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GENERAL GOVERNMENT
DIVISION

SEP 4 1974

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The Honorable Robert N. Giaimo
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Giaimo:

Your April 17, 1974, letter requested that we examine certain allegations made by Mr. Thomas H. Fromhartz in his February 25, 1974, letter to you. His principal concern was that first-class mail was being delayed in favor of third-class and bulk mail because the Postal Service does not have a monopoly on the latter classes. Your office agreed that we would assess the overall timeliness of first-class mail service in New Haven with particular attention to whether there was any neglect of first-class mail.

Mr. Fromhartz could not give us any information to substantiate that first-class mail was being delayed in favor of third-class and bulk mail. However, there has been a slight deterioration in the delivery of first-class mail in the New Haven area which, according to Service standards, should be delivered overnight. New Haven postal officials said the delay was due, in part, to the installation of a new letter-sorting machine at the New Haven Post Office. Also, we were told that the implementation of a new centralized address correction system at the East Haven Post Office-- which receives mail from the New Haven Post Office--caused minor mail delays during its early operating period. D.O. 3000

DELIVERY STANDARDS

Postal Service standards state that 95 percent of first-class mail should be delivered in 1, 2, or 3 days, depending on its destination or the distance it must travel. (See enc. I.) For example, 95 percent of intrasectional center facility mail (origin and destination within a sectional center facility area) should be delivered in 1 day. A sectional center facility is a postal facility within a specific geographic area which is used as the central processing, transportation, and/or mail dispatch point for that area. New Haven is a sectional center facility which includes 58 post offices in the surrounding area.

From January 4 through June 21, 1974, the New Haven Post Office generally did not meet the 95-percent overnight

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090123

delivery standard, although it generally met or exceeded the standard from July 6 through December 7, 1973. (See encs. II and III.) Delivery performance during the Christmas period was not considered because the significant increase in mail volume during that time makes it unrepresentative of normal service.

Letter-sorting machine

New Haven postal officials said the delay in mail delivery following Christmas was due to the installation of a letter-sorting machine which became operational on January 20, 1974.

The Postal Service is installing these machines throughout the Nation to speed mail deliveries, increase productivity, and reduce costs. A letter-sorting machine, which accommodates 12 operators who process letters, can sort up to 43,200 letters per hour. The machines have increased the letter-sorting rate from 30 letters per minute under the manual operation to 60 letters per minute and have increased the number of possible destination separations from 77 to 277.

The machines, however, have also increased the amount of mail which is missorted and often ultimately missent. Mail which is missorted (directed to the wrong address but corrected before leaving the post office) and mail which is missent cause mail delivery delays and additional processing costs. Although the New Haven Post Office had only limited test information on machine operator error rates, quality control office officials estimated that the average operator missort rate was about 7 percent.

New address correction system

According to Mr. Fromhartz, first-class mail was delayed at the East Haven Post Office several times during February 1974 following the implementation of a new centralized address correction system. Under the previous system each mail carrier was responsible for maintaining a file on address changes for the patrons on his delivery route and for making address corrections on letters not deliverable as addressed.

Under the new centralized address correction system, the carriers are no longer required to maintain the file or

B-114874

make the address corrections. The post office maintains a central file of address corrections. Letters which are not correctly addressed are returned by the carriers and corrections are made at the central location. Since the address correction function has been removed from the carriers' duties, carrier routes can be extended, reducing the overall number of carriers required to deliver the mail.

At the East Haven Post Office, the new system was implemented on February 2, 1974. As a result, one auxiliary carrier route requiring 7 hours was eliminated. However, additional clerk time was required in the East Haven Post Office to process the address corrections. Postal officials told us that, since a new clerk position was not immediately authorized and a familiarization period was required, on occasion they experienced delays in making address corrections and forwarding the mail for delivery.

New Haven postal officials informed us that on April 25, 1974, a new clerical position was assigned to the East Haven Post Office. One of the new clerk's responsibilities will be to make address corrections under the centralized system.

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Officials of the New Haven Post Office generally agreed with these facts as stated.

As your office agreed, we plan no additional work.

