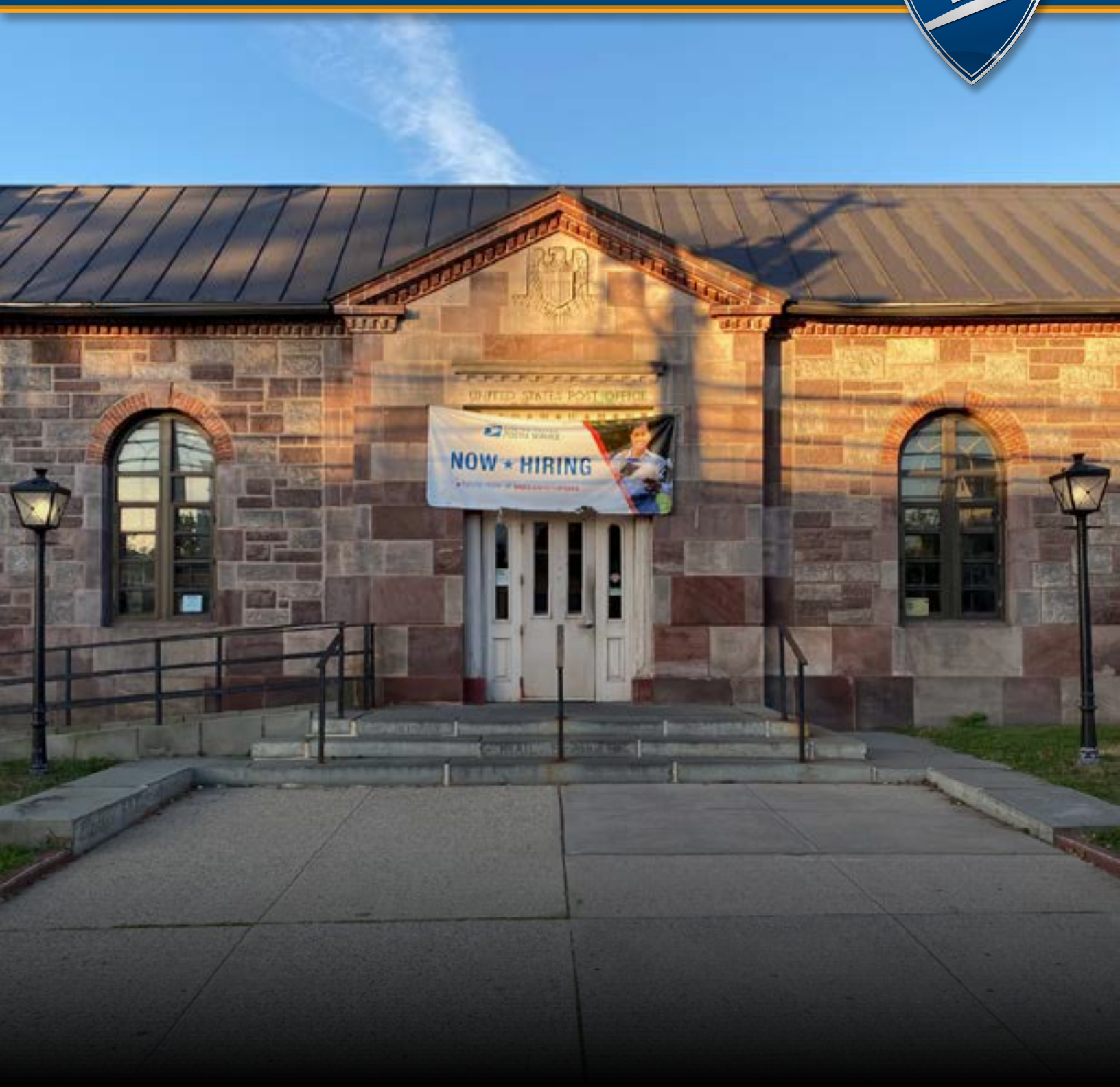# Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Kearny Main Post Office, Kearny, NJ

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 22-170-2-R23 | October 19, 2022

Transmittal Letter

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

October 19, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: MICHAEL P. DEIGNAN
MANAGER, NEW JERSEY DISTRICT

FROM: Joseph E. Wolski
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Kearny Main Post Office, Kearny, NJ
(Report Number 22-170-2-R23)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Kearny Main Post Office, Kearny, NJ.

