



# REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL BY THE CITY INTERNAL AUDITOR

AUDIT OF THE CITY OF SHREVEPORT  
Property Management Unit (Evidence Room)  
Shreveport Police Department

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT  
(IAR) 060118-07

December 31, 2018

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### Report Highlights

### Page(s)

- The video security system was not fully operational as this audit began.
- Unit needs to perform regular inventory counts of evidentiary property.
- The volume of evidence items being maintained by the Unit is growing faster than management can track.

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The Council  
City of Shreveport

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December 31, 2018

Councilman Jerry Bowman, Jr.  
Chairman, Shreveport City Council

Dear Councilman Bowman, Jr.:

Subject: IAR 060118-07 – Audit of the City of Shreveport Property Management Unit (Evidence Room) of the Shreveport Police Department

Attached please find the report mentioned above. Management comments are included in the report.

Sincerely,

Leanis L. Steward, CPA, CIA  
City Internal Auditor

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**AUDIT OF THE CITY OF SHREVEPORT**  
**PROPERTY MANAGEMENT UNIT (EVIDENCE ROOM)**  
**SHREVEPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
**INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT (IAR) 060118-07**

**Why We Did This Audit**

We have completed a performance audit of City of Shreveport Property Management Unit (Evidence Room) of the Shreveport Police Department. This audit was conducted as a regularly scheduled audit included in the annual audit plan. Our objectives included determining if property and evidence is accounted for appropriately, and if inventory records are accurate. We also determined if existing policies and procedures pertaining to property and evidence are being followed; and if there are any other issues regarding property and evidence that require management's attention.

**What We Recommended**

Restore full security to the evidence room, by seeking a local service vendor for its video security system and terminating the existing maintenance contract with an out of state vendor.

We also recommended implementation of the following inventory controls and best practices:

- Periodic partial inventories of evidence conducted throughout the year with a goal of completing the inventory of all evidence by 2019 year end utilizing barcode identification technology
- Seek an inter-agency evidence disposal policy to relieve build-up of inventory items while meeting legal requirements of the state and retaining certain evidence items
- Establish an evidence log to provide a central control point for items of evidence checked out to other agencies; and timely follow up on their return
- Implement a plan of enhanced location identification to improve efficiency locating evidence items

Finally, we recommended that management encourage officers to exercise more diligence in describing evidence submitted with their reports.

**Performance Audit of the City of Shreveport's Police Department's Property Management Unit (Evidence Room)**

**What We Found**

The video security system that provides a key control over the evidence inventory and access to the facility was not properly functioning. The malfunction was first observed on August 20, 2018 and the system was fully restored by November 15, 2018.

The Unit has not conducted an inventory of the evidence items under its control in more than 20 years. While we found no evidence that items are missing, the failure to conduct regular inventories decreases accountability and increases the potential for lost items. A complete inventory should be performed at least annually, and when changes of command occur. Acquiring barcode identification technology should facilitate this goal.

The evidence room is well organized and generally meets standards recommended by the International Association for Property & Evidence (IAPE) for physical security. However, the facility's layout does not provide unique locations that would enhance efficiency in locating and retrieving items of evidence.

Purging evidence from adjudicated cases (trials that have been concluded and from which further appeals are precluded) is hampered as prosecutors are reluctant to authorize disposal. The volume of evidence is growing at a fast pace, significantly impacting the Unit's day to day operations.

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## Introduction and Background

This audit was included in the annual audit plan as a performance audit of the Property Management Unit of the Shreveport Police Department.

The Property Management Unit is charged with receiving and maintaining evidence obtained by the Department's personnel in the discharge of their investigation of various criminal complaints. This duty includes maintaining the "chain of custody" records associated with that evidence. (*"Chain of Custody" is defined as the chronological documentation or paper trail that records the sequence of **custody**, control, transfer, analysis, and disposition of physical or electronic evidence.*) The Unit also receives and maintains "found" property and items for "safekeeping". The Unit disposes of evidentiary property when it is no longer needed for prosecutorial purposes and is properly authorized for disposal or destruction. The Unit disposes of "found" and "safekeeping" property if it is not claimed within a specified time frame.

Internal Audit was asked to review issues surrounding the growing volume of evidence being retained subsequent to adjudication and its impact on the operations of the Unit.

The objectives of this audit were to determine the following:

- If property and evidence are appropriately accounted for and whether inventory records are accurate
- If existing policies and procedures pertaining to property and evidence are being followed
- If there are any issues pertaining to property and evidence that need to be addressed by management





**Recommendation Evaluation Risk Criteria**

This report contains three findings with six recommendations. The chart below summarizes our evaluation of risk for the recommendations outlined in the report. Each recommendation was assessed a high, medium, or low risk level based on a qualitative assessment of exposure and/or corrective action priority.

