

STES POST OFFICE

Audit Report

Report Number DR-AR-15-005

April 21, 2015



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Highlights

Red Hook Station personnel
generally delivered mail to
correct addresses and fulfilled
customer needs. However,
we found customers experienced
some misdelivered, irregular
and untimely mail delivery.

Background

In fiscal year (FY) 2014, the U.S. Postal Service's Triboro District received 41,953 customer complaints regarding mail delivery and customer service; 378 of these complaints were about the Red Hook Station (Station), NY, a unit of a main Post Office. Station customers complained about misdelivered, irregular, and untimely mail delivery; inadequate retail window service; and limited access to postal services at alternate locations.

This audit responds to a request from Congresswoman Nydia M. Velazquez of New York to review customer complaints regarding mail delivery and customer service. Our objectives were to evaluate whether mail was delivered accurately and timely, and if customers' needs were addressed at the Station.

What The OIG Found

Station personnel generally delivered mail to correct addresses and fulfilled customer needs. However, we found customers experienced some misdelivered, irregular, and untimely mail delivery. In FY 2014, Station mail carriers delivered over 15.9 million pieces of mail. During this period, the Station received 33 complaints regarding misdelivered mail, 140 complaints of irregular mail delivery, and 34 complaints of untimely delivery of mail. Further, we found 23 of 378 customer complaints (6 percent) received at the Station were not resolved

on time. Finally, our review of Point-of-Sale surveys and retail data indicated instances of discourteous service and long wait times in line, while our observations identified poor upkeep of the Station. In FY 2014, 12 customers responded to the Point-of-Sale surveys. In 10 of these surveys, customers responded with negative comments about the sales and service associate who assisted them. Furthermore, wait times in line failed to meet standards in nine of 18 tests during FYs 2013 and 2014.

These issues occurred due to insufficient supervision at the Station. Specifically, supervisors did not always follow guidelines, establish clear expectations for work performance, address negative feedback, or clearly communicate with staff. We also found other operational issues, but are not making recommendations concerning them because management has addressed or is addressing them.

Improving delivery and customer service relating to the Station would enrich the customer experience and enhance the Postal Service's relationship with the public.

In other matters, congressional staff asked us to assess alternate retail access, including collection boxes. We identified 16 alternate retail locations within 1 mile of the Station delivery area serving customers, including eight collection boxes.

What The OIG Recommended

We recommended the district manager, Triboro District, inform customers about the gopost® lockers, continue to pursue centralized parcel operations, adjust mail arrival from plants, and update the integrated operations plan. We also recommended communicating alternate retail access locations

to customers. Finally, we recommended the district manager, Triboro District, direct the manager, Station, to maintain a customer complaint control log, give custodial personnel written instructions for cleaning the facility, and ensure compliance with those instructions.

Transmittal Letter



April 21, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: FRANK J. CALABRESE

DISTRICT MANAGER, TRIBORO DISTRICT

E-Signed by Robert Batta

VERIFY authenticity with e-Sign

COREST - CANTON

FROM: Robert J. Batta

Deputy Assistant Inspector General

for Mission Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – City Delivery and Customer Service

Operations – Red Hook Station, NY (Report Number DR-AR-15-005)

This report presents the results of our audit of the City Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Red Hook Station, NY (Project Number 15XG005DR000).

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Rita F. Oliver, director, Delivery Operations, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management

Table of Contents

Cover Highlights......1 Background......1 What The OIG Found......1 What The OIG Recommended2 Transmittal Letter......3 Findings......5 Introduction5 Conclusion6 City Delivery Operations6 Customer Service11 Customer Complaints11 Recommendations......15 Management's Comments15 Evaluation of Management's Comments16 Appendix A: Additional Information19 Background19 Objectives, Scope, and Methodology......20 Prior Audit Coverage21 Appendix B: Red Hook Station Enterprise Consumer Care System Complaints......23 Appendix C: Red Hook Station Point-of-Sale Fiscal Year 2014 Survey Results......24 Appendix D: Alternate Access Within 1 Mile of Red Hook Station Communities......25 Appendix E: Alternate Access Within 1 Mile of Red Hook Station Communities and Collection Box Locations26 Appendix F: Management's Comments......27 Contact Information32

Findings

In FY 2014, Station mail carriers delivered over 15.9 million pieces of mail. During this period the Station received 33 complaints regarding misdelivered mail, 140 complaints of irregular mail delivery, and 34 complaints of untimely delivery of mail.

Introduction

This report presents the results of our audit of City Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Red Hook Station (Station), NY (Project Number 15XG005DR000). This report responds to a request from Congresswoman Nydia M. Velazquez¹ of New York to review customer complaints regarding mail delivery and customer service at the Station. Our objectives were to evaluate whether mail was delivered accurately and timely and if customers' needs were addressed at the Station. See Appendix A for additional information about this audit.

The Station² is located in Brooklyn, NY, and provides service to residents of the Red Hook, Carroll Gardens, and Columbia Waterfront District communities. In fiscal year (FY) 2014, the Station delivered about 15.9 million pieces of mail to over 15,000 delivery points³ in these three communities. On September 24, 2014, Congresswoman Velazquez informed the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) of excessive complaints from local residents regarding mail delivery and unprofessional treatment. Local residents complained about misdelivered, irregular, and untimely mail delivery.

In a subsequent meeting, congressional staff relayed additional customer concerns about retail customer services. Residents reported window lines were too long and only one window was open at a time. Residents also said they had limited access to postal services at convenient locations.⁴ In FY 2014, the Triboro District received 41,953 customer complaints regarding mail delivery and customer service and 378 of these complaints were about the Station.



¹ Represents the 7th Congressional District in New York.

² The Station is in the Triboro District.

³ A single mailbox or other place to which mail is delivered.

The U.S. Postal Service offers alternate ways to access postal services at times convenient to customers. Convenient locations include supermarkets, drug stores, convenience stores, and automated teller machines at financial institutions.

