



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

COMPLETED: MAY 12, 2020

PUBLISHED: AUG 19, 2020

Courthouse Security Screening: Following Screening Procedures, Opportunities for Greater Efficiency

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Executive Summary

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit follows its operating procedures for weapons screening in King County courthouses, but screening efficiency has not been a priority and lines can be long. There are some actions the Court Protection Unit can take to speed lines at entrances, although many efficiency challenges are beyond its control. Additional marshal staffing is likely necessary to keep the Fourth Avenue entrance to the downtown courthouse open more consistently.



King County

Courthouse Security Screening: Following Screening Procedures, Opportunities for Greater Efficiency

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

What We Found

We observed thousands of patrons entering King County's courthouses during this audit, and the security screeners and marshals consistently carried out their duties as described in their standard operating procedures. While screeners have a limited ability to reduce lines, efficiency has not been a clear priority when setting screening policies. Changes to signage and procedures could help speed up the lines. Employees were not significantly faster than the public, so employee-only entrances may not increase efficiency. The physical layout of entrances can limit the effectiveness and efficiency of screening, since most courthouses were built before screening began.

We did not find records of any instance where a weapon had been used to attack another person inside a courthouse, since screening began in 1995; however, the effectiveness of the Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit is rarely measured using random testing after a screener's initial training. The Washington State Supreme Court mandates security standards, but it is unclear who is responsible for implementation.

With current staffing, our model predicts the Fourth Avenue entrance to the King County Courthouse could remain open around 88 percent of the time. This is because an entrance cannot be open without a marshal, and marshals can be called away to perform other duties. Our model predicts that the County has hired sufficient screeners to keep the Fourth Avenue entrance open around 97 percent of the time, but additional marshals would be required to achieve this level of service.

What We Recommend

We recommend implementing statewide standards, increasing rigor of screener rigor, and identifying equipment needed by screening staff. We also recommend improving signage to help speed up how long it takes to get through screening, and consistently using procedures that keep the line moving.

Why This Audit Is Important

In 1995, Susana Remerata and Phoebe Dizon were murdered inside the Fourth Avenue entrance after a domestic violence hearing in the King County Courthouse. The Superior Court immediately issued an order requiring courthouse weapons screening. Judges, jurors, witnesses, and the public rely on safe courthouses to ensure access to justice. The Sheriff's Office spends nearly \$7 million per year to screen weapons at the entrances to 11 courthouses in King County that serve more than 1.8 million people per year. Courthouse facilities include the King County Courthouse in downtown Seattle, the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent, the Youth Services Center,¹ the Involuntary Treatment Act Court, and seven District Court locations across the County.

Security screeners check for weapons using magnetometers and X-ray machines, and marshals are limited-commission law enforcement officers who can collect and store any weapons found.



¹ This facility is being replaced by the Children and Family Justice Center (CFJC), which was not open during audit fieldwork.

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Weapons Screening Standards and Effectiveness

SECTION SUMMARY

The Court Protection Unit in the King County Sheriff's Office follows procedures in carrying out weapons screening at entrances to King County courthouses, but operational gaps may hamper overall effectiveness.

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit (CPU) performs weapons screening at all King County courthouses and has policies and procedures that guide its work. However, it does not test the effectiveness of its screening through a defined testing program, and procedural gaps between the Sheriff's Office CPU and Facilities Management Division's King County Security Unit (KCSU) may present challenges to operational effectiveness and safety. Consistent testing and improved coordination could increase safety and security in courthouses around the County.

This report is organized in three sections. In this section we discuss the reasons and standards behind county courthouse security screening. In the second section we review potential ways to reduce lines and wait times during screening. Finally, we look at issues specific to courthouse staffing and the effect on the King County Courthouse in downtown Seattle.

Why are visitors and employees screened for weapons at King County courthouses?

In King County, courthouse weapons screening is required by Superior and District Court orders. In 1995, Susana Remerata and Phoebe Dizon were murdered in the downtown courthouse after a domestic violence hearing was held there. The Superior Court immediately issued an order requiring courthouse weapons screening. Since then, multiple court orders expanded weapons screening to include all 11 Superior and District Court locations in King County: the King County Courthouse (downtown courthouse), the Maleng Regional Justice Center, the Youth Services Center,² the Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) Court, and the District Court facilities in Auburn, Bellevue, Burien, Issaquah, Redmond, Shoreline, and Vashon Island.³ See Exhibit A, below.

² This facility will soon be replaced by the Children and Family Justice Center.

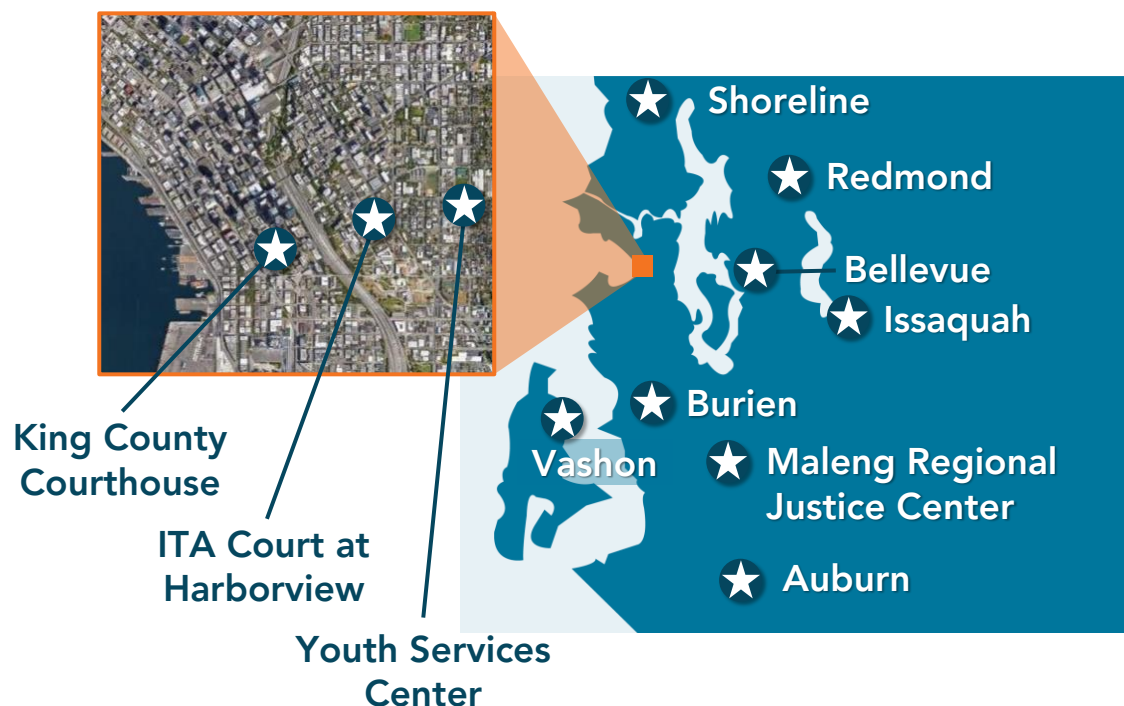
³ The most recent King County Superior Court and District Court screening orders are included in Appendix 1; they are the most recent screening orders as of the time of this report.

Who performs courthouse weapons screening?

Weapons screening at King County courthouses is carried out by the Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit and the Facilities Management Division's King County Security Unit. The CPU performs weapons screening when courthouses are open to the general public. KCSU security officers screen visitors at Superior Court locations when buildings are closed to the general public.

The CPU is made up of three squads; each squad is managed by a Sheriff's Office sergeant, and each covers one of the three main Superior Court and nearby District Court courthouses. CPU staff consist of marshals and screeners. Marshals are armed limited-commission law enforcement officers who provide a range of courthouse security support services. Screeners are responsible for checking courthouse patrons and their bags for weapons, observing patrons as they pass through magnetometers, and hand-wanding individuals if the magnetometer alarm sounds when they pass through it.⁴ Screeners also check personal bags, using X-ray machines at Superior Courts and through visual and manual inspections at District Courts.

EXHIBIT A: The Court Protection Unit screens for weapons at courthouses across King County.



Source: King County Auditor's Office illustration of Superior and District Court locations across King County

⁴ Magnetometers are sensor devices that detect and measure magnetic forces. They can detect metal on an individual's person, and are used to screen for weapons (firearms, knives, etc.). King County uses both walk-through and hand wand magnetometers; the former are called magnetometers and the latter, hand wands or handheld metal detectors.

How much does King County spend on weapons screening?

Current costs for the Court Protection Unit are roughly \$8.5 million per year.

Wages and benefits for CPU marshals and screeners total \$8.1 million in the 2019-2020 biennial budget. Additional expenditures include fixed costs for new equipment or supplemental screening-related work performed by KCSU. For example, the 2019-2020 budget included \$290,000 for the purchase of new X-ray machines. However, because these additional costs are either not ongoing or not primarily related to weapons screening, CPU staffing costs best represent the direct costs of courthouse weapons screening.

