



## AUDIT REPORT

# Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Columbia Main Post Office, Columbia, MO

January 5, 2021



Report Number 21-039-R21



January 5, 2021

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** PAMELA A DUNAWAY  
MANAGER (A), GATEWAY DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Balduff", is centered below the "MEMORANDUM FOR:" field.

**FROM:** Sean Balduff  
Director, Delivery and Retail Response Team

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Mail Delivery and Customer Service  
Operations – Columbia Main Post Office, Columbia, MO  
(Report Number 21-039-R21)

This report presents the results of our audit of the Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations – Columbia Main Post Office, Columbia, MO.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General  
Corporate Audit and Response Management  
Vice President, Delivery Operations  
Vice President, Area Retail & Delivery Operations, Central Area

## Background

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations at the Columbia Main Post Office in Columbia, MO (Project Number 21-039). The Columbia Main Post Office is located in the Gateway District of the Central Area. This audit was designed to provide U.S. Postal Service management with timely information on potential scanning and mail delivery risks at the Columbia Main Post Office.

The delivery unit has 38 city routes which are delivered by 47 full time carriers, and 12 City Carrier Assistants. The unit also has nine rural routes which are delivered by eight full time, seven Replacement Carriers, and six Assistant Rural Carriers. We chose the Columbia Main Post Office based on the number of stop-the-clock<sup>1</sup> (STC) scans occurring at the delivery unit.

## Objective, Scope and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate select mail delivery and customer service operations and determine whether internal controls were effective at the Columbia Main Post Office in Columbia, MO.

To accomplish our objective, we reviewed delivery metrics including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, Distribution Up-Time,<sup>2</sup> and carriers return to office time. During our site visits on November 17-18, 2020, we reviewed unit safety and security procedures, mail conditions, Voyager credit card and arrow lock key<sup>3</sup> security procedures, and COVID-19 safety procedures. We analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the "Notice Left"<sup>4</sup> area and interviewed unit management and employees.<sup>5</sup>

We conducted this audit from November through January 2021, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. 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 December 14, 2020 and included their comments where appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> 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", "No Access", and "Business Closed".

<sup>2</sup> Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes after it has arrived from the processing center.

<sup>3</sup> 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 lock keys are accountable property and subject to strict controls.

<sup>4</sup> The area of a postal facility where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

<sup>5</sup> The city and rural carriers we interviewed had from one to 36 years of service.

We relied on computer-generated data from the Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) system. Although we did not test the validity of controls over this system, we assessed the accuracy of the data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. Therefore, we determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

### Finding # 1: Package Delivery Scanning

Delivery unit employees improperly scanned 17,769 packages at the unit rather than at the delivery point between July and September 2020 (see Table 1).

**Table 1. STC Scans at Delivery Unit**

July	August	September	Total
8,288	5,133	4,348	17,769

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of Postal Service's PTR system data.

We also found that 15,931 (90 percent) packages scanned improperly at the unit were addressed to two businesses (see Table 2).

**Table 2. STC Scans by Delivery Address**

Deliver To	Number of Scans	Percentage of Scans
Business Address 1	14,702	83%
Business Address 2	1,229	7%
All Other	1,838	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,769</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service's PTR system data.

The unit created firm sheets<sup>6</sup> for these two businesses; however, the carrier scanned the firm sheets as “Delivered” at the delivery unit rather than at the delivery address, as required.<sup>7</sup> Management stated they knew about the requirement to scan firm sheets at the delivery point, but authorized the firm sheets to be scanned at the delivery unit to be more efficient and to ensure the packages received a delivered scan. During our audit, district management took corrective action by instructing unit management to stop scanning firm sheets at the delivery unit. Unit management also provided a stand-up talk on November 17, 2020 instructing carriers that packages and firm sheets must be scanned at the delivery address. As a result, we are not making a recommendation on this issue.

<sup>6</sup> 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. Postal Service guidance states that firm sheet usage for delivery points that receive 25 or more trackable pieces per day would result in highly increased efficiency.

<sup>7</sup> Where Is My Package (WIMP) and Scanning, February 2019.

