

City of Sacramento  
**Budget and Audit Committee Report**  
915 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814  
www.cityofsacramento.org

---

**File ID:** 2026-00658

5/5/2026

---

**Audit of the Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Section**

File ID: 2026-00658

**Location:** Citywide

**Recommendation:** Pass a **Motion:** 1) accepting the Audit of the Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Section; and 2) forwarding to the City Council for approval.

**Contact:** Farishta Ahrary, City Auditor, (916) 808-7266, fahrary@cityofsacramento.org; Kevin Christensen, Assistant City Auditor, (916) 808-4743, kmchristensen@cityofsacramento.org; Office of the City Auditor

**Presenter:** Kevin Christensen, Assistant City Auditor, (916) 808-4743, kmchristensen@cityofsacramento.org; Office of the City Auditor

**Attachments:**

1-Description/Analysis

2-Audit of the Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Section

3-Presentation

**Description/Analysis**

**Issue Detail:** This audit was approved as part of the 2025-26 Work Plan. According to the City Council Rules of Procedures, the Budget and Audit Committee shall receive, review, and forward to the council as appropriate, reports, recommendations, and updates from the City Auditor. This report documents the Audit of the Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Section.

**Policy Considerations:** The City Auditor's presentation of the Audit of the Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Section is consistent with the Mayor and City Council's intent to have an independent audit function for the City of Sacramento.

**Economic Impacts:** None.

**Environmental Considerations:** None.

**Sustainability:** None.

**Commission/Committee Action:** On April 13, 2026, the Audit of the Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Section was presented to the Sacramento Community Police Review Commission for review and comment.

**Rationale for Recommendation:** This staff report provides the Budget and Audit Committee with information that may be used to meet its responsibility to provide oversight and supervision of the City Auditor and other City departments.

**Financial Considerations:** The cost of the Audit of the Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Section was funded out of the Office of the City Auditor budget.

**Local Business Enterprise (LBE):** None.

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

Report# 2025/26-11 | April 2026



*City of*  
**SACRAMENTO**  

---

**Office of the City Auditor**  
*Performance Audit Division*

Farishta Ahrary, City Auditor  
Kevin Christensen, Assistant City Auditor  
Chevelle Jackson, Senior Fiscal Policy Analyst



### Our Mission

*To provide a catalyst for improvements of municipal operations and promote a credible, efficient, effective, equitable, fair, focused, transparent, and fully accountable City government.*

### Our Vision

*To improve City services by providing independent, objective, and reliable information regarding the City's ability to meet its goals and objectives and establish an adequate system of internal controls, root out improper governmental activities (i.e., fraud, waste, or abuse), and address racial, gender, and ethnic inequities.*

### Suggest an Audit

The Office of the City Auditor conducts performance audits of the City of Sacramento's operations to determine whether these operations and programs are operating efficiently and effectively. If you would like to offer ideas for audits to save the City money, increase revenues, or improve the efficiency and effectiveness of City operations and programs, please fill out our online form:

[https://forms.cityofsacramento.org/f/Suggest\\_an\\_Audit\\_Form](https://forms.cityofsacramento.org/f/Suggest_an_Audit_Form)

### Whistleblower Hotline

In the interest of public accountability and being responsible stewards of public funds, the City has established a whistleblower hotline. The hotline protects the anonymity of those leaving tips to the extent permitted by law. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days week, 365 days per year. Through this service, all phone calls and emails will be received anonymously by third party staff.

Report online at <http://www.cityofsacramento.ethicspoint.com> or call toll-free: 888-245-8859.

The City of Sacramento's Office of the City Auditor can be contacted by phone at 916-808-1166 or at the address below:

915 I Street  
MC09100  
Historic City Hall, Floor 2  
Sacramento, CA 95814

# Table of Contents

**Introduction .....5**

**Background .....5**

**Objective, Scope, and Methodology .....9**

**Finding 1: While staff located sampled items within best-practice error rate thresholds, the review identified opportunities to further strengthen warehouse operations. ....11**

    SPD’s evidence location and retrieval processes are operating effectively, with error rates within ranges considered acceptable under recognized standards. .... 11

    Ammunition storage practices present an opportunity to further strengthen security and policy alignment with best practices..... 14

    Recent improvement in storing firearms scheduled for disposal present opportunity to formalize procedures to further strengthen security controls..... 15

    Security surveillance equipment access controls can be strengthened..... 17

**Finding 2: Formal adoption of procedures along with clearer standards would strengthen alignment with best practices.....19**

    The Sacramento Police Department’s procedure manuals provide operational guidance; however, they remain in draft form and have not been formally adopted. .... 19

    The City’s Evidence and Property procedures could be enhanced with clearer, standardized guidance for valuing and documenting jewelry and other high-value items to align with best practices. .... 22

**Finding 3: Opportunities exist to achieve time and cost savings by relocating evidence collected on homeless enforcement actions.....24**

**Finding 4: Evidence disposition practices at Sacramento Police Department have not kept pace with incoming inventory, resulting in a growing accumulation of property.....30**

    Recent improvements in processing show progress, but sustained capacity increases are needed to reduce evidence storage crowding and associated safety, security, and chain-of-custody risks. .... 31

    Court timelines, investigative requirements, and legal disposition processes extend evidence retention periods, constraining storage capacity. .... 32

    Opportunities exist to improve disposition processing time for some property. .... 33

    Procedures could be strengthened by establishing performance goals for disposal..... 35

**Finding 5: The Sacramento Police Department’s Evidence and Property Section has implemented effective controls to safeguard evidence and property in the Evidence and Property warehouse. ....36**

    The City’s evidence and property warehouse maintains appropriate access controls, and access to high-risk evidence in secure areas is limited to authorized employees. .... 36

    While SPD recently completed an audit of security card access, policies and procedures can be improved to require periodic reviews with clearance to the facility..... 37

**Finding 6: The Sacramento Police Department’s Evidence and Property Section demonstrates strong performance in booking error detection and correction, with rates that outperform established best practice benchmarks. ....38**  
**Department Response.....40**

# AUDIT FACT SHEET

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

April 2026

Report #2025/26-11

### RECOMMENDATIONS

We made several recommendations regarding the Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section's policies and procedures. Our Recommendations included:

#### Warehouse Operations

- Consider moving all ammunition from open areas into a higher restricted-access area, separate from general warehouse traffic.
- Consider revising the Evidence and Property Manual to explicitly require ammunition to be stored in enhanced conditions consistent with best practice guidelines.
- Consider relocating or taking steps to enhance security controls for the video surveillance system workstation to better protect permanent records from tampering or unauthorized alteration and to strengthen access controls over sensitive system functions.

#### Finalize Procedures

- Finalize and implement the procedural manuals and ensure staff receive appropriate training on the finalized requirements.

#### Unhoused Property

- Consider collaborating with the Department of Community Response through the Incident Management Team to explore contracting with a qualified third-party provider to collect, store, and return personal property when taking people experiencing homelessness into custody.

#### Disposition Practices

- Consider establishing clear, time bound disposal goals supported by measurable targets or milestones and regular management review and update the Procedures to reflect these objectives in alignment with legal requirements and organizational priorities.

### BACKGROUND

The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section plays a critical role in the City's criminal justice process by securely storing impounded property and maintaining the integrity of evidence for court proceedings. Its operations are governed by federal and state requirements, as well as industry standards established by the International Association for Property and Evidence and the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. To assess the effectiveness of these responsibilities, we conducted audit testing and fieldwork focused on key controls and processes within the section. Our review identified several areas where improvements to policies and procedures could enhance operations and service to the community.

### FINDINGS

**Finding 1: While staff located sampled items within best-practice error rate thresholds, the review identified opportunities to further strengthen warehouse operations.**

- SPD has strong evidence management practices, and opportunities exist to further enhance security by aligning ammunition storage, firearm disposal procedures, and surveillance system access with best-practice standards.

**Finding 2: Formal adoption of procedures along with clearer standards would strengthen alignment with best practices.**

- SPD property management operates effectively but needs to formally adopt and clarify its draft procedures, especially for high-value items, to align with best practices, strengthen accountability, and reduce operational risk.

**Finding 3: Opportunities exist to achieve time and cost savings by relocating evidence collected on homeless enforcement actions.**

- SPD's storage of property from homeless-related arrests is costly and using a third-party service could reduce these burdens and improve return rates.

**Finding 4: Evidence disposition practices at Sacramento Police Department have not kept pace with incoming inventory, resulting in a growing accumulation of property.**

- SPD's evidence disposition processes have fallen behind intake, causing a growing backlog that strains storage capacity and increases operational risks.

**Finding 5: The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section has implemented effective controls to safeguard evidence and property in the Evidence and Property warehouse.**

- We found SPD maintains strong controls over evidence access, though it should formalize periodic access-audit requirements to further reduce risk.

**Finding 6: The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section demonstrates strong performance in booking error detection and correction, with rates that outperform established best practice benchmarks.**

- SPD maintains a booking error rate below one percent and corrects issues quickly, showing strong performance aligned with best-practice standards.

## Introduction

In accordance with the City Auditor's 2025/26 Audit Plan, we have completed the *Audit of the Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section*. 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.

This is the second installment of a review of the City of Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Section. In an effort to provide timely reporting, in 2023 we presented the *Audit of the Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Division – Sexual Assault Evidence Kits* as a separate audit that is part of the larger audit of the *Audit of the Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section*.

The City Auditor's Office would like to thank the Sacramento Police Department and Department of Community Response for their assistance and cooperation during the audit process.

## Background

The Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Section is vital to the criminal justice process in the City of Sacramento. Effective and efficient management of evidence and property operations is essential to providing high quality service to the community. Within the Sacramento Police Department (SPD), the evidence and property (E&P) management is embedded in the Office of Investigations Division. The evidence and property warehouse staff are responsible for storing impounded property and ensuring the integrity of evidence for court action.

The Sacramento Police Department operates its central evidence and property facility at 555 Sequoia Pacific Blvd. Evidence and property can be booked at four additional SPD facilities. These include Kinney Station (North) located at 3550 Marysville Blvd.; Rooney Station (South) located at 5303 Franklin Blvd.; Richards Station (Central and East) located at 300 Richards Blvd.; and the Police Department Headquarters located at 5770 Freeport Blvd. When evidence and property are booked and packaged at these stations, they are placed into lockers and picked up by E&P staff.

## Regulations and Best Practices

Evidence and property operations are regulated at the Federal and State levels, which are incorporated into key documents released by two industry standards-setting and best practice bodies: International Association for Property and Evidence, Inc. (IAPE) and the California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST).

IAPE is a non-profit organization created to provide education and training for all aspects of handling, storage, maintenance & disposal of evidence and property. The IAPE Board of Directors is charged with the duties of advancing the scope of knowledge and enhancing professionalism within the field of evidence and property management. The organization publishes a Professional Standards handbook to

assist evidence and property management agencies. The Professional Standards handbook provides guidance on the following evidence-related issues: (1) staffing; (2) policies/procedures; (3) packaging; (4) documentation; (5) storage facilities; (6) security; (7) drugs and narcotics; (8) money and cash; (9) firearms; (10) found property; (11) property for safekeeping; (12) property disposition; and (13) digital evidence management.

