



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

**Emergency Preparedness
for Hurricane Sandy**

Audit Report

September 30, 2013

Report Number HR-AR-13-009



HIGHLIGHTS

BACKGROUND:

Hurricane Sandy made landfall on October 29, 2012, in the eastern U.S. causing billions of dollars in damages, including about \$39.6 million in total costs and damages to the U.S. Postal Service. Emergency construction funding was required, communications were affected, and alternative continuity of operations locations were flooded.

The Postal Service has an integrated emergency management plan and hurricane guides to prepare for, mitigate, and respond to emergencies impacting its facilities. It established the Address Management System to capture correct customer address information to help locate displaced families in emergencies.

Our objectives were to assess the Postal Service's efforts to protect employees, mail, and other assets before and immediately following Hurricane Sandy; and to assess whether the Postal Service's Address Management System can benefit other agencies in response to future national emergencies.

WHAT THE OIG FOUND:

In most of the 27 locations we visited, management implemented emergency plans to safeguard employees and assets, assessed damages, and quickly re-established operations. However, managers at four locations did not adequately safeguard employees and managers at 13 locations did not

adequately safeguard mail and other assets because they were not sufficiently trained. Also, seven of nine district and installations did not always properly complete and approve the integrated emergency management plan because of inadequate oversight and confusion over which facilities required the plan. As a result, employees, mail, and \$1.1 million of cash and other assets were exposed to increased risk. Further, incidents related to national emergencies could impact the Postal Service's brand.

Also, the Postal Service's Address Management System could benefit other agencies in future national emergencies.

WHAT THE OIG RECOMMENDED:

We recommended management provide periodic training to personnel to ensure they are aware of procedures for safeguarding employees, clarify policies for facilities under mandatory evacuation orders, establish guidance for holding and moving mail and assets from facilities in mandatory evacuation areas, establish controls to ensure integrated emergency management plans are approved and updated at least annually, and clarify which facilities are required to maintain integrated emergency management plans.

[Link to review the entire report](#)



September 30, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR: JOSHUA D. COLIN
VICE PRESIDENT, EASTERN AREA OPERATIONS

RICHARD P. ULUSKI
VICE PRESIDENT, NORTHEAST AREA OPERATIONS

PAT A. MENDONCA
SENIOR DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF THE POSTMASTER
GENERAL

An e-signature block for Michael A. Magalski. It contains a grey rectangular area with a white background. At the top, it says "E-Signed by Michael A. Magalski" and "VERIFY authenticity with eSign Desktop". Below this is a handwritten signature in grey ink. A small yellow question mark icon is in the top right corner of the signature area.

FROM: Michael A. Magalski
Deputy Assistant Inspector General
for Support Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Emergency Preparedness for Hurricane
Sandy (Report Number HR-AR-13-009)

This report presents the results of our audit of Emergency Preparedness for Hurricane Sandy (Project Number 13YG012HR000).

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Andrea Deadwyler, deputy director, Human Resources and Support, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management

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Introduction

This report presents the results of our audit of Emergency Preparedness (EP) for Hurricane Sandy (Project Number 13YG012HR000). This is a self-initiated audit. Our objectives were to assess the U.S. Postal Service's efforts to protect employees, mail, and other assets before and in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Sandy¹ and to assess whether the Postal Service's customer address management system (AMS) could benefit other agencies in response to future national emergencies. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this audit.

Hurricane Sandy made landfall in the eastern U.S. on October 29, 2012. At least 181 postal facilities suffered damage requiring emergency construction funding. The Eastern and Northeast areas were overwhelmed with recovery efforts. Communications were affected and sites identified as alternative continuity of operations plan (COOP) locations were flooded. For the districts visited, the Postal Service estimated costs at more than \$6.7 million to impacted facilities, with that estimate rising as repairs are made and estimates revised.

The Postal Service's Integrated Emergency Management Plan (IEMP) is a comprehensive plan used to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from domestic emergencies that occur at Postal Service sites. In addition, Postal Service hurricane plans and guides are emergency-specific plans for facility, district, and/or area operation use. The purpose of these plans is to provide procedures and protocols to follow for the protection of Postal Service personnel, their families, and Postal Service property and equipment. They include the COOP, crisis management plan, emergency action plan, and other emergency-specific plans.

