

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

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 22-208-5-R23 | January 10, 2023



Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

January 10, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: GARY J. 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 – Edgemoor Branch, Wilmington, DE
(Report Number 22-208-5-R23)

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

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, 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 Edgemoor Branch, in Wilmington, DE (Project Number 22-208-5). The Edgemoor Branch is in the Delaware-Pennsylvania 2 District of the Atlantic Area and services ZIP Codes 19703, 19802, 19809 and 19810. These ZIP Codes serve about 78,919 people in an urban area.¹ This delivery unit has 63 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 Edgemoor 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 Edgemoor 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 Edgemoor 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&DCs). We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Edgemoor 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 Edgemoor 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 these ZIP Codes, 78,919 (100 percent) are considered to be 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); Marshallton Branch, Wilmington, DE (Project Number 22-208-4); and Lancaster Avenue Station, Wilmington, DE (Project Number 22-208-6).

⁹ Project Number 22-208.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

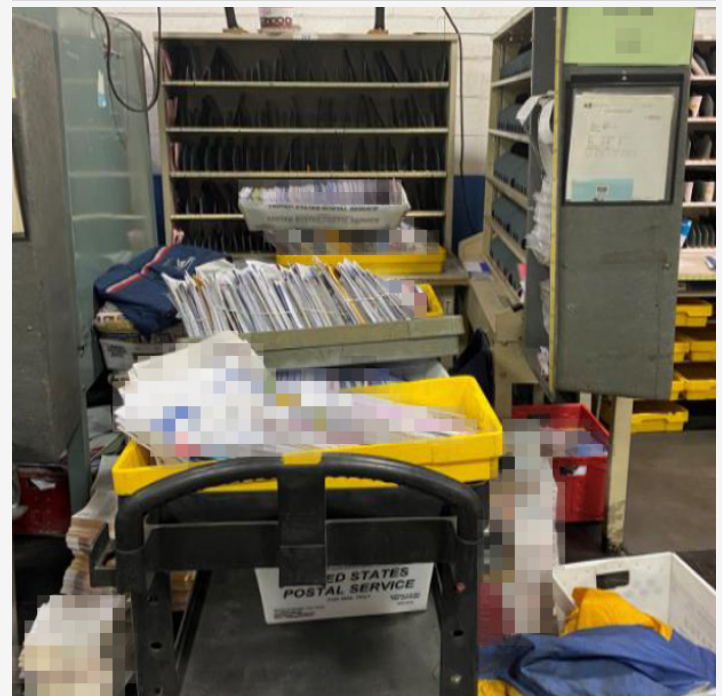
On the morning of October 25, 2022, we identified about 39,547 delayed mailpieces at 57 carrier cases and on the workroom floor.¹⁰ Specifically, we identified 30,873 pieces at the carrier cases and 8,674 pieces on the workroom floor. Unit management did not report this mail as delayed in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)¹¹ system. See Table 2 for the number of pieces of each mail type and Figure 1 for an example of delayed mail found at carrier case.

Table 2. Type of Delayed Mail

Type of Mail	Carrier Cases	Workroom Floor	OIG Estimated Count of Delayed Mail
Letters	15,211	5,108	20,319
Flats	15,652	3,565	19,217
Packages	10	1	11
Total	30,873	8,674	39,547

Source: OIG count of delayed mailpieces identified during our visit on October 25, 2022.

Figure 1. Example of Delayed Mail at a Carrier Case



Source: OIG photos taken October 25, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Unit management did not verify that all mail was cleared from the unit, delivered, and properly reported in the DCV system. The Manager, Post Office Operations, stated that the supervisors and station manager had been at the unit for less than one year and were not aware of the proper guidelines and reporting policy. In addition, management stated that the unit had multiple carrier vacancies, but they were holding job fairs for recruitment.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that all mail was processed and delivered daily and that the station had enough resources to deliver all the mail each day. 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. In addition, management is required¹³ to report all mail at the delivery unit after the carriers

¹⁰ Count of mail included individual piece counts and OIG estimate based on Postal Service conversion factors in Handbook M-32, *Management Operating Data Systems*, Appendix D; and 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.

