

**From:** Pearce, Beth [Beth.Pearce@vermont.gov]  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 05, 2015 5:30 PM  
**To:** London, Sarah  
**CC:** Wisloski, Stephen; Lueders-Dumont, Tim  
**Subject:** Audit Report on Gun Auctions  
**Attachments:** 13-10%20Police%20Evidence%20Audit%20FINAL.pdf

Sarah,

Thought this might be useful in your deliberations. I found an audit of the Colorado Springs Police Evidence operations completed in 2013. Audit Observation 14, beginning on page 29, specifically dealt with the gun auctions and concluded that they were time intensive and expensive. The auditor's recommendations included:

- Consider destroying the guns currently waiting to be auctioned to free up space in the gun room.
- Evaluate the costs and benefits of holding firearm auctions vs. destroying all guns involved in crimes. Consideration should be given to the amount of Evidence and Crime Lab personnel time used in preparing for the auctions.

While staff may include non-police members for the auction process, there is still a cost associated with that time, as well as costs associated with transport, storage, security, auction advertising, and accounting for auction proceeds. They documented the time needed for testing:

Multiple steps are involved to complete the test firing. According to a study prepared by the Crime Lab, the entire process of checking out guns, preparing, conducting and documenting the test firing and then returning the guns to inventory takes approximately two hours per gun. Therefore, to complete this testing would consume approximately 1,100 man hours. Per the Crime Lab, the test firing was normally handled by a trained ballistic technician and because of staffing constraints they would need to work overtime to accomplish these tests.

Perhaps you may want to talk with Auditor Hoffer to get some feedback on the issues presented here and in my previous email. Again, my comments do not relate to gun policy but rather direct costs, indirect costs, liability and the need for a full cost-benefit analysis.



**OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR**  
**COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO**

# **13-10 Colorado Springs Police Evidence Audit**

**April 2013**



## OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

# 13-10 Police Evidence Audit

April 2013

### **Purpose**

The audit was requested by the Colorado Springs Police Department to research concerns regarding increasing inventory levels in the Evidence Unit. A physical inventory was conducted to support the change in command that occurred during the audit period. Laws and regulations were reviewed for compliance.

### **Highlights**

Overall, we conclude that the Evidence Unit was operating within compliance with existing laws and regulations. At the current rate of growth we estimate the Evidence Unit may begin to run out of space in critical areas in 2015. We recommend planning begin now for possible facility expansion.

The processes and systems used to handle, research and release evidence combined to make it very difficult to reverse the trend of increasing inventory levels. We identified many potential areas of improvement that could help reduce inventory levels and improve efficiency within the Unit. However, the retention requirements specified by Colorado laws and the District Attorney will continue to impact long-term evidence storage. For certain crimes, evidence must be retained forever, or until a named defendant dies. Effective long-term storage strategies will need to be employed to satisfy these requirements.

A previous audit was conducted following a massive purge of evidence in 2006. The recommendations from that audit were successfully implemented and the Unit has made dramatic improvements in the storage, handling, and tracking of inventory. We also noted that the Evidence Unit staff was very security conscious and that there was a history of positive internal audits of inventory since the previous review by the Office of the

*(Continued on page 2)*

### **Management Response**

The Colorado Springs Police Department generally agrees with the observations and recommendations made in this report. Please see the report body for our detailed responses.

### **Recommendations**

1. Concentrate research and disposal efforts on items in inventory for extended periods and plan for additional facilities.
2. Improve information flow to Evidence Unit regarding case status.
3. Review the trend of increasing items per case and evaluate for potential causes.
4. Review guidelines for collecting evidence and discuss potential disposal of certain items in inventory.
5. Review guidelines related to retaining evidence.
6. Use information provided by the District Attorney's Office to research evidence eligible for release.
7. Consider arranging the evidence inventory by age, type of offense, expected retention length, or by item size to increase efficiency.
8. Consider adding an administrative staff position to the Evidence Unit.

*(Continued on page 2)*

# 13-10 Police Evidence Audit

April 2013

*(Highlights continued from page 1)*

City Auditor.

During the audit period there was a change in the Evidence Supervisor, which necessitated adding a physical inventory to the audit scope. The inventory was conducted in November 2012 and no discrepancies were noted.

The accompanying report lists observations and recommendations that are intended to assist the Evidence Unit in accomplishing their mission.

*(Recommendations continued from page 1)*

9. Consider improvements to information systems to eliminate old databases, combine relevant data into the evidence system and ensure appropriate personal information is gathered from defendants.
10. Investigate integrating the evidence and case management systems to reduce duplicate information entry.
11. Consider improvements to the evidence system regarding reporting, standardizing offense descriptions and adding preventive controls to the recovery date fields.
12. Improve controls over checkout and return of evidence.
13. Review the procedures covering cash held as evidence and consider making deposits when appropriate.
14. Review the procedures regarding the disposal and auctioning of firearms.

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# Office of the City Auditor Public Report

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Date: April 25, 2013

To: President King, President Pro Tem Bennett, and Members of City Council

Re: 13-10 Police Evidence Audit

We conducted an audit of the Police Evidence Unit. This audit was requested by the Police Department. The purpose of this audit was to address concerns related to the increase in evidence inventory and the effect on the Unit of recent changes in laws and regulations. The audit included a review of compliance with relevant policies, laws and regulations; controls utilized by the Unit; and the related information systems. Due to a change in command that occurred during the audit, a physical inventory of the on-hand evidence inventory was also conducted.

We concluded that inventory had been increasing more quickly than it could be released. Assuming the recent rate of growth continues, and if no other improvements are made in the systems and processes used in the Evidence Unit, some key areas may run out of space as early as 2015. The attached report includes fourteen observations along with two opportunities for improvement and our recommendations for each. If these recommendations are implemented, facilities expansion could be delayed.

The physical inventory related to the change in command found no discrepancies.

As always, feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Denny L. Nester, MBA, CPA, CIA, CFE, CGFM, CGAP  
City Auditor

Cc: Mayor Steve Bach  
Pete Carey, Police Chief  
Laura Neumann, Chief of Staff  
Vince Niski, Deputy Police Chief  
Mark Smith, Deputy Police Chief  
Sue Autry, Management Services Commander  
Joe Curro, Police Logistics Support Manager  
Jennifer Taylor, Police Evidence Supervisor



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## Office of the City Auditor Police Evidence

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### GLOSSARY

<b>CALEA</b>	–	Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies. The Colorado Springs Police Department is accredited by CALEA and follows the standards of this organization.
<b>CSPD</b>	–	Colorado Springs Police Department
<b>DA</b>	–	El Paso County District Attorney
<b>DEA</b>	–	Drug Enforcement Agency
<b>EOQ</b>	–	EvidenceOnQ is the current evidence system used by the Colorado Springs Police Department's Evidence Unit.
<b>LERMS</b>	–	Law Enforcement Records Management System is an application in use by the Colorado Springs Police Department to track various Police activities.
<b>OCA</b>	–	Office of the City Auditor
<b>SOL</b>	–	Statute of Limitations



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## REPORT DETAILS

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this audit was to address concerns raised by the Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) regarding the buildup of items in the Evidence Unit. We evaluated processes for compliance with existing policies, laws, and professional standards. We attempted to identify and address any additional problem areas as requested by the CSPD or determined from the audit itself. The audit included review and evaluation of procedures, practices and controls as deemed necessary.

### SCOPE

The review period was October 2010 through August 2012. The period was chosen because the new inventory tracking system, EvidenceOnQ (EOQ) was implemented in October 2010.

