

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Allapattah Station, Miami, FL

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 23-050-1-R23 | April 10, 2023



Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

April 10, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: MICHAEL VECCHITTO
ACTING MANAGER – FLORIDA 3 DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph E. Wolski", is centered below the recipient information.

FROM: Joseph E. Wolski
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions
Review – Allapattah Station (Report Number 23-050-1-R23)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Allapattah Station, Miami, FL.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ricardo Martinez, 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, Southern Area Retail & Delivery Operations
Director, Retail & Post Office Operations Maintenance

Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Allapattah Station in Miami, FL (Project Number 23-050-1). The Allapattah Station is in the Florida 3 District of the Southern Area and services ZIP Codes 33142 and 33242.¹ These ZIP Codes serve about 52,444 people in an urban area.² This delivery unit has 31 city routes. We judgmentally selected the Allapattah Station based on the number of Customer 360³ and Informed Delivery⁴ contacts associated with the unit, and Stop-the-Clock (STC)⁵ scans performed at the unit.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Allapattah Station in Miami, FL.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, arrow keys,⁶ 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.⁷ 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" area⁸ and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on March 22, 2023, and included their comments where appropriate.

The Allapattah Station is one of four delivery units⁹ the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of January 30, 2023, that are serviced by the Miami Processing and Distribution Center. We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Allapattah Station. We will issue a separate report¹⁰ that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all four 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 Allapattah Station. Specifically, we found issues with four 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 January 30, 2023.

1 ZIP Code 33242 services the Allapattah Station PO Box customers.

2 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, about 52,444 (100 percent) are considered living in urban communities.

3 A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.

4 Informed Delivery is a free and optional notification service that gives residential customers the ability to digitally preview their letter-sized mail and submit inquiries for mailpieces that were expected for delivery but have not arrived.

5 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."

6 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.

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

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

9 The other three units were the Doral Branch, Doral, FL (Project Number 23-050-2); Flagler Station, Miami, FL (Project Number 23-050-3); and the Princeton Branch, Homestead, FL (Project Number 23-050-4).

10 Project Number 23-050.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of January 31, 2023, we identified 739 delayed mail pieces at 17 carrier cases. Of the delayed mail pieces, 403 were in one carrier case. This mail was tagged with Postal Service (PS) Form 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*, but the form was incomplete. For example, it did not contain counts of delayed mail and signatures from the carrier and supervisor acknowledging the delayed mail. In addition, management did not report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)¹¹ system. See Table 2 for the number of pieces for each mail type and Figure 1 for an example of delayed mail found at carrier cases and the incomplete Postal Service (PS) Form 1571.

Why Did It Occur

Management stated the carrier returned with undelivered mail because they were unfamiliar with the route and arrived at the businesses after they were closed. The PM supervisor stated he was aware of the requirement to report the delayed mail in DCV; however, other duties took precedence over reporting the delayed mail.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have made sure that all mail was processed and delivered on the day it was committed for delivery and reported delayed mail in DCV. 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, managers are required¹³ to report all mail in the delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in DCV. Further, management must update DCV if volumes have changed prior to the end of the business day. Carriers must fill out PS Form 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*, to alert unit management of mail which was not delivered but was returned to the office.¹⁴

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

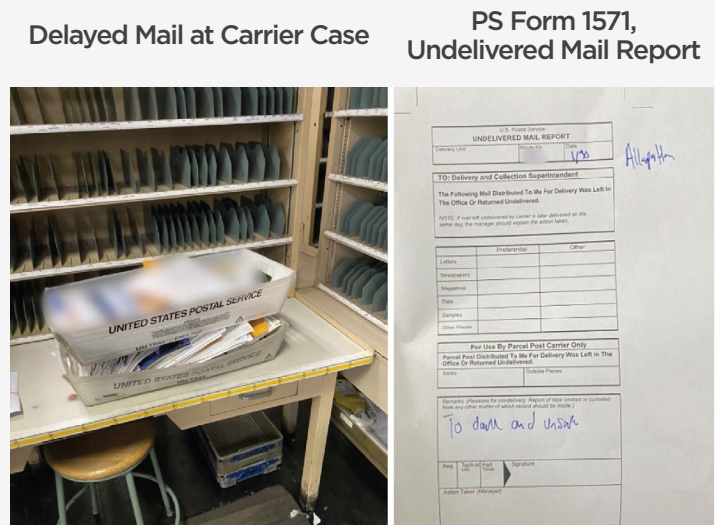
When mail is delayed, there is an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand. In addition, inaccurate reporting of delayed mail in DCV provides management at the local, district, area, and headquarters levels with an inaccurate status of mail delays and can result in improper actions taken to address issues.

Table 2. Type of Delayed Mail

Type of Mail	OIG Count of Delayed Mail
Letters	643
Flats	96
Packages	0
Totals	739

Source: The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) count of delayed mail pieces identified during our visit January 31, 2023.

Figure 1. Example of Delayed Mail and PS Form 1571



Source: OIG photos taken on January 31, 2023.

