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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
REGIONAL OFFICE
ROOM 403, U.S. CUSTOMHOUSE, 610 SOUTH CANAL STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60607

MAR 27 1975

Mr. Donald Swanson, Postmaster
United States Post Office
909 W. Euclid Avenue
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004

Dear Mr. Swanson:

We have completed a review of the energy conservation efforts undertaken at the United States Post Office located in Arlington Heights, Illinois. Our objectives were to determine how effectively energy conservation measures were implemented at the Post Office and to identify potential areas for effective long-term energy conservation by more efficient operating procedures and capital improvements. Specifically, we were concerned with the development of a coordinated long-range conservation program, controls to reduce energy consumed in the facility and by vehicles, and the impact of energy on operations.

Although we found evidence of efforts being made, we found no coordinated long-range energy conservation program at the Post Office. Without such a program, which should include an adequate energy-use information system, it is difficult to assess the progress made in reducing overall energy consumption.

The Postal Service was committed to effecting a 10-percent overall reduction in energy usage during fiscal year 1974 as compared to fiscal year 1973. The Arlington Heights Post Office, however, did not meet this goal. One factor, in our opinion, that prevented the goal from being met was the lack of continuing oversight. Although a postal official had been informally acting as the Energy Conservation Officer, his efforts were devoted only on an as needed basis and did not provide for continuous monitoring of energy consumption. For example, we found that fiscal year 1974 natural gas consumption was about 19-percent greater than in fiscal year 1973. Monitoring of energy consumption should have disclosed this earlier, so that actions, such as a building survey by the utility company, could have been undertaken.

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The Postal Service has issued guidelines concerning building and vehicular energy conservation and the reporting of energy usage. These guidelines, however, have not been adequately implemented. Efforts to conserve energy consumed in the facility were primarily directed towards assuring that the thermostat was properly set, and maintaining control over the use of lighting equipment. Although some efforts were made in these areas, as was illustrated, natural gas consumption substantially increased in fiscal year 1974 and electricity consumption decreased by only 1-percent during the same year.

Total reported vehicular mileage for the Arlington Heights facility and its branches in fiscal year 1974 was about 5-percent greater than fiscal year 1973 mileage. This increase has continued for the first two quarters of fiscal year 1975. The increase in total mileage has been mainly related to privately owned and leased vehicles. Although the cost of using these vehicles is not based on mileage, the goal of overall energy conservation suggests greater care be given to their use, since there is less operational control over these vehicles than over Postal Service owned vehicles. In our view, information should be readily available to management for determining whether the increase in total reported mileage was necessary to service the postal needs in the Arlington Heights Post Office territory which is, we were told, undergoing rapid industrial and population growth.

Reporting energy use has been done on an inconsistent and incomplete basis. We found no evidence that a required monthly summary of energy usage was filed with the U. S. Postal Service Energy Reporting Center after August 1974. Further, a gasoline usage and mileage report filed with the North Suburban Sectional Center Facility was incomplete. Mileage reported on this form for the first two quarters of fiscal year 1975 was about 28-percent less than the actual total mileage for this period.

Studies of the Post Office operations and energy use patterns should identify areas where energy could be conserved and help the Post Office meet its energy conservation goals. We noted one such study made by the Post Office that reduced operations by 36 hours a week, effective January 1975. Additional studies could pinpoint areas where further energy conservation could be obtained. For example, a study could be performed to determine the feasibility of replacing a single light switch for each row of carrier sorting case lights with individual switches for each sorting case.

Although efforts have been made to reduce energy consumption, we believe that the appointment of an Energy Conservation Officer to oversee a long-range conservation program would be a major step towards the Arlington Heights Post Office achieving its energy conservation goals.

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We acknowledge the cooperation extended to our representatives during the review. Your comments on the matters discussed herein will be appreciated.

A copy of this letter is being sent to the Regional Postmaster General, Central Region, Chicago, Illinois.

Sincerely yours,

G. F. Stromvall

G. F. Stromvall
Regional Manager

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