

# INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

January 24, 2023

## Weapons Destruction

### Mayor

Mattie Parker

### Council Members

Carlos Flores, District 2<sup>++</sup>

Michael D. Crain, District 3

Alan Blaylock, District 4<sup>++</sup>

Gyna Bivens, District 5

Jared Williams, District 6<sup>++</sup>

Leonard Firestone, District 7<sup>+</sup>

Chris Nettles, District 8

Elizabeth M. Beck, District 9

<sup>+</sup> Audit Committee Chair  
<sup>++</sup> Audit Committee Member



### Audit Staff

David A. Medrano  
City Auditor

1-24-2023

Date

Brian Burkland  
Assistant City Auditor

1-24-2023

Date

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Alisa Pfeifer  
Auditor

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Date

**The Weapons Destruction Audit  
was conducted as part of the  
Department of Internal Audit's  
Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Audit  
Plan.**

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## Executive Summary

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The Police Property and Evidence Warehouse (“Property Room”) collects, stores, and disposes of property and evidence including firearms. Firearms and other items must be destroyed on a regular basis to maintain adequate space for new property and evidence to be stored.

During the course of this engagement, we discovered that verification was not consistently applied on weapons destruction lists of record. Some firearms were hand-written in whereas others were crossed out after the weapons destruction list of record was printed.

Covers sheets have been developed and designed to be used by witnesses at the destruction site, to certify that the firearms noted on the weapons destruction list of record at point of shipment from the Property Room, were the identical and complete list of firearms shipped to the destruction site and were destroyed. However, during our sample testing, it was observed that in some instances, cover sheets reviewed did not reconcile to the weapons destruction list of record prepared by the Property Room at the time of shipment to the destruction site.

We also found that firearms were not always updated to show they were destroyed in the record management system (RMS). In addition, firearms were destroyed years after authorization was obtained.

Our audit findings are discussed in further detail within the [Detailed Audit Findings](#) section of this report.

Management has responded as to how they plan to address our audit findings and the related recommendations.

We feel that management’s response adequately addresses the audit recommendation and will help mitigate the City’s risk once implemented.

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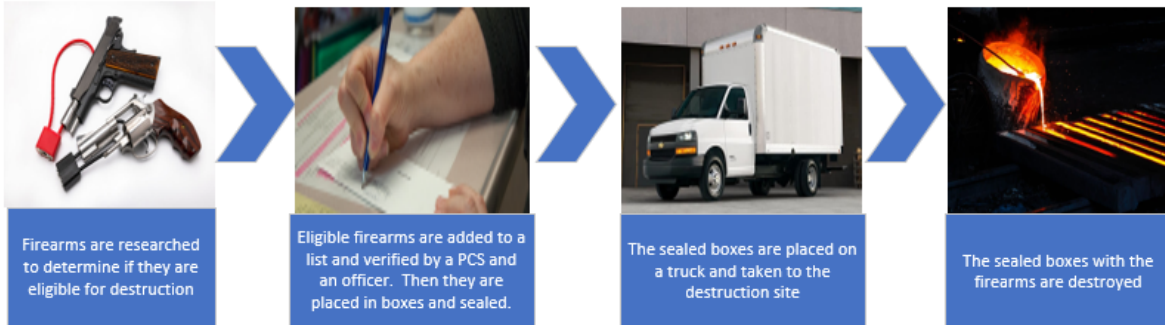
## Background

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The Police Property and Records Management Division contains the Property Room, which is responsible for the intake, processing, storage, and disposal of evidence and property items collected by the Fort Worth Police Department (“FWPD”). The Property Room currently stores a variety of items including firearms, ammunition, drugs, currency, and personal property.

When firearms are collected by FWPD, all are emptied of ammunition, then, a strap is placed through the barrel of handguns and secured, and finally, an evidence tag is placed on the box used to store the firearm. FWPD staff label the firearm evidence tag with a report number, item number, and description. Any damaged or missing items should be noted, then the firearm is stored in the Property Room. Staff are required to search for the firearm in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) to ensure the firearm is not stolen. If the firearm is determined to be stolen, then an e-mail is sent to the assigned detective and the firearm is released to the Police department with authorized jurisdiction.