Due to the change in command of the Evidence Unit during the audit period, the Professional Standards Division asked the Office of the City Auditor (OCA) to assist in conducting a change of command physical inventory per the Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) standards. The physical inventory of the Evidence Unit was completed in November 2012. This inventory included all on-hand locations, with special emphasis on the items CALEA recognizes as sensitive – money, drugs, guns and jewelry. A random statistical sample was drawn from the evidence database and compared to actual items in inventory.

### BACKGROUND

The Evidence Unit is charged with preserving evidence collected during the investigation of crimes and maintenance of certain personal property. The Unit is primarily a custodian of evidence and as such, does not have authority to make independent decisions regarding the disposition of items once they have been entered as evidence. That authority rests with Officers, the District or City Attorney, and other outside agencies, depending on the situation. The Unit is also responsible for personal property items that are stored in the Unit such as items found in a public venue. These items can be disposed of once they have been held for a specified period.

The Statute of Limitations (SOL) for each crime dictates how long after the occurrence of a crime a person may be charged with committing that crime. Generally, once the SOL lapses, the evidence can be disposed of if no one has been charged for that crime, since prosecution cannot be brought against them. This produces an indirect relationship between the SOL of a crime and the length of time evidence from that crime must be held. Once the SOL has expired, research can be conducted to determine if all necessary criteria has been met to allow for the proper disposal of an item. Researching items for disposal is a complex process discussed later in this report.

We would like to point out that the analysis conducted for this report, particularly in regard to cases, crimes, and the SOL for those crimes, was performed at a high level; and the results have been





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combined and aggregated for the purpose of analyzing broad trends in the evidence population as opposed to specific insight related to specific types of crimes.

In 2006, it was discovered by the Colorado Springs Police Department that evidence for a specific case had been disposed of improperly. An audit by the Office of the City Auditor determined that an aggressive goal had been set in 2004 by a new Evidence Supervisor to dispose of a large number of items in evidence. To achieve this goal, policies and procedures were not being followed by Evidence Unit staff. The result was that some items of inventory had been disposed of improperly. A number of recommendations were made, including the acquisition of newer and more fully featured evidence tracking software.

A working group called the Evidence Cadre was formed in 2006 to address audit recommendations and to work toward improvements in the Evidence Unit. Changes were implemented in packaging, warehousing, information systems and data integrity.

In the spring of 2012, the Colorado Springs Police Department requested the current audit to address the issue of evidence buildup, in part due to preservation requirements of recent DNA laws. The DNA laws (C.R.S. 18-1-11-2 and 18 -1-1003) require that all evidence in cases of certain felony crimes that may contain DNA, be retained for the life of the defendant, or for the statute of limitations if no defendant is named. For many offenses in this category there is no statute of limitations, which means evidence collected for these crimes must be retained forever.

In 2009 the El Paso County District Attorney's (DA) Office placed additional requirements to create a "Permanent Hold" category for the crimes specified by C.R.S. 18-1-11-2 and 18 -1-1003 and retain all (not just DNA) related evidence forever. Given these restrictions, there is a large amount of evidence in storage that must be retained forever or until the Evidence Unit is notified by the DA that items can be released.

### COMMENDABLE PRACTICES

Several commendable practices were noted by the auditors during this review. The dramatic improvements in the physical arrangement and handling of inventory from the previous audit to this audit are clearly shown in the before and after photos that follow. During this audit, the auditors noted the area was very neat, well organized, and the packaging was in excellent condition to protect and preserve evidence. Please note that the before pictures were taken after the 2005 purging of inventory, but before the Evidence Cadre completed its work.



## Office of the City Auditor Police Evidence

### Drug Room

*Before*



*After*



### Gun Vault

*Before*



*After*



### Misc Storage

*Before*



*After*





## Office of the City Auditor Police Evidence

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In addition, we noted that the Evidence Unit staff was very security conscious and were attentive to the conditions requiring their attention. For example, during the physical inventory process, when packaging that had been damaged was encountered, the tech took immediate action to correct the problem. We also observed that the techs were consistent in adhering to security procedures.

Lastly, the Professional Standards Division of the CSPD conducts regular announced and unannounced audits of inventory. Our review of these reports showed that no exceptions had been reported during the previous three years. The inventory conducted by the OCA in support of the change of command found that all items were accounted for.



## CONCLUSION

The concerns of the CSPD regarding the buildup of inventory were valid and we estimate that with the observed growth rate of evidence, the Evidence Unit may begin running out of available space in 2015.

Projected Space Remaining in Key Locations							
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Drug Room	29%	25%	22%	18%	14%	11%	7%
Cold Storage	17%	10%	3%	-3%	-10%	-17%	-24%
Handguns	55%	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%	25%
Long guns	19%	14%	10%	5%	0%	-4%	-9%
Annex Storage	28%	24%	20%	16%	11%	7%	3%
General Storage	33%	29%	25%	21%	16%	12%	8%

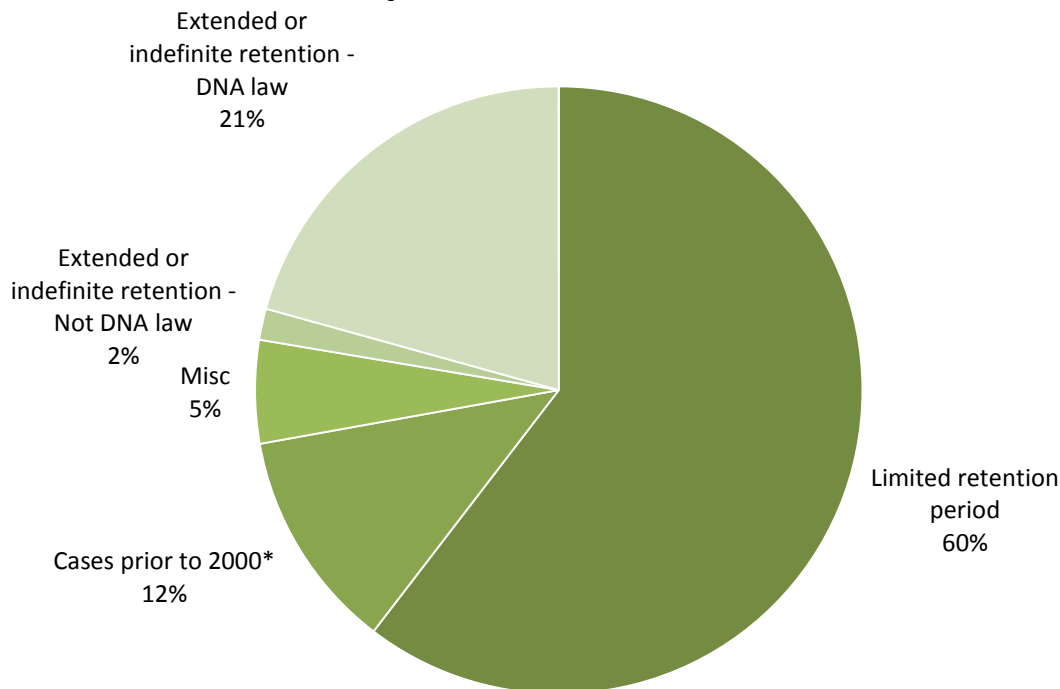
Implementing the recommendations in this report could improve the situation, delaying the need to expand facilities. However, even if the recommendations are implemented, there will still be certain evidence that must be retained for extremely long periods of time, or forever.