Conclusion

At most locations we visited, the Postal Service implemented emergency management plans to safeguard employees and assets, assessed damage to the mail processing network, and quickly re-established mail processing operations. However, managers at some locations did not adequately safeguard employees, mail, and other assets at facilities in known flood zones. In addition, responsible personnel did not always complete and approve IEMPs in accordance with Postal Service policy. Finally, the Postal Service's customer AMS could benefit other agencies in response to future national emergencies.

As a result, employees, mail, and about \$1.1 million of cash and other assets were exposed to increased risk. Further, incidents related to national disasters could negatively impact the Postal Service's brand.

¹ We did not address the effectiveness of the delivery vehicle operational response to Hurricane Sandy. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General's (OIG) will issue a separate report on that effort.

Safeguarding Employees

At 23 of the 27 facilities we visited, the Postal Service took appropriate action to effectively safeguard most employees. For example:

- Long Island District officials assessed local conditions, followed mandatory evacuation orders, and cancelled operations at impacted postal facilities.
- After Hurricane Sandy's impact, Triboro District officials, in coordination with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, assessed facilities that were flooded and ordered those facilities closed pending inspection.

However, at four of the 27 facilities we visited, managers did not adequately ensure the safety of employees. Specifically:

- Management required employees at the [REDACTED] Post Office [REDACTED] to report to work the day of the hurricane even though the facility was located in a mandatory evacuation zone.² Employees entered the affected area despite orders by local law enforcement not to enter. While at the facility, floodwaters rose quickly so the U.S. Coast Guard had to rescue several employees trapped by the rising waters.

The Postal Service's *Hurricane Preparedness Guide* requires the Postal Service to ensure emergency actions for a given location are consistent with guidance from state and local authorities. Hurricane plans must include local decision points and associated actions, such as a local authority ordering an evacuation. Further, Postal Service policy requires managers to evaluate the need to evacuate or close facilities depending on information received via radio or public service address and information provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

- At three locations, operations were conducted before completion of required assessments. Specifically:
 - A contractor conducted an assessment at the [REDACTED] Post Office on October 31, 2012. The facility had been damaged by hurricane floodwaters. The report stated that employees were inside and outside of the facility, sorting mail and moving contaminated and damaged mail and equipment from the facility before completion of the assessment.
 - A contractor conducted an assessment at the [REDACTED] Post Office more than 2 weeks after the hurricane. The facility had also been damaged by hurricane floodwaters. The assessment found that facility conditions were highly conducive to mold growth in the walls and that interior walls exceeded moisture

² In the event of a disaster, local officials can declare a mandatory evacuation. Hurricane evacuation zones are the areas of the city that may need to be evacuated due to life or safety-related threats from storm floodwaters.

levels up to 1 foot above floor level. However, at the time of the assessment, postal operations were being conducted.

- A contractor conducted an assessment at the [REDACTED] Post Office more than 2 weeks after Hurricane Sandy's impact. The facility was damaged by hurricane floodwaters and all interior walls were above acceptable moisture levels 1 to 3 feet above floor level. Further, there was a high probability of mold and conditions were conducive to mold growth in walls. However, employees and customers were at the facility at the time of the assessment and were found working inside and outside of the building at both retail and distribution operations.

Postal Service policy states that facilities affected by surge waters are required to have security, structural, and safe and health assessments before employees re-enter the facility and buildings are not to be entered until assessments are completed and deemed safe to enter.³

- Employees at the [REDACTED] Post Office sorted and delivered wet mail without the required protective equipment. Management only provided gloves and masks to employees who collected and handled the contaminated mail.

Postal Service procedures for collecting and handling mail damaged by storm surge or floodwaters require the issuance of gloves, disposable or washable coveralls, long sleeve shirts and pants, goggles, and shields or safety glasses with side shields.⁴ Employees did not believe management provided sufficient protective equipment.

This occurred because installation managers and emergency management team members did not receive sufficient hurricane preparedness training. We reviewed training records of personnel responsible for EP and found that 35 of 56 (63 percent) did not receive sufficient training in EP.⁵ Officials stated that they are currently developing additional EP training requirements. EP training and periodic refresher training is necessary to ensure emergency response personnel respond effectively and consistently to future incidents.

Conducting operations at potentially contaminated facilities before completion of facility assessments, not adhering to local evacuation orders, and handling contaminated mail and other assets without proper protection expose employees to increased risk of harm. See [Appendix C](#) for flood and rescue photographs.

³ Postal Service *Hurricane Response Guidance* dated September 21, 2005.

⁴ *Hurricane Response Guidance* dated September 21, 2005.

⁵ We assessed whether EP personnel received training in IEMP, Postal Alert Notification System, National Incident Management System, and Incident Command System.