Risk Levels	Recommendations
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>High Risk</b></p> <p>Represents <b>significant</b> level of risk exposure to City assets, public safety, or achievement of objectives or mission. Corrective action should have the highest priority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Unit and Administration explore options to terminate the current video surveillance system maintenance contract, and seek a qualified local organization for this service. <b>(Finding: Issues with the Security Camera System)</b></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Medium Risk</b></p> <p>Represents a <b>moderate</b> level of risk exposure to the City from extensive operating inefficiencies or high-level non-compliance issues. Corrective action should occur expeditiously.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Management implements identifiable discrete locations for weapon and narcotic evidence items. <b>(Finding: Submitting and Receiving Evidence into the Property Management Unit)</b></li> <li>➤ Department establish a system of periodic partial inventories of the evidentiary property on rotating basis to complete inventory of entire facility by end of 2019. <b>(Finding: Inventory Controls and Best Practices)</b></li> <li>➤ Department should meet with Prosecutors and Judges to establish a workable policy providing prompt permission to dispose/destroy evidence used in adjudicated cases, but allows retention as appropriate. <b>(Finding: Inventory Controls and Best Practices)</b></li> <li>➤ Unit should establish a log of evidence items signed out to other agencies to provide central control of items checked out and their expected return date. <b>(Finding: Inventory Controls and Best Practices)</b></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Low Risk</b></p> <p>Represents <b>minimal</b> level of risk exposure to the City from inefficiencies or low-level non-compliance issues. Corrective action should occur as appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Management encourages officers submitting evidence to use more diligence in preparing reports and describing evidence submitted to the Unit. <b>(Finding: Submitting and Receiving Evidence into the Property Management Unit)</b></li> </ul>



### **Scope and Methodology**

The scope of this audit includes the City of Shreveport's Property Management Unit of The Shreveport Police Department. To answer our objectives, we reviewed internal controls surrounding its operations and activities and developed audit procedures including, but not limited to, the following:

- Interviewing personnel in the Shreveport Police Department's Administration Section, and its Property Management Unit; the Information Technology Department, and others regarding controls and reporting
- Obtaining an electronic download of the case evidence inventory records
- Analyzing and filtering the download to identify discrete classes of evidence
- Selecting statistical samples of items received in each category of evidence during 2017 and 2018 through October 19<sup>th</sup>
- Conducting physical verification of evidence identification and location from computer record, and verification of computer record from the physical location and description of evidentiary items
- Documenting walkthroughs of the facility on Hope Street and the contracted facility for evidentiary and impounded vehicles on Greenwood Road to assess level of security
- Examination of documents and files detailing the authorization and disposal/destruction of evidentiary and non-evidentiary property

We conducted this audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. 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, conclusions, and recommendations based on our audit objectives.

***We thank the personnel in the various Offices and Departments identified above, as well as personnel in other City Departments, for their cooperation and assistance in gathering information provided to us in our work on this project.***





# **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



**Issues with the Security Camera System  
(Issues Management Needs to Address)**

The security camera system is a key component of control over the evidentiary items stored and maintained in the Unit's property (evidence) room. It provides a visual record of activities in the storage areas, particularly the narcotic, currency and weapon vaults, as well as the exterior perimeter of the facility.

We found that the security camera system was not functioning properly as we began this audit. The malfunction was first observed on August 20, 2018, and was resolved and the system fully restored by November 15, 2018.

The provider of the hardware and software, including an ongoing maintenance agreement, is located outside of the State of Louisiana. The vendor has no personnel or maintenance organization in the State of Louisiana capable of providing service for this system. The City's Information Technology Department provided critical support in restoring full functionality to this system. Louisiana Statutes prohibit public disclosure of security system plans and details of security system issues. They have been discussed with Police Administration in detail and are being addressed.

**Recommendation #1:** The Unit and Police Administration should explore options to terminate the current contract for camera system maintenance, and seek a qualified local organization for this service.

**Management Response:**

The Department's contract with the current vendor expires in June of 2019. That vendor, recommended by IT when the PMU (Property Management Unit) Facility was in the planning/building phases, is not licensed in Louisiana which, in turn, forces them to sub-contract to another vendor. The department will seek another qualified vendor to replace the current vendor prior to the expiration of the contract to ensure seamless service/maintenance.





**Submitting and Receiving Evidence into the Property Management Unit  
(Is Property and Evidence Accounted For and Are Inventory Records Accurate)**

All items of physical evidence should be tagged with the CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) number and a unique identifier (bar code) that is recorded in the Unit's computer evidence system. The system should contain a description of the evidence item sufficient to identify it as the specific item associated with that case. Descriptors such as serial number, color, size, and any other distinguishing features should be included in the system record. Furthermore, the record should include the physical location of the item within the property room.

The property room was generally well organized. Location information in the computer system guides personnel to an individually distinct area or container, but not to a specific location within the area or container. This requires the personnel seeking the item to search within the area or container to find the item. This final part of the search can be time consuming. We encountered several discrepancies between information contained in the computer files and the physical location or identity of the item sought that further expanded the search time.



Picture of a portion of area 31 L on a wall of the Gun Room

The lack of a truly unique location for each item results in inefficient use of personnel time. Failure to correctly record the description of an item could result in diminished prosecutorial effectiveness. Management has not taken full advantage of the design and layout of the evidence room to provide a truly unique location for each evidence item. Matching the complete description of the evidence items provided by the reporting officer to the item submitted as evidence is not always as precise as it should be.