We also conducted on-site observations at the unit the morning of November 17, 2020, before the carriers arrived for the day. During our observations, we judgmentally selected 60 packages (30 from the carrier cases and 30 from the “Notice Left” area) to review and analyze their scanning and tracking data. Of the 60 packages we reviewed, 12 of the 30 (40 percent) packages in the carrier cases and 18 of the 30 (60 percent) packages in the “Notice Left” area were missing an STC scan, had improper scans, or were not handled correctly. Specifically:

- Four packages (two at the carrier cases and two in the “Notice Left” area) had a “Delivered, In/At Mailbox” scan. A “Delivered” scan should only be made when a package is successfully left at the delivery address.
- Three packages at the carrier cases were scanned “No Access” even though no delivery was attempted. In addition, these packages were not scanned at the delivery point.
- Three packages at the carrier cases scanned "No Access" should have been scanned "Held at Post Office at Customer Request".
- Three packages at the carrier cases scanned "Available for Pick Up" should have been scanned "Held at Post Office at Customer Request".
- One package at a carrier case scanned “No Access” should have been scanned “Insufficient Address”. In addition, this package was scanned at the delivery unit.
- Eleven packages in the “Notice Left” area destined for Post Office (PO) Box addresses were scanned as “Delivered, PO Box” but were not placed in the customers’ PO Boxes. Packages that cannot fit into the PO Box or parcel locker should be scanned “Attempted”.
- Four packages in the “Notice Left” area should have been returned<sup>8</sup> to the sender. These packages ranged from two to 19 days past their return dates.
- One package in the “Notice Left” area was missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.

These package scanning issues occurred because management did not monitor scan performance. Management stated they emphasized ensuring STC scans were performed but did not always prioritize or monitor the accuracy or location of the scan. The Postal Service’s goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,<sup>9</sup> which includes accurate scanning of mailpieces at the point of delivery,<sup>10</sup> thus ensuring 100 percent visibility throughout the process.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Notice Left and Return Guidelines* dated July 2007, states that domestic packages should be returned on the 15th calendar day and international packages should be returned on the 30th calendar day.

<sup>9</sup> Delivering a Positive Customer Experience - Delivery Done Right stand-up talk.

<sup>10</sup> WIMP and Scanning, February 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Scanning at a Glance – Delivering 100 percent Visibility, August 2011.

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.

**Recommendation #1:** We recommend the **Manager, Gateway District**, instruct the **Postmaster, Columbia Main Post Office** to direct unit management to prioritize and monitor compliance with package scanning and handling procedures.

## Finding # 2: Safeguarding of Assets

Columbia main post office management did not properly manage and safeguard Postal Service assets including Voyager credit cards and mail delivery vehicles.

### Voyager Credit Card

We conducted an inventory of the unit's assigned Voyager credit cards on November 17, 2020 and found that five of 50 were missing. We determined five carriers had kept the Voyager credit cards at the end of the previous workday. Management stated this occurred because the evening supervisor did not follow the end of day closing procedures on the prior day to ensure all Voyager credit cards had been returned. Postal Service policy states that Voyager credit cards are accountable items and should be treated as such. Accordingly, they should never be carried by off-duty personnel or left in unattended vehicles or other locations with unrestricted access.<sup>12</sup> When there is insufficient oversight and supervision of accountable item such as Voyager credit cards, there is an increased risk of theft. In addition, management cannot prevent potentially fraudulent charges and unauthorized purchases.

### Delivery Vehicles

Employees did not always lock and secure delivery vehicles. We inspected 53 unattended vehicles on the morning of November 17, 2020 and found five were not locked and secured as required. The postmaster stated that the evening supervisor forgot to check the vehicles at the end of the day because it was late by the time he completed his other responsibilities. Postal Service policy<sup>13</sup> states that all vehicle doors must be secured when vehicles are left unattended and out of the driver's immediate site. When vehicles are left unlocked, there is an increased risk that they could be vandalized or stolen.

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<sup>12</sup> *Standard Work Instructions (Quick Reference): U.S. Bank Voyager Fleet Card Management for Site Managers*, January 8, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Handbook EL-814, *Postal Employee's Guide to Safety*, Section X,E,4, Parking.

**Recommendation #2:** We recommend **Manager, Gateway District**, instruct the **Postmaster, Columbia Main Post Office**, to prioritize the safeguarding of assets and follow procedures to ensure all Voyager cards are returned and delivery vehicles are locked at the end of each day.

