

# Zebulon Branch, Macon, GA: Delivery Operations

## AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 25-015-4-R25 | February 12, 2025



# Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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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 header.

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

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Zebulon Branch, Macon, GA: Delivery Operations  
(Report Number 25-015-4-R25)

This report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Zebulon Branch, Macon, 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

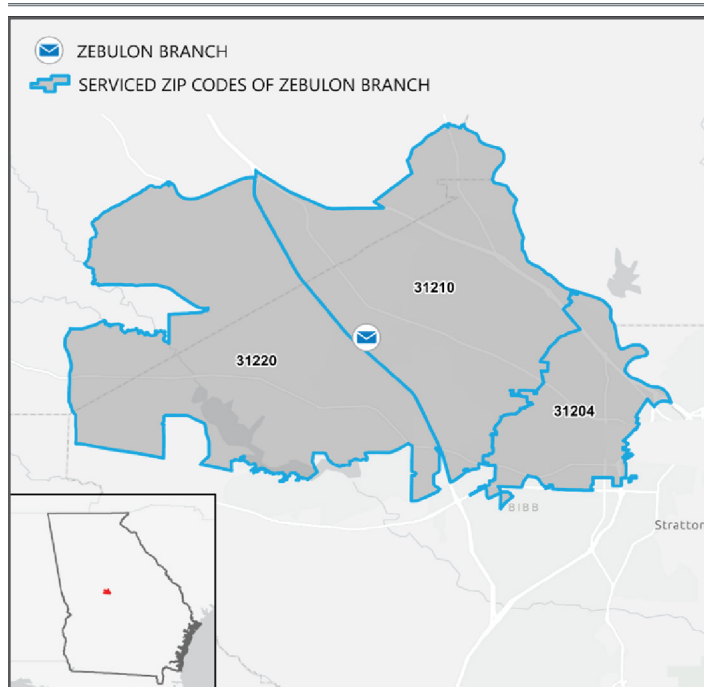
The U.S. Postal Service's mission is to provide timely, reliable, secure, and affordable mail and package delivery to more than 160 million residential and business addresses across the country. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviews delivery operations at facilities across 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 Zebulon Branch in Macon, GA (Project Number 25-015-4). The Zebulon Branch is in the Georgia District of the Southern Area and serves about 80,616 people in ZIP Codes 31204, 31210, and 31220, which are considered predominantly urban communities (see Figure 1). Specifically, 71,685 (89 percent) live in urban communities and 8,931 (11 percent) live in rural communities.<sup>1</sup>

This delivery unit has 34 city routes and 22 rural routes. From September 7 through October 4, 2024, the delivery unit had three supervisors assigned.<sup>2</sup> There was also one employee acting in a higher-level supervisor detail at this facility. The Zebulon Branch falls under the Macon Post Office for employee availability measurement. As of September 20, 2024,<sup>3</sup> the employee availability rate for the Macon Post Office was 91.21 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 Zebulon Branch is one of four delivery units<sup>4</sup> the OIG reviewed during the week of November 18, 2024, that are serviced by the Macon Local Processing Center (LPC).

We assessed all units serviced by the Macon LPC based on the number of Customer 360<sup>5</sup> (C360) delivery-related inquiries,<sup>6</sup> Informed Delivery<sup>7</sup> contacts, stop-the-clock<sup>8</sup> (STC) scans performed away from the delivery point and at the delivery unit, undelivered route information, and first and last mile failures<sup>9</sup> between July 1 and September 28, 2024.

**Figure 1. ZIP Codes Serviced by the Zebulon Branch**



Source: OIG analysis of ZIP Code data.

We judgmentally selected the Zebulon Branch primarily based on the number of C360 inquiries related to delivery and STC scans performed away from the delivery point. See [Table 1](#) for a comparison of some of these metrics between the unit and the rest of the district.

<sup>1</sup> We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.

<sup>2</sup> As recorded in 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.

<sup>3</sup> The last day of Pay Period 20.

<sup>4</sup> The other three units were the Gray Main Post Office, Gray, GA (Project Number 25-015-1), Perry Administrative Post Office, Perry, GA (Project Number 25-015-2), and Warner Robins Main Post Office, Warner Robins, GA (Project Number 25-015-3).

