

Cellular Phones

Report No. 93-9

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Telecommunications Section is responsible for managing King County telecommunications systems including phone lines, voice mail, SCAN calling, pagers, fax transmission, calling cards, and cellular phones. The section coordinates and negotiates with all vendors doing telecommunication business with King County, prepares telecommunication budgets for County agencies, and provides inventory maintenance and billing services for County agencies.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The objective of the study was to review cellular phone usage and the policies and procedures which govern cellular phone acquisition and use.

Audit staff reviewed telecommunication service costs by department for 1992 and January through July 1993, the Telecommunication Section cellular telephone inventory for July 1993, and selected cellular phone billing information for the period November 1992 through July 1993. Audit staff also interviewed Telecommunications Section management and staff, surveyed all County departments to determine the number of cellular phones owned or in use by departments, reviewed departmental policies and procedures related to cellular phone acquisition, assignment and use, and determined whether departments had identified needs for additional cellular phones.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1. The study found discrepancies between the County cellular telephone inventory and a county-wide survey of cellular telephones conducted by the Auditor's office.

The study recommended that the Telecommunications Section submit a copy of the inventory to each department to reconcile any differences.

Finding 2. The study found that cellular phones were used to make personal calls and were not reimbursed at full cost (cost plus tax and overhead).

The study recommended that personal calls be discouraged per the Employee Code of Ethics. If such calls are necessary it was recommended that they be controlled and reimbursed at full cost.

Finding 3. The study found that 34% of phones using US West cellular service were underutilized. The underutilized phones cost approximately \$83,810 to purchase and an estimated \$7,202 per year for phone use and service charges.

The study recommended that departments review their cellular phone usage and either discontinue service or switch service for phones used less than 28 minutes per month to Cellular One to reduce costs.

Finding 4. 1993 cellular phone service costs have increased 32% from 1992.

The study recommended that departments complete a needs assessment before requesting cellular phone equipment or service.

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