The main goal of the IAPE and POST standards and best practices is to ensure secure and efficient management of the evidence and property function. According to POST, failure to do so “can affect the successful prosecution of criminal violators, resulting in agency liability or loss of public confidence.” Therefore, according to POST, police departments and property rooms have “a fiduciary and legal obligation to store and protect items of evidence and property in its custody, and equally important, an obligation to legally restore property to the rightful owner as soon as practical or dispose of the property in a legal manner.”

### SPD Policies and Procedures

There are several documents used to outline the policies and procedures for booking and storing evidence in the SPD evidence and property warehouse. These include *Sacramento Police Department General Order 525.01 Evidence and Property* and SPD’s manual for the operation of its evidence computer-based database, *Property User Guide*.

The *SPD General Order 525.01* establishes the policy and procedures for the collection and storage of evidence. The policy states, “It shall be the policy of the Sacramento Police Department to ensure evidence/property is properly secured and stored and readily retrieved and that changes in possession are documented to maintain the integrity required for successful prosecution or proper disposition.” *General Order 525.01* also sets procedural steps for the collection and storage of evidence.

The *Versadex Property User Guide* includes a detailed description of how to enter the booked evidence and property into the database, property tag label creation, adding storage and continuity control records, adding case notes, disposition instructions, and instructions on running evidence queries.

SPD management provided a draft version of the *City of Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Procedural Manual*.<sup>1</sup> The draft handbook provides detailed procedures for Evidence and property staff, outlining requirements for the collection, preservation and disposition of evidence and property.

SPD also provided a separate procedures draft, titled the *City of Sacramento Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook*. The draft handbook provides detailed procedures for Evidence and Property staff, outlining requirements for the collection, storage, and disposition of firearms. According to E&P management, staff working in the warehouse facility have received these procedures, have been trained on the contents, and are expected to adhere to these guidelines.

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the cover of the draft *City of Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Procedural Manual*, the document was last modified in December 2020.

## Responsibilities of SPD Evidence and Property Section

The responsibilities of the evidence and property functions can be broken down into the following classifications: (1) intake; (2) storage; (3) distribution; and (4) disposition. These are clarified below.

Intake is the process by which evidence and property come under SPD jurisdiction. Other SPD employees, such as patrol officers or detectives, collect evidence and property in the course of responding to calls and conducting investigations. These employees, or booking officers, transfer control of collected evidence and property to the E&P Section, along with complete documentation describing the items and including the associated case number. The booking officer is responsible for entering evidence and property information in the Versadex system, printing an evidence/property label, and securing the item(s) in a locker.

The initial point of contact between Evidence and Property staff and collected items occurs when staff retrieve evidence from the E&P booking room, or Field Division lockers. At this point, the items have been packaged and labeled by the other SPD employees. Before bringing the property into the warehouse, evidence and property staff check the booking officer's entry in Versadex against the physical evidence to ensure accuracy. If the information is not accurate, the Evidence Technician must contact the submitting officer for corrections. The submitting officer must correct the Versadex entry and notify Evidence and Property staff once the correction is complete. If the correction requires access to the physical item, the officer must come to the warehouse, make the necessary updates, and resubmit the item(s). All evidence and property submitted should have a case number associated with it.

To that end, the verification of evidence and property from the evidence lockers represents the point in which the custody or responsibility for the items transfers from the submitting officers to evidence and property warehouse staff.

Storage is the process in which evidence and property staff maintain security and care over the evidence and property under their jurisdiction. Evidence and property staff must maintain proper controls over the inventory of items in their custody.

Distribution refers to the evidence and property staff responsibility for the retrieval and provision of booked evidence to SPD, law enforcement, and court officials as part of legal proceedings. Evidence and property staff are responsible for maintaining meticulous chain of custody records during the signing in and signing out of evidence.<sup>2</sup>

Disposition is a term used to describe the eventual fate of evidence or property. Disposition can occur in several ways, including: release to owner, special release (includes releasing to another agency or person other than the owner), destroy, city general fund, narcotics burn, release to relief organization, auction, asset seizure, pharmaceutical/drug take back disposal, retained for official use, released to DMV, FBI, and/or the Secret Service.

---

<sup>2</sup> IAPE defines chain of custody as "the chronological documentation of the seizure, custody, control, transfer (temporary or permanent), and disposition of evidence, either physical or electronic."

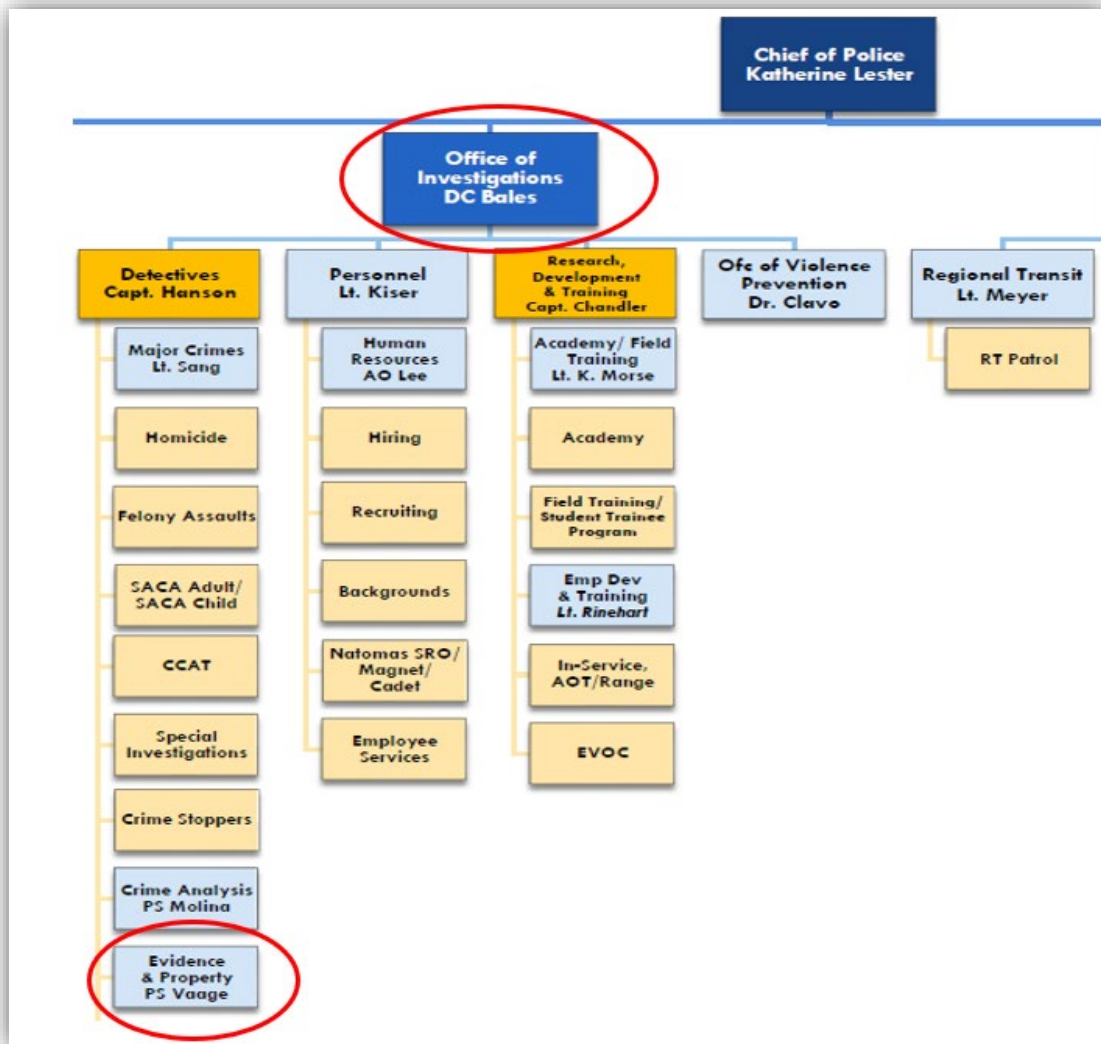
## Versadex

SPD currently uses Versadex as the evidence and property database and record management system. This database is used primarily to track the intake, ongoing storage, and disposition of all evidence and property. E&P staff can modify property entries. If a booking officer wishes to edit, they will contact E&P to make the change. There is a notes section available to make notes on items that may require explanation. The City pays about \$500,000 annually for the software and support.

## Organizational Structure and Staffing

The Sacramento Police Department's evidence and property function is embedded in the Office of Investigations Division.

**Figure 1: Sacramento Police Department Office of Investigations' Organizational Chart**



**Source:** Sacramento Police Department

The E&P Section is managed by one full-time Program Specialist, one full-time Supervising Property Assistant, one full-time Senior Evidence and Property Technician working in the capacity of the Department Armorer, three full-time Senior Evidence and Property Technicians, nine Evidence and Property Technicians, and one Captain.

The Program Specialist is a mid-level management role responsible for overseeing the Property Section, including inspections and audits of money, drugs, and firearms; supervising staff; maintaining procedures; and ensuring compliance with laws and policies. The role also manages budgets, contracts, auctions, interagency coordination, and key administrative functions that support secure and accountable evidence and property operations.

The Supervising Property Assistant oversees daily Evidence and Property operations, including staff supervision, inspections and inventories, and Versadex to ensure chain of custody. The role also manages policy updates, coordinates with partners, oversees high-profile dispositions, and authorizes fund releases.

The Armorer inspects, maintains, repairs, and procures department weapons, ammunition, and safety gear, and manages equipment check-in/check-out systems and records. The role also maintains manufacturer certifications and supervises the part-time Assistant Armorers.

Senior Evidence and Property Technicians assist stakeholders with evidence status and disposition, authorize limited fund releases, and coordinate deposits and the destruction of narcotics and firearms. They provide technical oversight of E&P staff and ensure the safe handling and storage of high-risk and sensitive materials.

Evidence and Property Technicians manage daily intake, documentation, secure storage, preservation, lawful release or disposal, and chain of custody for all evidence and property, while assisting the public and supporting investigations and court needs. They also transport items, process dispositions, fulfill requests for camera footage, manage supplies and shipments, notify owners, and update RMS.

## **Objective, Scope, and Methodology**

The objective of this audit was to determine whether SPD's Evidence and Property Section operates in compliance with applicable policies and procedures, laws, and industry best practices.

We reviewed relevant best practices and policy analyses related to law enforcement evidence and property operations and interviewed staff from peer agencies in other cities and counties to understand how evidence and property functions are structured, operated, and governed within their organizations.

We reviewed SPD's draft policies and procedures for evidence and property operations and conducted a series of walkthroughs of Evidence and Property facilities to assess structural and operational compliance with best practices.

We interviewed homeless shelter operators, subject-matter experts, SPD Integrated Mobile Police and Community Team command staff, and City officials to identify best practices for collecting, storing, and

returning property belonging to individuals experiencing homelessness that is taken into custody during incarceration.

As part of this project, we selected a sample of high-risk items recorded in Versadex, SPD's evidence tracking system, and stored in the E&P warehouse, focusing on firearms, drugs, securities, and jewelry.<sup>3</sup> We used a statistically valid sample with a 90 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error for each evidence category. We conducted walkthroughs of the main property warehouse and the secured safe that houses drugs, currency, and jewelry to verify the presence of sampled items. Where Versadex listed an item as being held outside the warehouse, Evidence and Property staff confirmed the item's documented location with the Crime Lab, local courthouses, and the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office.