Conclusion Station personne

Station personnel generally delivered mail to correct addresses and fulfilled customer needs; however, we found customers experienced some misdelivered, irregular, and untimely mail delivery. In FY 2014, Station mail carriers delivered over 15.9 million pieces of mail. During this period the Station received 33 complaints regarding misdelivered mail, 140 complaints of irregular mail delivery, and 34 complaints of untimely delivery of mail. Further, we found 23 of 378 customer complaints (6 percent) received at the Station were not resolved on time. Finally, our review of Point-of-Sale (POS) surveys and retail data indicated instances of discourteous service and long wait times in line (WTIL), while our observations identified poor upkeep of the Station. In FY 2014, 12 customers responded to the POS surveys, and 10 of these customers responded with negative comments about the sales and service associate who assisted them. Furthermore, WTIL failed to meet standards in nine of 18 tests during FYs 2013 and 2014.

Our review of alternate retail access identified 16 alternate retail locations within 1 mile of the Station delivery area serving customers, including eight collection boxes.

These issues occurred due to insufficient supervision at the Station. Specifically, supervisors did not follow guidelines, establish clear expectations for work performance, address negative feedback, or clearly communicate with staff. We also found other operational issues, but we are not making recommendations concerning them because management has addressed or is addressing them.

Improving delivery and customer service relating to the Station would enrich the customer experience and enhance the Postal Service's relationship with the public.

In other matters, congressional staff asked us to assess alternate retail access, including collection boxes. We identified 16 alternative retail locations within 1 mile of the Station delivery area serving customers, including eight collection boxes.

City Delivery Operations

The Station city carriers generally delivered mail to the correct address. However, some customers experienced misdelivered mail, and irregular and untimely mail delivery.

Accuracy. Station city carriers delivered over 15.9 million pieces of mail in FY 2014. We reviewed Address Management System (AMS)⁷ data and found no documented errors⁸ with customer addresses in the Station delivery area. However, the Station received 33 complaints of misdelivered mail in FY 2014 (see Appendix B). One reason mail was misdelivered was that 34 percent⁹ of the city carriers at the Station are city carrier assistants (CCA)¹⁰ and are not as familiar with the routes as regular city carriers are.

Mail was also misdelivered because many of the addresses in the Station delivery area were hard to find. In some cases, multiple names were written on an apartment mailbox while some addresses, names, and apartment numbers were handwritten. An example of this is 88 and 88A 3rd Place. These addresses are easily confused because the only difference between them is a handwritten 88A on the steps leading to that address. The handwriting is difficult to see during the day and would have been even more difficult to see at night had it not been for the holiday lighting in place during our site visit (see Figures 1 and 2).

⁵ The Postal Service's Complaint Handling Guidelines require a response to Internet, telephone, and walk-in complaints within 3 business days.

The POS survey is a receipt based customer survey generated from POS terminals that provides an invitation for customers to complete an online survey about their retail counter experience.

⁷ The Postal Services uses the AMS data to deliver mail to every address in the country. The OIG issued a report on national errors in the AMS data on February 28, 2014.

⁸ AMS errors consist of ZIP Code discrepancies, delivery point sequencing conflicts, duplicate delivery points, overlapping ranges, high-rise addresses improperly coded, or missing defaults.

⁹ The Station has 38 city carriers; 25 are regular city carriers and 13 are CCAs.

¹⁰ A noncareer, bargaining unit employee who performs the full range of letter carrier duties.

Figure 1. Difficult to Identify Address in the Daytime – Red Hook Area



Source: Google Maps street view, January 2013.

Figure 2. Difficult to Identify Address at Night – Red Hook Area



Source: OIG photograph taken December 11, 2014.

Because of the address challenges in the Station delivery area, management told us they assign CCAs on routes they are familiar with whenever possible. Therefore, we will not make a recommendation on this issue.

<u>Irregular Mail Delivery</u>. Station city carriers could not deliver mail to customers on a consistent basis. The Station received 140 complaints of irregular mail delivery in FY 2014 (see Appendix B). In most instances where customers complained, parcels were scanned as delivered, but delivery was not attempted on the day of the complaint.¹¹ We found in most cases irregular mail delivery complaints were caused by:

- Incorrect shipper information. When parcels are dropped at Postal Service delivery units by a third-party shipper, the shipper's tracking system often shows the item as "delivered." However, this does not mean the parcels have been entered into the Postal Service tracking system, or given to the assigned carrier to deliver. Our limited observations confirmed the confusion caused by this practice. We will refer this matter to the OIG Sales and Marketing Directorate for a future review.
- Malfunctioning residential buzzers. Malfunctioning buzzers at multi-unit buildings also contributed to delivery complaints. When buzzers are not in proper working order, carriers cannot contact customers to deliver parcels. Malfunctioning buzzers are the responsibility of the building owner or building management and complaints are handled by the city of New York. Therefore, we will not make a recommendation on this issue.
- Station personnel not informing customers of the gopost® lockers as an alternative delivery option. Despite the difficulty of delivering parcels in the Station area, Station management did not instruct personnel to inform customers of the availability of nearby gopost lockers as an alternative delivery option. Gopost units are automated, secured, self-service parcel lockers placed in convenient locations where customers can pick up or ship parcels at their convenience. The nearest gopost lockers are 1.2 miles away at the Cadman Plaza Post Office, Brooklyn, NY.

¹¹ Due to concerns about mail theft, it is Postal Service policy for carriers not to leave parcels when no one is home if the carrier deems it is not safe even if the customer has provided instructions to leave the package.

¹² Contractors performing cable work in the Brooklyn, NY, area accidentally cut through some wiring that caused residential buzzers to malfunction. Unknowingly, carriers used defective buzzers to notify customers that they had a delivery; however, the customers could not hear the buzzer to accept the mail and parcel delivery from the city carriers.

The Station did not have adequate floor space to effectively work the mail received by the delivery unit. Limited floor space at the Station led to workroom congestion, which hindered parcel distribution, office operations, and supervisor oversight.

<u>Untimely Mail Delivery</u>. Station city carriers could not always deliver the mail on time. The Station received 34 complaints of untimely mail delivery in FY 2014 (see Appendix B). In addition, we found city carriers consistently returned late from street delivery. Specifically, between FYs 2013 and 2014 city carriers returning after 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. increased by 18.60 percent and 12.30 percent, respectively. The Postal Service's goal is for 90 percent of city letter carriers to return from street operations before 5 p.m. (see Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of City Carriers Returning After 5 P.M.