<sup>5</sup> A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.

<sup>6</sup> A compilation of package inquiry, package pickup, daily mail service, and hold mail inquiries.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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."

<sup>9</sup> 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 |
|---|------------------------|----------------------------|
| C360 Delivery Inquiries                   | 12.4                   | 9.8                        |
| Scans Over 1,000 Feet From Delivery Point | 23.3                   | 14.1                       |

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service's C360, 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 Zebulon Branch in Macon, GA.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on the following audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys,<sup>10</sup> carrier separations and transfers, property safety and security conditions, and separations of packages for dispatch. 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; unit safety and security conditions; and package separations procedures for dispatch. 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 Zebulon Branch. We will issue a separate capping report<sup>11</sup> 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 Zebulon Branch. Specifically, we found issues with four of the areas we reviewed (see Table 2). We also found an issue related to the separation of packages for dispatch.

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                       |    |
| Other: Separation of Packages for Dispatch | X                       |    |

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

We analyzed employee data and did not identify any issues with carrier 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 Project Number 25-015.

# Finding #1: Delayed Mail

## What We Found

On the morning of November 19, 2024, we identified about 8,853<sup>12</sup> delayed mailpieces at 53 carrier cases. Specifically, we identified 5,905 flats, 2,917 letters, and 31 packages. In addition, management did not report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)<sup>13</sup> system. See 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*,<sup>14</sup> to document undelivered mailpieces.

Figure 2. Delayed Mail



Source: OIG photo taken November 19, 2024.

## Why Did It Occur

The delayed mail we identified was primarily due to the Macon postmaster directing the Zebulon Branch to only deliver packages and letter mail that arrived at the unit sorted in sequential order

and ready for delivery. The postmaster stated she made the decision to delay unsorted letter and flat mail to manage the carrier return times. Further, management stated it only uses a PS Form 1571 when the carrier has a tray or more of mail and was not aware that all undelivered mail was required to be documented. In addition, management did not report delayed mail in the DCV system because there was a miscommunication among unit management. Specifically, the supervisor who normally enters the mail in the DCV system stated she received no delayed mail information from the other supervisors.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have made sure that all mail was delivered on the day it was committed for delivery. Postal Service policy<sup>15</sup> states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. Policy<sup>16</sup> also states carriers must complete a PS Form 1571 for any undelivered mail brought back to the delivery unit. In addition, managers are required<sup>17</sup> 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 before 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.

<sup>12</sup> OIG estimate based on Postal Service conversion factors in Management Instruction PO-610-2007-1, *Piece Count Recording System*.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> PS Form 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*, lists all mail distributed to the carrier for delivery that was left in the office or returned undelivered.

<sup>15</sup> *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Standard Operating Procedures, Redline Policy.

<sup>17</sup> *DCV Learn and Grow*, August 1, 2024.

## Finding #2: Package Scanning

### What We Found

Employees scanned packages improperly at the delivery unit, scanned packages away from the intended delivery point, and handled packages incorrectly at the unit. We reviewed package scanning data for scans that occurred at the unit and removed any potentially accurate scans performed.<sup>18</sup> Employees improperly scanned 139 packages at the delivery unit between July 1 and September 28, 2024 (see Table 3). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that about 71 percent of them were scanned “Delivered.”

**Table 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit**

| STC Scan Type                                       | Count      | Percentage  |
|---|------------|-------------|
| Delivered   | 98         | 70.5%       |
| Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location | 36         | 25.9%       |
| Refused   | 3          | 2.2%        |
| Receptacle Full / Item Oversized                    | 2          | 1.4%        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>139</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service’s Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data.

We also reviewed 1,188 scans occurring away from the delivery unit and over 1,000 feet<sup>19</sup> from the intended delivery point between July 1 and September 28, 2024 (see Table 4). We removed scans that could have been performed within policy, such as “Animal Interference.” Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that about 96 percent of them were scanned “Delivered.”

