

Fiscal Year 2022 Capping Report - Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews - Central Area



AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 23-029-R23 | March 20, 2023



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Highlights

Background:

The U.S. Postal Service's Central Area has about 6,224 delivery units to assist in the Postal Service's universal service obligation to bind the nation together and provide prompt, reliable, and efficient postal services to all communities. As of September 2022, about 78,000 city and rural carriers delivered to about 32 million possible delivery points in the Central Area. During fiscal year (FY) 2022, we evaluated mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at 14 delivery units in the Central Area.

What We Did:

Our objective was to summarize the audit results of selected Postal Service delivery units in the Central Area during FY 2022 and evaluate recent package and truck arrival scanning performance. For this audit, we extracted and analyzed recent package and truck arrival scanning data and compared it to the data used during the initial audits to determine if there were any improvements in scanning performance.

What We Found:

During our FY 2022 audits at 14 delivery units, we found deficiencies with delayed mail at seven units, package scanning at 14 units, truck arrival scanning at 12 units, and property conditions at 13 units.

Based on our analysis of recent package and truck arrival scanning data, we found notable improvements in the number of packages scanned at the units and truck arrival scanning. Specifically, 12 of 14 delivery units reduced the number of packages scanned at the unit. Further, 10 of 12 delivery units increased the number of truck arrival scans.

In addition, while reviewing property conditions during our FY 2022 audits, we found the following property condition deficiencies occurred regularly: (1) portable fire extinguishers were missing monthly and/or annual inspections and (2) no signage was posted in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

Recommendations:

We recommended management (1) assign personnel at the district level to verify that fire extinguishers are properly inspected and develop a program to monitor the completion of monthly and annual fire extinguisher inspections and (2) re-issue and enforce policy related to posting signage in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.



Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

March 20, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: ERIC E. HENRY
VICE PRESIDENT, CENTRAL AREA RETAIL & DELIVERY
OPERATIONS

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly Thresher".

FROM: Kelly Thresher
Deputy Assistant Inspector General
for Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Fiscal Year 2022 Capping Report - Mail Delivery,
Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews - Central Area
(Report Number 23-029-R23)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews in the Central Area.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Sean Balduff, Director, Field Operations, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit Response Management
Director of Retail and Post office Operations Maintenance
Executive Vice President and Chief Retail & Delivery Officer
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations

Results

Introduction/Objective

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property condition reviews in the Central Area (Project Number 23-029). Our objective was to summarize the audit results of selected U.S. Postal Service delivery units in the Central Area during fiscal year (FY) 2022 and evaluate recent package and truck arrival scanning performance. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this audit.

Background

The Postal Service’s Central Area has about 6,224 delivery units to assist in the Postal Service’s universal service obligation to bind the nation together and provide prompt, reliable, and efficient postal services to all communities. As of September 2022, about 83,000 city and rural carriers

delivered to about 32 million possible delivery points in the Central Area.

During FY 2022, we evaluated mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at 14 delivery units in the Central Area (see Appendix A for list of reports). These delivery units spanned four different districts, had a combined total of 400 city routes and 118 rural routes, and served a total population of about 681,414. Staffing at these delivery units during the time of our reviews included 543 city carriers, 174 rural carriers, and 129 clerks.

Summary of Findings from Fiscal Year 2022 District Reports

We identified issues affecting mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at all 14 delivery units. Specifically, we found deficiencies with delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scanning, and property conditions (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Results

Delivery Unit	District	Deficiency Identified – Yes or No			
		Delayed Mail	Package Scanning	Truck Arrival Scanning	Property Conditions
Lewis Center Main Post Office (MPO)	Ohio 2	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
South Columbus Station	Ohio 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
East City Annex	Ohio 2	Yes	Yes	No	No
Plainfield MPO	Indiana	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Carmel MPO	Indiana	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Linwood Station	Indiana	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Saint Peters MPO	Kansas-Missouri	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maryville Gardens Station	Kansas-Missouri	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chouteau Station	Kansas-Missouri	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marian Oldham Station	Kansas-Missouri	No	Yes	No	Yes

		Deficiency Identified – Yes or No			
Delivery Unit	District	Delayed Mail	Package Scanning	Truck Arrival Scanning	Property Conditions
North Milwaukee Station	Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Waukesha MPO	Wisconsin	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Station	Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bradley Carrier Annex	Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total Offices with Deficiencies		7	14	12	13

Source: Results of U.S Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviews conducted in the Central Area during FY 2022.

