

**TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT  
FORENSIC INVESTIGATION UNIT  
AUDIT 14-09  
JULY 10, 2014**



# CITY OF TAMPA

Bob Buckhorn, Mayor

Internal Audit Department

Christine Glover, Internal Audit Director

July 10, 2014

Honorable Bob Buckhorn  
Mayor, City of Tampa  
1 City Hall Plaza  
Tampa, Florida

RE: Tampa Police Department – Forensic Investigation Unit, Audit 14-09

Dear Mayor Buckhorn:

Attached is the Internal Audit Department's report on Tampa Police Department – Forensic Investigation Unit (FIU).

FIU has already taken positive actions in response to our recommendation. We thank the management and staff of FIU for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

Sincerely,

/s/ Christine Glover

Christine Glover  
Internal Audit Director

cc: Dennis Rogero, Chief of Staff  
Sonya Little, Chief Financial Officer  
Jane Castor, Chief of Police

**TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT  
FORENSIC INVESTIGATION UNIT  
AUDIT 14-09  
JULY 10, 2014**

/s/ Vivian N Walker

---

Auditor

/s/ Christine Glover

---

Audit Director

**TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT  
FORENSIC INVESTIGATION UNIT  
AUDIT 14-09**

**BACKGROUND**

The City of Tampa Police Department's Forensic Investigation Unit (FIU) is an internal resource that provides expertise at crime scenes. Crime Scene Technicians (Technicians) document the scene through photography and collecting, processing, and preserving all types of evidence. This includes collecting DNA and identifying suspects through fingerprinting techniques. Additionally, in their offices, Latent Fingerprint Specialists examine and evaluate the latent fingerprints developed and "lifted" at the crime scene. FIU uses advancements in technology through digital photography and video media collection / enhancement. Aside from criminal case involvement, FIU also provides fingerprint services to the public and other law enforcement agencies.

FIU has an authorized staffing level of 31. The full staff includes: Technicians, Latent Fingerprint Specialists, an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) Technician, Fingerprint Technician, Multimedia Technician, and Administrative staff. Technicians and Latent Fingerprint Specialists must have an "exceptional understanding of law enforcement techniques and needs to perform their assigned tasks in a way that assists future courtroom proceedings."<sup>1</sup>

**STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES**

This audit was conducted in accordance with the Internal Audit Department's FY2014 Audit Agenda. The objective of this audit was to ensure that evidence collected at crime scenes was processed in accordance with the established intra-department procedures.

**STATEMENT OF SCOPE**

This audit reviewed FIU's activity from October 1, 2013, through March 31, 2014. Original records as well as copies were used as evidence and verified through observation and physical examination.

**STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY**

This audit reviewed internal controls related to the security of evidence and included testing the timeliness between when evidence was collected on scene compared to the date it was remitted to the Property Room. A sample of collected evidence was traced to the logs maintained by both FIU and the Property Room. If evidence was retained by FIU, testing was performed to determine if the retention complied with their internal guidelines.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.tampagov.net/dept\\_Police/ABOUT\\_US/INVESTIGATIONS\\_AND\\_SUPPORT](http://www.tampagov.net/dept_Police/ABOUT_US/INVESTIGATIONS_AND_SUPPORT)

### **STATEMENT OF AUDITING STANDARDS**

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.

### **AUDIT CONCLUSIONS**

Based upon the test work performed we conclude that evidence collected at crime scenes is not always processed in accordance with the established intra-department procedures.

### **NOTEWORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The Technicians of FIU responded to more than 15,800 calls with limited resources during fiscal years 2011-13. Based on a staffing level of 18, each Technician averaged more than 882 calls. As of 2008, FIU was required to respond to all calls as part of the crime reduction plan. It should also be noted that the addition of a Multimedia Technician provides the department with a skill set to address the current highly technological environment.

While the findings discussed below may not, individually or in the aggregate, significantly impair the operations of the Police Department, they do present risks that can be more effectively controlled. Before we completed our audit, Police Department personnel implemented some of the Internal Audit Department's recommendations.

