

Audit of the Sacramento Police
Department's Evidence and Property Section

Background

- The Evidence & Property Section protects the integrity of evidence used in criminal cases
- Strong controls reduce legal risk, support successful prosecutions, and maintain public trust
- Operations must meet federal/state requirements and should meet recognized standards (IAPE and POST)
- Effective evidence management ensures items are stored, tracked, and returned or disposed of legally

Audit Objective & Scope

Objective

Assess whether Evidence & Property operations comply with policies, laws, and best practices

Procedures & Operations

Review draft procedures, facility operations, and system controls (e.g., Versadex)

Access Controls

Examine warehouse access controls and badge activity for secure areas

Data & Trends

Analyze intake and disposition trends for 2022–2024 to identify bottlenecks and risks

Audit Methodology



Observe

- Conducted site walkthroughs of the main warehouse and secure storage areas
- Interviewed SPD staff, peer agencies, and subject matter experts to benchmark practices



Verify

- Selected a statistical sample of high-risk items to verify location accuracy



Analyze

- Reviewed booking errors and correction timelines
- Reviewed security access controls
- Analyzed intakes and dispositions

Finding 1: Evidence Retrieval Operating Effectively

SPD retrieves high-risk evidence with accuracy within best-practice error thresholds

All sampled drug, jewelry, and securities items were ultimately located within warehouse

Data shows 99.6% of firearm items located within warehouse (missing item was a fingerprint)

Retrieval and chain-of-custody processes align with POST and IAPE standards

Chain-of-custody records consistently supported item tracking



Finding 1: Evidence Retrieval Operating Effectively

Ammunition Storage Practices Can Be Strengthened



We found ammunition stored openly on warehouse floor

- Storage practices do not fully align with POST guidance
- Ammunition stored on pallets in open areas
- Open storage increases risk of loss, theft, or misuse

Recommendation: Move all ammunition to fire-rated lockers and update procedural manual

Finding 1: Evidence Retrieval Operating Effectively

Disposal Firearm Storage Improved but Procedures Not Updated

Firearms pending destruction were stored in open racks in the secure warehouse

- SPD added locking cages during the audit
- *Procedures Manual* does not reflect the new requirements
- Updating the *Procedures Manual* can reduce inconsistency and risk of missing firearms

Recommendation: Update *Manual* and train staff on new security requirements



Finding 1: Evidence Retrieval Operating Effectively

Video Surveillance Controls Can Be Enhanced



We found surveillance workstation located on open warehouse floor

- Accessible to staff in secure warehouse
- Placement decision made based on space concerns
- Risk of tampering

Recommendation: Enhance security controls for the video surveillance workstation

Finding 2: Adopting procedures with clearer standards would align with best practices

Evidence & Property procedures remain in draft and are not formally approved

The SPD's *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* and *Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook* are in draft form

- Best practices (GAO, IAPE, and POST) call for formally adopted procedures
- Weakens oversight and accountability, increasing risk and reducing consistency and defensibility

Recommendation: SPD finalize, adopt, and provide training to staff to ensure consistent implementation

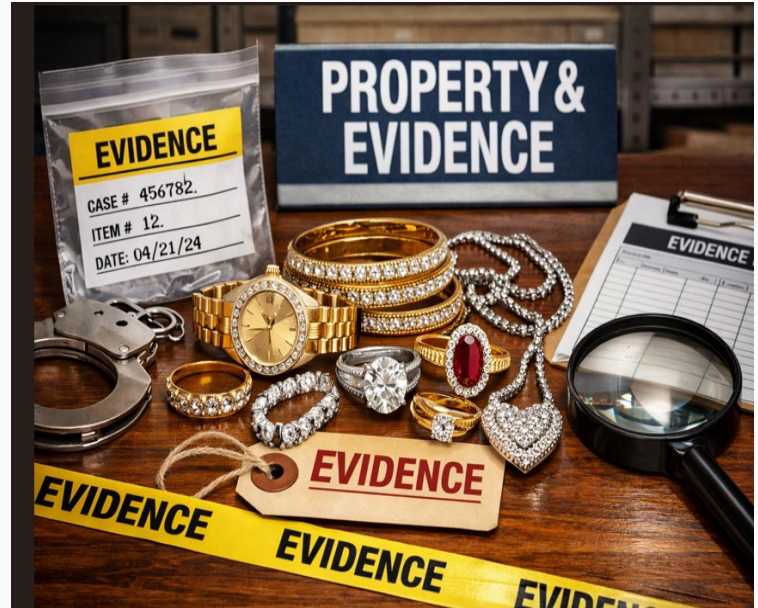
Finding 2: Adopting procedures with clearer standards would align with best practices

Enhancing Standards for High-Value Item Handling

Jewelry valuation and documentation in Versadex are not consistently completed

- SPD managers state that performing valuation is often difficult and unreliable
- Four items exceeded thresholds but were not stored in the safe
- Increased risk of loss or improper storage

Recommendation: Require securing items in the safe when value is uncertain and updating *Procedures*

