

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

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 22-181-3-R23 | November 1, 2022



Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

November 1, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: KEITH A. PIERLE
MANAGER, GEORGIA DISTRICT

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

FROM: Sean Balduff
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Stockbridge Main Post Office, Stockbridge, GA
(Report Number 22-181-3-R23)

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

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Valeta Bradford, 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, 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 Stockbridge Main Post Office (MPO) in Stockbridge, GA (Project Number 22-181-3). The Stockbridge MPO is in the Georgia District of the Southern Area and services ZIP Codes 30273 and 30281. These ZIP Codes serve about 80,403 people in a predominantly urban area.¹ We judgmentally selected the Stockbridge 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 Stockbridge MPO in Stockbridge, GA.

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" area⁶ 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 Stockbridge MPO is one of three delivery units⁷ the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of August 29, 2022, that are serviced by the Atlanta 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 Stockbridge MPO. We will issue a separate report⁸ 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 Stockbridge MPO. Specifically, we found issues with three 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 30, 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 80,403 people living in these ZIP Codes, about 76,056 (94.59 percent) are considered living in urban communities and 4,347 (5.41 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 Pickup," and "No Access."

³ The undelivered mail metrics include Customer 360 (C360) 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 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 McDonough MPO, McDonough, GA (Project Number 21-181-1) and Old National Station, Atlanta, GA (Project Number 22-181-2).

⁸ Project Number 22-181.

Finding #1: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees scanned 2,726 packages at the delivery unit between May and July 2022 (see Table 2). Further analysis of STC scan data for these packages showed that about 28 percent of them 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 2. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	May	June	July	Total	Percentage
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location	312	1082	414	1,808	66.32%
Delivered	65	619	85	769	28.21%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	35	16	53	104	3.82%
No Secure Location Available	7	13	15	35	1.28%
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	1	2	2	5	0.18%
Refused	0	0	3	3	0.11%
No Authorized Recipient	1	1	0	2	0.07%
Total	421	1,733	572	2,726	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.

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

In addition, on the morning of August 30, 2022, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 57 packages⁹ to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 57 sampled packages, nine (15.79 percent) had missing or improper scans, including:

- Four (one from the carrier cases and three from the “Notice Left” area) were missing “Arrival at Unit” scans, which are required for performance measurement.
- Two (one from the carrier cases and one from the “Notice Left” area) had a “Delivered” scan, which should only be performed when the package is successfully left at the delivery point.
- Two (one from the carrier cases and one from the “Notice Left” area) were missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.
- One from the carrier cases was scanned “Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location” 2.3 miles from the delivery point. Carriers are required to scan all packages at the point of delivery.

Further, we identified handling issues with 10 of the 57 packages (17.54 percent), including:

- Two from the “Notice Left” area were scanned “Forwarded” but were not properly processed in the forwarding system.
- One from the carrier cases was scanned “Return to Sender” on August 15, 2022. This package should have been returned to sender as required and not kept at the carrier case.
- Seven in the “Notice Left” area were not returned to sender as required.¹⁰ These packages ranged from two to 19 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 to ensure compliance, as they were more focused on mail delivery. Management was aware of the policy to scan packages at the point of delivery but allowed employees to scan packages in

⁹ We judgmentally selected 27 packages from the carrier cases and 30 packages from the “Notice Left” area.

¹⁰ *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, state 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.

the office for businesses with firm sheets¹¹ instead of at the point of delivery. Management also explained that it was difficult to adequately monitor and manage scan compliance because the facility did not have an AM supervisor at the time of our audit.

In addition, we noted that most of the packages with “Delivered” scans at the unit from May to July 2022 were destined for one business address. However, the carrier that delivered to this route did not always use a firm sheet. Due to the high volume of parcels for the route (see Figure 1), management provided additional assistance (custodial team) to make extra deliveries. These individuals scanned packages as “Delivered” while at the unit.

