Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Doral Branch, Doral, FL

AUDIT REPORT
Report Number 23-050-2-R23 | April 10, 2023

OFFICE OF
**INSPECTOR
GENERAL**
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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April 10, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: MICHAEL V. VECCHITTO
ACTING MANAGER, FLORIDA 3 DISTRICT

FROM: Joseph E. Wolski
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Doral Branch, Doral, FL (Report Number 23-050-2-R23)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Doral Branch, Doral, 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 & Executive 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 Doral Branch in Doral, FL (Project Number 23-050-2). The Doral Branch is in the Florida 3 District of the Southern Area and services ZIP Codes 33172, 33192, 33206, and 33222. These ZIP Codes serve about 37,076 people in an urban area.[1] This delivery unit has 24 city routes. We judgmentally selected the Doral Branch based on the number of Customer 360[2] and Informed Delivery[3] contacts associated with the unit and Stop-the-Clock (STC)[4] scans performed at the unit.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective is to evaluate delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Doral Branch in Doral, FL.

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, workroom floor, and in the "Notice Left" area[7] 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 Doral Branch is one of four delivery units[8] 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 (P&DC). We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Doral Branch. We will issue a separate capping report[9] 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 and customer service at the Doral Branch. 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.

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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, the population of 37,076 (100 percent) are considered to be urban.
2   A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.
3   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.
4   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."
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 three units were the Allapattah Station, Miami, FL (Project Number 23-050-1); Flagler Station, Miami, FL (Project Number 23-050-3); and the Princeton Branch, Homestead, FL (Project Number 23-050-4).
9   Project Number 23-050.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of January 31, 2023, we identified about 2,538 delayed mail pieces at five carrier cases and on the workroom floor.[10] Specifically, we identified 1,348 mail pieces at the carrier cases and 1,190 packages on the workroom floor. The mailpieces at the carrier cases were not properly labeled with color codes[11] or with Postal Service (PS) Form 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*.[12] In addition, unit management did not report any of this mail as delayed in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)[13] system. See Table 2 for the number of pieces for each mail type and Figures 1 and 2 for examples of delayed mail found at carrier cases and the workroom floor.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not adequately monitor operations to verify all mail was cleared from the unit and taken to the street for delivery or reported in the DCV system because they were busy with other duties and did not effectively elevate a logistics issue. Management stated that they did not monitor the carrier cases because Monday was a heavy mail day, and they were busy with other tasks, including additional time spent with newer employees.

Management stated that the 1,190 packages on the workroom floor were not delivered because they required, but did not receive support from, P&DC logistics to deliver the large volume of packages the previous day. Two Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) drivers typically came twice a day from the P&DC in Miami, FL, to deliver packages that carriers cannot deliver to high volume customers due to volume and vehicle space constraints. On the day prior to our visit (January 30, 2023), only one PVS driver came, and there was insufficient space on the truck to deliver all the packages. Unit management raised the issue to P&DC logistics, but did not receive the support needed to deliver the mail that day and did not pursue it any further. Also, unit management was unaware that they needed to report the 1,190 packages as delayed mail in the DCV system.

Table 2. Type of Delayed Mail

Type of Mail	Carrier Cases	Workroom Floor	Total OIG Estimated Count of Delayed Mail
Letters	75	0	75
Flats	1,272	0	1,272
Packages	1	1,190	1,191
Total	**1,348**	**1,190**	**2,538**

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

Figure 1. Examples of Delayed Mail in the Carrier Cases

No Color Code   No PS Form 1571
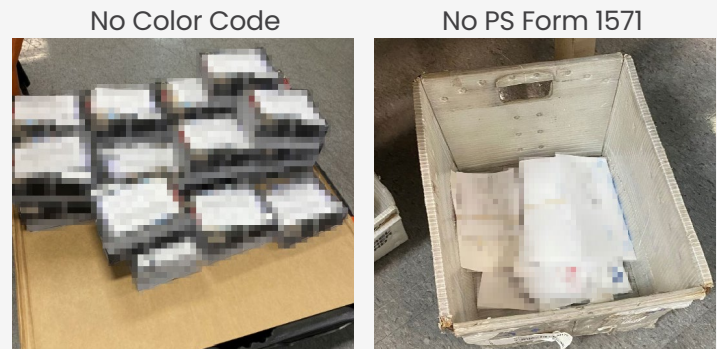
Source: OIG photos taken on January 31, 2023.

Figure 2. Example of Delayed Packages on the Workroom Floor

Source: OIG photo taken on January 31, 2023.

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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 The Postal Service uses a system of color coding to facilitate timely movement of Marketing Mail. The color code process assigns a color to each day of the week. Marketing Mail is not required to be mailed as First-Class Mail or Periodicals.
12 Postal Service Handbook M-41, City *Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*, paragraph 44.442.2.
13 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.

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 any remaining delayed mail in DCV. Postal Service policy[14] states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Mail Express are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. Marketing Mail should be treated as committed for delivery on the current date unless it is color coded for delivery on a future date. Management is also required[15] to report in the DCV system all mail at the delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties and to update the reported volumes if they 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.