We sought to assess SPD's evidence and property warehouse access controls and determine whether only appropriate employees are authorized to access high-risk evidence and property in secure areas. We obtained an access list showing employee names, SPD PersonID numbers, and detailed badge entry records for each warehouse door for calendar year 2024. These steps formed the basis for evaluating access to high-risk rooms within the evidence and property warehouse.

We sought to assess booking error rates and correction timeliness for evidence submitted by SPD patrol officers and reviewed Evidence and Property management tracking records documenting errors, notifications, and correction timeframes.

We assessed E&P disposition rates by analyzing records of all evidence booked into and disposed of by the facility in calendar years 2022 through 2024. We compared intake and disposition volumes, evaluated disposition timelines, and identified potential bottlenecks and opportunities to improve throughput.

---

<sup>3</sup> SPD reported the following inventory of high-risk items in the Evidence and Property Warehouse: 8,776 firearms, 12,453 drug-related items, 1,715 items classified as jewelry, and 5,080 securities.

## **Finding 1: While staff located sampled items within best-practice error rate thresholds, the review identified opportunities to further strengthen warehouse operations.**

The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property (E&P) Section is responsible for the storage, retrieval, and disposition of evidence collected during law enforcement activities. We conducted a sample review of high-value evidence and a series of walkthroughs and found that E&P staff operated within acceptable error rates when retrieving high-risk items. However, we identified several opportunities for improvement.

The International Association of Property and Evidence (IAPE) and the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) published best practices to guide local law enforcement on evidence booking, storage, and disposition. These guidelines emphasize varying procedures based on the risk and value of evidence and stress the importance of clear, comprehensive written procedures to maintain an adequate chain of custody throughout investigative and legal proceedings.

The Sacramento Police Department's *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* provides guidance on the collection, storage, and disposition of evidence. We tested a sample of high-risk and high-value items to assess Evidence and Property's ability to retrieve evidence and conducted a series of walkthroughs of the warehouse to evaluate conformance with best practices. We found:

- SPD's evidence location and retrieval processes are operating effectively, with error rates within ranges considered acceptable under recognized standards;
- Ammunition storage practices present an opportunity to further strengthen security and policy alignment with best practices;
- Recent improvements in using locking cages for firearms scheduled for disposal present an opportunity to formalize procedures and further strengthen security controls; and
- Security surveillance equipment access controls can be strengthened.

We found the E&P Section operates well within acceptable error rates for evidence retrieval. However, opportunities exist to further improve facility operations to better align with IAPE and POST best practices. Implementing these recommendations would further safeguard against evidence misappropriation and reinforce the integrity of the chain of custody.

### **SPD's evidence location and retrieval processes are operating effectively, with error rates within ranges considered acceptable under recognized standards.**

The City of Sacramento Police Department maintains strict protocols for the handling of evidence and property to ensure integrity and accountability. Officers are required to process and submit all items into the booking room before the end of their shift, avoiding personal storage in lockers or desks. Temporary secure storage may be used by detectives with supervisor approval, provided the property room is notified. Under no circumstances should property or evidence be taken home.

Every item taken into custody must be inventoried and packaged according to established guidelines. Special handling is required for sensitive items such as narcotics, firearms, hazardous materials, and evidence for DNA or crime lab testing. Officers must log all items into the department's records management system and secure them in designated lockers or storage areas. E&P personnel review submissions for proper labeling, packaging, and documentation, ensuring compliance with safety and procedural standards.

Maintaining an unbroken chain of custody is essential for successful prosecutions, safeguarding individual rights, and protecting property rights. Officers provide a booking receipt to property owners and follow strict hygiene and safety measures when processing evidence. E&P staff verify entries, correct discrepancies, and assign appropriate storage locations. These procedures uphold transparency, accuracy, and security throughout the intake and storage process, reinforcing the department's commitment to professionalism and public trust.

As described in SPD Procedures, the evidence booked into evidence falls with several item categories including: (1) Articles; (2) Security; (3) Firearm; (4) Jewelry; (5) Bicycle; (6) Drug; (7) Alcohol; (8) Watercraft; (9) Motor; (10) Miscellaneous; (11) Vehicle.

In alignment with California POST guidelines, additional security measures are required for high-risk items such as firearms, narcotics, and high-value property.

We sought to evaluate inventory accuracy and compliance with these standards, focusing on categories identified as high-risk. To establish a reliable basis for review, SPD provided population data for evidence currently in custody. The audit concentrated on firearms, drugs, jewelry, and securities due to their elevated risk and value, as defined by guidance established by California POST. The resulting sample sizes were 263 firearms, 265 drug-related items, 234 pieces of jewelry, and 257 securities.<sup>4</sup> We believe this methodology provides a sound foundation for assessing SPD's evidence management practices and supports transparency and accountability in safeguarding high-risk property.

We conducted a walk-through of items requiring enhanced security, including the handgun safe, long-gun cage, and the secure safe containing narcotics, currency, and jewelry. The walk-through was conducted in the presence of Evidence and Property staff.

For each item selected in our sample, E&P personnel retrieved the corresponding envelope, box, or bag from storage within the vault, and we verified the item's physical presence. Items reviewed included property stored in the main property area in large boxes, some containing numerous individual envelopes. Audit teams also observed items stored in safes, handgun lockers, and long-gun lockers. During this process, we documented whether each sampled item was present.

For any items not immediately located, we provided the list to management for follow-up. Management reviewed the evidence management system to trace the chain of custody through the Versadex system.

---

<sup>4</sup> As discussed in the Objective, Scope, and Methodology section of this report, sample sizes were calculated using a population-based sampling tool, applying a 90 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error to ensure statistical validity.

When records indicated that an item had been transferred, E&P staff conducted additional verification with external entities, including the Crime Lab, courthouses, and the District Attorney's Office, and provided supporting records.

Finally, for items that could not be located in the second search, an E&P Supervisor conducted a review of evidence to attempt to locate the item.

### **Drugs**

As stated above, we selected a sample of 265 items booked as "Drugs," representing a 90 percent confidence interval and five percent error rate. We found that all 265, or 100 percent, of the drug items in evidence within our population sample were located on the shelves of the SPD's warehouse, the County Crime Laboratory for testing, the District Attorney's Office, or identified as disposed. It appears that 100 percent of the drug items in our sample were properly tracked.

### **Firearms**

As stated above, we selected a sample of 263 firearms, representing a 90 percent confidence interval and five percent error rate. We found that 246, or about 94 percent, of the firearms were located on the shelves of the SPD's handgun storage area and the separate long gun shelves. We found that 13 of these items, upon SPD staff consultation with a handheld tablet interfaced to the property database, were within SPD custody in other locations including the Sacramento District Attorney's Office for court proceedings, at the Sacramento Crime Lab for testing, or at the Sacramento Court House storage center. According to SPD, 3 of the items, or 1 percent, were released or destroyed following the conclusion of legal proceedings. We found that one piece of evidence marked in Versadex under the firearm designation, or 0.38 percent, could not be located. This item was booked as "All Others", not a firearm, and included the description, "Tkn FRM Item #2. Print". In total, SPD evidence and property staff accounted for 262, or 99.6 percent, of the items categorized as firearms in our sample.

### **Securities/Currency**

As stated above, we selected a sample of 257 items booked as securities. In our initial walk through, E&P staff could not locate 38 items on the shelves during the walk through.

After completing our testing, we provided a copy of our results to E&P manager. The E&P Manager located 26 of the items not identified on the shelves during our initial walkthrough, leaving 12 items unlocated. The E&P Manager provided information from the Versadex system illustrating the locations and set items aside for auditor to view.

Prior to completion of this project, we sent SPD the final list of 12 unlocated items. Notably, none of these items had values of more than \$100 requiring storage in the safe. During the final inventory search, management ultimately located the remaining items within the evidence and property warehouse or through chain of custody records. In total, SPD located all the items in our sample.

## **Jewelry**

As stated above, we selected a sample of 234 pieces of jewelry. Notably, the items included in the sample included both high value items required to be stored in the safe and items valued at below \$100 that were stored on the common storage shelves in the warehouse. In our initial walk through, E&P staff located 174 items, or approximately 74 percent of the sample. Of these items, one unlocated item had a value of more than \$100.

The remaining 60 items were not located at their assigned shelf locations outside of the safe. We followed up with E&P management and provided the list of 60 items not identified on the shelves during our initial walkthrough. E&P staff performed another search through the evidence management system to review chain-of-custody records. E&P staff were able to locate an additional 18 items, leaving 41 items unlocated. It is worth noting that none of these unlocated items were assigned values of more than \$100.

Prior to completion of this project, we sent SPD the final list of 41 unlocated items. During the final inventory search, management ultimately located the remaining items within the warehouse or through chain of custody records. More specifically, chain-of-custody records indicated that some of these items had previously been disposed of or auctioned. Notably, several of the items had subsequently been relocated to secure safe storage as the appraised value exceeded the SPD high-value item threshold. As discussed later in this report, the items moved to the safe did not have a value listed when booked into Versadex and were potentially not appropriately appraised and stored with other high value items. In total, SPD located each item in our sample or produced chain-of-custody documentation showing the item had been released or destroyed.

## **Ammunition storage practices present an opportunity to further strengthen security and policy alignment with best practices.**

The *SPD Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* provides directions on ammunition booking and storing protocols. The procedures state that ammunition collected and sorted during business hours is stored in the Safekeeping/Found Bike Room, which also includes department ammunition and armory supplies.

However, over the course of multiple walk throughs, we found that a pallet of ammunition for destruction was being stored on a pallet on the main floor of the warehouse. As described in greater detail below, access to these areas are restricted to E&P staff.

According to E&P management, the storage of some of these items is somewhat unique in their operations because the Armorer for the SPD is located in the E&P warehouse. The Armorer is responsible for inspecting, maintaining, repairing, and procuring department firearms, ammunition, and safety equipment. The position manages weapon and equipment issuance systems, maintains required records, conducts follow-up actions, and holds manufacturer certifications across multiple weapon platforms. SPD also staffs an Assistant Armorer. The Armory Office is where firearms are serviced, equipment is issued to officers, and armory records are maintained.

Due to this dual functionality, there is substantial ammunition stored in secure areas accessible to E&P staff. For example, the Armorer is responsible for procuring ammunition for police officer duty weapons. This ammunition is ordered in bulk and stored in the evidence and property warehouse. As a result, thousands of rounds of ammunition are located on pallets on the warehouse floor. These pallets are currently stored in the same area as the found and safekeeping bicycles.

As described above, the E&P warehouse has two separate areas for the storage of handguns and long guns. Additionally, the E&P warehouse has a Gun Room, which is a designated area next to the Armory that is considered the holding area for firearms that are awaiting destruction.

California POST issues a *Law Enforcement Evidence and Property Management Guide* that provides best practices on ammunition storage. POST recommends that law enforcement agencies establish or update written directives for handling hazardous or dangerous evidence and property. POST guidance stresses that ammunition should be removed from firearms and stored separately in a fireproof locker, with procedures approved by the fire department, bomb squad, and agency rangemaster. Finally, POST guidance asserts that agencies should also consult with the local fire department, bomb squad, and/or the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives when developing policies related to explosives, ammunition, flammables, and other hazardous materials.

