

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**Inspections
A Self Evaluation Process for
Law Enforcement Agencies**

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**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

Inspections are used by law enforcement agencies to look at processes within the agency. Inspections determine if the agency is operating the way it should be and turning out the product that is expected. More often than not, law enforcement agencies do not evaluate their performance as organizational components. Instead, individuals are the only ones who undergo annual performance evaluations. The inspection process proactively looks at each organizational component of an agency and determines if it is performing as expected. The inspection model is an accepted method of checking an organization's performance regardless of whether it is a federal, state, or local agency. The inspection model is further seen as a proactive approach to self-evaluation and performance correction. Historically, when something negative occurred within law enforcement agencies, there would be a reactive investigation with perhaps discipline and hopefully corrective action. A more professional posture for an agency is being proactively vigilant to internal problems as they start to evolve and solving the problem rather than reacting after there is a full-blown problem. When implementing the inspection process the agency has to commit to allocating the needed staff for this function. This is often a difficult commitment to make and maintain over time. When the inspection model is properly implemented, the benefits to an agency are indisputable.

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INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement agencies in most cases are without tools in place to proactively audit or evaluate themselves. Often, police departments do not have a process whereby they can verify that their organizational components are meeting their business expectations. Additionally, there are no procedures for examining business practices to ensure that the departments are not in conflict with agency goals and objectives. For instance, an agency's evidence section makes certain that the appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that all property in the department's custody is accounted for. The sex crimes unit accurately applies title codes to all of the crimes they investigate to ensure accurate statistical reporting and make sure that the department is up to date on retention and archival periods for case files. Often times the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of an agency will not know that part of the system is breaking down until it is too late and a problem manifests itself and is reported in the media. The inspection process should be able to minimize or eliminate problems from occurring by proactively seeking out bad business practices or policy violations instead of waiting for them to be addressed as an Internal Affairs investigation.

This research paper will answer the question which considers whether or not a proactive inspection process benefits police organizations and will also discuss these benefits to CEOs as well as to the individual components of the department. The CEO is able to utilize the inspection process to look into areas of concern within the department such as: use of undercover funds, payments to confidential informants and testing of suspected narcotics, verifying uniform compliance with policies, and procedures throughout the organization.

Inquiries used for this paper include management texts, training literature and Internet articles, as well as interviews, surveys, observations, policies and procedures. The anticipated findings of this research project should reflect positively on the inspection process. The research proposes that the benefits to be gained from this process are numerous and can be implemented by any agency, large or small. Hopefully, this research will clarify (to agencies and CEO's) the benefits that can be gained by implementing an inspection process. The process can ensure that organizational components are in compliance with policies, and procedures. If the organizational component is not in compliance, then the inspection process gives notice of the shortcomings and can assist with solving the problem in order to ensure compliance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various forms of reference material can be found on this topic but few, if any, focus solely on the inspection process. More often than not, inspections are viewed as a component to an accreditation process or management tool.

A study was conducted of a newly implemented method of accountability of the New South Wales Police Services in Australia. Their method focused on management holding the department accountable for its actions and conduct. They found that the old method of only using disciplinary procedures to control misconduct was not wholly effective. A large focus on this new method of accountability was self-regulation. In order to hold an agency accountable they need to have policies and procedures in place to compare the performance of the agency to. Though the New South Wales Police Service differs from American law enforcement agencies the portion of the study on

accountability processes dealing with inspections is still of interest because it failed to serve its intended purpose. According to Chan (1996), at New South Wales they scrupulously conducted their inspections, audits, and performance reviews to ensure standards were maintained. It was found that performance was very difficult to measure and the inspection and audit processes require adequate resources in order to conduct them. The conclusion drawn maintains that there must be policies in place in order to conduct an objective inspection measuring tangible items from the policy. Another view noted at New South Wales was not as concerned with the new accountability process failing as it was the lack of interest and belief in the process by the rank and file officers with the upper management being the only portion of the organization believing in the new accountability process. (Chan, 1999).

Garmire (1977) noted "Inspections are an essential tool of management in large organizations" (p. 80). This function is not to be confused with the investigations conducted by Internal Affairs Units, nor should the Inspection be part of the Internal Affairs Unit. Generally, the work of the inspection unit is conducted openly with the notification of each unit prior to it being inspected. However, covert observations might be conducted to determine if the policies are actually being followed. The individual conducting the inspections will review the unit's records, policies and performance with the unit's supervisor/manager. The information gleaned from this process is shared with the unit's supervisor/management and the CEO. Weaknesses found during the inspection are pointed out and immediate correction is expected. The process will specifically state what needs to be done to correct the weakness. Failures to correct weaknesses pointed out to management are reported directly to the CEO. Additionally,

suggestions for improvement can be offered through this process based on the inspection findings. In agencies where corruption or the fear of its presence is a concern, the CEO of the organization must hold each manager and supervisor accountable for any misconduct by their employees using the inspection process as a tool to reach this end. Accountability at every level of an organization is critical to success. To deal with corruption or to instill a high level of accountability, the CEO must delegate accountability, through inspections down through the organization so that the responsibility is shared throughout the department's management.

