

Robert L. Roberts Station in Kansas City, KS: Delivery Operations

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 24-107-2-R24 | July 15, 2024



Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

July 15, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR: EDDIE L. BANNER
MANAGER, KANSAS-MISSOURI DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sean Balduff", is centered below the memorandum header.

FROM: Sean Balduff
Director, Field Operations Central and Southern

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Robert L. Roberts Station, Kansas City, KS: Delivery
Operations (Project Number 24-107-2-R24)

This report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Robert L. Roberts Station in Kansas City, KS.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Jenny Schneider, Audit 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, Central Area Retail & Delivery Operations
Director, Retail & Post Office Operations Maintenance
Corporate Audit and Response Management

Results

Background

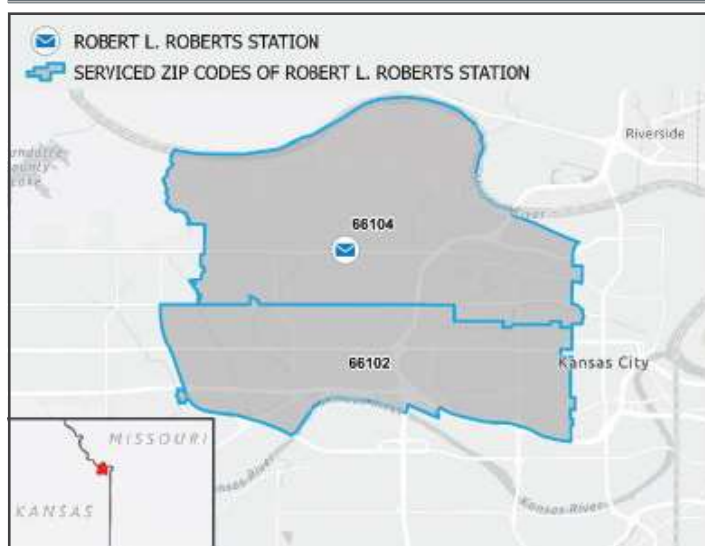
The U.S. Postal Service’s mission is to provide timely, reliable, secure, and affordable mail and package delivery to more than 160 million residential and business addresses across the country. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviews delivery operations at facilities across the country and provides management with timely feedback in furtherance of this mission.

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Robert L. Roberts Station in Kansas City, KS (Project Number 24-107-2). The Robert L. Roberts Station is in the Kansas-Missouri District of the Central Area and services ZIP Codes 66102 and 66104 (see Figure 1). These ZIP Codes serve 58,287 people in a predominantly urban area. Specifically, 57,588 (98.8 percent) live in urban communities and 699 (1.2 percent) live in rural communities.¹

This delivery unit has 38 city routes and one auxiliary rural route.² The Robert L. Roberts Station is one of three delivery units³ the OIG reviewed during the week of May 13, 2024, that are serviced by the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC).

We assessed all units serviced by the Kansas City P&DC based on the number of Customer 360⁴ (C360) delivery-related inquiries,⁵ Informed Delivery⁶ contacts, stop-the-clock⁷ (STC) scans performed away from the delivery point, first and last mile failures,⁸ and undelivered route information between January 1 and March 31, 2024. Additionally, we selected these units because of concerns raised by Senators Josh Hawley and Roger Marshall.

Figure 1. ZIP Codes Served by the Robert L. Roberts Station



Source: OIG analysis of ZIP Code data.

We judgmentally selected the Robert L. Roberts Station primarily based on the number of C360 inquiries related to delivery and Informed Delivery contacts. The unit was also chosen based on first and last mile failures and undelivered routes. See Table 1 for a comparison of some of these metrics between the unit and the rest of the district.

Table 1. Delivery Metric Comparison Between January 1 and March 31, 2024

Delivery Metric	Unit Average per Route	District Average per Route
C360s Delivery Inquiries	16.2	5.4
Informed Delivery Contacts	178.2	29.8

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service’s C360 and Informed Delivery data extracted on April 15, 2024.

1 We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.
 2 Auxiliary routes are routes that are evaluated at less than 39 hours per week.
 3 The other two units were the Shawnee Mission Post Office (Project Number 24-107-3) and Hickman Mills Post Office (Project Number 24-107-1).
 4 A cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.
 5 A compilation of package inquiry, package pickup, daily mail service, and hold mail inquiries.
 6 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.
 7 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.”
 8 First mile failures occur when a mailpiece is collected and does not receive a processing scan at the P&DC on the day that it was intended. Last mile failures occur after the mailpiece has been processed at the P&DC on a final processing operation and is not delivered to the customer on the day it was intended.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Robert L. Roberts Station in Kansas City, KS.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on five audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys,⁹ inaccurate carrier complement and timekeeping, 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, carrier complement and timekeeping, and distribution up-time.¹⁰ During our site visit we observed mail conditions; package scanning procedures; arrow key security procedures; timekeeping documentation; and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the “Notice Left” area¹¹ and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 2 with management on June 28, 2024, and included their comments, where appropriate.