Safeguarding Mail and Other Assets

Postal Service officials did not adequately safeguard the mail and other assets at 13⁶ of the 27 facilities visited. For example, officials sent mail to Postal Service facilities in known flood zones in the New Jersey Barrier Islands although the National Weather Service issued a coastal flood watch and mandatory evacuation orders were in effect. An installation official stated management could have held the mail at processing and distribution centers (P&DCs) and established additional procedures for removing mail and assets from the facility. Also, in the Triboro District, an installation manager did not take measures to safeguard the mail or assets. As a result, about 100 bags⁷ of mail were destroyed and other assets at the facility were placed at risk.⁸

The Postal Service's policies and procedures for safeguarding mail and other assets⁹ during an emergency include procedures for employees to raise mail as high as possible, wrap and cover equipment, and secure assets in safes within the facility. They also include contingency plans to hold mail or relocate movable items and assets to a location outside the flood zone area; however, this was not done.

Because the Postal Service did not adequately safeguard assets, we identified about \$1.1 million in assets at risk. See [Appendix B](#) for additional information.

Integrated Emergency Management Plan

Responsible personnel did not always complete and approve IEMPs in accordance with Postal Service policy. Seven of the nine districts and installations we reviewed did not have completed and approved IEMPs as required before Hurricane Sandy. This occurred because Postal Service management did not provide sufficient oversight to ensure responsible personnel completed these tasks and it is unclear which facilities are required to have an IEMP. One official stated that only Biohazard Detection System facilities are required to complete an IEMP. Another official stated that level 24¹⁰ and above facilities are required to complete an IEMP.

Postal Service policy¹¹ requires district and installation managers to update IEMPs annually. These updates are necessary to keep the plan current and accurate with changes that may have occurred throughout the previous year. When IEMPs are not completed in accordance with Postal Service guidance and the requirements are unclear, Postal Service employees, customers, the mail, and other assets are exposed to increased risk.

⁶ Nine facilities did not adequately safeguard mail and assets, three did not safeguard assets, and one did not safeguard the mail.

⁷ Damaged mail at this facility was placed in plastic trash bags and staged at the [REDACTED].

⁸ We were unable to determine the number of mailpieces destroyed at each affected facility; however, the Postal Service reported 38.75 tons of damaged mail underwent witnessed destruction.

⁹ Other assets consist of cash, stamp stock, and equipment.

¹⁰ Facility levels are calculated based on several factors such as current postmaster level, number of city and rural deliveries served, and number of rural route boxes served.

¹¹ Postal Service district and installation IEMP templates, March 2004.

Address Management System

The Postal Service's AMS could benefit other agencies in response to future national emergencies. Specifically, the Postal Service's AMS contains a National Change of Address process that allows customers to update their addresses using Postal Service Form 3575, Official Mail Forwarding Change of Address Order. Customer name and address information is protected by the Privacy Act, but can be provided to other federal agencies for official use during emergencies.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) personnel stated they were aware of the AMS, but because the Postal Service was able to restore services very quickly, there was no need to use the system. Officials from both agencies stated their internal processes were sufficient to respond to emergencies and they used social media to inform customers how to update their address information. Both agencies also provide links on their websites to the Postal Service's website to update address information. Also, the Postal Service's Office of National Preparedness officials stated they coordinated activities with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials, which included a discussion of AMS data usage. Because there was a relatively small overall increase (about 13 percent)¹² in the total number of address changes for the month following the hurricane compared to the same period the previous year in the Eastern and Northeast areas, FEMA did not make any requests for AMS assistance.

Regarding future use, SSA officials stated they would consider using the AMS should there be a need and expressed confidence in getting the necessary support from Postal Service officials. FEMA officials indicated they would use AMS data to ensure delivery of relief checks and to assist in preventing fraud and expressed interest in possibly using this data as an additional source of statistics for displaced persons.¹³

Postal Service Actions Taken

The Postal Service identified lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy and has begun taking action to better prepare for future natural disasters. For example, management has implemented a process of information sharing with stations and post offices and requires local installation managers to update employee contact numbers on the first of every month. They have also conducted service talks on procedures for safeguarding accountable mail. These actions should improve future responses to hurricanes.

¹² There were 102,806 change of address requests for October 29 to November 30, 2011, and 116,479 changes following Hurricane Sandy. In comparison, more than 1 million people were displaced by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

¹³ We contacted representatives from FEMA's Office of External Affairs to obtain information about the potential use of AMS.