Without improved controls and oversight of ammunition, these sensitive assets could be lost, stolen, or misappropriated, which could impair SPD's mission, and pose a public safety risk. We believe the SPD should take steps to ensure that ammunition is stored according to best practices in a separate, secure facility.

**We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 1. Consider moving all ammunition from open areas to fire-rated lockers and revising the Evidence and Property Manual to explicitly require ammunition storage in fire-rated lockers that conform to best practice guidelines.**

**Recent improvement in storing firearms scheduled for disposal present opportunity to formalize procedures to further strengthen security controls.**

Best practices recommend storing firearms in separate locked, limited access, monitored area within an evidence storage facility, particularly when pending destruction. Our audit found that some firearms scheduled for disposal were stored on open racks outside secure cages at SPD's Evidence and Property warehouse. The racks were located within the secure warehouse area accessible only to E&P staff. Management reported the racks were used briefly during disposal activities and has since added locking cage doors to secure the items inside. Updating the E&P Procedural Manual and training staff would formalize secure storage requirements during disposal processes and strengthen compliance.

California POST guidelines require law enforcement agencies to maintain clear standards for firearm security. Departments must implement written directives ensuring firearms are stored separately in secure, access-controlled areas, ideally with card-key entry and surveillance. Firearms should be kept

apart from other evidence and those marked for destruction should be in a distinct section of the same secure facility. These measures safeguard personnel, prevent mix-ups, and uphold public trust.

The International Association of Property and Evidence (IAPE) also sets standards to ensure firearms are stored securely and responsibly. According to the IAPE standards, firearms should be kept separate from general evidence in a designated area that provides enhanced security, environmental safety, and easy retrieval. For firearms pending destruction, additional precautions should be required because these items pose the highest risk of theft. They should be stored in a locked room, secured locker, or cabinet within the property room and placed away from active evidence to allow better tracking and monitoring. These measures help maintain accountability and reduce the likelihood of pilferage during the destruction process.

The *Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* outlines strict guidelines for handling and storing property. The Procedures emphasizes that all items must be placed in their designated storage areas, with locations recorded in Versadex. For example, firearms are stored in the Gun Room or Rifle Cage. These procedures ensure accurate tracking and secure storage of property within the department. The Procedures further require that firearms scheduled for destruction must be moved to the designated destruction room near the Armory.

The draft *City of Sacramento Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook* detail protocols for firearm safety and disposal. Additionally, every firearm entering Evidence and Property must undergo a safety check by the Armory before being stored in the handgun section or rifle section.

During a number of our visits to the E&P warehouse, we observed firearms stored on racks outside of cages. During our initial walkthrough in February 2021, there were several firearms on an open rack accessible to anyone in the warehouse, not in a locked and secure area.

E&P Management stated that staff typically use these racks during evidence disposal activities. Management further noted that the racks may be left unattended briefly in the secure warehouse during business hours; however, they are intended to be secured in the firearm destruction room.

During this audit, E&P staff placed locks and doors on the racks to prohibit removal of the items, and the locking rack is secured to a permanent fixture so it cannot be wheeled away. During a subsequent walkthrough in April 2025, we confirmed that racks had locking doors securing the items. In other words, the rack has a lockable door that limits access to the firearms. We believe this significantly lowers risk of misplacement or theft. However, the *Property Procedural Manual* has not been updated to explicitly detail these new requirements.

Not consistently separating firearms from general evidence in enhanced security areas such as locked rooms, secured lockers, or locked cabinets, particularly firearms pending destruction, increases risk. Safe firearm and ammunition storage practices, designed to prevent unauthorized or accidental access, reduce the risk of accidental shootings and deter theft.

We believe that E&P management should continue to ensure that firearms collected outside of the handgun storage room and the rifle cage for the purpose of disposal, be moved to a secure location or

locked when no E&P staff is present. This requirement should be memorialized specifically in the *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual*. We believe these actions will lower risk of loss of firearms.

**We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 2. Update the Evidence and Property Procedural Manual to explicitly require secured storage of firearms during disposal processes and provide training to staff to ensure consistent adherence to these requirements.**

### **Security surveillance equipment access controls can be strengthened.**

The E&P warehouse has various security measures in place to ensure the integrity of evidence and property. The SPD *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* establish requirements and procedures governing warehouse security systems, badge access controls, and video surveillance. The E&P warehouse has a security camera system that records motion and video surveillance.

However, during a walk-through, we found the video surveillance workstation, a computer system used to monitor video surveillance across the E&P warehouse, was located on the open warehouse floor. The video surveillance workstation was located in the found bicycle storage room and was accessible to evidence and property staff, increasing the risk of unauthorized access or tampering.

IAPE best practices recommend using video surveillance systems when enhanced security or a long-term record of ingress, movement, and egress is needed. Video surveillance can deter improper activity and serves as an effective internal control, while also discouraging unauthorized entry by increasing the likelihood of detection. IAPE also recommends that video surveillance systems should be in a secure location and should only be accessible by the manager. The restriction serves as a check and balance designed to prevent tampering with or altering the permanent record.

Additionally, POST *Evidence and Property Management Guide* asserts that appropriately supported computer security and back-up systems should be established to reduce the risk of information loss or degradation due to system interruption or failure. In some situations, it may be appropriate to employ hardcopy back-up of critical actions.

During interviews with SPD management, we learned that the video surveillance system is located in the found bicycle storage room. According to E&P managers, although warehouse space is limited, the system was placed in this location based on the City Information Technology Department's (IT) selection. During the course of the audit, IT notified E&P management that additional cameras will be installed to monitor the computer terminal area to enhance existing security controls.

While we understand that limited warehouse space contributed to the placement of the video surveillance system, this location presents several security, integrity, and compliance risks. SPD could benefit from securing the video surveillance system workstation to prevent tampering with or alteration of permanent records.

**We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 3. Consider taking steps to enhance security controls for the video surveillance system workstation to better protect permanent records and to strengthen access controls over sensitive system functions.**

## **Finding 2: Formal adoption of procedures along with clearer standards would strengthen alignment with best practices.**

The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property (E&P) Section is responsible for the storage, retrieval, and disposition of evidence collected during law enforcement activities. We conducted a sample review of high-value evidence and a series of walkthroughs and found that Evidence and Property staff operated within acceptable error rates when retrieving high-risk items. However, we identified several opportunities for improvement.

The International Association of Property and Evidence (IAPE) and the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) publish widely recognized best practice guidance for the operation of law enforcement evidence and property functions, including standards for documentation, security, chain of custody, and disposition. Best practices call for documented, formally approved, and consistently implemented procedures to guide operations, promote consistency, and strengthen accountability.

The SPD has issued the *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* and the *Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook* that E&P management uses to guide the operations of the section. We reviewed these documents and found:

- SPD's procedural manuals for evidence and property provide operational guidance; however, they remain in draft form and have not been formally adopted.
- SPD's *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* could be enhanced with clearer, standardized guidance for valuing and documenting jewelry and other high-value items to align with best practices.

Best practices assert that procedures should be formally approved, communicated, and implemented to function as effective internal controls. Leaving policies in draft form creates governance gaps that increase operational risk and weaken accountability. We believe that providing clear and specific policy language is essential to ensure consistent implementation, reduce ambiguity in decision-making, and strengthen accountability. Finalizing the *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* and *Firearm Handbook*, and training staff on the approved requirements, would strengthen consistency, defensibility, and oversight.

### **The Sacramento Police Department's procedure manuals provide operational guidance; however, they remain in draft form and have not been formally adopted.**

The Sacramento Police Department's *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* is a guide developed by SPD for managing evidence and property within its custody. Its primary purpose is to ensure the proper collection, preservation, storage, and disposition of all items handled by the E&P Section. The manual outlines objectives such as maintaining efficiency, integrity, and compliance with legal standards, while serving as a reference for officers, forensic technicians, records personnel, and other staff involved in evidence handling.

The manual is organized into multiple chapters covering key operational areas. These include organizational structure and specialized training requirements, property room layout and security measures, and detailed booking procedures for various categories of property such as evidence, safekeeping items, narcotics, firearms, and high-value items. It also provides definitions, documentation standards, and Versadex/RMS entry protocols to maintain accurate chain-of-custody records. Attachments supplement the manual with forms, labels, and procedural guides for packaging, auditing, and releasing property.

The *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* provide guidance on security and accountability. The manual details alarm systems, access controls, and surveillance protocols for the property facility, as well as contingency plans for emergencies and disasters. It prescribes strict handling and packaging standards for hazardous materials, biological evidence, firearms, and narcotics to prevent contamination or safety risks. Procedures for temporary storage, audits, inventories, and inspections are included to ensure compliance with statutory mandates and departmental policies.

Finally, the *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* addresses property disposition and release guidelines, including retention periods, purging criteria, and authorization processes. It explains how evidence is released to owners, transferred to other agencies, or destroyed under court order, and provides instructions for managing unclaimed property through auctions or donations. Additional sections cover discovery requests, court exhibits, and federal database validation for firearms. Overall, the document serves as a comprehensive framework for safeguarding evidence integrity and supporting successful prosecutions while adhering to legal and procedural standards.

The *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual*, however, has remained in draft form since December 2020. Policies and procedures establish clear roles, guide operations and decision making, and support compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Without approved and implemented policies and procedures, the Section lacks formalized operating standards, and management has limited ability to ensure and enforce accountability.

Meanwhile, the City of Sacramento *Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook* serves as a guide for Sacramento Police Department personnel on the safe handling, processing, and legal management of firearms in police custody. Its primary goal is to ensure compliance with state and federal laws, maintain safety standards, and preserve the integrity of evidence during the booking and release process. The handbook outlines responsibilities for both law enforcement personnel and evidence and property staff, emphasizing procedures that reduce the risk of accidents and legal violations.

The contents of the handbook are organized into sections that cover firearm safety protocols, technical definitions, and nomenclature for various firearm types, including pistols, rifles, and shotguns. It provides detailed instructions for inspecting firearms, identifying components, and distinguishing between magazines and clips. Additionally, the handbook includes a glossary of firearm-related terms, diagrams for cartridge and weapon parts, and examples of common firearm models. These sections aim to standardize terminology and ensure accurate documentation during evidence processing.

Beyond technical guidance, the handbook addresses operational procedures such as booking firearms into the Versadex system, verifying details like serial numbers and calibers, and packaging firearms for storage. It also explains the legal process for returning firearms to citizens, including requirements for registration, submission of ownership reports, and completion of Law Enforcement Release Applications. The final sections outline firearm prohibition categories and disqualifying misdemeanors, ensuring that releases comply with California Penal Code and federal regulations. Overall, the handbook functions as both a safety manual and a legal compliance resource for managing firearms within law enforcement operations. The *Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook* is also in draft form and has not been finalized.

According to the United States Government Accountability Office, internal control activities help ensure that management's directives are executed. Control activities are the policies, procedures, techniques, and mechanisms that enforce management's directives. An agency should maintain written policies, procedures, and processes to ensure that once the appropriate level of review has been determined, agency officials understand the process.

