



PERFORMANCE AUDIT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUREAU

Report to the Arizona Legislature
By the Auditor General
November 1990
90-5



STATE OF ARIZONA
OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL

DOUGLAS R. NORTON, CPA
AUDITOR GENERAL

November 26, 1990

Members of the Arizona Legislature
The Honorable Rose Mofford, Governor
Colonel F. J. "Rick" Ayars, Director
Department of Public Safety

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, A Performance Audit of the Department of Public Safety, Telecommunications Bureau. This report is in response to a June 14, 1989, resolution of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee and was conducted as part of the Sunset Review set forth in Arizona Revised Statutes §§41-2351 through 41-2379.

This report is the first in a series of five reports to be issued on the Department of Public Safety. The report addresses the effectiveness and efficiency of the Telecommunications Bureau. We found the Bureau is generally well managed. However, we found that the Department could generate more than \$700,000 annually by establishing a fee for conducting background checks and by modifying the fee for copies of accident reports. Further, the report recommends that the Department improve its operational audits of agencies which access criminal history data. In addition, the Department should take steps to upgrade the completeness and reliability of its criminal history data. We also report the need for the Department to strengthen its policies and procedures over the acquisition and assignment of telecommunications equipment, and to improve its cash handling procedures in its Arizona Criminal Justice Information System Division. Finally, we found that most users are generally satisfied with the Emergency Medical Services Communication system operated by the Bureau, although a few problems were noted.

My staff and I will be pleased to discuss or clarify items in the report.

Sincerely,

Douglas R. Norton
Auditor General

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Enclosure

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SUMMARY

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a performance audit of the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS), Telecommunications Bureau, pursuant to a June 14, 1989, resolution of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee. This performance audit was conducted as part of the Sunset Review set forth in Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) §§41-2351 through 41-2379.

This is the first in a series of five reports to be issued on the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS). The report focuses on the functions of the Telecommunications Bureau, which is responsible for developing, operating, and maintaining the State's criminal history data system as well as the department's other data processing and communications systems. The bureau has 284 full-time employees and a budget of \$14,234,600 for fiscal year (FY) 1991.

DPS Could Generate More Than \$700,000 Annually by Establishing a Fee for Certain Services and Updating Current Fee Schedules (see pages 7 through 11)

By establishing a fee for conducting background checks and modifying the fee for copies of accident reports, DPS could generate more than \$700,000 annually. DPS staff conduct approximately 6,000 background checks per month for both criminal and other agencies. However, Arizona is one of only seven states that has not established a state processing fee for completing background checks. If DPS charged \$10 for processing state background checks, the department could raise over \$600,000 for the state. (A.R.S. §41-1750 would have to be amended to allow for the establishment of this fee.) In addition, during the course of our audit, DPS began charging for all requests for copies of accident reports--this change should generate an additional \$108,000 annually.

DPSs' Operational Audit
Program Is Deficient (see pages 13 through 20)

DPS is not conducting required audits of agencies accessing criminal history data. A National Crime Information Center (NCIC) policy requires biennial audits of computer terminal users of the Arizona Criminal Justice Information System (ACJIS) to ensure these agencies comply with state and NCIC policy and regulations. (ACJIS provides Arizona users an interface with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's NCIC database, which contains criminal history record information on a national level.) However, since the audit program was implemented in 1987, only 39 percent of the terminal agencies have been audited by DPS on a biennial basis. As a result, deficiencies such as improper dissemination of information, inaccurate or incomplete data on the system, or system security problems may go unnoticed.

Further, most of the audits that have been completed by DPS have been very limited with the entire audit consisting of only a questionnaire. Few audits have included a visit to the agency site where the terminal is housed. In comparison, none of the five states we contacted use a questionnaire as the entire audit, and all of them include a site visit as part of each audit. During 1990, DPS began visiting most agencies being audited and plans other improvements to the audit program as well.

DPS Needs to Improve the Completeness and Reliability of its Criminal History Information
(see pages 21 through 33)

DPS needs to take steps to upgrade the completeness and reliability of its criminal history data. DPS is statutorily required to maintain criminal history information on individuals arrested by Arizona law enforcement agencies. This information is widely used by both criminal justice and other agencies in completing criminal investigations and pre-employment and pre-licensing background checks. However, the integrity of the data is compromised for several reasons. First, arrest data is not always entered on the computer system in a timely manner due to slow submission of arrest cards by local agencies. We found that 24 percent of the agencies we sampled submitted arrest cards over 30 days after the arrest. Also, once DPS receives the arrest card the information may not be entered into the system for over three weeks.

Second, over 60 percent of the arrest records currently on the system are missing at least one disposition (i.e., resolution of the arrest). Consequently, the outcome of these arrests (convicted, acquitted, etc.) is not captured on the system. Some of these arrests are for serious offenses including homicide and child molestation. A backlog of over 100,000 disposition forms awaiting entry into the system explains some of these open arrest records. However, insufficient procedures for resolving disposition forms rejected by DPS staff may be another cause of the numerous open arrest records.

Finally, DPS does not routinely verify the arrest and disposition data entered into the system to ensure data entry accuracy. In contrast, four of the five model states we contacted verify 100 percent of the data entry performed by state criminal history records staff.

Other Finding Areas:

Other findings in this report address:

- The need for the department to strengthen its policies and procedures over the acquisition and assignment of telecommunications equipment. Currently, other bureaus may purchase such equipment regardless of whether the Telecommunications Bureau feels the equipment is justified. (See pages 35 through 39)
- The need for the Arizona Criminal Justice Information System Division to improve its cash-handling procedures. Cash and checks are not adequately secured. (See pages 41 through 42)
- Users are generally satisfied with the Emergency Medical Services Communications system. This system, which provides a radio link between rescue vehicles and hospital staffs, is a statewide system operated by the bureau. Although most users feel that the system meets their needs, some problems were noted. (See pages 43 through 48)

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a performance audit of the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS), Telecommunications Bureau, pursuant to a June 14, 1989, resolution of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee. This performance audit was conducted as part of the Sunset Review set forth in Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) §§41-2351 through 41-2379. This is the first in a series of five reports on the department.

Background

The Department of Public Safety was established on July 1, 1969, consolidating the functions and responsibilities of the Arizona Highway Patrol, the Enforcement Division of the Department of Liquor Licenses and Control, and the Narcotics Division of the Arizona Department of Law. Currently, DPS is organized into five bureaus: Criminal Investigation, Highway Patrol, Administration, Telecommunications, and Criminal Justice Support. The department employs approximately 1,620 full-time employees (FTEs) with an annual budget of \$86 million.

Telecommunications Bureau Oversees Data Processing and Telecommunications Systems

The Telecommunications Bureau is responsible for developing, operating, and maintaining the department's data processing and communications systems. Most of these systems operate statewide and provide essential information services.⁽¹⁾ Headed by the Assistant Director for Telecommunications, the bureau is composed of the Data Processing,

(1) The Telecommunications Bureau also provides communications services to several other State agencies.

Arizona Criminal Justice Information System (ACJIS), Technical Communications, and Operational Communications Divisions.⁽¹⁾ Each division's staffing level and responsibilities are as follows:

- **Data Processing** has 55 FTEs. This division is responsible for developing and maintaining computer programs for the administrative, enforcement, and investigative needs of the department, as well as for the statewide criminal justice on-line network. The DPS computer systems are operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Technical assistance is also provided to county and local criminal justice agencies regarding linkages to the statewide criminal justice computer network.
- **Arizona Criminal Justice Information System** has 63 FTEs. The division is responsible for the statewide Arizona Computerized Criminal History (ACCH) network, which includes criminal arrest and disposition information. The division also administers the department's records systems for citations, warrants, and motor vehicle accident and offense reports. They also train DPS and other agency personnel in the use of ACJIS and audit ACJIS user agencies.
- **Technical Communications** has 74 FTEs and is composed of four sections: Engineering Services, Carrier Services, Telephone and Data Services, and Radio Services. Engineering Services is responsible for design, development, and installation of all radio system improvements and enhancements including the Emergency Medical Services Communications (EMSCOM) system, as well as for the development of equipment specifications. Carrier Services maintains the statewide microwave radio system and all mountaintop buildings, towers, antenna systems, and emergency generators. Telephone & Data Services installs and repairs the department's statewide telephone and data communications systems, and maintains the records and accounts associated with these systems. Radio Services installs and repairs electronic equipment, including mobile and portable radios, pagers, and mountaintop repeaters, at radio repair shops throughout the State.
- **Operational Communications** has 88 FTEs who provide dispatch services for the department, for law enforcement personnel from other agencies, and for the statewide EMSCOM system. Dispatch centers are located in Flagstaff, Phoenix, and Tucson.

(1) The bureau has four administrative staff positions: Assistant Director, Executive Secretary, Administrative Services Officer III, and Major.

Budget and Staffing

Currently, the Telecommunications Bureau has 284 full-time equivalent employees and a general fund budget of \$14,234,600. See Table 1 for further detail of the expenditures of the bureau.

TABLE 1

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY-TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUREAU
STATEMENT OF FTEs AND ACTUAL AND BUDGETED EXPENDITURES
FISCAL YEARS 1988-89, 1989-90, AND 1990-91
(Unaudited)**

	<u>1988-89</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>1989-90</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>1990-91</u> <u>Budgeted</u>
<u>FTE Positions</u>	284	284	284
<u>Expenditures</u>			
Personal Services	\$7,698,921	\$7,943,596	\$8,310,900
Employee Related	1,566,747	1,337,307	1,846,500
Professional and Outside Services	135,039	93,398	105,000
Travel - In State	67,815	77,305	88,400
Travel - Out of State	13,117	16,788	12,300
Equipment	1,836,445	1,612,814	2,513,800
Other operating	2,161,412	2,096,513	905,400
ACJIS	<u>439,937</u>	<u>447,742</u>	<u>452,300</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$13,919,433</u>	<u>\$13,625,463</u>	<u>\$14,234,600</u>

Source: Arizona Financial Information Systems, Department of Public Safety financial reporting system and the State of Arizona, Appropriations Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1991.

Audit Scope

Our audit report of the Department of Public Safety's Telecommunication Bureau presents findings and recommendations in six major areas:

- the need for updating and establishing fees for services;
- the adequacy of the audits performed by the ACJIS Division;
- the adequacy of criminal history data maintained by DPS;
- the need for strengthening controls over the acquisition and assignment of telecommunications equipment;
- the adequacy of the ACJIS Division's cash-handling procedures; and
- the effectiveness of the EMSCOM system in meeting user needs.

Our audit scope was limited because we lack the statutory authority to review criminal history data. Several areas within our audit were impeded due to our inability to access this data. For example, although accuracy of criminal history data is critical, we were unable to assess the reliability of this data. In addition, we were unable to physically inspect arrest cards and dispositions to determine and verify the extent of backlogs. Further, although we were able to obtain a data tape of the arrests on the ACCH system that lacked corresponding dispositions, we were unable to obtain any identifying information for follow-up purposes. Finally, we could not observe clerks entering criminal history data: this impacted our ability to conduct productivity studies.

This report also presents other pertinent information regarding state-of-the-art technologies which DPS plans to implement including an automated fingerprint identification system (see page 49), mobile digital terminals (see page 52), a computer assisted dispatch system (see page 53), and an 800 MHz radio trunking system (see page 54). In addition, we present information on the cost of upgrading the Arizona Criminal Justice Information System (see page 55).

This audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

The Auditor General and staff express their appreciation to the Director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the Assistant Director for Telecommunications, and staff for their cooperation and assistance during the course of our audit.

FINDING I

DPS COULD GENERATE MORE THAN \$700,000 ANNUALLY BY ESTABLISHING A FEE FOR CERTAIN SERVICES AND UPDATING CURRENT FEE SCHEDULES

By establishing a fee for certain services and updating current fee schedules, DPS could generate more than \$700,000 annually. DPS should establish a fee for conducting background checks on applicants for licenses and employment. Further, DPS's recent modification of its accident report fee schedule will generate additional revenues.

DPS Should Establish a Fee for Performing Background Checks

DPS should establish a fee for performing background checks on applicants for licenses and employment as do other states. If DPS established a \$10 fee, it could generate over \$600,000 annually for the State.

DPS staff perform background checks for both criminal and other agencies. For example, law enforcement agencies, school systems, and State licensing agencies submit the names and fingerprints of prospective employees and licensees to DPS to determine if they have criminal records. DPS conducts approximately 6,000 background checks per month (over 5,000 for other agencies and almost 1,000 for criminal justice agencies). Approximately 85 percent of these requests include both federal and State investigations. DPS performs State background checks at no charge, and then forwards these requests to the FBI for completion at the federal level.⁽¹⁾ The FBI charges other agencies a fee of \$20

(1) In 1989, the ACJIS Division proposed revising A.R.S. §41-1750 to establish a State fee with a \$20 ceiling; however, DPS never submitted this proposal.

for its service, and allows DPS to retain \$1 from each fee.⁽¹⁾ Thus, DPS receives only limited revenue for 85 percent of the background checks, and no revenue for the remaining 15 percent.

In general, agencies have required prospective employees or licensees to pay for the federal background check. The six State agencies with the largest number of requests for background checks pass the cost of the FBI service on to the prospective employees or licensees.⁽²⁾ The two school systems generating the most requests also pass the \$20 FBI service charge on to prospective employees and licensees.

Other states have established a state processing fee - Other states have implemented a service fee for completing background checks. Arizona is one of only seven states that has not established such a fee. The fees charged by 43 other states and the District of Columbia are shown in Table 2 (see page 9). Table 2 also reveals the following information about these states' fees for completing background checks:

- 21 of the 43 states listed have fees of \$10 or more;
- 9 of the 10 western states charge a fee;
- all states bordering Arizona except New Mexico charge at least a \$10 fee and;
- the average state fee is \$9.35.

In addition, in the past, at least one Arizona agency has charged applicants a processing fee. For example, even when the FBI fee was only \$14, the Arizona Department of Education charged applicants \$20 for

(1) In FY 1988-89, DPS collected over \$50,000 by retaining this portion of the FBI service charge. These revenues are used to pay the salaries of three limited-term employees hired to perform background checks. According to the ACJIS Division manager, due to an increase in salaries and employee-related expenses, revenue obtained from FBI fees no longer covers the direct costs of these three limited-term employees. Also, FBI revenues have never covered the indirect costs, such as space, supervision, and personal computers.

(2) These six State of Arizona agencies, in descending order of the volume of requests for background checks, are the following: Departments of Economic Security, Education, Public Safety (security guard licensing), Health Services, Insurance, and Real Estate.

TABLE 2

OTHER STATES' APPLICANT PROCESSING FEES^(a)

<u>State</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Fee</u>
Alabama	\$20.00	Nevada	\$15.00
Alaska	16.00	New Hampshire	5.00
California	18.50	New Jersey	8.00
Colorado	10.00	New Mexico	5.00
Delaware	25.00	New York	21.00
Florida	10.00	North Carolina	8.25
Georgia	7.50	North Dakota	20.00
Idaho	5.00	Ohio	3.00
Illinois	3.00	Oklahoma	10.00
Indiana	7.00	Oregon	10.00
Iowa	6.00	Pennsylvania	10.00
Kansas	4.00	Rhode Island	5.00
Kentucky	4.00	South Carolina	10.00
Louisiana	10.00	South Dakota	15.00
Maine	7.00	Tennessee	14.00
Maryland	1.00	Utah	10.00
Massachusetts	15.00	Virginia	5.00
Michigan	3.00	Washington	10.00
Minnesota	5.00	Washington, D.C.	5.00
Missouri	5.00	West Virginia	5.00
Montana	5.00	Wisconsin	10.00
Nebraska	5.00	Wyoming	15.00

(a) In addition to recovering the cost of processing applications, some states use the application fee to fund special projects. For example, New York's fee includes a \$10 surcharge to fund its Automated Fingerprint Identification System.

Source: State of Arizona, Office of the Auditor General staff compilation from a 1989 criminal justice consortium study. For states with a range of fees, the fee presented is the one that most closely resembles the processing performed by DPS.

certification and retained the difference of \$6 from each applicant to cover the cost of processing operations.⁽¹⁾

By establishing a \$10 fee, DPS could generate over \$600,000 - If DPS charged \$10 for processing State background checks, the department could raise over \$600,000 annually for the State. Since ten states, including Colorado and Utah, charge \$10, and 11 states, including California and Nevada, charge over \$10, the establishment of a \$10 fee seems reasonable. A.R.S. §41-1750 should be amended to allow for the establishment of this fee.⁽²⁾

DPS Has Recently Modified Its Accident Report Fee Schedule

During the course of the audit, we noted the need for DPS to modify its accident report fee schedule. DPS had been charging only people requesting accident report copies for commercial purposes (about 5 percent of all requests) a \$6 fee.⁽³⁾ However, statutes allow the department to charge everyone. Of the five states cited by the Deputy Chief of the FBI's National Crime Information Center as having model records operations, minimum fees for accident report copies range from \$2 to \$10.⁽⁴⁾ In addition, the ten largest cities and two largest counties in Arizona all charge for accident report copies. Late in the audit, DPS began charging everyone requesting accident report copies a fee of \$1 per page. The department expects to generate an additional \$108,000 for the State from this fee structure.

(1) On March 1, 1990, the FBI increased its fee from \$14 to \$20.

(2) In addition, A.R.S. §15-512, subsection C, regarding noncertified school district personnel, and A.R.S. §15-534, subsection E, regarding the Arizona Department of Education applicant certification fee, will need to be amended, since they specify \$20 as the cost of applicant processing.

(3) A.R.S. §39-121.03 defines commercial purpose in part as "any purpose in which the purchaser can reasonably anticipate the receipt of monetary gain from the direct or indirect use of such public record."

(4) Alabama, Arkansas, California, Nevada, and New York.

RECOMMENDATION

The Legislature should consider revising A.R.S. §41-1750 to allow DPS to establish a \$10 fee for conducting other background checks on applicants for licenses and employment at the State level. Revenues not needed to support this processing should then be deposited in the general fund.

FINDING II

DPS's OPERATIONAL AUDIT PROGRAM IS DEFICIENT

Deficiencies are evident in the Department of Public Safety's Operational Audit Program. DPS is not in compliance with a National Crime Information Center policy requiring biennial audits of computer terminal users of the Arizona Criminal Justice Information System (ACJIS). In addition, most of the audits that have been conducted by DPS to date have been superficial. However, DPS is taking steps to improve the audit function.

DPS maintains Arizona's Criminal Justice Information System which contains criminal history record information. Through ACJIS, users have access to drivers license information, stolen vehicle files, warrants, and criminal history data such as arrests and dispositions. In addition, ACJIS provides Arizona users with an interface with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's NCIC database which contains criminal history information on a national level. Local users enter records directly into NCIC through a computer terminal linked into the network.⁽¹⁾

To ensure agencies comply with State and NCIC policy and regulations regarding data integrity, NCIC adopted a policy in 1985 mandating biennial audits of those agencies with computer terminal access to NCIC. DPS is responsible for conducting these biennial audits on Arizona agencies. The audits are quality control checks to determine the completeness and accuracy of records and to ensure that information contained in those records is disseminated only to those entitled by law to the information.

(1) Missing person, wanted person, unidentified person, and property records are placed directly in the NCIC by the originating agency (agency holding the warrant, missing person report, or theft report) through a control terminal tied into the network.

**DPS Fails to Comply with NCIC
Biennial Audit Requirement**

DPS has not audited every terminal agency biennially as required.⁽¹⁾ Since the audit program was initiated in 1987, only 39 percent of the terminal agencies have been audited by DPS on a biennial basis. Without these audits, deficiencies may go undetected. The noncompliance appears to be caused by other tasks taking higher priority and poor management information.

The majority of terminal agencies in Arizona have not received mandated biennial audits - Although DPS instituted a mandated biennial audit program in 1987, we reviewed DPS audit records and found 107 of the 176 terminal agencies had not been audited every other year as required. Since 1987, DPS conducted 168 audits of terminal agencies.⁽²⁾ Although most agencies have been audited at least once since the program began in 1987, only 69 of the 176 agencies have been audited biennially as required. In fact, 13 agencies have never had an audit and 25 agencies are being audited for the first time this year. The Phoenix Police Department, the largest user of the system, will be audited for the first time this year.

Problems with local terminal agencies go undetected - As a result of inadequate audits, deficiencies are not detected in a timely manner. When audits are conducted, the department may identify deficiencies such as improper dissemination of information, inaccurate or incomplete data on the system, or system security problems. The department can then require the agency to take corrective action. However, since the department is not conducting regular audits of agencies performance, deficiencies may not be identified. An example of the types of problems identified in a local jurisdiction audit follows:

-
- (1) A terminal agency has direct terminal access to NCIC data and in many cases has authority to enter records on the system.
 - (2) The term audit refers to the operational audits which DPS conducts to comply with the mandated biennial audit requirement. DPS also conducts directed audits of agencies. However, these involve investigating specific allegations of system misuse and do not address all areas covered in an operational audit.

- A County Sheriff's Office was first audited by DPS in 1989. The agency scored 45 out of a possible 137 points. Two very critical areas (dissemination of data and file accuracy) scored very low. The audit revealed an error rate of 94 percent in the wanted person file and an error rate of 86 percent in the stolen vehicle file. Consequently, the agency was directed to do a complete validation of all their ACIC/NCIC entries within 60 days.⁽¹⁾ The agency subsequently sent a letter to DPS informing them that they had validated all their records and were now in compliance. DPS conducted a follow-up audit of the agency 8 months later and found that although the agency's dissemination procedures had drastically improved, error rates were still very high in the file accuracy area. Again the agency was advised to do a complete record validation within 60 days.

The importance of the audit process is further supported by the fact that within eight months of the Sheriff's Office stating it was in compliance, file accuracy errors were again identified. Inaccuracies on the system could cause serious legal ramifications especially if an inaccurate record resulted in an innocent person being wrongly arrested. In addition, the integrity of the system is seriously compromised when data accuracy is questionable.

DPS's failure to comply with biennial audit requirement is due to a few factors - In addition to conducting routine audits, DPS Operations Audit staff have other responsibilities, some of which are viewed as higher priority than operations audits. In addition, identifying agencies which require auditing is hindered due to the lack of adequate management information.

(1) The ACIC (Arizona Crime Information Center) contains the same type of information (stolen vehicles and wanted persons) as the NCIC. ACIC information is more comprehensive since NCIC only accepts offenses which meet its criteria. For example, about 98 percent of the warrants in the ACIC are not on the NCIC data base because out-of-state extradition is not indicated or the offenses don't meet NCIC criteria.