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.
 14 Handbook M-41, *City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*, paragraph 44.442.2

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees scanned 2,694 packages at the delivery unit between October and December 2022 (see Table 3). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 96.99 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, we selected 34 packages¹⁵ to review and analyze for scanning and tracking history. Of the 34 sampled packages, six (17.64 percent) had improper scans or handling, including:

- Two packages from the carrier cases were scanned as “Delivered.”
- Three packages should have been returned to sender instead of placed on the “Notice Left”

section. Two packages were scanned “Insufficient Address” and one was scanned “No Such Number.”

- One Package from the “Notice Left” section was scanned as “Return to Post Office for Address Verification.”

Further, four other packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned to the sender, as required. These packages ranged from eight to 13 days past their return dates.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. For example, management explained that it was their understanding that packages scanned to firm sheets¹⁶ could have their STC scans performed at the delivery unit instead of at the point of delivery, if the scans were made prior to 3 p.m. Therefore, management incorrectly allowed carriers to perform a “Delivered” scan for these packages at the delivery unit.

Table 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	Percentage
Delivered	982	719	912	2,613	96.99%
Delivery Attempted - No Access to Delivery Location	12	21	4	37	1.37%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	2	8	7	17	0.63%
No Secure Location Available	4	5	6	15	0.56%
Delivery Exception - Animal Interference	1	2	3	6	0.22%
No Authorized Recipient	1	0	3	4	0.15%
Refused	0	0	2	2	0.07%
Total	1,002	755	937	2,694	100%*

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

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.

¹⁵ We selected all 16 packages from the carrier cases before carriers arrived on January 31, 2023, and 18 packages from the “Notice Left” area on February 2, 2023.

¹⁶ 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.

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,¹⁷ which includes scanning packages and firm sheets at the time and location of delivery.¹⁸ 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 the Postal Service brand.

¹⁷ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

¹⁸ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Allapattah Station did not scan incoming trailer/truck barcodes,¹⁹ as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from October 1 to December 31, 2022, and found that employees did not perform a scan for any scheduled incoming trucks (see Table 4). During our site visit on January 31, 2023, we observed the unit employee did not scan the inbound mail trucks.

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 October 1 Through December 31, 2022

Month	Count of Inbound Trips	Count of Missed Scans	Percentage Missing
October	52	52	100%
November	53	53	100%
December	54	54	100%
Total	159	159	100%

Source: OIG analysis of data extracted from the Postal Service's Surface Visibility Web (SVWeb) system. SVWeb collects end-to-end data by linking multiple scans of a single asset to create visibility data to support planning, management, and optimization of the surface network.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not monitor truck scans and enforce compliance. Although the clerk knew they were supposed to complete truck scans, they did not.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have reviewed truck arrival tracking reports to verify that employees were performing all expected truck scans. According to Postal Service Policy,²⁰ 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.

¹⁹ The trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

²⁰ United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure - Subject: Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units (DU).

Finding # 4: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Allapattah Station including:

- Overgrown landscaping in the employee parking lot that can provide points of concealment (see Figure 2).
- Electrical outlet hanging loose from the wall.
- Cracked tiles in the PO Box and retail lobby areas.
- Stained and missing ceiling tiles on the workroom floor (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. Overgrown Landscaping in Employee Parking Lot



Source: OIG photos taken January 31, 2023.

Figure 3. Stained and Missing Ceiling Tiles



Source: OIG photo taken February 2, 2023.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide adequate oversight to verify property condition issues were corrected timely. Management allowed the parking lot landscaping to become overgrown. The local police department brought the issue to management's attention two weeks prior to our visit, but the issue remained unresolved during our site visit. Management stated that they were not aware of the loose electrical outlet or the cracked tiles in the lobby. Management had ordered and received the ceiling tiles on the workroom floor and was trying to obtain a scissor lift to install them.

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.²¹

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 Actions

On February 16, 2023, management at the Allapattah Station provided us support documenting that they secured the electrical outlet.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with the findings in the report.

See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

²¹ OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from January through April 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 assessed the reliability of PTR, DCV, Surface Visibility Web,²² and electronic Facilities Management System²³ 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.

²² Surface Visibility 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.

²³ 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



March 29, 2023

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Management Response - Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Allapattah Station, Miami, FL (Project Number 23-050-1-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Allapattah Station, Miami, FL*.

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

Management has begun taking steps to address the four findings.

Delayed Mail: A standard operating procedure and standard work instructions are already established. Local management will be retrained on how to properly identify, and record delayed and curtailed mail.

Package Scanning: Management will retrain applicable employees on the standard operating procedure for properly scanning and handling packages. Management will conduct daily reviews to ensure compliance.

Truck Arrival Scanning: Management will retrain applicable personnel on the standard operating procedure for scanning and recording trip arrival times and review the daily trip arrival log for compliance.

Property Conditions: Three of the four property conditions cited in the report have been fixed and pictures provided as verification. The one remaining condition has a work order submitted.

E-SIGNED by Michael V Vecchitto
on 2023-03-29 06:13:32 CDT

Michael Vecchitto
District Manager, Florida 3 District

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

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