Delayed Mail

We identified delayed mail at seven of the 14 delivery units we visited. Specifically, we found a total of about 66,018 delayed letters and flats and 313 delayed packages at the seven delivery units.¹ See Table 2

for a summary of the delayed mail by type at each location. In addition, we found that management did not always accurately report this delayed mail in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV) system.²

Table 2. Delayed Mail

Delivery Unit	Delayed Letters and Flats	Delayed Packages	Total Delayed Mail
South Columbus Station	34,528	33	34,561
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Station	11,726	46	11,772
East City Annex	5,114	234	5,348
Maryville Gardens Station	5,145	-	5,145
Bradley Carrier Annex	5,031	-	5,031
North Milwaukee Station	2,451	-	2,451
Linwood Station	2,023	-	2,023
Total	66,018	313	66,331

Source: Results of OIG reviews conducted in the Central Area during FY 2022.

¹ Count of mail included individual piece counts and OIG estimates based on Postal Service conversion factors in Management Instruction PO-610-2007-1, *Piece Count Recording System and Handbook M-32, Management Operating Data Systems*, Appendix D.

² 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. Prior to using the DCV system, delayed mail was recorded in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System.

This delayed mail occurred primarily due to the following reasons:

- Management did not ensure the delivery units had enough resources to deliver all committed mail each day.
- Management did not verify that all mail was delivered because other assigned duties, such as scheduling staff and preparing for meetings, took priority.
- Management did not verify that all mail was cleared from the unit and taken to the street for delivery.

In general, delayed mail was not properly reported because management was not aware of the requirement or the proper procedures for reporting delayed mail.

To address our delayed mail findings, we made a total of five recommendations to district management. Management agreed with all five recommendations. As of February 23, 2023, the recommendation to Ohio 2 District management was implemented and closed. Management at the other three districts were in the process of implementing corrective actions to address our recommendations. Plans detailed by management in response to our recommendations included providing direct oversight and ensuring that available resources are sent to units when there is potential delayed volume. In addition, management stated that information on mail conditions at delivery units will be entered into the DCV system and reviewed daily for accuracy. Although we did not perform any additional work in this area for this audit, we will continue to monitor mail delivery metrics for these districts and may perform additional work in the future.

Package Scanning

We identified issues with package scanning at all 14 of the delivery units we visited. Specifically, employees improperly performed Stop-The-Clock (STC)³ scans on packages at the delivery unit, rather than at the delivery point. In total, employees at these 14 units scanned 15,486 packages at the delivery unit during the three-month period prior to our audits. These package scanning issues primarily occurred because management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures.

³ The recorded date and time when a mailpiece is delivered and the Postal Service completes its commitment to service performance. Examples of STC scans include "Delivered," "Available for Pick-up," and "No Access."

⁴ The trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

To address our package scanning findings, we made a total of five recommendations to district management. Management agreed with all five recommendations. As of February 23, 2023, the recommendation to Ohio 2 District management was implemented and closed. Management at the other three districts were in the process of implementing corrective actions to address our recommendations. Plans detailed by management in response to our recommendations included holding mandatory service talks on scanning accuracy and integrity with employees and reviewing scanning data daily and using it to address any scanning issues with employees.

Truck Arrival Scanning

We identified issues with truck arrival scanning at 12 of the 14 delivery units we visited. Specifically, employees did not always scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes⁴ as required. In total, employees missed scanning 84.97 percent of the inbound trips. These truck arrival scanning issues occurred primarily because management did not monitor scan performance data to ensure that all trucks received an arrival scan.

To address our truck arrival scanning findings, we made a total of four recommendations to district management. Management agreed with all four recommendations. As of February 23, 2023, the recommendation to Ohio 2 District management was implemented and closed. Management at the other three districts were in the process of implementing corrective actions to address our recommendations. Plans detailed by management in response to our recommendations included holding mandatory service talks to reiterate the importance of performing appropriate truck/trailer barcode scans and monitoring truck/trailer arrival scans daily for scanning compliance and addressing non-compliance.

Property Conditions

We found safety, security, and maintenance issues at 13 of the 14 delivery units we visited. Some of the most common issues we identified were:

- Portable fire extinguishers with expired monthly and/or annual inspections.
- Interior building damage, such as cracks in walls, holes in ceilings, and stained and missing ceiling tiles.

- No signage posted in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search, as required.
- Dirty vents or missing vent covers.

These property condition issues occurred because management did not provide adequate oversight to ensure that property condition issues were corrected.

