



City of Corpus Christi City Auditor's Office

**AU17 - 003
Police Department
Property Room Audit Report**

**George Holland
City Auditor
April 17, 2025**



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Executive Summary

In conformity with the 2024 Annual Audit Plan, the City Auditor's Office (CAO) evaluated the controls in place and their sufficiency over the City of Corpus Christi Police Department's Property Room. The CAO did not identify any findings during this audit. However, the CAO noted the observations below:

1. Outdated Night Lockers – The night lockers that hold property and evidence are 33+ years old and have several different locks requiring staff to sort through keys to find the right one to open the locker. The lockers are frequently out of service, requiring maintenance, and have limited space for storing property and evidence.
2. Guns Sent for Destruction – If a gun stored in the property room is not returned to its owner, kept for departmental use, or kept in safekeeping, it is sent for destruction. Guns are destroyed at least once a month, and include collector's edition weapons. Higher-end weapons can be sold, generating revenues for the City of Corpus Christi. However, all guns are destroyed.
3. Routine Inspections – Water lines and other piping run along the ceiling of the property room warehouse. The exposed piping hangs above the shelves where property and evidence are stored. We found that routine inspections of these pipes were not being conducted.
4. Property Stored in Cardboard Boxes – Depending on the type of property, an item must be stored in a cardboard box to allow for the item to breathe and not become moldy. However, not all items are required to be stored in cardboard boxes. No plastic tote bins, which could protect items in the event of a water line burst, are currently utilized for storage.
5. Cash Counts Conducted by Hand – Cash up for disposition is deposited weekly. The cash counts are conducted by hand by the Money & Jewelry Vault Custodian. A money counter is not utilized during this process, which is inefficient, and counterfeit bills cannot be detected quickly.
6. Exposed Keys – All keys used to open night lockers, vaults, etc., are hanging and exposed. The department's keys were not in a designated key safe.

Finding – an issue where the department is non-compliant with a contractual provision, a stated policy, or procedure. A finding may also be identified as an effect on the schedule or budget or an immediate control risk.

Observation – the auditor has determined that the issue poses a possible risk of becoming a finding. An observation might also be a process improvement.

Introduction

The City of Corpus Christi Auditor's Office is responsible for providing: (a) an independent assessment of City operations to ensure policies and procedures are in place and complied with, inclusive of purchasing and contracting; (b) information that is accurate and reliable; (c) assurance that assets are properly recorded and safeguarded; (d) assurance that risks are identified and minimized; and (e) assurance that resources are used economically, efficiently, and that the City's objectives are being achieved.

Objective

The CAO completed the performance audit of the Police Department—Property Room AU17-003. The objective of the audit was to evaluate whether sufficient controls were in place over the evidence and property room function.

Scope

Our audit covered the period from January 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, and was limited to verifying the existence and disposition documentation of property and evidence. Due to Chain of Custody restrictions, the CAO staff could not open the sealed envelopes, bags, or boxes to verify their contents. Additionally, narcotics and the impound lot were not in the scope of this audit.

Methodology

To achieve the audit objective, the CAO performed the following:

- Interviewed staff within the Property Warehouse Division.
- Conducted walk-throughs of property/evidence warehouses.
- Reviewed the City of Corpus Christi Police Department Property Warehouse Policy and Procedures Manual, the City of Corpus Christi Police Department Property and Evidence Policies and Procedures, Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Security Policy, and the Texas Code of Criminal Procedures.
- Evaluated internal controls related to property and evidence accountability.
- Observed the collection, processing, storage, and disposition of property and evidence.
- Observed the destruction of weapons at a third-party location.
- Obtained and reviewed Crystal Reports inventory records of property and evidence.
- Obtained and reviewed audit logs and disposition forms for disposition items sent out for auction.
- Obtained and reviewed Daily Activity Logs for Property Warehouse staff.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). 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 the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

The Corpus Christi Police Department (CCPD) Property Evidence Division manages the receipt, storage, transfer, and disposal of property and evidence. The CCPD Property Room manages the storage of property and evidence of over 100,000 items, utilizing one primary location and one remote auxiliary location.¹

The Property Room is responsible for:

1. Maintaining a system, Info View, to manage acceptance, storage, transfer, and removal of property and evidence.
2. Safeguarding the integrity of property and evidence by maintaining strict security and safety measures, proper packaging and storage methods, proper chain of custody tracking, current standards, and supplies associated with the documentation and storage of property and evidence.

