

# Cordova Main Post Office in Cordova, TN: Delivery Unit Operations

## AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 23-100-2-R23 | June 27, 2023



# Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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June 27, 2023

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** OMAR R. COLEMAN  
DISTRICT MANAGER, TENNESSEE DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph E. Wolski".

**FROM:** Joseph E. Wolski  
Director, Field Operations

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – Cordova Main Post Office, Cordova, TN: Delivery Unit  
Operations (Report Number 23-100-2-R23)

This report presents the results of our audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions review at the Cordova Main Post Office in Cordova, TN.

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

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General  
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  
Corporate Audit and Response Management

# Results

## Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Cordova Main Post Office in Cordova, TN (Project Number 23-100-02). The Cordova Main Post Office is in the Tennessee District of the Southern Area and services ZIP Codes 38016 and 38018. These ZIP Codes serve about 78,549 people in a predominantly urban area.<sup>1</sup> This delivery unit has 48 rural routes. We judgmentally selected the Cordova Main Post Office based on the number of Customer 360<sup>2</sup> inquiries and Informed Delivery<sup>3</sup> contacts associated with the unit, undelivered route information, and stop-the-clock (STC)<sup>4</sup> scans performed at the unit.

## Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Cordova Main Post Office in Cordova, TN.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, arrow keys,<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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” area<sup>7</sup> and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations

and conclusions, as summarized in Table 1, with management on June 8, 2023, and included their comments, where appropriate.

The Cordova Main Post Office is one of five delivery units<sup>8</sup> the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of May 1, 2023, that are serviced by the Memphis Processing and Distribution Center and Mail Processing Annex. We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Cordova Main Post Office. We will issue a separate report<sup>9</sup> that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all five 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 Cordova Main Post Office. Specifically, we found issues with all 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 May 1, 2023.

1 We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from Esri, which is based on Census Bureau information. Of the people living in these ZIP Codes, about 74,328 (about 94.63 percent) are considered living in urban communities and 4,221 (about 5.37 percent) are considered living in rural communities.

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 mailpiece. 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 four units were the Collierville Main Post Office, Collierville, TN (Project Number 23-100-1); Desoto Carrier Annex, Memphis, TN (Project Number 23-100-3);

9 Germantown Main Post Office, Germantown, TN (Project Number 23-100-4); and Hickory Hills Station, Memphis, TN (Project Number 23-100-5).

Project Number 23-100.



# Finding #1: Delayed Mail

## What We Found

On the morning of May 2, 2023, we identified 932 delayed mailpieces at 37 carrier cases. Specifically, we identified 878 mailpieces and 54 parcels. In addition, management did not report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)<sup>10</sup> system. See Table 2 for the number of pieces for each mail type.

**Table 2. Type of Delayed Mail**

Type of Mail	OIG Count of Delayed Mail
Letters	875
Flats	3
Packages	54
<b>Totals</b>	<b>932</b>

Source: OIG count of delayed mailpieces identified during our visit on May 2, 2023.

## Why Did It Occur

Management did not verify that all mail was cleared from the unit and taken to the street for delivery the previous day. Specifically, the postmaster stated that the previous day had been a heavy mail day and not all the mail was sorted before the carriers departed for the street. In addition, the postmaster stated that he had to leave early that day unexpectedly and that he was the one who typically reported delayed mail volumes in DCV.

## What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured all mail was available prior to the carriers departing for the street. Postal Service policy<sup>11</sup> 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 required<sup>12</sup> 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.

## 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.

<sup>12</sup> *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide*, September 2022.

## Finding #2: Package Scanning

### What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. In total, employees scanned 388 packages at the delivery unit between January and March 2023 (see Table 3). Further analysis of the STC<sup>13</sup> scan data for these packages showed that 60.82 percent of them were scanned “Delivered.” This data does not include 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, on the morning of May 2, 2023, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 60 packages<sup>14</sup> to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 60 sampled packages, 15 (25 percent) had improper scans, including:

- Nine packages (seven from the carrier cases and two from the “Notice Left” area) had a “Delivered” scan, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer’s point of delivery.

