

**TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT  
FORENSIC INVESTIGATION UNIT  
AUDIT 07-06  
APRIL 19, 2007**



# CITY OF TAMPA

Pam Iorio, Mayor

Internal Audit Department

Roger Strout, Internal Audit Director

April 19, 2007

Honorable Pam Iorio  
Mayor, City of Tampa  
1 City Hall Plaza  
Tampa, Florida

RE: Tampa Police Department – Forensic Investigation Unit, Audit 07-06

Dear Mayor Iorio:

Attached is the Internal Audit Department's report on TPD's Forensic Investigation Unit.

We thank the management and staff of the Forensic Investigation Unit for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.


Sincerely,

Roger Strout  
Internal Audit Director

cc: Stephen Hogue, Police Chief  
Darryl Smith, Chief of Staff

TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT  
FORENSIC INVESTIGATION UNIT  
AUDIT 07-06

  
Auditor

  
Audit Supervisor

  
Audit Director

**TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT  
FORENSIC INVESTIGATION UNIT  
AUDIT 07-06**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Forensic Investigation Unit has four distinct sections that provide support to the Tampa Police Department. These sections are known as: Data Entry, Crime Scene, Latent Fingerprint, and Photographic Laboratory.

The following list is not exhaustive, but identifies some of the specific duties performed by each section:

- The Data Entry Section is responsible for processing arrest data on adult and juvenile offenders.
- The Crime Scene Section is responsible for providing technical forensic expertise to perform crime scene investigations through the use of photography, collection and preservation of evidence, identification of evidentiary items, processing evidence for latent fingerprints and alternate light source analysis, and providing courtroom testimony.
- The Latent Fingerprint Section is responsible for using fingerprint expertise to assist in identifying criminals through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS).
- The Photographic Laboratory Section is responsible for the processing, archiving, and printing of all police and fire department crime scene and public relations photos, also providing court testimony as it relates to their job.

At the time of the audit, there was an authorized staffing level of 33 employees, which included one vacant Crime Scene Technician position.

**STATISTICS**

The year-to-date activity volume of the Forensic Investigation Unit functions for calendar years 2005 and 2006 are as follows:

<b><u>Activity</u></b>	<b><u>2006</u></b>	<b><u>2005</u></b>
Crime Scene Technicians – Fingerprint Classifications	29,741	27,366
Latent Print Examiners – AFIS Entries	569	361
Data Entry – New and Verified Booking Report Records	27,856	31,030
Photography Lab – 35MM Film Rolls Developed	6,011	6,730

Note: this information was obtained from an annual report produced by the Tampa Police Department.

## **STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES**

This audit was conducted in accordance with the Internal Audit Department's FY07 Audit Agenda. The objectives of this audit were to ensure that:

1. Evidence, collected by the Forensic Investigation Unit, was properly stored and subsequently transferred to the Property Room in a timely manner.
2. The Forensic Investigation Unit was operating in compliance with guidelines established by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Incorporated (CALEA).

## **STATEMENT OF SCOPE**

The audit period covered the Forensic Investigation Unit's (FIU) activity that occurred from October 1, 2005, through December 31, 2006. Source documentation was obtained from FIU. Original records as well as copies were used as evidence and verified through physical examination.

## **STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY**

The sample size and selection were statistically generated using a desired confidence level of 90 percent, expected error rate of 10 percent, and a desired precision of 10 percent. Statistical sampling was used in order to infer the conclusions of test work performed on a sample to the population from which it was drawn and to obtain estimates of sampling error involved. When appropriate, judgmental sampling was used to improve the overall efficiency of the audit.

To achieve the audit's objectives, reliance was placed on computer-processed data contained in the City's Versadex system. We assessed the reliability of the information produced by the Versadex system. Based on a review of the controls over access to and modification of data in the system, information produced from Versadex was deemed reliable.

