

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE: September 16, 2005

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT: Follow-up audit of the August 8, 2003, *Performance Audit of the Citation Processing of Code Compliance Services*- Report #389

We conducted this follow-up audit of the citation processing of Code Compliance Services (CCS) under the authority of Chapter IX of the City Charter and according to applicable government auditing standards. We included tests of records and reviews of program guidelines and procedures that we considered necessary in the circumstances. Our objective was to determine whether management had implemented the audit's original recommendations or had taken other acceptable actions to remedy the control weaknesses identified in the original audit report.

The original audit report contained four findings with nine related recommendations. Management implemented three of the recommendations, took acceptable action to address two, partially implemented three, and not implemented one.

The following details the original audit findings and recommendations and shows the status of implementation.

## **1. The City is incurring unnecessary certified mail expenses.**

**We recommended** that the Director of CCS employ methods to revise the City Ordinances reflect The State of Texas *Health and Safety Code* notification requirements and follow-up with the City Attorney's Office to determine actions that can be taken prior to modifying the City Code.

*We found that the department stopped issuing citations via certified mail and that the City Code was revised to match the state statute (Implemented).*

**2. The receipt, storage, distribution, and control of citations need improvement.**

**We recommended** that the Director of CCS:

- A. Establish a method to distribute citation booklets that ensures receipt and distribution of the booklets are controlled. Procedures should include:
- Individuals responsible for ordering and retrieving citation booklets.
  - Storage and safeguarding.
  - Individuals authorized to distribute booklets.
  - Creation of an electronic issuance log that numerically lists the citation booklets with columns for issuance date, receiver's badge number, officer name/employee ID number, and name of the issuer.
  - Central location for storage and distribution of citation books for inspectors.
  - Completion of the issuance log.
  - Sequential issuance of booklets.

*We found that an office assistant keeps the numbered citation booklets in a locked cabinet; stamps them when checked out, logs the recipient's name, badge number, and division, and has the recipient sign and note both the check in and check out dates. However, this is still done manually, not electronically (Partially implemented).*

- B1. Establish a record retention and transfer policy for citation booklets.

*We found that the citation booklet and log retention policy is five years (Implemented).*

- B2. Develop procedures to address voided citations.

*We found that CCS arranges voided citations alphabetically by inspector and stores them in a locked file cabinet (Implemented).*

- B3. Designate supervisors/managers to perform periodic reviews no less often than quarterly to ensure compliance.

*We found that the section manager asserts that he reviews these quarterly, but keeps no record of his reviews (Partially implemented).*

**3. Current procedures do not reasonably ensure alleged violators are personally contacted.**

**We recommended** that the Director of CCS:

- A. Consider changing the work shifts of district inspectors to cover hours outside the traditional workday/week and initiate efforts to have inspectors hand deliver warnings, notices, and citations to alleged violators in person.

*We found that management considered changing shifts but decided to grant overtime case by case to help inspectors reach people after hours (Management took acceptable actions to address the recommendation).*

- B. Determine the relevance of any other purported causes preventing personal contact and design measures to reduce their effect (i.e., pair-up inspectors in one vehicle, seek aid from the DPD and/or City Marshal's Office).

*We found that many Code violations have been decriminalized, which will not require inspectors to identify defendants personally in court. However, this was the only change considered (Partially implemented)*

#### **4. Time spent at court is not effectively scheduled.**

**We recommended** that the Director of CCS:

- A. Coordinate with applicable departments (i.e., City Attorney, Judicial, Court and Detention Services) to implement a court routing system similar to the one used by the Dallas Police Department. CCS inspectors would then be deployed to court only when the defendant is present and ready for trial.

*We found that all cases involving inspectors are still scheduled for one day in the week; and the implementation of the civil adjudication process will provide optional court dates to inspectors prior to writing citations. It also requires citizens to submit written requests for inspectors to be present at trial. These two changes are expected to drastically reduce inspectors' attendance in court (Management took other acceptable actions to address the recommendation).*

- B. Consult with Court Services to develop a process that will eliminate the possibility of scheduling an individual to appear on different cases in different courtrooms at the same time.

*We found that while the changes noted in A above will reduce errors, there is still no system in place that will eliminate the possibility of scheduling inspectors for different court cases at the same time (Not implemented).*

We commend management for their work in addressing issues related to the nine original audit recommendations.

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C: Kathleen Davis, Director of Code Compliance Services