Best practices recognize that policies are critical to an organization as they determine how business operations and transactions are conducted, outlining boundaries and relationships among entities in an organization. By setting rules or a predefined course of action, policies ensure that organizations adhere to compliance frameworks and their requirements.

Without written procedures or wide knowledge of these procedures, a basic internal control standard, E&P management may be unable to ensure that staff follow requirements and cannot ensure consistency in their processes over time.

Policies are expected to be formally approved, communicated, and applied in practice to function as effective internal controls. Leaving policies and procedures in draft form creates governance gaps that increase operational risk, weaken accountability, and expose the organization to legal, compliance, and reputational harm. Finalizing policies is not merely an administrative step; it is a critical control that enables consistent execution, defensible decision-making, and effective oversight. We believe the Sacramento Police Department should prioritize finalizing the *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* and the *Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook* and ensure staff receive appropriate training on the finalized requirements.

**We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 4. Finalize and implement the Evidence and Property Procedural Manual and ensure staff receive appropriate training on the finalized requirements.**
- 5. Finalize and implement the Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook and ensure staff receive appropriate training on the finalized requirements.**

**The City’s Evidence and Property procedures could be enhanced with clearer, standardized guidance for valuing and documenting jewelry and other high-value items to align with best practices.**

Best practices recommend that law enforcement agencies establish clear, written procedures for the booking, storage, valuation, and disposition of jewelry and other high-value property. While the Department’s procedures provide some guidance in these areas, the City’s written policies and procedures could be better organized and strengthened to be more closely aligned with best practices.

SPD’s *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* includes direction related to high-value item evidence. It is the responsibility of E&P personnel to examine the submitted items to ensure correct labeling, packaging, and documentation. It is also the responsibility of E&P personnel to view the items listed in the property section of Versadex and the items booked in to ensure accuracy. Booking officers are directed to enter in the Versadex general evidence under the “Jewelry” type and provide a basic description of the evidence.

The Procedures provide specific guidance for high value evidence and evidence valued at more than \$100, requiring that currency and jewelry exceeding this threshold be stored in the safe located in the Evidence and Property warehouse while pending release, auction, or disposal. Additionally, in the evidence purging guidelines, the Procedures state that “high value items include fine jewelry and high balance gift cards” and that these items “should be stored in the same manner as currency.”

However, the Procedures do not establish criteria for determining the value of jewelry or provide clear booking and handling instructions for high-value items. Instead, guidance related to high-value property is limited to general statements, such as: “High Value Items – Care should be taken by officers when handling high value items. Appropriate packaging solutions should be determined to ensure the value and integrity of the item.”

In interviews and walk-throughs for this report, we found that E&P staff have separated and placed jewelry in the safe and separated higher value from lower value items. However, as discussed in Finding 1 of this report, during an inventory check for the “Jewelry” evidence designation, E&P staff identified four items that required relocation to appropriate secure storage in the safe, as the appraised value exceeded the SPD high-value item threshold. As discussed later in this report, the items moved to the safe did not have a value listed when booked into Versadex and were potentially not appropriately appraised and stored with other high value items.

E&P management noted the difficulty in accurately appraising jewelry items booked into evidence as booking officers and E&P technicians have no formal training related to that field. Based on materials provided by E&P, we found that Versadex fields related to appraised value are not consistently completed. As a result, opportunities exist to provide clearer guidance to err on the side of caution and ensure that valuable items are put into the safe.

California POST *Law Enforcement Evidence and Property Management Guide* recommends that valuables should be individually itemized, and the value of the property should be determined by the

reasonable and fair market value. If the property is an item from a commercial establishment, the value of the item is market retail value plus tax. Recognizing the limitations faced by booking officers and E&P staff in accurately appraising items, we recommend providing clear guidance directing staff to secure items that may potentially be high value, such as items appearing to be diamond earrings, in a safe. This approach helps ensure such items are separated from general evidence and stored in a higher-security area. Incorporating some guidance into the procedures would help promote consistency and strengthen alignment with best practices.

**We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 6. Update the Evidence and Property Procedures to provide clear guidance on identifying and itemizing items that may potentially have high value and require that such items be secured in a safe to enhance security.**

### **Finding 3: Opportunities exist to achieve time and cost savings by relocating evidence collected on homeless enforcement actions.**

The Sacramento Police Department’s Evidence and Property Section stores personal belongings taken at the time of arrest, including items from people experiencing homelessness. Many of these belongings, including essential items like identification and medication, are never claimed. Other local law enforcement agencies have adopted approaches that reduce storage burdens and improve the return of property to its owners.

SPD’s evidence and property section and SPD’s Integrated Mobile Police and Community Team (IMPACT) officers spend considerable time working to collect, store, and dispose of this property. These issues have exacerbated space issues in the warehouse and pulled IMPACT command staff from other policing activity. Meanwhile, homeless advocates have expressed equity implications of requiring people experiencing homelessness (PEH) to reengage with law enforcement after an arrest to reclaim their belongings.

Local law enforcement agencies in California have identified opportunities to improve operational efficiency and reduce staff time and costs by relocating property collected during homeless enforcement activities. These agencies have contracted a third-party vendor to pick up, store, and deliver property to the person experiencing homelessness following release from incarceration.

SPD’s retention of homeless property strains storage capacity, increases costs, creates barriers for people experiencing homelessness, and adds operational, legal, and employee-safety risks. High volumes of property in the Evidence and Property warehouse increase staff time spent locating and disposing of items, reducing efficiency and increasing the risk of error, while patrol officers spend more time collecting and transporting property. Storing large amounts of property, particularly items in poor condition, can also affect employee health, safety, and morale. Identifying opportunities to divert property from the warehouse could improve efficiency and increase the likelihood that belongings are returned to their owners.

#### **SPD’s retention of property belonging to incarcerated homeless individuals is time-intensive and costly for Evidence and Property personnel and has contributed to limited storage capacity in the facility.**

The evidence and property section is responsible for the collection, preservation and disposition of evidence and property. In recent years, the collection and storage of property belonging to people experiencing homelessness that are incarcerated has taken up significant space in the E&P warehouse. Managing homeless property requires significant storage space and staff time and resources, limiting the department’s ability to carry out other essential evidence management responsibilities, including the collection, preservation, and disposition of evidence and property.

When a PEH is arrested, their personal property is kept at the evidence and property room until it is claimed or disposed, following statutory rules on holding times. PEH arrested may have bulky items such

as a tent, sleeping bag, bicycle, backpack, clothes, shoes, personal electronics, medication, identification and documents, and other items. Police officers and outreach workers at the scene of the interaction work with the PEH to discern what is important enough to bring and book into the warehouse. However, this has caused overcrowding at the evidence and property room. Additionally, SPD management indicated, based on their experience, many PEH do not collect their property.

SPD's E&P warehouse is responsible for temporarily storing non-evidentiary property<sup>5</sup>, which consists of items with no evidentiary value and items held for safekeeping pending return. Safekeeping property is not associated with a criminal or civil case but must be secured and managed until it can be lawfully released to its owner. In practice, some PEH who are taken into custody require booking of substantial personal property because they lack alternative storage options. Although these items are typically unrelated to any criminal case, they are stored by law enforcement as "safekeeping" because there is no other practical place for the property to go.

California law requires public agencies that take personal property for temporary safekeeping to properly store, document, and dispose of the property; provide the individual with a receipt and clear instructions on how to retrieve it; and make reasonable efforts to identify the owner if the individual is not the owner. The law also requires agencies to inform individuals that the property must be claimed within 60 days or it may be disposed according to California law. During that period, the individual may retrieve the property, authorize another person in writing to retrieve it, or notify the agency that they are unable to retrieve the property because they are in custody and request that the agency continue to hold it. If such notice is provided, the agency may retain the property for up to an additional 10 months. These requirements are stated in the *SPD Evidence and Property Procedural Manual*.

During a walkthrough of the E&P warehouse, SPD management informed us that safekeeping property associated with homeless individuals occupies a significant amount of storage space. Management identified a large area dedicated to these items. We observed bulky personal belongings, including a scooter, portions of a drum set, large bags, bicycles, bedding, strollers, and other miscellaneous items.

SPD management stated that safekeeping property must be stored for a statutorily required retention period unless health or safety concerns, such as vermin infestation, necessitate earlier disposal. They also noted that the storage area is not climate controlled, which can result in unpleasant odors during the summer months.

They indicated that retrieval rates are low and that identifying and contacting property owners can be challenging, which complicates the return of belongings with their owners. When safekeeping is not retrieved by the owner, evidence and property staff will follow standard procedures, which may include sending eligible items to auction at [www.propertyroom.com](http://www.propertyroom.com), donating appropriate items, or disposing of items as required.

---

<sup>5</sup> Although, by definition, non-evidentiary property is not evidence, its storage and handling carry constitutional due process and property rights implications. Management of non-evidentiary property therefore requires the same level of security, chain of custody, and management as any other item stored as evidence.

We sought information from the evidence and property manager related to the time spent on homeless property booking and disposals. As illustrated in Figure 2 below, the evidence and property management provided estimates for E&P staff work on homeless property issues and the number of bookings annually.

**Figure 2: Evidence and Property Section estimated staff time on PEH property**

Property Room Personnel	
Average hours booking homeless items per incident	1.25
Average hours for disposition review per incident	0.25
Average time releasing or disposing of property per incident	0.625
<b>Average combined hours per Incident</b>	<b>2.125</b>
Estimated PEH-related incidents annually	2,620
<b>Annual staff hours dedicated to PEH property</b>	<b>5,565</b>
Total hourly compensation rate (wage + benefits)	\$63.85
<b>Estimated annual staffing cost</b>	<b>\$355,325</b>

**Source:** Created by Office of the City Auditor based on estimates provided by the Sacramento Police Department.

According to information provided by management, the warehouse processes property for an estimated 2,620 homeless-related incidents annually, resulting in approximately 5,565 staff hours dedicated to handling homeless-related property. We estimate this workload represents about \$355,325 in annual staff costs.

**The collection and processing of property associated with individuals experiencing homelessness is time-intensive and costly for patrol officers.**

Police officers have also reported challenges related to the significant time and labor required to collect and manage personal property associated with individuals experiencing homelessness. The City’s Incident Management Team (IMT) addresses homelessness through a coordinated, multi-departmental approach that combines outreach and engagement with enforcement of City laws and ordinances.<sup>6</sup>

When responding to homelessness-related calls, the Sacramento Police Department deploys officers based on the size and complexity of the encampment. SPD categorizes these responses as either Rapid Response or Coordinated Response. Rapid Response addresses encampments that violate the City Code or the California Vehicle Code, with a primary focus on protecting public health and safety through prompt compliance. A secondary objective is to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with available social services. If an encampment is too large or complex to be effectively addressed through a

<sup>6</sup> The IMT includes representatives from the Department of Community Response, the City Manager’s Office, the Sacramento Police Department, the Sacramento Fire Department, Community Development Department – Code Compliance Division and Animal Care Services Division, and Department of Public Works. Within this framework, the Sacramento Police Department supports code enforcement activities and helps ensure the safety of community members and City staff.

