *Arrow/Modified Arrow Lock (MAL) Key Accountability Standard Work Instruction*, dated May 2024.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from September through December 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 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 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 Brookline Branch, Fort Point Station, and Revere Carrier Annex, as well as the district.

We assessed the reliability of PTR, Delivery Condition Visualization system, and the Time and Collection System 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



November 25, 2024

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Management Response: Fort Point Station, Boston, MA: Delivery Operations (Report Number 24-154-2-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Fort Point Station, Boston, MA: Delivery Operations*.

Management agrees with the two findings in the report on package scanning and arrow keys.

Management has begun taking steps to address the two findings.

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

Arrow Keys: Management will update the inventory log to reflect all arrow keys on hand and report any missing keys to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Management will also provide training on proper handling and security of arrow keys. Additionally, reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

E-SIGNED by DERMOT.G TUOHY
on 2024-11-26 18:14:39 EST

Dermot Tuohy
A/Manager, MA-RI District

cc: Vice President, Area, Retail & Delivery (Atlantic)
Corporate Audit Response Management

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