



OFFICE OF THE
STATE AUDITOR

News Release

For Immediate Release

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**Office of the State Auditor Releases a Review of Property and Evidence
Storage and Management Among Selected Utah Law Enforcement Agencies**

Salt Lake City, UTAH –

The Office of the State Auditor (Office) today announced the release of a Review of Property and Evidence Storage and Management Among Selected Utah Law Enforcement Agencies.

The Office's Performance Audit team conducted a review of selected law enforcement agencies to determine to what extent agencies have established appropriate controls over property, including evidence, with particular emphasis on money, firearms, and controlled substances. The Office reviewed seven agencies across the state and of a range of sizes, checking each agency's controls, policies, and procedures for compliance with applicable state statutes and application of industry best practices.

Utah statute authorizes a peace officer to take possession of evidence and other property through various means, including seizing property related to a crime or public safety, receiving firearms for safekeeping, and finding or receiving lost or mislaid property. Examples of property taken into custody include money, weapons, controlled substances, drug paraphernalia, motor vehicles, bicycles, jewelry, clothing, biological evidence, and phones.

Property owners, prosecutors, and other interested parties expect a law enforcement agency (agency) to take measures that provide reasonable assurance that property in the possession of the agency is secured, tracked, and maintained. Additionally, state statute requires agencies to hold seized property "in safe custody" and maintain "a detailed inventory of all property seized." Securing, tracking, and maintaining property ensures the integrity of property held as evidence and enables the safe return of property to owners.

The audit report contains five findings:

1. Some property records do not match actual property storage.
2. Law enforcement agencies had inadequate controls over property storage.
3. Multiple agencies had insufficient controls for property disposal.
4. Law enforcement agencies are not issuing receipts to owners of seized property, as required by state statute.
5. Some agencies have inadequate controls regarding access to digital property records.

“I encourage law enforcement agencies across the state to review this report and then to evaluate their evidence-handling policies and procedures, improving them where weaknesses are identified.” said State Auditor John Dougall.

The report may be found on the Office’s website at auditor.utah.gov and specifically at: <https://reporting.auditor.utah.gov/servlet/servlet.FileDownload?file=0151K000003NFczQAG> .

About the Office of the State Auditor

The Office of the State Auditor provides Utah taxpayers and government officials with an independent assessment of financial operation, statutory compliance, and performance management for state and local government.

Specific activities of the Office include performing financial audits, conducting Federal funds compliance audits, providing local government oversight, conducting agency and program performance audits, performing fraud and compliance audits, and operating the State Auditor Hotline for citizens to report suspected financial issues or improprieties. These capabilities strengthen Utah State Government and help taxpayers have confidence in the integrity of Utah’s government agencies.

The State Auditor is a Constitutional Officer of the State of Utah, elected directly by the state’s citizens every four years. The role of the State Auditor is authorized in Article VII, Section 15 of the Utah Constitution. For more information, see auditor.utah.gov.

Contact:

Nicole Toomey Davis,
Public Information Officer
Office of the State Auditor
801-678-4835
ndavis@utah.gov