

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE: November 12, 2004

TO: Jiroko Rosales
Director, Courts and Detention Services

SUBJECT: Administrative Finding and Recommendations – Audit of Lew Sterrett Operations

This memorandum contains administrative findings and recommendations. The nature and significance of these findings do not warrant inclusion in the subject audit report nor do they require management responses. However, they represent conditions that could become more significant if not addressed. These areas will be considered for subsequent review during future audits of this operation

1. Asset safeguarding needs improvement.

• Video monitoring tapes are not properly secured.

There are four security cameras that are continuously operating and recording in the Courts and Detention Services (CDS) office at Lew Sterrett (LS):

- Two covering the inside window area.
- One covering the safe in the manager's office.
- One covering the desk area where supervisors balance the clerk-closeouts.

The late-night shift supervisor places new tapes in the security camera recorder daily. Used tapes are removed from the recorder and stored in an unsecured box in the manager's office. Tapes are reused in about a month. A particular tape may be removed and preserved when a questionable recorded situation exists. The tapes are not secured and access to the manager's office is not restricted.

According to CDS Policy and Procedure 200.35, Security System Audio/Visual Recordings, Section V, Subsection B. the recording tapes are to be removed each morning, and the used tapes are to be locked in the tape storage cabinet.

• Change funds are exposed and the manager does not have the safe's combination.

The change fund is kept in the safe in the manager's office, along with the daily collections. We observed several occasions when the safe was unlocked. The supervisors have the combination to the safe; however, the manager does not.

Procedures 200.34, Key Accessing Funds and 200.10 Vault Accessibility address vault access and knowledge of the combination by the supervisors and the manager. Procedure 200.10 states the vault will be kept locked at all times.

Keeping the safe locked and limiting access to the safe to the supervisors and the manager will reduce the risk of loss and improve accountability in safeguarding assets.

Jail trustees frequently clean the CDS office and enter areas unsupervised. This places assets at the risk of loss. Operations will be affected if the manager cannot retrieve change or startup amounts from the safe.

We recommend that the Director of CDS take steps to ensure that:

- Each used video tape is secured in accordance with CDS Policy and Procedure 200.35.
- The manager has access to the safe's combination, and the safe remains locked during nonuse.

2. Enhancements of the customer service windows may be warranted.

Clerks sitting at their workstations are not able to see customers waiting in line; therefore, the clerks frequently must stand up to ascertain if there are customers waiting for service. The clerks do not have microphones or other communication devices and often have to raise their voices to communicate with customers.

Citizens that conduct business at the LS facility must enter through the main doors and pass through the metal detector to reach the lobby. The citizen is then able to approach one of the three CDS customer service windows in the lobby.

Dallas County staff requests customers to form a single line to the left side of the far left window. This prevents customers from lining up in front of all of the windows and obstructing the lobby. However, customers have a tendency to line up in front of all of the windows because they are not aware of the County queuing policy. County staff members often have to ask customers to reposition their lines.

To avoid customers becoming frustrated, confused, and perhaps forced to wait in line unnecessarily, customer flow should be orderly; and customer communication should be effective.

We recommend that the Director of CDS:

- Post multi-language signs advising customers of the queuing policy.
- Install a mirror over each customer service window to allow staff to view the lines.
- Install microphones at the service windows for communication and/or lights to designate the next available window.

3. Services provided at Lew Sterrett may not be effectively publicized.

CDS' location on the City's web site does not list all of the services available to the public at LS. Traffic citations issued by the Dallas Police Department have information on the back of the violator's copy relating to services available at Main Street and LS.

Services should be publicized to enhance effective customer utilization. The expanded presentation of LS service is restricted to violator issued information and the limited information on the web site. Management considered the methods used to publicize LS services provided as sufficient.

The number of transactions completed at LS may increase if its availability is publicized more. An increase in customer activity at LS may reduce the congested lines at the Municipal Building.

We recommend that the Director of CDS:

- Increase the information on the City's web site to reflect all of the services available at the LS facility and to promote the convenience of the LS facility.
- Utilize other methods to increase information about the available services at LS (i.e., pamphlets, posters, etc.).

4. Functions performed currently do not match documented policies and procedures.

The procedures have not been regularly updated to reflect current practices and procedures. We reviewed 32 CDS procedures related to LS operations. We noted that 28 of the procedures have effective dates between 1995 and 1999 and were established under the previous director of CDS. Three procedures were effective during 2000 and one took effect during 2003.

The Cash Handling Training Manual contains the most recent procedures. This manual serves as a guide for performing cash handling functions at LS. We noted sections and procedures in this manual that are no longer applicable. Examples include; but are not limited to:

- Procedure 200.30, Team Leader. Since this was written the staff functions were restructured, and there are now six individuals functioning as supervisors, and team leaders designations no longer exist.
- Procedure 200.34, Key Accessing Funds, also addresses team leader functions.
- Procedure 200.7, Appearance Bonds, Section D. 7, addresses defense attorneys signing the appearance bond for their clients. The current procedure requires defendants and not their attorney to sign the appearance bond.

We observed that the same procedures are redundantly addressed in multiple sections of the procedures. Procedure 200.34, Key Accessing Funds and procedure 200.10 Vault Accessibility, both address vault access and the manager having knowledge of the combination.

Procedures should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current policies and functions.

Outdated procedures cause confusion and may result in decreased efficiency and reduced staff accountability.

We recommend that the Director of CDS review and update the CDS procedures at LS.

If you have any questions, please call me at 670-3223 or Jimmy Martin Audit Manager at 670-5095.

Paul T. Garner

Paul T. Garner
Assistant City Auditor

c: Mary K. Suhm, Interim City Manager
Charles Daniels, Assistant City Manager