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

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

have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in DCV. Management must update DCV 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.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees scanned 2,051 packages at the delivery unit between July and September 2022 (see Table 3). Further analysis of the STC¹⁴ scan data for these packages showed that 93.13 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 43 packages¹⁵ to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 43 sampled packages, 11 (25.58 percent) had improper or missing scans, including:

- Eight (five from the carrier cases and three from the “Notice Left” area) were scanned “Delivered,”

which should only occur when a package is successfully left at the delivery point.

- Three from the “Notice Left” area were missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.

In addition, we identified handling issues with five of the 43 packages (11.63 percent), including:

- Two from the “Notice Left” area were scanned “No Such Number” and one was scanned “Addressee Unknown.” These should have been returned to the sender.
- One from the carrier case was scanned “Insufficient Address” and should have been returned to the sender.
- One from the “Notice Left” area was scanned “Forwarded” but was not properly processed in the forwarding system.

Further, 18 packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned to the sender, as required.¹⁶ These packages ranged from four to 113 days past their return dates.

Table 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	July	August	September	Total	Percentage
Delivered	510	600	800	1910	93.13%
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location	23	92	9	124	6.05%
No Authorized Recipient	2	1	2	5	0.24%
No Secure Location Available	3	1	1	5	0.24%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	2	1	2	5	0.24%
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	1	0	0	1	0.05%
Refused	0	1	0	1	0.05%
Total	541	696	814	2051	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 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.”

¹⁵ We reviewed all 13 packages from the carrier cases and 30 packages from the “Notice Left” area.

¹⁶ *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.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Management was aware of the policy to scan packages at the point of delivery but allowed employees to scan packages in the office for businesses with firm sheets.¹⁷ In addition, management explained that the station manager and supervisors were new to their positions and had not been properly trained to ensure scanning procedures were sufficiently followed.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,¹⁸ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.¹⁹ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹⁹ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Edgemoor Branch did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes²⁰ as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from July 1 to September 30, 2022 and found that employees did not perform scans for 474 of 575 scheduled trucks (82.43 percent) arriving from the Delaware P&DC (see Table 4). However, during our observations on the morning of October 25, 2022, we noted that employees did scan incoming trucks.

Why Did It Occur

Unit management did not monitor scan performance data to ensure that all trucks received an arrival scan. Specifically, the station manager stated that he was not aware of any reports available for monitoring truck scanning performance and focused on mail delivery and trying to balance staff shortages. Further, a mail handler stated that she scanned trucks upon arrival, but sometimes missed them when she was away from the dock.

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,²¹ 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 4. Truck Arrival Scans from July 1 through September 30, 2022

Month	Count of Inbound Trips	Count of Missed Scans	Percentage Missing
July	198	156	78.79%
August	187	163	87.17%
September	190	155	81.58%
Total	575	474	82.43%

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.

²⁰ The trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

²¹ *United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedures – Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units (DU).*