It was believed that recent changes to the DNA law were contributing to the buildup of inventory. While these laws and regulations may have a profound effect in the future, the existing inventory situation was not caused by these laws. The new laws have not been in effect long enough to observe the full impact on inventory levels. We noted there appears to be a correlation between the implementation of these laws and the average number of items per case being collected. Observation 3 details this situation.

We analyzed the on-hand inventory to determine the crime each item was associated with and how long each item had been in inventory. Data analysis was complicated by multiple information system changes and inconsistent data fields. By combining information from various systems, we were able to see that the majority of older items had been in inventory for an extended period (greater than 5 years) and that most items were associated with limited retention period crimes--not the more serious, "Keep Forever" crimes. Based on this analysis, we believe there could be opportunities to reduce on-hand inventory if these older, less serious cases are targeted for research and possible disposal.



### On-hand Inventory by Anticipated Retention Period



*\*Data for cases prior to 2000 was not reviewed*

As mentioned above, the Evidence Unit had made great strides in improving their handling, storage and tracking of inventory. Unfortunately, many of the issues influencing the buildup of inventory were beyond the purview of the Evidence Unit to correct.

We conclude that, overall, the Evidence Unit was operating in compliance with existing policies, laws, and professional standards. We were not able to establish that the recent DNA law changes were responsible for the increasing inventory levels; however we believe the impact of these recent changes in law could be more serious in the future. Our review of policies, procedures, internal controls and information systems resulted in the observations and recommendations for improvements which follow.

We appreciate the cooperation and support of the Evidence Unit staff and management during the audit. The Professional Standards Division was very helpful in planning for the physical inventory and the Crime Analysis Unit provided key information concerning crimes. We thank each group for their assistance during this project.



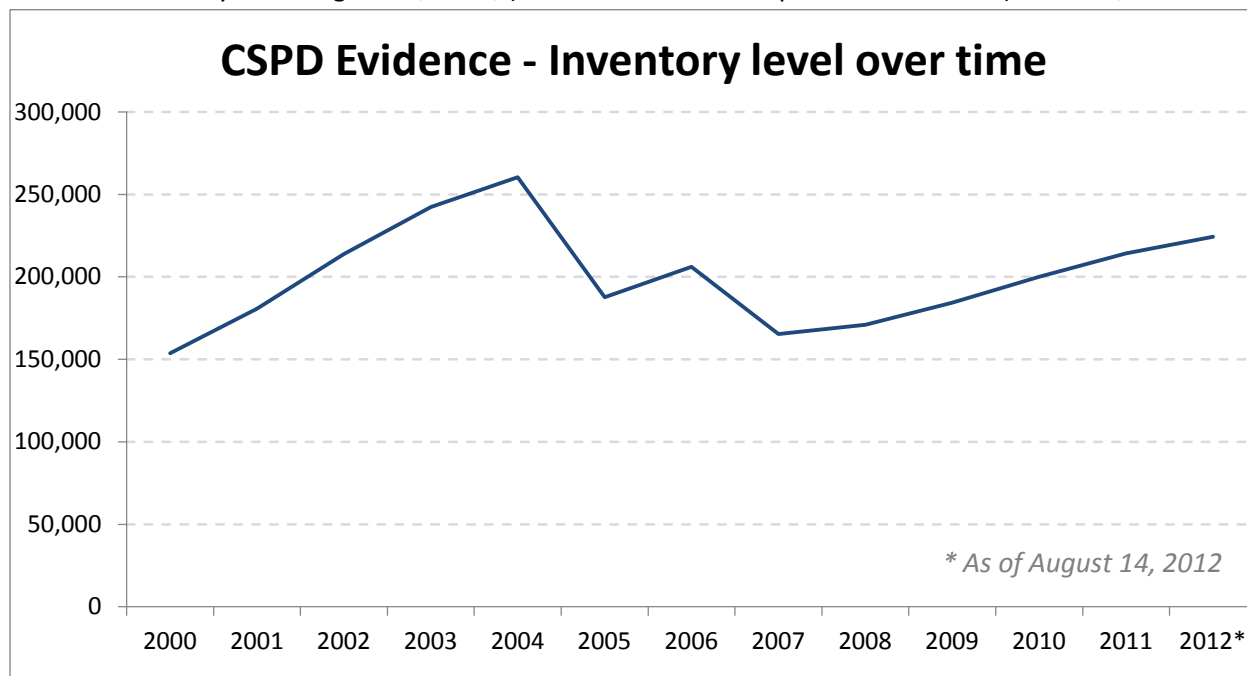
## OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES – INVENTORY

### OBSERVATION 1 – EVIDENCE INVENTORY LEVELS HAVE BEEN INCREASING

Apart from two notable exceptions, the Evidence Unit has received more items each year than they were able to dispose of. As seen on the chart below, in 2004 -2005 inventory was reduced from over 267,000 items to 187,000 items. However, this purging of inventory resulted in the improper release and destruction of some evidence. While the goal of reducing inventory was achieved, this was an unacceptable response to the problems the Unit faced because some evidence was destroyed, which was needed for the prosecution of crimes.

In 2006 – 2007, the work of the Evidence Cadre resulted in further reductions; down to a low of 167,000 items. This effort involved using 16 full-time officers and two civilians to research evidence for disposal, correct database errors, and reorganize the inventory. The Cadre was disbanded and the additional staff returned to their normal duties in February 2008. As the work of the Cadre illustrated, adding more manpower to the inventory problem can have a significant impact, but is not a cost-effective, long-term solution.

Since the Cadre ended, inventory levels have been steadily increasing because more items are added to inventory each year than can be released. The net increase has been 14,600 items per year since 2007. On-hand inventory as of August 14, 2012, (the date the audit snap shot was created) was 224,338 items.



We reviewed the intake and disposal rates of the various item types and locations to determine how quickly areas were reaching capacity. It is important to note that the number of items alone is an



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incomplete indicator of the space used; some items take more space than others and the crime involved dictates how long an item must remain in inventory.

Our estimate is that certain critical areas will be out of space beginning in 2015, given the recent rate of growth. This estimate is rough due to the wide variation in types of evidence and the lack of certain details in the data. Because no one can predict how much evidence will be submitted or what types of crimes will be committed in the future, we needed to extrapolate available data in order to reach our conclusions.

The chart below shows the projected growth in critical locations and the inventory level in each as of August 2012. The Annex Storage area was used for items in long-term storage, which must be kept forever.

Current and Projected Inventory			
Location	Current Inventory	Estimated Capacity	Estimated Date Filled
Drug Room	27,260	38,943	2019
Cold Storage	3,884	4,821	2015
Handguns	1,830	4,028	2023
Long guns	710	879	2016
Annex	37,933	54,190	2019

If the recommendations made in this report are implemented, it should delay the need to plan for expansion of facilities for some time; however, we could not predict the impact of most of our recommendations on available space because there was too much uncertainty to make valid predictions.

The Evidence Unit plans to add additional staff in 2013. According to our calculations, since the implementation of the new evidence database, each tech could process an average of 6,800 items per year. Therefore, adding two techs should result in 13,600 more items being processed each year than were processed with previous staffing levels. On a purely mathematical basis, these additional resources should have a significant impact on inventory growth, slowing the growth of inventory from 14,600 items on average per year to only about 1,000 items per year.

Because it takes roughly six months from the date of hire until a new Evidence Tech is fully trained, it will take time to see the benefits of the additional staff. Adding two techs and reducing the growth of inventory will not address the need to reduce the current inventory to a more manageable level. Additional steps will be needed to improve processes and systems to make the staff more efficient.

