

GAO
Accountability • Integrity • Reliability

Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-05-48](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Mail and postal facilities are tempting targets for theft and other criminal acts. Approximately 800,000 U.S. Postal Service (USPS) employees process about 700 million pieces of mail daily at almost 38,000 facilities nationwide. Criminals attack letter carriers to get mail containing valuables and burglarize postal facilities to get cash and money orders. These activities at USPS facilities can put at risk the integrity of the mail and the safety of employees, customers, and assets. We looked at physical security measures at large facilities that perform automated mail-sorting functions, which on the basis of discussions with USPS, we defined as “core” facilities. Specifically, our objectives were to provide information on (1) what USPS has determined to be the physical security requirements at core facilities, (2) what security measures have been implemented and what security problems exist at USPS core facilities, and (3) what are USPS’s plans to respond to identified security problems.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Postmaster General develop a plan, with objectives, time frames, and resources needed, for correcting and updating USPS’s security database so USPS can accurately assess the status of physical security at core facilities, identify needed improvements, and assess progress made. USPS agreed with our recommendation and committed to develop such a plan.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-48.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Peter Guerrero at (202) 512-2834.

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Physical Security Measures Have Increased at Some Core Facilities, but Security Problems Continue

What GAO Found

USPS has determined physical security requirements, such as access control and exterior lighting, for its facilities and specified them in a handbook and a manual. The security requirements are mandatory for new facilities and any renovations made to existing facilities. Further guidance outlines how physical security requirements are to be implemented at all facilities. Additionally, USPS uses policy memorandums to increase managers’ awareness of specific security issues and reinforce physical security requirements, such as locking doors and wearing identification badges.

Available information showed that implementation of security measures had increased at some core facilities, although security problems still existed at some facilities. However, incomplete and inaccurate USPS data precluded us from making an assessment of changes in the implementation of security measures at all core facilities. Specifically, the USPS Facility Security Database, which records security conditions, has a number of problems, such as missing and incomplete data, duplicate responses, and miscoded facilities. Nevertheless, available information on one-third of the 373 core facilities showed some additional security measures have been implemented at each of these facilities since fiscal year 2001. However, our analysis of Inspection Service reports and our site visits to 13 core facilities revealed a number of security problems, such as facility and vehicle keys unaccounted for, doors and gates left unlocked or alarms deactivated, mail and stamp inventory left unsecured, and employees not wearing identification badges as required.

According to USPS officials, a number of plans and processes to improve physical security are being developed. For example, through a formal review and follow-up process, the Inspection Service is working with local and headquarters management officials to improve facility security. The Inspection Service has filled almost all of its 47 new Physical Security Specialist positions. USPS has also created an Emergency Preparedness group to ensure consistent application of and increased compliance with security standards and is in the process of updating and improving its Facility Security Database. This database has the potential for identifying and tracking facility security issues nationwide.



Source: GAO.

USPS guidelines state that site security is intended to prevent unauthorized entry or exit by employees and/or others. This unattended guardhouse indicates an unsecured access point at a core facility.