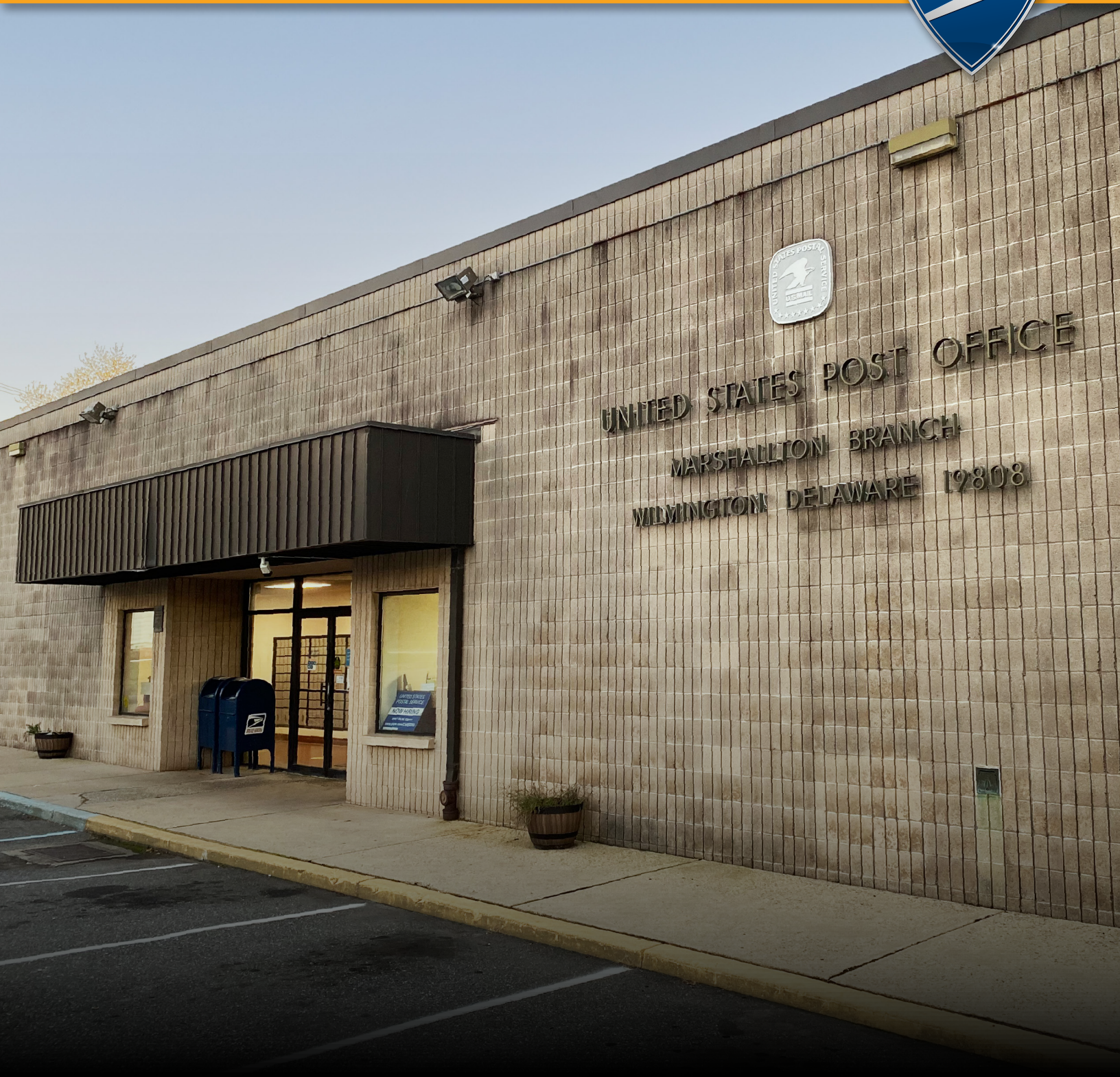


Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Marshallton Branch, Wilmington, DE

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 22-208-4-R23 | January 10, 2023



Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

January 10, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: GARY VACCARELLA
MANAGER, DELAWARE-PENNSYLVANIA 2 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 – Marshallton Branch, Wilmington, DE (Report
Number 22-208-4-R23)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Marshallton Branch, Wilmington, DE.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit and Response Management
Chief Retail & Delivery Officer & Exec 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

Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Marshallton Branch in Wilmington, DE (Project Number 22-208-4). The Marshallton Branch is in the Delaware-Pennsylvania 2 District of the Atlantic Area and services ZIP Code 19808. This ZIP Code serves about 38,296 people and is considered to be an urban area.¹ This delivery unit has 33 city routes. We selected the Wilmington, DE area based on Congressional interest in Delaware and concerns raised during a recent House Oversight and Reform Committee hearing.² We judgmentally selected the Marshallton Branch based on the number of Stop-the-Clock (STC)³ scans occurring at the delivery unit, rather than at the customer's point of delivery, and indicators for undelivered mail.⁴