Fiscal Year	5 p.m.	6 p.m.	7 p.m.	8 p.m.	9 p.m.	10 p.m.
2013	70.70%	35.20%	6.10%	0.90%	0.30%	0.00%
2014	76.80%	53.80%	18.40%	2.00%	0.10%	0.00%
Percent Change	6.10%	18.60%	12.30%	1.10%	-0.20%	0.00%

Source: Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW), Delivery Data Mart.

Untimely mail delivery was caused by:

- Space constraints at the Station.
- Late arriving mail from the processing and distribution center (P&DC).
- Manual sorting of automation compatible mail rather than returning it to the P&DC.
- Insufficient supervision and oversight of city delivery operations.

The Station did not have adequate floor space to effectively work the mail received by the delivery unit. Between FYs 2013 and 2014, the Station's parcel volume increased 16 percent while parcel growth nationally increased 8 percent. Limited floor space at the Station led to workroom congestion, which hindered parcel distribution, office operations, and supervisor oversight (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Station Workroom Congestion



Figure 4. Station Carrier Work Area Congestion



Source: OIG photographs taken December 9, 2014, at 11:22 a.m.

Because the Station lacked enough floor space for carriers to properly prepare the mail for delivery, carriers had to place each type¹³ of mail in separate relay sacks. This meant each carrier routinely had four or more relay sacks of mail to organize on the ground each time he or she reloaded mail to continue delivery (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Station Carrier Reloading Mail in the Dark



Source: OIG photograph taken December 11, 2014.

¹³ Carriers deliver caseable mail, Delivery Point Sequence (DPS) mail, Flat Sequencing System mail, and parcels. DPS and Flat Sequencing System mail is arranged in delivery order for a particular carrier route. This mail requires no primary or secondary distribution.

Triboro District officials are aware of the impact the space constraints had on delivery operations and were actively searching for facilities to centralize parcel operations.¹⁴ But they face challenges in securing additional space due to high rents in the area.

Mail did not always arrive on time or in the proper mail mix from the P&DC as outlined in the unit's integrated operating plan (IOP). The Postal Service designed the IOP to help stabilize mail flow by setting delivery units' and processing facilities' expectations for the arrival and quantity of mail. This information is critical to establishing appropriate staffing and reporting times to eliminate carrier delays.

Each day of our observations, the DPS and collection mail¹⁵ arrived 15 minutes to more than an hour late. In addition to being late, these dispatches brought large quantities of working mail (mail requiring sorting by clerks and casing by carriers) in excess of the agreed upon volumes in the IOP. Station management reports mail arrival delays in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System.¹⁶ However, mail arrival errors were not corrected by the P&DC and mail continued to arrive late. With the late arrivals, management established later carrier reporting times to ensure that 80 percent of carrier routes' mail was available to prepare for delivery.¹⁷ On January 10, 2015, the Postal Service implemented the nationwide Network Rationalization initiative.¹⁸ This initiative removed the requirement for overnight delivery of First-Class Mail. Because of this change, the Triboro District plans to allow stations to move city carriers to earlier start times, which should reduce the frequency of city carriers returning after 5 p.m.

Also, supervisors did not always follow guidelines¹⁹ to return automation compatible mail to the P&DC for processing into DPS. The Station's manager of Post Office Operations implemented a policy requiring district approval before unworked mail could be returned to the P&DC. Because of this policy, the Station did not return automation compatible mail to the P&DC for processing into DPS, but had clerks manually sort this mail. Therefore, city letter carriers had to wait for mail and then case the mail that should have been in DPS when it arrived from the P&DC. This additional work increased carrier office time at the Station. During our fieldwork, management took corrective action and began returning unworked mail to the P&DC. Therefore, we will not make a recommendation on this issue.

Finally, supervisors did not always establish clear daily expectations for carriers' leave and return times. They did not use the *Workload Status* report to determine the daily mail volume and route time. In addition, supervisors did not always follow up to identify issues for corrective actions using the *Managed Service Point* and *Route Carrier Daily Performance* report information. Supervisors' ability to monitor carrier performance and delivery operations was impacted by the Triboro District requirement that supervisors count individual hot case²⁰ mail instead of using linear measuring²¹ and converting that measure to a piece count. As a result of our fieldwork, management took corrective action and changed their policy from individual counting to linear measurement, allowing supervisors more time to engage with city carriers. Therefore, we will not make a recommendation on this issue.

¹⁴ On December 9, 2014, Triboro District officials submitted a proposal to consolidate parcel operations in a parcel annex.

¹⁵ Due to an area mail processing consolidation beginning July 30, 2011, mail collected by Triboro District stations had to be sent an additional 14 miles away for cancellation and sorting at the Morgan Station P&DC in New York City instead of to the Brooklyn P&DC, which previously processed this mail. As a result, mail arrives at the Station later than when it was processed at the Brooklyn P&DC, causing a later start time for city carriers.

¹⁶ Customer Service Daily Reporting System is a delivery unit based system with a formal delayed mail reporting tool.

¹⁷ Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services, Section 122.11.b, March 1998.

¹⁸ This change gives the P&DC additional time to properly prepare and present the mail for distribution to the delivery unit.

¹⁹ Field Operations Standardization Development, Morning (AM) Standard Operating Procedures (AMSOP) II Guidebook, Section 1-2, 2007. The AMSOP provides standardized methods and processes to all delivery units.

²⁰ A special distribution case in a delivery unit for last minute sorting or resorting of mail, especially preferential mail sorted to the wrong routes or received late. The carrier collects this mail before leaving for his or her route. Informally, this is also called end case and hot case.

²¹ Non-linear letter and flat mailpieces are counted by mail processing equipment and sorted to individual carrier routes. Linear mail requires manually measuring the mail and casing it in delivery order at the delivery unit.

Customer Service

Station personnel generally addressed customer needs; however, some customer complaints were not resolved timely, while some customers experienced discourteous service and faced long WTIL. In addition, the Station was not properly maintained.

Customer Complaints

Although management addressed all complaints and most were resolved, there were minor instances when customer complaints were not resolved within the time established by the Postal Service. Our review of Enterprise Consumer Care (eCC)²² data indicated the Station received 378 delivery and customer service complaints in FY 2014. These complaints were less than 1 percent of the 72,528 customers that visited the Station in FY 2014.

We found 23 of the 378 customer complaints (6 percent) received via the Internet or telephone were not resolved within 3 business days (see Table 2).