The ACJIS Operations Audit staff have various responsibilities in addition to conducting routine operational audits of terminal agencies.⁽¹⁾ ACJIS audit staff also inspect the site of terminal locations, work with local agencies to help them obtain access to the system, investigate allegations of system misuse, and do various other tasks. In addition, audit staff spend a considerable amount of time on administrative tasks.⁽²⁾ For example, in 1989--24 percent of available staff time was devoted to administrative tasks. In contrast, the unit has never devoted more than 23 percent of its time to routine audits. In fact, since the audit function began in 1987, DPS has cancelled 77 routine audits to accomplish other tasks.

Furthermore, DPS does not keep a list of agencies due to be audited or the date the agencies were last audited (if they have ever been audited). This prevents the ACJIS auditors from easily identifying those agencies that need to be scheduled for an audit. In order to determine exactly how many agencies required audits and whether the agencies had been audited in compliance with the biennial requirement, we requested a master listing of terminal agencies required to be audited. However, ACJIS audit staff had no such master listing for audit purposes. In early 1990, ACJIS staff identified 14 agencies which had not yet been scheduled for an audit. (Our review subsequently identified three additional agencies that had never been scheduled for an audit that ACJIS staff failed to identify.) Further, the only way DPS can determine whether an agency has been on the system long enough to even require an audit is by searching the agency file.

**Most Audits Conducted by
DPS Have Been Superficial**

Even when DPS does conduct audits, the audits are very limited and their effectiveness is questionable. The majority of audits conducted have

(1) The Operations Audit Unit has 6 staff: five auditors and one supervisor.

(2) Administrative tasks include research, analysis, correspondence, and audit report writing.

been questionnaires only with no site visits by audit staff or review of agency records. In addition, there are other indications of weaknesses in the audit program. Other states' audit programs appear stronger in comparison.

Most audits have only included questionnaires - Although DPS has identified three types of audits ranging from a questionnaire audit to a site visit with extensive data testing, most of the audits conducted by DPS thus far have been limited to the questionnaire or level I audit. A level I audit consists of mailing the terminal agency a questionnaire which an agency representative completes and returns to the audit section for grading. In a level I audit, the agency site is not typically visited nor are any agency files reviewed and compared against data on the system to check for accuracy and completeness. Of the 168 audits DPS has conducted in the past three years (1987, 1988, and 1989), 148 or 88 percent have been level I audits.

During the same time period, only 20 agencies received more extensive audits. Nineteen agencies received a level II audit which entails visiting the agency site and compiling and reviewing a random sampling of the agency's records. In addition, one agency received a level III audit which is similar to a level II but involves more extensive data sampling.

Effectiveness of audit program is questionable - DPS's audit program appears to be ineffective, especially given the reliance on questionnaire audits. A recent audit conducted by NCIC appears to indicate that the department's audit program is not adequate. In 1987 and 1989, NCIC audited the Department of Public Safety because of its responsibility to ensure agencies are in compliance with NCIC policy. As part of the audit of DPS, NCIC reviewed selected local terminal agencies to ensure compliance with NCIC regulations. Both audits revealed that local agencies were not complying with the NCIC validation policy which requires that agencies take steps--such as calling the owner of a reported stolen vehicle to ensure the vehicle is still missing--to ensure

that a record on the system is still valid.⁽¹⁾ According to NCIC, the biennial audit is one way to monitor local agencies' procedures to ensure they are complying with the NCIC validation requirements. Although the level I questionnaire audit does request agencies to identify their validation procedures, no follow-up is performed to ensure what is put on paper is what is done in practice.

In addition, DPS's own data seems to point to a weakness in its audit program. Audit scores show that DPS audit staff discover considerably more deficiencies when conducting on-site visits as opposed to relying on self-reported responses to its questionnaires. For example, scores averaged 90 percent for the 148 agencies receiving level I audits while scores averaged only 79 percent for the 19 agencies which had a level II audit.

Furthermore, the current audit process fails to take into consideration various remote sites that also house terminals. Presently, only one audit is scheduled per terminal agency even though an agency may have terminals at various locations. (For example, Phoenix Police Department has over 200 terminals located at various substations around the valley and Department of Corrections has terminals located at its prisons across the State). In the case of a level I audit, one person is responsible for filling out the questionnaire audit. However, DPS audit staff recognize that one person may not have knowledge of operations at the agency's various remote sites. Even when conducting a level II or level III audit, only one site is visited even though an agency may have terminals at various locations around the State.

(1) The validation process requires the entering agency to compare its support documents to the information entered on the system. (The entering agency is supplied a printout of a sample of records entered.) In addition, the agency must consult with appropriate sources (complainant, prosecutor, court, etc.) to ensure the accuracy, completeness, and validity of the record. In 1987, NCIC found 8 of 12 (66.6%) agencies visited failed to validate their vehicle records properly, and 3 of 13 (23.08%) failed to validate their wanted person records properly. In 1989, 7 of 15 (46.6%) agencies with vehicle records and 4 of 7 (57.14%) with wanted person records failed to validate their records properly.

Other state's audit programs are more in-depth - We contacted five other states to obtain information on their audit process and found that in comparison, Arizona's audit program appears weak.⁽¹⁾ None of the other five states use a questionnaire as the entire audit, although some use a questionnaire to facilitate the audit process and identify areas that need more scrutiny. All five identified a site visit as part of each audit. In addition, Nevada, New York, and California also visit all remote terminal sites while Alabama spot checks terminals at remote sites. Furthermore, these states review a sample of records for accuracy and completeness as part of each audit conducted.

DPS Is Taking
Steps to Improve

DPS management is aware of many of the problems mentioned above and has begun taking corrective action. ACJIS audit staff recognized the inadequacy of the questionnaire audit and have scheduled mainly level II audits for 1990. The audit staff plan to conduct 69 audits in 1990; 49 of those are scheduled to be level II audits.⁽²⁾ According to a May 1990 memo "the plan is to audit all agencies at a level II to place more emphasis on file accuracy and the importance of the validation process." In addition, any level I audits conducted will be done on site as well "to ensure the most complete and accurate information is obtained during the audit." Other planned improvements include:

- Implementing an automated database which will provide complete audit histories of every terminal agency as well as track and monitor audits in progress.
- Incorporating visits to remote terminal location areas to ensure policies and regulations are adhered to at these sites.
- Auditing non-terminal agencies which receive confidential criminal history record information to ensure the information is being used only for legitimate purposes.

(1) We contacted Alabama, Arkansas, California, Nevada, and New York because they were recommended as model states by a NCIC representative.

(2) To be in compliance with the NCIC biennial audit requirement, 88 audits would need to be scheduled each year given the current 176 terminal agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DPS should take steps to bring the department into compliance with the NCIC biennial audit requirement.
2. DPS should make every effort to conduct on-site (level II or level III) audits when possible.
3. DPS should continue to implement improvements to its audit program such as visiting remote terminal locations and auditing non-terminal agencies.

FINDING III

DPS NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE COMPLETENESS AND RELIABILITY OF ITS CRIMINAL HISTORY INFORMATION

DPS needs to take steps to upgrade the completeness and reliability of its criminal history data. Statutes require DPS to maintain criminal history record information on individuals arrested by Arizona law enforcement agencies. However, the integrity of this data is compromised by the untimely entry of arrest data and missing data on case dispositions. Adding to the problem, DPS does not routinely verify arrest and disposition data entered.

DPS Must Maintain Criminal History Information on Individuals Arrested by Local Agencies

Statutes require DPS to maintain criminal history information on individuals arrested by Arizona law enforcement agencies. Because this criminal history data is used by both criminal justice and other agencies when making critical decisions, it is important that the information be complete and accurate.

DPS maintains criminal history data - Statutes require that DPS maintain criminal history record information on offenders arrested by Arizona law enforcement agencies. A.R.S. §41-1750 states that DPS shall "procure and maintain records of photographs, descriptions, fingerprints, dispositions and such other information as may be pertinent to all persons who have been arrested for or convicted of a public offense within the state." The ACJIS Division has the responsibility of maintaining the State's criminal history system, the Arizona Computerized Criminal History network (ACCH).

ACCH contains arrest and disposition data on offenders who have been arrested in Arizona. By statute, arresting agencies are required to forward arrest data to DPS, while courts must forward disposition

information to DPS. In fiscal year 1989-90, a monthly average of 9,000 arrest fingerprint cards and 9,300 disposition forms were received by the ACJIS Division.

Criminal justice and other agencies access ACCH when making important decisions - ACCH data provides input into decision making at both criminal justice and other agencies. Criminal history information assists members of the criminal justice community in making release, bonding, and penalty decisions, and also assists officers in completing criminal investigations. For example, many judges will release suspects on bond if they cannot review the suspects' criminal history records. This provides suspects an opportunity to flee. If judges could review the records, however, they might opt to keep the suspects in custody.

Recent legislation allows many other agencies access to ACCH data for the completion of background checks for employment and licensing applicants. For example, ACCH is used to determine if prospective teachers and child care workers have criminal records. ACJIS Division staff disseminate all criminal history information (convictions, acquittals, and open arrests) to most employment and licensing agencies.

A U.S. Department of Justice report on criminal history data quality notes that the existence of incomplete or inaccurate data increases both the potential of causing unjustified harm to individuals and the States' susceptibility to liability.⁽¹⁾ Thus, the maintenance of timely, complete, and accurate criminal history data is essential.

Arrest Data Not Entered on Timely Basis

Untimely entry of arrest information compromises the reliability of ACCH data. Local law enforcement agencies do not always submit arrest data to DPS in a timely manner. Further, once arrest data is received, DPS does not consistently input the data on a timely basis. In addition,

(1) United States Department of Justice. Strategies for Improving Data Quality. Report of work performed under Bureau of Justice Statistics grant, awarded to SEARCH Group, Inc. April, 1989.

procedures for resolving problematic arrest cards cause delays in updating the criminal history data base.

Submission of arrest cards not always timely - Some local law enforcement agencies do not forward arrest cards to DPS on a timely basis. Establishing a statutory time limit could result in more timely submission.

Working with DPS staff, we compiled, for arrest cards input during a 7-day period, the dates of arrest and the dates the arrest data arrived at DPS. Analysis of the data revealed that on average, 24 days had elapsed between the two dates. Many agencies are timely in their submission of arrest fingerprint cards, as 44 percent of the agencies submitted cards within 10 days of the arrest. For example, the Phoenix Police Department submitted arrest cards on average 6 days after the date of arrest. However, other agencies are not as timely: 24 percent of the agencies submitted arrest cards over 30 days after the arrest. For example, one arrest card arrived at DPS 788 days after the date of arrest. Another city's police department submitted arrest cards on average 157 days after the dates of arrest.

Staff from the two largest police departments having problems submitting arrest cards on a timely basis noted that arrest card completion has not been given a high priority. Consequently, the departments have not dedicated an adequate number of staff to arrest card tasks, as the following example illustrates.

- Staff from one of these cities' police departments attribute the untimely submission of arrest fingerprint cards to a lack of staff assigned the task of completing arrest cards. Until March 1989, county jail staff completed all arrest cards for this particular police department. After March 1989 the county decided that it would still take individuals' fingerprints while booking them into jail, but would not complete the information portion of the arrest cards. For more than a year after the police department assumed the responsibility of completing arrest cards, no additional personnel were assigned to fulfill the responsibility. This resulted in a backlog of arrest cards which was at one point 10 feet high.