What standards guide weapons screening?

Weapons screening is guided by three sources: King County Courts' local orders, Court Protection Unit and King County Security Unit procedures, and Washington State Courts General Rule 36.

The local court orders spell out requirements for courthouse security screening and reference CPU's standard operating procedures.⁵ In addition, Washington State Courts General Rule 36 (GR 36) specifies that "Trial Court Security" requires basic security and safety measures for all courthouses in Washington.⁶ Among GR 36's requirements are:

- Court Security Committee
- Court Security Plan
- Local Court Security Policy and Procedure Guide
- Minimum Court Security Standards, including public weapons screening.

Do screeners follow procedures?

Courthouse weapons screening conducted by the Court Protection Unit follows procedures. We observed over 4,000 individuals go through the weapons screening process during the audit. We found that CPU screeners consistently carried out their work in compliance with CPU's standard operating procedures.

Is weapons screening effective?

Court Protection Unit counts the number and types of weapons confiscated, but this is an inadequate measure of effectiveness. Effective weapons screening prevents banned weapons from entering the secure area of the courthouse. As a measure of its work, CPU maintains records of the weapons identified and withheld as property as part of its operations. This measure is limited because it does not show CPU's failure rate—the number of times individuals were able to get weapons into the courthouse. For example, CPU staff noted instances during secondary screening events—such as courtroom entrances in particularly high-risk trials—where additional items were found.

⁵ See Appendix 1; the CPU standard operating procedures section with the list of prohibited and permitted items is included in the Superior Court order as Appendix B to that order.

⁶ GR 36 "Trial Court Security" is included in Appendix 2.

Are there ways we could better test weapons screening effectiveness?

Random testing is a best practice for security screening operations, but the Court Protection Unit does not have a documented testing program. Periodically conducting randomized covert weapons screening tests, and assessing the results to guide screener training, is a best practice in ensuring an effective weapons screening program. CPU standard operating procedures require screeners to receive primary and recurrent testing on security equipment, and during our interviews screeners shared examples of randomized testing with dummy weapons. The testing process itself, however, is not described in CPU policies. In our interviews with CPU staff, staff could only recall being tested at Superior Court courthouses and were unclear how often testing was supposed to occur, noting that testing seemed to happen when new sergeants were assigned to a CPU unit. CPU does not maintain records of random weapons screening tests or testing results.

Recommendation 1

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit should develop, document, and implement a randomized weapons testing program and include it in its standard operating procedures. The program should include recurring random testing at all courthouse locations at defined intervals. Once implemented, the Court Protection Unit should measure the effectiveness of screening to detect test items.

Are there gaps in security screening procedures?

The Court Protection Unit and King County Security Unit have converging roles in security screening, but gaps in operational procedures are not addressed in the policies and procedures for either unit. KCSU is responsible for after-hours screening and coordinating courthouse security via the Emergency Dispatch Center (EDC). CPU and KCSU staff noted differences in operational expectations between each unit, but these differences are not addressed in the policies and procedures for either unit. For example, EDC dispatchers monitor District Court cameras and duress alarms, but CPU policy provides that marshal radios be linked with local police dispatch. This means that the people monitoring these alert systems cannot communicate directly with the marshals and screeners on-site. Both CPU and KCSU staff noted unresolved questions about the operational roles of the two functions.

Recommendation 2

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit and Facilities Management Division King County Security Unit should clarify roles and responsibilities for screening and security operations and ensure that their respective policies and procedures are aligned.

Is the County meeting the requirements of GR 36?

The County is not meeting some General Rule 36 requirements. Courts, CPU, and KCSU managers all agreed that GR 36 applies to and guides King County's courthouse security and weapons screening practices, and shared examples of how the County meets specific terms. However, stakeholders had different perspectives on how the elements of GR 36 are satisfied as a whole. For example, there is no single plan that includes all the elements of the Court Security Plan required by GR 36. Instead, Superior Court staff referred to multiple documents, such as both CPU and KCSU's standard operating procedures, as the Court Security Policy and Procedure Guide. The Court Security Committee, including CPU, KCSU, and courthouse tenants as participants, does not meet regularly, and no coordinating body is responsible for identifying and addressing operational gaps between CPU and KCSU. As a result, while the County meets many of the minimum court security standards of GR 36, the rule's intended coordination of security operations—including weapons screening procedures—is not occurring.

Recommendation 3

King County Superior Court, Sheriff's Office, and Facilities Management Division should together review Washington State Courts General Rule 36 and determine how the County meets each of the rule's requirements, identify who is responsible for each requirement, and identify whether there are any gaps.

Are King County courthouses designed for effective weapons screening?

The Court Protection Unit noted challenges with the configuration of screening at courthouse entrances and the quality of screening equipment. At most King County courthouse entrances, weapons screening was introduced without capital or design changes to accommodate screening functions. We observed multiple locations—primarily in District Courts—where the location of magnetometers and bag checks are hampered by building design. According to Facilities Management Division, funding for capital improvements at courthouse entrances has been limited to major capital projects at the Maleng Regional Justice Center and at the new Children and Family Justice Center only. Addressing these problems would require a capital program to redesign and remodel these entrances. See Exhibit B, below.

EXHIBIT B: Cramped entrances at District Court locations were not designed with weapons screening in mind and capital projects would be required to expand the screening areas.



Source: King County Auditor's Office photos of security screening stations at Burien and Shoreline District Courts

Could better equipment help screeners to do their work?

Investments in equipment for screening staff could address potential risks. CPU management recently purchased new, higher resolution X-ray machines to replace existing equipment that is roughly 15 years old. However, X-ray screening only occurs at Superior Court locations, and no dedicated life cycle capital replacement program exists for weapons screening equipment.

During our site visits, we noted that safety gear for CPU staff appeared to be lacking. For example, screeners at District Court locations hand-check bags for weapons and contraband, but screeners did not have nonstick gloves.⁷ Equipment challenges can also be caused by gaps in operational coordination; for example, some marshals do not have access to their District Court's camera feeds, so they must respond to distress calls without being able to see the situation in the courtroom before opening the door. Facilities Management Division staff explained that camera and alarm system upgrades may not include additional licenses for feeds on-site because that is a body of work specific to the EDC. The CPU standard operating procedures include a Security Screening Equipment section, but the section is limited to operational guidance for X-rays, magnetometers, and handheld metal detectors.

Recommendation 4

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit should identify, document, and distribute the equipment needed for screening operations for each weapons screening location.

⁷ Nonstick gloves are made of material that avoids cuts or accidental punctures by hypodermic needles.



Customer Experience

SECTION SUMMARY

Even though security screeners have a limited ability to reduce lines during peak hours, there are some steps that could help speed up the lines. The primary causes of delay are the physical limitations of the screening areas and people entering the building who fail to follow instructions, but incremental improvements may be possible. Clear hand-off procedures, consistent verbal instructions, and better signage could improve efficiency. A separate employee-only entrance might not improve efficiency, since we did not find that employees were significantly faster than the public on average, but there may be other operational reasons for a separate entrance.

Why are lines to enter a courthouse sometimes so long?

