

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

January 4, 2010
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WJB # 09-0072

TO: The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

BOPC No. 10-0009

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: ACTIONS TAKEN REGARDING UNSECURED DOCUMENTS

On October 27, 2009, the Police Commission discussed the issue of unsecured law enforcement documents at Northeast, Southwest, and Wilshire Area Police facilities. The Police Commission requested a report documenting the circumstances that lead to the problem along with the Office of Operations' corrective and preventive measures that were put into place.

The attached fact sheet, prepared by the Office of Operations, documents their findings surrounding the issue of unsecured files at Area police stations along with the measures put in place to not only correct the issue but also prevent a recurrence.

If there are any questions regarding this matter, please have a member of your staff contact Lieutenant Jerry Rodriguez, Office of Operations, at (213) 486-0100.



CHARLIE BECK
Chief of Police

Attachment

FACT SHEET

UNSECURED DOCUMENTS AT AREA POLICE FACILITIES

December 18, 2009

Background. On October 27, 2009, the Police Commission discussed the issue of unsecured law enforcement documents at Northeast, Southwest, and Wilshire Area Police facilities. The Police Commission requested a report documenting the scope of the problem that led to this issue along with what has been done to correct it and prevent any future recurrences.

Findings. In Northeast Area, files were found stacked against a wall in a common hallway of the Area Station. It was determined that these files were packaged and processed for pick-up and delivery to one of the City's offsite secured storage facilities. However, the fact remains that the files were not secured and were accessible to anyone walking by in the hallway. The Area Commanding Officer was notified and immediate steps were taken to move the files into a secured storage space while awaiting pickup.

In Southwest Area, unsecured files were found stacked within the parking facility. These files, although not in a conspicuous location, were clearly not being maintained in a secured storage facility as mandated by policy. Immediately upon being notified of the situation, the Southwest Area Commanding Officer assigned a police officer to monitor and ensure the security of the files while the construction of a secured fence enclosure, with a locked gate, was completed. The expedited construction of the fence was completed by October 19, 2009, within a few days from the initial discovery. Southwest Area's storage space was filled with more recent files which led them to resort to storing older files in the parking structure. It was also determined that these files were so outdated that they no longer qualified for storage at the City's secured storage facility, commonly referred to as Iron Mountain, but were to be destroyed.

In Wilshire Area, unsecured files were also discovered in the lower level parking structure. Again, although not in a conspicuous location, they were not secured according to Department policy and were accessible to anyone in that area of the parking lot. Like the files discovered in Southwest Area, these files were too old to qualify for storage at Iron Mountain and were to be destroyed. Once this issue was brought to the Commanding Officer's attention, the files were immediately relocated to a secured storage space within the Area until the files could be destroyed. The secured storage space within Wilshire Area was filled to capacity with more recent and relevant files resulting in files being stored in unsecured locations. The files were moved to a temporary secured storage location until they could be picked up for destruction.

Immediate actions taken by the Director, Office of Operations. Upon being notified of the incident, the Director asked that the Office of Operations Bureau Chiefs assemble a Bureau task force staffed with a Lieutenant or higher to conduct immediate physical inspections of every police facility and structure for any unsecured files. Aside from files secured in the locked, vacant, captain's office of the old Rampart police facility, no unsecured files were found during the inspection. The files in the old Rampart police facility were relocated to a temporary secured storage location within the new Rampart Area until picked up for destruction.

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Additionally, during the weekly Office of Operations Direct Reports Meeting, the Director reminded his Bureau Chiefs of his expectation that police files be kept in a manner consistent with Department and City record retention policy.

Records Retention Policy. According to the Department Manual, all commanding officers are responsible for the supervision, maintenance, and disposal of division records, in accordance with Division 12 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code. The Manual directs commanding officers to designate a Department records retention representative within their command who shall inventory and appraise all records in their entity; prepare and maintain Records Retention Schedules for records in their entity; prepare amendments to Records Retention Schedules when necessary; cause records to be transferred to storage when appropriate; and maintain liaison with the Department Records Coordinator regarding records management procedures. Currently, all of the geographic Areas, including Northeast, Southwest, and Wilshire, have designated the Area Records Unit supervisors as their Records Retention Representatives.

In accordance with the Department Manual, Section 2/335.20, Records and Identification Division administers and coordinates the LAPD's records retention program with the City Clerk's Office to ensure compliance with the Administrative Code. The Department Records Coordinator operates out of the Administrative Section of Records and Identification Division.

Conclusion/Recommendations. The identified storage concerns occurred because the documents in question were so dated that they only qualified for destruction and were not eligible to be removed to archive sites such as Iron Mountain or the City Records Center. This resulted in the secured storage space at the Areas being filled to capacity with the more recent records that require retention, leaving no room for the older documents. The need for additional storage space caused the aforementioned Areas to deviate from our standard storage procedures.

The volume of old files at these Areas highlight a breakdown in the manner and or frequency with which the documents were sent for retention and or destruction. Had the Areas adhered to the yearly records retention schedule and shipped older documents for destruction the number of records retained by the Areas would not have exceeded their storage capacity. However, it is important to note that Area Records Department-wide are operating with a number of vacant positions that undoubtedly contributed to this problem.

In discussing the issue with a small sampling of Area Records Clerks, they advised of difficulties in having records retention pick-ups or destruction pickups in spite of making the necessary requests. On the other hand, Records and Identification Division advised that they are available to help Areas with their records retention and destruction request efforts. For this reason, the Director has mandated that personnel from the Office of Operations attend the monthly Area

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Records Managers Associations meeting which is also attended by the Department's Records Coordinator from Records and Identification Division. This will provide an opportunity to ensure that Area Records and Records and Identification Division work together to ensure records are submitted in a timely manner for retention or destruction according to Department and City policy.

This was also a topic of discussion at the Office of Operation Direct Report's meeting. The Director reminded his Bureau Chiefs of the importance of timely records retention and destruction in addition to the importance of ensuring that all Department files be maintained in a manner consistent with policy. Working closely with Area Records Coordinators and the Department's Records Retention Coordinator Office of Operations will ensure this issue does not recur.

Prepared by:
Office of Operations