A statutory time limit could result in more timely submission of arrest cards. The Department of Justice report recommends that states institute

mandatory reporting laws which specify a time period within which local agencies should submit criminal history information. The report states that such statutes have proven "highly effective" in some cases.

Last year the ACJIS Division proposed revising A.R.S. §41-1750 to require local agencies to submit arrest fingerprint cards within 10 days of arrest, but DPS never submitted the legislation. However, many local agencies may not be able to submit cards within 10 days. For example, Flagstaff and Tucson Police Department staff indicated that a 15-day limit would be more reasonable. DPS staff should consult the local law enforcement agencies in order to determine a reasonable statutory time limitation. Once a time limit is established, DPS should monitor the timeliness of agencies' submission of arrest cards in order to ensure compliance.

Entry of arrest data does not always occur on a timely basis - Once DPS receives arrest data, it does not always input the data in a timely manner. Staff vacancies are a cause of untimely entry.

DPS is untimely in entering arrest data. We analyzed arrival and input dates of arrest data entered during a 7-day sample period. Although first offender arrest entry (performed by the day shift) occurred on average 6 days after arrival of arrest cards at DPS, entry of repeat offender arrest data (performed by the evening shift) occurred on average 23 days after arrival of arrest cards at DPS. This turnaround time does not meet the division's goal of processing arrest cards within 14 days of receipt.

Our review also indicated that evening shift staff do not consistently enter arrest cards in the order in which they arrived at DPS. For example, on June 7 the evening shift entered arrest cards which had arrived on May 31 (a 7-day turnaround), and on June 8, arrest cards which had arrived on May 14 were entered (a 24-day turnaround). Because arrival dates are not reviewed when choosing which arrest cards to enter, daily turnaround times of repeat offender data entry vary.

Staff vacancies may represent part of the cause of untimely entry. The evening shift has 6 clerk positions. During the first half of 1990, two experienced clerks left. Also, two other positions were filled with inexperienced clerks during the same time period.

Insufficient procedures for resolving problematic arrest cards - Current ACJIS Division procedures for resolving problematic arrest cards contribute to the unreliability of ACCH data. The procedures place the responsibility for correcting and resubmitting cards on the local law enforcement agencies. Other states take more responsibility for seeing that rejected cards are corrected and the data entered.

DPS rejects arrest cards for several reasons. If cards contain illegible fingerprints, they are rejected. Also, DPS rejects arrest cards if they contain inaccurate or incomplete information. For example, the year of arrest is indicated frequently as the year of birth. In fiscal year 1989-90 DPS rejected 2,959 arrest cards, or three percent of the cards received, because the fingerprints were illegible. DPS also rejected 2,113 arrest cards, or almost two percent, because they contained inaccurate or incomplete information.

ACJIS Division procedures for resolving rejected arrest cards do not guarantee reliable ACCH data since DPS relies on local agencies to correct and resubmit rejected cards. When a card is rejected, ACJIS Division staff enter the arrest data in an error data base and return the card to the submitting agency. If the agency corrects and resubmits the card, ACJIS staff will delete the entry from the error data base and enter the arrest data into ACCH. However, the likelihood that the arrest data will be entered into ACCH in a timely manner is low. The average age of arrest records in the error file is 323 days.⁽¹⁾ The ACJIS Division does not attempt to resolve the problems with these records.

Other states have established procedures which, if implemented by the ACJIS Division, could result in improved arrest recording. Four of the

(1) The 323-day figure is based on a review of the 6,630 arrest records residing in the error file as of June 5, 1990. DPS began recording rejected records in an error file July 1, 1988.

five states identified as model states by the Deputy Chief of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) do not return cards with information problems to the local agencies. Rather, these four states (Alabama, California, Nevada, and New York) telephone the submitting agencies to obtain the needed information. By implementing similar procedures, DPS could resolve almost 30 percent of the records in the error file on a timely basis and ensure that the records were entered into ACCH.⁽¹⁾

Calling local agencies will not, however, resolve problems with cards rejected because of illegible fingerprints. In these cases, DPS should consider entering the cards into ACCH. Frequently, by the time an arrest card having an illegible print is rejected and returned to the submitting agency, the subject is no longer in custody. Thus, the agency cannot obtain new fingerprints and resubmit the card. Three of the states contacted (California, Nevada, and New York) enter such cards and flag that the record is not supported by fingerprints. Any subsequent searches on the subject will result in a "conditional hit" because of the lack of fingerprints. Currently, DPS has 4,603 arrest records in the error file. Although these records can be searched, they typically are not used because the record is not supported by fingerprints.

Numerous ACCH Arrest Records Are Incomplete

Incomplete arrest records also contribute to the unreliability of ACCH data. Numerous ACCH arrest records do not have corresponding dispositions. A disposition backlog explains some of these open arrests. The existence of insufficient procedures for resolving rejected

(1) Although this process may require additional staff, because we were restricted from working with ACCH data we could not perform any productivity analyses to determine where staffing, if any, might be required. However, four of the five states' criminal justice agencies we contacted have staff dedicated to correcting problem cards. The number and sophistication of the units responsible for correcting arrest cards varies. The New York Division of Criminal Justice Services has two staff devoted to arrest card resolution. The California Department of Justice resolution unit has 20 staff; however, these staff do not just process problematic arrest cards. For example, four staff are devoted to training local agency staff.

disposition forms may represent another cause of the numerous open arrest records. Because of the importance of ACCH data, DPS should initiate procedures for identifying and completing open arrest records.

Disposition forms are initiated at the time of arrest and completed by agencies terminating arrest cases. For example, county or prosecuting attorneys can decide to modify or not file arrest charges. When cases go to court, court staff note on the forms whether individuals were convicted or acquitted of the charges. ACCH arrest records are open until dispositions are forwarded to and entered by ACJIS Division staff.

Numerous ACCH arrest records lack corresponding dispositions - Many ACCH arrest records do not have dispositions. There are approximately 720,000 arrest records in ACCH. Of those arrests occurring before May 1988, almost 312,000 have at least one count which does not have a disposition. Of those arrests occurring during and since May 1988, almost 129,000 have at least one count which does not have a disposition. Thus, over 60 percent of the arrest records are missing at least one disposition. Although some of the more recent arrest records may not have been resolved yet, those more than two years old should have been resolved and therefore should contain dispositions.

Many of the arrest records missing dispositions represent serious offenses. Table 3 (see page 28) shows a compilation of serious counts that do not have corresponding dispositions in ACCH. Arrests occurring between 1975 and 1987 are shown. As most arrest cases are resolved within two years of the arrest, these counts should have been resolved and thus should have dispositions recorded. As Table 3 shows, dispositions are not recorded for almost 1,400 homicide counts, over 4,000 sexual assaults, almost 6,000 robberies, and over 2,500 child molestation counts. The lack of dispositions for these and other counts could impede criminal investigations. The missing disposition data also could increase the State's susceptibility to liability. For example, if a person was denied employment or licensing because ACCH showed an open arrest when the person had actually been acquitted, the person could sue the State.

TABLE 3
ARREST COUNTS WITHOUT DISPOSITIONS^(a)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Homicides</u>	<u>Number of Sexual Assaults</u>	<u>Number of Robberies</u>	<u>Number of Child Molestations</u>
1975	48	61	361	58
1976	56	127	301	32
1977	68	82	262	26
1978	73	111	349	51
1979	98	209	403	81
1980	151	313	595	104
1981	131	345	792	127
1982	103	304	605	196
1983	147	327	503	301
1984	105	426	374	356
1985	121	533	377	406
1986	131	449	470	290
1987	<u>155</u>	<u>737</u>	<u>493</u>	<u>506</u>
Total:	<u>1,387</u>	<u>4,024</u>	<u>5,885</u>	<u>2,534</u>

(a) Data in table based on ACCH data tape provided to Auditor General staff by DPS. Identifying information, such as individuals' names and identification numbers, was not provided. Thus, Auditor General staff could not verify the data provided.

Source: Auditor General staff compilation of DPS data tape of arrests having at least one count that does not have a disposition recorded.

Disposition backlog - A backlog of disposition forms explains some of these open arrest records. As of March 1990, the ACJIS Division had 123,812 backlogged disposition forms awaiting entry into ACCH. This backlog accumulated between October 1987 and May 1989, a period during which DPS quit entering dispositions.

The causes of the backlog suggest poor managerial oversight. The ACJIS Division quit entering dispositions so that it could address arrest card

backlogs.⁽¹⁾ Arrest cards were backlogged because of staff participation on a task force overseeing the move to the new DPS building, supervisor rotation, and special programs. ACJIS Division management should have controlled these events to prevent backlogs. For example, during the latter half of 1987, two experienced fingerprint technicians devoted 251 hours to the move task force. In addition, DPS management directed the division to undertake a special project to provide California with over 20,000 arrest cards for arrests occurring along the Arizona-California border. This project was completed at the expense of not entering data on Arizona's own system. Although the ACJIS Division has initiated efforts to eliminate the disposition backlog, as of June 1990 over 107,000 dispositions awaited processing.

Insufficient procedures for resolving rejected dispositions - The existence of insufficient procedures for resolving rejected dispositions may be another cause of the numerous open arrests. In fiscal year 1989-90, DPS rejected over 30 percent of the disposition forms received. Like arrest cards, some disposition forms may be rejected if they contain inaccurate or incomplete data, such as an incorrect date of birth. According to the disposition processing supervisor, however, bad data accounts for only 2 to 3 percent of the disposition forms rejected.⁽²⁾ The majority of the dispositions rejected are denied because they do not match ACCH arrest records. When these dispositions are rejected, DPS enters the disposition data into the error data base and returns the forms to the arresting agencies. ACJIS staff do not attempt to correct these dispositions or identify what happened to the corresponding arrest card.⁽³⁾

(1) Backlogs of arrest cards existed at several stages of the entry process. As of September 1988, almost 16,000 arrest cards had to be name searched (the first task of the entry process), over 12,000 first offenders had to be assigned State identification numbers before entry could occur, over 16,000 repeat offender arrest cards awaited entry, and over 2,500 arrest cards needed review by fingerprint technicians before entry could occur.

(2) The ACJIS Division should also handle these forms by calling the agencies to obtain the needed information.

(3) There were 34,174 disposition records residing in the error file as of June 5, 1990.

Returning rejected dispositions to the arresting agencies is ineffective. Dispositions are returned to the arresting agency in an attempt to obtain the corresponding arrest cards. However, local law enforcement agency staff interviewed stated that by the time dispositions are rejected by DPS and returned to them, the individuals are generally no longer in custody. Thus, the agencies cannot take a new set of fingerprints to resubmit corresponding arrest cards. Given this situation, the local agencies either discard the dispositions or place them in their own offender files. In either case, the dispositions are never returned to DPS for entry into ACCH.

The ACJIS Division should revise its procedures regarding rejected dispositions. First, DPS could retain the forms and try to locate records of the arrests. For example, it could review arrest records in its error data base to determine if any match the dispositions. Second, DPS could initiate the use of unique tracking numbers in order to facilitate proper linking of arrest and disposition data. Three of the five states contacted have implemented tracking number systems. Under these systems, a tracking number is assigned to an arrest at the time of arrest, and all subsequent information regarding the arrest includes the number. Thus, arrests and dispositions can be matched even if some of the information on the arrest cards and dispositions differ.