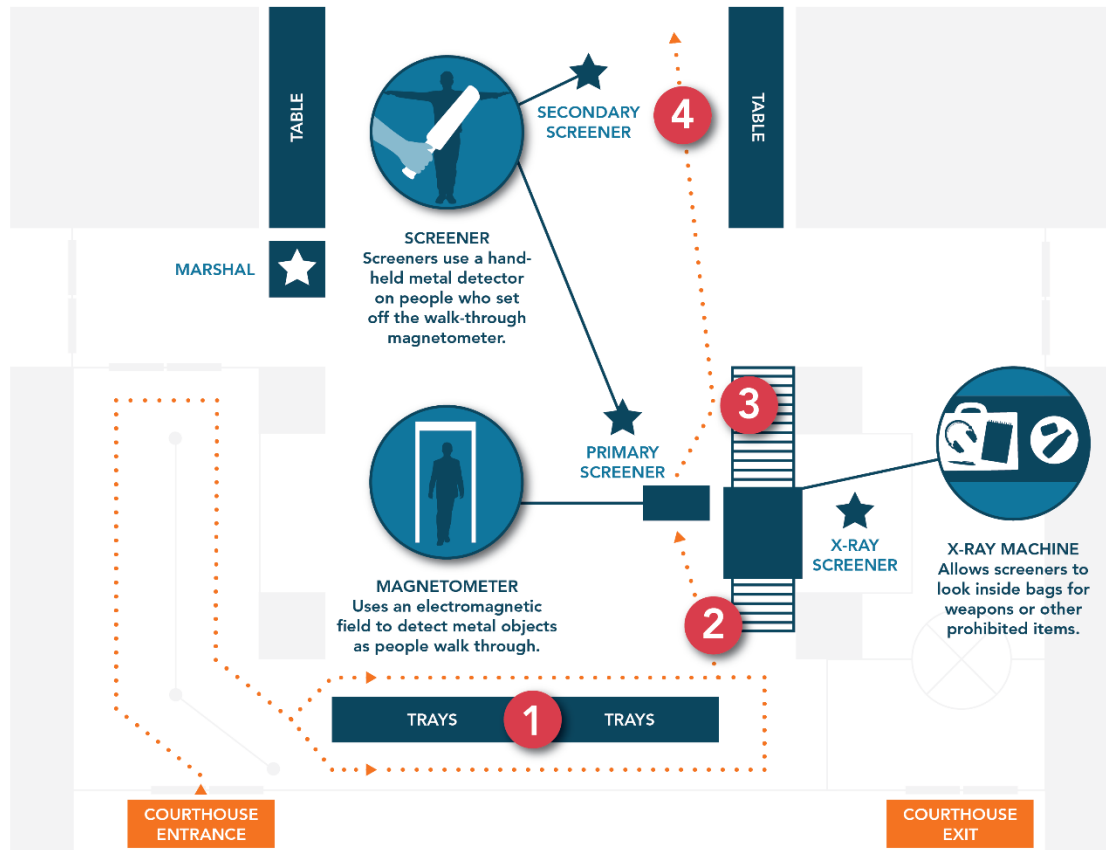
Long lines are often caused due to peaks in demand, when large numbers of people enter the courthouses in the morning and again when returning from lunch. During these peak times, the rate of people trying to enter the building can exceed the rate at which they can move through security screening. Based on our observations, we found it generally takes between 5 and 15 seconds for an average person to walk through a magnetometer and collect their items from the X-ray machine. Between one-third to one-half of people set off the magnetometer, which then directs a screener to hand-wand the person with a handheld metal detector.⁷ Using a hand wand can take an additional 5 to 30 seconds, which can delay movement in the line.

Can screeners make the lines go faster?

Screeners have some ability to improve efficiency, but many factors that cause delays are outside of their control. People failing to follow screening procedures (e.g., not emptying pockets or not removing laptops from bags) is a major reason for delays. In addition, a backup at the magnetometer can stall the throughput of the X-ray machine, since there is limited space for trays to pile up while waiting for the people to be hand-wanded. Conversely, delays in the X-ray machine (e.g., when there is a laptop or a suspicious object that needs further investigation) pauses the passage of trays into the machine and stops the line of people waiting to pass through the magnetometer, since there is limited space for people to safely crowd around the ramp at the end of the X-ray machine belt. In theory, these compounding issues could be mitigated with more physical space to conduct screening, but it would likely take a large capital project to expand the physical constraints of the courthouse entryways. See Exhibit C, below, for examples of the primary causes of delay.

⁷ In February 2020, after the fieldwork for this audit was finished, the Sheriff's Office increased the sensitivity of the magnetometers at the King County Courthouse. This caused many more people to set off the magnetometers and to require hand-wanding by a security screener, which slowed down the lines coming into the building.

EXHIBIT C: King County Courthouse security line configuration and potential causes of delay:



PAIN POINTS

- 1 LOADING**
People who take a long time loading trays can slow the line. Having multiple lanes allows quicker people to bypass slower people.
- 2 RERUNNING**
People who forget to remove laptops from bags or completely empty their pockets can slow the line. Everyone must wait while they put their forgotten items into a tray to be rerun.
- 3 UNLOADING**
People who unload their trays at the X-ray machine can slow the line. Not only must people wait during the unloading, but empty trays can pile up and block the X-ray machine ramp.
- 4 HAND-WANDING**
People who set off the magnetometer must be hand-wanded. When this happens, it stops the line unless a secondary screener can wand the person away from the magnetometer.

Source: King County Auditor's Office illustration of the security screening process at the 3rd Avenue entrance of the King County Courthouse

Is moving the line quickly a priority?

Efficiently moving people through the line is important to effective security and customer service, but it has not been made a priority. Long lines are a security risk, since they place judges, jurors, witnesses, and other vulnerable people in a fixed, predictable, and unsecured location. In addition, people entering the building have an interest in doing so quickly. However, staff members within the CPU stated that their priority was thorough screening and that efficiency was generally not a consideration. This lack of priority is consistent with the screener's standard operating procedures, which do not mention efficiency or highlight ways to keep the line moving. While the ability of screeners to improve efficiency might be marginal, there could be improvements that would speed up the line without sacrificing effective security screening.

The Sheriff's Office has made operational decisions before fully considering their impact on efficiency. For example, in February 2020, the Sheriff's Office became concerned that the magnetometers were not sensitive enough to consistently detect metal when people were wearing winter coats. The vendor who calibrates and tests the machines was not immediately available, so the Sheriff's Office changed the policy at the downtown courthouse to require every person entering the building to remove all coats, including suit jackets. The Sheriff's Office reversed this policy change two days later, but the sensitivity of the magnetometers was increased to the point where most people set off the machine. Both of these changes had a noticeable impact on efficiency, but it is not clear whether the Sheriff's Office considered those impacts or balanced them against effectiveness goals before making these changes.

Recommendation 5

The Sheriff's Office should include efficiency as a goal in the Court Protection Unit standard operating procedures.

What improvements could speed up security screening lines?

There are several small changes that could increase efficiency. Since delays are caused by a variety of interrelated factors, no single strategy will likely have a significant impact, but collectively they might lead to a noticeable improvement. These strategies include:

- consistently screening people away from the magnetometer
- giving clear and consistent instructions to people entering the building
- using pictures on signs that tell people how to get through screening
- posting signs at locations where people will need to see them.

The remainder of this section will discuss each of these strategies in more detail.

How could screening away from the magnetometer speed up the lines?

A frequent cause of delays occurs when the screener at the magnetometer stops the line in order to hand-wand a person. When there are additional screeners working at the entrance, the screener at the magnetometer can pass the person to the secondary screener and keep the line moving. However, we observed that this was not always done, and there is no clear expectation established in the standard operating procedures to encourage this option. We also observed that screeners would occasionally have the person attempt to go through the magnetometer again, which stops the entire line and often does not resolve the issue.

Recommendation 6

The Sheriff's Office should develop and implement standard operating procedures that encourage screeners at the magnetometer to pass people to secondary screeners and avoid having people go through the magnetometer multiple times whenever possible.

How could consistent verbal instructions speed up the lines?

Clear and consistent verbal instructions to patrons about how to unload trays could reduce confusion and delays. Confusion among people about how and where to properly unload their trays can cause backups. To keep the line moving, people need to take their trays and all items off the ramp at end of the X-ray machine belt and unload at back tables away from the screening area. Trays can pile up on the belt and block the X-ray machine throughput when people either unload their trays on the ramp, leave their trays on the ramp, or both. Screeners at the magnetometer often verbally direct people to take their trays to tables away from the X-ray machines to unload, but we observed that these instructions were not always consistent or clear. For example, a screener might say "Take your items to the back table," and the person will remove their items from the tray and leave the tray on the ramp. The screener would then need to halt the line to instruct the person to come back and retrieve their tray.

Recommendation 7

The Sheriff's Office should develop clear and consistent verbal instructions for security screeners that minimizes confusion about how to unload trays.

How could better signage speed up the lines?

Better signage could improve efficiency by giving clear instructions to people. Even if all verbal instructions were consistently clear, they might not be effective or helpful for some patrons of the courthouses. For example, verbal instructions are not helpful to a person who cannot hear or who has a limited proficiency with English. Clear signage would be more equitable and could marginally improve efficiency, keeping lines shorter on average. Screeners stated that people rarely seem to read posted instructions, which are entirely in English and use very few graphics to communicate what people should do to go through screening efficiently. See Exhibit D, below, for examples of current signs and signs that use graphics.

EXHIBIT D: Graphics could help communicate instructions better than text-only signs.



Source: King County Auditor's Office photos of security signage at King County Courthouse, and illustrations

How could the location of signs speed up the lines?

Signs are often placed in locations that are not helpful to people going through screening, which causes delays. For example, there is a sign on top of the X-ray machine instructing people to remove laptops from bags.⁸ By the time a person sees this sign, however, they will have already passed the loading tables that have trays for their laptop and bag. If they do see the sign, they would need to double back in line to pick up a tray and remove their laptop, potentially delaying the entire line. Signage located in places where people are already looking, such as a sign at the loading table or a sticker inside of the trays, could help people understand how to efficiently move through screening. Creating effective signs and knowing where best to place them might require specific expertise in communications and usability.

Recommendation 8

The Sheriff's Office should consult with an expert in communications and usability to develop instructional signs that use graphics and post these signs in locations where people are best able to see and act on their instructions.

Would an employee-only entrance decrease wait times?