To meet these responsibilities, the Property Warehouse must follow several Chapters of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, including Chapter 12, *Limitation*, and Chapter 18, *Search Warrants*, related to the disposition of seized property, as well as departmental policies and procedures regarding the storage and disposition of seized or found property and evidence.

Staff

The Property Room staff includes five civilian Property Warehouse Storekeepers, one part-time, retired officer, and one Property Warehouse Lead. Property Storekeepers maintain division records by conducting periodic reviews and inventories of recovered/stolen property and reviewing inventory assessments to ensure that the property is accounted for. Storekeepers enter inventory data into computer databases and release property to owners, detectives, and other agencies as per the proper chain of custody. All Storekeepers are trained in all warehouse areas, including the Gun Vault, Homicide Vault, and Money/Jewelry Vault. Storekeepers also prepare unclaimed property for the monthly auction pick-up. The Property Room also has a service window where Storekeepers help citizens pick up their found or safekeeping items Monday through Friday, from 8 am to 5 pm.

¹ Item count as of June 2024.

Property Intake

Property includes items collected as evidence, seized for forfeiture, determined to be abandoned, or otherwise kept in custody for safekeeping. The property or evidence consists of weapons, jewelry, electronics, money, personal belongings, or other property. After an item has been seized or found, a Corpus Christi Police Officer turns the items into the Property Room night lockers. Property Room staff pull reports each morning and retrieve and verify items against the report. After processing, each item is given a location and stored in the warehouse.

Figure 1: Life Cycle of Property Items

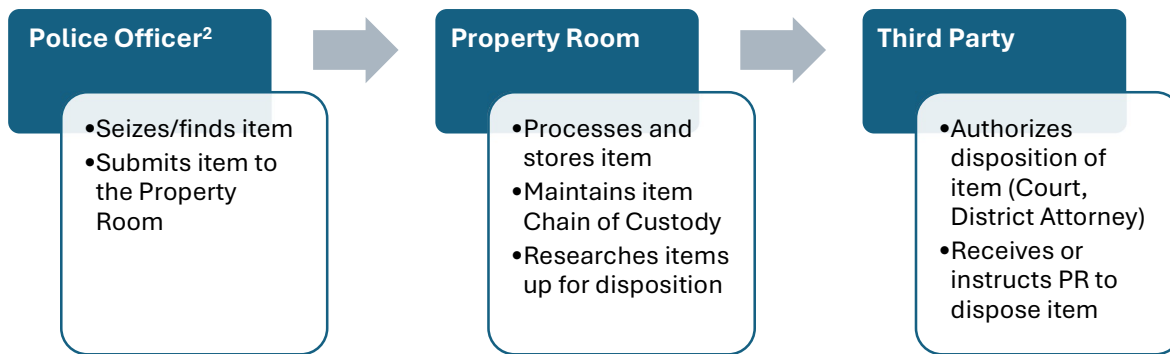


Figure 2: Number of Intake & Purged Items in the last 4 years

Year	# of Intake Items	Year	# of Purged Items
2021	16,913	2021	20,466
2022	16,422	2022	27,500
2023	19,050	2023	20,957
2024	17,602	2024	17,827

Figure 2 demonstrates property continuously being submitted and purged from 2021 through 2024.

² Items seized or found by Police Officers are not part of the Property Room function. The step was included to show how items enter the Property Room and are processed.

CCPD Property Warehouse Mission Statement

The Corpus Christi Police Department Property Evidence Division receives and stores evidence, found, and safekeeping property. Our goal is to return found and safekeeping property to the rightful owner(s) when possible or legally dispose of the property in a timely manner. We gladly serve the community, our officers, and other law enforcement agencies.

The Property Warehouse receives annual external audits and semi-annual inspections for accreditation with the Texas Police Chief's Association (TCPA) Accreditation Program. The annual audit is turned over to the TCPA Accreditation Program to meet Standard 12.08, *Inventory of Property/Evidence*. The semi-annual inspection is turned into the TCPA Accreditation Program to meet Standard 12.07, *Inspection of Property/Evidence*. The Chief of Police also reviews the annual audits and semi-annual inspections. The CCPD Property Warehouse has received accreditation after every audit and inspection.³

Property Release & Disposal

Types of property disposal include release, destruction, auction, or requisition. After items have met their retention period, a Disposition Form is sent to the assigned investigator. The investigator will authorize the item to be held because of a pending case, partially released (if several items), disposed of/destroyed, released to the owner, or sold at auction. Items that cannot be released or sent to auction but are still functional are sent to Metro Ministries for use.