View of one aisle of box locations within the Narcotic Vault



View of search in progress for an item

**Recommendation #2:** Management should identify the individual pegs in each area of the gun room with a unique number. Thus, the location of a specific handgun might be GR31L-15, rather than the present GR31L. Similarly, management might implement the use of plastic crates capable of supporting hanging files for maintaining narcotic evidence. Hanging files numbered from 1 thru 75 would reside in each crate, and each file could hold three to five items of evidence, each in its own clear plastic envelope marked as it is presently. Thus, the location of a specific evidence item might be Box 325-21, rather than the present Box 325.

**Management Response:**

The department will continue to explore efficient solutions to enhance inventory control procedures including, but not limited to, more specific location indexing.

**Recommendation #3:** Management should strongly encourage officers submitting evidence to use more diligence as they prepare their reports and describe the evidence they submit to reduce the incidence of error. Presently, most of these type errors are caught by the property room intake officers, put aside for “corrections” and resubmitted by the submitting officers. Submitting officers and intake officers should both be more diligent to make the process more efficient.

**Management Response:**

This has been addressed and sworn supervisory personnel will continue to coach and mentor patrol officers with regard to properly documenting items submitted as evidence. Additional formal training opportunities will be identified as well.



**Inventory Controls and Best Practices  
(Are Policies and Procedures Related to Evidence Being Followed)**

Complete annual inventories of evidence should be conducted. Additionally, an inventory should be conducted whenever there is a change in command. Periodic inspections of critical segments of the evidence inventory: i.e., currency, narcotics and weapons, should also be performed. Records of evidence items checked out to other agencies, the District Attorney or Court should be maintained to provide control over the length of time out and ensure their timely return. Items no longer required for prosecution should be evaluated and purged.

We were unable to determine that an inventory of the evidence items has ever taken place. Internal Audit conducted a performance audit of the Property Management Unit in 2000, and reported that the Unit had not performed a physical inventory. Personnel within the Unit whose tenure dates back to 1999 report there has not been a physical inventory since that audit. The physical size of the inventory continues to grow as purging older items is hampered by the failure of the Courts and District Attorney's office to approve evidence items connected to adjudicated cases for disposition/destruction.

Evidence items checked out to other agencies or the courts are reported as such within the individual item's electronic file. Documents supporting the movement of the item and the related "chain of custody" record are scanned into the electronic file. However, there is not a separate log of items checked out to provide control over these items and follow up to secure their timely return.

The potential for items held as evidence to go missing increases as the physical size of the inventory grows. Accountability is diminished as there is no definite way to determine when an item became missing. Further, the continuing growth of items in inventory may exceed the facility's capacity in the near term future.

**Recommendation #4:** The Department should establish a system of periodic partial inventories of the evidentiary property on a rotating basis with a goal of counting the entire facility by the end of 2019. To facilitate this goal, the Department should acquire inventory software and hardware capable of reading and recording the identification bar code on each evidence item for comparison with the inventory records contained in the RMS (the Department's ***Records Management System***) software.

**Management Response:**

In addition to the implementation of a new records management system by the end of 2020, the Department is exploring the viability of engaging a third party vendor to conduct regular, routine inventories of the PMU (Property Management Unit) Facility.



**Recommendation #5:** The Department should meet with prosecutors and judges to establish a workable policy for all parties that provides for prompt permission to dispose/destroy evidence used in adjudicated cases, but that also will allow for retention in capital cases and other cases susceptible to appeals.

**Management Response:**

The Police Administration is working to coordinate a meeting with the appropriate outside governmental entities in an effort to provide specific, written guidance delineating legally sound protocols with regard to the disposal/destruction of items in the inventory of the PMU (Property Management Unit) Facility.

**Recommendation #6:** The Unit establish a log of evidence items signed out to other agencies; providing a record of date checked out, agency and person receiving the evidence, the evidence identification number, and expected date of return. This log may be manual or electronic, but would provide controls over the timely return of the items checked out.

**Management Response:**

This has been accomplished through our records management system. The ability exists in a search field to view items that have been checked out of the PMU Facility by departmental investigators as well as investigators from other agencies, i.e. the District Attorney's Office, DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency), BATF (Bureau Of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) etc. However, there is not an "expected date of return" in which the items are returned by other criminal justice entities. Some agencies, such as the BATF, may keep the items for court and then ultimately store them in their facility after convictions are obtained. The release code for such items show "Released to Other Agency."





IAR 060118-07  
December 11, 2018

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Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S. Ben Hebert".

S. Ben Hebert, CPA, CFE, CMA, CISA, CLEA, CLAA, CGMA  
Staff Auditor III

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leanis L. Steward".

Leanis L. Steward, CPA, CIA  
City Internal Auditor

bh:dw

- c: City Council
- Clerk of Council
- Mayor
- Director of Finance
- Chief Administrative Officer
- Carr, Riggs & Ingram
- Chief of Police