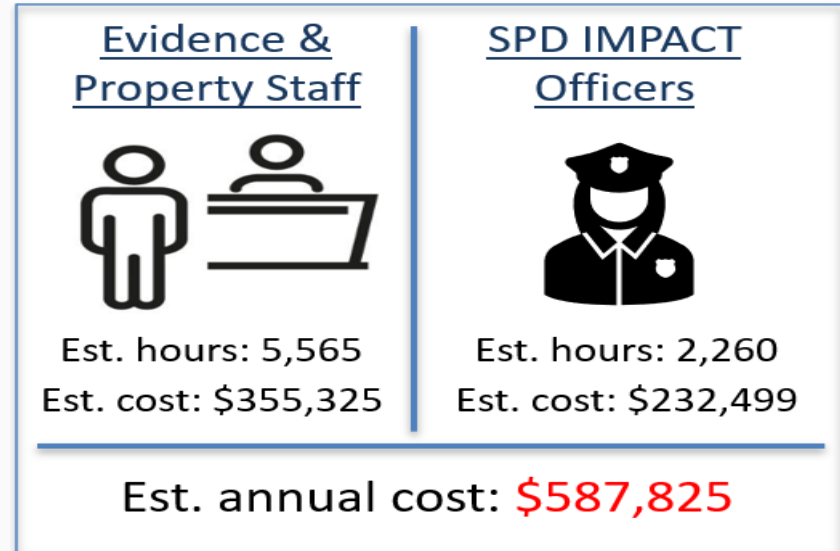


Finding 3: Opportunity to reduce time and costs by relocating homeless enforcement property

Resources spent managing property from people experiencing homelessness

- Diverts E&P staff and IMPACT officers from core duties and increases congestion, delays, and error risk

Recommendation: Consult with DCR to explore contracted services and design performance tracking steps



Finding 4: Evidence disposition practices have not kept pace with incoming inventory, resulting in a growing accumulation of property

- Evidence is accumulating faster than it is removed, creating long-term storage pressure
- Legal retention requirements limit SPD's ability to dispose of property quickly
- Many items remain in storage for years due to case timelines and authorization delays

Exit Year	Incoming	Items Processed Out	Net Increase
2022	55,746	39,498	16,248
2023	46,570	38,637	7,933
2024	40,839	44,116	-3,277
Total	143,155	122,251	20,904

Recommendations:

Prioritize Long-Pending Items

- Continue monitoring items authorized for disposal over 60 days
- Prioritize older items within each disposal category
- Reduce delays and improve overall throughput

Establish Clear Disposal Goals

- Set time-bound disposal targets with measurable milestones
- Conduct regular management review of progress
- Update the Evidence & Property Procedural Manual to align with goals, legal requirements, and priorities

Time Category	Number of Items
0–30 days	30,396
31–60 days	18,651
61–90 days	11,789
91–180 days	15,232
181–365 days	7,898
1–2 years	5,191
2–3 years	1,407
3–4 years	447
4–5 years	335
More than 5 years	550

Finding 5: SPD has implemented effective controls to safeguard evidence and property in the Evidence and Property warehouse

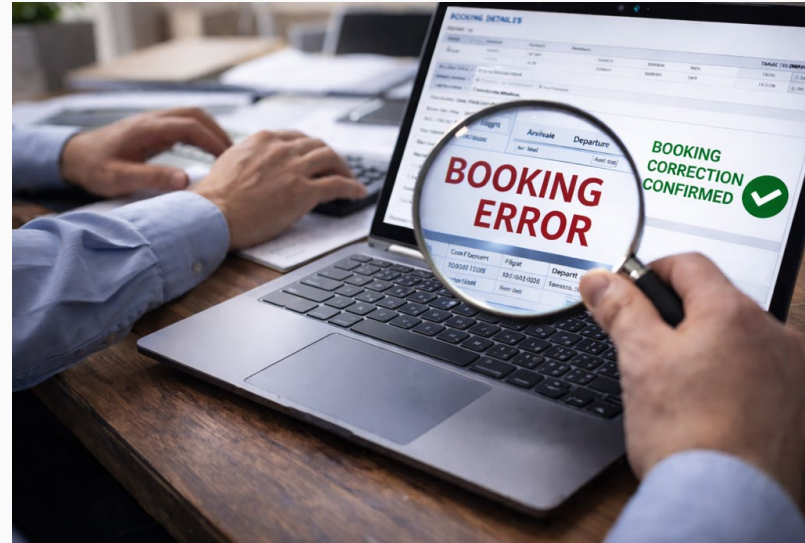
Strong access controls are in place with restricted high-risk rooms and no unauthorized access identified; however, periodic access reviews are not required

- Outdated permissions increase improper access risk
- Increase risk of potential for evidence loss, tampering, or chain-of-custody issues

Recommendation: Finalize policies and require periodic audits to ensure access permissions are current, appropriate, and aligned with assigned duties

Finding 6: SPD demonstrates strong performance in booking error detection and correction, with rates that outperform established best practice benchmarks

- High booking accuracy; errors are rare (<1%)
- Most errors corrected within 2–7 days
- Practices align with POST best practices
- Structured correction and escalation in place



Questions & Comments

