

Gray Main Post Office, Gray, GA: Delivery Operations

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 25-015-1-R25 | February 12, 2025



Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

February 12, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR: AVINESH D. KUMAR
MANAGER, GEORGIA DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Balduff", is centered below the "MEMORANDUM FOR" section.

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

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Gray Main Post Office, Gray, GA: Delivery Operations
(Report Number 25-015-1-R25)

This report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Gray Main Post Office in Gray, GA.

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

Results

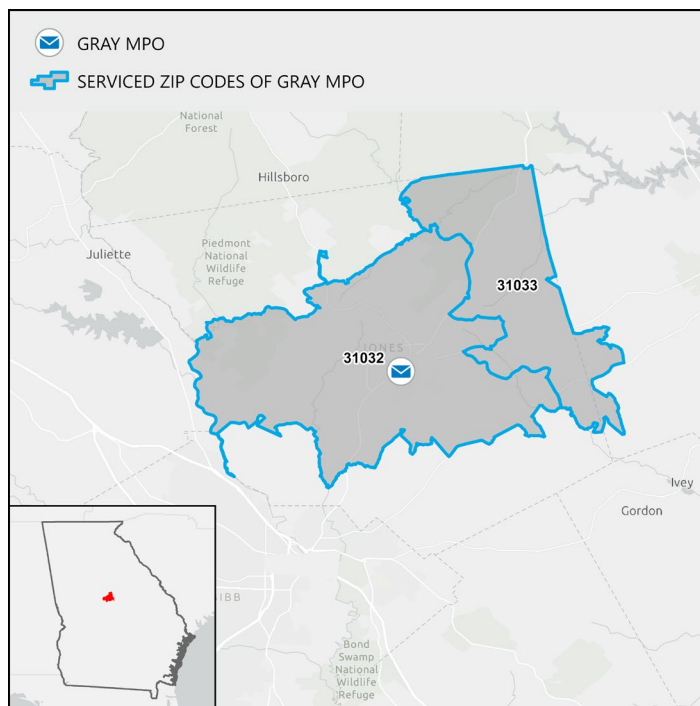
Background

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

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Gray Main Post Office (MPO) in Gray, GA (Project Number 25-015-1). The Gray MPO is in the Georgia District of the Southern Area and serves about 16,289 people in ZIP Codes 31032 and 31033, which are considered rural communities¹ (see Figure 1).

This delivery unit has 11 rural routes. From September 7 through October 4, 2024, the delivery unit had one supervisor assigned.² As of September 20, 2024,³ the employee availability rate for the Gray MPO was 86.1 percent year-to-date for fiscal year (FY) 2024, which is under the Postal Service's retail and delivery operations employee availability goal of 93.6 percent for FY 2024. The Gray MPO is one of four delivery units⁴ the OIG reviewed during the week of November 18, 2024, that are serviced by the Macon Local Processing Center (LPC).

Figure 1. ZIP Codes Serviced by the Gray MPO



Source: OIG analysis of ZIP Code data.

We assessed all units serviced by the Macon LPC 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 at the delivery unit, undelivered route information, and first and last mile failures⁹ between July 1 and September 28, 2024.

We judgmentally selected the Gray MPO primarily based on the number of Informed Delivery contacts, STC scans performed away from the delivery point, and undelivered routes. See [Table 1](#) for a comparison of some of these metrics between the unit and the rest of the district.

¹ We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and rural classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.

² According to the Postal Service's Time and Attendance Collection system (TACS). TACS is the system used by the Postal Service to automate the collection of employee time and attendance information.

³ The last day of Pay Period 20.

⁴ The other three units were the Perry Administrative Post Office, Perry, GA (Project Number 25-015-2); the Warner Robins Main Post Office, Warner Robins, GA (Project Number 25-015-3); and the Zebulon Branch, Macon, GA (Project Number 25-015-4).

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 processing facility on the day that it was intended. Last mile failures occur after the mailpiece has been processed at the processing facility on a final processing operation and is not delivered to the customer on the day it was intended.