Need for program to address open arrest records - Because of the importance of ACCH data in completing criminal investigations and pre-employment and pre-licensing background checks, DPS should identify and complete arrest records which do not have dispositions.⁽¹⁾ In addition to ensuring that disposition processing is not backlogged and that rejected dispositions are entered into ACCH in a timely manner, the ACJIS Division should ensure that all dispositions are reported. Most states do not receive dispositions for all arrests reported. The U.S. Department of Justice report recommends that states monitor reporting of

(1) In 1989 the California Department of Justice was ordered by the court to attempt to obtain missing disposition data prior to disseminating arrest information for employment purposes.

dispositions. Flagging arrest records over a certain age which do not have dispositions, that is, arrest records which should have dispositions, represents the first step of such a program. Next, the disposition data must be acquired and entered.

DPS Does Not Routinely Verify Data Entered into ACCH

The ACJIS Division's failure to routinely verify the data entered into ACCH contributes to the unreliability of ACCH data. Although we could not determine the accuracy of individual ACCH records, we noted a lack of data entry verification procedures. DPS should implement some of the verification procedures used by other states' criminal history records staffs. In addition, DPS should plan a comprehensive data quality audit.

Data entered into ACCH is not routinely verified - Currently, arrest and disposition data entered into ACCH is not routinely verified to ensure data entry accuracy. Although we were unable to review the accuracy of individual ACCH records, we noted a lack of mechanisms allowing data entry errors to be detected.

We were unable to verify the accuracy of individual ACCH records because access limitation laws do not allow for auditing criminal history records. State statutes specify that criminal history records are only available to criminal justice agencies performing criminal investigations and other agencies completing pre-employment and pre-licensing background checks. The DPS Assistant Attorney General representative and our Counsel agreed that statutes do not provide Auditor General staff authority to access ACCH data.

However, we noted deficiencies in existing data entry quality control mechanisms which led us to question the accuracy of ACCH records. Currently, there are three ways in which ACJIS Division staff detect data entry errors. First, a supervisor may uncover errors while performing periodic quality control checks of a clerk's entry. Second, clerks may identify arrest data entry errors while entering disposition data. Third, data entry errors can be uncovered if a subject reviews and

challenges his or her record. In addition, local agencies do not routinely verify ACCH data. Staff of local law enforcement agencies interviewed noted that unless a subject approaches them to review his or her record or unless some external impetus occurs, they would not detect a data entry error in an ACCH record depicting an arrest made by one of their officers.⁽¹⁾

DPS should implement verification procedures used by other states - The ACJIS Division should develop procedures to routinely verify the data entry accuracy of arrest and disposition data input into ACCH. Four of the five states contacted verify 100 percent of the data entry performed by state criminal history records staff. (One of these states, Nevada, has used different verification procedures in the past and feels the procedure requiring double entry of criminal history data is most efficient.) The fifth state contacted has procedures whereby the data entry supervisor verifies a statistical sample of records entered.

DPS should organize a comprehensive data quality audit - In addition to improving its data entry verification procedures, the ACJIS Division should plan a comprehensive data quality audit to determine the accuracy of existing data. The U.S. Department of Justice report recommends that states provide for "baseline" audits of criminal history records repositories. Audits should include evaluations of data quality control procedures as well as the completeness and accuracy of criminal history records. The report recommends, "If possible, the audit should be performed by an outside contractor or by an independent agency such as the state auditor's office." The ACJIS Division has never undergone a baseline audit, although it plans to have such an audit done in fiscal year 1991-92. In order for this audit to be successful, the agency performing the audit must be granted access to ACCH records.

(1) An example of an external impetus causing an agency to verify an ACCH record is the FBI informing an agency that a subject has two state identification numbers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ACJIS Division should obtain input from local law enforcement agencies and identify an acceptable time limit for submission of arrest fingerprint cards. DPS should petition the Legislature to modify A.R.S. §41-1750 accordingly.
2. ACJIS Division management should more closely monitor turnaround times, backlogs, and staffing levels for entering arrest data.
3. The ACJIS Division should improve its procedures for processing problematic arrest cards and disposition forms. The following should be incorporated into the revised procedures:
 - a. The error data base should be used to identify outstanding arrest cards and disposition forms which have been rejected.
 - b. ACJIS staff should call agencies to obtain needed information rather than return the documents to the submitting agencies. ACJIS Division management should consider dedicating staff to the correction of problematic documents.
 - c. DPS should consider entering arrest data and flagging arrest cards having illegible fingerprints.
 - d. In cases where a disposition must be rejected because there is not a corresponding arrest record, the ACJIS Division should consider obtaining arrest data itself rather than returning disposition forms to agencies. DPS should also consider implementing a unique tracking number system to facilitate the matching of arrests and dispositions.
4. DPS should implement a system to identify older arrest records which lack dispositions. Once identified, DPS should take steps to obtain and enter missing disposition data.
5. The ACJIS Division should implement procedures to verify at least a statistical sample of arrest and disposition records input. Double entry should be considered as a verification mechanism.
6. DPS should ensure that a comprehensive data quality audit, planned for FY 1991-92, occurs. The agency performing the audit must be granted access to ACCH data in order for the audit to be successful.

FINDING IV

DPS NEEDS TO STRENGTHEN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OVER THE ACQUISITION AND ASSIGNMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

Although DPS spends on average over \$560,000 annually on telecommunications equipment, the department's policies and procedures for the acquisition and assignment of telecommunications equipment need improvement.⁽¹⁾ DPS has taken steps to enhance controls, but further effort is needed.

Traditionally, DPS telecommunications equipment has consisted primarily of mobile/vehicular radios. However, the technological advances of the past few years have resulted in the expansion of the department's arsenal of communications equipment. Portable radios, cellular/mobile phones, pagers, facsimile machines, answering machines, and mobile display terminals are some of these recent additions.

We reviewed the communications equipment purchased in the last three years (fiscal years 1987-88 through 1989-90), and found that the department purchased approximately 1,000 units of new and replacement equipment at a cost of about \$1.6 million. The equipment purchases we reviewed did not include large or unique items such as radio consoles or telephone switches, but rather the communications equipment most likely to be assigned to individual DPS employees.

Existing Policies and Procedures Are Insufficient

Given the amount of money DPS spends annually on telecommunications equipment, current acquisition and assignment policies and procedures are

(1) This amount is for communications equipment most likely to be assigned to individual employees. If large or unique items were included, the total annual figure would be over \$1 million.

inadequate, and fail to address the assignment and use of all types of equipment, both new and used. This lack of adequate policies also allows the responsibility for selecting and purchasing equipment to be assumed by various personnel. Finally, DPS does not identify whether equipment is really needed, and justification for equipment assignments is not always evident.

Policies regarding telecommunications equipment assignment and use are inadequate - Present policies do not address the assignment and utilization of equipment. The department divides policies into two categories--"General Orders," directives all bureaus must follow, and "Bureau Orders," directives developed by one of the five bureaus that apply only to those employees in the specific bureau that promulgates the policy.

Some General Orders discuss communications equipment; however, there are no department or bureau policies that address the newer equipment the department utilizes (i.e., cellular phones, facsimile machines, answering machines, or pagers). Additionally, there is no department or individual bureau policy that specifies which types of equipment will be issued to personnel within each bureau or at various organizational levels within the department.

For example, only three orders address communications equipment. One identifies required and optional equipment for patrol vehicles; however, the list does not mention any communications equipment that might be in a vehicle, (e.g., mobile radio or cellular phone). In addition, there are two policies on the installation and use of police radio scanners and citizen band radios. Neither specifies which officers should be assigned this equipment. The absence of policies addressing these issues can result in inequities in the assignment of equipment.

The lack of policies promotes inconsistency - Due to a lack of policies, various personnel select and purchase equipment. Although the Telecommunications Bureau is responsible for developing, operating, and maintaining the department's communications systems, the bureau is not solely responsible for the purchase of telecommunications equipment, and

any DPS bureau with the funds can purchase communications equipment. At least 28 percent of the 1,061 units of communications equipment purchased in the past three years was purchased by other bureaus in the department.

The Highway Patrol Bureau's use of scanners is one example of inconsistent acquisition and utilization. A survey of Highway Patrol district offices indicated that the use of scanners varied from a single unit in a district office to several units in each district (one scanner in each patrol vehicle). The Assistant Director of Highway Patrol told us that the use of scanners is discretionary, and the bureau has no universal policy governing their use. He also noted that the districts have the funds to purchase additional equipment.

We surveyed three neighboring states, Utah, New Mexico, and California, to determine whether they had a centralized policy within their public safety departments for purchasing communications equipment. In all three states, the equivalent of Arizona's Telecommunications Bureau purchased all equipment for all departments, rather than the individual departments purchasing equipment for their operations.

Needs assessments are limited - In addition to inadequate equipment policies and procedures for purchasing equipment, DPS does not conduct comprehensive needs assessment before purchasing new equipment. When we attempted to obtain copies of needs assessments for the communications equipment recently acquired by the department (including, but not limited to, mobile display terminals, cellular phones, portable radios, pagers, facsimile machines, and answering machines), we were able to locate only two written assessments--one for facsimile machines and the other for cellular phones.⁽¹⁾

(1) Several DPS managers indicated to us that assessments had been performed, but had not been documented. Also, the assessment for mobile display terminals written in the early 1980s had been sent to the archives and, due to retention schedules, has since been destroyed.

A survey of bureau staff was used in both of these assessments to determine whether the equipment was needed, and for what types of activities.

Therefore, of the assessments we reviewed, no criteria had been established against which to evaluate equipment implementation or perform cost analysis. Estimates of implementation costs should include not only the initial purchase price, but also estimated maintenance and equipment replacement costs.

Justification for certain equipment assignments is lacking - We found no written justifications within needs assessments, policies, or other administrative documentation to indicate the reason certain types of equipment are assigned to particular staff. For example, each assistant director and all command staff above the rank of lieutenant are assigned a cellular phone, in addition to a mobile radio, portable radio, and a pager.

The Department's Information Analysis Section conducted a limited study to develop criteria for the evaluation and approval of requests to purchase mobile telephones. The criteria given highest priority in the report was "Is there a need which cannot be met by existing means of communications (portable or car radios, stationary telephone or direct contact) and which can only be met by using portable telephones?" However, we found no documentation to verify that this criteria had been considered by the department in assigning this equipment.

Department Strengthens Acquisition Policy

In July 1990, an executive staff committee tentatively approved revisions to an existing General Order that addresses the procurement of goods and services. These revisions require the Assistant Director of the Telecommunications Bureau to endorse all communications equipment requisitions prior to review and approval by the purchaser's chain of command. The department is currently finalizing these revisions, and hopes to distribute them to the individual bureaus in the very near future. However, in order to prevent unnecessary or excessively costly

equipment purchases, DPS should also consider conducting needs assessments before purchasing new equipment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The department should establish written criteria upon which to base equipment assignments. The criteria should include appropriate justification for the assignment of each type of equipment to a particular position.
2. The department should conduct more comprehensive needs assessments before acquiring equipment. These assessments should include measurable criteria against which to evaluate equipment usage. Assessments should also be written to allow for review and documentation.
3. The department should ensure telecommunications equipment purchases and assignments conform to the criteria established by the department.