Rapid Response, it is referred for a Coordinated Response. Coordinated Responses involve City-County Partnership Outreach Teams composed of City outreach specialists, County behavioral health staff, and community-based organizations.

During interviews with SPD IMPACT command staff, we learned that a Rapid Response call requires two police officers, while a Coordinated Response call requires the full team of 10 to 12 police officers. In some instances, the SPD response to a call will lead to the incarceration of a PEH, which then requires the officer to collect the PEH belongings. Additionally, following a response, officers are required to travel to the E&P warehouse to book and tag evidence and personal property, then return to the field for additional calls.

We sought information from the Police IMPACT command staff related to the time spent collecting homeless evidence at a crime scene, transporting the items to the E&P facility, and time spent entering the property through the booking procedures.

**Figure 3: SPD IMPACT estimated staff time on PEH property**

Police Officers	
Average hours per incident collecting and booking PEH property <sup>7</sup>	1.00
Total hourly compensation rate (wage + benefits)	\$88.74
Estimated Annual incidents requiring PEH evidence collection and booking	2,620
<b>Estimated annual staffing cost</b>	<b>\$232,499</b>

**Source:** Created by Office of the City Auditor based on estimate provided by the Sacramento Police Department.

Based on E&P management and IMPACT’s estimates, the IMPACT officers support evidence processing for approximately 2,620 homeless-related incidents each year, requiring about 2,620 staff hours. This reflects an estimated annual staff investment of nearly \$232,499 to support these activities. In total, based on the estimates provided, SPD spends about \$587,825 annually on collecting, storing, and disposing of evidence collected from people experiencing homelessness.

**Comparable law enforcement agencies reported that alternative approaches strengthened operational efficiency, eased storage demands and allowed sworn personnel to devote more time to core policing responsibilities.**

The issues faced by SPD are not unique and many local law enforcement agencies are experiencing similar strains. However, we found some local law enforcement agencies have developed procedures to store homeless property in offsite non-police facilities. These actions have resulted in time savings for law enforcement personnel and higher retrieval rates by homeless individuals of their property.

We found two local law enforcement agencies in California contract with third-party companies to collect, manage, store, and return PEH personal property. For example, the Anaheim Police Department

<sup>7</sup> Notably, the Police IMPACT command staff did not include time for separating evidence as that process is assisted by DCR outreach staff.

(APD) contracts with a vendor to collect and store homeless property for safekeeping. During police responses, APD officers collect evidence, while the vendor's personnel collect and transport safekeeping items to a storage facility. In 2020, the Anaheim City Council approved \$400,000 to increase staffing resources, including the deployment of additional City personnel and contracted support from a consultant to assist with site responses. During an interview, an official from the Anaheim Police Department explained that this process enables police officers to return to the field more quickly and remain available to respond to calls for service, rather than spending time collecting and managing safekeeping property.

Officials in Sonoma County have also contracted with a consultant to divert property belonging to people experiencing homelessness that is collected during incarceration. During the course of our audit, an IMPACT command staff representative met with Sonoma County staff and conducted a site visit of the consultant's facility to assess its operations and service capacity. Sonoma County provides documents and notices to PEH when their property is collected and moved to the storage facility. For example, the *Notice of Collected Property* and *Notice of Intent to Dispose of Collected Property* specify the time the collected property will be stored for, instructions for retrieval, and documentation required to reclaim the property.

We believe the City can benefit from contracting with a property management service similar to the City of Anaheim and Sonoma County. The City of Anaheim found an uptick in police officers' morale and time to respond to other incidents when not required to manage PEH property. Additionally, as previously noted, we learned that SPD officials had already begun researching how to implement a similar service for the City. During this audit, SPD IMPACT and Department of Community Response (DCR) management started exploring the potential for entering such a contract with an agency to pick up, store, and return homeless property to PEH following their period of custody.

**We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 7. Consider collaborating with the Department of Community Response through the Incident Management Team to explore contracting with a qualified third-party provider to collect, store, and return personal property when taking PEH into custody.**

**Best practices provide that developing clear oversight and performance monitoring helps ensure service levels and appropriate operational priorities.**

Representatives from DCR have expressed support for the concept of engaging a consultant to assist with PEH property and help PEH retain access to their property during periods of incarceration. SPD IMPACT command staff and E&P management have also expressed support for engaging a consultant to assist with these services.

We believe that any steps to engage a consultant to assist in PEH property collection and storage should be coupled with tracking or monitoring to ensure effectiveness. Best practices emphasize that strong

internal controls require clear policies, defined responsibilities, and ongoing monitoring to manage risk and achieve organizational goals to ensure objectives are achieved.

Through their coordinated efforts within the IMT, SPD (through the work of IMPACT) and DCR should collaborate to monitor any potential contractor's work to ensure that assistance with PEH property storage and delivery supports program objectives. SPD should also track the extent to which the contractor's involvement provides operational relief, including reductions in staff time spent booking and disposing of homeless property.

We believe that coordinated monitoring through the IMT would help ensure that any consultant contracted to assist with PEH property is effectively supporting homeless property storage and achieving time savings for SPD. Ongoing oversight can also provide SPD and DCR with clearer visibility into operational impacts, including whether a consultant's involvement results in measurable time savings for City staff and allows resources to be redirected toward higher-value activities. Together, these efforts can help the IMT confirm that the arrangement is functioning as intended and delivering the anticipated benefits.

**We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 8. Collaborate with the Department of Community Response through the Incident Management Team to design and implement a series of monitoring controls to track the time saved by Evidence and Property staff and Sacramento Police Department Impact Team patrol officers resulting from contracting with a consultant to assist in the collection and storage of homeless evidence collected during enforcement actions.**

## **Finding 4: Evidence disposition practices at Sacramento Police Department have not kept pace with incoming inventory, resulting in a growing accumulation of property.**

The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property (E&P) function operates within a complex legal and operational environment that requires balancing evidence integrity, prosecutorial needs, and storage capacity. While SPD's draft *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* establishes a clear framework for lawful and accountable disposition, evidence has accumulated faster than it is disposed. Reliance on manual processes, multiple external authorization systems, and limited staffing capacity has constrained the department's ability to consistently and timely remove evidence that is no longer needed, contributing to increasing space constraints and operational risk.

Nationally recognized best practices issued by the International Association for Property and Evidence (IAPE) and statewide guidance from the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) emphasize the importance of systematic, recurring evidence review, use of automated alerts, dedicated purge time, clear authorization pathways, and sufficient staffing resources. These standards recognize that timely and lawful disposition is one of the most critical controls for maintaining manageable inventories, preserving evidence integrity, and reducing operational, legal, and reputational risk associated with overcrowded evidence facilities.

Between 2022 and 2024, SPD booked more than 143,000 items into the Evidence and Property Room while disposing of approximately 122,000, resulting in a net increase of more than 20,000 items remaining in storage. Although disposition rates have improved each year, incoming evidence continues to outpace removals. Meanwhile, legal restrictions requiring the storage of evidence for extended periods of time limit E&P management's ability to remove property. These dynamics contribute directly to ongoing space constraints and overcrowding.

We found:

- Recent improvements in processing show progress, but sustained capacity increases are needed to reduce evidence storage crowding and associated safety, security, and chain-of-custody risks;
- Court timelines, investigative requirements, and legal disposition processes extend evidence retention periods, constraining storage capacity;
- Opportunities exist to improve disposition processing time for property authorized for disposal; and
- Procedures could be strengthened by establishing performance goals for disposal.

We believe that while SPD has an appropriate policy framework and has made measurable progress, opportunities exist to augment current disposition practices to offset inventory growth. Designing and implementing systematic focus on property authorized for disposal coupled with reasonable performance goals can assist in reducing inventory.

### **Best Practices Stress Focus on the Design and Implementation of Disposal Practices.**

Prolonged retention of items already approved for disposal places avoidable strain on Evidence and Property operations. Holding these items occupies space needed for active evidence, consumes staff time on inventory that no longer serves investigative or legal purposes, and increases the risk of loss or misplacement. Strengthening post-authorization disposal scheduling, capacity, and prioritization offers a practical opportunity to sustain recent improvements and further improve efficiency and risk management.

National best practices emphasize the importance of timely, ongoing disposal. IAPE identifies effective, routine purging as one of the most important tools for keeping property room inventories manageable and preventing overcrowding, which can slow operations and increase staffing and storage needs. IAPE outlines several structured approaches to disposition, ranging from statute-based review schedules and accelerated review cycles to limited, tightly controlled administrative closures for severe backlogs.

Similarly, POST identifies timely and lawful disposition as a core responsibility of evidence and property units. POST recommends clear written procedures for authorization and final disposition, complete documentation in property management systems, and dedicating focused staff time to disposition activities to help agencies manage inventory efficiently and reduce operational risk.

### **Evidence and Property Procedures Provide the Framework for Lawful and Timely Disposition.**

The SPD's *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual (Procedures)* provides guidance on booking, storage and disposition of evidence. The Procedures emphasize that disposition is a judgment-based, case-by-case process that often requires coordination with investigators and prosecutors, allows release when evidentiary value ends or a court order requires it, and provides clear authority and specialized procedures for high-risk property to ensure legally compliant, accountable, and efficient outcomes that protect public safety and reduce unnecessary storage.

SPD includes into its Procedures a section outlining "Purging Guidelines" for removing or disposing of evidence. The Procedures establish the framework for when and how evidence and property may be released, purged, or otherwise disposed. These retention requirements are designed to protect prosecutorial integrity, preserve legal rights, and ensure the department can respond to future legal challenges or reopened cases.

The Procedures also guide that special consideration is required in certain circumstances, for example, when evidence is linked to multiple cases or defendants, cases subject to refiling, and matters involving court orders, domestic violence, or sexually violent predators.

### **Recent improvements in processing show progress, but sustained capacity increases are needed to reduce evidence storage crowding and associated safety, security, and chain-of-custody risks.**

As part of fieldwork for this audit we requested from the SPD two data sets. First, a listing of all evidence that was booked into the E&P warehouse in calendar year 2022, 2023, and 2024. Second, we

requested all evidence that was disposed of by the E&P warehouse staff in 2022, 2023, and 2024. We sought to compare evidence and property inventory throughput over a three-year period, comparing the volume of items entering the system with the number of items processed out through return, disposal, or transfer.

As Figure 4 illustrates, while recent improvements show progress, inventory intake exceeded processing capacity over most of the period reviewed, resulting in a net increase in stored items and added strain on the E&P warehouse.

**Figure 4: Evidence and Property Inventory Throughput and Net Change, 2022–2024**

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>143,155</b>	<b>122,251</b>	<b>20,904</b>

**Source:** Created by Office of the City Auditor based on data provided by Sacramento Police Department.

As illustrated above, over the three-year period reviewed, the volume of evidence and property items entering the system exceeded the number of items processed out, resulting in a net increase of more than 20,000 items in inventory. The overall trend reflects a multi-year accumulation of inventory that potentially increases pressure on storage capacity and operational resources.

Further, as the data show that inventory intake declined each year over the period reviewed, we are unable to determine whether recent improvements in net inventory levels were driven in part by fewer items entering the system, or by increased processing capacity. If intake levels increase in the future due to changes in enforcement activity, policy, or operational demands, current processing capacity may again prove insufficient, leading to renewed growth in backlog.

