



2018 Savannah Police Department Property  
and Evidence Room Annual Audit

January 18, 2019

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## **Executive Summary**

The Office of Organizational Performance and Accountability (OOPA) has completed the annual audit of the Savannah Police Department Property and Evidence Room (P&E). The purpose of the review was to ensure accountability and continuity of custody for property and evidence.

Findings, recommendations, and management responses and action plans are included after background information.

## **Objective, Scope, and Methodology**

The objective for this review was to ensure the accountability and continuity of custody for property and evidence. The review focused on items received during July 15, 2017 through July 31, 2018. In meeting our objective, we performed the following procedures:

- Interviewed/discussed risks, issues, and processes with Angela Harris, Property and Evidence Room Supervisor
- Reviewed:
  - Policies/Procedures including:
    - The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc., (CALEA) Standards
    - Savannah Police Department internal documents relating to property and evidence
  - Tiburon system data
  - City of Savannah general ledger
  - Forms, bank deposit slips and statements relating to property and evidence
  - Actual property and evidence
- Observed/Tested:
  - Controls and processes for the safeguarding of property and evidence
  - Randomly selected 100 items that were tested to for completeness and accuracy. Selected 20 items each from the following five categories:
    - Weapons
    - Drugs
    - Currency
    - Jewelry
    - Non-High Risk items
  - Randomly selected five items (one from each of the five categories) from the property and evidence room and verified against system data and forms to ensure completeness and accuracy (i.e. worked backwards)
  - Matched/verified 12 cash deposits to ensure accuracy and accountability
- OOPA expresses their appreciation to the staff of the P&E Unit for their cooperation and assistance.

## **Background**

The P&E Unit is an essential element of the City of Savannah's Police Department relating to prosecution of cases within local, state, and federal court systems. The facility is the overall repository for the storage of evidence for both the city and county. The unit consists of one Police Sergeant, one Property Room Supervisor and five Civilian Evidence Technicians. Members of the unit have received various necessary certificates and trainings to adequately handle property and evidence and duties relating to prosecution.

The overall mission of the unit is to receive, process, store and secure all property and evidence that is either found or seized within the jurisdiction of Savannah and Chatham County. The integrity of the evidentiary chain of custody is maintained until such time as there is a disposition rendered upon the property or evidence by the court or the property is returned to its rightful owner.

The P&E Unit adheres to the CALEA Standards. This provides and maintains a body of standards for Law Enforcement. Specifically, standard 84 relates to Property and Evidence Control.

CALEA Standard 84.1.6 (Inspections and Audits) section requires the person responsible for the P&E function to conduct inspections of the property room every six months or semi-annually. These inspections should determine that the property room is maintained in good physical condition, sanitary and orderly, policies and procedures are being followed, items stored are secure and protected, the accountability of items stored, and that property no longer having evidentiary value is disposed of properly or returned to their rightful owner.

Standard 84.1.6 also requires two audits independent of each other. This includes an annual audit and change of custodian review. The annual audit is performed by a supervisor not routinely or directly involved with the P&E function to ensure accountability and continuity of custody. The other audit occurs when a new P&E custodian is assigned. This audit is performed to ensure that records are correct and properly annotated.

## Findings, Recommendations, Management Response and Action Plan

CALEA and P&E Unit standards requires OOPA to perform the annual audit. Upon completion of the audit, it was identified that the unit received on average approximately 1,600 items per month during the scope of July 15, 2017 through July 31, 2018. The P&E unit provided support for the completion of the inspections and previous audits as required per CALEA standards.

The review revealed the P&E unit thoroughly administers property and evidence by continuously monitoring, detecting, and correcting errors made by the Officers during submission of these items. Cash deposits are made appropriately per policies and procedures as well as the completeness and accuracy of property and evidence forms, system data, and chain of custody details.

Below shows the results of the issue(s) identified during the review.

Finding 1	The data fields for “disposal date” and “disposal description” pertaining to “Currency” that were either deposited or returned were not updated in the system to accurately reflect the current status. “Currency” testwork results revealed 5 out of 20 (or 25%) items did not have these data fields updated.
Recommendation	Ensure all disposed items are updated in the data system to accurately reflect the current status of that item.
Management Agree	<b>Yes</b>
Management Action Plan	In review of the findings of this audit and the recommended actions regarding the disposal date and description for currency; the processes for Currency Deposit/Disposal and Currency Status have been modified. Effective immediately all currency that was either deposited or returned will have the data fields for “disposal date”and “disposal description” updated within one business day from the status change. Additionally, a staff member of the Property Room will be assigned to peer review each case within two business days after depositing funds or when cash is returned to an individual to ensure the status change has been properly documented .  Property Room Personnel changed documentation in the computer system to reflect that these five cases were returned and or deposited.
Completion Date	Implemented