The bulk of evidence resided in General Storage and contained items related to a wide variety of crimes, most of which were not affected by the recent DNA laws. Our analysis showed that 82,142 items on-hand were related to crimes that typically carry a SOL of 3 years or less, but they have been in inventory for more than 3 years.





Items in Inventory for Crimes with SOL Less than 3 years				
Crime Category	Years Held in Inventory			Total
	0- 3 years	3 - 5 years	5 + years	
Assault crimes - Non-Sexual	9,070	3,921	7,104	20,095
Arson	333	181	386	900
Drug crimes	13,494	6,214	11,800	31,508
Property crimes	2,189	959	2,261	5,409
Theft	12,968	4,995	11,518	29,481
Robbery	5,128	1,911	2,429	9,468
Money/Con crimes - not Forgery	5,490	2,876	7,271	15,637
Other crimes	11,210	4,764	7,079	23,053
Not crimes	5,828	2,157	4,316	12,301
<b>Total</b>	<b>65,710</b>	<b>27,978</b>	<b>54,164</b>	<b>147,852</b>
% of Total	44.44%	18.92%	36.63%	

We recommend that the items related to less serious crimes that have been in inventory for extended periods should be the focus of a concerted disposal effort to free up space. Assigning additional resources, such as was done with the Evidence Cadre, would allow more items to be researched and possibly disposed of than the current staffing level could achieve. However, this approach is not a permanent solution. The inventory would eventually return to high levels due to the unsustainable growth rate, especially in light of the additional constraints due to the DNA laws and regulations.

#### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department:

- Concentrate research and disposal efforts on items that have been in inventory for extended periods and that are associated with crimes that carry relatively short SOLs.
- Plan for additional facilities to store evidence which cannot be disposed of, especially cold storage.

#### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We concur. The Police Department is well into the hiring process for five Evidence Technicians. It will take approximately six months to put each incoming Evidence Technician through the formal training program where each new hire is partnered with a trainer; another six months of monitored independent field work by the new hires will bring each new employee to a fully trained status. After the initial six months of formal training, the Evidence Unit will be in the position to focus some of the veteran staff on dispositions during normal business hours. The highest priority dispositions will be closed cases or those





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cases that have exceeded the Statute of Limitations. For the interim, overtime hours were approved for the Evidence technicians to devote additional time to dispositions.

Once the Evidence unit is fully staffed with trained Evidence technicians, the goal of the Evidence Supervisor is to strategically address dispositions to reduce inventory; this we believe will delay the need for a new facility for general storage in the time frames projected. As to the recommendation for additional cold storage, we intend to purchase another commercial freezer; however, this is a temporary solution as there is little space left in the evidence storage area to house freezers. We are also considering permanent solutions for adding to our on-site cold storage capacity, i.e., converting a small storage room into a walk-in freezer, or purchasing an insulated freezer container.



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## OBSERVATION 2 – IMPROVEMENTS WERE NEEDED TO FACILITATE EVIDENCE DISPOSITION

As a general observation, the Evidence Unit had many responsibilities and constraints on its operations, but lacked decision making authority. A technician could not determine when it was appropriate to dispose of evidence without first validating that all required information had been properly documented and approval for disposal had been given from outside authorities, such as the DA's Office or the reporting officer.

While this segregation of duties was proper and necessary, we identified several related opportunities to improve communication that we believe could reduce the time required for researching disposals. The following recommendations are general suggestions that are intended to make the research process more proactive and less time consuming.

### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Colorado Springs Police Department seek opportunities to improve information flow regarding case status and therefore evidence disposition.

Some possible improvements include the following:

- Make it easy for the officers and the DA's Office to complete any required paperwork. Seek out opportunities to automate these processes using email or SharePoint based forms that could be completed online.
- Make it easy to request releases from attorneys and defendants. Make as much information as possible accessible via secure online applications to eliminate handling of paper and mailing costs.
- Create tickler files to be used internally to track which cases an evidence tech has been researching and the status of the case. Use of an automated system could improve the tech's efficiency in disposals because they would have the information about status at hand. This process could help them know how long they have been waiting for information and would remind them where they left off when they return to research duties.
- Ask officers and others to justify holding evidence, especially evidence that may have limited prosecutorial value.
- Ask officers and others to justify extending cases by issuing warrants or other methods of prolonging the storage period for evidence beyond its normal holding time.

### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We have long recognized the sharing of information as a means of improving efficiency. Our ongoing efforts and discussions with the District Attorney's (DA's) Office to leverage the technology afforded by the mutual adoption of the EvidenceOnQ tracking system has produced one such benefit. Effective



## Office of the City Auditor Police Evidence

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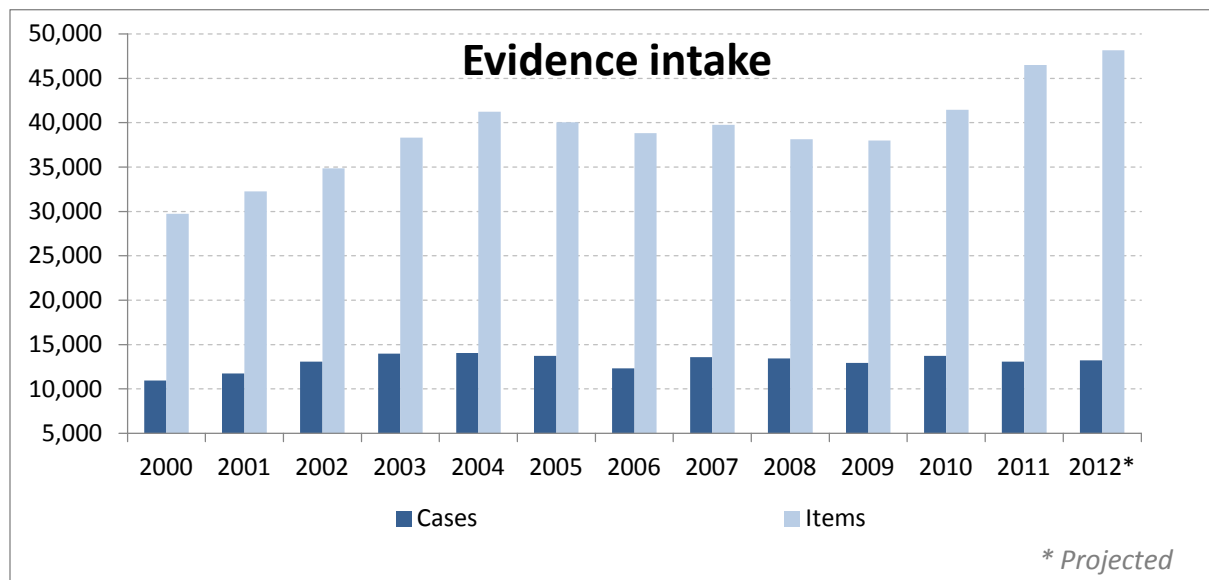
February 4<sup>th</sup>, the DA's Office is utilizing an electronic release system. We anticipate a quicker release on evidentiary items over the current process of exchanging paper documents.

We also utilize email and the EvidenceOnQ tracking system as much as possible when facilitating requests for release of evidence from officers and the DA's Office. The Evidence Unit at various times forwards inquiries to officers on evidence hold matters. With the additional manpower afforded by the new hires, the Evidence Unit should be in a position to implement and sustain a systematic review of case holds and dispositions.