**Court timelines, investigative requirements, and legal disposition processes extend evidence retention periods, constraining storage capacity.**

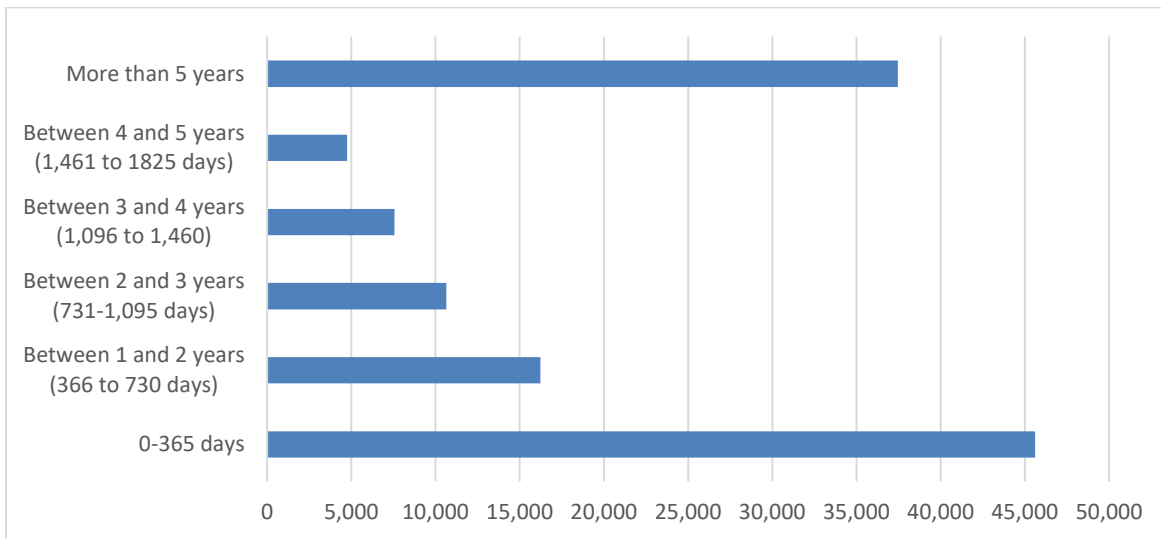
E&P managers face structural constraints due to legal requirements governing evidence disposal. They must retain property until investigators, prosecutors, or courts authorize its release, leaving managers with limited control over disposal timelines. Consequently, large volumes of evidence remain in E&P facilities for extended periods, creating unavoidable backlogs that accumulate over time.

SPD includes in its Procedures a section outlining “Purging Guidelines” for removing or disposing of evidence. Special considerations result in required storage of certain evidence for extended periods, for example, when evidence is linked to multiple cases or defendants, evidence retention requirement for the length of prison sentence, or evidence held for cold cases.

To assess how long evidence and property typically remain in storage before leaving the facility, we analyzed the age of all items at the time they were disposed of, returned, transferred, or otherwise removed from inventory. The Figure below summarizes the age of evidence and property at the time

items left the facility, showing how long inventory remained in storage before being returned, disposed of, or otherwise released. It highlights that while many items move through the system within the first year, a substantial portion remains in inventory for multiple years.

**Figure 5: Total Time from Intake to Final Disposition**



**Source:** Created by Office of the City Auditor based on information provided by Sacramento Police Department.

The age profile of inventory leaving the facility shows that a substantial share is disposed of within the first year. However, approximately 63 percent of items remained in inventory for more than one year prior to leaving the facility, including about 31 percent that remained in storage for more than five years. This distribution reflects the legally constrained and case-driven nature of evidence retention, where court processes, investigative needs, and legal holds can significantly extend storage time.

As described above, for a portion of evidence, E&P staff are required to work with and receive authorization from Investigators or Prosecutors to clear evidence appropriate for disposal. This evidence must be held and requires approval for several reasons, such as through the length of a court case or until an individual is released from prison. This process depends on timely updates from these partners to confirm case closure and authorize the release or destruction of evidence.

**Opportunities exist to improve disposition processing time for some property.**

Legal and investigative requirements largely determine how long property must be retained in the warehouse. However, once items are authorized for disposal E&P staff have greater influence over how quickly they are cleared from inventory. Management could consider opportunities to improve post-authorization clearance timelines by better aligning disposal practices with operational capacity and workload.

We reviewed the disposition data for property that required authorization for disposal. First, we found that about 75 percent of the items, 91,964 of 122,251, disposed of between 2022 and 2024 required

authorization for disposal. In other words, E&P staff did not have any control over how long 75 percent of the items in the warehouse are required to remain as they are awaiting authorization for disposal.

The Figure below summarizes how long items remained in inventory after they were authorized for disposal, showing the time between approval and actual disposition. The Figure highlights that most items are cleared within the first few months after authorization, reflecting generally effective follow-through once items are approved for release. However, the table shows a smaller share of items experiencing longer post-authorization delays, illustrating how capacity, scheduling, and coordination needs can extend clearance timelines and contribute to short-term backlog pressure.

**Figure 6: Days Between Disposal Authorization and Final Disposition of Evidence and Property**

Clearance Time	Number of Items Disposed	Percentage
0-30 days	30,396	33%
31 to 60 days	18,651	20%
61 to 90 days	11,789	13%
91 to 180 days	15,232	17%
181 to 365 days	7,898	9%
Between 1 and 2 years (366 to 730 days)	5,191	6%
Between 2 and 3 years (731-1,095 days)	1,407	2%
Between 3 and 4 years (1,096 to 1,460)	447	0%
Between 4 and 5 years (1,461 to 1825 days)	335	0%
More than 5 years	550	1%

**Source:** Created by Office of the City Auditor based on information provided by Sacramento Police Department.

According to E&P management, these timelines in many cases reflect the different legal steps that occur after disposals are authorized. These steps include batching items for scheduled destruction events such as gun destruction, coordinating with internal units to determine evidence is not connected to another ongoing matter, contacting property owners, and complying with safety and documentation requirements. E&P management acknowledged that more thorough monitoring of items authorized for disposal could lead to faster disposal times but competing priorities for staff deployment limit their ability to perform monitoring consistently.

However, we believe management could consider a focused approach to clearing items after disposal is authorized, with added attention on items pending for older categories. While some delays are expected due to various requirements, periodic reviews of older authorized items can help identify where delays are unavoidable versus where processes could be improved.

**We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 9. Continue to monitor the periodic review of items authorized for disposal for more than 60 days and prioritize older authorized items within each disposal category. This approach would help prevent extended delays and improve throughput for long-pending items.**

**Procedures could be strengthened by establishing performance goals for disposal.**

Keeping property room inventory free of items no longer needed helps prevent overcrowding, reduces storage and staffing demands, and supports efficient operations. According to IAPE, “There is no procedure more important to keeping the inventory of a property room at a manageable level than an effective on-going purging program.”

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, management, with oversight, sets clear and measurable objectives aligned with the organization’s mission and legal requirements. These objectives are supported by performance measures that track progress toward results. Performance measures may include numeric targets or milestones to show progress over time. Management monitors performance data and reviews it regularly to ensure the information is accurate and reliable. This supports informed decision making and continuous improvement.

As stated above, the SPD’s *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* explains how evidence is booked, stored, and disposed of, with clear guidance for safely and legally releasing items when they are no longer needed. The purging guidelines outline when and how evidence may be removed to protect legal rights, support investigations, and reduce unnecessary storage while maintaining public safety.

However, the Procedures do not currently include objectives or goals for the timely disposal of evidence and property. Establishing clear disposition goals for certain categories of evidence could help improve disposal rates and reduce ongoing storage constraints.

Performance measures help organizations track progress toward their goals, identify risks, and improve results by turning objectives into clear, measurable expectations. We believe E&P management should consider designing and implementing goals or objectives into their procedures.

**We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 10. Consider establishing clear, time bound disposal goals supported by measurable targets or milestones and regular management review and update the *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* to reflect these objectives in alignment with legal requirements and organizational priorities.**

## **Finding 5: The Sacramento Police Department’s Evidence and Property Section has implemented effective controls to safeguard evidence and property in the Evidence and Property warehouse.**

The Sacramento Police Department (SPD) Evidence and Property Section is responsible for the collection, preservation and disposition of evidence and property. Evidence and property can vary from firearms, articles, securities, drugs, jewelry, personal property, and other types of items. These items are preserved to support prosecution, comply with legal requirements such as the Fourth Amendment, and for the appropriate disposition of evidence and property. Maintaining the integrity, security, and admissibility of evidence and property is critical to ensuring consistent, lawful, and defensible evidence management practices.

To preserve the integrity of evidence and property, the SPD’s *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* provide guidance directing that some high-risk evidence such as firearms, drugs, and currency and jewelry valued at over a specific amount, are stored in secure rooms in the evidence and property warehouse. The Evidence and Property Facility use card-key access, a multi-zone alarm system continuously recording exterior cameras, and motion-activated interior cameras to restrict and monitor entry, supporting accountability and protecting the integrity and chain of custody of evidence and property. These rooms housing high-risk items typically require additional badge or key access to ensure the evidence and property is only accessible by authorized personnel.

We analyzed SPD access records in the evidence and property warehouse to determine the appropriateness of entry and exits to the facility and found:

- The City’s evidence and property warehouse generally maintains appropriate access controls, and access to high-risk evidence in secure areas is limited to authorized employees; and
- While SPD recently completed an audit of security card access, policies and procedures can be improved to require periodic reviews of individuals with clearance to the facility.

Although our review did not identify any instances of unauthorized access to the E&P warehouse, we identified opportunities to further reduce risk by strengthening related policies and procedures. According to best practices, not only should all keys, access codes, and proximity cards be closely monitored and accounted for annually, but agencies should also conduct periodic audits to ensure that authorized employees have possession of them and that all are accounted for.

### **The City’s evidence and property warehouse maintains appropriate access controls, and access to high-risk evidence in secure areas is limited to authorized employees.**

To assess evidence and property warehouse access controls and determine whether only appropriate employees had access to high-risk secure areas, we requested a list of individuals with warehouse access for calendar year 2024.

During interviews with SPD officials, we learned that the evidence and property warehouse has various rooms such as a large booking room, safe, armory, found bicycle storage room, gun rooms, and a

forensic evidence laboratory room. They explained that many individuals will have access to general rooms such as the large booking room, while certain rooms storing high-risk evidence, such as drugs and firearms, will be limited to specific staff.

We reviewed the access controls and actual access of high-risk rooms between January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, to ensure only authorized employees have access to secure rooms. SPD officials confirmed that the high-risk rooms that evidence and property staff have access to include the armory, gun room, and safe. We did not find any instances of unauthorized access to the high-risk areas during our testing period.

### **While SPD recently completed an audit of security card access, policies and procedures can be improved to require periodic reviews with clearance to the facility.**

Conducting routine badge access audits in an evidence and property warehouse protects the security, integrity and admissibility of evidence. Best practices also recommend conducting periodic audits to verify compliance with department policies and procedures. SPD officials stated that intermittent audits have been performed before. In June 2025, SPD conducted their first audit of access records under an updated quarterly schedule. SPD should update the *Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* to incorporate periodic audits of security access and reflect their updated processes.