Garmire (1977) talks about two different kinds of inspections, line inspections and the staff inspection. Staff inspections are conducted by someone outside of the organizational unit being inspected, thus giving the process an independent and objective view. Line inspections are conducted by a supervisor in direct control over an employee and involve their direct observation of employees. The line inspection is a highly effective tool to maintain compliance with certain standards, but it has its weaknesses. The supervisor may be lenient with their subordinates and might not understand what is expected of the inspection process or the purpose it serves relating to accountability. A supervisor might even enhance or alter the inspection reports so they do not look as bad. For these reasons, the staff inspection can serve as a check and balance to ensure that the line supervisor is conducting the inspections correctly. Observations are made of the procedures and practices of the unit and any other areas of critical importance. The results of the observations are reported directly to the CEO. It is at this point when observation finds practices that are not in compliance with policy that corrective changes need to be made immediately.

Geller (1985) looks back to the blue ribbon commissions of 1963 through 1973 and examines how these commissions brought about reform. The Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) published its set of minimum standards for law enforcement agencies after these blue ribbon commissions and their “black letter” recommendations. (Geller, 1985). CALEA has 446 standards that law enforcement agencies have to meet to become an accredited agency. (CALEA, 1999). An integral part of this process is the inspection component. CALEA addresses both line inspections and more importantly staff inspections. These inspections ensure that the agency is complying with the standards on an ongoing basis. The line inspections are an ongoing process at a frequency dictated by each agency. Often these inspections are conducted monthly at the patrol level. Staff inspections are a management tool for administrators ensuring that agency procedures are being followed. CALEA requires that every 3 years each organizational component of an agency have a staff inspection performed on it. (CALEA, 1999).

Throughout the literature it is repeatedly stated that the inspection function is to be administered on a totally professional, objective, and impartial basis, with inspectors having a reputation of fairness and integrity. In larger departments a specialized inspection unit will conduct the inspections and report their findings, both good and bad, to the CEO. In smaller agencies the inspection process might be fulfilled by someone the CEO delegates to on a part-time basis. In all cases, all administrators and supervisors need to be aware of the inspection process, their accountability, and whether their personnel are adhering to the policies and procedures of the department.

This inspection process serves the CEO as a secondary source of information supplementing what he receives from his regular chain of command. (Sheehan, 1989).

British law enforcement, in regard to inspections, takes a different approach. In England police agencies have to pass a nationally administered inspection. If the agency passes their inspections they receive national funding for their annual budget. This funding amounts to nearly one-half of an agencies annual budget. This model of inspection carries a heavy consequence for non-compliance and sets a national standard for all agencies. (Geller, 1985).

METHODOLOGY

What is the best proactive approach for an agency to hold itself accountable, to audit itself, or evaluate its performance? It is believed that the inspection process is a model that can be used by agencies, large and small, to look at themselves and determine if they are operating in the desired manner. The inspection process looks at the day-to-day performance of the various components of the agency and compares that performance to policies and expectations that are in place. The inspection process further determines if the components are in compliance with policy or not. The areas not in compliance are identified and corrective recommendations are mandated. These findings are reported to the CEO of the agency. This proactive approach gives the agency a snapshot view at how it is conducting its business from day to day. The CEO can tell if the agency is meeting their expectations and those of the community served. Additionally this process will discern whether the various organizational units of the department are doing what they say they are doing in practice and will further serve as an indication of how their policy says they should be conducting business.

From 1998 through 2003 this researcher was involved in the inspection process, speaking to numerous Law Enforcement Agencies that had an inspection process in place during that time. As part of this research, those conversations and interviews have been drawn on for support. Observations of the inspection process in practice were made and are referred to in this research. A survey distributed to 25 Law Enforcement agencies across Texas varying in size from 6 officers to 1300; with a 100% response rate was used as well.

FINDINGS

After a short overview of the inspection process, the survey asked if the agencies currently had an inspection process in place. Of the agencies surveyed, 32% currently had an inspection process in place. Of the agencies with an inspection process in place, only one agency, said it did not work for them. Of the 25 agencies surveyed, 96% felt the process was of value to their agency, this included the one agency that felt their current process was not working. One agency felt they could not use the inspection model.