Table 2. Station – Complaints Not Resolved Timely

Types of Complaints	Internet	Telephone	Number of Complaints Late 1 to 5 Days
Customer Service	0	7	7
Delivery	10	6	16
Total	10	13	23

Source: eCC.

Postal Service guidelines require management to record customer complaints on a control log to ensure a timely response.

Our analysis found customer complaints were not resolved because the supervisor did not complete a control log enabling follow-up on those complaints. The supervisors stated higher priorities in Station operations affected their ability to complete the control log.

<u>Customer Retail Window Experience</u>. Sales and Service associates (SSA) generally interacted positively with customers. Our observations showed SSAs were courteous and helpful. For example, when customers submitted incomplete forms, or did not know their tracking numbers, SSAs did their best to resolve the issues. However, our review of the POS surveys for FY 2014 indicated minor instances when customers were not treated with courtesy. Specifically, 10 of 12 Station customers who responded to the POS survey gave negative feedback about their interaction with the SSAs (see Appendix C).

While Station management was aware of the POS survey, management did not address the negative feedback with the SSAs. The Station manager did not receive instructions on how to retrieve the POS survey performance. POS survey information is "owned" by the Postal Service's Consumer and Industry Affairs program area, and is available on its internal web page, which is accessible to Postal Service management. We will not make a recommendation in this report on using POS survey information to address customer feedback due to a previous recommendation²³ to Postal Service Headquarters.

²² Customer complaints that cannot be immediately resolved are entered in the eCC system, which records and tracks customer complaint information for small business and residential customers.

The OIG issued a management alert recommending the Postal Service provide guidance to the areas, districts, and units on using POS survey information to increase Postal Service customer satisfaction, (*Retail Customer Service*, Report Number MS-MA-15-002, dated October 17, 2014).

Customers complained of long
lines because only one retail
window was open; however,
we found that two or more
windows were open most
of the time.

<u>WTIL</u>.²⁴ Station customers also complained of long lines due to a single SSA staffed at one retail window (see Appendix A). We reviewed the station's WTIL data from the periodic mystery shops²⁵ as well as our on-site observation during fieldwork. The Station's mystery shops data indicated the WTIL often exceeded the 5-minute goal for window operations. In FYs 2013 and 2014, 18 mystery shops were conducted at this location and nine of 18 (50 percent) failed to meet the 5-minute goal (see Table 2). On the other hand, our data indicated that two or more retail windows were staffed at least 94 percent of the time;²⁶ this data did not support customer complaints that long lines were due to a single open retail window (see Table 3).

Table 3. FYs 2013 and 2014 Mystery Shops at the Station

FY	WTIL	Occurrences Failed	Three Retail Windows Staffed	Two Retail Windows Staffed	One Retail Window Staffed
Failed Mystery S	hops				
2013	5 to 10 minutes	3	-	11.1%	5.6%
	11 to 15 minutes	0	-	-	-
2014	5 to 10 minutes	5	22.2%	5.6%	-
	11 to 15 minutes	1	5.6%	-	-
Sub-Total Failed	Mystery Shops	9	27.8%	16.7%	5.6%
Passed Mystery	Shops				
2013	Less than 5 minutes	5	5.6%	22.2%	-
2014	Less than 5 minutes	4	-	22.2%	-
Sub-Total Passed	d Mystery Shops	9	5.6%	44.4%	-
Total Mystery Sh	ops	18	33.4%	61.1%	5.6%

Source: EDW. Retail Data Mart.

During our audit, we observed²⁷ one retail window staffed for the first half hour in the morning and two retail windows staffed thereafter. During this period, we found the average length per transaction was about 3 minutes. If more than four customers were waiting in line, the 5-minute or less WTIL goal was not usually met (see Figure 7).

WTIL is very important to a Post Office's operation. The Postal Service wants to take care of its customers and ensure they complete their business transactions on a timely basis. Service in Five Minutes or Less is an initiative created to provide a level of service that keeps customer WTIL to a minimum while providing quality customer service. The retail organization is committed to achieving this service standard at least 87.5 percent of the time. Diverting time-consuming transactions away from the retail counter and promoting self-service alternatives are strategies that reduce the amount of time customer wait.

²⁵ The Mystery Shopper Program uses independently contracted "customers" who visit post offices and document their experiences by answering a standardized questionnaire. Each "customer" conducts a mailing transaction to test the quality of his or her experience at a retail unit.

²⁶ Combine percentage for "Three Retail Windows Staffed" and "Two Retail Windows Staffed" columns.

²⁷ Period covered initial retail window open 9 a.m. through 11:20 a.m.

Figure 7. Customers Waiting in Line at the Station



Source: OIG photograph taken December 11, 2014, at 9:09 a.m.

According to Postal Service policy, retail units should promote alternate access and use lobby assistants during peak traffic periods during the day. Longer WTIL occurred because Station management did not instruct SSAs to inform customers of alternate access locations because management believed the Station would lose revenue. Also, the Station did not have lobby assistants to handle customer pickups. We are not making a recommendation in this report on lobby assistants because of a prior report recommendation²⁸ to Postal Service Headquarters management on this issue.

<u>Custodial Maintenance</u></u>. Custodial maintenance was not properly performed at the Station.²⁹ Our observations verified custodial staff did not properly clean the retail lobby, workroom, and parking lot. In the retail lobby, maintenance did not vacuum rugs, dust windowsills and doorways, or mop floors (see Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 8. Station Retail Lobby



Source: OIG photographs taken December 11, 2014, at 7:58 a.m.

Figure 9. Station Window Sill



Source: OIG photographs taken December 11, 2014, at 7:59 a.m.

²⁸ The OIG issued a report on recommending the Postal Service deploy lobby assistants at self-service kiosk sites as necessary to promote use. (*Self-Service Kiosks*, Report Number DR-AR-14-002, dated January 22, 2014).

²⁹ Our review of social media sites identified multiple complaints about the Station being "filthy and dirty" (see Appendix A).

In the workroom area, carrier cases, tables, Post Office boxes, and radiator surfaces were dusty and dirty. The walls and doors were not spot cleaned for smudges. Litter was not picked up from the parking lot or dock area (see Figures 10 and 11).

Figure 10. Station Walls



Source: OIG photographs taken December 11, 2014, at 7:44 a.m.