FINDING V

THE ACJIS DIVISION SHOULD IMPROVE ITS CASH-HANDLING PROCEDURES

The Arizona Criminal Justice Information System (ACJIS) Division should improve its cash-handling procedures. Current procedures present the potential for cash loss. Many measures, if implemented, would reduce this potential.

Currently, the ACJIS Division charges fees for several services. For example, during fiscal year 1989-90, approximately 954 parties paid \$6 to obtain copies of accident reports for commercial purposes. As DPS begins charging fees for additional services, such as providing accident report copies for noncommercial purposes or conducting background checks, the ACJIS Division will receive as much as \$700,000 in additional cash. Thus, the need for adequate cash-handling controls will only become more important in the future.

Current procedures present potential for cash loss - The ACJIS Division's current cash-handling procedures present the potential for cash loss. Currently, when cash or a check is received for a service, a clerk writes a receipt, stamps the check "for deposit only to the Arizona State Treasury," and places the cash or check in an envelope. The envelope is kept in a drawer which is left unlocked during the day and locked at night. The key to the drawer is kept on a supervisor's desk.

There are several deficiencies in these procedures resulting in the potential for cash loss. For example, many ACJIS Division staff work the evening and night shifts, and thus could access the envelope where cash and checks are kept. Also, no division staff reconcile the receipts against the cash and check intake. These deficiencies could allow undetected cash loss to occur. For example, a clerk could receive a check for a service rendered, not issue a receipt, and take cash equal to

the amount of the check. Even if a receipt were issued, the clerk could take the same amount of cash, and, given the lack of reconciliation, the shortage would not be detected.

Many measures would reduce the possibility of cash loss - The implementation of several measures would decrease the potential for cash loss. First, although current revenues do not warrant the need, if DPS begins charging additional fees the ACJIS Division should obtain a cash register. With a cash register, DPS could both issue receipts and have a master tape of transactions that a supervisor could easily review. Second, next to the cash register DPS should place a sign stating that customers are to be issued receipts and requesting customers to ask for receipts if they do not receive them. Finally, DPS should require the form of payment, cash or check, to be indicated on receipts, and a supervisor should reconcile daily both the cash and the check intake against the receipts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. If DPS revenues increase due to new fees, it should purchase a cash register to issue receipts and provide a master tape of transactions.
2. DPS should place a sign next to the cash register requesting customers to ask for receipts if they do not receive them.
3. DPS should require the form of payment, cash or check, to be indicated on receipts, and a supervisor should reconcile the cash and checks received against the receipts.

FINDING VI

MOST USERS FEEL THAT THE EMSCOM SYSTEM ADEQUATELY MEETS THEIR NEEDS; HOWEVER, SOME PROBLEMS WERE NOTED

Although most users of the Emergency Medical Services Communications (EMSCOM) system are generally satisfied, some system problems do exist. A survey of EMSCOM users revealed that the system does meet most of their needs. Most concerns raised by users address problems that DPS has limited ability to correct. However, one problem noted is correctable and appears to stem from inadequate dispatcher training. In addition, when problems occur there is no centralized means for ensuring that these concerns are forwarded to the appropriate EMSCOM personnel for resolution.

Arizona's EMSCOM system provides a radio communication link between field Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel and medical facilities throughout the State. The EMSCOM system allows ambulance, fire department, and other rescue vehicle personnel to talk with physicians at hospitals regarding patient care. EMSCOM users access the system using a radio mounted in their vehicle. They call in and speak with an EMSCOM dispatcher located in DPS's Phoenix Communications Center. This dispatcher will then connect the user with a specific hospital to receive medical advice. These radio connections are called "patches."

DPS is statutorily designated as the EMSCOM system manager and works with the Department of Health Services (DHS) to provide an effective communication network. DHS is statutorily required to coordinate the establishment of a statewide EMS system, and consequently provides much of the EMSCOM system funding. DHS also provides radio equipment to users.

Most Users of EMSCOM Are Generally Satisfied

A limited survey of EMSCOM users conducted by Auditor General staff revealed that most appear to be satisfied with the system. We conducted a telephone survey of 45 different EMSCOM users. Fifteen of the 78 hospitals in the system were surveyed, along with 30 of the 164 field users (primarily ambulance companies and fire departments). Respondents within each user category were selected based on amount of system usage as well as geographic location.

Results showed an overall satisfaction with the system. Most field and hospital users surveyed remarked that the system was good and that EMSCOM personnel were helpful and professional. In addition, many users felt that the system adequately met their needs. Further, users were generally satisfied with the quality of EMSCOM radio transmission.

Some Problems Noted Cannot Be Addressed by DPS

Despite a high level of satisfaction with EMSCOM, users still identified some areas of concern. However, DPS has limited ability and resources to remedy these problems. These areas are discussed below.

- Common calling - Many field users do not like a recently implemented procedural change for accessing EMSCOM because it affects their ability to use their portable radios. This procedure requires all users to call a dispatcher on the same channel, and then switch to another channel for communication with the hospital.⁽¹⁾ However, many field users have portable radios which do not have channel switching capability. Thus, when they are away from the ambulance treating a patient, the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) must leave the patient and return to the vehicle to switch channels on the mobile radio mounted in the ambulance to obtain hospital communication.

(1) The old procedure allowed the field units to communicate with the hospital on the channel they called in on. No channel switching was required.

Several field users have also complained that the common calling procedure increases their time on EMSCOM as well as time needed to establish hospital patches. This can be detrimental if they are close to the hospital and don't have sufficient time to establish a patch before arriving at the hospital. They are also concerned that the dispatchers do not monitor the patch as closely, and thus are not as available to assist with transmission problems.

DPS officials claim that having one common channel is an accepted and efficient means for users to access the system, and they implemented this change to respond to the increase and growth in EMSCOM radio traffic. This new procedure should minimize the amount of time the dispatcher spends establishing patches and consequently allow the dispatcher to handle more calls.

- Access delays - Despite the implementation of a common calling system to help free up the dispatcher, users are still experiencing delays getting on the system. Since there is only one call-in channel for all users statewide, backup can occur if more than one user calls in at the same time. In fact, 8 of the 32 field units surveyed responded that they cannot get through to a dispatcher 25 percent of the time.

Obtaining quick access to the EMSCOM system is important. For example, communication delays give the hospital less time to prepare for the patient's arrival. Also, patient care may be compromised if field units have to wait for medical advice from the hospital regarding treatment of critically ill patients. For example, a paramedic was transporting a patient who needed an IV. The paramedic could not get through on EMSCOM, so he had to start the IV without consulting a doctor.

We attempted to identify the demands on the system to validate user concerns. Although data regarding system use is limited, it does provide an indication of the demands on the system.⁽¹⁾ Analysis of the available data indicates that system use is intermittent and sporadic. We found that five calls may come in within ten minutes of each other while at other times only one call may come in within an hour period. We also observed EMSCOM console operations during a period of normally heavy patching activity and found a low level of activity. The unpredictability of system use makes it difficult to determine whether there is a need to open another console to handle EMS calls. DPS has a second EMSCOM console that they purchased several years ago which if manned may ease some of the access delays. Although we could not determine the need for an additional console, DPS plans to request three additional dispatcher positions to man the second EMSCOM console.

(1) There is no system in place to monitor the number and times of radio transmissions. The only data available identifies the number of patches created per user; however, there can be several radio transmissions relating to each patch.

- Some areas of the state lack EMSCOM coverage - Some users complained that there are too many areas or "deadspots" which do not have EMSCOM coverage. These deadspots exist because mountains and valleys block the transmission, or the mountaintop radio towers are too distant from the user trying to access the system.

DPS is aware of these areas of limited coverage, and is taking steps to improve coverage where feasible. The department is adding two radio towers to the EMSCOM system in fiscal year 1990-91 at a cost of approximately \$60,000.⁽¹⁾ In addition, an existing tower, which is unnecessary at its present urban location, will be transferred to a remote location to improve coverage in that rural area. However, these improvements will place the current system at capacity due to the limitations on the number of channels the dispatching console can handle.

The only solution is to purchase a new console with increased channel capacity. Although additional towers could then be handled by the console, DPS officials state it would not be feasible or cost effective to provide 100 percent coverage for the entire State. There are areas where the population is so small that the probability for an EMSCOM transmission would be very small on a yearly basis, and would not justify the major expense of installing a radio tower.

Transmission Quality Problems Stemming from Insufficient Dispatcher Training Can Be Addressed

Although DPS has limited ability to address the concerns noted previously, users' concerns regarding poor transmission quality in certain areas of the state can be addressed by improving dispatcher training. Users have experienced poor transmission quality which appears to stem from the dispatcher's lack of knowledge regarding system capabilities. DPS is aware of the problem and is taking steps to correct it.

Several users have expressed concerns regarding dispatchers' inability to create quality patches. These concerns focused on the dispatcher telling the field user to use the wrong tower or channel to establish the patch. Inadequate patching as a result of dispatcher error can cause static or even cause the patch to break off. For example, there are areas in the northern (Flagstaff and Sedona) and southern (Bowie and Casa Grande) parts of the state where the dispatcher must have a good

(1) DHS funded these towers through the Emergency Medical Services Revolving Fund.

knowledge of the area and available towers to establish a good quality patch. EMSCOM dispatchers create many "cross patches" for users in some of these areas because they require the use of more than one tower to establish the patch. If the dispatcher attempts to patch the user by using only one tower or if the dispatcher selects the wrong towers for transmission, the user may experience heavy static or lose the patch altogether. The following case examples illustrate some of the problems users in these areas have experienced:

- CASE 1

An ambulance user requested a dual cross patch with the destination hospital as well as with the hospital from which the company receives medical control. The user requested a specific channel for the cross patch because one of the hospitals only had a particular channel. However, the EMSCOM dispatcher told the user to utilize another channel. The base hospital could not hear the transmission on this other channel, so the user switched to the channel originally requested, and then the transport hospital could not hear the transmission.

There was little time to establish a new patch before arriving at the transport hospital. The dispatcher was unaware that there were problems with this patch and could not assist the users in reestablishing it. As a result, the patch was not completed.

- CASE 2

An intermediate level emergency medical technician (IEMT) requested a patch with his base hospital, and the dispatcher replied that the patch could not be made. When the dispatcher said that the patch could not be done, the IEMT interrupted patient care to explain to the dispatcher how the patch could be made. Once he did this, the patch was completed without further problems.

According to DPS management, these situations should not occur if the proper towers are used for the cross patch. Consequently, inadequate dispatcher training appears to be the cause of these problems.

DPS is addressing these concerns by stressing dispatcher training on the EMSCOM system. Special attention will be given to cross patching procedures. Dispatchers will also be made more aware of the towers and repeaters available in each area, so that they know which ones can be

used from certain locations to improve transmission quality. DPS communications staff are also looking into developing a list that would show what towers would normally be needed to create patches for each user.

Lack of Centralized Control for Monitoring User Complaints

The DPS Telecommunications Bureau currently lacks a formal means of tracking and resolving complaints submitted by users regarding EMSCOM. In many instances, resolution of these complaints is delayed because they are initially sent to either DHS or the State EMS Council. We identified four EMSCOM complaints that were initially sent to a member of the State EMS Council before being forwarded to DPS. DPS needs to coordinate with both of these entities as well as with all users to ensure that all EMSCOM complaints are sent to DPS.