## **TEMPORARY STORAGE OF EVIDENCE (REPEAT FINDING)**

**CONDITION:** Evidence placed in temporary storage exceeded the maximum limit of eight days without documentation to support the reason for delayed submittal to the Property Room. Additionally, some evidence was collected and placed in temporary storage, but not entered on the temporary storage log.

The Technicians of FIU are not always able to process evidence removed from a crime scene during their assigned shift. Therefore, a temporary location is used to store the evidence until the Technician can complete the processing and subsequently transfer it to the Police Department's Property Room for more permanent storage.

FIU uses an ACCESS database, referred to as the Crime Lab Log, to record its activities during calls for service. The Crime Lab Log was queried for all activity during the audit time period of October 2013 through March 2014. During this time period, there were 1,125 entries that indicated evidence was collected. Using Automated Command Language (ACL) software, a sample of 119 entries was selected to review for compliance with the established Intra-Departmental Policy (IDP) 705.13, which requires temporary storage of evidence for no more than eight days.

The sampled items were compared to the date of receipt by the Property Room. Of the 119 entries, 29 were not required to be placed in temporary storage for various reasons. For the remaining 90 items not received by the Property Room on the same calendar day, the temporary storage logbook was reviewed. This review disclosed the following exceptions:

- Thirteen entries were removed after more than 8 days (averaging 13 days) with no documented explanation for why the extended retention was required.
- Three items recorded on the Crime Lab Log were not remitted to the Property Room the same day and was not documented as being held in temporary storage.

Management indicated that the report supplement prepared by the Technician should document how evidence is handled, to include when it is stored and removed from the temporary location. Also, when evidence is required to be kept in the temporary location beyond the permitted time limit, the Technician is required to obtain Supervisory approval and document the reason for the extension in the report supplement. The report supplements for the items noted above did not include documentation to support either approval by the Supervisor or the reason for retaining the item beyond the eight days.

**CRITERIA:** Draft IDP 705.13 - Procedures for the Temporary Storage of Evidence requires the Technician to complete the log "at the time the evidence is placed inside and removed from the temporary storage area." Additionally, the IDP limits the retention of evidence in temporary storage to no more than eight days unless otherwise documented as approved by the Supervisor and noted in the Technician's report supplement. There is also to be a weekly review of the log by the Shift Supervisors.

CAUSE: There is currently no process in place that would ensure evidence placed in temporary storage is logged. Additionally, the weekly review of the temporary storage log by the Shift Supervisors is not documented.

EFFECT: The integrity of the chain of custody of evidence could be questioned when gaps appear in the paper trail, as evidenced in the lapse between the time of collection from the scene to depositing with the Property Room.

RECOMMENDATION: Management should evaluate the number of days evidence is permitted to be retained in temporary storage. If deemed inadequate, the draft procedure should be revised to reflect a more feasible time period, be approved by the Chief of Police, and implemented as soon as possible. Additionally, the weekly review by the Shift Supervisors should be documented and include a comparison between the temporary storage items and evidence collected and noted in the Crime Lab Log. For those instances where the evidence will be retained longer than the established timeframe, Shift Supervisors should ensure the Technician's supplement is updated to reflect the reason for the delay.

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE: **1.** The temporary storage log has been modified as of 6/17/14 to include a supervisory review category. It includes a space for the supervisor's initials and date. **2.** An internal directive, dated 6/17/14 has been issued for all shift supervisors to conduct a review of their employee's temporary evidence entries and the log on their final work day. Action and supplementation is to be completed for any extensions or violations. **3.** IDP 705.13 has been modified to the temporary storage of items for no more than 28 days. The IDP was forwarded up the chain of command for approval through the personnel division, dated 6/17/14. **4.** The report does not provide a full explanation as to why some entries remained past the 8 day mark. Additional or extra requested processing needs to items of evidence, extended illness of an employee causing delays, and increased workloads (processing requests and calls for service) for technicians over the past years, The addition of complete firearm processing of all seized weapons caused hundreds of processing requests. **5.** Regarding chain of custody, items held over 8 days does not mean the chain of custody is broken or questioned. The item is still in evidence and under our secure control. There is no gap, it 's either in property or temporary storage.

Immediate implementation (6/17/2014) for above items 1, 2 and 3 of management response.