King County employees do not appear to be significantly quicker than the general public on average, so an employee-only line might not make screening more efficient. Queueing theory (the science of speeding up lines) states that creating a separate line for faster people will help increase the efficiency of a process. For example, the express line at a grocery store allows customers who will take a short amount of time to bypass slower customers. This results in lower average wait times. To make a separate line work in practice, it is necessary to communicate criteria for an express line to customers ahead of time so that they can join the appropriate line. While a customer's number of items might be an easy identifier in a grocery store, there are fewer feasible options when considering the people entering a courthouse.

One easily identifiable group is King County employees. Given their familiarity with the screening process, it is reasonable to assume that they would go through screening more efficiently than the general public. However, we did not find a significant difference between these groups in our observations of the King County Courthouse in downtown Seattle or the Regional Justice Center in Kent.⁹ Other reasons might still justify an employee-only line, such as allowing employees to enter the building to open offices before allowing the public to enter. For instance, at the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent, the morning rush can sometimes prevent employees from entering the building on time. This means the public will still need to wait until the employees open their offices.

⁸ A frequent and time-consuming problem involved people forgetting to remove laptops from bags. This is necessary because the X-ray machine cannot see through laptops, which creates hidden areas in bags that might not be examined by screeners. When a person forgets to remove their laptop, the screeners will stop the conveyor belt, ask the person to remove the laptop, wait for them to do so, and then re-examine their bag and laptop separately.

⁹ It is possible that more observations might find a statistically significant correlation between employment and speed. However, based on the limited number of observations we were able to make during this audit, it does not appear that any such correlation would be consistent or very strong.



Staffing Fourth Avenue Entrance in Downtown Seattle

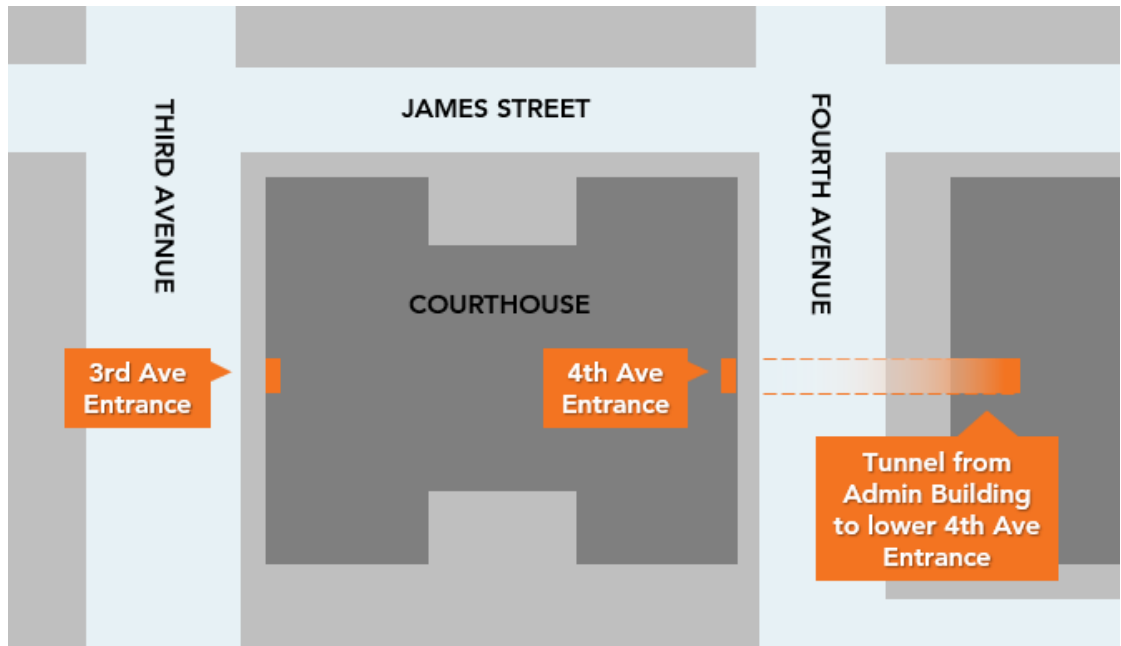
SECTION SUMMARY

Staffing levels in 2020 should be sufficient to keep the Fourth Avenue entrance to the downtown courthouse open during public operating hours about 88 percent of the time, but more marshals would be required to ensure this entrance is always open during public hours. When multiple marshals are responding to calls for service within the courthouse, closing the Fourth Avenue entrance generally causes the least disruption to operations. Our model also predicts that the number of screeners is enough to keep the Fourth Avenue entrance open 97 percent of the time when the building is open to the public, but only if additional marshals are hired.

Why is the downtown courthouse Fourth Avenue entrance sometimes closed unexpectedly?

We found that an insufficient number of marshals on duty was the primary reason for closing the Fourth Avenue entrance to the downtown courthouse. In 2019, the Fourth Avenue entrance was scheduled to be open Monday through Thursday during peak hours (8–10 a.m. and 12–2 p.m.). Within these limited hours, this entrance was closed 16 percent of the days it was scheduled to be open. Many judges and other stakeholders advocated for more consistent operating hours for this alternative entrance, due to their concerns about the safety of the Third Avenue entrance. See Exhibit E, below.

EXHIBIT E: Unlike other courthouses, the King County Courthouse has more than one public entrance staffed by screeners and marshals.



Source: King County Auditor's Office illustration of entrances to the King County Courthouse in downtown Seattle

What duties make marshals unavailable to work at the downtown courthouse entrances?

Unlike screeners, marshals have many competing duties that can create staffing shortages at entrances. For example, marshals can be asked to provide extra security during a sensitive trial, respond to disorderly conduct and unruly patrons, escort defendants, and stand by to assure the peace during King County Council meetings. Furthermore, these competing duties may be requested by a variety of elected officials: any of the Superior and District Court judges, the County Council, and judges at the Washington State Court of Appeals. These calls for service can take between a few minutes to several weeks, and sometimes there is limited advance notice. Often, these calls are handled by roving marshals, but sometimes these calls require taking a marshal away from an entrance post and closing that entrance.

Why does the downtown courthouse Fourth Avenue entrance close and not other entrances?

Staffing shortages at any of the other court locations can lead to the closure of the Fourth Avenue entrance. This is because the downtown courthouse is the only courthouse in the County that has multiple public entrances. Closing the entrance at any other courthouse would result in closing the courthouse entirely. When staffing is insufficient at other locations (such as when too many marshals call in sick), staff are temporarily transferred to cover the shortage. When staff are pulled from the downtown location, it can result in the closure of the Fourth Avenue entrance. This is because it is the entrance that serves the fewest number of people and is easier to securely close than either the Third Avenue or Administration Building tunnel entrances.

How could the downtown courthouse Fourth Avenue entrance stay open more consistently?

Keeping the Fourth Avenue entrance open consistently would likely require hiring additional marshals. As mentioned above, calls for service are somewhat unpredictable and come from a variety of independent sources. This means there is always a chance that the calls for service might exceed the number of marshals on duty that day. When this happens, the Fourth Avenue entrance may need to close. However, the probability of this closure occurring decreases if there are additional marshals on duty available to handle calls for service.

With current marshal staffing, how often could the Fourth Avenue entrance stay open?

Our staffing model predicts that the Fourth Avenue entrance could remain open 88 percent of the time with current staffing levels—11 marshal full-time equivalent positions. This means a marshal could expect enough calls for service that the Fourth Avenue entrance might still need to be closed 12 percent of the time due to a lack of marshal availability. This is a conservative estimate, so it is possible that the entrance could be open more frequently, depending on the extent to which marshals are available for overtime shifts or can otherwise manage calls for service. See Exhibit F, below, for our model's predictions of how frequently the Fourth Avenue entrance would likely remain open depending on different levels of staffing. For example, with 13 marshal FTEs, the model predicts that the Fourth Avenue entrance would be open around 95 percent of the time; this equates to being closed unexpectedly around one day per month. Alternatively, to keep the Fourth Avenue entrance open almost all the time (i.e., only unexpectedly closed once a year), the model predicts it would require 18 marshal FTEs.

EXHIBIT F: More marshals increase how frequently the Fourth Avenue entrance could remain open.

FOURTH AVENUE:
FREQUENCY STAFF AVAILABLE



Source: King County Auditor's Office analysis

How does screener scheduling impact the Fourth Avenue entrance?