Recommendations

We recommend the vice presidents, Eastern and Northeast areas, in coordination with the senior director:

1. Provide periodic training to responsible personnel to ensure they are aware of procedures for safeguarding employees during an emergency.
2. Clarify policies and procedures regarding employees reporting to Postal Service facilities where mandatory evacuation orders have been issued.
3. Issue supplemental guidance for holding mail and moving mail and other assets from facilities located in mandatory evacuation areas.
4. Establish controls to ensure integrated emergency management plans are reviewed, approved, and updated at least annually.
5. Clarify which facilities are required to maintain complete, approved, integrated emergency management plans and communicate that to appropriate personnel.

Management's Comments

Management generally agreed with the findings of assets at risk and all the recommendations. They did not agree with employees at risk relating to mandatory evacuations, stating that postal policy is to adhere to and be consistent with locally ordered evacuations. Regarding the [REDACTED] evacuation, they stated the order required residents to evacuate by 9 p.m. October 29, 2012, and the instructions to carriers were to be off the streets by 11 a.m. Management stated this was a prudent response to the evacuation order and that the storm surge rose earlier than forecast. They also stated that the Postal Service prepared to the best of its ability, but with any disaster there will be circumstances beyond its control such as the timing of the storm surge along the New Jersey coast.

Regarding recommendation 1, management agreed to provide training to area and district officials by holding tabletop exercises on an annual basis as part of the preparations for the hurricane season, as well as just in time training to potentially impacted facilities in the days before landfall based on the National Hurricane Center forecast. Because the 2013 hurricane season still remains, training for the 2014 hurricane season has not yet been scheduled. Just in time training will be scheduled for any storms in the remainder of the 2013 hurricane season.

Regarding recommendation 2, the Postal Service has a set policy that mandatory evacuations issued by local authorities will be followed, and that policy is reviewed during the annual hurricane season preparatory activities. In the event of an incoming storm and mandatory evacuations have been ordered, the Postal Service will monitor

storm activities and timing of evacuations prior to forecast landfall. This will include regular meetings with area and district leadership, activating vehicle relocation plans, and communicating to employees when to evacuate and where to report post landfall. They also stated they will review the hurricane guide and revise it appropriately each year. For the 2014 hurricane season, this review will be completed by March 31, 2014.

Regarding recommendations 3 and 4, management will review and update emergency plans on an annual basis as part of the preparations for the hurricane season. Additionally, the Postal Service will conduct after action reviews to identify and incorporate any lessons learned from each event. The reviews and updates will be completed and additional guidance will be developed and distributed to the field by the end of calendar year 2013 and any additional guidance will be added to the hurricane guide in the annual update for the 2014 hurricane season. Also, management will review and update, as appropriate, the existing controls for reviewing, approving, and updating IEMPs by the end of calendar year 2013.

Regarding recommendation 5, management will clarify which facilities are required to maintain complete and approved IEMPs and communicate that to appropriate personnel by the end of calendar year 2013. See [Appendix E](#) for management's comments, in their entirety.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations and corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report. Regarding employees at risk, specifically relating to the [REDACTED] evacuation, we acknowledge the existing policy and that the exact timing of the storm could not be predicted. However, mandatory evacuations were in effect as of 9 p.m., October 28, 2012, and local authorities closed [REDACTED] which is the main road leading to the [REDACTED]. Since employees entered a mandatory evacuation zone despite orders by local law enforcement not to enter, we continue to believe management could have reduced the risk to employees by not requiring them to report to work the day of the hurricane.

The OIG considers all the recommendations significant, and therefore requires OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG request written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. These 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: Additional Information

Background

Hurricane Sandy made landfall in the eastern U.S. on October 29, 2012, striking near Atlantic City, NJ. The total nationwide impact to the Postal Service is estimated at \$39.6 million. Numerous Postal Service facilities suffered damage or complete destruction, requiring emergency construction funding.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy's initial impact, the Eastern and Northeast areas were overwhelmed with recovery efforts. Although many Postal Service facilities were damaged, all employees were accounted for and no major workplace injuries occurred. Communications were affected and sites identified as alternative COOP locations were flooded. The Postal Service rerouted mail from damaged facilities and continued to process mail at alternative facilities not impacted by the hurricane. Numerous Postal Service facilities in the Eastern and Northeast areas suffered damage or complete destruction, resulting in about \$6.7 million in repairs¹⁴ to 181 Postal Service facilities. Table 1 depicts the estimated cost of repairs for owned and leased facilities.