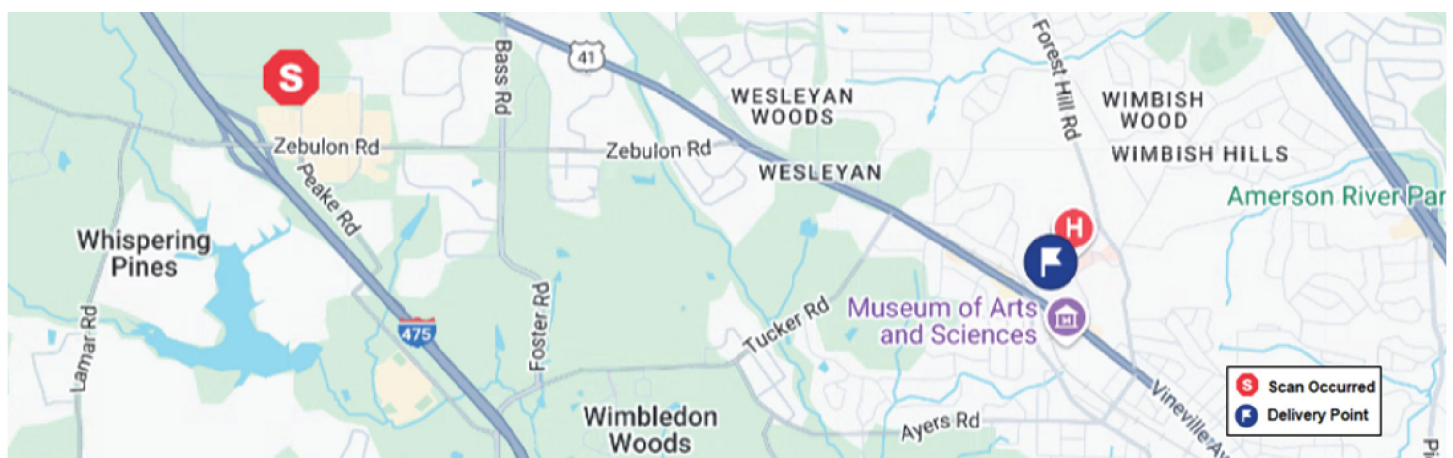
**Table 4. STC Scans Over 1,000 Feet Away From the Delivery Point**

| STC Scan Type                                       | Count        | Percentage  |
|---|--------------|-------------|
| Delivered   | 1,138        | 95.8%       |
| Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location | 35           | 2.9%        |
| Held at Post Office at Customer Request             | 14           | 1.2%        |
| Delivered to Agent for Final Delivery               | 1            | 0.1%        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>1,188</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service’s PTR System data.

For example, the map in Figure 3 shows an instance where a carrier scanned a package as “Delivered Attempted – No Access” 4.5 miles away from the delivery point.

**Figure 3. Scan Away From the Delivery Point at the Zebulon Branch, Macon, GA**



Source: Postal Service Single Package Look Up.

<sup>18</sup> This data does not include scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as “Delivered – PO Box” and “Customer (Vacation) Hold.”

<sup>19</sup> 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 November 19, 2024, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 30 packages from the carrier cases to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 30 sampled packages, 26 (86.7 percent) had improper scans or handling issues, including:

- Fourteen packages did not have the proper scan indicating the correct status of the package. Nine of these packages were awaiting a delivery scan, suggesting that the packages were not taken out for delivery; four were scanned delivered, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's delivery address; and one package was missing an arrival at unit scan, which is necessary to provide complete visibility.
- Six packages had STC scans that were made between .2 and 7.1 miles away from the delivery point. Scans should be made as close to the delivery point as possible.
- Six packages were not handled properly at the delivery unit. Four of these packages were scanned "Business Closed" on the previous Saturday and were not taken out for delivery the next delivery day. The other two packages were scanned "Return to Sender" or "Insufficient Address" and should have been returned to the sender.

### Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and

enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. The closing supervisor stated he could not monitor carrier scanning since he was often out of the building performing other tasks such as addressing carrier vehicle breakdowns, delivering replacement scanners for ones that stopped working while the carriers were delivering mail, and delivering gas cards so carriers could fuel their delivery vehicles. The unit manager explained that he did not have time to monitor scanning reports or enforce proper package scanning because he was busy doing other activities, such as disciplining employees and performing tasks instructed by upper management.