Figure 11. Station Parking Lot



Source: OIG photograph taken December 11, 2014, at 8:07 a.m.

Postal Service policy requires custodians to vacuum and mop the retail lobby 1 to 3 times per week. Custodians must also clean the workroom and exterior areas 5 to 7 times per week. Local management has the discretion to change how frequently cleaning occurs based on local conditions. Poor maintenance occurred at the Station because management did not clearly communicate expectations for cleaning the station lobby or monitor performance.

Recommendations

We recommended management inform customers of alternative delivery options, pursue centralized parcel operations, adjust mail arrival from P&DC and update the integrated operating plan as necessary, and communicate alternate retail access locations to customers. We also recommended management maintain a customer complaints log and give custodial personnel written instructions for cleaning the facility.

We recommend the manager, Triboro District:

- 1. Inform customers of the gopost lockers as an alternative delivery option.
- 2. Continue to pursue centralized parcel operations.
- 3. Adjust mail arrival from processing and distribution centers and update the integrated operating plan as necessary.
- 4. Communicate alternate retail access locations to customers.

We recommend the manager, Triboro District, direct the manager, Red Hook Station, to:

- 5. Maintain a customer complaints control log.
- 6. Give custodial personnel written instructions for cleaning the facility and ensure compliance.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with the findings and recommendations. In response to recommendation 1, district officials agreed to inform customers of the gopost lockers as an alternative delivery option. They developed an Every Door Direct Mailing (EDDM) to notify customers of gopost locations. Management completed implementation April 6, 2015.

In response to recommendation 2, district officials agreed that centralizing parcel operations could potentially provide greater efficiency; however, at this point they will optimize space in the facility by developing a new floor plan. The target implementation date is May 15, 2015.

In response to recommendation 3, district officials agreed to adjust mail arrival from processing and distributions centers and update the IOP. Officials stated that they updated mail arrival transportation schedules and IOPs to coincide with Network Rationalization. Management completed implementation on January 10, 2015.

In response to recommendation 4, district officials agreed to communicate alternative retail access locations to customers. They developed an EDDM to notify customers of alternative retail access locations and posted these locations in the retail lobby. Management completed implementation on April 6, 2015.

In response to recommendation 5, district officials agreed to maintain a customer complaint control log. Officials communicated with the station manager and initiated the log on April 7, 2015.

In response to recommendation 6, district officials agreed to give custodial personnel written instructions for cleaning the facility and to ensure compliance. They provided written instructions to custodians, created a checklist for compliance, and provided additional custodial support to improve overall facility appearance. The target implementation date is April 19, 2015.

See Appendix F for management's comments in their entirety.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations and corrective actions taken or planned should resolve the issues identified in the report.

The OIG considers all recommendations significant, and therefore requires OIG concurrence before closure. We concur that the actions taken sufficiently addressed all recommendations and we consider these recommendations closed with the issuance of this report.

Other Matters

Congressional staff asked the OIG³⁰ to assess alternate retail access and availability, including collection boxes.³¹ Station communities have access to Postal Service products and services at 16³² alternate retail access locations within 1 mile of the Station delivery area (see Appendix D and Appendix E). Customers could encounter difficulties when traveling to those alternate locations due to the densely populated areas. Triboro District officials stated they have not pursued local contractors to participate as an Approved Postal Provider because the Station was not among their top 10 percent of offices needing alternate retail access. However, Triboro District officials are willing to pursue an Approved Postal Provider of alternate retail access for Station customers.

There were two Contract Postal Units (CPU³³) in the Station's geographical area. But their contracts were terminated in 2009 and 2012. We could not determine the reason for the CPU termination in 2009. The other facility was terminated based on an agreement between the Postal Service and the American Postal Workers Union to close or convert CPUs to Postal Service operated facilities staffed by Postal Service employees.³⁴

We also reviewed residential collection box³⁵ locations in the Red Hook area and found eight collection boxes available for customers to use (see Figure 12).

³⁰ Congressional staff indicated the area lacked enough alternate retail access and collection boxes. The congressional staff thought it would be helpful to add alternate retail access and collection boxes on Van Brunt Street and, possibly, by the public housing development along Richards and Dwight streets.

³¹ Collection boxes are freestanding blue street boxes used by the public to deposit outgoing stamped mail.

³² Eleven Approved Postal Providers and five Postal Service stations. We used usps.com to identify the number of alternate access locations within a 1-mile radius.

³³ CPUs offer alternate access to postal services during and after normal business hours. CPUs are typically located in retail establishments under contract to the Postal Service, are staffed by the retailer's employees, and offer all the regular services available in a Post Office.

In May 2011, the Postal Service and the American Postal Workers Union signed the 2010-2015 Collective Bargaining Agreement that included a memorandum of understanding to close or convert 20 CPUs to Postal Service operated facilities staffed by Postal Service employees. We issued a report on *Closure of Contract Postal Units* on August 16, 2012.

³⁵ Residential collection boxes should be located throughout residential areas as needed for ready use by the public.

Figure 12. Collection Boxes in the Red Hook Area



Source: OIG generated using google map background.

Local management decides the total number and location of collection boxes in a delivery area. Management makes these decisions by measuring mail volume in collection boxes and evaluating community interests and needs.³⁶ Triboro District is constantly monitoring blue box use, and its recent evaluation of the Red Hook area had indicated coverage met the community's needs. However, as a result of our field work, Triboro District officials reassessed the Red Hook area and will be adding collection boxes, although the locations of those boxes has not been finalized.

³⁶ Postal Operations Manual Volume 9, Section 323.3 - Residential Collection Boxes.

Appendices

Appendix A: Additional Information	19
Background	19
Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	20
Prior Audit Coverage	2
Appendix B: Red Hook Station Enterprise Consumer Care System Complaints	2
Appendix C: Red Hook Station Point-of-Sale Fiscal Year 2014 Survey Results	24
Appendix D: Alternate Access Within 1 Mile of Red Hook Station Communities	2
Appendix E: Alternate Access Within 1 Mile of Red Hook Station Communities and Collection Box Locations	20
Appendix F: Management's Comments	2

Appendix A: Additional Information

Background

The Station is located in Brooklyn, NY, and provides service to residents of the Red Hook, Carroll Gardens, and the Columbia Waterfront District communities. On September 24, 2014, Congresswoman Velazquez informed the OIG of excessive complaints from local residents regarding mail delivery and unprofessional treatment. Local residents complained about misdelivered, irregular, and untimely mail delivery. In a subsequent meeting, congressional staff relayed additional concerns from residents regarding retail customer service.