We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Robert L. Roberts Station. We will issue a separate report¹² that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all three delivery units, as well as the district. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about our scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting delivery operations and property conditions at the Robert L. Roberts Station. Specifically, we found issues with all five areas we reviewed (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Deficiencies Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail	X	
Package Scanning	X	
Arrow Keys	X	
Carrier Complement and Timekeeping	X	
Property Conditions	X	

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of May 13, 2024.

We did not identify any issues with carrier complement. However, we did identify issues with timekeeping management (see [Finding #4](#)).

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Time of day that clerks have completed distributing mail to the carrier routes.

¹¹ The area of a delivery unit where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.

¹² Project Number 24-107-2.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of May 14, 2024, we identified about 38,167¹³ delayed mailpieces at 38 carrier cases, the PO Box section, and hot case.¹⁴ Specifically, we identified 35,951 letters and 2,216 flats. In addition, management did not accurately report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)¹⁵ system. Although management reported

36,026 delayed letters, they did not report any delayed flats. See Table 3 for the number of pieces for each mail type and Figures 2 and 3 for examples of delayed mail found at the unit. In addition, the carriers did not complete Postal Service (PS) Forms 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*,¹⁶ to document undelivered mailpieces.

Table 3. Types of Delayed Mail Identified

Type of Mail	Carrier Cases	PO Box	Hot Case	Total Count of Delayed Mail
Letters	35,378	358	215	35,951
Flats	2,096	115	5	2,216
Totals	37,474	473	220	38,167

Source: OIG count of delayed mailpieces identified during our visit on May 14, 2024.

Figure 2. Examples of Delayed Mail in the Carrier Case



Source: OIG photo taken May 14, 2024.

Figure 3. Examples of Delayed Mail in the PO Box and Hot Case



Source: OIG photos taken May 14, 2024.

¹³ Count of mail included individual piece counts and OIG estimate 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.

¹⁴ Distribution case in the delivery unit for last-minute sorting or resorting of mail that a carrier collects before leaving for their route.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ PS Form 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report*, lists all mail distributed to the carrier for delivery that was left in the office or returned undelivered.

Why Did It Occur

Management stated the majority of the delayed mail identified was Delivery Point Sequence (DPS) letters and flats that arrived late from the P&DC the previous day after the carriers had departed for the street. The unit reported the late arrival of mail in the Mail Arrival Quality/Plant Arrival Quality (MAQ/PAQ)¹⁷ system, and the plant responded that there were staffing issues resulting from a significant amount of unscheduled leave. The DPS mail at the plant was not cleared until 6:45 a.m., which caused the mail to be delayed. We reported this issue during our simultaneous audit of the Kansas City P&DC.¹⁸

The station manager stated they should have reported the delayed flats in DCV, but did not, due to an oversight. In addition, unit management did not enforce the red line process — a standardized clearance process, including the proper disposition of mail types, for carriers returning to the office upon completion of delivery assignments. This enabled carriers to take undelivered mail they brought back from their street duties to their cases without filling out a PS Form 1571. The station manager stated he had a lot of new carriers that needed to be trained on this process.

What Should Have Happened

P&DC management should be prepared for unanticipated circumstances that could impact mail delivery service to postal delivery units. Delivery unit managers are required¹⁹ to report all mail in the delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in DCV. Management must also update DCV if volumes have changed prior to the end of the business day. In addition, policy²⁰ states that all mail returned from the street is required to be identified with a PS Form 1571 and signed by the carriers and supervisors.

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.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding. See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

¹⁷ The MAQ/PAQ system facilitates communication and resolution of issues with the movement of mail, including collection mail, between Postal Service facilities.

¹⁸ *Efficiency of Operations at the Kansas City Processing and Distribution Center, Kansas City, MO* (Report Number 24-106-R24, dated July 15, 2024).

¹⁹ *Informed Visibility Delivery Condition Visualization User Guide*, August 2023.

²⁰ Standard Operating Procedures, Redline Policy.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees scanned packages improperly at the delivery unit and handled packages incorrectly at the unit.²¹

We reviewed package scanning data for scans that occurred at the unit and removed any potentially accurate scans performed.²² In total, employees improperly scanned 197 packages at the delivery unit between January and March 2024. Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 39 percent of them were scanned “Delivery Attempted – No Access” (see Table 4).