Periodically, firearms must be destroyed to make room in the Property Room for new ones to be housed. Firearms that are eligible for destruction are placed on a weapons destruction list. Then they are verified by an FWPD officer and a Property Room employee to ensure that the firearms on the weapons destruction list reconcile completely and identically to those in the box separated for destruction. Then the boxes of firearms are sealed and the tape is signed by an officer. When the firearms arrive at the weapons destruction site, the boxes and the firearms inside are completely destroyed.



## Objectives

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- To determine whether weapon destruction is in accordance with City policy and/or applicable legislation.
- To ensure accountability for weapons designated for destruction.
- To ensure that weapon destruction records are adequate and properly retained.

## Scope

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Review of destroyed firearms from October 1, 2018 to June 30, 2022. Additional firearms were reviewed as necessary.

- Internal Audit was limited to verifying the existence of documentation. Internal Audit did not observe the destruction of firearms.
- Non-firearm weapons were excluded from this audit.
- The crime lab was not reviewed or visited during the course of this audit.

## Methodology

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To achieve the audit objectives, the Department of Internal Audit performed the following:

- interviewed Police Department Property and Evidence warehouse staff;
- created a flowchart of processes;
- reviewed firearm verification on the destruction list;
- examined previous audit from Special Investigations Section;
- reviewed departmental policies and general orders;
- observed physical security in the Property Room, excluding the Crime Lab;
- analyzed firearms data pulled from the TriTech system;
- analyzed screenshots from current and previous records management systems;
- reviewed destruction authorization to determine if firearms were authorized to be destroyed; and
- evaluated internal controls related to weapons destruction.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. 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 that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The Department of Internal Audit would like to thank the Police Department for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

## Overall Risk Evaluation

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High	Medium	Low
Verification was not thorough or complete.		
Property and Evidence records were not correctly updated in the Record Management Systems (RMS)		



## Detailed Audit Findings

### 1. Verification was not thorough or complete.

The Standard Operating Procedures for the Property and Evidence Unit state that a sergeant or their designee must verify all firearms on the weapons destruction list. It also says that the Property and Evidence Supervisor and a Sr. Property Control Specialist (PCS) must inventory the firearms on the weapons destruction list. However, we identified 44 instances where the weapons destruction list failed to document written verification from both an officer and a PCS for a given firearm, as required by the SOP. However, this was only 2% of the approximate 2,302 possible verifications. Verifications are important because they are the documentation that the firearms that are gathered for destruction are the same firearms that are authorized to be destroyed. Without the verification, there is a risk that the incorrect firearms could be destroyed. We were unable to determine the cause of the lack of verifications.

In addition, at the weapons destruction site, a weapons destruction site representative, two FWPD Officers, two PCSs', and the Property and Evidence Supervisor sign a cover sheet that serves to document the number of firearms destroyed and confirm that these staff members witnessed the destruction of firearms noted on the weapons destruction list of record, as prepared when at time/point of shipment from the Property Room. However, in some instances, we identified that the number of firearms on the cover sheets containing witness signatures did not have the same number of firearms as that noted on the weapons destruction list of record. The weapons destruction list is often altered with additional firearms being handwritten in or firearms crossed off and removed from the destruction box. Staff indicated the difference occurred because the Property and Evidence supervisor did not update the final cover sheet with subsequent alterations. The lack of accuracy on the cover sheets allows a risk that firearms could go missing somewhere in the destruction process without ever being detected.

**Recommendation 1A:** *The Chief of Police should ensure that all firearms are verified by both an FWPD Officer and a Property Control Specialist before being destroyed.*

**Auditee's Response: Concur:** After each destruction box is verified by the FWPD officer and a Property Control Specialist, the list will then be given to the Property Control Unit Supervisor to check and verify all firearms have been signed off by both the officer and PCS prior to destruction.