To address our property condition findings, we made a total of four recommendations to district management. Management agreed with all four recommendations. As of February 23, 2023, the recommendation to Ohio 2 District management was implemented and closed. Management at the other three districts were in the process of implementing corrective actions to address our recommendations. In response to our recommendations, management stated that they had abated many of the safety, security, and maintenance issues identified and placed work orders for all remaining issues.

Finding #1: Package and Truck Scanning Improvements

We reviewed package and truck scanning data for September through November 2022 to determine if improvements had been made compared to the data reviewed during our initial audits. Based on our analysis, we found notable improvements in the number of packages scanned at the unit and an increase in truck arrival scans.

Package Scanning

Based on our analysis of data from September through November 2022, 12 of the 14 delivery units reduced the number of packages scanned at the unit, compared to the period reviewed during the initial audit. Overall, the 14 sites reduced their scans made at the unit by about 75 percent and nine of the sites reduced their scans at the unit by over 50 percent (see Table 3).

Table 3. Packages Scanned at the Unit

Delivery Unit	Scans At the Unit During Initial Review Period	Scans At the Unit From September – November 2022	Percent Change
Linwood Station	1,049	37	-96.47%
Plainfield MPO	3,768	202	-94.64%
Lewis Center MPO	1,700	148	-91.29%
Carmel MPO	2,635	326	-87.63%
North Milwaukee Station	644	140	-78.26%
East City Annex	1,714	405	-76.37%
Maryville Gardens Station	563	155	-72.47%
South Columbus Station	428	188	-56.07%
Chouteau Station	173	86	-50.29%
Marian Oldham Station	566	293	-48.23%
Bradley Carrier Annex	1,194	739	-38.11%
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Station	596	503	-15.60%
Saint Peters MPO*	282	389	37.94%
Waukesha MPO	174	287	64.94%
Total	15,486	3,898	-74.83%

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.

*While scans at this unit increased overall during the three-month period compared to the initial audit period, we noted that there were only 30 scans at the unit in November, which indicates significant improvement.

Truck Arrival Scanning

Based on our analysis of data from September through November 2022, 10 of the 12 delivery units reduced the number of missed truck arrival scans,

compared to the period reviewed during the audit (see Table 4).

Table 4. Truck Arrival Scans

Delivery Unit	Percentage of Scans Missed During Initial Review Period	Percentage of Scans Missed From September – November 2022	Change in Percentage of Missed Scans
Linwood Station	94.41%	31.29%	-63.12%
South Columbus Station	100.00%	41.25%	-58.75%
Chouteau Station	66.45%	17.11%	-49.34%
Carmel MPO	94.13%	48.41%	-45.72%
Lewis Center MPO	100.00%	56.21%	-43.79%
Waukesha MPO	100.00%	63.98%	-36.02%
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Station	98.80%	70.45%	-28.35%
Plainfield MPO	84.71%	76.80%	-7.91%
Saint Peters MPO	21.48%	15.95%	-5.53%
North Milwaukee Station	100.00%	97.05%	-2.95%
Bradley Carrier Annex	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Maryville Gardens Station*	31.82%	64.75%	32.93%

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from the Postal Service’s Surface Visibility Web (SVWeb) system. The SVWeb system 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.

*While the percentage of missing arrival truck scans at the unit increased overall during the three-month period compared to the initial audit period, we noted that unit personnel performed 100 percent of the truck arrival scans in November, which indicates significant improvement.

Based on the overall improved performance, we are not making any additional recommendations related to package or truck arrival scanning procedures at this time. We will continue monitoring these activities and may perform additional work in the future.

Finding #2: Recurring Property Conditions

During our FY 2022 audits, we found the following property conditions regularly occurred:

- Portable fire extinguishers were missing monthly and/or annual inspections at 10 delivery units.
- No signage was posted in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search at six delivery units.

Based on the number of sites where we observed these issues, they may be systemic and should be addressed at an area-wide level.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires portable fire extinguishers to be visually inspected monthly and subject to an annual maintenance check.⁵ In addition, Postal Service policy states that signage must be provided that states that vehicles may be subject to search.⁶ 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.

⁵ 29 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations Section 1910.157(E) (2 & 3)

⁶ Handbook RE-5, *Building and Site Requirements* section 2-2.4, Site Signage.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **Vice President, Central Area**, assign personnel at the district level to verify that fire extinguishers are properly inspected and develop a process to monitor the completion of monthly and annual fire extinguisher inspections.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the **Vice President, Central Area**, re-issue and enforce policy related to posting signage in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with the findings and recommendations in the report. See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated that Central Area District Managers will be responsible for ensuring delivery units certify fire extinguisher inspections using the fire extinguisher certification checklist in the Safety Health Management Tool. Compliance will be measured monthly and annually by the District Safety Department. The target implementation date is February 29, 2024.