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Marshallton Branch in Wilmington, DE.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, arrow keys,⁵ 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.⁶ 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" area⁷ and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on December 15, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The Marshallton Branch is one of six delivery units⁸ the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of October 24, 2022, that are serviced by the Delaware and Philadelphia Processing and Distribution Centers (P&DC). We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Marshallton Branch. We will issue a separate report⁹ that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all six 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 Marshallton Branch. 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 October 24, 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 this ZIP Code, 38,296 (100 percent) are considered living in urban communities.

² [Delivering For Pennsylvania: Examining Postal Service Delivery and Operations from the Cradle of Liberty](#), September 7, 2022.

³ 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."

⁴ The undelivered mail metrics include Customer 360 (C360) inquiries, Informed Delivery inquiries, and non-delivered routes.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

⁷ The area of a delivery unit where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

⁸ The other five units were the Germantown Station, Philadelphia, PA (Project Number 22-208-1); Logan Station, Philadelphia, PA (Project Number 22-208-2); North Philadelphia Station, Philadelphia, PA (Project Number 22-208-3); Edgemoor Branch, Wilmington, DE (Project Number 22-208-5); and Lancaster Avenue Station, Wilmington, DE (Project Number 22-208-6).

⁹ Project Number 22-208.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of October 25, 2022, we identified about 9,401 pieces of delayed mail at the unit. Specifically, we identified 7,992 flats and 1,280 letters at 31 carrier cases.¹⁰ In addition, we found 129 delayed outgoing packages behind the retail window that should have been dispatched to the P&DC the previous evening. Unit management did not report this mail as delayed in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)¹¹ system. See Figures 1 and 2 for examples of delayed mail found at carrier cases and behind the retail window.

Figure 1. Examples of Delayed Mail in the Carrier Cases



Source: OIG photos taken October 25, 2022.

Figure 2. Packages Left Behind the Retail Window



Source: OIG photos taken October 25, 2022.

¹⁰ OIG estimate based on Postal Service conversion factors in Management Instruction PO-610-2007-1, Piece Count Recording System.

¹¹ 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.

Why Did It Occur

Unit management did not adequately monitor operations to ensure all mail was cleared from the unit and taken to the street for delivery because they were busy with other tasks, including monitoring staffing and participating in daily meetings. Also, the acting supervisor did not perform a thorough walkthrough the previous night and did not see the 129 packages behind the retail window. The delayed mail was not reported because the acting supervisor was not aware of the proper procedures for reporting mail in the DCV system.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that all mail was processed and delivered daily. The PM Unit Review states a final walkthrough should be conducted to ensure that all mail has been collected prior to final dispatch to the P&DC. In addition, Postal Service policy¹² states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. Management is also required¹³ to report all mail in the delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in the DCV system. Further, management must update the DCV system if reported volumes have changed prior to the end of the business day.

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.

¹² *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.

¹³ *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide*, September 2022.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. Employees scanned a total of 893 packages at the delivery unit between July and September 2022 (see Table 2). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 85.89 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, 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.

In addition, on the morning of October 25, 2022, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 13 packages¹⁴ to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 13 packages, two (15.38 percent) from the carrier cases were missing STC scans to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery. Further, one package from the “Notice Left” area should have been returned to sender rather than being placed in the “Notice Left” area because it had an address that did not exist.

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 they were more focused on monitoring staff and preparing mail to be dispatched to the plant.

Additionally, we found that 619 (69.32 percent) of the scans at the unit were conducted for a single customer using firm sheets.¹⁵ Management stated that there was a standing policy to scan firm sheets as “Delivered” at the unit for this customer.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have adequately monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including ensuring that packages and firm sheets are 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,¹⁶ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹⁷ Further, the acting branch manager stated that packages in the “Notice Left” area should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are returned to sender as required.

Table 2. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	July	August	September	Total	Percentage
Delivered	26	677	64	767	85.89%
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location	35	32	38	105	11.76%
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	8	8	1	17	1.90%
No Secure Location Available	3	0	0	3	0.34%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	0	1	0	1	0.11%
Total	72	718	103	893	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.

¹⁴ We selected all eight packages from the carrier cases and all five packages from the “Notice Left” area.

¹⁵ 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.

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

¹⁷ *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. By improving scanning operations, management can potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Marshallton Branch did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes¹⁸ as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from July 1 through September 30, 2022 and found that employees did not perform scans for 111 of 258 (43.02 percent) scheduled inbound trips arriving from the Delaware P&DC (see Table 3).