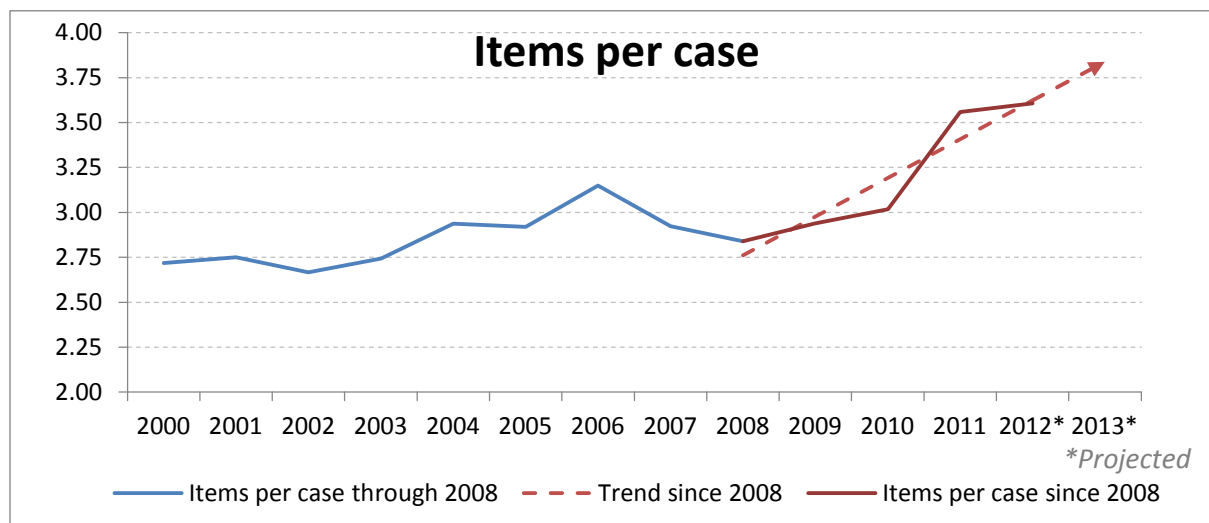


**OBSERVATION 3 – THE NUMBER OF ITEMS COLLECTED PER CASE HAD INCREASED**

The number of cases for which evidence was submitted remained flat from 2000-2011, with approximately 13,044 cases each year. However, the number of items submitted per year; therefore, the average number of items submitted per case, had increased dramatically since 2008.



The average number of items per case ranged from 2.7 to 2.8 prior to 2008, but rose to 3.6 beginning in 2008. This increase corresponded with the change in the Colorado law regarding retention of DNA evidence and the enhanced retention requirements from the DA's Office. If the trend continues, the need for additional storage space may be accelerated.





## Office of the City Auditor Police Evidence

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Because the trend began when the DNA laws changed and because all evidence was collected by officers in the field, we believe there may be a correlation between the change in laws and officer training on evidence collection related to DNA.

### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department review the trend of increasing items per case and evaluate the root cause behind the increase. Opportunities may exist to improve training concerning evidence collection.

### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The trend of rising evidentiary items per case is long and widely recognized as having a significant impact on Evidence Unit operations. This trend, however, is an external influence on the Evidence unit, which is common to most law enforcement agencies. The Evidence Unit will attempt to take the lead on addressing this trend and discuss training options with the department Investigations Division, Professional Standards Training Academy (Recruit and In-service classes), the Metro Crime Lab, and the Colorado Bureau of Investigations and establish a set of general guidelines.



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#### OBSERVATION 4 – SOME ITEMS IN INVENTORY APPEARED TO HAVE LIMITED VALUE

Two primary purposes of collecting and maintaining evidence are to further the investigation of crimes and to help convince a jury that the defendant committed the crime in question. The auditors noted multiple examples of items, some fairly large compared to typical evidence, which appeared to have little investigative or courtroom value. For example, rocks used to break windows during a break in and old computer monitors.

When we inquired about why certain items remained in inventory, we were told that because of the crime associated with the item, it should be retained in the event that it was needed in court. This includes old computer monitors that were collected along with all other computer equipment in sexual exploitation cases.

As the Evidence Unit had limited space available to store items and the process to dispose of items was time consuming, priority should be given to items which help further an investigation and help get convictions in the court room.

#### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department review the training and guidelines given to officers on evidence collection, and educate the officers of the impact of evidence collection. In addition, we recommend the City Attorney's and District Attorney's Offices be contacted to discuss the usefulness of certain items currently in evidence to determine if some items could be considered for disposal.

#### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

While this is an external influence on the operations of the Evidence Unit, we concur that contemporary evidence collection does impact the unit. The Evidence Unit will evaluate evidence collection methods and discuss training options with the department Investigations Division, the Professional Standards Division (Training Academy), the Metro Crime Lab, and the Colorado Bureau of Investigations.

The Evidence unit recently initiated another round of discussions with the DA's Office to review evidence release guidelines. The evidence unit also recognizes the limited value of certain items; however, as custodians the Evidence Unit has limited influence or control over submissions. Nevertheless, the Evidence Unit will take the lead on this matter until and when we hand off to another department unit/section.



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#### OBSERVATION 5 – DNA LAWS AND LOCAL GUIDELINES HAVE IMPACTED THE INCREASE IN EVIDENCE INVENTORY

Colorado law was revised in 2008 to require items that could possibly contain DNA evidence to be retained in certain crimes until the defendant dies, or in cases with no identified defendant, until the statute of limitations expire. For murder, kidnapping, treason, and forgery there was no limitation, which means the related evidence must be kept forever if a defendant was not named.

Guidelines provided to the Colorado Springs Police Department by the El Paso County District Attorney's Office directed all evidence in crimes with no statute of limitations, and several additional crimes with limitations of 3-10 years, must be retained indefinitely if no defendant was named.

The requirement to retain evidence indefinitely, especially in excess of what the law required, placed a burden on the storage of the Evidence Unit. If the statute of limitations passed for a crime and that crime could no longer be prosecuted, the value in retaining the evidence after that point was questionable.

These restrictions were certainly a contributory reason for the buildup of inventory in the Evidence Unit; however, the impact had not yet been fully felt because these changes were relatively new. In the future these requirements will have a greater impact on the Unit as ongoing criminal activity and evidence collection will force long-term storage of more evidence.

#### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department work with the District Attorney's Office and other stakeholders to review the guidelines regarding retaining evidence.

#### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

An ongoing dialogue has been established in the past with the District Attorney's Office to address evidence release guidelines. The Evidence Supervisor has recently communicated with the DA's Office for a meeting and ongoing discussion on current evidence release guidelines.



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#### OBSERVATION 6 – SOME EVIDENCE IN INVENTORY MAY HAVE BEEN ELIGIBLE FOR RELEASE

The El Paso County District Attorney's Office provided the auditors with a list of cases which were marked as being Colorado Springs Police Department cases that had been closed. Using analysis software, we were able to import the list and compare the case numbers to case numbers found in the Evidence Unit system.

This analysis showed 36,369 items in on-hand inventory from 6,339 unique cases which were marked as closed by the DA. Further analysis showed that 4,633 of these items also had a notation indicating that the evidence should be released.

It was noted that a similar report had been furnished to the Evidence Unit by the DA in the past, and that it was used as the primary authorization to release evidence. This report, in part, led to the improper purging of evidence in 2005. Caution and research will still need to occur in order to properly determine which of these items can be released; however, this list could serve as a starting point for research by the Evidence Techs.

#### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department research the items and cases which match the list provided by the District Attorney's Office to determine what items may be released. This report and analysis method may be beneficial to the Evidence Unit in the future to check for items that could be researched and possibly purged.

#### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We concur. Evidence technicians are now working overtime hours to process dispositions. They are utilizing this list as a tool in researching cases which may be available for release. A request for release of evidence is forwarded to the appropriate holding agency or unit of any identified closed case files. Evidence will not be released until all appropriate authorization has been received and verified. With the additional manpower afforded by the new hires, the Evidence Unit should be in a position to maximize efforts on reviews of case holds and dispositions.





#### OBSERVATION 7 – PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT OF INVENTORY REDUCED EFFECTIVENESS

The Evidence Unit stored evidence by general categories. For example, drugs and firearms were stored in their own locations and homicide was stored separately from general items. Firearms related to homicides were kept separate from other guns. As mentioned previously, the physical arrangement of the Evidence Unit had greatly improved since the prior audit.

The general items and drug room were not sorted by offense class such as misdemeanor or felony, were typically not sorted by crime; nor were they sorted by date of collection. This means that items that required long-term storage were mixed in with items that should have had a much faster turnaround time. Every time techs needed to locate an item, they had to look through the long-term and short-term items to find the specific item. The individual packages (bags, envelopes, etc.) were arranged by bar code number within a given box, however the process of locating the exact item was more time consuming because items were mixed together in a container.

Items were stored in the first container with space available that the evidence tech came across. Items of differing sizes being stored together made it difficult to quantify the volume of space items were taking up, leaving the Unit to monitor the number of items instead.

If items were stored by similar offenses and statute of limitations, it would be easier for the techs to catch items which could be released and they could more easily analyze data to determine which types of evidence were contributing to the growth of inventory. The techs relied on the information in the evidence system to identify items to research which might have been eligible for disposal. As discussed in Observation 9, the evidence system did not contain complete records for all items, offense classes in particular.

#### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department consider:

- Arranging inventory by age, type of crime and how long the item is expected to be held.
- Consider keeping like sized items together so inventory can be monitored in terms of volume, not only number of items.

#### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We concur that there may be some value in the concept of storing items by statute of limitation; however, logistically we do not feel it is a worthwhile effort at this time. Based on present inventory levels nearly reaching capacity this would require an immense amount of time and resources as locations would have to be emptied in order to backfill using the above recommended strategy. In addition, due to the inability to predict evidence size, volume and retention for any given case, it would be extremely difficult to effectively designate appropriately sized areas of the storage facility. We concur that keeping like sized items together increases efficiency. The evidence unit currently stores



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evidence primarily by size. There are designated locations for paper envelopes, odd-size items, large bags and oversized items. In addition, shelving for the gun vault was specifically designed to accommodate storing hand gun and long gun boxes in separate locations. Any change in evidence storage will bring with it enormous staff costs in labor and physical reconfigurations that must be balanced against perceived advantages in changing storage practices. In summary, every method of storage brings with it advantages and disadvantages; there are no ideal or utopian solutions.



#### OBSERVATION 8 – STAFFING IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE BENEFICIAL

The Evidence Unit employed no administrative personnel, which left tasks such as answering the phone, setting appointments with property owners, and processing paperwork to the technicians. This work took away time from essential activities such as researching cases for disposal and processing incoming evidence. Based on information provided by the Evidence Unit, our calculation showed that the Evidence Unit spent as much as 60 hours each week on administrative tasks.

#### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department consider adding an administrative position to the Unit to allow the techs to prioritize their time on primary tasks.

#### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We concur. During the 2012 budget submission process the Evidence Unit Supervisor and Logistics Support Section Manager submitted a proposal to hire two additional Evidence Technicians. The 2013 Evidence Unit budget subsequently authorized the hiring of one Full-Time Evidence Technician and one Full-Time (40 hour) Evidence Technician – Hourly. The Evidence Technician – Hourly position will fulfill the administrative role.



## OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND RESPONSES – SYSTEMS

### OBSERVATION 9 – INFORMATION SYSTEMS DID NOT CONTAIN ALL PERTINENT EVIDENCE INFORMATION

The Evidence Unit had to access multiple computer applications to research the status of cases when determining if items could be released or disposed. Some of the applications had been replaced with newer versions; however, the old versions still needed to be maintained and used for research because not all of the data had been transferred.

We identified 17 discrete tasks that were required to research a typical case for disposal of evidence. There were eight separate information systems used for this research, resulting in a total of 66 required verifications. In the following chart, each 'X' represents the required validation for the given step utilizing the information system indicated.

Evidence Research Process and Systems								
Research Task	Information System Accessed for Research							
	ETS	EOQ	LERMS	CRIS II	CJIS/MNI	Action Viewer	Data Access	Evidence Self Serve
Chain of custody	X	X						
Case type		X	X	X				
Case status			X	X	X	X	X	
Defendants		X	X	X		X		X
Related cases				X		X	X	
Other agencies involved			X	X				
DA release on file		X	X	X				
DNA release on file		X	X	X				
Summons #'s	X	X	X		X		X	
Victim information		X	X	X		X	X	
NCIC			X		X			
Property owner	X	X	X	X				
Outstanding warrants			X		X		X	
Offense type	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Offense description	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Is there a permanent hold on the case (homicide, kidnapping)	X	X						X
Are any relevant court orders pertaining to the case?	X	X	X	X				



Some of these systems were external to the Police Department, and were, therefore, outside the scope of this audit to recommend changes.

For the systems internal to the Department, we found several examples of incomplete information. For example, chain of custody information was split between the old and new evidence systems. For 72% (162,546) of items, this information was not migrated from the old evidence database. As a result, when techs needed to research an item or case, they had to refer to both systems before determining if the item could be released.

Certain crimes required that the evidence be maintained until the death of the defendant. The Evidence Unit was not informed of the status of defendants, as Social Security Numbers or other unique identifiers were not always recorded in the Evidence Unit system for defendants, and no automatic death notification was available.

Additionally, in the evidence database, there were approximately 79,000 items with no listed offense class, such as felony or misdemeanor. In order to determine the offense class, and the retention period for items, we had to combine data from multiple systems. The techs did not have the ability to create queries combining information from the various systems to assist them in their research. This limitation made it very difficult to determine how much inventory needed to be held for an extended period.

Time was wasted in research and expenses were incurred in continuing to maintain these older systems.

### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

- The Police Evidence Unit should identify data that resides only in the old computer applications and research the possibility of importing it into the new database with the goal being the elimination of the old application. This recommendation is specific to the Evidence Tracking System and EvidenceOnQ systems; however, other opportunities may exist with IT applications not completely under the control of the Evidence Unit.
- In addition to incorporating data present on older systems, the Police Evidence Unit should determine if there is a data source that could be used to easily populate the evidence system with the missing offense classes and other data that could reduce research time.
- Ensure appropriate personal information of defendants is recorded in cases where the evidence will be held until their death, and investigate a method of receiving automatic notifications of their death.

### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We concur. The Evidence Supervisor is discussing options with the City Information Technology (IT) Department for future integration between the data stored in the old Evidence Tracking System and EvidenceOnQ. Prior to the drafting of this report the department entered into negotiations with



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FileOnQ, the vendor for EvidenceOnQ and the vendor for the Law Enforcement Records Management System (LERMS) application, New World Systems (NWS). As a result, a Purchase Order was recently awarded for an interface between EvidenceOnQ and LERMS with the goal of establishing one integrated Evidence tracking and inventory system. The two vendors are now in discussion on implementing the interface.