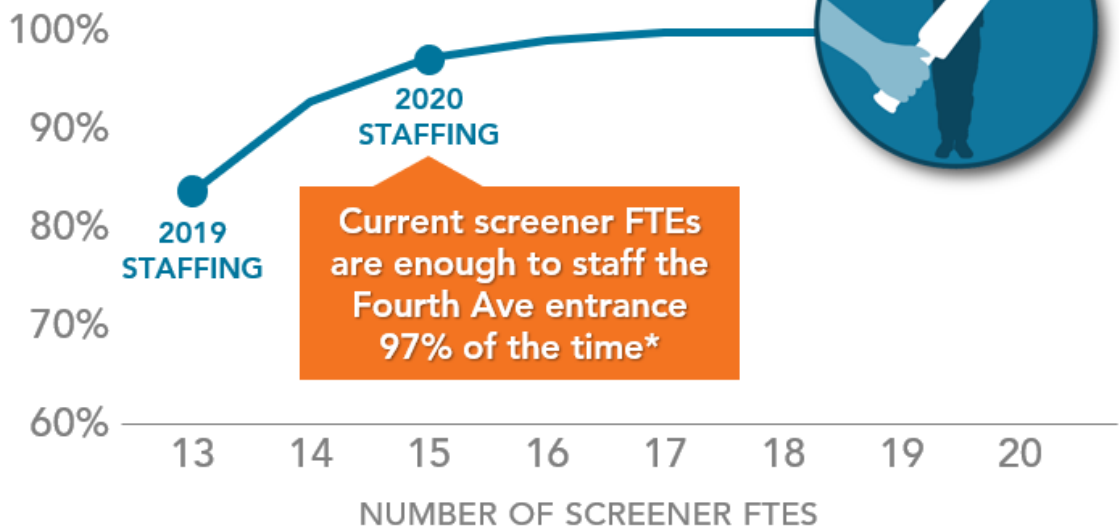
In addition to marshal staffing discussed above, to keep the downtown courthouse Fourth Avenue entrance open consistently from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., every day, it is generally necessary to have 10 screeners on duty. More FTE positions are required to cover absences due to illness and vacations (i.e., a relief factor). In 2019, there were 13 FTE security screeners at the downtown courthouse. After factoring in absences, this means there was on average nine screeners on duty. In December 2019, the County Council approved two additional positions, so in 2020 there will be 15 screener FTEs.

With current screener staffing, how often could the Fourth Avenue entrance stay open?

Our model predicts that with the current staffing level for screeners (15 FTE), the Fourth Avenue entrance would only close three percent of the time due to an insufficient number of screeners. This is equivalent to the Fourth Avenue entrance being unexpectedly closed seven days per year. The two additional screener FTEs hired in 2020 increased the likelihood that the Fourth Avenue entrance could remain open, based on screener availability, from 83 percent to 97 percent of the time. See Exhibit G, below. Without additional marshals, however, our model still predicts that the Fourth Avenue entrance would only be open 88 percent of the time.

EXHIBIT G: At 2020 staffing levels, there should be enough screeners available to work the Fourth Avenue entrance around 97 percent of the time.

FOURTH AVENUE:
FREQUENCY STAFF AVAILABLE



Note: Additional marshals are still required to keep the Fourth Avenue entrance open more than 88% of the time.

Source: King County Auditor's Office analysis

Conclusion

King County performs courthouse weapons screening to help ensure the safety of courthouse patrons, and the Sheriff's Office CPU follows written procedures in conducting this work. A structured testing program and more thoughtful examination of directional signage and screening practices could help bolster the effectiveness and efficiency of courthouse screening, and improved coordination among courthouse security stakeholders could address perceived operational risks. In addition, changes in staff levels could help ensure enough marshals and screeners are on duty to meet demand. Ultimately, ensuring safe access in King County courthouses means the weapons screening function must have the resources to meet needs and expectations.

Appendix 1

King County Superior and District Courts Courthouse Security Screening Orders

1		
2		
3	SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON	
4	IN AND FOR KING COUNTY	
5		
6	In re the Matter of:	NO. 19-2-12050-4 SEA
7	SCREENING FOR SECURITY in the KING	
8	COUNTY COURTHOUSE , in SEATTLE,	AMENDED
9	WASHINGTON, the COURTS BUILDING at the	ORDER RE SCREENING FOR
10	MALENG REGIONAL JUSTICE CENTER in	SECURITY
11	KENT, WASHINGTON, THE YOUTH SERVICES	
12	CENTER in SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, and the	EFFECTIVE MAY 14, 2019
13	INVOLUNTARY TREATMENT COURT in	
14	SEATTLE, WASHINGTON.	
15		
16	The Court on its own motion makes the following findings:	
17		
18	It is the responsibility of the judiciary, and within its inherent power and its statutory	
19	authority under RCW 9.41.300 (1)(b), to take reasonable steps to provide access to	
20	justice for all citizens, and to promote the safety of persons, including parties,	
21	witnesses, jurors and staff, while present in court facilities. For purposes of this	
22	order "court facilities" means the King County Courthouse, in Seattle, WA, the	
23	courthouse building at the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent, WA, the Youth	
24	Services Center building in Seattle, WA, and the Involuntary Treatment Court, and	
25	associated judicial, prosecuting attorney and public defender offices, located on the	
26	second floor of the Ninth and Jefferson Building in Seattle, WA. Additional	
27	applicable findings are incorporated into this order as delineated in Appendix A.	
28		
	Based on the foregoing findings, the KING COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT HEREBY ORDERS:	
	1. <u>Mandatory Screening.</u> All persons entering court facilities shall be screened in	
	accordance with this order. King County Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit	
	Marshals and Security Screeners, and King County Facilities Management Division	
	Security Officers shall thoroughly search all person and property, using	
	appropriate electronic screening equipment and/or by hand, for prohibited items	
	before entering court facilities, except as described in Section 3 below.	
	2. <u>Prohibited items.</u> No persons shall be permitted to possess or bring into court	
	facilities any prohibited item as defined in Appendix B or any other item that is	
	determined to be a threat to security, except as described in Section 3 and 4	
	below.	
	3. <u>Exceptions to Mandatory Screening.</u> The following persons are exempt from	
	mandatory screening, and may possess certain prohibited items, to the extent	
	PAGE 1 OF 9	MAY 2019
	AMENDED ORDER RE SCREENING FOR SECURITY	

described below:

- (A) Commissioned law enforcement personnel while present in court facilities on official agency business, and only with respect to prohibited items they are authorized to possess or carry by their employing agency, or prohibited items that are to be used as exhibits (evidence) in a pending court case, if rendered safe.
- (B) King County Adult and Juvenile Detention Facility – Corrections Officers and King County Sheriff’s Office Court Protection Unit Marshals while on duty, and only with respect to prohibited items they are authorized to possess or carry by their employing agencies.
- (C) King County Sheriff’s Office Security Screeners shall be screened when they first report to work at the start of their shift and thereafter anytime they leave the secure building premises and return.
- (D) King County Facilities Management Division Security Officers (including officers, dispatchers, sergeants and chief) shall be screened only upon reporting to work at the start of their shift, unless they change locations during a shift, in which case they shall be re-screened at the new location. This provision sunsets, unless affirmatively renewed, December 31, 2021. They shall be allowed to bring into the court facilities any Oleoresin Capsicum chemical compound product and baton that they have been issued and certified to carry by the Facilities Management Division. Plain clothes FMD security personnel, including the Security Chief, will always be screened upon entering the secured perimeter of the courthouse.

Notwithstanding the above, the persons listed in subsections (A) – (D) shall be subject to mandatory screening if entering court facilities to conduct personal business. Personal business includes, but is not limited to presence at court facilities as a party to an action under chapter 10.14 (harassment), 10.99 (domestic violence), or 26.50 (domestic violence prevention) or any action under Title 26 RCW where any party has alleged the existence of domestic violence as defined in RCW 26.50.010.

- 4. **Exceptions to Prohibited Items; Permitted Items.** The following persons are subject to mandatory screening before entering court facilities, but may bring in the items specified below:
 - (A) King County employees performing construction, repair and maintenance work in court facilities may bring in tools of their trade.
 - (B) Contract worker retained by the County to perform construction, repair and maintenance work in court facilities may bring in tools of their trade after verification of their work by the King County Facilities Management Division.
 - (C) Deputy Prosecuting Attorneys may bring in prohibited items that are to be used as exhibits (evidence) in a pending court case, if rendered safe. Prohibited items in the possession of persons other than commissioned law enforcement personnel in Section 3(A) above or Deputy Prosecuting Attorneys that are to be used as exhibits (evidence) in a pending court case must be cleared by a King

County Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit Sergeant before allowed into court facilities.

(D) King County employees may bring in standard office equipment, supplies and ordinary kitchen utensils.

(E) All person may possess or bring into court facilities the permitted items described in Appendix B.

(F) Armored transport personnel shall be allowed to retain their company-authorized firearm but shall be escorted to and from their destination by a commissioned King County Sheriff's Office Marshal or Deputy.

5. Commissioned law enforcement personnel not wearing a clearly identifiable uniform shall not be allowed to enter court facilities with a prohibited item of any kind (including, but not limited to any weapon) unless they clearly display official photo identification from their agency confirming that they are a commissioned law enforcement officer and are on the official business of their agency.

