

# Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – McDonough Main Post Office, McDonough, GA

## AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 22-181-1-R23 | November 1, 2022



# Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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November 1, 2022

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** KEITH PIERLE  
MANAGER, GEORGIA DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Balduff", is centered below the memorandum header.

**FROM:** Sean Balduff  
Director, Field Operations

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – McDonough Main Post Office, McDonough, GA (Report Number 22-181-1-R23)

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

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General  
Corporate Audit and Response Management  
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Exec VP  
Vice President, Delivery Operations  
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations  
Vice President, Processing and Maintenance Operations  
Vice President, Southern Area Retail & Delivery Operations

# Results

## Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the McDonough Main Post Office (MPO), McDonough, GA (Project Number 22-181-1). The McDonough MPO is in the Georgia District of the Southern Area and services ZIP Codes 30252 and 30253. These ZIP Codes serve about 91,063 people in a predominantly urban area.<sup>1</sup> We judgmentally selected the McDonough MPO based on the number of Stop-the-Clock (STC)<sup>2</sup> scans occurring at the delivery unit, rather than at the customer's point of delivery, and indicators for undelivered mail.<sup>3</sup>

## Objective, Scope, and Methodology

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

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, arrow keys,<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup> and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with

management on October 14, 2022 and included their comments where appropriate.

The McDonough MPO is one of three delivery units<sup>7</sup> the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of August 29, 2022, that are serviced by the Atlanta, GA Processing and Distribution Center. We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the McDonough MPO. We will issue a separate report<sup>8</sup> 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 McDonough MPO. Specifically, we found issues with all five of the 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 29, 2022.

1 We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from Esri, which is based on 2010 Census Bureau information. Of the people living in these ZIP Codes, about 76,988 (84.54 percent) are considered living in urban communities and 14,075 (15.46 percent) are considered living in rural communities.

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," and "No Access."

3 The undelivered mail metrics include Customer 360 inquiries, Informed Delivery inquiries, and undelivered 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 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 Old National Station, Atlanta, GA (Project Number 21-181-2) and Stockbridge MPO, Stockbridge, GA (Project Number 22-181-3).

8 Project Number 22-181.



# Finding #1: Delayed Mail

## What We Found

On the morning of August 30, 2022, we identified about 16,051 delayed mailpieces at 58 carrier cases, the dock, and the workroom floor<sup>9</sup> (see Table 2). Specifically, we identified 8,231 pieces at the carrier cases and 7,820 pieces on the dock and workroom floor. In addition, this mail was not reported in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)<sup>10</sup> system. See Figures 1 and 2 for examples of delayed mail found at carrier cases, on the dock, and workroom floor.

Table 2. Type of Delayed Mail

Type of Mail	Carrier Case	Dock and Workroom Floor	OIG Estimated Count of Total Delayed Mail
Letters	3,802	0	3,802
Flats	4,429	7,820	12,249
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,231</b>	<b>7,820</b>	<b>16,051</b>

Source: OIG count of delayed mail pieces identified during our visit on August 30, 2022.

Figure 1. Examples of Delayed Mail in the Carrier Cases



Source: OIG photos taken August 30, 2022.

Figure 2. Examples of Delayed Mail on Dock and Workroom Floor



Source: OIG photos taken August 30, 2022.

## Why Did It Occur

Management did not verify that all mail was delivered and properly reported into the DCV system. Management stated that other assigned duties took priority, such as training inexperienced staff and following up on operational issues.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that all mail was processed and delivered daily. Postal Service policy<sup>11</sup> states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. In addition, managers are required<sup>12</sup> to report in DCV all mail that remains in a unit after carriers have left for their street duties. Further, some of the mail we counted at the carrier

<sup>9</sup> OIG estimate based on Postal Service conversion factors in Handbook M-32, *Management Operating Data Systems*, Appendix D.

<sup>10</sup> A tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of daily mail conditions at the point in time when carriers have departed for the street.

<sup>11</sup> *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.

<sup>12</sup> *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide*, March 2022.

cases should have been placed in the 3M case<sup>13</sup> for further processing, but instead was placed back into carrier cases.

### **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.

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<sup>13</sup> A piece of equipment where carriers place missorted, missequenced, and missent mail to identify recurring errors.

## Finding #2: Package Scanning

### What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees scanned 4,967 packages at the delivery unit between May and July 2022 (see Table 3). Further analysis of STC scan data for these packages showed that 90.50 percent of these packages were scanned “Delivered.” This data excludes scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as “Delivered – PO Box” and “Customer (Vacation) Hold” but, rather, represents 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 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit**

STC Scan Type	May	June	July	Total	Percentage
Delivered	1,921	1,543	1,031	4,495	90.50%
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location	366	22	61	449	9.04%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	2	2	16	20	0.40%
Refused	1	1	0	2	0.04%
No Secure Location Available	0	0	1	1	0.02%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,290</b>	<b>1,568</b>	<b>1,109</b>	<b>4,967</b>	<b>100%</b>

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 30, 2022, we selected 58 packages<sup>14</sup> to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 58 sampled packages, 17 (29.31 percent) had improper scans, including:

- Seven (six from the carrier cases and one from the “Notice Left” area) had a “Delivered” scan, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the delivery point.
- Six (two from the carrier cases and four from the “Notice Left” area) were missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.
- Four at the carrier cases were scanned “Delivery Attempted” at the delivery unit. “Delivery Attempted” scans should be performed at the delivery point.

