



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D C 20548

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GENERAL GOVERNMENT  
DIVISION

AUG 4 1976

Mr. James V. P. Conway  
Senior Assistant Postmaster General  
Employee and Labor Relations Group  
United States Postal Service 52

Dear Mr Conway

The General Accounting Office has studied selected aspects of the Postal Service's training and development programs to determine if these programs were being carried out effectively. Because the Service started a review of its training programs with the intent of redesigning their content, presentation, and administration, our review was curtailed. The purpose of this report is to bring to your attention the results of our work for consideration when redesigning the Service's training programs.

Our work was performed at the Postal Service Training and Development Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, and various postal facilities in the Service's Western Region. Although our study was limited in scope, an Inspection Service report found that problems similar to those noted in the Western Region existed elsewhere in the Nation.

The Service's training and development programs were not achieving maximum effectiveness because:

- Training was not provided all employees in accordance with Service policy.
- Some priority training was either not given in a timely manner or not given at all.
- Low local training center utilization indicates a need to develop methods for increasing utilization and/or to revise design criteria to prevent the construction of facilities that are larger than necessary.

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## TRAINING-NOT UNIFORMLY AVAILABLE

The objective of Service training programs is to assure that all employees receive adequate training for efficient, productive performance. The Orientation and Craft Skill Training Manual (Publication 23) is the authorized written plan for providing training to craft employees. Only 200 of the larger post offices are required to follow this plan. As a result, employees in post offices not under this plan are not assured of an equal opportunity to receive the quality of training detailed in the plan. These noncovered post offices range in size from first through fourth class with some having 5,000 or more employees. In the Western Region, there are about 24,000 craft employees in offices whose training program does not have to follow the plan. Some of these employees are not receiving training.

According to Service officials, noncovered post offices may request training as outlined by the plan, but such a request is at the discretion of the local postmaster. Generally, requests are not made because these offices do not have funds for providing on-the-clock training to craft employees, even though it is Service policy to provide job-related training on-the-clock. For instance, employees in post offices covered by the plan receive up to 30 hours of on-the-clock scheme training. However, in noncovered offices, employees in or aspiring to positions requiring scheme knowledge generally are not allowed any on-the-clock scheme training. Thus, contrary to postal policy, these employees are not receiving training on-the-clock for officially-assigned duties. These practices result in training being provided inequitably and some employees not being trained at all.

## PRIORITY TRAINING NOT ALWAYS GIVEN

Service headquarters' Employee Relations Department officials identified three types of craft employee training critical to postal operations. (1) Orientation, (2) Origin-Destination Information System (ODIS), and (3) Mail Classification. Some of this training is either not given to employees in a timely manner or not given at all.

Orientation of new employees appears to be a critical training function in that it forms the basis for preparing these employees for efficient, safe, and productive careers. While Service officials stated that orientation training should be given to new craft employees, in the Western Region we found that this training is not being provided to all new employees. Records of the 250 craft employees hired from January 1974 to August and September 1975 at

the Sacramento and San Jose Sectional Centers respectively showed that 207, or 83 percent, had not received orientation training.

ODIS is an information system by which mail volume, service analysis, and other mail characteristics data are collected and presented in a variety of report formats for use by all levels of postal management. The system relies on employees collecting and recording data, and proper training of these employees is essential to the system's accuracy. At the Sacramento Post Office, records showed that only 6 of 20 data collection technicians had received the required training. At the San Jose Post Office, only 5 of the 11 technicians had received the required ODIS training

Proper mail classification is important to the Service because the revenues received are dependent on the classification given the mail. None of the three employees responsible for mail classification at the Sacramento Sectional Center had received any formal mail classification training. Likewise, only one of the eight employees responsible for mail classification at the San Jose Post Office had begun formal training, and this training consisted of 1 hour completed on the employee's own time. The training center manager stated that five of the eight employees were hired prior to the requirement for formalized training and probably do not need such training now.

#### LOW UTILIZATION OF LOCAL TRAINING CENTERS

Training is provided in local Postal Employee Development Centers (PEDC's) modern, well-equipped training centers where employees learn the fundamental skills of their jobs and prepare themselves for advancement. Operated by the local post office, the PEDC is the focal point for all training that takes place in postal facilities.

In July 1975, a new PEDC costing \$158,000 was completed at the San Jose Post Office. An analysis of the utilization of the center for accounting period four, fiscal year 1976, showed that this PEDC was operating at about 8 percent of its capacity. The analysis considered the equipment availability and employee usage

#### San Jose Post Office PEDC

#### Utilization for AP 4, FY 1976

Total equipment hours available during AP	11,710
Hours actually used	902
Utilization percentage	7.7%

An Inspection Service audit report (225-090-5-0004-AO, June 1975) showed that utilization of PEDC's in selected Eastern region offices was also less than 10 percent

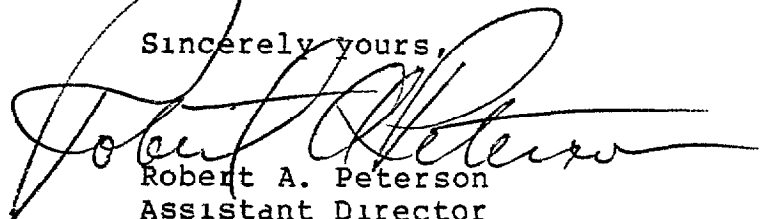
As mentioned earlier, the San Jose Post Office had not provided all employees with priority training. If all employees identified as lacking priority training had received it during accounting period four, fiscal year 1976, the training center utilization would have been increased from 8 to about 24 percent. The excess capability could be further tapped by the 49 associate offices within the San Jose Post Office's jurisdiction not covered by the Service's formal training plan.

Service design criteria for PEDC's provide space for all in-house training based on the size of the employee complement. It appears that PEDC's are underutilized and a need exists for the Service to develop methods for increasing PEDC utilization, and/or revise the design criteria to preclude the construction of facilities that are larger than necessary.

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We wish to express our appreciation for the cooperation given us by both Headquarters and Western Region officials during the conduct of our review. We would appreciate being informed of any changes in the Service's training programs resulting from the on-going reexamination

Sincerely yours,



Robert A. Peterson  
Assistant Director