Training for inspections is difficult to find, the source this researcher found was the Institute of Police Technology and Management (IPTM) in Jacksonville, Florida. IPTM's discussions of an inspection model reiterate those ideals already found in other literature. The inspection process should report directly to the CEO of the organization and report both the positive and the negative findings. The inspectors must have some tenure with the agency as well as integrity, patience, and good interviewing skills to name a few. (IPTM, 1998).

First-line supervisors conduct line inspections. This responsibility is often found in standard operating procedures such as, "Supervisors will conduct inspections of personnel under their command and take corrective action on deficiencies. Copies of periodic inspection reports will be forwarded to the area Commander and Accreditation/Inspections Unit" (APD Patrol SOP, 2003, p. 5). The inspections include the patrol officers' equipment, compliance with grooming standards and inspection of the officers patrol vehicles. The line inspection ensures that officers are equipped for duty with all of their approved equipment, they are in compliance with the dress and grooming policies and that the patrol vehicles are clean and have no new damage on them, and that all on-board equipment is operating including in-car video systems, radios, lights and any specialized equipment that may not be offered in all vehicles.

The staff inspection will look into a whole organizational unit/component of the department. The staff inspection is used to determine if the unit is following their standard operating procedures (SOP's) and meeting the needs of the department to make sure the department is doing what they say they are doing. The staff inspection is very detail oriented in collecting documentation to support compliance or non-compliance with the inspected standards. The standards that are inspected are taken directly out of SOP's and are tangible and significant in nature, being objective, not subjective or open to personal bias. (Jones, 2003). This coincides with what Garmire (1977) says in Local Government Police Management.

The inspection process is ideally suited for the CEO to use in special situations where the CEO needs specific information. The CEO may direct the inspector to look into a particular area that has become a concern such as the handling and accounting

of property in the evidence room, or the documentation of the use of undercover funds, or whether a specific crime is being reported accurately in relation to Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) standards. The CEO receives information from the inspection process to supplement information received through the chain of command and to ensure him that the agency is functioning as he expects it to.

The majority of the literature on the inspection process recommends the person conducting staff inspections is specifically dedicated to this function. Though as previously stated this is not always possible such as in smaller agencies. Having a specific person responsible for this task brings with it consistency in administering the inspections. A consistent quality end product, vested interest, and a drive to better the agency is the value gained when the inspection process is assigned to a specific individual and/or unit. Another method for conducting inspections that has been discussed is to outsource the inspection task to Lieutenants throughout the department. This design might be utilized when there are a large number of staff inspections to conduct in a short period of time and the staffing of the "inspection unit" is not sufficient. This process was implemented in one large Texas agency and was going to be implemented in an Oklahoma agency. The outsourced Lieutenants that were going to conduct the inspections had to be trained in the process since this was not their normal duty. Instructions and templates for reporting were provided and help was available for the outsourced inspectors. It was found that there was no buy in on from a majority of the outsourced inspectors nor were they stake holders. The end product was not of the quality that was normally produced compared to the dedicated inspection person. The reports were not consistent. Documentation was not always solicited by the inspectors

or included in the reports. Part of the objective of this program was for the Lieutenants to gain a broader knowledge of the departments' inner working, a better understanding of the inspection process, and that this would help perhaps gain greater support of the process. These objectives were only partially realized. Though this model will get an agency from point A to point B it is not recommended by this researcher due to the general lack of quality and deviation from the adage that the inspectors are the eyes and ears of the CEO and as such they should be professional, objective, impartial and have a reputation of fairness and integrity. The Oklahoma agency, having never conducted inspections before, was implementing this model to get the agency through its staff inspections from point A to B. There is no information yet as to how the Oklahoma agencies process worked out.

All agencies that are accredited by CALEA (1999) are required to have an inspection process. The function includes conducting a staff inspection of each organizational component of the department in a three-year cycle and is described as, (the) "... role of staff inspections is to promote an objective review of agency administrative and operational activities, facilities, property, equipment, and personnel outside the normal supervisory and/or line inspections" (pp.53-52). All of CALEA's standards are straightforward good business practices. The inspection process is the same; it is a straightforward good business practice for any agency to get into. Looking at yourself, checking your performance, seeing if you are conducting business the way you should be. If the agency is not performing the way the CEO expects it to be, if it is not conducting business the way it should be, this business practice can provide the opportunity to fix problems before they hurt the agency.