Table 1. Delivery Metric Comparison Between July 1 and September 28, 2024

Delivery Metric	Unit Average per Route	District Average per Route
Informed Delivery Contacts	33.4	21.1
STC Scans at the Unit	16.6	12.2
Scans Over 1,000 Feet From Delivery Point	19.8	14.1

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service’s Informed Delivery and Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data extracted October 7, 2024. PTR is the system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Gray MPO in Gray, GA.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on the following audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys,¹⁰ carrier separations and transfers, and property safety and security conditions. 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. During our site visit we observed mail conditions; package scanning procedures; arrow key security procedures; employee separation procedures; and unit safety and security conditions. 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 2 with management on January 23, 2025, 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 Gray MPO. We will

issue a separate capping report¹¹ that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all four 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 and property conditions at the Gray MPO. Specifically, we found issues with four of the areas we reviewed (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of Results

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

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of November 18, 2024.

- We reviewed STC scans occurring at the delivery unit, and those completed greater than 1,000 feet¹² from the intended delivery point between July 1 and September 28, 2024 and did not identify any systemic issues. The new postmaster started at this delivery unit in July 2024 and the STC scans made at the unit dropped from 113 in July to 25 in August and September combined. In addition, upon further review during fieldwork, we determined that about 77 percent of the scans performed away from the delivery point were actually scanned accurately at the point

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 Project Number 25-015.
¹² 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.

of delivery. This included about 34 percent of the scans made at one house, which was located over 1,000 feet away from the mailbox. While we didn't have a finding related to these scans, we did have a finding related to improper package scanning.

- We analyzed employee data and did not identify any issues with employee separations and transfers.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of November 19, 2024, we identified about 1,176¹³ delayed mailpieces at seven carrier cases and in the collection mail area.¹⁴ Specifically, we identified 734 letters, 439 flats, and three packages. In addition, management did not report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)¹⁵ system. See Table 3 for the number of pieces for each mail type and Figure 2 for examples of delayed mail found at carrier cases. Further, the carriers did not complete Postal Service (PS) Forms 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*,¹⁶ to document undelivered mailpieces.

Table 3. Types of Delayed Mail Identified

Type of Mail	Carrier Case	Collection Mail Area	Total Count of Delayed Mail
Letters	631	103	734
Flats	398	41	439
Packages	0	3	3
Totals	1,029	147	1,176

Source: OIG count of delayed mailpieces identified during our visit on November 19, 2024.

Figure 2. Examples of Delayed Mail in the Carrier Cases



Source: OIG photos taken November 19, 2024.

¹³ Count of mail included individual piece counts and OIG estimates based on Postal Service conversion factors in Management Instruction PO-610 2007-1, *Piece Count Recording System*.
¹⁴ This was mail carriers collected on their routes and brought back to the unit after the final dispatch to the LPC.
¹⁵ A tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of daily mail conditions at the point in time when carriers have departed for the street.
¹⁶ PS Form 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*, lists all mail distributed to the carrier for delivery that was left in the office or returned undelivered.

Why Did It Occur

The delayed mail we identified was primarily due to management not enforcing the redline¹⁷ process. Specifically, management did not verify that carriers identified and placed mail that they brought back from their routes into the appropriate area or completed a PS Form 1571 to document the reason why the mail could not be delivered. In addition, carriers were not using the 3M case¹⁸ to allow for supervisor review of missequenced mail, but instead were putting it back in their cases upon returning from their routes. Furthermore, the postmaster was not aware of the mail at the carrier cases because she did not complete a walkthrough of the unit the previous evening. She stated that she had worked from open to close that day, left about 8:45 p.m., and had to be back to open the unit at 4:45 a.m. She also did not take the collection mail to the LPC due to her late schedule.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that all mail was processed and delivered daily and that any mail returned from a route was properly identified. Postal Service policy¹⁹ states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. In addition, policy²⁰ states delivery units must follow the redline process, which includes carriers completing a PS Form 1571 for any undelivered mail brought back to the delivery unit. Carriers should place missequenced mail into the 3M case when they return from their routes²¹ and a supervisor should review and report this mail on a 3M Daily Log and notify the appropriate operations support office.²²