## Management's Comments

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

Regarding recommendation 1, district management stated a stand-up talk was given to carriers to scan packages and firm sheets at the delivery address and station management was given instructions to prioritize and monitor compliance with package scanning and handling procedures. Additionally, district management will conduct a follow up audit to ensure proper scanning is taking place for scans made on the street and at the "hold mail" and PO Box sections before February 1, 2021.

Regarding recommendation 2, management provided a stand-up talk on November 17, 2020 instructing carriers and clerks to prioritize the safeguarding of assets and follow the procedures necessary to ensure delivery vehicles are locked daily. District management also stated that they implemented a procedure to verify all voyager cards are returned and the postmaster will be notified if any accountable items are missing. Management stated these actions were implemented on December 15, 2020.

## Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations in the report.

All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when actions are completed and supporting documentation for those actions that have already been completed. Recommendations should not be closed in the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendations can be closed.

## APPENDIX A. MANAGEMENT'S COMMENTS

DISTRICT MANAGER  
GATEWAY DISTRICT



December 18, 2020

Joseph E. Wolski  
Director, Audit Operations

Subject: Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations  
Columbia Main Post Office, Columbia, MO 65201  
Report Number 21-039

Please find below my response to the deficiencies found during the November 17-18, 2020, Mail Delivery and Customer Service Operations Audit of the Columbia Post Office.

The risks identified and facility response:

### **Package Delivery Scanning:**

- Delivery Unit employees improperly scanned 17,769 packages at the unit rather than at the delivery point between July and September 2020.
- Of the 17,769 packages scanned, 15,931, or 90% of the packages scanned improperly at the unit were addressed to two businesses.
- The unit created firm sheets for the two businesses: however, the carrier scanned them "Delivered" at the delivery unit rather than at the delivery address as required.
- 60 packages (30 from Carrier cases and 30 from Notice Left shelf) were reviewed and analyzed by their scanning and tracking data. Forty percent of the packages in the carrier cases and sixty percent of packages in the "Notice Left" area were missing a STC scan, had improper scans, or were not handled correctly.

### **Response**

- We agree with the findings. While the audit team was on site, the management team was given instructions to stop scanning the firm sheets at the delivery unit. In addition, a stand-up talk was given to all employees on November 17, 2020, instructing carriers that packages and firm sheets must be scanned at the delivery address.
- We agree with the findings. The Postmaster created a Firm Sheet SOP for the clerks and carriers. This SOP was shared with the Columbia office staff and was sent to the OIG team per their request.
- We agree with the findings. On 12/16/2020 there was another service talk with the craft employees to review the process of scanning packages at the delivery address.
- We agree with the findings. Management has been instructed to prioritize and monitor compliance with package scanning and handling procedures.
- We agree with the findings. Operations Programs Support will conduct a random follow up audit in Columbia before February 1, 2021, to ensure proper scanning is taking place for scans made on the street as well as the hold mail and PO Box sections.

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**Safeguarding of Assets:**

**Voyager Credit Card:**

- An inventory of the unit's assigned Voyager credit cards found that five out of the fifty cards were missing. It was determined that five carriers had kept the Voyager credit cards at the end of the previous workday.

**Response to Voyager Credit Card:**

- We agree with the findings. It was determined the supervisor didn't follow the end of day closing procedures on the prior day to ensure all Voyager credit cards had been returned. This was addressed with the supervisor.
- The closing clerk will verify all the cards have been returned and file the accountable log daily. Any missing cards or accountable items will be reported to the Postmaster and investigated immediately.

**Delivery Vehicles**

- Delivery vehicles aren't being locked. On the morning of the audit, 53 unattended vehicles were inspected and five were found to be unlocked and not secured as required.

**Response to Delivery Vehicles:**

- We agree there were vehicles that were unlocked while unattended. A service talk has been given to all employees explaining the importance of ensuring all vehicles are locked and secured nightly.
- A management meeting was conducted explaining the importance of the vehicle checks and certification in DMS pm survey. The Management team has been instructed to prioritize the safeguarding of assets and to follow the procedures necessary to ensure delivery vehicles are locked daily.

I have reviewed the Mail Delivery and Customers Service Operations audit conducted on the Columbia Mo. Post Office on November 17-18, 2020. I have reviewed the audit and the responses with the Manager of Post Office Operations and the Postmaster of the unit, and we are in agreement with the findings. The processes above are now in place and will be monitored for compliance. Please let me know if you require any additional information or if you have any questions.



Pamela A Dunaway  
A/District Manager  
Gateway District