

PROPERTY ROOM CONSULTING, INC

"We rescue law enforcement property rooms"



Inspection and Inventory Audit Report

Teaneck Police Department NJ

Conducted November 8 - December 1, 2021

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Background: I was contacted by Teaneck Police Department in reference to conducting an inventory audit of the Police Department's Evidence Room. The agency is accredited and it is seeking re-accreditation at this time. Audit is to replace outgoing personnel (Garcia/Adamili/Distler and install incoming personnel (Diaz/Aninori/Skoufas/McGurr. I subsequently provided a quote for services, which the Department subsequently accepted. We agreed on a start date of November 8, 2021.

On Scene Evaluation:

Checklist:

The evidence/property room is being maintained in a neat and orderly fashion. **Yes**

The integrity of the stored evidence property is being maintained. **Yes**

The evidence/property is being protected from damage and deterioration. **Yes (with notation 1)**

Proper accountability procedures are being maintained. **Yes (with notation 2&3)**

Evidence and/or property having no further evidentiary value has been identified and is ready for disposal. **Yes**

Temporary storage areas are clean, intact and all locking mechanisms are functional. **Yes**

It appears that all department directives concerning the property management function are being followed without exception. **Yes.**

Notation 1: The evidence room underwent a mold remediation in 2018.

Notation 2: I intentionally reference sequential property numbers as PR rather than PD as the Department references them to avoid confusion with another PD field.

Notation 3: Accountability procedures are generally good with the exception of legacy evidence prior to PR000001 in 2007 and no directive requiring dual verification of cash prior to submission as noted within the report.

Teaneck Inspection

Intake and Packaging of Evidence:

- Efficient. Case officer completes BEAST entries and generate barcodes.
- Require double verification for cash and CDS prior to heat sealing. Have both officers sign across the seal(s).

Property Management Systems:

Log Books:

Log book system is used to track evidence until mid-2018. Each item is given a unique property record (PR) number. The log books are generally well maintained with the exception of narcotics until roughly 2014, which had been logged into the books but not updated. Some cases, particularly BON cooperatives had been stored within the narco unit, and the drugs and records were not maintained in the evidence room. This situation appears to have been corrected several years ago, but the records from that period are less reliable than the recordkeeping system itself.

BEAST System is not being used as intended. **ISSUE STILL REMAINS**

Location/Status related errors are primarily due to one of two reasons.

1. Outgoing evidence custodian did not have a good understanding of how to operate the Beast system correctly.
2. Items are being scanned exclusively via speed sheet rather than at point of transaction.

Storage System related inefficiencies are primarily due to the system not being set up to mirror the physical design of the room(s)

Four main aspects of BEAST

Collection Purpose: Why an item is brought into the function. Examples include:

- Evidence: Pending further criminal/quasi criminal action
- Forfeiture: Pending civil forfeiture (must be submitted to BCPO within 48hr)
- Found Property: No owner, things of value, keys
- Safekeeping: DV Seizure, TERPO, Temp custody for weapons of those on vacation, etc.

Offense Type: The most serious offense associated with the item, or other occurrence prompting item intake. Examples include:

- Homicide
- Robbery
- Possession of CDS
- Ordinance Violation
- Found Property

Status: The general whereabouts of the item. Examples include:

- Stored in location (and the specific location within the department)
- To lab
- To court

Item Type: The specific category of property or evidence to which an item belongs. Examples include:

- Handgun
- Rifle
- Shotgun
- Vegetation
- Power Substance
- Rocklike Substance

UNDERSTANDING THESE ASPECTS IS CRITICAL AND SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO ALL PERSONNEL VIA ROLL CALL TRAINING. The above aspects, when properly documented work together to create an accurate inventory of all items on hand, an accurate chain of custody for each item and serve to provide alerts to the property custodian to assist in disposition of each item. Unfortunately, the system is not being used correctly for these purposes, which in turn compromises the usefulness and veracity of the data.

Temporary Evidence Holding:

Temporary holding is a key in only design, meaning that once the impounding officer has secured the items, the only person(s) who could access them are the property custodian keyholders. The current method of temporary evidence holding is acceptable.

Physical Design of the Evidence Vault

The main vault appears to be in compliance with the NJ Attorney General Guideline and best practices.

Security/Environmental: **Construction is solid including above the drop ceilings, which is optimum.**

- The vault is located in a secure area within the police department and the vault entrance door is under video surveillance.
- Vault door does not contain glass or other easily breeched materials.
- The vault does not contain windows but is separated from records archives only by chain-link.
- Locking mechanisms include separately keyed deadbolt locks at all access point doors.
- Fire suppression present.
- *NJ Attorney General/NJSACOP Guideline requirement - **High risk items are secured under a separate layer of security (cash, CDS, firearms and jewelry/precious metals/gemstones valued at over \$500.*** This is accomplished through the use of locking cabinets with the vaults. CDS, currency and jewelry, precious metals and gemstones along with perishables are all stored within vault, separated within locked cabinets.
- Room has been remediated for mold.
- HEPA air handler is present, but just became inoperable. This should be replaced when possible.

Storage Scheme: Logistically the room is laid out so that it is easily understood by a reasonable person.

- The storage locations within the room can easily translate to identifiable storage locations within the BEAST. It is possible for the custodian to locate an item in a timely manner based on “property numbers” in the legacy system and; barcode in the BEAST system.
- Items are generally kept off the ground.
- Good assortment of bins, boxes, open shelving, drums and binders.
- Storage locations should be created for items moved from their primary location awaiting a process such as return, destruction, auction, etc. When an item is slated for its respective process, it should be moved to the awaiting process location, such as “destruction box A”, but should remain in status “stored in location” until the item is actually destroyed or transferred to another agency for destruction.
- Some new locations have been created that conflict with others.