Table 1. Estimated Cost of Damaged Facilities

| Type of Facility | Number of Facilities | Costs |
|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Owned | 89 | \$3,370,229 |
| Leased | 92 | 3,281,152 |
| Total | 181 | \$6,651,381 |

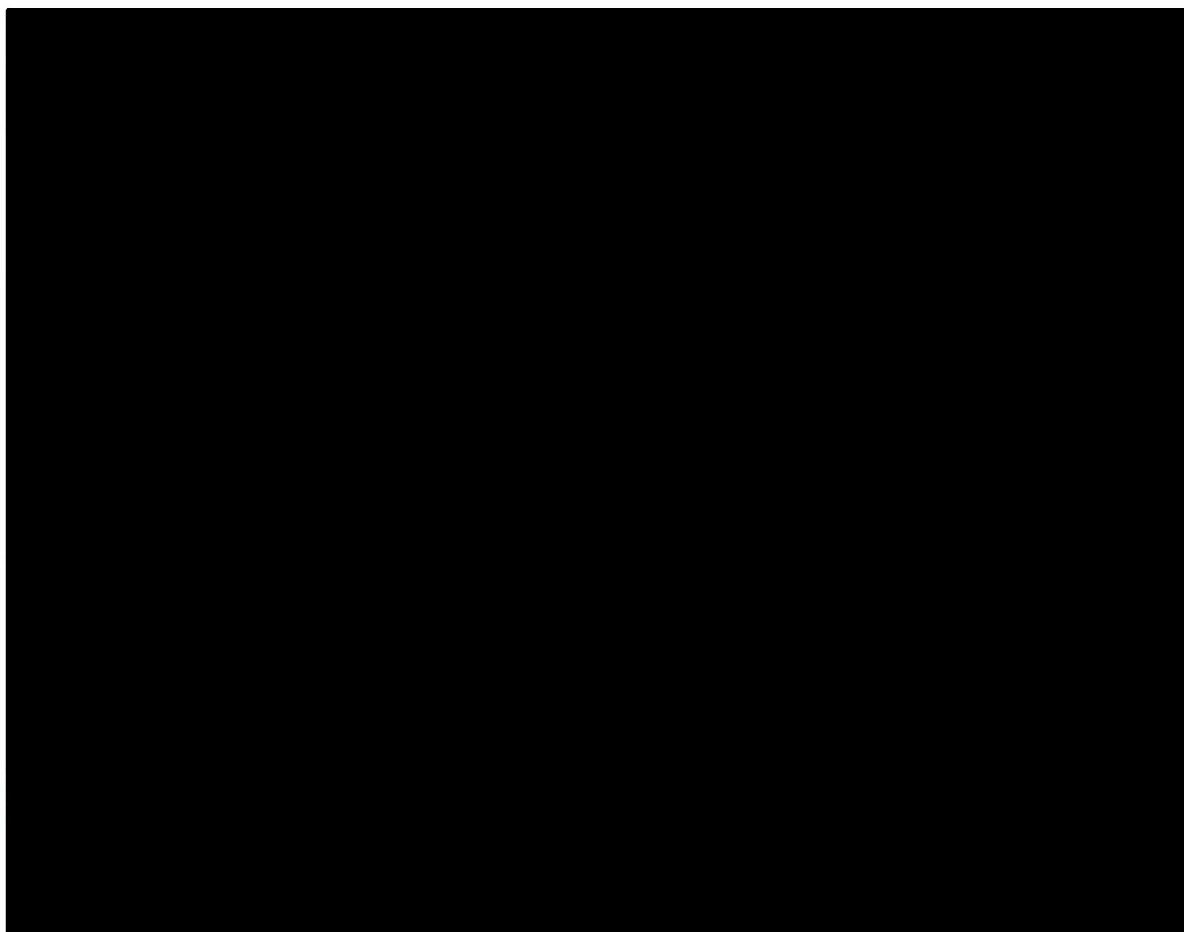
Source: Electronic Facilities Management System (EFMS).¹⁵

Figure 1 shows the facilities we visited in the Eastern and Northeast areas that were hardest hit.

¹⁴ As of February 28, 2013. Costs are expected to increase as repairs are made and estimates revised.

¹⁵ The EFMS is the official Postal Service record for real property inventory and the management system for administering all property related projects including acquisition, design, construction, disposal, and repairs.

Figure 1. Summary of Impacted Facilities Reviewed



Source: OIG analysis.