### 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,<sup>20</sup> which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.<sup>21</sup>

### 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.

<sup>20</sup> *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

<sup>21</sup> *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)<sup>22</sup> system and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. Unit management reported 24 keys in RADAR as "In-Use," "Damaged," or "Duplicate." Based on our physical review of arrow keys at the unit, 16 of the 24 keys listed in RADAR were missing and an additional 19 keys found at the unit were not recorded in RADAR. Unit management had not reported any of the missing keys to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

In addition, arrow keys were not always kept secure. Specifically, arrow keys were kept inside the registry cage, [REDACTED] throughout our visit. Employees had access to the key that opens the registry cage, and we observed employees retrieving arrow keys without supervision. We also found that carriers were not signing the daily log to acknowledge their acceptance and return of keys.

### Why Did It Occur

Management did not properly manage and safeguard arrow keys because it was focused on other activities, such as making carrier assignments and performing closing duties. Further, the unit manager stated he accounted for all the keys on the RADAR list during the last certification, which

was November 5, 2024. He explained further that sometimes arrow keys get mixed up as carriers work at different delivery units during the week leaving them at the wrong delivery unit.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,<sup>23</sup> 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 deposited in a secure location, and 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.

<sup>22</sup> The arrow key certification in RADAR provides a national platform for all facilities to verify current inventory and account for all arrow keys.

<sup>23</sup> Arrow/Modified Arrow Lock (MAL) Key Accountability Standard Work Instruction, dated May, 2024.



## Finding #4: Property Conditions

### What We Found

We found one security issue at the Zebulon Branch. Specifically, there was no sign posted at the entrance of the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

### Why Did It Occur

The unit manager was not aware they were required to have the sign posted.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified security policies were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,<sup>24</sup> management must post signage stating that vehicles are subject to search.

### Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management's attention to security policies can reduce the risk of employee theft, employee and customer lawsuits, and enhance the Postal Service brand.

### Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

<sup>24</sup> Postal Service Handbook RE-5, *Building and Site Security Requirements*, September 2009.

## Finding #5: Separation of Packages for Dispatch

### What We Found

Employees at the Zebulon Branch did not properly separate packages destined for the Atlanta, GA, Regional Processing and Distribution Center (RPDC). Specifically, on November 20, 2024, during the unit's evening operations, we observed outgoing Priority Mail<sup>25</sup> packages comingled in the same container with other packages.

### Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide oversight to ensure that employees properly separated packages for dispatch to the RPDC. The unit manager stated he was not aware of the requirement for separation.

### What Should Have Happened

The Postal Service requires all level 22 and above units to separate Priority Mail from the non-Priority Mail packages and use a specific placard when dispatching this mail to the processing facility.<sup>26</sup>

### Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Proper mail preparation is required for visibility throughout the Postal Service network. When mail is not properly separated for dispatch to the processing facility, in accordance with procedures, there is an increased likelihood that mail will require additional processing steps. Furthermore, this can result in delays and service failures and an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand.

### Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

<sup>25</sup> An expedited service that may contain any mailable matter weighing no more than 70 pounds.

<sup>26</sup> *Learn and Grow RDC/RSC Updates*, May 2024.

# Appendix A: Additional Information

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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 Main Post Office, Perry APO, Warner Robins Main Post Office, 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: Zebulon Branch, Macon, GA: Delivery Operations (Report Number 25-015-4-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Zebulon Branch, Macon, GA: Delivery Operations*.

Management generally agrees with the five findings in the report on delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys, property conditions, and separation of packages for dispatch.

Management has begun taking steps to address the five 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*. 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 ordered new subject to search sign and a workorder was submitted for the installation.

*Separation of Packages for Dispatch:* Management will provide service talks to reinforce package separation practices to ensure Priority Mail is not comingled with non-priority mail. Reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

E-SIGNED by Avinesh D Kumar  
on 2025-01-24 08:35:31 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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