Further, managers must complete the PM checklist and verify that the unit is free of all outgoing mail. In the event collection mail does not make it on the final dispatch truck to the plant, management must initiate procedures for ensuring the mail is

transported to the processing plant.²³ Managers are also required²⁴ to report all mail in the delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in the DCV system. Further, management must update the DCV system if volumes have changed prior to the end of the business day.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

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

Postal Service Response

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

17 A standardized framework encompassing manager and carrier responsibilities after carriers return to the delivery unit upon completion of delivery assignments, ensuring that any mail returned from the street is identified with a signed completed PS Form 1571 and that no mail is taken back to the carrier case.

18 The area of the delivery unit where carriers place their missent, missorted, and missequenced mail.

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

20 Standard Operating Procedures, Redline Policy.

21 *3M (Missent, Missort and Missequence)* Standard Work Instruction: Carrier, May 8, 2019.

22 *3M (Missent, Missort and Missequence)* Standard Work Instruction: Supervisor, May 8, 2019.

23 Standard Operating Procedures, Dispatch Deviation Policy, July 19, 2024.

24 *DCV Learn and Grow*, August 1, 2024.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

We found issues with employees improperly scanning packages. On the morning of November 19, 2024, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected all five packages from the carrier cases to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. All five of the sampled packages had improper scans. Specifically, all five packages received an STC scan (three were scanned “Forwarded” and two scanned “Delivery Attempt – No Access to Delivery Location”). However, based on discussions with the carriers, no delivery was attempted. For four of these packages, carriers stated they had passed the delivery point when they realized they had not delivered the packages. Instead of going back to deliver the packages, they incorrectly scanned them and brought them back to the office. The other package showed up at the carrier case after the carrier had left the unit to deliver mail.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning procedures. Management stated it monitors scans daily. However, it focuses on integrity and scan failure reports that record missing scans instead of reports that show improper scans. In addition, the postmaster did not complete a walkthrough in the evening to identify the packages and verify the scan status due to it being late and having to return early in the morning.

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,²⁵ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.²⁶

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.

²⁵ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

²⁶ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #3: Arrow Keys

What We Found

Unit management did not properly update the arrow key inventory log and safeguard arrow keys. On the morning of November 21, 2024, we reviewed the unit's arrow key certification list in the Retail and Delivery Applications and Reports (RADAR)²⁷ system and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. Unit management reported 21 keys in RADAR as "In-Use" or "In-Vault." Based on our physical review of arrow keys at the unit, four of the 21 keys were missing, and one additional key found at the unit was not recorded in RADAR. Unit management had not reported any of the four keys we identified as missing to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

In addition, arrow keys were not always kept secure. Specifically, arrow keys were kept [REDACTED]. We also found that carriers were not signing the daily log to acknowledge their acceptance and return of their assigned keys.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not properly manage and safeguard arrow keys due to a lack of oversight. Specifically, the postmaster stated that she had not conducted an arrow key inventory since she took over the unit in July. The PM supervisor conducted an inventory in September and determined that several keys were missing. She called the previous postmaster and supervisor to attempt to locate the keys, but they were unable to recover all of them. Management was aware that the keys were not properly secured and had discussed putting a process in place to secure the keys but had not done it at the time of our audit. Carriers had been using a sign-in sheet to acknowledge the acceptance and return of their keys, but they recently fell out of the practice of using it and management stopped enforcing it.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,²⁸ management must keep an accurate inventory of all arrow keys. Any missing keys must be immediately reported to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

In addition, policy states that arrow keys must remain secured until they are individually assigned to personnel. A supervisor or clerk must supervise employees signing out keys on the inventory log. Upon return, arrow keys should be signed in and deposited in a secure location. A supervisor or clerk must verify all keys have been returned and accounted for daily.

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.

²⁷ The arrow key certification in RADAR provides a national platform for all facilities to verify current inventory and account for all arrow keys.

²⁸ Arrow/Modified Arrow Lock (MAL) Key Accountability Standard Work Instruction, dated May, 2024.