- Two packages at the carrier cases had a manually keyed “Available for Pick-Up” entry, which was improperly recorded at the office.
- Two packages at the carrier cases had a “Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Address” scan, but were scanned away from the point of delivery.
- One package at the carrier case had a “No Authorized Recipient” scan from April 6, 2023.
- One package from the “Notice Left” area had a “No Such Number” scan, but was not placed in the “Return to Sender” area.

Further, eight packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned to the sender, as required.<sup>15</sup> These packages ranged from seven to 45 days past their return dates.

### Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. Management explained that they were usually not on the district’s scanning integrity reports, and therefore, were not aware they had scanning issues.

**Table 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit**

STC Scan Type	Count	Percentage
Delivered	236	60.82%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	68	17.53%
Delivery Attempted- No Access to Delivery Location	62	15.98%
No Secure Location Available	13	3.35%
Refused	5	1.29%
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	3	0.77%
No Authorized Recipient	1	0.26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>100%</b>

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.

<sup>13</sup> A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mailpiece. Examples of STC scans include “Delivered,” “Available for Pick-up,” and “No Access.”

<sup>14</sup> We judgmentally selected 30 packages from the carrier cases and 30 packages from the “Notice Left” area.

<sup>15</sup> *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, states 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,<sup>16</sup> which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.<sup>17</sup> Packages on 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.

<sup>16</sup> *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.

<sup>17</sup> *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

## Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

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### What We Found

Employees at the Cordova Main Post Office did not scan any incoming trailer/truck barcodes,<sup>18</sup> as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from January 1 through March 31, 2023, and found that employees did not perform any scans for the 323 scheduled incoming trucks. During our observations on the morning of May 2, 2023, we confirmed through observation that employees were not scanning the incoming mail trucks.

### Why Did It Occur

Management did not monitor scan performance data to verify that all trucks received an arrival scan. The postmaster stated that he was told when he first arrived at the unit a year ago that they did not have to scan the trucks, per the prior manager's direction. The postmaster acknowledged he should have verified scanning expectations with district management.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have directed personnel to perform truck arrival scans and conducted reviews of truck arrival tracking reports to verify that employees were performing all expected truck scans. According to Postal Service Policy,<sup>19</sup> 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.

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<sup>18</sup> The trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.

<sup>19</sup> *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 and safeguard arrow keys. On the morning of May 4, 2023, we reviewed the unit's inventory log for arrow keys and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. We found 26 arrow keys listed on the inventory log, with one key missing. The missing key was later found with a new carrier who had kept the key in the [REDACTED] the previous night. Further, arrow keys were not always kept secure. During our interview with the postmaster, he showed us six unassigned spare arrow keys from his [REDACTED]

We observed the carriers signing out their keys on the inventory log in the morning. The keys were housed in a [REDACTED] that was kept locked in the secure location overnight and brought out for distribution and collection.

### Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight to verify that personnel properly managed and safeguarded arrow keys. The missing arrow key was not accounted for at the end of the day prior to our review. Unit management stated that the PM Supervisor did not have time to complete the arrow keys accountability process due to other priorities, such as getting the collection mail to the plant and other mail-related duties. Regarding the six keys in the unlocked desk drawer, the postmaster explained that the keys should have been kept secured along with the other arrow keys, but he forgot that they were in his desk until our interview.

### What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,<sup>20</sup> management must keep an accurate inventory of all keys and conduct a semiannual physical survey of all keys. In addition, policy states that arrow keys must remain secured until they are individually assigned to

personnel. 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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 Cordova Main Post Office, including:

### Building Safety:

- An Inspection Service door was blocked by miscellaneous materials, including an unsecured step ladder.
- All five fire extinguishers on-site were missing updated monthly and annual inspections.
- No manual fire alarm pulls observed in the facility.<sup>21</sup>
- Numerous electrical cord daisy chains were observed on top of carrier cases.
- Crumbling concrete curb and sidewalk cracks were observed at the front of building (see Figure 1).
- Loading dock guard rail was damaged with bent and exposed metal edges.