Regarding recommendation 2, management emailed instructions to all Central Area District Managers that all employee parking lots are required to have signage posted stating that vehicles may be subject to search. This action was completed on March 7, 2023.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

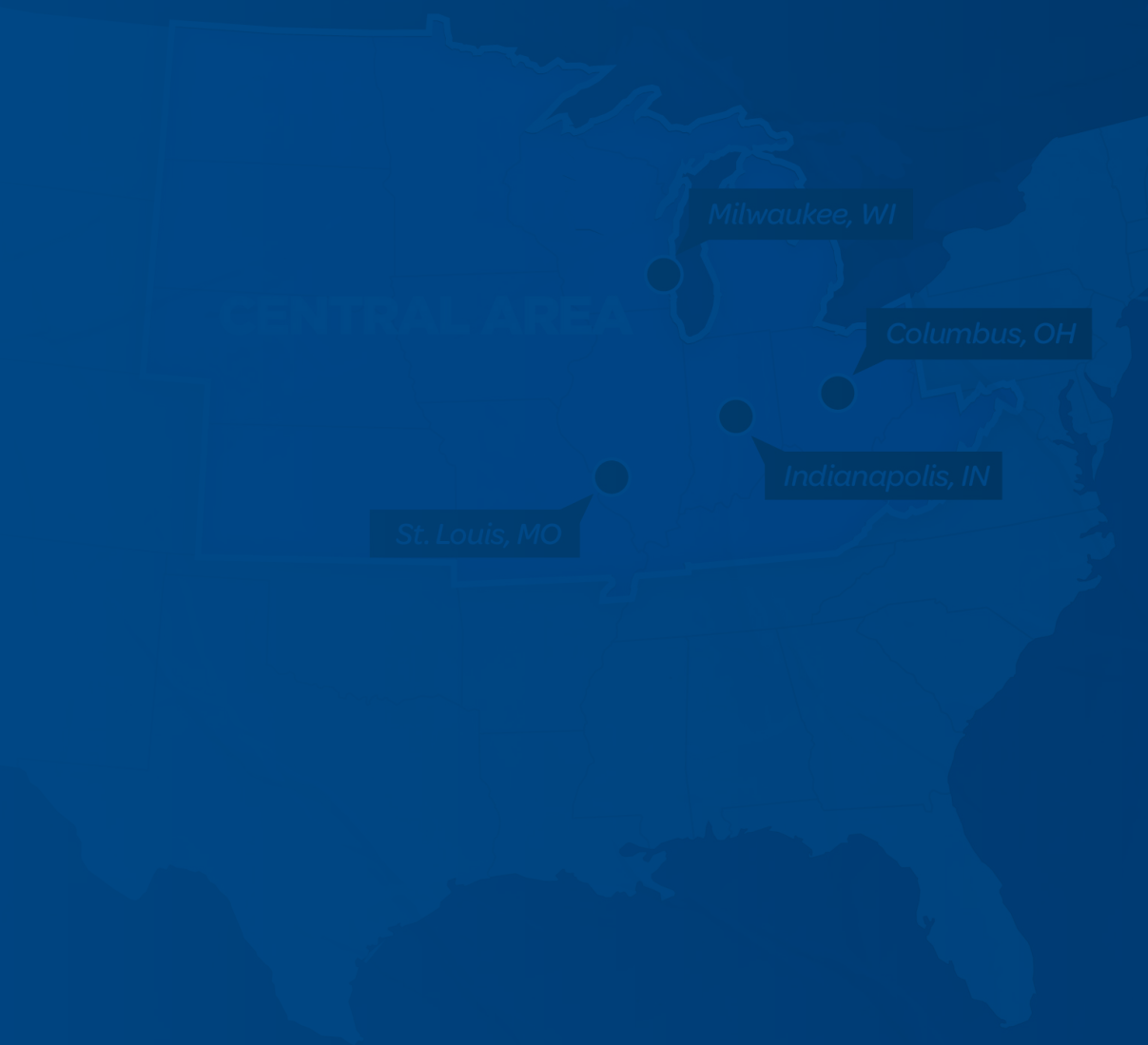
The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations and corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report.

Recommendation 1 requires OIG concurrence before closure. The OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. This recommendation should not be closed in the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendation can be closed.

After reviewing instructions that Postal Service management issued requiring all employee parking lots to have signage posted stating that vehicles may be subject to search, we consider recommendation 2 closed with the issuance of this report.