Once these complaints are forwarded to DPS, there is no procedure to ensure that they are tracked and resolved in a timely manner. For example, a complaint received by DPS in March 1990 was not formally responded to until four months later. The Assistant Director of the Telecommunications Bureau is in the process of formulating a new policy that would ensure timely resolution of these complaints. The policy would require that these complaints, when expressed in writing, initially be routed through the Assistant Director's office. In this way, he will be aware of the complaints and will also be able to track their progress toward resolution to ensure it is timely.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DPS should continue to improve dispatcher training regarding EMSCOM operations.
2. DPS should develop a formal procedure for the handling and disposition of written complaints submitted by EMSCOM users.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION

During the audit we obtained information on state-of-the-art technologies which DPS plans to implement including an automated fingerprinting identification system, mobile digital terminals, a computer assisted dispatch system and a 800 MHz radio trunking system for the Phoenix Metropolitan area. In addition we obtained information on the cost of upgrading the Arizona Criminal Justice Information System.

Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS)

Senate Bill 1001, passed by the Legislature and approved by the Governor during the spring of 1990, allowed for the implementation of an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS).

The use of AFIS will allow DPS staff to analyze crime scene fingerprints and generate lists of suspects for crimes for which there are no suspects. Generally, DPS staff do not perform searches to determine if latent prints match any of the 830,000 offender fingerprints on file.⁽¹⁾ However, if law enforcement officials have 3 to 4 parties suspected of committing a crime, they can compare the suspects' prints with the fingerprints obtained at the crime scene. Otherwise, DPS files but does not analyze the latent prints. When DPS has attempted to generate lists of suspects by matching latent prints with offender prints, the effort has been inefficient and time consuming. For example, DPS staff served on a task force formed to solve the Tucson prime time rapist case. One DPS latent print examiner reviewed 500,000 offender fingerprints over an 8-month period before identifying the rapist.

AFIS will allow DPS staff to identify suspects in a more efficient manner. AFIS digitizes and stores both latent and offender fingerprints. When a latent print is run against the offender data base, AFIS will provide a candidate list of possible matches. Final

(1) A latent print is a fingerprint obtained at the scene of a crime. Latent prints generally do not consist of clear prints of 8 fingers and 2 thumbs and, consequently, cannot be used to identify suspects.

verification of the match will be made by a fingerprint examiner. According to the supervising latent print examiner, if AFIS had been operational during the prime time rapist investigation, the identification would have been made sooner and some of the crimes could have been prevented. DPS plans to have AFIS operational in May 1992.

As an alternative to purchasing its own AFIS system, DPS could have joined the Western Identification Network (WIN). WIN is an AFIS system which is being operated jointly by some of the western states. ACJIS Division staff indicated that they had prepared a cost benefit comparison of joining WIN versus purchasing an independent AFIS system. The comparison revealed that purchasing an independent AFIS system was a better solution for Arizona because DPS can have management control and install more remote stations for almost the same cost as joining WIN. Searching against the FBI fingerprint file is not an alternative because the file is not automated.

Senate Bill 1001 created an AFIS fund and transferred \$2 million from the general fund to the AFIS fund for the lease-purchase of equipment and services. DPS will seek additional annual appropriations over the next four years to fund the remainder of the lease-purchase agreement. The first year of the AFIS implementation will cost DPS approximately \$2,100,000. Annual costs for the second through fifth years are expected to be approximately \$2,865,000.⁽¹⁾ Thus, the total cost for the first five years will be approximately \$13.56 million. In order to generate revenues to fund the operation and maintenance costs of AFIS, the bill raised the rate of assessments on fines from 37 to 40 percent and modified the distribution of Arizona Criminal Justice Enhancement Fund (ACJEF) monies. As of October 31, 1990, 7.5 percent of the total monies collected for ACJEF will be deposited in the AFIS fund. DPS anticipates collecting \$1,195,000 annually from this distribution, based on fiscal year 1988-89 ACJEF revenues.

(1) The annual \$2,865,000 cost is comprised of \$1,935,000 for hardware (including conversion, software, and site preparation), \$15,000 for communications lines, \$150,000 for other operating costs, and \$765,000 for maintenance. The maintenance component is not included in the first year's cost.

Many other states and cities have acquired AFIS systems and reported increases in the number of crimes solved.⁽¹⁾

- California - According to the system manager, 30,000 crime scene identifications have been made since AFIS became operational in 1979. For example, 75 of 400 unsolved murders have been solved.
- San Francisco - Statistics for the first 4 years during which AFIS was operational (1984-1988) reveal the following numbers of crimes solved: over 2,000 burglaries, 98 homicides, 200 robberies, 224 auto thefts, 39 rapes, 32 narcotics offenses, 29 hit and run incidents, and 43 assaults. According to a San Francisco Police Department crime scene investigations inspector, the increased number of burglaries solved resulted in a 28.6 percent decrease in the number of burglaries in the city.
- St. Louis - Since AFIS was installed in 1988, the AFIS manager indicated that there have been 760 crimes solved that would otherwise not have been solved.

In addition, during our audit, the Phoenix Police Department was negotiating with a vendor in order to buy an AFIS system. One Phoenix Police Department staff member noted that Phoenix needs its own AFIS system because the department maintains data on certain misdemeanors which DPS does not maintain. Also, the Phoenix Police Department has such a large volume of prints to process that it would monopolize the DPS AFIS system if it did not have its own system, thus preventing other law enforcement agencies in the state from using the DPS system.

DPS anticipates the need for additional latent print examiners as a result of the installation of AFIS.⁽²⁾ Additional examiners will be needed to address both the anticipated workload increase (DPS expects the volume of latent cases to double after AFIS becomes operational) as well as previously filed latent prints. California and San Francisco

(1) According to the Assistant Director of the Telecommunications Bureau, 26 other states have AFIS systems. The FBI does not have an AFIS system.

(2) DPS could not provide a range of the number of positions which might be needed, but certified latent print examiners will be needed to fill the positions. Certified latent print examiners obtain fingerprints at crime scenes, testify in court, and perform complex fingerprint comparisons.

increased their latent print staff as a result of implementing their AFIS systems, and Phoenix anticipates a similar staff increase when its AFIS system becomes operational.

Mobile Digital Terminals

Mobile digital terminals (MDTs) are portable computer terminals that are mounted in vehicles and enable Highway Patrol officers to access computer data bases to run warrant checks on people and vehicles without having to communicate with the dispatcher. Presently, the officers transmit these requests to the dispatchers, who runs these checks for them. This slows the response time to the officers, and congests voice radio channels. The implementation of MDTs and their interface with the computer assisted dispatch (CAD) system should enable DPS to obtain significant savings of time and air traffic.

Once interfaced with the CAD system, the MDTs will allow units to check in and out on calls for service without voice transmissions. Units will be able to indicate their arrival on the scene through a single key stroke, and can check back in and update CAD records with call status information and other pertinent data without broadcasting this information to all listeners. MDTs will enable field units to maintain their status with the dispatcher and dispatch center without voice contact.

Implementation schedule - The timetable for having an MDT system operational in Phoenix and Tucson is fall 1990. DPS has ordered 119 MDTs, along with the equipment to build up mobile digital repeater sites in both Maricopa and Pima county for a cost of \$796,281.⁽¹⁾ These MDTs will be distributed along geographic boundaries associated with major metropolitan areas, specifically Phoenix and Tucson. It is intended that 30 MDTs be installed in Highway Patrol vehicles in Tucson, and 70 in

(1) Criminal Justice Enhancement Funds (CJEF) and Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations (RICO) funds were used to implement the MDT system.

vehicles in the Phoenix area. The remaining 19 will be installed in Criminal Investigations specialty vehicles.

There is no funding available for expanding this system during fiscal year 1990-91: the number of terminals will remain at 119. Future expansion is dependent upon available funding. The ultimate goal is that all appropriate vehicles in the Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff areas will eventually receive these terminals for an approximate total of 250 terminals.

Dispatcher workload - DPS anticipates that the MDTs will cause dispatcher workload to remain constant, but have a different focus. Officers will no longer be asking dispatchers to run records checks for them. However, since the officers will have the ability to do this themselves, they should come across more "hits" (instances where a drivers license is suspended or revoked, or a vehicle is listed as stolen), resulting in the dispatchers having to call more wreckers, issue more department report numbers, and handle other tasks associated with processing a hit. Since the amount of radio traffic in the Phoenix and Tucson areas is near the saturation point, it is DPS's intention that MDTs will allow dispatchers to maintain the same level of service for the next two to three years.

Computer Assisted Dispatch System

The Operational Communications Division is presently implementing a Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) system to improve the efficiency of its Highway Patrol dispatch function. CAD is an automated system which assists the dispatcher in the initial receipt of information, the assigning of appropriate resources, and the tracking of desired information such as response times, type of event, location, and call assignment.

CAD will eliminate many currently manual tasks and in the process improve department record keeping as well as response times to calls for service. For example, CAD will eliminate much of the manual records and procedures used by the dispatchers such as rolodexes, telephone books,

wrecker rotation lists, incident cards, locator/status sheets, and radio hand logs. In addition, CAD will help the dispatcher identify the appropriate resources to respond to calls. For example, when a field unit calls in to dispatch, a dispatcher will enter the location using highway number and mile marker, and CAD will display all the possible assisting agencies for that service area on the screen. Agencies identified include the appropriate fire department, police department, tow trucks, ambulance company, and hospital in that area. The dispatchers currently retrieve this information from maps, phone lists, and other source documents. This can be time consuming. Furthermore, the system will have the ability to generate management reports which should be useful in assessing dispatcher workload, unit activity, types of events, locations of events, response times, and other activities.

CAD will also improve tracking of officer status and may increase officer safety. Unit status will be displayed by committed units and available units. In addition, pending calls will be displayed on the CAD system according to six priority classifications, with priority one calls (emergency calls) in red on the screen. Furthermore, there will be an alarm built into the system to alert the dispatcher that an officer is overdue to call-in. Timers will cause the officer's status line to turn to red from white when the specified time has elapsed.

The CAD system will cost \$217,000, all of which will come from state appropriations. Hardware has been installed in Phoenix and Tucson Communications Centers, and CAD is expected to be fully operational by September 1990. The Flagstaff Communications Center was originally scheduled for implementation in fiscal year 1990-91; however, funding was not approved. This request will be resubmitted for fiscal year 1991-92.

Phoenix Metropolitan Area 800 MHz Radio Trunking System

Due to the increased use of existing radio channels, DPS plans to implement an 800 MHz radio trunking system. The department currently uses a 460 MHz Ultra High Frequency (UHF), two-way mobile radio system for its voice radio communications that allocates one channel to each

user.⁽¹⁾ According to DPS, voice radio channels in the Phoenix metropolitan area are already extremely congested during peak hours, and waiting time to broadcast over the system is considered excessive for a law enforcement agency (i.e., greater than a ten-second wait). With the projected expansion of the freeway system in metropolitan Phoenix, the demand for radio communications will be increased. Additionally, there are no UHF radio frequencies available in the metropolitan area that are compatible with DPS radios. Anticipating the need for additional radio channels, DPS has obtained licenses from the FCC for eight 800 MHz radio channels to allow for "trunked" radio use.