**Figure 1. Crumbling Sidewalk Concrete**



Source: OIG photo taken on May 3, 2023.

### Building Security:

- No “subject to search” sign posted on property.
- Outermost customer lobby glass door did not close properly (see Figure 2).
- The employee parking lot gate was not working and has damaged concrete pylons (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2. Customer Lobby Door**



Source: OIG photo taken on May 3, 2023.

<sup>21</sup> OSHA, 29 CFR 1910.165, (e).



**Figure 3. Employee Parking Lot Gate**



Source: OIG photo taken on May 3, 2023.

**Building Maintenance:**

- Wall damage and cut-out in the men’s restroom (see Figure 4).
- Numerous stained, damaged, or missing ceiling tiles throughout the facility due to roof leaks, including the customer lobby.
- Some parking lot lights (employee and customer parking lots) were burnt out, while other lights were on.
- One loading dock platform was out of order.
- The workroom water fountain was not functioning and blocked off (see Figure 5).

**Figure 4. Men’s Bathroom Wall Damage**



Source: OIG photo taken on May 3, 2023.

**Figure 5. Non-Working Water Fountain**



Source: OIG photo taken on May 3, 2023.

**Why Did It Occur**

Management did not take the necessary actions to verify that property condition issues were corrected because they were unaware of the numerous issues we identified. Management stated that they do not routinely walk around the facility to look for property issued like the ones we found, or just had not noticed them. Their priority is to make sure the mail gets delivered. Additionally, the facility has a full-time custodian, and management depended on the custodian to be aware of and repair minor things.

**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.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor’s Safety Handbook*.

### **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 April through June 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,<sup>23</sup> and electronic Facilities Management System<sup>24</sup> data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> 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



June 21, 2023

JOHN CIHOTA  
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

**SUBJECT:** Management Response: Cordova Main Post Office in Cordova, TN: Delivery Unit Operations (Report Number 23-100-02)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, Cordova Main Post Office in Cordova, TN: Delivery Unit Operations.

Management agrees, in part, with the five findings in the report on delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scanning, arrow keys, and property conditions.

Management has begun taking steps to address the five findings.

*Delayed Mail:* On May 1, 2023, Cordova received 93,120 letters, 2,435 flats, and 5,494 parcels for delivery. The 932 pieces of delayed mail identified by the OIG represents 0.92% of that volume. Management will retrain local EAS on the Standard Work for properly reporting delayed mail in DCV. Management continues to pursue recruitment activities in the Tennessee District and post career opportunities weekly until all vacancies are filled.

*Package Scanning:* From January 1, 2023, to March 31, 2023, Collierville received 299,485 parcels in total for delivery. The 388 identified in this report by the OIG as scanned in the office represents 0.13% of total parcels delivered. Personnel will be retrained on the proper way to scan parcels for non-delivery due to No Access, Weather Delays, and Integrity Scans. The Standard Work for proper scanning due to Weather Delays or No Access is communicated on a regular basis and always in advance of an expected weather event.

*Truck Arrival Scanning:* Management will retrain personnel on the proper way to scan Truck Arrivals. The Standard Work instructions has also been sent out to all offices and reminders will be sent weekly.

*Arrow Keys:* The office will be retrained on Standard Work and operating procedures for Arrow Key Management including updating key logs, reporting missing arrow keys to the USPS Inspection Service, returning any broken arrow keys to Topeka, and ensuring arrow keys are verified and secured daily. Recent Gemba's were completed and office in full compliance.

*Property Conditions:* Seven of the 18 property conditions have been abated. Work orders have been submitted for the remaining 15.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Omar Coleman', written over a horizontal line.

Omar Coleman  
Manager, Tennessee District

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

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INSPECTOR  
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