The Postal Service developed the IEMP¹⁶ to assist in the management of natural and manmade disasters that affect Postal Service facilities.¹⁷ The IEMP provides a framework for managing each phase of an emergency: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. In addition, the IEMP establishes procedures for minimizing damage to Postal Service facilities and personnel. The IEMP includes an EAP,¹⁸ COOP,¹⁹ and annexes.²⁰

¹⁶ The IEMP uses a standardized template to consolidate a facility's stand-alone plans; for example, contingency plans, Emergency Action Plans (EAP), COOP, crisis management plans, and emergency specific plans. The IEMP also establishes emergency management teams and defines team roles and responsibilities, and positions.

¹⁷ According to Postal Service officials, only level 24 or higher postal facilities are required to develop and maintain IEMPs.

¹⁸ The EAP provides tasks and procedures for evacuating the installation.

¹⁹ The COOP provides operational tasks and procedures for moving operations to an alternate facility.

²⁰ Each annex provides hazard specific procedures to follow during an emergency.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Our objectives were to assess the Postal Service's efforts to protect employees, mail, and other assets before and in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Sandy; and to assess whether the Postal Service's customer AMS can benefit other agencies in response to future national emergencies.

To accomplish our objectives, we:

- Conducted fieldwork at 27 Postal Service facilities impacted by Hurricane Sandy in the Eastern and Northeast areas.
- Assessed procedures for safeguarding employees, mail, and other assets.
- Reviewed EP plans and lessons learned.
- Interviewed Postal Service officials from headquarters, areas, districts, and installations, including local union officials.
- Reviewed applicable EP plans and Postal Service and federal policies.
- Reviewed training records, preparation and response activities associated with Hurricane Sandy, and lessons learned.
- Discussed the potential benefits of the Postal Service's customer AMS with officials from FEMA, VA, and SSA.

See [Appendix D](#) for a list of the facilities included in our audit.

We conducted this performance audit from January through September 2013, 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 objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on August 23, 2013, and included their comments where appropriate.

We assessed the reliability of training records and building and assets cost data by reviewing existing information about the data and the system that produced them, and interviewing agency officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

There were no audit reports issued within the last 3 years related to EP.

Appendix B: Other Impact

| Recommendations | Impact Category | Amount |
|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| 2, 3 | Assets or Accountable Items at Risk ²¹ | \$330,537 |
| 2, 3 | Physical Safety and Security ²² | 777,509 |
| Total | | \$1,108,046 |

We estimated assets at risk using a conservative approach as follows:

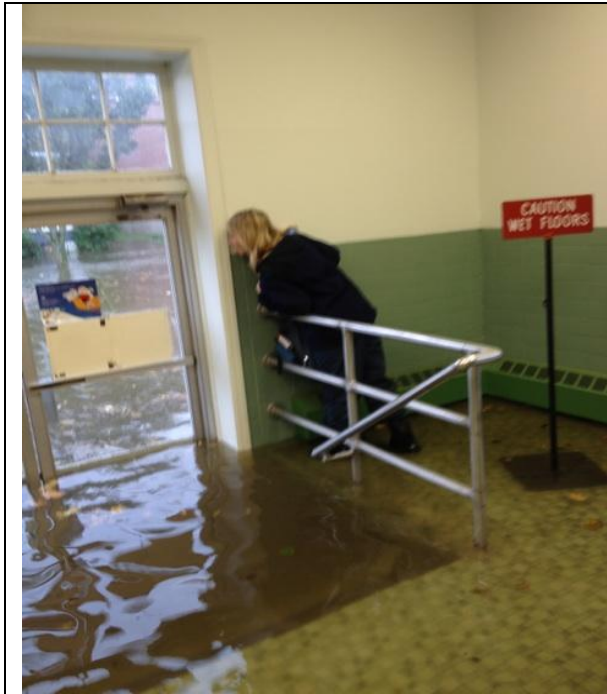
- We determined that 13 of the 27 facilities visited were located in flood zones by accessing the FEMA website and using FEMA's Mapping Information Platform. We based our conclusion on the address, city, state, and ZIP Code of each facility.
- We obtained capital property listings from the Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) system to identify the undepreciated values²³ for each type of equipment at the facilities we visited. The total undepreciated cost of the equipment that could be moved quickly was \$330,537. These assets include such items as office equipment, computers, routers, and outdoor equipment.
- We obtained the cash-on-hand and stamp stock totals from EDW. The total cash-on-hand and stamp stock at the impacted facilities was about \$777,509.