Why Did It Occur

Management did not monitor truck arrival scan performance data to ensure that all trucks received an arrival scan. Specifically, management was not aware of any reports available for monitoring truck scanning performance. We further determined the acting branch manager did not have access to the truck scanning performance reports.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have reviewed truck arrival tracking reports 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.

Table 3. Truck Arrival Scans from July 1 through September 30, 2022

Month	Count of Inbound Trips	Count of Missed Scans	Percentage Missing
July	86	31	36.05%
August	89	53	59.55%
September	83	27	32.53%
Total	258	111	43.02%

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.

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

Finding #4 Arrow Keys

What We Found

Unit management did not properly manage and safeguard arrow keys. On the morning of October 27, 2022, we reviewed the unit's arrow key inventory log and conducted a physical inventory of the keys at the unit. We verified that all 33 arrow keys listed on the log were present at the unit. In addition, one of three keys listed as missing on the inventory log, which was certified on September 6, 2022, was at the unit. However, none of the keys listed as missing on the log had been reported to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

We also found that arrow keys were not always kept secure. The acting supervisor stated that the arrow keys are kept in a [REDACTED] overnight and then sorted on to the [REDACTED] by the AM clerk. However, the [REDACTED] did not have a door and the key to the [REDACTED] was kept in an [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED]. We observed the keys organized on the [REDACTED] in the unlocked [REDACTED] during the morning hours of our visit. We also found that the acting supervisor did not always verify that all arrow keys were returned and accounted for each evening. We observed the returned keys are sometimes left unattended on the [REDACTED] (see Figure 3).

Why Did It Occur

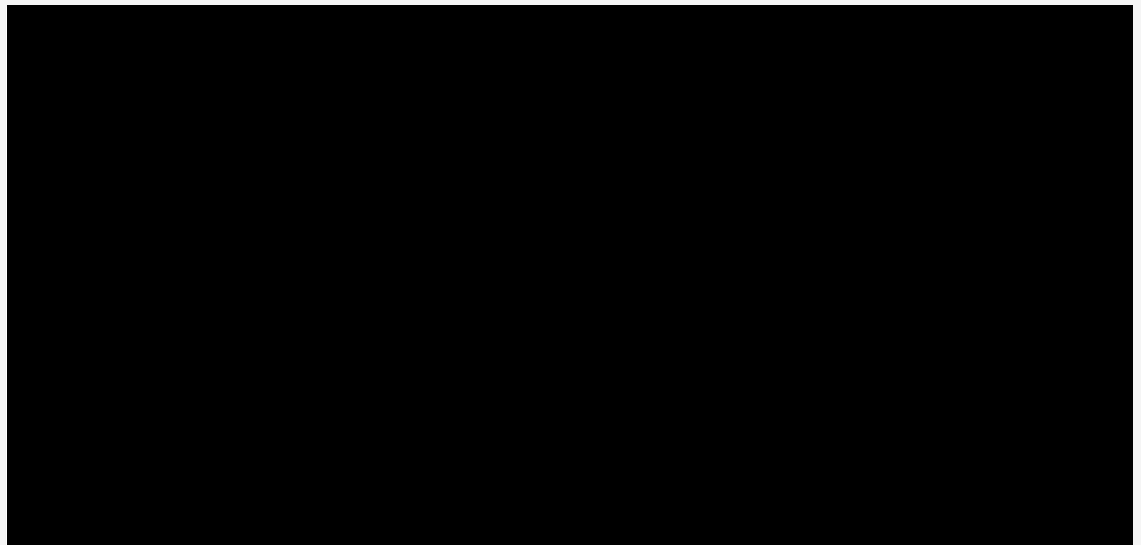
Unit management did not prioritize the proper accountability and security of arrow keys. Specifically, the acting branch manager stated he had only been at the unit for about two weeks and was more focused on mail delivery. The acting supervisor stated that he prioritized preparing mail and packages for dispatch to the plant. Unit management stated that they reported the missing keys to the district as instructed by district management; however, district management stated there were no reports of missing keys from the Marshallton Branch. Further, unit management was not able to explain why the door to the [REDACTED] was missing or how long it had been missing.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that employees properly followed arrow key accountability and security procedures. According to Postal Service policy,²⁰ management must immediately report missing arrow keys to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. In addition, policy²¹ states that arrow keys must remain secured until they are individually assigned to personnel. A supervisor or clerk must supervise employees signing out keys on the inventory log. Upon return, arrow keys should be deposited in a secure location and a supervisor or clerk must verify all keys have been returned and accounted for daily.