Table 4. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	Count	Percentage
Delivered Attempted - No Access	77	39.1%
Delivery Exception - Animal Interference	60	30.5%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	52	26.4%
Delivered	8	4.0%
Total	197	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.

We also found issues with scanning and handling of packages in the unit. On the morning of May 14, 2024, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 60 packages²³ to review and analyze scanning and tracking history. Of the 60 sampled packages, 18 (30 percent) had improper scans or handling issues, including:

- Ten packages (three from the carrier cases and seven from the “Notice Left” area) were scanned between 0.4 and 4.4 miles away from the delivery point. Three of the packages were scanned “Receptacle Full/Item Oversized,” two

were scanned “Delivery Attempted – No Access,” one was scanned “No Secure Location Available,” and one was scanned “No Authorized Recipient Available.”

- Three packages from the carrier cases were scanned “Held at Post Office at Customer’s Request.” Two of these did not have a hold order and one was in the wrong carrier case.
- Three packages (one from the carrier cases and two from the “Notice Left” area) were missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.
- One package from the carrier cases was scanned delivered, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer’s delivery address.
- One package from the carrier cases was not placed in the notice left area after several delivery attempts. The package was in the unit approximately 54 days.

Further, 10 of the 30 sampled packages in the “Notice Left” area were not returned to the sender, as required. These packages ranged from one to 22 days past their scheduled 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 stated the unit experienced an unusually high turnover of employees between October 2023 and April 2024, and they were more focused on the completion of mail delivery than performing their scanning oversight responsibilities.

Regarding the Notice Left area, management stated that their prior “Notice Left” clerk was from another unit, and they did not have a trained replacement. This transition process impacted coverage for the

21 We found a nominal amount of scans occurring away from the delivery unit and over 1,000 feet from the intended delivery point between January and March 2024.
22 This data does not include scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as “Delivered – PO Box” and “Customer (Vacation) Hold.” Additionally, PO Box scans at the unit were only counted when the delivery point was an address away from the unit. This category does not include mail addressed for a PO Box.
23 We judgmentally selected 30 packages from the carrier cases and 30 packages from the “Notice Left” area.

“Notice Left” section while management was seeking a replacement.

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,²⁴ which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.²⁵ 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.²⁶

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 improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance both the customer experience and the Postal Service brand.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

²⁴ *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020

²⁵ *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

²⁶ *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, April 2016. 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.

Finding #3: Arrow Keys

What We Found

Unit management did not properly manage and safeguard arrow keys. On the morning of May 16, 2024, we reviewed the unit's arrow key certification list in the Retail and Delivery Applications and Reports (RADAR)²⁷ system and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. We determined 12 of the 47 keys located at the unit were not on the list and eight of the 43 keys on the list could not be located. Unit management had not reported any of the missing keys to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

In addition, arrow keys were not always kept secure. Specifically, unit management discovered several arrow keys in [REDACTED] during our visit. We also determined that management did not verify that all keys were returned at the end of the day.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight to properly manage arrow keys. Specifically, unit management had not followed standard operating procedures for conducting the monthly arrow key inventory certification. The manager stated that the inventory and certification completed in May was performed while carriers were using the arrow keys to perform street duties, so no physical verification was performed. Management also stated they did not know how to add arrow keys to the RADAR certification. This resulted in inaccurate reporting and a lack of notification to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

The station manager also stated that other competing responsibilities — such as completion of daily mail delivery, completion of route reviews, and sorting mail — were given higher priorities, which consumed most of his time and impacted his ability to effectively manage the arrow key process.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key security procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,²⁸ management must keep an accurate inventory of all arrow keys. Any missing keys must be immediately reported to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

In addition, policy states that arrow keys must remain secured until they are individually assigned to personnel. Upon return, arrow keys should be deposited in a secure location, and 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.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

²⁷ The arrow key certification in RADAR provides a national platform for all facilities to verify current inventory and account for all arrow keys.

²⁸ USPS Arrow Key Guidebook Standard Work Instructions, updated August 2023.

Finding # 4: Timekeeping Management

What We Found

We determined the station had 14 unresolved, disallowed time occurrences made between January 6 and March 29, 2024. Management did not complete a PS Form 1017-A, *Time Disallowance Record*,²⁹ entry in the Time and Attendance Collection System (TACS),³⁰ nor did they print and retain the form, for any of these occurrences.

Why Did It Occur

A unit supervisor stated they had received TACS training prior to having access to TACS. However, they did not recall receiving training related to the PS Form 1017-A process or the requirement to print and retain hard copies.

