

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a performance audit of the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) Central Evidence & Property Section (CE&P) policies and procedures. This report is issued to offer recommendations and observations concerning CE&P policies and procedures and compliance with those procedures.

Findings noted by the auditors related to NOPD policies and procedures included:

- Complete inventories of the CE&P facility were not performed at least annually by CE&P staff.
- Annual audits of the CE&P facility were not conducted in accordance with NOPD policy.
- NOPD policy had not been updated to specify procedures to be performed during the audits.¹
- Disposals of evidence had not taken place since Hurricane Katrina², despite the fact that thousands of pieces of evidence and contraband property had exceeded all statutes of limitations.³

Failure to purge evidence hindered the CE&P section from operating efficiently and in accordance with NOPD policy and best practices. The CE&P facility inventory cannot be reduced to a manageable level until the NOPD develops and implements an ongoing purging program for evidence.

Findings noted by the auditors during testing of CE&P inventory included:

- The actual location of evidence and property exhibits did not agree to the storage location per the BEAST⁴ system.
- Evidence and property exhibits listed in CE&P custody in BEAST were no longer in the custody of CE&P. The actual custody of two of these exhibits could not be determined.
- Currency exhibits that were the object of previous Public Integrity Bureau (PIB) investigations remained in CE&P custody and were listed at the amount originally recorded even though those amounts were no longer accurate.
- Inventory reports per BEAST did not include a complete listing of evidence and property exhibits in the custody of CE&P.

¹ The Louisiana Legislative Auditor conducted a compliance audit of the CE&P section in a report released on July 8, 2009 titled "City of New Orleans Police Department Compliance Audit". The 2009 report noted that annual audits and inventories of the CE&P facility were not being conducted. These findings from the 2009 report remained unresolved during the scope period of this audit.

² Hurricane Katrina made landfall in New Orleans on August 29, 2005, flooding the former location of the CE&P facility in the basement of NOPD headquarters.

³ CE&P management was unable to generate a report that listed the total number of evidence and property exhibits in the custody of the CE&P facility.

⁴ Bar Coded Evidence Analysis Statistical Tracking (BEAST) software, manufactured by Porter Lee, was used by NOPD to track all evidence and property exhibits submitted to CE&P.

The auditors noted that the NOPD has made several significant improvements in recent years to CE&P policies and procedures. Currency exhibits submitted to the custody of the CE&P facility are now deposited in an interest-bearing account with the City on a weekly basis.⁵ Additionally, a climate-controlled DNA section was added to the CE&P facility and all DNA exhibits were barcoded and cataloged in this location. The CE&P Procedures Manual was also revised to adopt professional standards recommended by the International Association for Property and Evidence, Inc. (IAPE).

Despite improvements made to CE&P policy and procedures, evidence and property in CE&P custody still has a high risk of theft or misplacement if inventories, audits and disposals are not conducted in accordance with NOPD policy and best practices.⁶ The recommendations in this report, if adopted, should improve internal controls over evidence and property stored in the CE&P facility, reducing the opportunity for theft and misplacement to occur.

The City fully or partially agreed with all of the OIG recommendations to the ten findings in the report.

A follow-up review will be conducted to determine the status of the City's responses.

All responses by the City in the body of this report are direct statements and have not been modified.

⁵ The 2009 Louisiana Legislative Auditor "City of New Orleans Police Department Compliance Audit" noted that all evidence and property currency submitted to the custody of CE&P was stored on-site in the CE&P facility, making it susceptible to theft and misplacement.

⁶ CE&P management began to address the causes of the findings in this report as they became apparent over the course of the audit.