In addition, we identified handling issues with five of the 28 packages (17.86 percent) at the carrier cases including:

- Two scanned as “Addressee Unknown” and “No Such Number” which should have been returned to the sender.
- Three scanned “Receptacle Full/Item Oversized” which should have been placed at the “Notice Left” area.

Further, 20 of the 30 packages reviewed in the “Notice Left” area were not returned to the sender, as required.<sup>15</sup> These packages ranged from two to 60 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. Specifically, management was not ensuring that every carrier was checked for packages upon returning from the street. In addition, management was not checking packages left at the carriers’ cases. Further, management was not ensuring that clerks were going through the “Notice Left” area and returning packages when necessary.

<sup>14</sup> We reviewed all 28 packages from the carrier cases and judgmentally selected 30 packages from the “Notice Left” area.

<sup>15</sup> *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.

Management acknowledged the importance of accurate scanning; however, they said other urgent customer service issues took priority, such as addressing customers' concerns.

In addition, most of the packages with "Delivered" scans at the unit from May to July 2022 were addressed to one business. The carrier who delivered this route during our audit stated that they used a firm sheet but scanned it as "Delivered" while at the unit. Management was unaware that carriers were scanning at the unit and assumed they were doing so at the delivery point.

### **What Should Have Happened**

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including ensuring that carriers scan packages at the delivery point and not at the delivery unit. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,<sup>16</sup> which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

<sup>17</sup> *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

# Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

## What We Found

Employees at the McDonough MPO did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes<sup>18</sup> as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from May 1 through July 31, 2022 and found that employees did not perform a scan for 333 of 351 (94.87 percent) scheduled inbound trucks (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Truck Arrival Scans from May 1 through July 31, 2022**

Month	Count of Inbound Trips	Count of Missed Scans	Percentage Missing
May	159	149	93.71%
June	126	121	96.03%
July	66	63	95.45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>94.87%</b>

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from the Postal Service's Surface Visibility Web (SVWeb) System. SVWeb 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.

## Why Did It Occur

Management did not monitor scan performance data to ensure that all trucks received an arrival scan or enforce scan procedures for trailer/truck barcodes. Specifically, management stated that they were unaware of the reports to verify that the trailer/truck scans were being completed. A clerk at the station stated that they were aware they should be scanning the trucks but did not since management was not monitoring scan performance.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily to ensure that clerks were performing all expected trailer/truck scans. They should also have instructed employees to perform

appropriate trailer/truck scans and enforced compliance. According to Postal Service policy,<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> The trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

<sup>19</sup> United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure - Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units (DU).



# Finding #4: Arrow Keys

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## What We Found

Unit management did not properly manage arrow keys.<sup>20</sup> On the morning of August 30, 2022, we reviewed the unit's arrow key inventory log and conducted a physical inventory of arrow keys at the unit. Five of the 46 keys listed on the inventory log could not be located. In addition, we identified eight keys that were not listed on the inventory log. Management also had not updated the arrow key inventory log since July 15, 2021.

## Why Did It Occur

The postmaster stated that he did not have a chance to update the arrow key inventory log since arriving at the McDonough MPO in June 2022. He stated that his focus had been on other duties such as addressing management staffing and daily assignment of delivery routes.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,<sup>21</sup> management must keep an accurate inventory of all keys and conduct a semiannual physical survey of all building keys. Any missing keys must be immediately reported to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

## Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When there is insufficient oversight and supervision of accountable items such as arrow keys, there is increased risk of mail theft. These thefts damage the Postal Service's reputation and diminish public trust in the nation's mail system. Additionally, because arrow keys open mail receptacles, lost or damaged keys can result in undelivered mail.

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<sup>20</sup> Arrow keys are used by carriers to open mail receptacles, such as collection boxes and apartment mailboxes. Arrow keys are accountable items and are subject to strict controls.

<sup>21</sup> *Administrative Support Manual* Issue 13, Sections 273.461, 273.464, and 273.471, July 1999 – updated through March 31, 2022.

# Finding #5: Property Conditions

## What We Found

We found safety, security and maintenance issues at the McDonough MPO including:

- Blocked electrical panels (see Figure 3).
- A blocked U.S. Postal Inspection Service door (see Figure 4).
- Multiple extension cords connected together.
- No signage posted in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.
- Forty-five stained ceiling tiles throughout the facility (see Figure 5).

During our audit, management took corrective actions by removing items in front of electrical panels and relocating equipment that was blocking a Postal Inspection Service door.

**Figure 3. Blocked Electrical Panels**



Source: OIG photos taken August 31, 2022.

Source: Postal Service photo provided October 14, 2022.

**Figure 4. Blocked Inspection Service Door**



Source: OIG photo taken August 31, 2022.

Source: Postal Service photo provided October 14, 2022.

**Figure 5. Stained Ceiling Tiles**



Source: OIG photos taken September 1, 2022.

## Why Did It Occur

Management did not take the actions necessary to ensure that facility condition issues were corrected because they were addressing other repairs with more urgency, such as an inoperable air conditioner and parking lot lighting.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight to personnel responsible for maintaining facilities, reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up for completion. 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.<sup>22</sup>

### **Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers**

Management's attention to safety, security, and maintenance 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.

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<sup>22</sup> OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

# Appendix A: Additional Information

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We conducted this audit from August through November 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, and the SVWeb database. 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.



# Appendix B: Management's Comments



October 20, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA  
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property  
Conditions Review – McDonough Main Post Office, McDonough, GA  
(Project Number 22-181-1-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 – McDonough Main Post Office, McDonough, GA*.

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

Management has begun taking steps to address these five findings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Pierle", written over a horizontal line.

Keith Pierle  
Manager, Georgia District

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

# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



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