## **STATEMENT OF AUDITING STANDARDS**

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to afford a reasonable basis for our judgments and conclusions regarding the organization, program, activity, or function under audit. An audit also includes assessments of applicable internal controls and compliance with requirements of laws and regulations when necessary to satisfy the audit objectives. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

## **AUDIT CONCLUSIONS**

Based upon the test work performed and the audit findings noted below, we conclude that:

1. Documentation to support that evidence collected by the Forensic Investigation Unit, was properly stored – and subsequently transferred to the Property Room within the three day suggested time frame, required improvement.

2. The Forensic Investigation Unit was operating in compliance with guidelines established by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Incorporated (CALEA).

**FAVORABLE COMMENT**

Management of the Forensics Investigation Unit should be complimented on reducing the backlog of data entry from a two-year period (noted in the prior audit) to currently, a little more than 45-days (as of the end of fieldwork on January 31, 2007).

While the findings discussed below may not, individually or in the aggregate, significantly impair the operations of the Forensics Investigation Unit (FIU), they do present risks that can be more effectively controlled. Before we completed our audit, FIU Management had implemented one of the Internal Audit Department's recommendations.

### **VERSADEX SYSTEM (Repeat Finding)**

One of the major functions of the computer system known as Versadex is to maintain a history of arrests by the Tampa Police Department. The system interfaces with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office computer system known as Jail Administrative Management System (JAMS), since bookings occur at facilities maintained by the Sheriff. Daily, the Forensics Investigations Unit (Unit) receives arrest reports prepared by JAMS for each TPD arrest.

The arrest reports – known as booking reports, and fingerprint cards received by the Unit are initially processed by the Crime Scene Technicians (Technician). The Technician is responsible for determining if a fingerprint card is already on file for the individual arrested. If no fingerprint card exists, the Technician will identify the individual by reviewing the fingerprints using a classification method known as the Henry system. It should be noted that at the time of booking at HCSO, the individual is fingerprinted and classified by HCSO Deputies. The fingerprint classification determined by HCSO will appear on the booking report that interfaces with Versadex; however, since any changes in classification made by HCSO is not received initially by TPD, the Technicians perform their own classification.

Once the classification has been determined by the Technician, the booking information along with the fingerprint card (if already on file) is forwarded to the Data Terminal Operators (DTO) for input of criminal charges in the Criminal Description module of Versadex. Information entered by the DTO includes any information not already in the system. Some of the information that is required to be entered includes any new alias names, any “scars, marks, tattoos, deformities, and descriptions” identified at the time of booking, and any new address information. At the end of fieldwork (January 31, 2007), information received as of December 18, 2006, was being input to Versadex by the Forensics Investigation Unit, representing approximately a six to eight weeks backlog in their data entry.

Police Department personnel rely on the information maintained on Versadex for their investigations. However, if information is required immediately regarding arrest information and Versadex is not current (the system will display last involvement date and the type of case), Police personnel have access to the Sheriff's Office booking information that provides more detailed information than can be seen by the public.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

Management should determine the acceptable level for the Forensic Unit's Data Terminal Operator's (DTO) data entry backlog. Upon determining the acceptable level for the DTO backlog, anything beyond the acceptable level should be brought current. Additionally, a system should be established to ensure that all records are entered timely and maintained at the established level.

### **AUDITEE RESPONSE**

Agree. The Forensic Investigations Unit previously established an acceptable backlog entry time of thirty days. This entry time will remain in effect. The data entry is a fluid process that is affected by the number of arrestees in a given period of time and employee attendance. Currently the data entry staff is limited to three personnel, thus the absence of one employee for even a short duration affects the backlog. This unit will attempt to identify additional resources to keep the backlog within the thirty-day limit specified and strive for a reduction to twenty-one days.

## **TEMPORARY STORAGE OF COLLECTED EVIDENCE (Repeat Finding)**

The Crime Scene Technicians (Technician), of the Forensic Investigation Unit (FIU), were not always able to process evidence removed from a crime scene during their assigned shift. Therefore, a “temporary” location was established to store evidence until the Technician could complete the processing and subsequently transfer it to the Police Department’s Property Room for storage.