Management Actions

During our audit, management at the Doral Branch took corrective action by performing a service talk and one-on-one discussions with employees regarding the proper use of color codes and PS Form 1571 on February 1, 2023. We observed the use of proper guidelines for non-delivered mail during the remainder of our visit, including reporting delayed mail in DCV.

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14 *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.
15 *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 178 packages at the delivery unit between October and December 2022 (see Table 3). Further analysis of the STC[16] scan data for these packages showed that 91.57 percent of them were scanned "Delivered." This data excludes scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as "Delivered - PO Box" and "Customer (Vacation) Hold" but, rather, represents scans performed at the delivery unit that should routinely be made at the point of delivery. In addition, we only included "Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location" scans performed Monday through Friday to avoid legitimate scans for businesses that are closed on weekends.

In addition, on the morning of January 31, 2023, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 60 packages[17] to review and analyze for scanning and tracking history. Of the 60 sampled packages, 53 (88.33 percent) had improper or missing scans, including:

- Thirty-eight packages (29 from the carrier cases/workroom floor and nine from the "Notice Left" area) were scanned as "Delivered," which should only occur when a package is successfully left at the delivery point.

- Nine packages from the "Notice Left" area were missing scans to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.

- Six packages (one from the carrier cases/workroom floor and five from the "Notice Left" area) had STC scans that did not let the customer know that their package was available for pickup at the delivery unit.

Further, seven packages in the "Notice Left" area were not returned to the sender, as required.[18] These packages ranged from two to 10 days past their return dates.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management was not aware of available scanning exception reports they could have used to monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures.

Table 3. STC Scans at the Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	October	November	December	Total	Percentage
Delivered	15	5	143	163	91.57%
Delivery Attempted - No Access to Delivery Location	7	2		9	5.06%
No Secure Location Available	1	1		2	1.12%
Receptacle Full/Item Oversized	3	1		4	2.25%
Total	**26**	**9**	**143**	**178**	**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.

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16 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."

17 We reviewed 30 packages from the carrier cases/workroom floor and another 30 packages from the "Notice Left" area.

18 *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.

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,[19] which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.[20] Packages in the "Notice Left" area should have been reviewed and returned to the 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.

19 *Delivery Done Right the First-Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.
20 *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Doral Branch did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes,[21] 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 620 of 940 (65.96 percent) scheduled incoming trucks (see Table 4). During our site visit on January 31, 2023, we observed an employee at the unit made the required scans for seven inbound mail trucks.

Table 4. Truck Arrival Scans From October 1 Through December 31, 2022

Month	Count of Inbound Trips	Count of Missed Scans	Percentage Missing
October	315	214	67.94%
November	318	205	64.47%
December	307	201	65.47%
Total	**940**	**620**	**65.96%**

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 arrival scan performance because they assumed the scans were being done by others when an assigned employee was absent during most of October through December. Further, management was unaware that truck scanning performance reports existed that allowed them to monitor scanning compliance.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have performed reviews of truck arrival tracking reports to verify that employees were performing all expected truck scans and enforced compliance. According to Postal Service Policy,[22] 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/trailer 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.

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

Finding #4: Arrow Keys

What We Found

Unit management did not properly manage the distribution of arrow keys. We found that carriers were not consistently signing the daily inventory key log to acknowledge the acceptance of their assigned keys. On the morning of January 31, 2023, we reviewed the unit's arrow key inventory log used to track the daily custody of arrow keys and conducted a physical inventory of arrow keys at the unit. We found that all 29 keys[23] listed on the inventory log were accounted for by management. However, we also found an extra key that was not listed on the unit's inventory.

We found that arrow keys were kept in a secure location. The keys were housed in a rollable accountable cart that was kept secured in a locked accountable cage overnight.

Why Did It Occur

The unit did not update or use the log, as required, because the supervisor did not understand the importance of tracking daily who has possession of the arrow keys. He believed that, if the semi-annual arrow key inventory was conducted and keys were kept in a secure location, it was not important to track when the keys were issued to carriers.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key security procedures were followed. According to Postal Service policy,[24] management must keep an accurate inventory of all keys. In addition, policy[25] states a supervisor or clerk must supervise employees signing the keys out on the inventory log.

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.

Management Actions

During our audit, management at the Doral Branch took corrective action by updating the unit's arrow key inventory log on February 6, 2023. The unit also instructed the carriers to sign the arrow keys out and back in each day, and we observed carriers doing so. In addition, the extra key that was not listed was added to the inventory log.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with all the findings in the report.

See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

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23 Two of the 29 keys were not at the unit because they were damaged and had been returned to the district office.
24 *Administrative Support Manual* Issue 13, Sections 273.461, 273.464, and 273.471, July 1999 - updated through March 31, 2022.
25 *Standard Work: Arrow Key Accountability*, January 2022, and *USPS Arrow Key Standard Work*, January 2022.

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,[26] and electronic Facilities Management System[27] 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.

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26 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.
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.

UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE

March 29, 2023

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Management Response - Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review - Doral Branch, Doral, FL (Project Number 23-050-2-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 - Doral Branch, Doral, FL.*

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

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.

Arrow Keys: Management at the Doral Branch will ensure the arrow key daily inventory log is properly maintained.

E-SIGNED by Michael V Vecchitto
on 2023-03-29 06:13:56 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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