Mail Delivery Issues – Brightwood Station, Indianapolis, IN

October 25, 2019

Report Number 19-020-R20

October 25, 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR: TODD S. HAWKINS
MANAGER, GREATER INDIANA DISTRICT

E-Signed by Hilderbrand, Sherry
VERIFY authenticity with eSign Desktop

Sherry A. Hilderbrand

FROM: Sherry A. Hilderbrand
Director (A), Delivery and Retail Response Team

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report – Mail Delivery Issues – Brightwood
Station, Indianapolis, IN
(Report Number 19-020-R20)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery Issues at the Brightwood Station, Indianapolis, IN (Project Number 19-020).

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Byron Bustos, Operations Manager, at bbustos@uspsoig.gov or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management
Vice President, Delivery and Retail
Vice President, Area Operations

Background

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery issues at the Brightwood Station, Indianapolis, IN (Project Number 19-020). The Brightwood Station is in the Greater Indiana District of the Great Lakes Area. This audit was designed to provide U.S. Postal Service management with timely information on potential mail delivery risks at the Brightwood Station.

The Brightwood Station has 23 city delivery routes delivered by 32 city carriers. We selected Brightwood Station based on our analysis of carriers returning after 6:00 p.m. using data from the Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW).

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to assess mail delivery service at the Brightwood Station in Indianapolis, IN.

To accomplish our objective, we analyzed delivery metrics such as mail arrival, distribution up time (DUT), carrier return to office time, and the number of routes and carriers to assess performance of delivery operations. During our site visit from September 10-11, 2019, we conducted delivery unit observations, and interviewed delivery unit personnel and unit management to verify data and identify causes for carriers returning to the unit after 6:00 p.m.

We relied on computer-generated data from the EDW, the Scan Point Management System (SPMS), and the Surface Visibility system. Although we did not test the validity of controls over these systems, we assessed the accuracy of the data by testing the completeness and reasonableness of the data, observing operations at the unit, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

We conducted this audit from September through October 2019, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on September 30, 2019 and included their comments where appropriate.

Finding #1: City Carriers Returning After 6:00 p.m.

We determined carriers at Brightwood Station were returning to the office after 6:00 p.m. Specifically, during Quarters (Q) 2 and 3 of fiscal year (FY) 2019, 30 percent of carriers returned by 6:00 p.m., 50 percent by 7:00 p.m., and 85 percent by 8:00 p.m.

(see Table 1). The Postal Service's goal is to have 100 percent of carriers return by 6:00 p.m.[1]

Table 1. Brightwood Station Carriers Returning by 6:00 p.m.

FY 2019 Quarters	Percentage of Carriers Returning By 6:00 p.m.	Percentage of Carriers Returning By 7:00 p.m.	Percentage of Carriers Returning By 8:00 p.m.
Q2	30%	49%	82%
Q3	31%	51%	89%
Average	**30%**	**50%**	**85%**

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of City Carriers Returning After 6:00 p.m. data from EDW-Delivery Data Mart.

This condition occurred due to:

- **Late Mail Arrival:** Mail frequently arrived late to the Brightwood Station. During Qs 2 and 3 of FY 2019, 237 of the 360 trips (66 percent) from the Indianapolis Mail Processing Annex and Indianapolis Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) were late to the Brightwood Station (see Table 2). The average late trip was 49.9 minutes late and the latest mail trip was five hours late.

  The unit could not provide us with a Mail Arrival Profile (MAP) or Integrated Operating Plan (IOP)[2] with the servicing plants at the time of our visit. Delivery unit management stated that they are in the process of updating the IOP. The Postal Service designed the IOP/MAP to help stabilize mail flow by setting delivery units' and processing facilities' expectations for the arrival and quality of mail. A signed copy must be on file at the delivery unit.[3] This information is critical to establishing appropriate staffing and reporting times to eliminate carrier delays.

  Subsequently, we reviewed FY 2019, Q4[4] mail trips to Brightwood Station and noted a reduction in late trips (from 66 percent to 40 percent) and a reduction in average minutes late (from 49.9 minutes to 32.3 minutes). However, as a result of late arriving mail, the unit missed its DUT. During a 30-day period ending September 9, 2019, SPMS showed the branch's DUTs were late 36 percent of the time – ranging anywhere from four to 70 minutes.

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[1] *Staffing and Scheduling Tool, Function 4 Applications User Guide*, 2016.
[2] A contract between the mail processing plant and the delivery unit — which contains the unit's MAP — that helps stabilize mail flow.
[3] *AM Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) II Guidebook*, Section 2.2, 2013.
[4] Q4 through September 25, 2019.

Table 2. Late Arriving Mail at the Brightwood Station

Trips	Count	Percentage
Late Trips	237	66
Non-Late Trips	123	34
Total	**360**	

Source: OIG analysis of Surface Visibility Data.

▪ **Unfilled City Carrier Vacancies:** Of the 23 city delivery routes, four (17 percent) were vacant at the time of our visit. Unit management informed us that three of the four routes were open for bid, but that the delivery unit had been operating with four open routes for months. Several carriers stated that they help deliver mail on vacant routes routinely, adding two or more hours of work to their day. Additionally, there are 32 carriers assigned to the unit; however, eight of them (25 percent) are on various types of extended leave.

When mail arrives on time, clerks will be able to distribute it to the carriers, allowing them to leave for their routes on time. In addition, improving staffing levels would reduce the need for carriers to return to their units after 6 p.m.

> **Recommendation #1:** We recommend **the Manager, Greater Indiana District**, update the Integrated Operating Plan and Mail Arrival Profile for the Brightwood Station, the Indianapolis Mail Processing Annex, and the Indianapolis Processing and Distribution Center to reflect accurate mail arrival times.