**Target Implementation Date:** 08/01/2023

**Responsibility:** Property Control Unit Supervisor (Chastity Roberts)

**Applicable Department Head:** Neil Noakes, Chief of Police

**Applicable Assistant City Manager:** Fernando Costa

**Recommendation 1B:** *The Chief of Police should ensure that a visual inspection and written confirmation of the quantity and type of firearms to be destroyed occurs, so as to ensure chain of custody over the complete and identical list of firearms taken from the Property Room to the transport vehicle.*

**Auditee's Response: Concur:** The firearms destruction list will be physically checked and verified against each firearms destruction box to insure the number of firearms on the list matches and is accurate prior to the firearms being transferred to the transport vehicle.

**Target Implementation Date:** 08/01/2023

**Responsibility:** Property Control Unit Supervisor (Chastity Roberts)

**Applicable Department Head:** Neil Noakes, Chief of Police

**Applicable Assistant City Manager:** Fernando Costa

## 2. Property and Evidence records were not correctly updated in the Record Management Systems.

The departmental policy states that the disposition of property, including the date of disposition, disposal number, and the name of the property control specialist (PCS) obtaining the authorization should be included in TriTech, the current records management system (RMS). Auditors sampled firearms from four separate weapon destruction lists and also a sample of firearms from the TriTech data to see if the firearms were correctly updated to reflect their destruction. Two of sixty-one (3%) firearms sampled were not updated in the RMS to reflect that they had been destroyed. However, staff said that the disposition of some firearms were not correctly transferred during the changeover of RMSs and could be the cause for the incorrect labeling. Staff indicated they are currently in the process of updating records for the firearms that Internal Audit identified as having been destroyed.

The current weapons destruction process does not require workflow step(s) to record into the RMS the date when weapon destruction authorization was formally received, causing firearms to be destroyed years after receipt of a weapons destruction authorization. We discovered 14 firearms having received weapon destruction authorizations ranging from 1.6 years to 8.4 years prior to their date of disposal. Again, staff indicated this was due to multiple RMS changeovers which caused research of eligible firearms to be labor-intensive and time-consuming. Incorrect disposition recorded in the RMS causes a risk of confusion as to whether the firearm has actually been destroyed. In addition, a PCS may spend time researching a firearm that has already been destroyed or previously approved for destruction.

**Recommendation 2A:** *The Chief of Police should ensure that all firearm disposals are updated in the RMS (currently TriTech) to correctly (i) reflect the current status of the firearm and (ii) ensure that court orders/disposal authorizations are noted within the RMS so the firearm can, appropriately, be placed in the destruction box as soon as it returns (from lab, court, etc.) to the Property Room.*





**Auditee's Response: Concur:** After each destruction box is verified by the FWPD officer and a Property Control Specialist, the list will be given to the Property Control Unit Supervisor to check and verify all paperwork has been uploaded into the RMS system and the property disposition has been updated to reflect the current status as well.

**Target Implementation Date:** 08/01/2023

**Responsibility: Property Control Unit Supervisor (Chastity Roberts)**

**Applicable Department Head:** Neil Noakes, Chief of Police

**Applicable Assistant City Manager:** Fernando Costa

**Recommendation 2B:** *The Chief of Police should ensure Property Room staff are involved in the process of choosing the new RMS and consider having a separate RMS for legacy property and evidence to make disposal research faster and more efficient.*

**Auditee's Response: Concur:** With the recommendation (Involving Property Room staff) moving forward. Additionally; I agree that we should explore stand-alone software – Property/Evidence Management software that fits all of our department's needs. This would most likely be a separate system from our Records Management System.

**Target Implementation Date:** 10/01/2026 (FY25/26)

**Responsibility: Program Support Division Admin (Michael Munday)**

**Applicable Department Head:** Neil Noakes, Chief of Police

**Applicable Assistant City Manager:** Fernando Costa