

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PROPERTY & EVIDENCE

Property Room Standards

8. SECURITY AND ALARMS

A written directive should require that only authorized personnel have access to the areas used by the agency for storage of property and evidence. Entry to property areas should be controlled to prevent the alteration, unauthorized removal, theft, or other compromise of property stored by the agency to maintain a chain of custody. No one other than property room personnel should have keys to the property storage areas. During non-business hours the department needs to establish a written protocol for entry into the Property Room. It is always suggested that the Property Officer be called-in for the entry. If this is not practical a two-person rule is necessary.

All extra keys should be sealed in an envelope that is kept in a safe location designated by the agency head. A log should be maintained to indicate the date, time, necessitating circumstances, employee, and supervising person using the key whenever the seal on the envelope is broken. Whenever these keys are used, a written record must be prepared to justify the use of the duplicate key.

Policy Issues:

Access During Business Hours

Access - After Hours

Access log maintained for all entries to the Property Room (other than property room personnel on duty)

Key Control – Responsibility for keys

Requirement to change lock or keys upon personnel changes

Practice or Policy Testing alarms in Property Room

The Property Room should be equipped with high quality interchangeable core locks that can easily be changed when personnel changes occur. A high-tech alternative to traditional keys are cardkeys in conjunction with a PIN that records who accessed the door and when.

Key-holding personnel should be limited to only those persons who regularly work in the room, and the Division Commander who is in the direct chain of command should keep a spare key. The Division Commander should be responsible for supervising when locks are changed. Under no circumstances should a key to the main property room be kept in the Watch Commander's office where multiple persons have access to it without controls.

Temporary Lockers – Security

Temporary interior lockers should be equipped with slam-lock hardware that does not require a key to lock. Any time a padlock is use on storage lockers they need to be affixed to the locker to avoid removal and duplication.

Oversize lockers should have a vestibule that is unlocked when empty and slam-locked when evidence is put inside. A sufficient number of oversize lockers should be available to prevent commingling evidence from more than one case.

Gun, Narcotic, and Currency Storage Areas – Security / Alarms

Guns, money, and narcotics are the primary targets of thefts that have occurred in law enforcement property rooms. All efforts need to be taken to secure these areas and track all entries. Consideration should be given to electronic access systems along with a secondary keypad for all entries. Installation of a video camera on the door or interior is an excellent control. The controls may be relaxed somewhat if only the Property Officer has access to these areas. Multiple entries require tighter internal controls. Hinges need to be on the interior of the room or use commercially designed security hinges.

Intrusion Alarms

All property rooms should be fitted with an intrusion alarm that detects when the entry doors are opened without authorization. Additional motion detectors should protect the enhanced security area for the firearms, narcotics, and currency. Employees at a 24/7 workstation should monitor these alarms. Alarms should be tested monthly and records kept. Additional alarms of a similar nature should be fitted to secondary and oversize Property Rooms

Duress Alarms

Any property release area that is removed from immediate back up should be equipped with a duress alarm. Remote property rooms with firearms, narcotics, or currency should also be equipped with a duress alarm. This alarm should be monitored in a 24/7 facility and tested once a month. A test log should be maintained. Monitoring the alarm at a third-party alarm company adds an additional level of internal control.

Video Surveillance

Consider placing video surveillance at the all points of entry. The system can all be activated by motion detectors and provide a good long-term record of all entries. Management needs to establish a written policy on how long the tapes are to be stored any time a video system is used. Newer technology also allows images to be stored digitally on a computer hard drive.