Finding #4: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found property safety and security issues at the Gray MPO, including:

Property Safety:

- All four fire extinguishers were missing monthly and annual inspections.
- One fire extinguisher was blocked (see Figure 3).
- The electrical panel was blocked (see Figure 3).

Property Security:

- There was no sign posted in the employee parking area stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight and take the necessary actions to verify that property condition issues were corrected. Management did not know about the missing monthly fire extinguishers because they were more focused on mail delivery operations. The blocked fire extinguisher and electrical panel were due to space limitations in the unit. In addition, management was not aware of the requirement for the “vehicle subject to search” sign in the employee parking lot. During our audit, management took corrective action to unblock the electrical panel.

What Should Have Happened

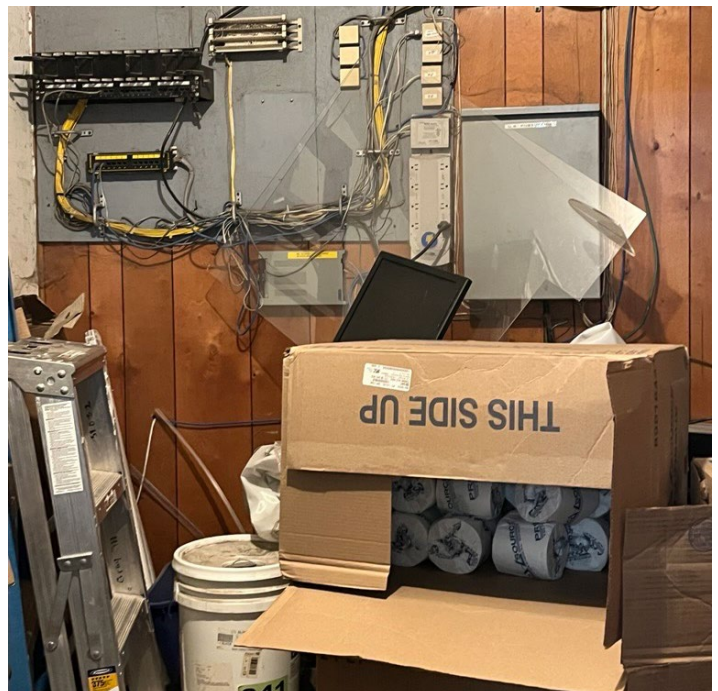
Management should have provided sufficient oversight of personnel responsible for maintaining facilities, reported safety and security issues as they arose, and followed up for completion. The Postal Service requires management to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers.²⁹

Figure 3. Examples of Property Safety Issues

Blocked Fire Extinguisher



Blocked Electrical Panel



Source: OIG photos taken November 20, 2024.

²⁹ Postal Service Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*, July, 2020.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

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

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from October 2024 through February 2025 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 components that were significant within the context of our objectives. We will issue a separate report that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for the Gray MPO, Perry Administrative Post Office, the Warner Robbins MPO, and the Zebulon Branch, as well as the district.

We assessed the reliability of PTR and DCV 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



January 24, 2025

VICTORIA SMITH
ACTING DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Gray Main Post Office, Gray, GA: Delivery Operations
(Report Number 25-015-1-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Gray Main Post Office, Gray, GA: Delivery Operations*.

Management generally agrees with the four findings in the report on delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys, and property conditions.

Management has begun taking steps to address the four findings.

Delayed Mail: Management will conduct a service talk on proper handling and recording of delayed mail in DCV. Management will also reiterate the requirement to use PS Form 1571 *Undelivered Mail Report* and follow the *Redline process*. Reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Package Scanning: Management will provide a service talk on proper 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 all missing keys to the US Postal Inspection Service. Management will also conduct training on proper management and security of arrow keys. Additionally, reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Property Conditions: Management has abated the four safety and security related property conditions identified in the audit.

E-SIGNED by Avinesh D Kumar
on 2025-01-24 08:35:10 EST

Avinesh D. Kumar
District Manager, Georgia District

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

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



This document contains sensitive information that has been redacted for public release. These redactions were coordinated with USPS and agreed to by the OIG.

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