



# Inspections & Controls

## Tools to help you prevent corruption in your department

**T**he sergeant is summoned to the reception office of the detox center. A man brought in for public drunkenness and an inability to care for himself complains about a loss of money. He claims he'd just cashed his welfare check and had several hundred dollars on his person just before being picked up by the police. Although this type of complaint is somewhat endemic to public drunkenness, the sergeant remains on high alert, for good reason.

During recent months, similar complaints have accelerated dramatically around welfare check time. Rather than the relatively few and random acts of "drunk rolls," a pattern seems to be forming. While the sergeant interviewed the first complainant, a second detainee at the center made a similar complaint. More significantly, the detainee had been brought in by the same officers involved in the first complaint.

The area captain convenes a special meeting with the reporting sergeant, the detective division and a commander from headquarters. The captain recommends setting up a covert sting operation to discover what's going on. The headquarters commander approves this rare and somewhat risky operation because police officers could be involved in the thefts.

An undercover police officer plays the role of a public drunk near where the thefts were occurring. A wallet is placed in his trousers with marked bills, and he is carefully surveilled by a protective team of detectives.

On the second day of operation, the unthinkable happens: Two uniformed officers working the public intoxication detail picked up the UC and remove the marked money from his wallet prior

to dropping him off at the detox center. *The result:* They are arrested by internal affairs, terminated and prosecuted.

A sting operation is an extreme method of monitoring or inspecting the behavior of officers. In this article, we examine four additional types of inspections or controls that can detect and, more importantly, prevent acts of corruption.

### 4 Types of Controls

*The "Snapshot":* This is the most common form of review used by field supervisors. Typically, supervisors monitor the activities of their squad or team through radio transmissions or computer aided dispatch in order to determine events that should be prioritized for inspecting. Although snapshot inspections are well known and universally used, the concept of prioritizing them is now recognized as essential. Because these inspections cover probably less than 10% of all incidents, prioritization must be deliberately and thoughtfully performed. Priority can be based on type of incident, experience level of the officer(s), past officer performance or potential for misconduct (e.g., the end of high speed pursuit). *The bottom line:* Snapshot inspections are effective when they are prioritized correctly, rather than at random.

*The Closed Loop:* Some activities are conducive to, and may even demand, continual monitoring. Many agencies record all incoming telephonic requests for service or the registering of complaints. Video cameras are used by many departments to monitor narcotic storage areas, booking areas for incoming prisoners and interrogation rooms. Many departments now use video cameras on patrol vehicles for multiple reasons.

*The Biopsy:* This is a comprehensive, after-the-fact review of

a process or series of connected events—the careful examination of a specific case, from the time a citizen calls to report the incident until a final disposition is rendered by the court, for example. This type of inspection is best used to detect problems in systems or standard operating procedures. "Biopsies" of the organization and its systems are costly. They are unique in discovering failures in the way the various sub systems of an agency interact (e.g., patrol with detectives or detectives with prosecutors). Because they are comprehensive, corruption can be uncovered as well.

*The Function Audit:* It's often very helpful to thoroughly examine a process or procedure employed by your agency.

*Example:* The care of property, the processing of vice complaints, responses to complaint letters, actual practices of the personnel evaluation process or the reporting and recording of overtime. This type of inspection can uncover misconduct or corruption and reveal inefficiencies in the system, or be used to retrain employees in the system's use.

### The Final Word

Inspections and controls are a critical aspect of leadership, whether you're an executive, supervisor or training officer. They are critical not only for what they catch, but because they inherently communicate organizational values and culture. Carefully chosen and performed, inspections can prevent corruption and improve performance. —On Point

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