Figure 3. Arrow Keys Security

Source: OIG photos taken October 25, 2022.



²⁰ Administrative Support Manual Issue 13, Section 273.471, July 1999 – updated through March 31, 2022.

²¹ Standard Work: Arrow Key Accountability, January 2022 and USPS Arrow Key Standard Work, January 2022.

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.

Finding #5: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety, security, and maintenance issues at the Marshallton Branch, including:

- A blocked electrical panel (see Figure 4).
- Missing required monthly inspections for all five portable fire extinguishers at the facility.
- No sign posted in the delivery unit employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.
- A hole in the breakroom wall by a vending machine.
- Damaged walls at the custodian sink (see Figure 5).
- Damaged ramp railing and broken concrete at the rear dock areas (see Figure 6).
- Dirty air vents in men's and women's bathrooms.
- A missing vent cover in women's locker room.

Figure 4. Blocked Electrical Panel



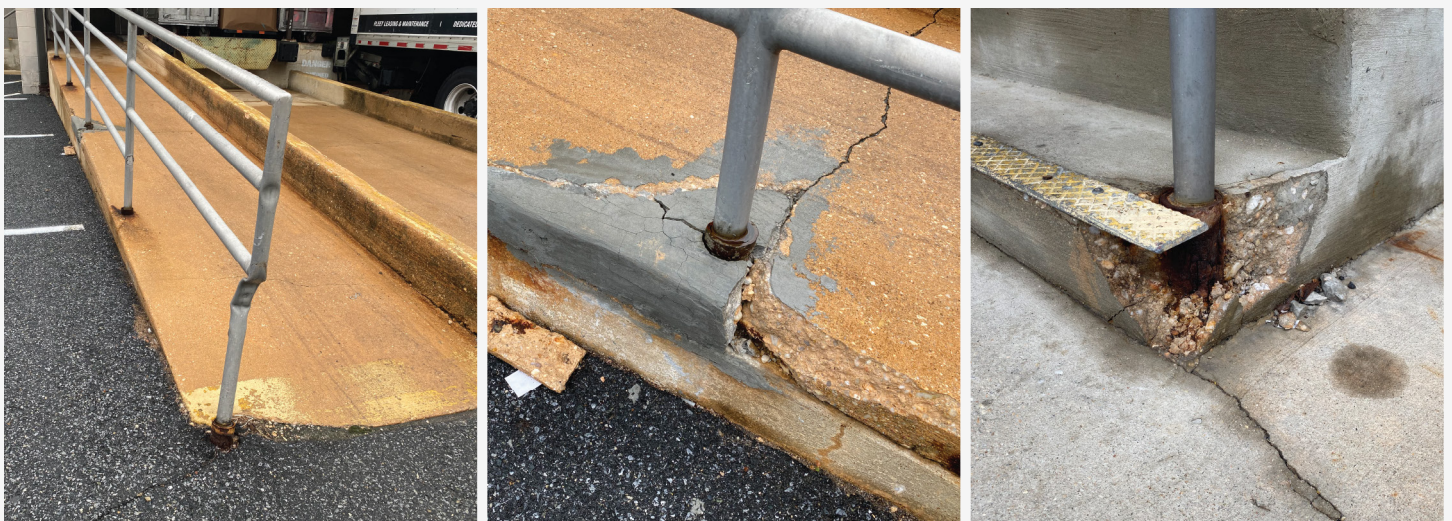
Source: OIG photo taken October 25, 2022.

Figure 5. Damaged Walls at the Custodian Sink



Source: OIG photo taken October 25, 2022.

Figure 6. Damaged Ramp Railing and Broken Concrete at Rear Dock Areas



Source: OIG photos taken October 25, 2022

Why Did It Occur

Management did not take the necessary actions to ensure that facility condition issues were corrected. Specifically, the acting branch manager had only been at the unit for about two weeks and was not aware of the issues we identified, including the dirty air vents, the damaged dock stairs and ramp areas, and the issues with the fire extinguishers.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight of facility maintenance; reported safety, security, 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.²²

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.

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

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from October 2022 through January 2023 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



December 20, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Marshallton Branch, Wilmington, DE (Project Number
22-208-4)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with 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 – Marshallton Branch, Wilmington, DE*.

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

Management has begun taking steps to address the five findings.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "E. Williamson", written over a horizontal line.

Edward B. Williamson
A/District Manager, Delaware-Pennsylvania 2 District

cc: Vice President, Area Retail & Delivery Operations - Atlantic
Corporate Audit Response Management

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



Contact us via our [Hotline](#) and [FOIA](#) forms. Follow us on social networks. Stay informed.

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

For media inquiries, please email press@uspsoig.gov or call (703) 248-2100