Residents reported retail window lines were too long, only one window was open at a time, and they had limited access to conveniently located postal services. In FY 2014, the Triboro District received 41,953 customer complaints regarding mail delivery and customer service, 378 of these complaints (less than 1 percent) were about the Station (see Table 3).

Table 3. Summary List of Constituent Concerns

Retail Services:

- 1. Lobbies in disarray and filthy.
- 2. Long wait times in line.
- 3. Limited alternate retail access channels.
- 4. One clerk working the window at any given time.
- 5. Window clerk(s) are rude.
- 6. Inadequate staffing.
- 7. Unprofessional employees, unfriendly atmosphere.
- 8. Consumers faced challenges in seeking redress.

Delivery Services:

- Misdelivered mail.
- 10. Erratic mail delivery.
- 11. Mail is delivered late in the day or not at all.
- 12. High-rise buildings do not always have mail sorted to their boxes.
- 13. Sometimes carriers just drop mail with building manager and expect him/her to sort.
- 14. One side of the street receives mail and the other does not.
- 15. Mail takes longer than expected to receive, sometimes mail is delayed weeks at a time.
- 16. Concerns over delivery by substitute carriers when the regular carrier is not on the route.
- 17. Not enough blue collection boxes in the area.
- 18. Missing parcels.
- 19. Parcels are damaged and/or missing.

Applicable to Retail and Delivery Services or Other:

20. Mail delays

Source: Congresswoman Velazquez's staff and eCC complaints.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Our objectives were to evaluate whether mail was delivered accurately and timely and if customers' needs were addressed at the Station. To accomplish our objectives, we:

- Obtained and reviewed documentation and application policies and procedures related to delivery and customer service operations.
- Obtained, analyzed, and reviewed city delivery and customer service operations data such as address management, mail volume, carriers returning after 5 p.m., percent to standard, customer complaints and the POS survey and retail feedback performance, WTIL, and retail window transactions.
- Observed city delivery and retail operations at the Station.
- Met with Triboro District personnel, Station personnel, the union steward, and congressional staff to identify issues or concerns regarding complaints from constituents.

We conducted this performance audit from October 2014 through April 2015, 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 objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on March 27, 2015, and included their comments where appropriate.

We relied on data obtained from Postal Service operational systems, including EDW, eFlash, Facilities Database, and Address Management System, eCC System, and POS survey database. We also relied on data obtained from city-data.com for the Red Hook area population. We assessed the reliability of data by confirming our results with management and determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purpose of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

Report Title	Report Number	Final Report Date	(in millions)
Window Retail Customer Service	MS-AR-15-001	1/29/2015	\$288.5 Million

Report Results: Between FYs 2012 and 2013, an increasing number of customers expressed dissatisfaction with the service they receive at retail facilities. While the Postal Service's goal is 90 percent customer satisfaction, in FY 2013 more than 20 percent of survey respondents stated they had been treated "worse than other retailers" at Postal Service retail counters. Dissatisfied customers exist, in part, because procedures for improving customer service are not functioning as intended and there is a lack of continual, formal customer service training. Further, sales associates are selected based on seniority rules, rather than suitability for the position, as suggested by best practices. In addition, the Postal Service does not have a mandatory process to ensure managers regularly observe sales associates and provide feedback. Regular observation would help sales associates recognize where they need to improve their performance. Management was partially responsive to the recommendations and corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report. Management disagreed with the monetary impact.

Retail Customer Service MS-MA-15-002 10/17/2014 None Management Alert

Report Results: SSAs did not always inform customers about the availability and location of the POS survey link at the end of their transaction receipt. As a result, customers were not encouraged to complete the survey. Additionally, the Postal Service has not provided consistent guidance on using and communicating POS survey information to area, district, and unit level offices. Consequently, unit management cannot always take appropriate action to address customer service issues or recognize excellence. Management agreed with our findings and recommendations.

City Letter Carriers Arriving After 5 p.m.
in the Capital Metro District

DR-AR-14-006

7/21/2014

None

Report Results: City carriers returning after 5 p.m. is a growing problem in the Capital District, increasing by 14 percent from FY 2011, Quarter (Q) 1 to FY 2013, Q4. This occurred because mail from the processing facilities did not meet times established in the IOP and management did not always properly supervise city delivery operations. Adhering to IOPs will improve mail arrival time and improved supervision of city letter carriers will reduce the number of carriers returning after 5 p.m., improve carrier safety, and reduce late mail delivery. Management agreed with our findings and recommendations.

City Delivery Efficiency- South Florida DR-AR-14-004 3/04/2014 \$30,587,250

Report Results: We found 83 of 112 delivery units (74 percent) in the South Florida District used 374,982 more workhours than projected because management did not always enforce policies and procedures for supervising city delivery operations and office and street supervision was inconsistent at the delivery units, allowing for some inefficiency in operations. We identified the potential to eliminate 374,982 workhours through improved supervision and other efforts to increase overall efficiency at these delivery units and avoid about \$15 million in costs annually. Management agreed with our findings, recommendations, and monetary impact.

Address Management System Data DR-AR-14-003 2/28/2014 \$30,233,901

Report Results: The Postal Service's efforts to reduce address database errors in AMS data were ineffective. Reported yearly errors have increased from 267,478 in FY 2011 to 430,843 in FY 2013, primarily because edit books were not updated consistently and street reviews were not always conducted on the routes that needed them. The Postal Service reduced emphasis on address accuracy by initially reducing the number of address management specialists by nearly 40 percent and then reclassifying them to bargaining technician positions. Further, the Postal Service did not have a formal standardized AMS training program or a follow-up process to ensure compliance. Management agreed in principle with the four recommendations. Management also agreed with the monetary impact.