Sincerely yours,

Victor L. Lowe

Victor L. Lowe
Director

Enclosures - 3

SERVICE STANDARDS

FIRST CLASS

**OVERNIGHT: INTRASECTIONAL CENTER FACILITY & ADJOINING
SECTIONAL CENTER FACILITIES DESIGNATED LOCALLY**

SECOND DAY: 600 MILES

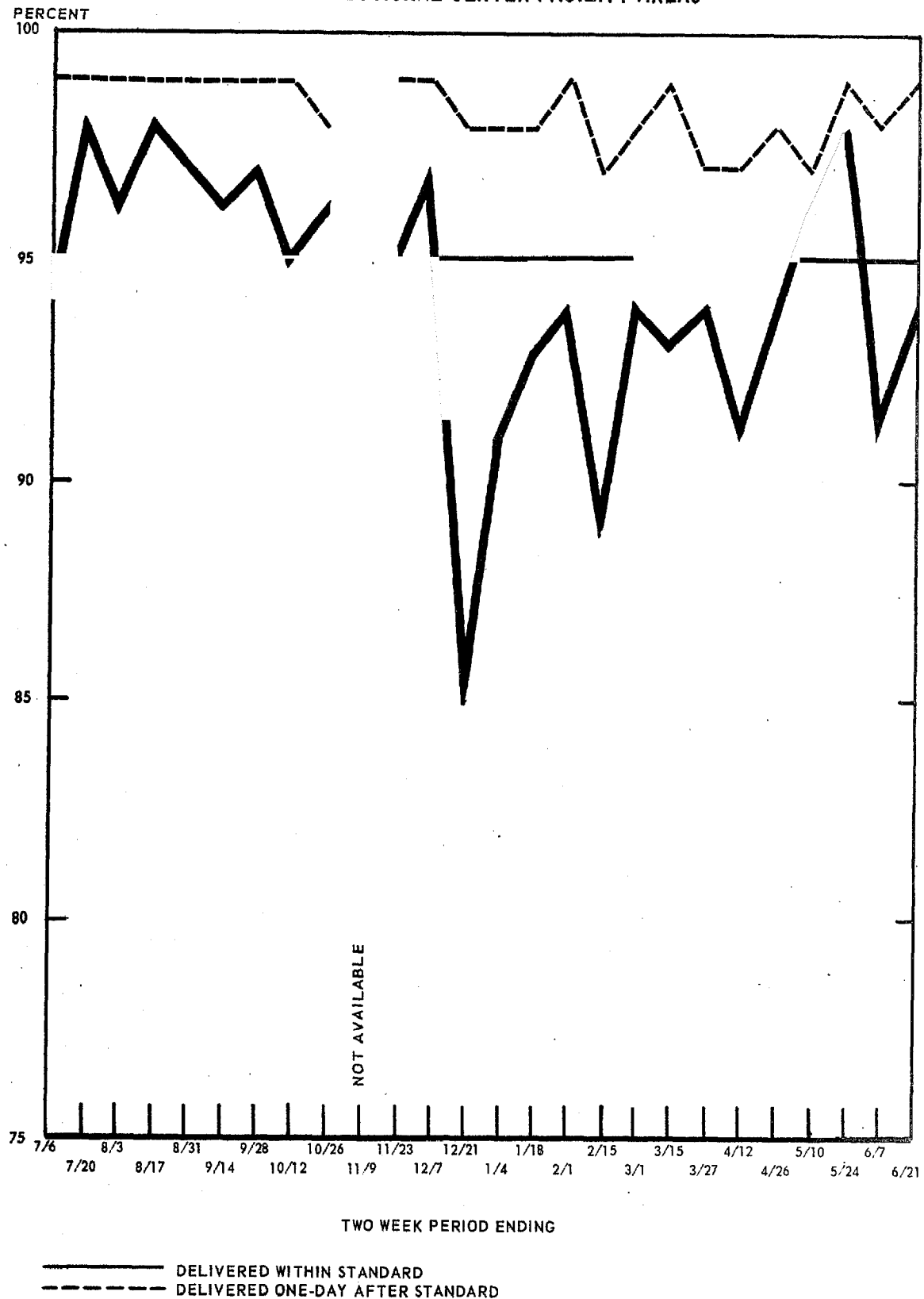
THIRD DAY: NATIONWIDE

AIRMAIL

OVERNIGHT: 600 MILES PLUS DESIGNATED AREAS

SECOND DAY: NATIONWIDE CONTIGUOUS STATES

PERCENT OF MAIL DELIVERED OVERNIGHT FROM
NEW HAVEN TO INTRA-SECTIONAL CENTER FACILITY AND
ADJOINING SECTIONAL CENTER FACILITY AREAS



PERCENT OF MAIL DELIVERED OVERNIGHT FROM
INTRA-SECTIONAL CENTER FACILITY AND ADJOINING
SECTIONAL CENTER FACILITY AREAS TO NEW HAVEN