A review was performed of the log maintained for entry to the “temporary” location during the time period of October, 2006, through December, 2006. During this time period, there were 272 entries in the log, which we reviewed. The following exceptions were noted:

- Seventy-six items of evidence were stored longer than the three days allowed by the policy.
- Fifty-eight entries did not document the date the items were removed from the temporary location for transfer to the Property Room.
- Eighteen entries did not document who removed the evidence.

There is a risk of the chain of custody of evidence being questioned when the record documenting how that evidence is stored is incomplete. Management indicated that the supplement prepared by the Crime Scene Technician should document how evidence was handled, to include when it was stored and removed from the temporary location. However, a cursory review of report supplements disclosed that this information was not always included.

Additionally, for a sample of 24 items, a review of Property Room records for entries by FIU personnel was performed. The review disclosed that, generally, evidence collected by the Technician was submitted to the Property Room the same day it was collected. The items not submitted the same day were entered on the entry log and placed in the temporary storage location.

Management indicated that their policy was to store evidence for no longer than three days in the temporary storage location. Untimely removal of evidence was noted in the prior audit (Identification Section – On Scene Investigation, Audit 02-03) and it was recommended that a policy be written to establish the length of time evidence should be maintained in the temporary storage location. The Post Audit Review for Audit 02-03 – Identification Section – On Scene Investigation (six months after the audit) indicated that the policy was developed and was to be submitted for review and approval. However, during this audit, the copy of the policy obtained was stamped as “draft.” FIU personnel indicated that due to turnover in Management, the policy was not submitted for approval by the Chief of Police.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2**

Management should ensure the “draft” procedure is approved by the Chief of Police and implemented as soon as possible. Additionally, there should be a periodic review of the entry log for the temporary location to ensure all required information is documented and that evidence is transferred to the Property Room in a timely manner.

## **AUDITEE RESPONSE**

Agree. The IDP draft regarding the temporary storage evidence was previously submitted but due to procedural concerns the document is in the process of being revised again. The rewrite will extend the storage period to a five-day limit to allow additional time for the latent fingerprint specialists to examine the evidence. This IDP will be completed and approved within the next three months.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

Management should determine the cause for incomplete documentation on the temporary storage location's entry log and develop a procedure to ensure it is corrected.

### **AUDITEE RESPONSE**

Agree. The Forensic Investigation Unit supervisor will require each shift supervisor to both review the temporary entry / storage logs on a weekly basis as well as submit periodic reports on their findings. The shift supervisors will ensure compliance from their reviews. The goal is to gain compliance immediately. As an additional check and balance, the assigned captain has implemented a schedule of auditing the logs every other month and will also conduct random checks of the temporary logs, evidence, and Versadex supplements.

### **VEHICLE INVENTORY CHECKLIST (Repeat Finding)**

An unannounced inspection of the Forensic Unit vehicles to determine compliance with Intra-Departmental Procedure (IDP) 604 – Mobile Crime Scene Labs, disclosed numerous missing items. A discussion with the Supervisor indicated that the items noted as missing were routinely kept in a separate “personal” kit. However, there was no documentation to support that the “personal” kits were monitored for compliance with the IDP.

Intra-Departmental Procedure 601.11 (Duties and Responsibilities of the FIU Shift Supervisor) required each shift Supervisor to perform inspections of the mobile crime labs “during his/her shift.” A completed checklist prepared by FIU was reviewed; however, it did not document who or when the inspection(s) was performed.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

Management should develop a checklist that complies with the Intra-Departmental Procedure for both the mobile crime lab and the personal kits of the Technicians. It should include the frequency of inspections and who should perform them. Also, unannounced inspections should be performed periodically by someone at a level higher than Supervisor.

### **AUDITEE RESPONSE**

Agree. IDP #601.11 (Duties and Responsibilities of the FIU Shift Supervisor) needs additional detail to include “when and who” will be responsible for the mobile crime lab inspections. The Forensic Investigation Unit supervisor will re-write the corresponding IDPs in order to ensure compliance with the recommendations and to address the issues. The assigned captain will ensure the approval process is completed. A procedure has already been implemented with regards to the mobile crime lab vehicles. Finally, a checklist has been designed to facilitate the inventories. This recommendation should be resolved and in compliance within three months.