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Appendix A: Additional Information

Scope and Methodology

We selected our FY 2022 audit sites based on our analysis of delivery metrics including the number of STC scans occurring at the delivery unit and the number of customer inquiries that the delivery unit received. During these audits, we reviewed additional delivery metrics, including the number of routes and carriers at each unit, mail arrival times, number of reported delayed mailpieces, and package scanning. We also reviewed truck arrival scan compliance and safety, security, and maintenance conditions at each unit.

In addition, we extracted and analyzed data from September through November 2022 to determine recent package and truck arrival scanning performance. Specifically, we extracted and analyzed data from the PTR system for the number of STC scans performed at the unit instead of the delivery address. We also extracted and analyzed data from the SVWeb system to determine the percentage of truck arrival scans not being performed at the delivery units. We compared this data to the data

used during the initial audits to determine if there were any improvements in package and truck arrival scanning performance.

We conducted this performance audit from January through March 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 discussed our observations and conclusions with management on February 22, 2023, and included their comments where appropriate.

We assessed the reliability of PTR and SVWeb data by reviewing it for completeness, reasonableness, accuracy, and validity. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

Report Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Select Units, Milwaukee, WI Region</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at delivery units in the Milwaukee region.	22-147-R23	10/17/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Bradley Carrier Annex, Milwaukee, WI</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-147-4-R22	8/31/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Station, Milwaukee, WI</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-147-3-R22	8/31/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Waukesha Main Post Office, Waukesha, WI</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-147-2-R22	8/31/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – North Milwaukee Station, Milwaukee, WI</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-147-1-R22	8/31/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Select Units, St. Louis, MO Region</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at delivery units in the St. Louis, MO region.	22-115-R22	8/31/22	None

Report Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Saint Peters Main Post Office, Saints Peters, MO</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-115-1-R22	7/13/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Maryville Gardens Station, St. Louis, MO</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-115-2-R22	7/13/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Chouteau Station, St. Louis, MO</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-115-3-R22	7/13/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Marian Oldham Station, St. Louis, MO</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-115-4-R22	7/13/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Select Units, Indianapolis, IN Region</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at delivery units in the Indianapolis, IN region.	22-091-R22	6/22/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Linwood Station, Indianapolis, IN</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-087-R22	5/26/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Carmel Main Post Office, Carmel, IN</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-086-R22	5/26/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Plainfield Main Post Office, Plainfield, IN</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-085-R22	5/26/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews – Select Units, Columbus, OH Region</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at delivery units in the Columbus, OH region.	22-052-R22	4/13/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – East City Annex, Columbus, OH</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-044-R22	3/16/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – South Columbus Station, Columbus, OH</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-043-R22	3/16/22	None
<i>Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Lewis Center Main Office, Lewis Center, OH</i>	Evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions.	22-042-R22	3/16/22	None

Appendix B: Management's Comments



March 8, 2023

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Fiscal Year 2022 Capping Report - Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews - Central Area (Report Number 23-029-DRAFT)

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, *Fiscal Year 2022 Capping Report - Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Condition Reviews - Central Area*.

Management agrees with the two findings in the report: (1) Package and Truck Scanning Improvements, and (2) Recurring Property Conditions.

Following are our comments on each of the two recommendations.

Recommendation 1:

We recommend the **Vice President, Central Area**, assign personnel at the district level to verify that fire extinguishers are properly inspected and develop a process to monitor the completion of monthly and annual fire extinguisher inspections.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation.

The Vice President, Central Area will instruct the Central Area District Managers to ensure delivery units in the Central Area certify fire extinguisher inspections using the fire extinguisher certification checklist in the Safety Health Management Tool.

Compliance will be measured by the District Safety Department to include monthly and annual inspections.

Target Implementation Date: 02/29/2024

Responsible Official: Vice President, Area Retail & Delivery Operations (Central)

Recommendation 2:

We recommend the **Vice President, Central Area**, re-issue and enforce policy related to posting signage in the employee parking lot stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation.

The Vice President for Central Area will reiterate to District Managers in the Central Area, the requirement that all employee parking lots have signage posted stating vehicles may be subject to search. The instructions regarding adherence to Poster 7 – Rules and Regulations Governing Conduct on Postal Property was sent to the Central Area District Managers on March 7th, 2023. See attached email. Management requests this recommendation be closed with issuance of the final report.

Target Implementation Date: 04/30/2023

Responsible Official: Vice President, Area Retail & Delivery Operations (Central)



Eric E. Henry
Vice President, Area Retail & Delivery Operations

cc: Corporate Audit & Response Management

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES



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