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: Postmaster General
    Corporate Audit and Response Management
    Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Executive Vice President
    Vice President, Delivery Operations
    Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
    Vice President, Processing and Maintenance Operations
    Vice President, Atlantic Area Retail & Delivery Operations

MAIL DELIVERY, CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND PROPERTY CONDITIONS REVIEW – KEARNY MAIN POST OFFICE, KEARNY, NJ
REPORT NUMBER 22-170-2-R23

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Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Kearny Main Post Office (MPO) in Kearny, NJ (Project Number 22-170-2). The Kearny MPO is in the New Jersey District of the Atlantic Area and services ZIP Codes 07031 and 07032. These ZIP Codes serve about 56,039 people and are considered to be urban areas.[1] We judgmentally selected the Kearny MPO based on the number of Stop-the-Clock (STC) [2] scans occurring at the delivery unit, rather than at the customer's point of delivery, and indicators for undelivered mail.[3]

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Kearny MPO in Kearny, NJ.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, arrow keys,[4] 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.[5] During our site visit we reviewed mail conditions; package and truck arrival scanning procedures; arrow key security 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" area[6] and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on October 3, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The Kearny MPO is one of three delivery units[7] the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of August 15, 2022, that are serviced by the Dominick V. Daniels Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC). We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Kearny MPO. We will issue a separate report[8] that provides 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 Kearny MPO. Specifically, we found issues with four of the five 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	
Arrow Keys		X
Property Conditions	X	

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of August 15, 2022.

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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 U.S. 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", and "No Access".
3   The undelivered mail metrics include Customer 360 (C360) inquiries, Informed Delivery inquiries, and non-delivered routes.
4   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.
5   Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.
6   The area of a delivery unit where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.
7   The other two units were the Belleville Annex, Belleville, NJ (Project Number 22-170-1); and the Union Post Office, Union, NJ (Project Number 22-170-3).
8   Project Number 22-170.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of August 16, 2022, we identified 507 delayed mailpieces at 20 carrier cases. Specifically, we identified about 435 letters and about 72 flats. In addition, this mail was not reported as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)[9] system. See Figure 1 for examples of delayed mail found at carrier cases.

Why Did It Occur

Management was not aware that undelivered mail brought back by carriers is considered delayed.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that all committed mail would be delivered and accurately accounted for and reported in DCV any remaining delayed mail delivery volumes. Carriers should have notified management of undelivered mail and management should have inspected the facility in the morning and evening to ensure all mail had been delivered on the required day. Postal Service policy[10] states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. In addition, managers are required[11] to report in DCV all mail that remains at a unit after the carriers have left for their street duties or upon realization that there would be delayed mail.

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 DCV 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.

Figure 1. Examples of Delayed Mail in the Carrier Cases

Source: OIG photos taken August 16, 2022.

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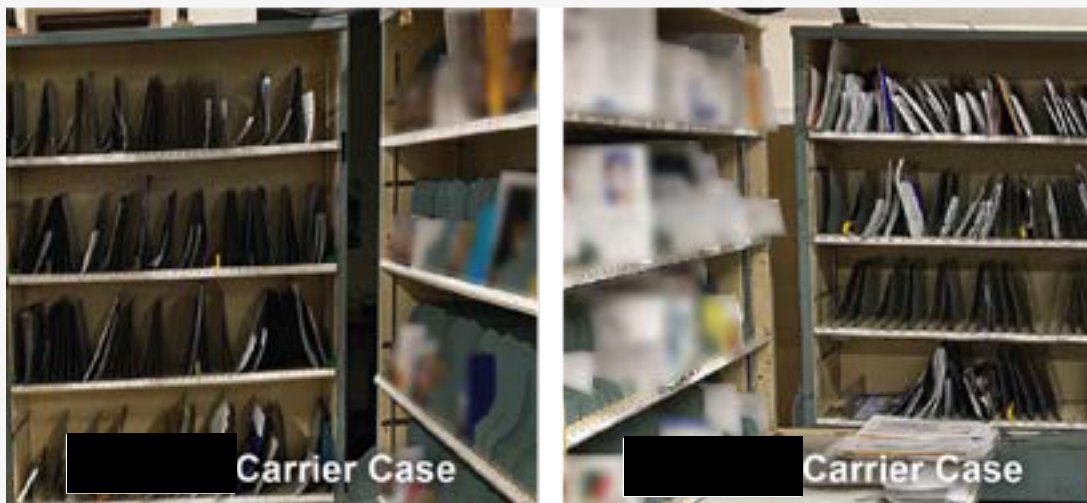
9   A tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of daily mail conditions at the point in time when carriers have departed for the street.
10   *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.
11   *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide,* March 2022.

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Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees scanned 890 packages at the delivery unit between May and July 2022 (see Table 2). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that about 79.78 percent of them were scanned "Delivered". This data exclude scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as "Delivered – PO Box" and "Customer (Vacation) Hold" but, rather, represent scans performed at the delivery unit that should routinely be made at the point of delivery. In addition, we only included "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location" scans performed Monday through Friday to avoid legitimate scans for businesses that are closed on weekends.

Table 2. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	May	June	July	Total	Percentage
Delivered	74	249	387	710	79.78%
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location	50	113	16	179	20.11%
No Authorized Recipient			1	1	0.11%
Total	**124**	**362**	**404**	**890**	**100%**

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data. PTR is the system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

In addition, on the morning of August 16, 2022, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 60 packages[12] to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 60 sampled packages, two (3.33 percent) selected from the carrier cases had improper scans.