What Should Have Happened

Postal Service policy³¹ states unit personnel must complete PS Form 1017-A entries and place them in a notebook binder that is secured from unauthorized access documenting the reason for the disallowed time.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When proper documentation of time disallowance is not completed, management could incur additional managerial workhours. In addition, the Postal Service risks violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act³² when unit management does not maintain documentation that shows the justifiable reason and employee notification for disallowed time.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

²⁹ Form used only when a supervisor observes, or has reason to know, that an employee did not work while "on the clock." The supervisor must document the basis for any such disallowance. These forms serve as a cumulative record of disallowed time.

³⁰ The system used by the Postal Service to automate the collection of employee time and attendance information.

³¹ Handbook F-21, *Time and Attendance*, Section 146 – Approving Entries, February 2016.

³² 29 USC § 201-219.

Finding # 5: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety, security, and maintenance issues at the Robert L. Roberts Station.

Property Safety:

- An internal Postal Inspection Service door was blocked.
- All four fire extinguishers were missing annual inspections, and two had expired monthly inspections.
- There were multiple concrete cracks (2 inches deep) around the postal vehicle parking lot, dock area, and building causing a potential tripping hazard (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Concrete Cracks in Employee Parking Lot



Source: OIG photo taken May 15, 2024

Property Security:

- There was no signage posted in the employee parking area stating that vehicles may be subject to search.

Property Maintenance:

- There were missing ceiling tiles in the customer lobby (see Figure 5).
- There were overgrown bushes in the parking lot against the surrounding fences.

- There was a damaged awning on the northwest corner of the carrier loading zone (see Figure 6).
- The women's restroom had broken wall tiles.

Figure 5. Missing Ceiling Tiles in Customer Lobby



Source: OIG photo taken May 15, 2024.

Figure 6. Damaged Awning



Source: OIG photo taken May 15, 2024.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight and take the necessary actions to verify that property condition issues were corrected. The station manager stated that the unit maintenance staff was terminated in October 2023, without replacement, prior to his arrival at the unit in January 2024. No one has since been assigned monitoring responsibilities for property conditions at the unit. The station manager also stated that other competing responsibilities, such as mail delivery operations and route evaluations, were given higher priorities. This consumed most of his time and impacted his ability to effectively manage property conditions at the unit.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose and followed

up to ensure resolution. The Postal Service requires management to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers.³³

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 penalties; and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Management Actions

Unit management cleared the area in front of the Inspection Service door during the audit.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

³³ Postal Service Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook*, July 2020.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from May through July 2024 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.

In planning and conducting the audit, we obtained an understanding of the delivery operations internal control structure to help determine the nature, timing, and extent of our audit procedures. We reviewed the management controls for overseeing the program and mitigating associated risks. Additionally, we assessed the internal control components and underlying principles, and we determined that the following three components were significant to our audit objective:

- Control Activities
- Information and Communication
- Monitoring

We developed audit work to ensure that we assessed these controls. Based on the work performed, we identified internal control deficiencies related to all three that were significant within the context of our objectives. We will issue a separate report that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for the Shawnee Mission Post Office, Hickman Mills Post Office, and the Robert L. Roberts Station, as well as the district.

We assessed the reliability of PTR, DCV, and TACS 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.

Appendix B: Management's Comments



July 1, 2024

JOHN CIHOTA
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Robert L Roberts Post Office, Kansas City, KS: Delivery Operations (Report Number 24-107-2-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Robert L Roberts Post Office, Kansas City, KS: Delivery Operations*.

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

Management has begun taking steps to address the five findings.

Delayed Mail: Management will conduct a service talk on proper handling and recording of delayed mail in DCV. Management will also reiterate the requirement to use PS Form 1571 *Undelivered Mail Report*. Reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Package Scanning: Management will provide a service talk on proper scanning procedures and conduct reviews to monitor compliance.

Arrow Keys: Management will update the inventory log to reflect all arrow keys on hand and report all missing keys to the US Postal Inspection Service. Management will also conduct training on proper management and security of arrow keys. Additionally, reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Timekeeping Management: Local management will be retrained on proper record keeping for disallowed time. Management will create and accurately maintain a logbook for PS Forms 1017-*A Time Disallowance Record*. Reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Property Conditions: Management has abated two of the eight property conditions related to safety, security, and maintenance and working to either fix or complete work orders for the remaining items.

E-SIGNED by EDDIE L BANNER
on 2024-07-01 16:17:54 EDT

Eddie Banner
District Manager, KS- MO District

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

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