Manatan, Impaat

Report Title	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact (in millions)
City Delivery Efficiency Pacific, Southern, Western Areas	DR-AR-13-004	5/24/2013	\$28,080,953

Report Results: The Bay-Valley, Dakotas, Houston, Oklahoma, and Portland districts have opportunities for enhanced street delivery efficiency. We determined the districts could use about 7 fewer minutes of street time per day on each carrier route.³⁷ We found that management did not always reinforce policies and procedures for supervising city delivery street operations and street supervision was inconsistent at the delivery units, allowing for some inefficiency in operations. Officials indicated they are somewhat limited in providing oversight while carriers are performing street delivery due to office workload priorities. Reducing workhours by 340,499 and improving supervision would increase overall efficiency in these districts and provide potential cost avoidance of about \$14 million annually. Management agreed with our findings, recommendations, and monetary impact.

³⁷ Each route's street time (workhours required to complete street delivery) is established during the annual route review or inspection.

Appendix B: Red Hook Station Enterprise Consumer Care System Complaints

Type of Complaints	FY 2013 Triboro District	FY 2013 Red Hook Station	Percentage of Red Hook Station to Triboro District	FY 2014 Triboro District	FY 2014 Red Hook Station	Percentage of Red Hook Station to Triboro District
Delivery - Misdelivered	4,148	33	0.80%	2,518	33	1.31%
Delivery - Irregular	15,053	178	1.18%	15,047	140	0.93%
Delivery - Untimely	1,946	11	0.57%	4,397	34	0.77%
Total Delivery Complaints	21,147	222	1.05%	21,962	207	0.94%
Customer Service	10,571	90	0.85%	19,991	171	0.86%
Total Complaints	31,718	312	0.98%	41,953	378	0.90%

Source: eCC.

Appendix C: Red Hook Station Point-of-Sale Fiscal Year 2014 Survey Results

POS Survey Result Comments	Positive Feedback	Negative Feedback
Poor customer service, unclean facility, misdelivered mail.		Х
2. Discourteous staff, with exception of one SSA.		х
3. Discourteous, with exception of two SSAs.		x
4. Unprofessional staff.		x
Insufficient retail staff, unclean facility, and untimely mail delivery.		х
Insufficient package labels and boxes and discourteous staff.		Х
7. Great experience.	x	
8. Insufficient retail staff.		x
9. Insufficient retail staff.		x
10. Great experience.	x	
11. Insufficient retail staff.		Х
12. Long WTIL.		х
Total	2	10

Source: Maritz Research: Postal Service vendor that performs POS survey analysis.

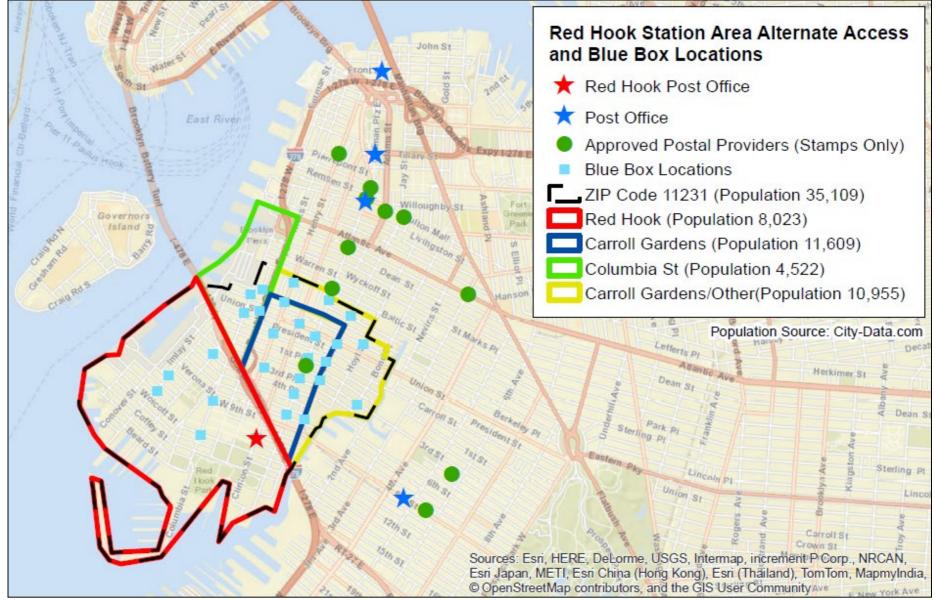
Appendix D:
Alternate Access Within
1 Mile of Red Hook Station
Communities

Alternate Access Sites	Site Type	Red Hook Population 8,023	Carroll Gardens Population 11,609	Columbia Waterfront Population 4,522
			(Distance Measured in Mile	es)
395 Court Street	APP	.42	.13	.78
348 4th Avenue	APP	.81		
341 9th Street	APP	.95		
244 Court Street	APP	.88	.38	.49
275 9th Street	РО	.81		
150 Court Street	APP		.56	.38
4 Court Street	APP		.86	.47
16 Court Street	APP		.99	.55
156 Henry Street	APP		.99	.44
1 Boerum Place	APP		.86	.59
386 Fulton Street	APP		.88	.67
271 Cadman Plaza #1	РО			.62
271 Cadman Plaza #2	GP			.62
210 Joralmon Street	РО		.84	.51
84 Front Street	РО			.95
520 Atlantic Avenue	APP		.98	

Note: Approved Postal Provider (APP); Post Office (PO) gopost (GP). Source: USPS.com locator, Google Maps and City Data.com.

Appendix E: Alternate Access Within 1 Mile of Red Hook Station Communities and Collection Box Locations

This map summarizes the geographic distribution of the 16 alternate access sites, blue box locations, and population within the Red Hook ZIP Code.



Source: OIG Countermeasure and Performance Evaluations Team generated using City-Data.com Zip Code and population data.

Appendix F: Management's Comments

PERFORMANCE AUDITS - Red Hook Station, Triboro District

April 14, 2015

Laurie Dillard
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: City Delivery and Customer Service Operations- Red Hook Station, NY DR-AR-15-DRAFT

In reference to the OIG audit DR-AR-15, management agrees with the findings. As a district, we will collectively address the concerns to mitigate and ensure prompt resolution

Recommendation # 1

Inform customers of the gopost lockers as an alternative delivery option.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Triboro District has developed an Every Door Direct Mailing (EDDM) to notify customers of our gopost locations.



<u>Target Implementation Date</u> Completed week of April 6th 2015

Responsible Official
Edward Roggenkamp, Postmaster Brooklyn

Recommendation # 2

Continue to pursue centralized parcel operations.