- One had a "Return to Post Office for Address Verification" scan but was scanned at the delivery unit.

- One had an "Available for Pickup" scan but was not scanned at the point of delivery.

Further, 25 packages in the "Notice Left" area were not returned to the sender, as required.[13] These packages ranged from one to 65 days past their return dates.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Management stated that most of the scans that occurred at the delivery unit were related to firm sheet[14] failures. Specifically, when carriers scanned firm sheets during delivery, the scans did not always capture all the packages listed on the firm sheet log; therefore, carriers had to manually scan the missing packages on the firm sheet log.

Regarding the two packages found at the carrier stations, management did not ensure that carriers were checking in with a supervisor upon return from their street deliveries to determine if all packages were delivered and management did not ensure that a supervisor conducted a PM walkthrough to search for undelivered packages.

In addition, management stated that packages in the "Notice Left" area were not returned timely because the unit was understaffed and overlooked that it was not being done. As a result of our audit, management took corrective action on August 17, 2022, by returning to senders all the packages that exceeded their return dates.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance. They should have reported and followed up on the firm sheet issue to determine why it was occurring. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,[15] which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.[16]

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12   We judgmentally selected 30 packages from the carrier cases and 30 packages from the "Notice Left" area.
13   *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, states that domestic packages should be returned to sender on the 15th calendar day after a notice is left and international packages should be returned to sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.
14   A list of packages for delivery to one address documented with a single barcode. Firm sheets are used to link packages sent to one address on a single form.
15   *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.
16   *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Carriers should have notified management of undelivered packages and management should have inspected the facility in the morning and evening to ensure that all packages had been delivered on the required day. Packages in the "Notice Left" area should have been reviewed for second notices and returned to sender if they remained after the prescribed number of days.

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 potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

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Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Kearny MPO did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes[17] as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from May 1 to July 31, 2022, and found that employees did not perform a scan for 80 of 242 scheduled trucks (33.06 percent) arriving from the Dominick V. Daniels P&DC (see Table 3).

Table 3. Truck Arrival Scans from May 1 through July 31, 2022

Month	Count of Inbound Trips	Count of Missed Scans	Percentage Missing
May	80	28	35.00%
June	80	28	35.00%
July	82	24	29.27%
Total	**242**	**80**	**33.06%**

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from the Postal Service's Surface Visibility System.[18]

Why Did It Occur

Management did not monitor scan performance data to ensure that all trucks received an arrival scan. Management stated that they were not aware they should be monitoring truck arrival scans, nor did they know where to get the reports to be reviewed or have access to the reports.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have performed reviews to ensure that employees were performing all expected truck scans. According to Postal Service policy,[19] 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.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When employees do not scan the truck 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.

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17   The trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.
18   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.
19   *United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units (DU).*

Finding #4: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Kearny MPO including:

- Exposed wiring.

- No annual fire extinguisher inspections since 2020 and no monthly inspections since September 2021 (see Figure 2).

- Broken water fountain with stagnant water (see Figure 3).

- Inoperable toilets in the men's and women's restrooms (see Figure 4).

Figure 2. Missing Annual and Monthly Fire Extinguisher Inspections

Source: OIG photos taken August 16, 2022.

Figure 3. Broken Water Fountain

Source: OIG photo taken August 18, 2022.

Figure 4. Inoperable Toilets in the Men's and Women's Restrooms

Source: OIG photos taken August 17, 2022.

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Why Did It Occur

Management did not take the necessary actions to ensure that facility condition issues were corrected because they were not aware of most of the issues.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight of personnel responsible for maintaining facilities, reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up for completion of repairs. The Postal Service is required to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers. In addition, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards.[20]

As a result of our audit, management took corrective action on August 30, 2022, by replacing the covers over the exposed wiring (see Figure 5).

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management's attention to maintenance and 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's Comments

Management agreed with all findings in the report. See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

Figure 5. Exposed Wiring

Source: OIG photo taken August 18, 2022.

Source: Photo provided to the OIG by Postal Service management on August 30, 2022.

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20 OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook.*

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Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from August through October 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, DCV, the Surface Visibility database, and the electronic Facilities Management System.[21] 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.

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21   A custom-built 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

![USPS United States Postal Service logo]

October 12, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Kearny Main Post Office, Kearny, NJ (Report Number
22-170-2-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service an opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft audit report, *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Kearny Main Post Office, Kearny, NJ.*

Management agrees with the four findings in the report on delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scanning, and property conditions.

Management has completed implementation of action plans that address delayed mail, package scanning, and truck arrival scanning. Supporting documentation was provided to the OIG. Two of the four property conditions sited in the report have been abated and images provided as proof of abatement. Steps have begun to address the two remaining property conditions.

Michael P. Deignan
Manager, New Jersey District

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

Contact us via our Hotline and FOIA forms. Follow us on social networks. Stay informed.

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