> **Recommendation #2:** We recommend **the Manager, Greater Indiana District**, review and assign the appropriate number of carriers to the Brightwood Station to ensure carriers return to the office in a timely manner.

Finding #2: Arrow Lock Key Management

Brightwood Station management did not properly manage arrow lock keys.[5] Specifically, two arrow lock keys could not be found when we visited the station to conduct an inventory. Additionally, the key log was outdated with key numbers that were no longer valid and new key numbers were not properly documented on the log.

According to unit management, this condition occurred because the afternoon supervisor was not following proper procedures for arrow key accountability and the key log was not updated to reflect recently replaced keys. Postal Service policy states that postmasters must keep accurate key inventories and all keys should be kept in a secure location.[6] In addition, Postal Service policy states that delivery service managers must assure that employees properly handle accountable items every day and when carriers

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[5] Arrow lock keys are accountable items that are used to secure and service mail receptacles.
[6] *Administrative Support Manual*, Section 273 and *Postal Operations Manual*, Issue 9, 633.42, Arrow Lock Keys, July 2002 (updated with revisions through April 30, 2019).

return from their routes, clerks should be available to check in accountable items as efficiently and promptly as possible.[7]

When there is insufficient oversight and supervision of accountable items such as arrow lock keys, there is an increased risk of mail theft.

> **Recommendation #3:** We recommend the **Manager, Greater Indiana District**, instruct the Brightwood Station manager to follow applicable Postal Service and Inspection Service policies and procedures to ensure proper security and accountability of arrow lock keys.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with the findings and recommendations 1 and 3 but disagreed with recommendation 2 as written. See Appendix A for management's comments in their entirety.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated the IOP/MAP will be updated to reflect accurate mail arrival times. The target implementation date is November 1, 2019.

Regarding recommendation 2, management stated vacancies are not due to complement but to the automated job bid cycle. The unit adheres to Local Memorandums of Understanding processes for filling vacancies.

Regarding recommendation 3, management has been instructed to follow applicable policies and procedures to ensure proper security and accountability of arrow lock keys. The Great Lakes Area SOP for arrow keys have been provided to the unit and each employee will be trained. The keys reported missing, have been located and accounted for. The unit updated the arrow key log has validated the log is maintained daily.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations in the report.

Regarding management's disagreement with Recommendation 2, we believe management's efforts to fill the vacancies in accordance with local agreements is sufficient to satisfy the intent of our recommendation. As such, we consider management's response to Recommendation 2 to be responsive.

All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. Recommendation 1 should not be closed in the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system until the OIG

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[7] Handbook M-39, *Management of Delivery Services*, Sections 111.2 and 127, March 2004.

provides written confirmation that the recommendation can be closed. We consider recommendations 2 and 3 closed with the issuance of this report.

Appendix A. Management's Comments

**UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE**
Greater Indiana District

October 17, 2019

Lazerick C. Poland
Director, Audit Operations

**Subject: Mail Delivery Issues-Brightwood Station, Indianapolis, Greater Indiana District
(Report Number DRT-AR-20-DRAFT)**

Greater Indiana District management conditionally agrees with the Brightwood Station Report

Finding 1: City Carriers Returning After 1800

**The OIG determined carriers at Brightwood Station were returning to the office after 6:00
p.m.**

Recommendation 1:

The Manager, Greater Indiana District, update the Integrated Operating Plan and Mail Arrival
Profile for the Brightwood Station, the Indianapolis Mail Processing Annex, and the Indianapolis
Processing and Distribution Center to reflect accurate mail arrival times.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Manager, Greater Indiana District agrees that the Integrated Operating Plan and Mail Arrival
Profile for the Brightwood Station, the Indianapolis Mail Processing Annex, and the Indianapolis
Processing and Distribution Center should be updated to reflect accurate mail arrival times. The
most recent IOP accompanies this response. An updated IOP will be provided by 11/1/2019.

Recommendation 2:

Manager, Greater Indiana District, review and assign the appropriate number of carriers to the
Brightwood Station to ensure carriers return to the office in a timely manner.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Manager, Greater Indiana disagrees with recommendation. Vacancies at the Brightwood Station
are not due to complement. Vacancies in the unit are due to the automated bid cycle. All
Indianapolis Stations and Branches adhere to the Local Memorandum of Understandings
process that pertains to filling vacancies. Copy of pertinent LMOU language accompanies this
response.

UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE
Greater Indiana District

Finding 2: Arrow Lock Key Management

Brightwood Station management did not properly manage arrow lock keys. Specifically, two arrow lock keys could not be found when we visited the station to conduct an inventory. Additionally, the key log was outdated with key numbers that were no longer valid and new key numbers were not properly documented on the log.

Recommendation 3:

Manager, Greater Indiana District, instruct the Brightwood Station manager to follow applicable Postal Service and Inspection Service policies and procedures to ensure proper security and accountability of arrow lock keys.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Manager, Greater Indiana District agrees with the recommendation. The Brightwood Station has been instructed to follow applicable Postal Service and Inspection Service policies and procedures to ensure proper security and accountability of arrow lock keys. The GLA SOP for Arrow Key has been provided to the unit and it will be shared with each employee in a training setting. Both keys (154-9323 and 69-6949) that were documented as missing in this report were located and are accounted for. The unit has been provided with instructions on how to report lost or stolen arrow lock keys. The unit has updated the key log to reflect current arrow lock key numbers. It has been validated that this log is maintained daily. All aforementioned SOPs accompany this response.

J Kennedy for T. Hawkins

Todd Hawkins
District Manager
Greater Indiana