To promote consistent practices, the International Association of Property and Evidence (IAPE) establishes standards requiring written policies that limit access to secure areas to authorized personnel. These standards emphasize the use of key and electronic access controls, access logs, and regular monitoring to prevent unauthorized entry. IAPE also recommends that agencies account for all keys, access codes, and badges at least annually and maintain logs documenting any entry by individuals not assigned to the E&P warehouse.

During our review of access records dated January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024 we did not identify any instances of unauthorized access to high-risk rooms. Additionally, some individuals listed as having access, such as volunteers, contract custodians, employees from other City Departments (IT, Fire, etc.), had access only to the officer entrance, which includes the booking room, breakroom, and restrooms. These individuals did not have access to the warehouse, as warehouse access is restricted exclusively to Evidence and Property staff.

While we did not find any instances of unauthorized individuals accessing high-risk rooms, conducting periodic audits ensures that authorized individuals have access to appropriate rooms in the warehouse. Without periodic reviews, there's a risk of unauthorized individuals accessing rooms, evidence tampering, compromised chain of custody, theft, and other potential liabilities. SPD should finalize its policies requiring periodic audits of access to the evidence and property warehouse.

#### **We RECOMMEND the Sacramento Police Department:**

- 11. Finalize its policies and procedures and require periodic audits of evidence and property warehouse access to verify that access permissions are current, appropriate, and aligned with assigned duties.**

## **Finding 6: The Sacramento Police Department’s Evidence and Property Section demonstrates strong performance in booking error detection and correction, with rates that outperform established best practice benchmarks.**

The SPD and E&P Room staff generally books evidence and property accurately and corrects identified booking errors in a timely manner. Booking errors were infrequent during the audit period and were typically identified and resolved through established procedures, supporting the integrity of the evidence management process.

The draft version of the *City of Sacramento Police Department Evidence and Property Procedural Manual* establishes requirements for evidence intake, documentation, correction of errors, supervisory notification, and escalation.

Best practices issued by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training also emphasize written directives, uninterrupted chain of custody, and formal correction processes when evidence is improperly documented or packaged.

To assess performance against these criteria, we reviewed E&P provided data on booking errors identified between 2022 and 2024. The data covered more than 143,000 articles of evidence and reflected a reported booking error rate of less than one percent. Most errors were corrected within several days, with only a small number remaining unresolved.

### **Evidence and Property Room Procedure Specify Booking Requirements and Corrective Actions**

SPD’s E&P Procedures establish detailed requirements for the intake, packaging, labeling, documentation, and system entry of all evidence and property at the time of booking. E&P staff are responsible for reviewing submitted items to confirm compliance with these requirements, including verifying the accuracy of system entries and the adequacy of packaging to preserve evidentiary integrity. Items that do not meet procedural requirements may be refused or flagged for correction and are secured in a designated temporary location until deficiencies are resolved, with additional handling controls applied as necessary based on the nature of the item.

When a booking error is identified, the procedures require staff to issue a formal correction notice to the booking officer specifying the deficiency and required corrective action. The policy establishes defined response timeframes and a progressive escalation process, including supervisory notification to the officer’s sergeant and, if necessary, a lieutenant when corrections are not made timely. For items that cannot be located or were not submitted as required, officers must complete supplemental documentation explaining the discrepancy. These procedures are intended to maintain an uninterrupted chain of custody and align with POST best practices emphasizing clear written directives, accountability, and structured correction and escalation processes within evidence management operations.

## Evidence and Property Booking Errors Occurred Infrequently and Were Generally Corrected Promptly

We requested information from Department management to assess the frequency of booking errors, and the length of time officers take to correct them. The Department provided data covering 2022 through 2024, including the date each error was identified, the dates correction notices were issued, and the date the error was resolved. According to Department staff, when an error is detected, the booking officer is notified and the error is logged in a tracking spreadsheet, with a follow-up notice issued if the error is not corrected within one week. As Figure 7 illustrates, most of the property errors were remedied in between two and seven days.

**Figure 7: Booking Error and Correction Rates**

Categories Days Late	2024	2023	2022	Total	Percentage
Same Day	14	11	17	42	14%
Next Day	10	9	20	39	13%
Under 2-7 Days	30	37	49	116	40%
8-14 Days	6	11	22	39	13%
15 to 21	8	7	8	23	8%
Greater than 21	7	9	10	26	9%
Not Corrected	2	4	1	7	2%
<b>Total Errors Detected</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>292</b>	

**Source:** Created by Office of the City Auditor based on information provided by Sacramento Police Department.

We were unable to independently verify certain error dates in the spreadsheet because corrections made in the evidence management system overwrite earlier entries. Based on the data provided, the Department reported 292 booking errors out of 143,155 articles of evidence booked during the period, resulting in an error rate of less than one percent. Of these errors, seven remained unresolved at the time of our review, while the majority were corrected within two to seven days.



monitoring and protection of the video surveillance system and servers. These servers are behind multiple doorways that require security card key authorization, which is limited to Evidence and Property staff and exempt management. Additionally, data and video from this server are backed up on a separate, replicated off-site server.

4. Finalize and implement the Evidence and Property Procedural Manual and ensure staff receive appropriate training on the finalized requirements.

Response: Concur. The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section is working with the Professional Standards Unit to update and finalize the Evidence and Property Procedural Manual and will provide staff training upon completion. The anticipated date of completion is September 1, 2026.

5. Finalize and implement the Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook and ensure staff receive appropriate training on the finalized requirements.

Response: Concur. The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section is working with the Professional Standards Unit to update and finalize the Evidence and Property Firearm Handbook and will train staff accordingly. The anticipated date of completion is September 1, 2026.

6. Update the Evidence and Property Procedures to provide clear guidance on identifying and itemizing items that may potentially have high value and require that such items be secured in a safe to enhance security.

Response: Concur. The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section is working with the Professional Standards Unit to update and finalize the Evidence and Property Procedural Manual to include guidance on identifying, itemizing, and storing items that may have potentially high value, as well as ensuring staff training on these procedures. The anticipated date of completion is September 1, 2026. In the interim, the Sacramento Police Department has disseminated an internal memo with guidance and requirements consistent with this recommendation.

7. Consider collaborating with the Department of Community Response through the Incident Management Team to explore contracting with a qualified third-party provider to collect, store, and return personal property when taking PEH into custody.

Response: Concur. The Sacramento Police Department is collaborating with the Department of Community Response, and a Request for Proposals has been issued to explore contracting for these services.

8. Collaborate with the Department of Community Response through the Incident Management Team to design and implement a series of monitoring controls to track the time saved by Evidence and Property staff and Sacramento Police Department Impact Team patrol officers resulting from contracting with a consultant to assist in the collection and storage of homeless evidence collected during enforcement actions.

Response: Neutral. Neither agree nor disagree. The Sacramento Police Department would need to research the resources, software options, and system capabilities required to design and implement monitoring controls that track the time savings across the Department. Currently, the Department does not have dedicated funding to support this effort.

9. Continue to monitor the periodic review of items authorized for disposal for more than 60 days and prioritize older authorized items within each disposal category. This approach would help prevent extended delays and improve throughput for long-pending items.


Response: Concur. An Evidence and Property Technician has already been assigned secondary duties to review long-pending items and support timely disposal.

10. Consider establishing clear, time bound disposal goals supported by measurable targets or milestones and regular management review and update the Evidence and Property Procedural Manual to reflect these objectives in alignment with legal requirements and organizational priorities.

Response: Concur. The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section is working with the Professional Standards Unit to update and finalize the Evidence and Property Procedural Manual to include disposal goals and management review processes. The anticipated date of completion is September 1, 2026.

11. Finalize its policies and procedures and require periodic audits of evidence and property warehouse access to verify that access permissions are current, appropriate, and aligned with assigned duties.

Response: Concur. The Sacramento Police Department's Evidence and Property Section is working with the Professional Standards Unit to update and finalize section directives, including requirements for periodic facility access audits. Quarterly audits of the security card access to Evidence and Property have already been implemented.



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

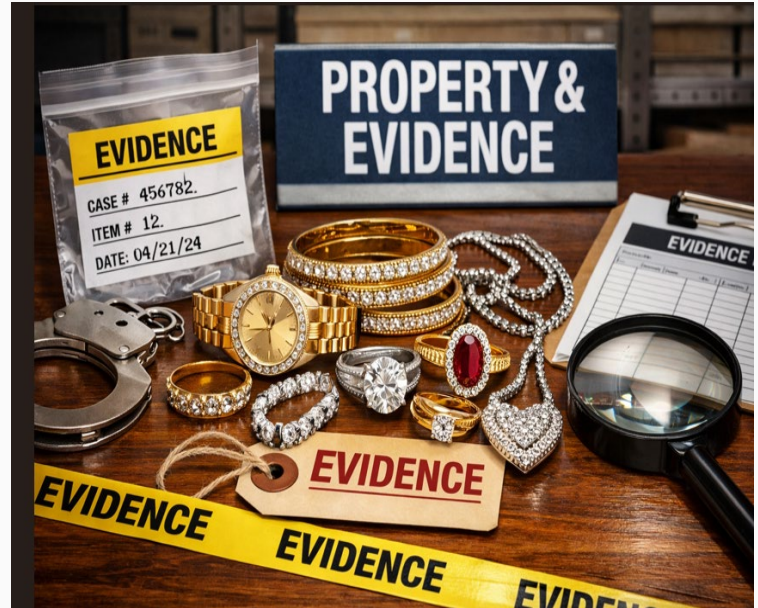
# Finding 2: Adopting procedures with clearer standards would align with best practices

## *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*

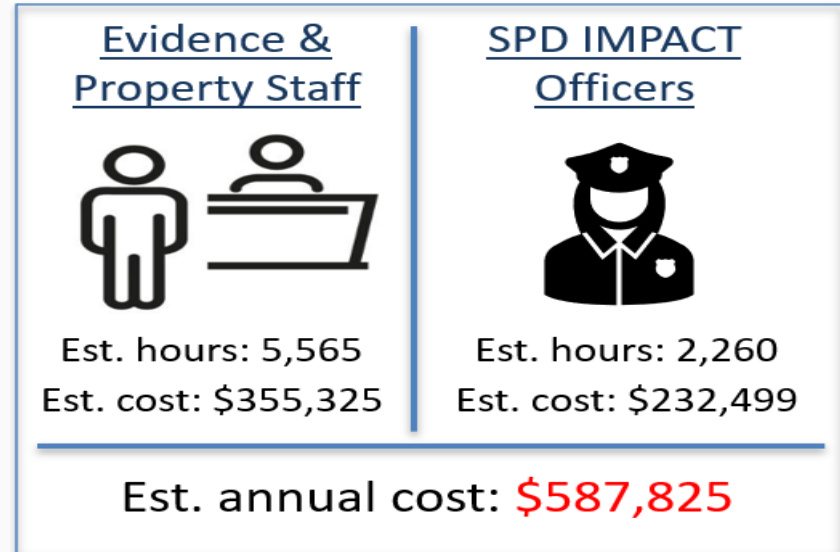


# Finding 3: Opportunity to reduce time and costs by relocating homeless enforcement property

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
<b>Total</b>	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