Administration of the Evidence Vault

Special Handling Items:

Cash/Jewelry/Gems/Precious Metals:

Cash is generally handled properly.

- Found money and non-essential evidence money is transferred into a law enforcement trust account within municipal finance, within 48 hr; or returned to owner.
- Funds pending forfeiture are deposited with County Prosecutor, within 48 hr.
- Only cash absolutely needed for prosecution such as dye pack cash, bloody cash, serial number recorded cash is kept as evidence.
- Cash and other high value storage locations should be contained within the "Cash/Jewl" locker section in the BEAST
- Dept is excellent in regard to putting cash on deposit.

Firearms: Firearms are segregated from general property in an area known as "RLOCK or GLOCK" in locking cabinets.

- Notation of cleared and checked should be notated in BEAST entry, along with the hazard marking "Firearm" on the BEAST label.
- Firearms storage locations should be contained within the "firearms" locker section in the BEAST
- Hasp and lock needed RLOCK1
- Firearms Holding Locker 2 should be renamed to match the rest of the scheme.

CDS: CDS is segregated from general property in an area known as "NARC" in locking cabinets.

- CDS storage locations should be contained within the "CDS" locker section in the BEAST

DNA: DNA is segregated from general property in an area known as "DNA" in a locking refrigerator.

- DNA storage locations should be contained within the "DNA" locker section in the BEAST
- Add lock mechanism to both fridges
- DNA snapshot in time audit attached.

Storage capacity as an issue. Lack of expansion space was evident at a nearly critical level. This condition is mostly the result of a failure to purge evidence over the last decades. Part of this endeavor is to help reduce volume through identifying items to be purged. During our time onsite, thousands of drugs and general evidence that had met purge requirements were segregated for destruction. Additionally, TPD staff updated the log books and created a running manifest with all items to be purged, I am requesting a copy upon completion as a secondary list for future audits.

Temporary Release of Evidence:

Most often accomplished for lab analysis. Items needing lab analysis are generally segregated when they are removed from the temporary evidence lockers and placed in a “to lab” box. The evidence custodian is responsible for all submissions. I noted that a large portion of any paperwork discrepancies can be attributed to either the log book or the BEAST not being updated when given items are transferred, most often to lab. This condition is apparent in legacy entries, i.e. those prior to the current evidence custodians. Items known or suspected to not be currently at the lab need to be researched as best as possible and the disposition noted in the entries.

Purge:

Will update in 2022. Large scale purge just accomplished.

Additional purging needs to take place on a regular basis, as my mission was to create space to make the room manageable in terms of space. Effort should be made to purge three items for each new item brought in. Meeting this goal should result in manageable inventory levels. To accomplish this, I estimate needing a dedicated officer to evidence with no other responsibilities. Disposition methods are discussed below.

- Destruction: Contraband as well as items of identification and financial instruments such as credit cards, financial documents, etc that cannot be returned should be destroyed by an appropriate method. The same applies to firearms that have been approved for destruction. Follow Bergen County policies relating to destruction, and if none exists, state policy.
- Auction: Property that becomes owned by the municipality such as that found by an officer, or unclaimed property not wanted by the finder or abandoned property should be auctioned. This can be accomplished by conducting a live municipal auction or using a service such as govdeals.com or propertyroom.com.
- Donate: Municipal government can authorize donation of property such as bicycles or youth sporting equipment to a 503c entity.
- Return to Owner/Finder

Follow NJ AG Directive 2011-01 and revisions as well as Bergen County policy.

Disposition eligibility is dependent on the reason why a given item was impounded. The following is largely representative, although **some counties have stricter requirements:**

- Indictable charges filed and disposed of in Superior Court: NJ AG Directive 2011-01 sets an evidence retention period for all evidence used in a criminal prosecution which is generally 5

years OR expiration of sentence, whichever is longer. To determine eligibility, there is a time consuming and tedious process. First, the cases needing review need to be identified. Then the cases must be researched in PROMIS/GAVEL and the sentencing information of each person related to the case must be attained and subsequently submitted to the appropriate Assistant Prosecutor for approval. No item can be disposed of until approval is given. These tasks are best accomplished by civilian personnel with AOC access as the tasks do not require the expertise of a sworn officer and civilians tend not to be pulled for other purposes and come at a lower expense than sworn personnel.

- Indictable charges filed but downgraded or otherwise disposed of in Municipal Court; OR Non-Indictable charges filed: In most cases except DWI, which is ten years, items can be disposed of one year from the disposition date, unless an appeal has been filed. Although disposition can be accomplished without prosecutorial approval, the same research needs to be done to determine an item's eligibility date.
- Criminal case, no charges filed: Items should be purged upon expiration of the statute of limitations, with exception of CODIS, AFIS cases which are held indefinitely.
- Found Property: 180 days from recovery date.
- Maximize the "return to owner" of stolen property in accordance with 2C:65-1, when there is no dispute as to ownership.

Found items such as driver's licenses, passports and other items with a known owner need to be returned to the owner in a timely manner. Very little follow up exists in this regard.

Audit:

General:

Items Not Located=0

Cash/Jewelry/PM, Gem

Items Not Located = 0

DNA:

Items Not Located=0

Firearms

Items Not Located: 2

10093	GLOCKDD	Charter Arms .38
26756	GLOCKEE	Ruger 9mm

CDS: (PR-000001 of 2007-Present)

CDS Items Not Located = 0

CDS: (PRE 2007-PE-00001)

Cases Not Located:

2007	51
2006	07, 14
2005	84
2000	82

Audit Discussion: The items not located rate across the board is excellent.

NOTHING FOLLOWS