6. Commissioned law enforcement personnel entering court facilities on personal business who violate any provision of this order shall promptly be reported to their employing agency.

7. In addition to the foregoing, Appendix C specifies supplemental screening and Access requirement for the Involuntary Treatment Court.

8. A copy of this order and Appendix B shall be posted at all entrances to the King County Courthouse, the Youth Services Center, the Involuntary Treatment Court and the Maleng Regional Justice Center.

9. This order supersedes the Amended Order Re Screening for Security entered on November 22, 2011 and is effective the date signed below.

Entered this 15 day of May, 2019

James Rogers, Presiding Judge
King County Superior Court

PAGE 3 OF 9
AMENDED ORDER RE SCREENING FOR SECURITY

MAY 2019

Appendix A

1. In 1993, the Legislature amended RCW 9A.41.300 to enlarge the prohibition against weapons in court facilities to include: "(1)(b)...those areas in any building which are used in connection with court proceedings, including courtrooms, jury rooms, judge's chambers, offices and areas used to conduct court business, waiting areas, and corridors adjacent to areas used in connection with court proceed. The restricted areas do not include common areas of ingress and egress to the building that are used in connection with court proceedings, when it is possible to protect court areas without restricting ingress and egress to the building. The restricted areas shall be the minimum necessary to fulfill the objective of this subsection (1)(b)."
2. At the same time, the Legislature also amended RCW 9A.41.300 to provide that "(1)(b)...[t]he local judicial authority shall designate and clearly mark those areas where weapons are prohibited, and shall post notices at each entrance to the building of the prohibition against weapons in restricted areas."
3. On March 3, 1995, the Presiding Judge entered a General Order finding that "on September 15, 1994, the King County Superior Court judges unanimously determined that it is not possible to protect court-related areas in the King County Courthouse without prohibiting weapons from the entire building. The court directed the Presiding Judge to enter an order prohibiting weapons from the entire building, except weapons carried by authorized law enforcement officers."
4. On March 3, 1995, the Presiding Judge ordered that protection of court-related areas in the King County Courthouse requires screening for weapons at building entrances, and that no unauthorized person shall gain entry while in possession of a weapon.
5. On March 3, 1995, the Presiding Judge entered a second General Order, based on the Superior Court's inherent power and public obligation to protect the safety and security of citizens in the King County Courthouse, directing the King County Sheriff that law enforcement personnel may not retain their weapons while in the King County Courthouse unless on official business.
6. On March 26, 1997, the Presiding Judge entered a General Order defining "court facilities" at the Regional Justice Center in Kent, Washington, and ordering that beginning March 31, 1997, no person shall bring into said facilities: Any item that constitutes a weapon under any applicable law; any explosive substance; alcohol; mace, pepper spray or similar items; or, any items that may be used as weapons such as box knives, screw drivers, scissors, letter openers, and pocket knives; provided that the court security detail may permit the following into the building: (1) weapons carried by authorized law enforcement officers who are on duty; (2) weapons or other items in the possession of law enforcement officers or deputy prosecuting attorneys which are brought into the building to be used as an exhibit in

a pending case; (3) tools of trade in possession of construction workers, repair and maintenance workers who are on assignment in the building; and (4) office equipment and supplies and ordinary kitchen utensils, in the possession of persons employed in the building and which are being brought into the building for their ordinary use.

7 On March 29, 1999, the Presiding Judge entered a General Order amending the list of court facilities subject to entrance screening by adding the Alder Tower at the Department Youth Services and the courtroom at Harborview Hall.

8 In 2004 the Legislature amended R.C.W. 9A.41.300 and to prohibit law enforcement officers who are present at a courthouse building as a party to an action under chapter 10.14, 10.99 or 26.50 RCW, or an action under Title 26 RCW where any party has alleged the existence of domestic violence as defined in RCW 26.50.010, from having any weapon in his or her possession.

9 On May 4, 2004, the Presiding Judge entered a General Order amending the March 29, 1999 screening order and included the 2004 amendments to RCW 9A.41.300.

10 The Involuntary Treatment Court, and associated judicial, prosecuting attorney and public defender offices, has moved from Harborview Hall to the second floor of the Ninth and Jefferson Building.

11 On November 22, 2011 the Presiding Judge entered a General Order revising the name of the Regional Justice Center to the Maleng Regional Justice Center, the Alder Tower at the Youth Services Facility to the Youth Services Center and the Courtroom at the Harborview Campus to the Involuntary Treatment Court. The amended order added Appendix C specifying supplemental screening and access requirements for the Involuntary Treatment Court and added the requirement for a copy of the Amended Order Re Screening For Security and Appendix B to be posted at all court facilities.



Standard Operating Procedures

Court Protection Unit - CPU

APPENDIX B – PROHIBITED AND PERMITTED ITEMS

The purpose of this Appendix is to establish a common list of items that are specifically prohibited from entry into King County Court facilities by court order and law. This Appendix will also establish a list of items that may be allowed entry. This is not intended to be a complete or comprehensive list.

At times Marshals/Deputies may allow or turn away items not included herein at their discretion. Items that have been altered from their original use or intent may also be prohibited. Laws relating to other prohibited items or weapons may be located in Title 9A1 RCW, Firearms and Dangerous Weapons as well as local city ordinances.

King County Employees, working in the capacity of construction, repair and maintenance, and who are on assignment in court facilities, may be allowed to bring in tools of their trade. Contract workers may also be allowed, after notification and verification of their work by Facilities Management Division.

Commissioned law enforcement personnel and deputy prosecuting attorneys may bring exhibits (evidence) in a pending court case into court facilities. All other evidentiary exhibits (of prohibited items) must be cleared by a Court Protection Unit Sergeant.

Persons employed in the building may bring office equipment, supplies and ordinary kitchen utensils into court facilities.

Biological hazards – Marshals/Deputies will not hold for safekeeping any prohibited items (i.e., used razors, dirty eating utensils, etc.) that appear to be a biological hazard.

Illegal items – Marshals/Deputies shall confiscate any items that are illegal to possess by law. Persons found in possession of illegal items may be arrested and charged under law.

Generally speaking, commissioned Law Enforcement personnel on official business are excluded from the provisions of this document.

A. Prohibited Items

1. Sharp Instruments
 - Box Cutters/Utility Knives
 - Corkscrews (any size)
 - Knives (except for plastic or metal round-bladed butter type knives)



Standard Operating Procedures

Court Protection Unit – CPU

- Knitting Needles (any size – metal, plastic or other material - includes circular needles)
- Razor-Type Blades (straight razors and razor blades-does not include safety razors)
- Meat Cleavers
- Swords/Sabers/Daggers/Dirks
- Scissors (metal with pointed tips - any size)

2. Firearms/Weapons

- Ammunition of any kind
- Billy Clubs/Night Sticks/Black Jacks
- Brass Knuckles (includes plastic, metal or other material)
- Firearms of any kind (includes BB/Pellet/Air-soft/Paintball and Replicas)
- Flare Guns
- Gun Powder including black powder and percussion caps
- Gun Shaped Lighters
- Martial Arts Weapons of any kind (includes Nunchakus, Kubatons and Throwing Stars)
- Parts of Firearms
- Starter Pistols
- Spear Guns
- Slung or Sling shots of any kind
- Tasers/Stun Guns/Cattle Prods/Shocking Devices of any kind
- Toy Guns/Weapons of any kind

3. Tools

- Axes/Hatchets
- Chain (greater than 7" in length; wallet chains are exempt)
- Crowbars
- Drills and Drill Bits (includes cordless portable power drills)
- Hammers (all types)
- Pipe (plastic or metal, including end caps)
- Saws and Saw Blades (includes cordless portable power saws)
- Screwdrivers of any length (except for small eyeglass type)
- Tools (greater than 7" in length)
- Wrenches and Pliers (7" or more in length)

4. Chemicals/Incendiary Devices

- Acid/Ammonia/Chlorine/Chemical drain openers/ Liquid Bleach
- Aerosole (any except for personal care or toiletries in limited quantities)
- Any unidentifiable liquid, gas, gel, substance or chemical



Standard Operating Procedures

Criminal Investigations Division

Court Protection Unit -- CPU

- Charcoal/Sulfur
- Fire extinguishers and other compressed gas cylinders
- Flammable Liquids/Gels/Gases (includes Paints, Turpentine and Paint Thinner)
- Fuels (includes Gasoline, Cooking Fuels and Lighter Fluid)
- Gas Torches/Torch Lighters - thin, needle-like flame of air-propelled fire
- Mace/Pepper Spray/Tear Gas Explosives or incendiaries of any kind (includes Replicas, Fireworks and Flares)
- Spray Paint

5. Miscellaneous

- Golf Clubs/ Pool Cues/ Ski Poles/Sticks/Poles/ Hockey or Lacrosse Sticks
- Handcuff keys
- Skateboards/Rip sticks or similar devices
- Spillable Batteries - except those in wheelchairs