#### OBSERVATION 10 – DATA NEEDED TO BE ENTERED TWICE BY OFFICERS

When officers brought in evidence, they were responsible for entering data into the Law Enforcement Records Management System (LERMS) regarding the case and then entering duplicate information into the evidence system. This created the opportunity for errors and took up valuable officer time.

Prior to issuance of this report, discussions were underway to implement improvements in these applications.

#### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Evidence Unit investigate opportunities to integrate the LERMS and evidence systems to eliminate the need for duplicate data entry.

#### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We concur. Prior to the drafting of this report the department entered into negotiations with FileOnQ, the vendor for EvidenceOnQ and New World Systems (NWS), the vendor for the LERMS application. As a result, a Purchase Order was recently awarded for an interface between EvidenceOnQ and LERMS. The two vendors are now in discussion on implementing the interface.



## OBSERVATION 11 – EVIDENCE SYSTEM COULD BENEFIT FROM MODIFICATIONS

We noted the evidence tracking system had several issues related to item information.

- A. The on-hand inventory report was not accurate. The report included locations that were not under the control of the Evidence Unit. Ideally this report should only show those locations for which the Evidence Unit was responsible. Examples of locations classified as on-hand included the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, the District Attorney's Office, and the Colorado Springs Police Department K-9 Unit.
- B. In the EvidenceOnQ database, the offense descriptions were not standardized. For example, "2 DEG. BURGLARY", "2ND DEGREE BURGLARY", and "BURGLARY IN THE SECOND DEGREE" all denoted the same offense, but the officer submitting the evidence phrased them differently. This information was entered into a text box that was filled in by the officers, and there appeared to be no set naming convention to identify the crimes. This also contributed to the excessive research time and limited the ability to analyze the data for meaningful trends.
- C. When evidence was collected by officers, the date the item was recovered was noted in the system. The EvidenceOnQ database contained five items which showed a recovery date (the date the item was obtained for evidence) in the future, which was impossible. Some were dated in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2012 and some were dated in 2020-2021. The data was copied from the Evidence System in August 2012, meaning any collection date after August could not have happened yet. This could cause a problem with the chain of custody records, and made the evidence system inaccurate in respect to those specific records.

## AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Colorado Springs Police consider the following actions:

- A. Review the locations included in the on-hand inventory report and modify the report to reflect only those locations under the control of the Evidence Unit.
- B. Consider making the offense description field a drop down menu or implement some standard naming convention.
- C. Determine if the EvidenceOnQ system can be modified to prevent entry of future recovery dates.

## COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We concur with the recommendation to review modifications to the EvidenceOnQ system. The evidence unit regularly communicates customization options with the EvidenceOnQ vendor administrator and we have a favorable track record in receiving recommended option or enhancements. The Evidence unit will communicate the above recommendations to the EvidenceOnQ administrator.





## OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND RESPONSES – INTERNAL CONTROLS

### OBSERVATION 12 – INVENTORY CHECKOUT AND RETURN CONTROLS COULD BE IMPROVED

Items could be checked out of the Evidence Unit by appropriate officers, investigators, the DA, DEA and other outside agencies, or the crime lab. When evidence items were transferred outside the unit, they were scanned into a location in the evidence system (EOQ) and a responsible party signed either the EOQ signature pad or a paper receipt.

Items were often checked out for extended periods of time, in excess of the Standard Operating Procedures. Of the 6,100 items listed in locations indicating they were checked out of the Evidence Unit, 31.4% had been checked out for 6 to 12 months and an additional 33.5% were checked out more than 1 year.

No reconciliation was performed to validate which items that were checked out will be returned and which will not be returned. Items could be returned to the owner by officers or during the court process by the DA, but the Evidence Unit was not notified and the evidence database was not updated to indicate the final disposition of these items. The locations in EOQ did not differentiate between items permanently checked out and those that were expected to be returned.

### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department:

- Enforce the current SOP rules for how long items can be checked out or ask that the final disposition (i.e. returned to owner) be indicated in the evidence database.
- Improve documentation of where items checked out are and who is responsible for them.
- Perform regular reconciliations of items checked out.

### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Evidence unit will begin conversations to identify those locations in EvidenceOnQ which represent a temporary location and those which represent a permanently transferred location (i.e., the evidence will never be returned to the Evidence unit). Once these locations are established, we can then identify which transfers require a time-limit and/or a receipt if the time-limit is exceeded. On January 23, 2013, the department published Bulletin 502-13 (O), Evidence Transactions to Courts and Outside Agencies, reinforcing the chain of custody procedures for evidence signed out to external jurisdictions or agencies.

This clarification requires an officer to provide a signed receipt from the court or outside law enforcement agency if evidence is retained. If the officer does not receive a receipt on the transfer of evidence, the evidence is returned to the Evidence Unit. We will update all applicable Evidence Unit SOPs with this clarification. The final disposition of items signed out to internal units/sections and



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external agencies will be indicated in the EvidenceOnQ database and annual review of evidence signed out from the Evidence Unit will be conducted.



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#### OBSERVATION 13 – EXCESS CURRENCY WAS RETAINED IN THE EVIDENCE UNIT

Currency submitted as evidence was retained by the Evidence Unit in a safe, which presented an internal control risk. Some of this currency, such as cash recovered from a bank robbery with red dye on it, needed to be retained as specific evidence. Most of the currency, however, appeared to have little value as specific evidence and could have been deposited into a bank account until such time as its final disposition was known.

The International Association for Property and Evidence, Inc. (IAPE), Standard # 10, addresses proper handling of currency. Standard 10.3 “Money - Documentation of Movement” states, “Money should be deposited or transferred out of the property room as soon as practical once it no longer has evidentiary value.” In addition, the authors of “Property and Evidence by the Book” indicate that “less than 1% of all currency stored as evidence in our property rooms is ever introduced into court.”

There was no procedure to transfer money being held as evidence to a bank for safekeeping.

#### AUDITOR’S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department review the procedures regarding cash held as evidence, and consider making regular deposits when appropriate. The cash handling procedures may include a process for depositing any amount over a set threshold or making regular deposits of all currency received when the actual currency submitted is not deemed to be of particular value to the prosecution of the case. If it is determined that cash should be returned to an owner, this could be accomplished by writing them a check from the safe keeping account.

#### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We concur with the observation. Several years ago, the then Evidence Unit Supervisor and Logistics Support Manager proposed a similar change in cash retention procedures. The department Fiscal Services Supervisor submitted the proposed changes to City Finance. The proposal was rejected with the explanation that Finance was the only disbursing agent for the City of Colorado Springs. We will, however, resubmit our proposal and attempt to negotiate a satisfactory agreement with City Finance.

If approved, the practical implementation of this recommendation could potentially take several years as it would still be necessary to obtain the appropriate release documentation for every item of currency in the safe before any currency considered non-evidentiary for its physical value to the case could be transferred to a financial institution.



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## OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND RESPONSES - OTHER

### OBSERVATION 14 – GUN AUCTIONS WERE TIME INTENSIVE AND EXPENSIVE

The Colorado Springs Police Department conducted auctions of certain firearms no longer needed. For a firearm to be auctioned it had to first be test fired by the Metro Crime Lab, and the projectile and shell casing were kept by the Evidence Unit for potential future reference. Handgun results were entered into a national database and kept locally; long gun results were only kept locally.