²¹ Assets or accountable items (for example, cash, stamps, and money orders) that are at risk of loss because of inadequate internal controls.

²² Physical operations assets (for example, plant, computer equipment, or vehicles) that are unsafe or at risk of loss because of inadequate physical protection or safety practices. This category also includes the safety and security of employees.

²³ Using undepreciated values to determine assets at risk is a conservative approach.

Appendix C: Photographs of an Impacted Facility²⁴



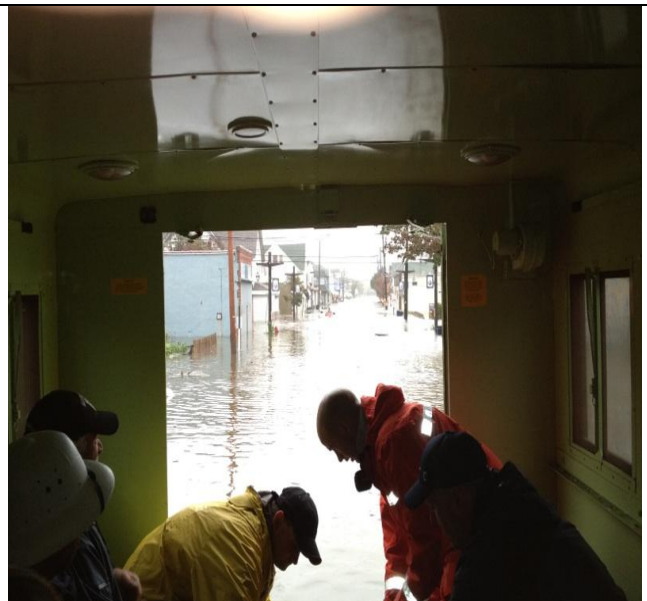
Photograph 1 – [REDACTED] Postal Service employee in lobby of Post Office, waters rising.



Photograph 2 – [REDACTED] Postal Service employees and others inside Coast Guard rescue vehicle.



Photograph 3 – [REDACTED] Inside Coast Guard rescue vehicle leaving after employee extraction.



Photograph 4 – [REDACTED] Inside Coast Guard rescue vehicle leaving after employee extraction.

²⁴ Photographs taken October 29, 2012, by Postal Service employees.

Appendix D: Facilities Reviewed

| Count | Area | District | Facility Name |
|-------|-----------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Northeast | Triboro | [REDACTED] |
| 2 | Northeast | Triboro | [REDACTED] |
| 3 | Northeast | Triboro | [REDACTED] |
| 4 | Northeast | Triboro | [REDACTED] |
| 5 | Northeast | Triboro | [REDACTED] |
| 6 | Northeast | Triboro | [REDACTED] |
| 7 | Northeast | Triboro | [REDACTED] |
| 8 | Northeast | Triboro | [REDACTED] |
| 9 | Northeast | Triboro | [REDACTED] |
| 10 | Northeast | Long Island | [REDACTED] |
| 11 | Northeast | Long Island | [REDACTED] |
| 12 | Northeast | Long Island | [REDACTED] |
| 13 | Northeast | Long Island | [REDACTED] |
| 14 | Northeast | Long Island | [REDACTED] |
| 15 | Northeast | Long Island | [REDACTED] |
| 16 | Northeast | Northern New Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 17 | Northeast | Northern New Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 18 | Northeast | Northern New Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 19 | Northeast | Northern New Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 20 | Northeast | Northern New Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 21 | Eastern | South Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 22 | Eastern | South Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 23 | Eastern | South Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 24 | Eastern | South Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 25 | Eastern | South Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 26 | Eastern | South Jersey | [REDACTED] |
| 27 | Eastern | South Jersey | [REDACTED] |

Appendix E: Management's Comments



September 27, 2013

Memorandum for: Judith Leonhardt, Director, Audit Operations

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report – Emergency Preparedness for Hurricane Sandy (Report Number HR-AR-13-DRAFT)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Emergency Preparedness for Hurricane Sandy (Report Number HR-AR-13-DRAFT) Draft Audit Report.

We have reviewed the and generally agree with the findings of assets at risk. We do not agree with the employees at risk specifically relating to mandatory evacuations. Postal policy is to adhere and be consistent with locally ordered evacuations. For the referenced [REDACTED] evacuation, it is our understanding that the mandatory evacuation order was made such that residents had to be out by 9 pm Oct 29th 2012. The evacuation order was issued the morning of the 29th. Instructions to the carriers were to be off the streets by 11 am. This was a prudent response to the evacuation order. The storm surge rose earlier than forecast.