B. **Permitted Items**

1. Cigar Cutters
2. Common eating utensils (i.e.: forks, round bladed butter type knives)
3. Crochet Needles (hooked tips)
4. Cuticle Cutters/ Nail Clippers-any size/ Nail Files with rounded tips- any size
5. Eyeglass Repair Tools - including miniature screwdrivers.
6. Eyelash Curlers
7. Glass bottles/containers containing identified and permitted liquids
8. Hair chopsticks with blunt tips
9. Round bladed butter type knives (plastic or metal)
10. Safety Razors (disposable razors)
11. Scissors - any size plastic or metal with blunt tips
12. Tools except screwdrivers (7" or less in length)
13. Tweezers
14. Wrenches and Pliers (7" or less in length)

Appendix C

Supplemental Screening and Access Requirements

at the

Involuntary Treatment Court

1. **After Hours Access by ITC Personnel.** Except as provided in paragraph 3, weekend and after hours access at the Involuntary Treatment Court shall be limited to King County Superior Court judges and commissioners, Prosecuting Attorney office lawyers and staff, and Public Defense lawyers and staff ("ITC Personnel"). All ITC Personnel must use their valid key cards to enter the Involuntary Treatment Court. ITC Personnel shall not bring prohibited items or unauthorized personnel into the Involuntary Treatment Court after hours.
2. **Custodial Staff Access and Screening.** Access to the Involuntary Treatment Court by custodial staff employed by Wright Runstad or the University of Washington shall be limited to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. All such staff must enter through the screening station at the public entrance of the Involuntary Treatment Court.
3. **Construction, Maintenance and Repair Workers.** University of Washington, Harborview Medical Center, and King County Facilities Management Division employees and contractors performing construction, maintenance or repair work at the Involuntary Treatment Court must enter through the screening station at the public entrance. Employees and contractors performing construction, maintenance or repair work in the Involuntary Treatment Court between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. on weekdays or on weekends must arrange access through Harborview Public Safety (HPS) and be escorted by an HPS officer.

No. 13-05

Order Amending GAO No. 13-04
Regarding Screening for Security
At King County District Court Facilities

To promote security at the King County District Court Facilities and to clarify those items which are excluded from being brought in to those facilities it is hereby ordered that effective immediately:

- (1) All contraband under Federal or State law is banned.
- (2) No person shall bring in to any of the aforementioned court facilities any item that constitutes a weapon under any applicable law, any firearm, knife, pocket knife, dagger club or similar items, or any items that may be used as a weapon such as box knives, hammers, screw drivers, scissors, or letter openers. Provided however, that the Court Security Officers and the Facilities Maintenance Security Officers may permit the following into King County District Court Facilities: (1) weapons or firearms carried by fully commissioned law enforcement officers which are issued to them or approved by their employing agency and who are on the premises on the official business of their office; (2) weapons or other items in the possession of law enforcement officers or deputy prosecuting attorneys which are brought into the building to be used as an exhibit in a pending case; (3) tools of the trade in possession of construction, repair and maintenance workers who are on assignment in the building; and (4) office equipment, supplies and ordinary kitchen utensils, in the possession of person employed in the building and which are brought into the building for their ordinary use.
- (3) No commissioned law enforcement officer who is not wearing a clearly identifiable uniform may be allowed to enter any King County District Court Facility subject to this order with any item identified in paragraph (1) above unless he or she clearly displays official departmental identification establishing that he or she is a fully commissioned law enforcement officer.

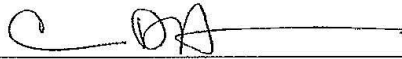
(4) No law enforcement officer may have in his or her possession any item identified in paragraph (1) above if he or she is present at any King County District Court Facility as a party to an action.

(5) The King County Sheriff's Office, acting through the Court Protection Unit/Court Security Officers and the Facility Maintenance Division, acting through the Facility Maintenance Security Officers, shall use appropriate electronic scanning devices and/or search all persons and property entering any King County District Court Facilities and excludes all items as set forth above.¹

(6) A copy of this order shall be posted at all King County District Court Facility entrances.

(7) This order supersedes General Administrative Order No. 01-76.

Entered this 19 day of June, 2013



Corinna Harn
Chief Presiding Judge
King County District Court

¹ Certain facilities have employee entrances. Only King County employees may use those entrances and exceptions may be made at those entrances with regard to searches of King County employees.



Appendix 2

Washington State Courts General Rule 36

General Rules

GR 36 TRIAL COURT SECURITY

(a) Purpose. A safe courthouse environment is fundamental to the administration of justice. Employees, case participants, and members of the public should expect safe and secure courthouses. This rule is intended to encourage incident reporting and well-coordinated efforts to provide basic security and safety measures in Washington courts.

(b) Definition. "Incident" is defined as a threat to or assault against the court community, including court personnel, litigants, attorneys, witnesses, jurors, or others using the courthouse. It also includes any event or threatening situation that disrupts the court or compromises the safety of the court community.

(c) Incident Reports.

(1) Reporting Method.

(i) The court should make a record of each incident as soon as practicable, but no later than two days after the incident. The report shall be kept on file by the local court administrator.

(ii) The court shall report all incidents electronically to the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) on the AOC Threat/Incident Report Form within one week of the incident.

(d) Court Security Committee.

(1) Role. Each trial court should form a Court Security Committee to coordinate the adoption of court security policies and make recommendations regarding security protocols, policies, and procedures necessary to protect the public, court personnel and users, and court facilities. The Court Security Committee should adopt a Court Security Plan and thereafter revise the Plan as may be necessary.

(2) Committee Composition. The Presiding Judge for each court should convene a Court Security Committee meeting and invite representatives from the following:

- (i) Judiciary;
- (ii) Court Clerical Staff;
- (iii) Prosecuting Authority's Office;
- (iv) Public Defender's Office;
- (v) Executive Branch;
- (vi) Law Enforcement;
- (vii) Facilities/Maintenance Department;
- (viii) Any other agency of government housed in the same building;
- (ix) Any other person the presiding judge deems appropriate.

(e) Court Security Plan. Each Court Security Committee should create a Court Security Plan for each courthouse location. If a Court Security Plan is adopted, the Court Administrator shall keep the Plan on file and accessible to the court community. The Court Security Plan should be in writing and should address:

(1) Routine security operations, including security screening for persons entering the court facility, secure storage of weapons not permitted in the courthouse, parking, landscaping, interior and exterior lighting, interior and exterior doors, intrusion and detection alarms, window security, protocol for building access for first responders, and provision of building floor plans for first responders.

(2) Written or oral threats or declarations of intent to inflict pain or injury upon anyone in the court community;

- (3) Physical layout of court facility and escape routes;
- (4) Threats-in court or by other means (telephone, e-mail, website, etc.);
- (5) Bomb threat;
- (6) Hostage situation;
- (7) Weapons in the court facility;
- (8) Active shooter
- (9) Escaped prisoner;

(10) High risk trial plan;

(11) Routine security operations;

(12) Threat and security incident response techniques in and around the court facility, which may include how to defuse situations and remain calm during an incident;

(13) Personal safety techniques in and around the court facility;

(14) Irrate and abusive individuals.

(f) Security Drills. Each court may hold security drills as determined by the Court Security Committee, as deemed necessary by the Presiding Judge in consultation with other authorities in the courthouse. Drills should include all court personnel, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement, and other regular court users.

(g) Minimum Court Security Standards. Every Court shall endeavor to meet or exceed the following minimum standards. Should the Court fail to meet the Minimum Court Security Standards, the Court should state in the Court Security Plan why the minimum standards were not met.

(1) Policy and Procedure Guide for all court and clerk personnel. Trial courts shall develop a Court Security Policy and Procedure Guide, using as examples the guides from Spokane County and Seattle Municipal Court, which guides are available from the Administrative Office of the Courts.

(2) Weapons screening by uniformed security personnel at all public entrances. Uniformed security personnel shall perform weapons screening at all public entrances, using as a minimum metal-detector wand screening and physical examination of bags, briefcases, packages, etc.

(3) Security audits every three years. Trial courts shall conduct a security audit at least every three years. Updates to the Court Security Policy and Procedure Guide shall be disseminated to all court and clerk personnel.

(4) Security cameras recording with loops of at least 7 days, with signage that recording is taking place. Security cameras shall be placed at strategic locations as determined by the Court Security Committee, with signs posted nearby advising that recording is taking place. Security camera footage shall be retained for at least 7 days.

(5) Duress alarms at multiple strategic locations, such as clerk's office, administration, and courtrooms, with broadcasting to the nearest law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the court site. Easily accessible and discreetly placed duress alarms shall be located at multiple strategic locations as determined by the Court Security Committee. The duress alarm shall broadcast to the law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction to respond to the site, and which is closest to the site.