April 14 2015

Page 1 of 6

PERFORMANCE AUDITS - Red Hook Station, Triboro District

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees that a centralized parcel operation could potentially provide greater efficiency, however, at the current time space utilization within the facility will be optimized.

Target Implementation Date

New floor plan will be evaluated by May 15, 2015

Responsible Official:

Frank Calabrese, District Manager

Recommendation # 3

Adjust mail arrival from processing and distribution centers and update the integrated operating plan as necessary

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Transportation schedules (mail arrival profiles) and Integrated Operating Plans (IOPs) were updated to coincide with Network Rationalization.

Target Implementation Date:

Completed January 10th 2015

Responsible Official:

Ed Roggenkamp, Postmaster Brooklyn

Recommendation # 4

Communicate alternate retail access locations to customers.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Triboro District developed an EDDM mailing to notify customers of alternate access locations.

April 14 2015 Page 2 of 6

PERFORMANCE AUDITS - Red Hook Station, Triboro District

Red Hook Post Office 615 Clinton St Brooklyn, NY 11231

First-Class Mail Postage & Fees Paid USPS Permit No. G-10

Visit Our Retail Partners Near You!



Local Postal Customer

Note: Alternate locations are also posted in retail lobbies and USPS.COM

<u>Target Implementation Date</u> Completed week of April 6th 2015

Responsible Official

Edward Roggenkamp, Postmaster Brooklyn

Recommendation # 5

Direct the manager, Red Hook Station, to: Maintain a customer complaints control log.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with the recommendation.

Management has communicated with station manager concerning customer complaints and has implemented customer complaint log.

Target Implementation Date

Customer Complaint Log implemented April 7th 2015

Responsible Official

Edward Roggenkamp, Postmaster Brooklyn

Recommendation # 6

Give custodial personnel written instructions for cleaning the facility and ensure compliance.

April 14 2015

Page 3 of 6

PERFO	RM	ANCE AUDITS - Red Hook Station,	Trib	oro	Distr	rict
		ponse/Action Plan:				
		ees with the recommendation.				
		is have been provided to custodians and	d a ch	neckli	st cre	eated for
compliance.						
•						
U.S. Proper Services		EXINTERCATION				I
Custodial Preventive- Ma	inten	nce Checking 0 6 B L D G S	Pillings		Турч	
EQUIPMENT TYPE Custodial Cleaning Systems Lecution Building		Building ModelSeries Original lancation date 2006 ModelSeries 2006 Revised by dis	ter (self-self-self-self-self-self-self-self-			
Part or Component	Item No.	INSTRUCTIONS	Lake	Check f	Frequency	
	1		_		Dally	
SAFTEY	1	Comply with all Safety Precautions, Report any Deficiencies Obtain required supplies to complete all work. Reference the Building Services Flandbook Custodial transing for individual room cleaning instruction.				3
FLAG	2	Inspect its condition, Replace if damaged, Check for special instruct before Raising Flag. Lower Flag before dank if no light is on flag.				
LOBBY	2	CLEAN All Lobby areas, Box Sections, Screen lines, Etc		-		
		imenor/extenor, Lighting, Empty/remove Trash. Mop floors as instructuse safety/warning signs where needed.	cted			
EXTERIOR	4	POLICE Front entrance, sidewalks, grounds, grass, parking, etc. and empty/remove trash. Dweep paved areas once a week.	8			
OFFICES	٤	CLEAN All include but not limited to: desks, tables, cabinets, All Glass, Lighting, Emptyremove Trash and Mop floors or Vacuum (if carpeted).				
LAVATORIES	6	CLEAN All		-	_	
		Partitions, Walls, Ledges, Lighting, Emptylremove Trash, Replenish supplies (soap, towels etc.) and Mop Ploors. Use safety-warning sign where needed.	16			
LOCKER ROOMS	2	CLEAN All	NI	_		4
		include but not limited to: Wipe Lockers, locker tops, walls, leages, A Glass, Lighting, Emptyliremove Trash, Mop floors. Use safetywarnin signs where needed.	19			
SWINGROOMS	8	And/or Break Area's-CLEAN All. Include but not limited to: wipe tables, chairs, ledges, All Glass, Light Empty/remove Trash and Mop floors or Vacuum (if carpet).	iting.			
WORKROOMS	2	CLEAN or POLICE Ail Indude but not limited to: Tables, Desks, cases, ledges, All Glass, Fi	_			
		Empty/remove trash. Mop floors as instructed, Use safety/warning sign where needed.	ns			
PLATFORMS	10	CLEAN or POLICE All Include but not limited to: All Glass, Lighting, Floors, Empty/remove to	trash.			
JANITORS CLOSETS CORRIDORS	11 12	CLEAN and Restock Supplies. CLEAN or POLICE All				
REPORT		Mop floors as instructed Use safety/warning signs where needed.				
		AnyrAll Deficiencies; Safety Issues, etc. to PM or Senior Official In charge. Inquire for any additional Duties and/or instructions.				
PS FORM 4777 AO PM	Godde			Page 1 or 1.865 2012	f 2	
			-		PRO COL	
Custodial Preventive Mo	únten	mce Checklins District Description Characterist Characterist	Heatel	~	Туре	
EQUIPMENT TYPE Cuelode Cleaning		Sub-Equipment Building Model/Series Crignal leavence date			-	1
Part or	Item	MIG No. Date Leaf flevised Date Redson No. Approved by its	1.800			
	No.	INSTRUCTIONS		Chand f Gorgania	highlights	
	al c	ustodial support has been scheduled to i	impro	ove o	verall	facility
appearance.						
T	o cucreny					
Target Implem		ation Date				
April 19th 201	5					
Doononsible C	vee: -	lai				
Responsible C		<u>iai</u> amp, Postmaster Brooklyn				
Luwaru Rogge	FIIK	amp, rosumaster brooklyn				
April 14 2015					Р	age 4 of 6
						over to irer to over 1955

PERFORMANCE AUDITS – Red Hook Station, Triboro District
Frank Calabrese Triboro District Manager
cc: Kelly Sigmon, Ed Phelan, Rick Uluski, Sally Haring
April 14 2015 Page 5 of 6



Contact us via our Hotline and FOIA forms, follow us on social networks, or call our Hotline at 1-888-877-7644 to report fraud, waste or abuse. Stay informed.

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