It should be noted that with any natural disaster, comes unpredictability and associated risk. While the Agency prepares and plans to the best of its ability including incorporating lessons learned from past events, there will be circumstances that were not foreseen or forecast and beyond our control, such as the timing of when the storm surge was to hit along the New Jersey coast.

Recommendation:

Provide periodic training to responsible personnel to ensure they are aware of procedures for safeguarding employees during an emergency.

Response

Concur. Management agrees with the recommendation to provide periodic training to responsible personnel to ensure they are aware of procedures for safeguarding employees during an emergency.

The Postal Service provides training to Area and District by holding tabletop exercises on an annual basis as part of the preparations for hurricane season. Additionally, because each hurricane is unique, the Postal Service provides just in time training to potentially impacted facilities in the days prior to landfall. The decision on which facilities receive this just in time training is based on the National Hurricane Center (NHC) forecast landfall. National Preparedness staff supports Area leadership with this decision by discussions and providing mapping depicting the NHC forecast and locations of Postal facilities.

475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW
WASHINGTON DC 20260-7010
202-268-6070
FAX: 202-268-7110

Because we are still in the 2013 hurricane season, annual training for the 2014 hurricane season has not been scheduled. Additionally, for any storms in the remainder of the 2013 hurricane season, the just in time training will be provided.

Recommendation:

Clarify policies and procedures regarding employees reporting to postal facilities where mandatory evacuation orders have been issued.

Response

Concur. Management agrees with the recommendation to clarify policies and procedures regarding employees reporting to postal facilities where mandatory evacuation orders have been issued.

The Postal Service has set policy that mandatory evacuations established by local authorities will be followed. This is reviewed during the annual hurricane season preparatory activities including the tabletop exercises.

In the event of an incoming storm and mandatory evacuations have been ordered, Postal Service activities to monitor the storm and timing of evacuation orders begin 48 hours prior to forecasted landfall (per the Hurricane Guide). These activities include regular telecons/meetings with the Area and District leadership, activating vehicle relocation plans, and communicating to employees when to evacuate and where to report post landfall.

For the remainder of the hurricane season 2013, National Preparedness will work with Area leadership to emphasize the policy concerning evacuations for any tropical system forecast to make landfall. The Hurricane Guide will be reviewed and revised appropriately in the annual update for the 2014 hurricane season to be completed by March 31, 2014.

Recommendation:

Issue supplemental guidance for holding mail and moving mail and other assets from facilities located in known flood zone areas.

Response

Concur. Management agrees with the recommendation to issue supplemental guidance for holding mail and moving mail and other assets from facilities located in known flood zone areas.

The Postal Service reviews and updates emergency plans on an annual basis as part of the preparations for hurricane season. Additionally, because each hurricane is unique in its track, intensity and impacts, the Postal Service performs an After Action Review (AAR) to identify and incorporate any lessons learned from each event. Additional guidance will be developed and distributed to the field by December 31, 2013 and will be added to the

Hurricane Guide in the annual update for the 2014 hurricane season to be completed by March 31, 2014.

Recommendation:

Establish controls to ensure integrated emergency management plans are reviewed, approved, and updated at least annually.

Response

Concur. Management agrees with the recommendation to establish controls ensure integrated emergency management plans are reviewed, approved, and updated at least annually.

The Postal Service reviews and updates integrated emergency plans on an annual basis as part of the preparations for hurricane season. The Office of the Senior Director will review and update as appropriate the existing controls for this process by December 31, 2013.

Recommendation:

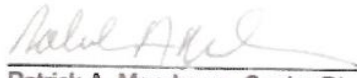
Clarify which facilities are required to maintain complete, approved, integrated emergency management plans and communicate that to appropriate personnel.

Response


Concur. Management agrees with the recommendation to clarify which facilities are required to maintain complete, approved integrated emergency management plans and communicate that to appropriate personnel.

The Office of the Senior Director will clarify which facilities are required to maintain complete, approved integrated emergency management plans and communicate that to appropriate personnel by December 31, 2013.

We require that this report be withheld from release under Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) due to the sensitivity of the subject matter.


Patrick A. Mendonca, Senior Director


Joshua D. Colin, PhD, Vice President, Eastern Area Operations


Richard P. Uluski, Vice President, Northeast Area Operations

cc: Sally K. Haring
Michael A Swigart
Tina M. Worley