



WEBER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE **POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Evidence Audits & Storage Location Inspections

EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/07/03 AMENDS/SUPERCEDES: 56.7 STANDARD NUMBER: 84.1.6	REVIEW DATE: 05/02/05 REVISION DATE: 05/02/05 APPROVED: _____ Sheriff Signature
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56.7.1 Purpose

To ensure the integrity of the evidence and property management system and to enforce accountability for evidence and stored property.

56.7.2 Rationale

Periodic inspections of the storage locations ensure that these locations are kept clean, orderly and functional. Periodic inspections (both scheduled and unannounced) of the records, as well as scheduled audits and inventories, protect the integrity of the evidence system and identifies potential problems or shortcomings to be corrected preventing major problems and liabilities.

56.7.3 Definition

- A. **Audit:** A formal examination of an organization's accounts and records. A methodical examination and review.
- B. **Inventory:** An itemized list or catalog of property on hand. This includes:
 - 1. **Partial Inventory:** An accounting and examination of ALL property and evidence of a particular type or category entrusted to the evidence custodian.
 - 2. **Complete Inventory:** An accounting and examination of ALL property and evidence entrusted to the evidence custodian.
- C. **Inspection:** A checking or testing against established standards. Includes checking the facilities and areas used for the processing and storage of evidence,

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property and associated records. May include a partial inventory of randomly or specifically selected items as well as an audit or inspections of some records to verify compliance with standards, policies and authorized procedures.

- D. Short-term Evidence/Property Release: The temporary release of evidence or property for presentation to a court as evidence, to a lab for analysis, to a law enforcement official to aid in an investigation or for some other official purpose.

56.7.4 Policy

- A. To maintain the integrity of the Sheriff's Office evidence storage room, the following activities shall be completed as outlined below:

- 1. Quarterly inspections

- a. The evidence custodian shall conduct quarterly inspections to ensure adherence to procedures for the control of in-custody property.
- b. The inspections will be documented and a report submitted to the Section supervisor of the evidence facility, with a copy retained in evidence facility files.

- 2. Change in property custodian

- a. When there is a change in the designated evidence custodian, an inventory shall be conducted jointly by the newly designated evidence custodian and the outgoing evidence custodian to ensure that the records are correct and properly annotated.
- b. The inventory will be documented in a report which will be submitted to the Sheriff, with a copy retained in evidence facility files.

- 3. Annual audits

- a. An annual audit, of in-custody property, shall be conducted by a supervisor, not routinely or directly connected with the control of property.
- b. The supervisor should be selected by the Sheriff.
- c. The audit will be documented and a report submitted to the Sheriff,

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with a copy retained in evidence facility files.

4. Annual Inventory

- a. There will be a systematic and complete inventory and accounting of all property and evidence in the custody of the evidence custodian conducted by the evidence custodian and one other Sheriff's Office member during each calendar year as directed by the Professional Standards Bureau commander.
- b. The results of the annual inventory will be summarized in an annual report.
- c. The annual inventory may be conducted as one successive property/evidence inventory or as a series of partial inventories conducted throughout the year.

5. Inspections

- a. Unannounced Staff inspections of in-custody property shall be conducted at least annually, as directed by the Sheriff.

56.7.5 Procedure

A. Quarterly inspections

1. The evidence custodian shall conduct an inspection at least once during each calendar quarter. That inspection will include:
 - a. an inspection of the evidence storage areas for cleanliness,
 - b. a check to make sure that all evidence and property is logged and placed in appropriate storage areas,
 - c. a spot check of evidence records,
 - d. a review of *short-term* evidence and property *releases*, and
 - e. a check of the safe and storage lockers containing drugs, money, jewelry and firearms.
2. "Quarterly Inspection" forms will be completed, kept on file by the Evidence Custodian and available for official review.

B. Change in property custodian

1. When there is a permanent change in the Property Custodian, the

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Professional Standards Bureau commander will order a complete inventory of all evidence and property in custody to include:

- a. an inspection of all evidence and property,
 - b. a comparison of all evidence/property items against evidence room records to ensure that all are properly accounted for,
 - c. a prepared report at the conclusion of the inventory to include:
 - i. observations regarding the conditions of the evidence and property storage facilities,
 - ii. a description of any discrepancies,
 - iii. the signatures of all those involved in the inventory.
2. There will be at least two officials participating in the transitional inventory, one of whom must be the incoming Evidence Custodian.
 3. The outgoing Evidence Custodian should participate in the transitional inventory.
 4. Prior to the new Evidence Custodian taking over all of the evidence and in-custody property responsibilities, the Professional Standards Bureau commander will oversee:
 - a. the changing of all locks on any Evidence/property out-storage facilities,
 - b. the issuance of keys and electronic access cards to the incoming Evidence custodian,
 - c. the retrieval of keys and the cancellation of electronic access cards issued to the out-going Evidence Custodian.

C. Annual audit

1. Annual audits are ordered by the Sheriff.
2. The sheriff or his designee will select at least two auditors of the rank of sergeant or higher from among staff not routinely nor directly associated with the evidence function.
3. The annual audit will consist of :

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- a. an inspection of at least ten (10) percent of the items in custody,
- b. a comparison of the above items against evidence room records to ensure that there is proper accountability,
- c. a prepared report at the conclusion of the audit to include:
 - i. observations regarding the conditions of the evidence and property storage facilities,
 - ii. a review of policies, procedures and standards related to the evidence and in-custody property to ensure compliance,
 - iii. descriptions of any discrepancies,
 - iv. recommendations,
 - v. the signatures of those involved in the inventory.
- d. The final report will be submitted to the sheriff with copies distributed to the Evidence Custodian, his supervisor and the bureau commander.
- e. Any discrepancies identified in the annual audit, as well as any recommendations, will be addressed in writing by the bureau commander or his designee. This report, in response to the audit should include:
 - i. rebuttals or challenges to findings (if any),
 - ii. descriptions of corrective action plans, and
 - iii. additional recommendations.

D. Inspections

- 1. Unannounced Staff inspections of in-custody property shall be conducted at least ~~semi~~ annually, as directed by the Sheriff.
- 2. Unannounced Staff inspections may be similar to a *quarterly inspection* or more extensive as with an *annual audit*. The extent of the inspection will be determined by the Sheriff.
- 3. The inspector(s) will be supervisors selected by the Sheriff.

E. Annual Inventory

- 1. An annual inventory will include:
 - a. an inspection of ALL evidence and property, and
 - b. a comparison of all evidence and property against evidence room

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records to ensure complete accountability.

2. An annual inventory must be conducted at least once each calendar year, however, it need not be conducted as one successive exercise. A series of partial inventories, conducted throughout the year, inventorying a complete category or categories of items at one time is permissible.
3. The Professional Standards Bureau commander will designate another Sheriff's Office supervisor to assist and oversee the annual inventory. It need not be the same supervisor for each partial inventory conducted during the year.
4. A summary report, documenting any discrepancies and issues arising from a partial inventory will be submitted with the signatures of both the evidence custodian and the assigned supervisor.
5. Both the partial inventory reports and the comprehensive annual inventory report will address the following:
 - a. descriptions and remedies of discrepancies found,
 - b. observations regarding the conditions of evidence/property and the storage facilities, and
 - c. the signatures of those who participated in the inventory/ies.
6. A year end summary inventory report, which includes copies of all relevant prior partial inventory reports, will be submitted by January 31 of the following year by the Training and Support Section lieutenant or the Professional Standards Bureau commander.