

Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

Audit Report

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Linda Vista Station, San Diego, CA

Report Number 22-059-R22 | April 5, 2022





OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

April 5, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: JENNIFER VO
MANAGER, CALIFORNIA 6 DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph E. Wolski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

FROM: Joseph E. Wolski
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Linda Vista Station, San Diego, CA (Report Number 22-059-R22)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions – Linda Vista Station, San Diego, CA.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ricardo Martinez, Operational Manager, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, WestPac Area
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Exec VP
Chief Logistics & Processing Operations Office & Exec VP

Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Linda Vista Station, San Diego, CA (Project Number 22-059). The Linda Vista Station is in the California 6 District of the WestPac Area and services ZIP Codes 92108 and 92111. These ZIP Codes serve about 65,493 people and are considered to be urban communities.¹ We judgmentally selected the Linda Vista Station based on the number of stop-the-clock (STC)² scans occurring at the delivery unit, rather than at the customer's delivery address.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Linda Vista Station in San Diego, CA.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on these four audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, and property conditions. Specifically, we reviewed delivery metrics including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, and distribution up-time.³ During our site visit from February 1-3, 2022, we reviewed mail conditions; package and truck arrival scanning procedures; and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the "Notice Left" area⁴ and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on March 21, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The Linda Vista Station is one of three delivery units⁵ the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of January 31, 2022, that are serviced by the Margaret L. Sellers (San Diego, CA) Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC). We issued this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the Linda Vista Station. We will issue a separate report⁶ providing the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all three delivery units. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about our scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Linda Vista Station. Specifically, we found deficiencies with three of the four areas we reviewed (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Issues Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail		X
Package Scanning	X	
Truck Arrival Scanning	X	
Property Conditions	X	

Source: Results of OIG fieldwork during week of January 31, 2022.

¹ We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from Esri, which is based on 2010 Census Bureau information.

² A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mail piece. Examples of STC scans include "Delivered", "Available for Pick-up", "No Access", and "Business Closed".

³ Time of day when clerks have completed distributing mail to carrier routes.

⁴ The area of a postal facility where letters or packages that carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

⁵ The other two units were the Downtown San Diego Station, San Diego, CA (Project Number 22-060) and the Ramona Main Post Office, Ramona, CA (Project Number 22-062).

⁶ The project number for the separate report is 22-077.

Finding #1: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees scanned 5,344 packages at the delivery unit between October and December 2021 (see Table 2). While there may have been instances where the packages were correctly scanned at the unit, there were also instances where employees improperly scanned the packages.

Table 2. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	October	November	December	Total	Percent
Delivered	1,303	751	738	2,792	52.25%
Delivery Attempted - No Access To Delivery Location	773	763	683	2,219	41.52%
Delivery Exception - Animal Interference	57	72	30	159	2.98%
Receptacle Full/Item Oversized	67	35	25	127	2.38%
No Authorized Recipient	13	4	6	23	0.43%
No Secure Location Available	4	6	5	15	0.28%
Refused	7	2	0	9	0.17%
Totals	2,224	1,633	1,487	5,344	100%⁷

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System⁸ data.

For example, on the morning of February 1, 2022, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 52 packages⁹ to review and analyze scanning and tracking data. Of the 52 packages, five (10 percent) had improper scans. The five packages had "Delivered" scans, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's delivery address.

Further, four packages in the "Notice Left" area were not returned to the sender, as required.¹⁰ These packages ranged from 1 to 9 days past their return date.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because management did not enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. For example, delivery unit employees stated they were scanning packages as "Delivered" at the delivery unit for mail being held at the unit due to full or broken mail receptacles, and for customers with vacation hold requests. Management stated they instructed employees to follow this process because they believed it was the proper scanning policy. Further, management did not adequately monitor the "Notice Left" area and did not assign a clerk to do so.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have been aware of the correct method for scanning packages so they could monitor scan performance and enforce compliance. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,¹¹ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹² Packages in the "Notice Left" area should have been reviewed and returned to the sender if they remained at the facility after the prescribed number of days.

⁷ Total percentage does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

⁸ A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

⁹ We analyzed all 28 packages from the carrier cases and 24 packages from "Notice Left" area.