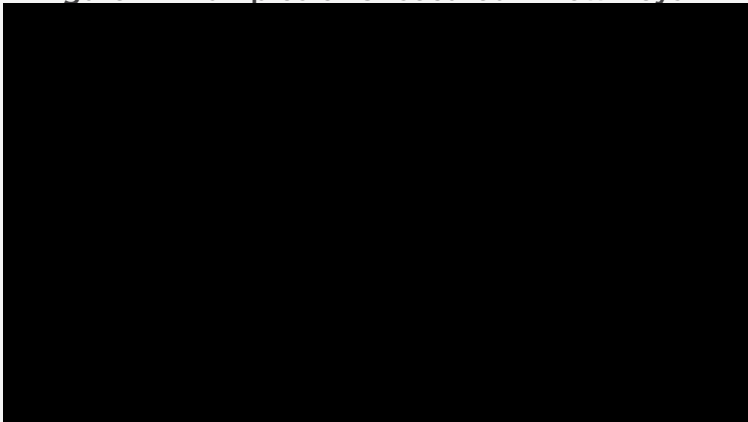
Finding #4: Arrow Keys

What We Found

Unit management did not properly manage and safeguard arrow keys.²² On the morning of October 26, 2022, we reviewed the unit's Arrow Key Certification report and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. We found 33 of the 54 keys listed on the report, which was certified on September 3, 2022. In addition, we identified eight keys at the unit that were not listed on the report. Unit management had not reported any of the missing keys to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

In addition, arrow keys were not kept in a secure location. Specifically, carriers left keys in [REDACTED] when they returned in the evening (see Figure 2). We also found that carriers were not consistently signing the daily log to acknowledge the acceptance and return of their assigned keys and no supervisor was verifying that all keys were accounted for and returned.

Figure 2. Examples of Unsecured Arrow Keys



Source: OIG photos taken October 26, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not properly manage and safeguard arrow keys because they were not aware of the policy related to arrow key accountability. The PM supervisor stated that he did not know that he should be managing the arrow keys. In addition, the AM supervisors stated they were short-staffed and did not have support employees to ensure that carriers sign keys in when they return from the street.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that employees properly followed arrow key security procedures. According to Postal Service policy,²³ management must immediately report missing arrow keys to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. In addition, policy²⁴ 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.

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.

²² Carriers use arrow keys to open mail receptacles, such as collection boxes and apartment mailboxes. Arrow keys are accountable items and subject to strict controls.

²³ *Administrative Support Manual* Issue 13, Sections 273.461, 273.464, and 273.471, July 1999 - updated through March 31, 2022.

²⁴ *Standard Work: Arrow Key Accountability*, January 2022, and *USPS Arrow Key Standard Work*, January 2022.

Finding #5: Property Conditions

What We Found

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

- A blocked electrical panel in the workroom (see Figure 3).
- A blocked Postal Inspection Service door in the workroom area (see Figure 4).
- All 12 fire extinguishers were missing the annual inspection. The last annual inspection was done in March 2021. In addition, 11 fire extinguishers were missing monthly inspections and one did not have a tag, so the inspection date could not be determined. Further, two fire extinguishers were blocked and not easily accessible – one in the storage room and one in the workroom.
- An uneven surface at the dock door entrance causing a potential trip hazard (see Figure 5).
- Stained ceiling tiles and a dirty wall in the lobby (see Figure 6) and workroom area.
- Cracked concrete around the railing outside the dock entrance (see Figure 7).
- No signage posted in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.²⁵

Figure 3. Blocked Electrical Panel



Source: OIG photo taken October 25, 2022.

Figure 4. Blocked Inspection Service Door



Source: OIG photo taken October 25, 2022.

Figure 5. Uneven Surface



Source: OIG photo taken October 25, 2022.

²⁵ Handbook RE-5, *Building and Site Requirements*, Section 2, Site Security, Section 2-2.4 Site Signage.

Figure 6. Stained Ceiling Tile and Dirty Wall in Lobby



Source: OIG photo taken October 25, 2022.

Figure 7. Cracked Concrete



Source: OIG photo taken October 25, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not take the necessary actions to ensure that facility condition issues were corrected because other duties, such as addressing customer inquiries and getting the mail out for delivery each day took priority. In addition, the station manager stated that he was not aware of the uninspected fire extinguishers, blocked electrical panel, blocked inspection service doors, and cracked concrete.

²⁶ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

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. 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.²⁶

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.

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, the SVWeb database, and the electronic Facilities Management System.²⁷ 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.

²⁷ 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



December 20, 2022

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property
Conditions Review – Edgemoor Branch, Wilmington, DE (Project Number
22-208-5)

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 – Edgemoor 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 black 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

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