Figure 1. Example of Parcel Volume for One Rural Route



Source: Photos taken by Stockbridge MPO employee.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including ensuring that all packages were routinely scanned 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,¹² which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹³ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹³ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #2: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Stockbridge MPO did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes¹⁴ 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 scans for 72 of 316 (22.78 percent) scheduled inbound trucks (see Table 3). We noted that truck arrival scanning improved in July from the prior two months. In addition, during our observations on the morning of August 30, 2022, employees did scan incoming mail trucks.

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

Month	Count of Inbound Trips	Count of Missed Scans	Percentage Missing
May	122	37	30.33%
June	106	23	21.70%
July	88	12	13.64%
Total	316	72	22.78%

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

The acting postmaster did not monitor scan performance data to ensure that all trucks received an arrival scan or enforce scan procedures for trailer/truck barcodes because he assumed the scans were being properly performed. He further stated that he was aware of the policy and tools available to monitor for compliance but had not consistently used them because he was focused on mail delivery.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have performed reviews to ensure that carriers were performing all expected truck scans. They should also have instructed employees to perform the 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.

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.

¹⁴ The trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

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

Finding #3: Property Conditions

What We Found

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

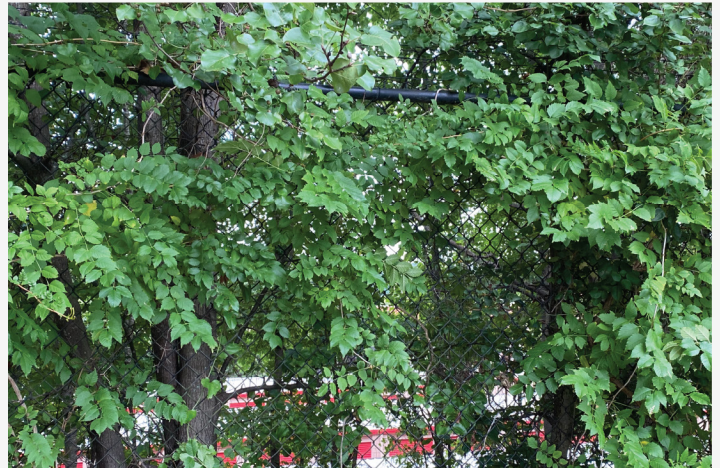
- Missing annual and monthly fire extinguisher inspections.
- An uncovered drainage hole in the Postal Service vehicle parking lot (see Figure 2).
- Overgrown vegetation along the fence in the rear of the building (see Figure 3). Employees stated there was a homeless encampment located outside the fence area at one time.
- No signage posted around the facility stating that vehicles may be subject to search.
- Stained ceiling tiles throughout the facility (see Figure 4).
- A damaged wall near the dock area (see Figure 5).
- A dirty heat vent in the customer lobby (see Figure 6).

Figure 2. Uncovered Drainage Hole in Postal Vehicle Lot



Source: OIG photo taken August 31, 2022.

Figure 3. Overgrown Vegetation Along Fence



Source: OIG photo taken August 31, 2022.

Figure 4. Examples of Stained Ceiling Tiles



Source: OIG photos taken August 30, 2022.

Figure 5. Damaged Wall Near Dock Area



Source: OIG photo taken August 31, 2022.

Figure 6. Dirty Heat Vent in Customer Lobby



Source: OIG photo taken August 31, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide adequate oversight to ensure that property condition issues were promptly identified and corrected. Specifically, the acting postmaster stated that he was newly appointed at

the unit, was unaware of the issues identified, and had not taken the opportunity to walk the perimeter of the facility because he was focused on getting mail delivered.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight to personnel responsible for maintaining facilities; reported safety, maintenance, and security issues as they arose; and followed up to ensure the issues were addressed. 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.¹⁶

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

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

¹⁶ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

Appendix A: Additional Information

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 PTR, Delivery Condition Visualization,¹⁷ the SVWeb database, and the electronic Facilities Management System.¹⁸ 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 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.

¹⁸ 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



October 20, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Stockbridge Main Post Office, Stockbridge, GA
(Project Number 22-181-3-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 – Stockbridge Main Post Office, Stockbridge, GA*.

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

Management has begun taking steps to address these three 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

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