¹⁰ *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, state that domestic packages should be returned to the sender on the 15th calendar day after a notice is left and international packages should be returned to the sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.

¹¹ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹² *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

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. In addition, if packages in the “Notice Left” area are not returned timely, the customer may not know that their package was not delivered. By improving scanning and handling operations, management can potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Finding #2: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Linda Vista Station did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes (99T)¹³ as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from October 1 through December 31, 2021, and found that employees did not perform scans for 69 of the 254 (about 27 percent) scheduled trucks originating from the Margaret L. Sellers P&DC (see Table 3).

Effect on the Postal Service and its Customers

When employees do not scan the 99T barcode, the Postal Service does not receive timely transportation information and is unable to address issues that may be causing mail delays, which could affect customer service.

Table 3. Truck Arrival Scans from October 1 through December 31, 2021

Month	Count of Inbound Trips	Count of Missed 99T Scans	Percentage Missing
October	88	17	19.32%
November	80	22	27.50%
December	86	30	34.88%
Total	254	69	27.17%

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from the Postal Service's Surface Visibility System¹⁴

Why Did It Occur

This occurred because management did not monitor and enforce truck scan performance. Management stated that they had not communicated the scanning policy to new employees and that trucks might not be scanned if employees were busy conducting other duties.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have reviewed the Arrive Depart Tracking report to ensure that all expected truck scans were being performed. They should also have instructed employees to perform appropriate 99T scans and enforced the requirement. According to Postal Service policy,¹⁵ employees must scan the trailer barcode on Postal Service trailer/trucks and Highway Contract Route trucks arriving at the delivery unit during local operating hours.

¹³ The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

¹⁴ Surface Visibility collects end-to-end data by linking multiple scans of a single asset to create visibility data to support planning, management, and optimization of the surface network.

¹⁵ *United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units.*

Finding #3: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found a safety issue at the Linda Vista Station. Specifically, two ladders in the workroom floor were unsecured and facing in a way that could tip over and injure an employee.

Why Did It Occur

Management stated they were unaware the ladders were left unsecured.

What Should Have Happened

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires ladders to be secured to prevent accidental displacement.¹⁶

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

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

Management took corrective action during our site visit. The two ladders were repositioned and secured on February 1, 2022.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with all findings in the report. See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

¹⁶ OSHA 29CFR 1910.23(c)(7)(i) requires that ladders are secured to prevent accidental displacement.

Appendix A

Additional Information

We conducted this audit from January through April 2022 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.

We relied on computer-generated data from the PTR system, the Surface Visibility database, and the electronic Facilities Management System.¹⁷ Although we did not test the validity of the controls over these systems, we assessed the accuracy of the data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

¹⁷ A Postal Service system used to manage work orders, contracts, and payments for facility construction, repairs, and alteration contracts, along with real estate contracts.

Appendix B

Management's Comments



March 30, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review –
Linda Vista Station, San Diego Project Number 22-059-DRAFT

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Linda Vista Station, San Diego.

Following are our comments on each of the three findings.

Findings #1:

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit between October and December 2021. While there may have been instances where the packages were correctly scanned at the unit, there were also instances where employees improperly scanned the packages.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this finding.

Delivery scans were performed in the delivery unit between October and December 2021. Majority of which are proper scans but there were incidents where employees improperly scanned the package. Employees has been retrained properly and continuous communication will be given regarding scanning standard work instructions.

Finding #2:

Employees at the Linda Vista Station did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes (99T) as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from October 1 through December 31, 2021 and found that employees did not perform scans for 69 of the 254 (about 27 percent) scheduled trucks originating from the Margaret L. Sellers P&DC.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees this finding.

Retrained clerk employees to ensure proper surface visibility scanning on each truck. Continuous communication will be given.

Finding #3:

We found a safety issue at the Linda Vista Station. Specifically, two ladders in the workroom floor were unsecured and facing in a way that could tip over and injure an employee.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this finding.

Identified safety issue regarding ladders, was abated on the same day.

E-SIGNED by Jennifer T Vo
on 2022-03-30 14:46:27 CDT

Jennifer T. Vo
District Manager, California 6 District

cc: Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, WestPac Area
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Exec VP
Chief Logistics & Processing Operations Office & Exec VP
Corporate Audit Response Management

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