Figure 3: Disposition Process



Additional Information:

See Appendix A for the Management Responses

Staff Acknowledgement:

Samantha Chapa, Auditor-In-Charge
Amr Hussein, Senior Auditor
Cathy Bracken, Temp. Auditor
Jacob Clark, Audit Intern

³ The CAO did not utilize results from external performance audits.

Appendix A: Management Response

April 17, 2025

George H. Holland,
City Auditor
Corpus Christi, Texas

RE: Corpus Christi Police Department – Property Room

We have carefully reviewed the recommendations presented in the audit report referenced below, and our action plans to address the observations are described on the following pages.

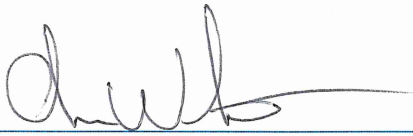
☒

Agree

☐

Disagree

Sincerely,



Christopher White
Assistant Police Chief

5/5/25

Date



Mike Markle
Chief of Police

5/5/25

Date



Peter Zanoni
City Manager

May 12, 2025

Date

Summary of Management Responses

Recommendation #1 - Outdated Night Lockers		
Property and evidence are stored by CCPD in outdated night lockers, with different locks requiring staff to use more than one key to open the lockers when retrieving items. The lockers are frequently out of service, requiring maintenance, and have limited space for storing property and evidence. Staff is called in later or over the weekend to store items that do not fit in the lockers.		
Recommended Action Plan: New modern lockers should be purchased for the department. The purchase would be a one-time expense that would improve the department's efficiency and offer more storage space for incoming items.		
Agree/Disagree:	Responsible Party:	Completion Date:
Agree	Pat Persohn	October 2025
Management Response: CCPD will acquire a quote for lockers and also work with Facilities Maintenance on a quote on a remodel.		
Recommendation #2 - Guns Sent for Destruction		
Guns not returned to their owner, kept in safekeeping, or kept for departmental use are destroyed. Guns, including limited edition/collector's item weapons, are destroyed monthly.		
Recommended Action Plan: Limited edition and collector's item weapons should be sold to generate revenues for the City of Corpus Christi.		
Agree/Disagree:	Responsible Party:	Completion Date:
Disagree	N/A	N/A
Management Response: CCPD Command Staff does not agree to this, and CCPD will not sell any guns.		

Recommendation #3 - Routine Inspections		
Water lines and other piping run along the ceiling of the property room warehouse. The exposed piping hangs above the shelves where property and evidence are stored. Routine inspections of these pipes are not being conducted. This could lead to malfunction, destroying property and evidence.		
Recommended Action Plan: Perform routine inspections of all piping and water lines to avoid the potential of damaged property and evidence.		
Agree/Disagree: Agree	Responsible Party: Pat Persohn	Completion Date: October 2025
Management Response: CCPD agrees to put in a Work Order with Facilities Maintenance for this recommendsation.		
Recommendation #4 - Property Stored in Cardboard Boxes		
Property and evidence are stored in cardboard boxes. With the risk of having water lines and other piping running along the ceiling in the warehouse, there is a possibility that items could become damaged. Property and evidence could potentially become compromised.		
Recommended Action Plan: Items not required to be stored in cardboard boxes should be stored in plastic totes to minimize the risk of items becoming damaged.		
Agree/Disagree: Agree	Responsible Party: Pat Persohn	Completion Date: October 2025
Management Response: CCPD agrees to look at the feasibility of moving property to storage bins for protection from potential water damage.		

Recommendation #5 - Cash Counts by Hand <i>(Implemented)</i>		
Cash up for disposition is deposited weekly. The cash count is conducted by hand by the Money & Jewelry Vault Custodian. A money counter is not utilized during this process, which is inefficient, and counterfeit bills cannot be detected quickly.		
Recommended Action Plan: Purchase a money counter to ensure all monies are counted correctly and no counterfeits are sent for deposit.		
Agree/Disagree: Agree	Responsible Party: Pat Persohn	Completion Date: February 2025
Management Response: A money counter has been purchased and is in use.		
Recommendation #6 - Exposed Keys <i>(Implemented)</i>		
All keys used to open the night lockers, vaults, etc., are hanging on a wall and exposed. The department's keys were not in a designated key safe. Unauthorized access can occur, putting the keys at risk of being taken.		
Recommended Action Plan: Install a key safe to keep all department keys in one secure area.		
Agree/Disagree: Agree	Responsible Party: Pat Persohn	Completion Date: February 2025
Management Response: A key safe has been purchased and installed. It is now in use.		