Guns awaiting test firing and auction were accumulating in the Evidence Unit due to a backlog of more pressing tasks in the Crime Lab. Our analysis estimates 568 firearms were waiting to be auctioned, most of which needed to be test fired first. Multiple steps are involved to complete the test firing. According to a study prepared by the Crime Lab, the entire process of checking out guns, preparing, conducting and documenting the test firing and then returning the guns to inventory takes approximately two hours per gun. Therefore, to complete this testing would consume approximately 1,100 man hours. Per the Crime Lab, the test firing was normally handled by a trained ballistic technician and because of staffing constraints they would need to work overtime to accomplish these tests.

There are other costs and labor involved when a gun auction is held. A study of all of the associated costs had not been performed. The potential benefits compared to the cost of gun auctions had not been documented. Testing the guns and conducting the auction appeared to be an expensive, time consuming operation.

### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that the Colorado Springs Police Department:

- Consider destroying the guns currently waiting to be auctioned to free up space in the gun room.
- Evaluate the costs and benefits of holding firearm auctions vs. destroying all guns involved in crimes. Consideration should be given to the amount of Evidence and Crime Lab personnel time used in preparing for the auctions.
- Investigate not test firing long guns since the results are not recorded into a database.

### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

We agree. In 2009 the City Council directed the sale of firearms at auction. The Evidence Unit will submit a request for consideration to destroy the guns currently awaiting auction to free up space until a full cost-benefit analysis can be conducted and reviewed. If directed to resume auctioning firearms, the Evidence Unit will track all expenses or debits mandated by the Colorado Revised Statutes, to include the cost of the auction advertisements, over-time expenses for security, Crime Lab Technician time/labor to test fire the firearms, Evidence Technician time/labor to support and conduct the auction,



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and proceeds forfeited to the Courts, and Victim's Compensation Fund for a full cost-benefit analysis. In May 2012 the department Command Group approved an Evidence Unit change in procedure for test-firing weapons. According to the Colorado Bureau of Investigations, they do not enter test fires from long guns into National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN). For this reason, the Evidence Unit stopped the practice of submitting long guns to the Crime Lab for test firing to fall in line with the CBI recommendations.



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## OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

### OPPORTUNITY 1 – CSPD AND DA EVIDENCE SYSTEMS SHOULD SHARE INFORMATION

The Colorado Springs Police Evidence Unit and the DA's Office both used EvidenceOnQ to track their evidence inventory. The CSPD and the DA had started to share data, but there was still room for improvement. When the DA needed evidence, they were able to login to the CSPD EOQ system to view and select specific items related to a case. The Evidence Technicians received an automated notice of these selections and pulled the requested items. When the DA arrived to collect the evidence, they also received a printed report listing the various items.

Manual data entry was still required by the DA to bring the items into their inventory and by the CSPD Evidence Unit when the items were returned. This duplication of data entry created opportunities for errors and increased the time required to process transfers.

These systems operated on different networks and had different stakeholders, but because the data was contained in databases from the same vendor, there could be efficiencies if information was shared electronically.

### AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

Investigate opportunities to share data between the DA's EOQ system and the CSPD EOQ system to improve efficiencies in both offices. Currently there is a manual sharing of information that may be improved if the EOQ developers were involved.

### COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

Because the District Attorney's Office facilitates evidence functions with the entire 4<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, we do not believe it is feasible in practice to pursue this recommendation as there is the potential for the DA's Office to share information with multiple agencies, that may result in security issues. The DA's Office has access to the CSPD EvidenceOnQ system and utilizes it to electronically request items for court. There is little need for CSPD to access the DA's Office EvidenceOnQ system. At any time, the Evidence unit can request chain-of-custody documentation from the DA's Office Evidence tracking system.



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## OPPORTUNITY 2 – DIGITAL MEDIA MAY DEGRADE AND BECOME UNREADABLE

Recordable media such as writable CD/DVDs, audio tapes and VCR tapes, were used to produce and store evidence. This included recordings of interviews and pictures of crime scenes. While this type of media had a long life expectancy, it was subject to wear and failure, especially if it was of poor quality or was mishandled. As technology advances, some older types of media, such as audio cassette tapes and VCR tapes, may become unreadable if the proper playing device was no longer available.

The evidence inventory included over 19,000 items of digital media, with an average age of 2.59 years.

According the National Archives:

*"CD/DVD experiential life expectancy is 2 to 5 years even though published life expectancies are often cited as 10 years, 25 years, or longer. However, a variety of factors... may result in a much shorter life span for CDs/DVDs. Life expectancies are statistically based; any specific medium may experience a critical failure before its life expectancy is reached. Additionally, the quality of your storage environment may increase or decrease the life expectancy of the media. We recommend testing your media at least every two years to assure your records are still readable."*

SOURCE: <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/initiatives/temp-opmedia-faq.html>

## AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

We recommend the Evidence Unit adopt the guidelines of the National Archives to ensure evidence stored on digital media remains readable. DVDs used to store evidence should be of high quality and special emphasis should be put on proper handling, packaging and storage. Critical evidence may warrant additional back-ups in case of damage to a DVD.

In addition, some type of alternative back up method should be considered to increase the likelihood that digital information will be available when needed.

## COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

The Metro Crime Lab (MCL) is responsible for storing all photographs taken by Police Department employees in support of all criminal and traffic investigations. The MCL recognizes the potential for digital media to degrade and become unreadable. In an effort to prevent that from happening the MCL has researched the possibility of moving digital media to a Digital Imaging Management System (DIMS) which would store digital images on a high capacity storage device with redundant storage capability. Off the shelf DIMS software has been tested and a system identified for purchase using federal grant money. About the same time the City of Colorado Springs (City) embarked on a transition to a Digital Records Management System (RMS). During the development phase of the city RMS it was projected that the RMS could be modified to incorporate a DIMS module. Development of that module has been ongoing for over a year. The MCL expects to begin testing the DIMS module in the next few months.

# CITY COUNCIL'S OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR

## COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

### **About our Office**

The mission of the Office of the City Auditor is to provide City Council with an independent, objective and comprehensive auditing program for operations of the City. Our auditing program includes:

- Evaluating the adequacy of financial controls, records and operations
- Evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational operations
- Providing Council, management and employees objective analysis, appraisals, and recommendations for improving systems and activities

The Office of the City Auditor is responsible for auditing the systems used by the City of Colorado Springs and its enterprises, including Colorado Springs Utilities. We perform a variety of audits for these entities, including financial audits, performance audits, contract audits, construction audits, and information system audits. We also perform follow-up on a periodic basis to monitor and ensure management actions have been effectively implemented.

### **Authorization and Organizational Placement**

Our audits are conducted under the authority of Chapter 1, Article 2, Part 7 of the Colorado Springs City Code, and more specifically parts 703, 705 and 706 of the Code. The Office of the City Auditor is structured in a manner to provide organizational independence from the entities it audits. This independence is accomplished by the City Auditor being appointed by and reporting directly to the City Council.

### **Audit Standards**

The audit was conducted in a manner that meets or exceeds the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, a part of the Professional Practices Framework promulgated by the Institute of Internal Auditors, with the exception of the requirements under standards 1312 and 1321 to obtain an external quality assurance review once every five years. We do not believe this non-compliance impacted the quality of our audit.

The audit included interviews with appropriate personnel and such tests of records and other supporting documentation as deemed necessary in the circumstances. We reviewed the internal control structure and compliance tests. Sufficient competent evidential matter was gathered to support our conclusions.