An 800 MHz radio trunking system allows one radio channel to act as a "traffic cop" to direct a mobile or portable radio to any vacant voice channel on the trunked radio system. A computer keeps track of the assignments of radio users to prevent one group of users from talking to another group or accidentally being overheard. Computerized call direction allows approximately twice as many units to be placed on a trunked system with a given number of channels as compared to a conventional channel radio system. A three-year departmental plan proposes implementing an 800 MHz trunked radio system for the Phoenix metropolitan area at a cost of \$610,000. In fiscal year 1991-92, \$130,000 will be required for equipment for the White Tanks Mountaintop Center (in the western Phoenix metropolitan area), as well as for a small number of radios to use the system. In fiscal year 1992-93, an additional \$480,000 will be needed for equipment at the Thompson Peak Mountaintop Center (to cover the eastern and northeastern Phoenix metropolitan area), for additional computer controls to make the system more effective, and for mobile and portable radios.

ACJIS Computer Upgrade

DPS maintains the State central repository for criminal history record information. Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies utilize

(1) The department also provides radio communications services for several other State agencies including the Department of Transportation, Game and Fish, State Land, State Parks, Liquor Licenses and Controls, Emergency Services, Corrections, Agriculture and Horticulture, and the Capitol Police.

the Arizona Criminal Justice Information System (ACJIS) to identify, investigate, and apprehend criminals. This information is available to local agencies at no charge.⁽¹⁾ Due to expanded usage of the system and to comply with National Crime Information Center (NCIC) user response times, DPS has requested additional funding to upgrade the current computer system housing the criminal history information. The cost to upgrade the system ranges from \$1 million to \$3 million depending on whether the department purchases a used or new computer.⁽²⁾

Due to the cost of the expansion, we surveyed six other states to identify how these states fund the hardware costs associated with their criminal justice information system and specifically whether users of the system shared the cost of the system.⁽³⁾ We found that each of the six states require some type of cost sharing from the users although only two of the states require the users to help support the cost of the mainframe. For the most part, users are responsible for the cost of terminals, printers, and telephone lines used to access the system. However, Michigan and Alabama both charge their users a monthly fee to help fund the system. Alabama charges a \$450 monthly user fee while Michigan is charging users \$100 per month over the life of a five-year lease/purchase agreement to upgrade their system.

-
- (1) The DPS computer system was purchased with state funds. In addition, \$452,300 in general funds are appropriated to the ACJIS line fund each year. This line fund provides the user agencies with one terminal, one printer, the cost to hook up to the system, and pays the monthly telephone bills for accessing the system. Users pay for any additional terminals and the monthly telephone costs associated with the additional terminals.
 - (2) DPS's request of \$301,000 in their fiscal year 1990-91 budget to upgrade the computer system under a multiyear installment purchase approach was not approved. Therefore, on July 12, 1990, DPS requested \$200,000 in Criminal Justice Enhancement Funds to upgrade the system by December 1990 in order to maintain satisfactory user response time.
 - (3) Arkansas, New York, California, Alabama, and Nevada were recommended by the Deputy Chief of the National Crime Information Center as states with model criminal justice information programs. Michigan was surveyed as we had learned that it was charging users and we wanted to obtain additional information regarding its charging.

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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ROSE MOFFORD F. J. "RICK" AYARS
GOVERNOR DIRECTOR

November 16, 1990

Mr. Douglas R. Norton
Auditor General
2700 North Central Avenue, Suite 700
Phoenix, AZ 85004

Dear Mr. Norton:

Enclosed is the response from the Arizona Department of Public Safety to the revised draft report of performance audit of the Telecommunications Bureau.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. J. Ayars".

F. J. "Rick" Ayars, Colonel
Director

pb

November 13, 1990

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY'S
RESPONSE TO
REVISED DRAFT REPORT OF PERFORMANCE AUDIT
OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUREAU

FINDING I

DPS COULD GENERATE MORE THAN \$700,000 ANNUALLY BY ESTABLISHING
A FEE FOR CERTAIN SERVICES AND UPDATING CURRENT FEE SCHEDULES

As noted in the Audit Report, the Department of Public Safety has begun charging everyone requesting accident reports at a rate of \$1.00 per page. This is expected to generate \$108,000 annually.

RECOMMENDATION

The legislature should consider revising A.R.S. 41-1750 to allow DPS to establish a \$10 fee for conducting other background checks on applicants for licenses and employment at the State level. Revenues not needed to support this processing should then be deposited in the general fund.

RESPONSE

DPS agrees with this recommendation and will take steps in the next legislative session to introduce changes to A.R.S. 41-1750 to allow DPS to begin charging a fee for background checks on applicants.

FINDING II

DPS'S OPERATIONAL AUDIT PROGRAM IS DEFICIENT

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DPS should take steps to bring the department into compliance with the NCIC biennial audit requirement.
2. DPS should make every effort to conduct on-site (level II or level III) audits when possible.
3. DPS should continue to implement improvements to its audit program such as visiting remote terminal locations and auditing non-terminal agencies.

RESPONSES

1. Although the audit report indicates DPS is not in compliance with NCIC policy, the NCIC 1989 audit report states, "ACJIS Operations Audit Program is in compliance with the NCIC policy." Although there is a difference of opinion between the state auditors and the NCIC auditors regarding the degree of this compliance, it should be noted this is a federal NCIC audit

requirement and if the state of Arizona is meeting the requirements to the satisfaction of NCIC (federal government) note of this should be made.

2. DPS concurs with the recommendation of the audit team that every effort should be made to conduct level II or level III audits when possible. However, limitations on human resources oftentimes prevent this from being feasible. It should be noted, the audit program has never received any authorized FTEs through the appropriations process. When these programs were mandated by NCIC it became necessary for DPS to utilize existing resources in an effort to comply with these federal requirements. Due to legislative cuts in authorized positions in FY 1982/83 the total process of auditing criminal history records and maintaining the DPS's records system is being done with 3 less FTEs today than it was prior to FY 1982/83. During this same time, arrest cards received have gone from approximately 50,000 annually to over 111,000 annually. Applicant fingerprints have increased from 37,000 annually to over 70,000 annually, and dispositions of cases has increased from 60,000 to 113,000 annually.

DPS agrees that possibly all programs could use some level of improvement, however, considering there has been a decrease in available human resources over the past 10 years while at the same time, existing programs have increased by as much as 60% and many new programs have been implemented which had to be complied with with existing financial and human resources.

3. It is agreed that improvements to audit programs could be made by more visits to terminal locations and every attempt will be made to make more personal visits to terminal locations, however, the auditing of nonterminal locations is not feasible with the existing amount of FTEs.

FINDING III

DPS NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE COMPLETENESS AND RELIABILITY OF ITS CRIMINAL HISTORY INFORMATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The ACJIS Division should obtain input from local law enforcement agencies and identify an acceptable time limit for submission of arrest fingerprint cards. DPS should petition the Legislature to modify ARS 41-1750 accordingly.
2. ACJIS Division management should more closely monitor turnaround times, backlogs, and staffing levels for entering arrest data.
3. The ACJIS Division should improve its procedures for processing problematic arrest cards and disposition forms. The following should be incorporated into the revised procedures:

- a. The error data base should be used to identify outstanding arrest cards and disposition forms which have been rejected.
 - b. ACJIS staff should call agencies to obtain needed information rather than return the documents to the submitting agencies. ACJIS Division management should consider dedicating staff to the correction of problematic documents.
 - c. DPS should consider entering arrest data and flagging arrest cards having illegible fingerprints.
 - d. In cases where a disposition must be rejected because there is not a corresponding arrest record, the ACJIS Division should consider obtaining arrest data itself rather than returning disposition forms to agencies. DPS should also consider implementing a unique tracking number system to facilitate the matching of arrests and dispositions.
4. DPS should implement a system to identify older arrest records which lack dispositions. Once identified, DPS should take steps to obtain and enter missing disposition data.
 5. The ACJIS Division should implement procedures to verify at least a statistical sample of arrest and disposition records input. Double entry should be considered as a verification mechanism.
 6. DPS should ensure that a comprehensive data quality audit, planned for FY 1991-92 occurs. The agency performing the audit must be granted access to ACCH data in order for the audit to be successful.

RESPONSE

The Department of Public Safety concurs with these recommendations and steps will be taken to implement some of the suggestions with existing human resources. However, programs such as calling agencies regarding rejected dispositions, rejected fingerprint cards, and etc., in addition to double entry verification of disposition records are all programs which would be exceptionally difficult to implement with existing resources.

FINDING IV

DPS NEEDS TO STRENGTHEN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OVER THE ACQUISITION AND ASSIGNMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The department should establish written criteria upon which to base equipment assignments. The criteria should include appropriate justification for the assignment of each type of equipment to a particular position.

2. The department should conduct more comprehensive needs assessments before acquiring equipment. These assessments should include measurable criteria against which to evaluate equipment usage. Assessments should also be written to allow for review and documentation.
3. The department should ensure telecommunications equipment purchase and assignments conform to the criteria established by the department.

RESPONSES

1. DPS concurs with this recommendation and is currently in the process of drafting a general order which will identify the telecommunications equipment required for each critical position within the department.
2. DPS also agrees with this recommendation and steps are being taken to establish procedures to ensure assessments of major procurements are made prior to making major telecommunications purchases.
3. Increased emphasis will also be placed on existing policies and procedures to ensure they are being adhered to as it relates to the procurement of telecommunications equipment.

FINDING V

THE ACJIS DIVISION SHOULD IMPROVE ITS CASH-HANDLING PROCEDURES

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. If DPS revenues increase due to new fees, it should purchase a cash register to issue receipts and provide a master tape of transactions.
2. DPS should place a sign next to the cash register requesting customers to ask for receipts if they do not receive them.
3. DPS should require the form of payment, cash or check, to be indicated on receipts, and a supervisor should reconcile the cash and checks received against the receipts.

RESPONSE

The Department of Public Safety agrees with all three recommendations and is in the process of implementing all three recommendations. By January 1991, the cash register, a receipt log and procedures for handling payments received on a daily basis will all be implemented.

FINDING VI

MOST USERS FEEL THAT THE EMSCOM SYSTEM ADEQUATELY MEETS THEIR NEEDS; HOWEVER, SOME PROBLEMS WERE NOTED

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. DPS should continue to improve dispatcher training regarding EMSCOM operations.
2. DPS should develop a formal procedure for the handling and disposition of written complaints submitted by EMSCOM users.

RESPONSES

1. DPS is presently implementing a revised advanced EMSCOM dispatcher training program which should greatly enhance the ability of DPS EMSCOM dispatchers.
2. A formal procedure has been developed within the Telecommunications Bureau to handle not only EMSCOM written complaints but all complaints received by the Telecommunications Bureau. This procedure is in addition to established general orders and will supplement the complaints and discipline procedures manual utilized by DPS.

SUMMARY

In summary, there are a number of good suggestions in this audit report from which DPS can make a number of improvements to provide better service to both the criminal justice community and the citizens of the State of Arizona. As noted in the responses, those programs which can be implemented without any additional human or financial resources are already being undertaken by DPS. Those changes which require legislative changes, or additional funding, will be addressed in the coming fiscal years.

We would like to thank the auditors from the Auditor General's Office for their cooperation and their professionalism in attempting to minimize the day-to-day operational impact to the Telecommunications Bureau while this audit was being performed.