(6) Emergency notification broadcast system in place, with standardized color coding, and all personnel trained on the system. An emergency notification broadcast system shall be established with standardized color coding denoting the level of emergency. All court and clerk personnel shall be trained on use of the system.

(7) Active shooter training for all court and clerk personnel. Active shooter training shall be delivered to all court and clerk personnel.

[Adopted effective September 1, 2017.]

Agency Response


Due to issues related to the coronavirus pandemic, the Department of Executive Services and Superior Court declined to provide official response letters. However, these agencies provided their concurrence of our recommendations along with implementation timelines and details via email.



KING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
516 Third Avenue, W-116
Seattle, WA 98104

Mitzi G. Johanknecht
Sheriff

July 15, 2020

TO: King County Auditor's Office
FROM: Mitzi G. Johanknecht, Sheriff 
RE: KCSO response to the final report on the Courthouse Security Audit

Thank you for providing the final audit report for review by the King County Sheriff's Office (KSCO). We have found this audit process to be informative and productive. We appreciate your efforts to help us determine opportunities for improvement in our operation of the screening process of the Courthouse through our Court Protection Unit.

I appreciate the audit team identifying the recommendation that the KCSO implement statewide standards, increase our testing, and work to identify additional equipment needed by our screening staff. We also acknowledge that by improving signage this will aid in speeding up the time it takes a person to move through screening and commit to consistently using procedures that keep the line moving. While we believe our main priority is the safety and security of the building and its occupants, we are certainly open to a more streamlined process that also addresses efficiency.

We will work collaboratively with Superior Court as well as the Executive through the Facilities Management Division to address the recommendations in the audit. While we concur with all of the recommendations except one where we partially concur, budget considerations will determine how soon we will be able to address the recommendations. We have a plan to implement most of the recommendations sometime within the next biennium. We had hoped to implement sooner but the recent events of COVID-19 and the civil unrest have diverted our attention and resources.

Again, we want to thank you for conducting this audit and assisting us to improve service to the residents of King County.

cc: Undersheriff Patti Cole-Tindall
Chief of Staff Liz Rocca
Chief Bryan Howard
Jason King, KCSO CFO

Recommendation 1

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit should develop, document, and implement a randomized weapons testing program and include it in its standard operating procedures. The program should include recurring random testing at all courthouse locations at defined intervals. Once implemented, the Court Protection Unit should measure the effectiveness of screening to detect test items.

Agency Response

Concurrence	Concur
Implementation date	12-31-2020
Responsible agency	Sheriff's Office
Comment	We will have a randomized weapon's training program in place that will include random testing at our various locations.

Recommendation 2

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit and Facilities Management Division King County Security Unit should clarify roles and responsibilities for screening and security operations and ensure that their respective policies and procedures are aligned.

Agency Response

Concurrence	Concur
Implementation date	December 31, 2020
Responsible agency	FMD/KCSO
Comment	Three consecutive meetings will be held to develop a report.

Recommendation 3

King County Superior Court, Sheriff's Office, and Facilities Management Division should together review Washington State Courts General Rule 36 and determine how the County meets each of the rule's requirements, identify who is responsible for each requirement, and identify whether there are any gaps.

Agency Response

Concurrence	Concur
Implementation date	March 1, 2021
Responsible agency	FMD, KCSO, Superior Court
Comment	Our plan is to hold two meetings each year: one in January for discussion and one in February to finalize changes or to gain concurrence on any budget request which may be necessary.

Recommendation 4

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit should identify, document, and distribute the equipment needed for screening operations for each weapons screening location.

Agency Response

Concurrence	Concur
Implementation date	December 31, 2020
Responsible agency	KCSO
Comment	We will evaluate what is needed for screening operations and ensure each location has the appropriate equipment.

Recommendation 5

The Sheriff's Office should include efficiency as a goal in the Court Protection Unit standard operating procedures.

Agency Response

Concurrence	Partially concur
Implementation date	December 31, 2020
Responsible agency	KCSO
Comment	While we agree that efficiency should be considered, safety and security of the Courthouses are the primary focus. We will take steps to improve efficiencies.

Recommendation 6

The Sheriff's Office should develop and implement standard operating procedures that encourage screeners at the magnetometer to pass people to secondary screeners and avoid having people go through the magnetometer multiple times whenever possible.

Agency Response

Concurrence	Concur
Implementation date	December 31, 2020
Responsible agency	KCSO
Comment	We will develop a plan that moves people to secondary screening as opposed to having them go back through the magnetometer multiple times.

Recommendation 7

The Sheriff's Office should develop clear and consistent verbal instructions for security screeners that minimizes confusion about how to unload trays.

Agency Response

Concurrence	Concur
Implementation date	December 31, 2020
Responsible agency	KCSO
Comment	We will develop a comprehensive plan and ensure training.

Recommendation 8

The Sheriff's Office should consult with an expert in communications and usability to develop instructional signs that use graphics and post these signs in locations where people are best able to see and act on their instructions.

Agency Response

Concurrence	Concur
Implementation date	December 31, 2020
Responsible agency	KCSO
Comment	We will work with a communications expert to assist with graphics and signage to improve instructions for the people coming to the Courthouses.



Statement of Compliance, Scope, Objective & Methodology

Statement of Compliance with Government Auditing Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Scope of Work on Internal Controls

We assessed internal controls relative to the audit objectives. This included review of selected policies, procedures, and protocols, as well as interviews with staff from the King County Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit (CPU) and the Facilities Management Division King County Security Unit (KCSU). In performing our work, we identified concerns about the frequency of randomized testing that would help ensure that staff and screening equipment are able to detect any weapons.

Scope

This audit evaluated courthouse entry security screening conducted by staff from the CPU and KCSU. The audit reviewed security screening at the King County Courthouse, Maleng Regional Justice Center, and Youth Services Center. It also reviewed security screening at District Court facilities in Auburn, Bellevue, Burien, Issaquah, Redmond, and Shoreline. The audit evaluated screening conducted in 2019.

Objectives

How does King County establish screening standards for the safety of courthouse employees and visitors and to what extent does King County's courthouse security screening meet both those standards and best practices?

To what extent do King County's courthouse security screening operations and staffing practices allow efficient and equitable access to county courthouses?

Methodology

For this audit, we observed the security screening of thousands of people at the King County Courthouse, the Maleng Regional Justice Center, and the Youth Services Center. We also observed conditions at six District Court locations. We interviewed the sergeants, marshals, and screeners at each location. We compared the practices we observed with written standards, including policies, standard operating procedures, and General Rule 36, which is promulgated by the Washington State Supreme Court to govern security of courthouses.

While making observations, we collected data about the people entering the courthouses. These included the number of people, whether they were King County employees, the time it took for them to pass through security screening, whether they triggered the walk-through magnetometer, and the time it took for screener staff to hand-wand individuals. We researched queueing theory to determine whether there were best practices that could improve efficiency.

For our staffing analysis of the Fourth Avenue entrance to the King County Courthouse in downtown Seattle, we collected data from the PeopleSoft payroll system to determine the actual rates at which marshals and screeners took leave for illness, vacation, and other reasons. We also reviewed the count of incidents and calls for service throughout 2019, as collected by the lead marshal at the downtown courthouse. Using a Monte Carlo analysis, we were able to model the average probability distribution of how many marshals and screeners would be available to work courthouse entrances given different levels of full-time equivalent positions.



List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit should develop, document, and implement a randomized weapons testing program and include it in its standard operating procedures. The program should include recurring random testing at all courthouse locations at defined intervals. Once implemented, the Court Protection Unit should measure the effectiveness of screening to detect test items.

Recommendation 2

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit and Facilities Management Division King County Security Unit should clarify roles and responsibilities for screening and security operations and ensure that their respective policies and procedures are aligned.

Recommendation 3

King County Superior Court, Sheriff's Office, and Facilities Management Division should together review Washington State Courts General Rule 36 and determine how the County meets each of the rule's requirements, identify who is responsible for each requirement, and identify whether there are any gaps.

Recommendation 4

The Sheriff's Office Court Protection Unit should identify, document, and distribute the equipment needed for screening operations for each weapons screening location.

Recommendation 5

The Sheriff's Office should include efficiency as a goal in the Court Protection Unit standard operating procedures.

Recommendation 6

The Sheriff's Office should develop and implement standard operating procedures that encourage screeners at the magnetometer to pass people to secondary screeners and avoid having people go through the magnetometer multiple times whenever possible.

Recommendation 7

The Sheriff's Office should develop clear and consistent verbal instructions for security screeners that minimizes confusion about how to unload trays.

Recommendation 8

The Sheriff's Office should consult with an expert in communications and usability to develop instructional signs that use graphics and post these signs in locations where people are best able to see and act on their instructions.



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KYMBER WALTMUNSON, KING COUNTY AUDITOR

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