CONCLUSIONS

Law enforcement agencies in most cases are without a tool in place to proactively audit or evaluate themselves. They do not have a process in place to verify that the organizational components are meeting the business expectations of the department or to look into the business practices to ensure they are not in conflict with agency goals and objectives. The inspection process is a model that would benefit most if not all law enforcement agencies. The only negative findings regarded manpower needed to implement this model and buy in or belief in the value of the process by the rank and file employees. In addressing the manpower needs in a larger agency, an adequate number of inspectors would need to be allocated to the job or other creative resource allocations could be made. In smaller agencies the inspector could perform the inspection duties as a part of their other duties. The ability to see the value of this process or to have what can be called "buy in" is accomplished through education from the top of the organization down with all supervisors supporting the process and understanding that inspections ensure that all personnel in the organization are performing their duties with consistency. The researchers experience asserts that lack of consistency in job performance is a common complaint among the rank and file of larger agencies. For example, officers in one part of town do things one way while in another part of town officers do things differently. This causes a disparity and the perception that one division is held to different standards. The inspection process ensures that there is consistency throughout the department and all areas are evaluated and inspected objectively and the same standards are applied.

Inspections conducted have turned up the following results of benefit to an agency. A routine staff inspection of an Aviation Unit turned up a “hot start” recorded in the onboard computer over ten flights prior to the inspection. This caused the grounding of the aircraft and an airworthiness inspection of the engine perhaps preventing the possibility of an in flight engine failure from occurring. A special inspection conducted on the use of undercover funds determined consistency with the documentation of funds was not occurring and a computer-based program would enhance this process. These recommendations were made and implemented. After each of these inspection reports the CEO of the organization commented that these are the reasons why we have an inspection process in place. The inspection process discovers problems before they manifest themselves in a negative way, such as the second example firmed up accountability of undercover funds and consistence documentation and tracking of the funds throughout the agency instead of numerous methods of tracking funds. This inspection came on the heels of the media’s investigation into the Dallas Texas Police Department’s perceived misuse of or at the least excessive disbursement of undercover funds to a single confidential informant in 2002. This situation became newsworthy and cast a very poor light on the agency and their accountability and tracking of undercover funds.

The literature and experience of this researcher finds that the ideal inspection model consists of a dedicated inspector(s) ensuring consistent, unbiased, professional, impartial, ethical, and objective, inspections and reports. The dedicated inspector ensures quality training, experience over time, a good reputation, and professionalism through the inspection process preventing adversarial situations and ensuring that the

process is viewed positively. Buy in or belief in the value of the process is cultivated by explaining the process and how it helps the department as demonstrated by the inspector conducting the inspections openly, honestly, objectively and with the supervisor of the unit being inspected participating. The inspector collects documents from the supervisor of the unit being inspected to demonstrate that policy is being followed. If policy is not being followed, it is noted in the report. The inspector will also note in the report the positive areas of the inspection. Inspection reports are concisely written up, an executive summary is included for the CEO to review, and all of the supporting documents are archived within the inspection unit. If deficiencies are noted, corrections are recommended and a time frame is given to implement the recommendations followed by a follow-up inspection to ensure the unit has made corrections and come into compliance. (APD Inspection SOP, 2001).

This is a timely tool for law enforcement agencies, as they are held more and more accountable for their actions. If an agency decides to implement an inspection model they have already decided that they want to be proactive, holding themselves accountable, evaluating their performance to ensure they are doing what they say they are doing. The agency wants to ensure it is operating consistently across all divisions of the agency. The agency also sees the benefits of discovering problems and fixing them before they manifest themselves in a negative way. The inspection process demonstrates to the community that the agency values accountability and is dedicated to being a professional organization, holding itself accountable not just reacting to demands from outside the agency for accountability. This researcher contends that the agency that holds itself accountable and evaluates itself is able to make improvements

more rapidly and more often by inspecting itself than the agency that is reactive to problems only after they manifest themselves in a negative way. This process can be equated to the individual that wants to improve him or herself and finds self-evaluation and looking inwardly as a tool to that end.

The inspection model can benefit any agency by keeping it up to date on how it is operating. It ensures the employees of the agency that they are looked at objectively, and that there is consistent operation across all divisions throughout the agency.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX - 1



MEMORANDUM Austin Police Department NWAC

To: Leadership Command College Participants
From: Lieutenant Romoser
Date: September 29, 2003
Subject: Training Request

My research paper is dealing with the inspections process. An individual or a unit within an organization can handle this process. The purpose is to go out and inspect units to ensure they are abiding by the agency polices. Another purpose is conducting inspections at the direction of the CEO of the organization to look at specific functions within the department to ensure they are operating properly.

Your name: _____

Agency Name: _____

Department Size: _____

Does your department have an inspection process currently? Yes___No___

Does the inspection process work for your department? Yes___No___

Any comments would be appreciated: _____

After hearing the inspection process summary might this be of value to your agency? Yes___No___

Any comments would be appreciated: _____

May I contact you with questions regarding this? Yes___No___

APPENDIX - 2

