

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

Staff Inspection: A Cost Effective Management Tool

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**By
Gary Teeler**

**Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Austin, Texas
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ABSTRACT

The staff inspection process can be a very useful and cost effective tool for law enforcement administration. As law enforcement becomes more technologically complex, agencies should seek internal methods to ensure compliance with policy and procedure and to minimize negative incidents which can attract public scrutiny. A well designed staff inspection process can produce numerous tangible benefits which should outweigh the cost associated with formation of the staff inspection unit.

The benefits of a staff inspection program can be utilized by agencies of all sizes, as agencies large and small share many of the same challenges. The research will show that the proactive benefits of an effective staff inspection program can help administrators create and modify policy and promote efficiency. This research will further serve to influence other policy makers, administrators, and supervisors, both within and outside the department.

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INTRODUCTION

Most administrators would agree that police management today is a complicated business. Budgetary constraints, personnel issues, morale issues, and officer misconduct are some of the challenges that affect police agencies, regardless of size. These issues can often attract media attention and public scrutiny, which can further compromise the effectiveness of department operations. Being paramilitary in structure, the chief administrator ultimately holds the responsibility for what occurs in all areas. A well-designed and properly utilized staff inspection program could be an effective tool that an administrator needs in order to identify and address these types of issues.

This document will examine the usefulness of the staff inspection component in modern law enforcement agencies. In simple terms, a staff inspection is a type of inspection conducted by personnel who do not have supervisory control over the persons, facilities, or procedures being inspected. Staff inspections are usually done by specialized staff, which reports directly to the chief executive officer. They are substantially different from line inspections, which are conducted on a more frequent basis, usually by direct in-line supervisors. The staff inspection component should be considered in all agencies as a means of keeping management informed of what is occurring in the agency before any issues may occur that could bring negative attention or cause inefficient operations.

The purpose of the research is to examine the numerous tangible benefits of the staff inspection process and to determine if the process would be cost effective to implement. The main objectives of a staff inspection program are based on determining if policies and procedures are properly implemented and adequate for reaching the

department's goals. They may also be useful in determining if the department has adequate resources to meet goals and if those resources are properly allocated. The process will also be of use in detecting deficiencies in integrity, supervision, training and morale. It is apparent that there are many benefits but determining the cost of the benefits is problematic.

The research question focuses on if the staff inspection can be a cost effective management tool in law enforcement agencies, regardless of size. Most large police agencies have utilized a staff inspection program with a great degree of success. Many smaller agencies that lack staffing and resources do without this useful inspection tool. The restructuring of duties and assignments could allow even a small agency to have a part-time inspection component.

The method of inquiry for this research will include material from numerous journal publications of law enforcement organizations, from government documents, and from several books written by well-established experts in the field of law enforcement. Standard operating procedure manuals, training manuals, department policies, and personal interviews will also be utilized. A survey based on information reported by 39 survey participants, representing 33 agencies, will be included.

The anticipated findings should show that the many tangible benefits of staff inspection could outweigh the associated costs of forming and staffing a unit. Results should also show that staff inspections are applicable to agencies of any size. The field of law enforcement will benefit from the research by administrators being able to see the long-term benefits of conducting formalized staff inspections and understanding how the associated cost can be an investment in the department.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of staff inspections in law enforcement was likely derived from a similar process utilized in the military. According to the United States Department of the Army (2002), during the American Revolution, Inspector Generals were used to assist commanders in achieving disciplined and combat ready units. Due to the paramilitary structure and strong organizational subculture of modern law enforcement, adopting a similar structure was a logical progression. The recognized need for an inspectional component is well documented and has proven both essential and useful. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement formally recognized the staff inspection concept in 1967, although very few police agencies were using a structured program (Gebhardt, 1981). In 1973, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals released a report recommending that a staff inspection component should be used in all police departments (Gebhardt, 1981). This report further outlined some specific guidelines regarding the organization of an inspectional unit.

Many federal law enforcement agencies have successfully utilized the staff inspection concept as well. According to the United States Department of Justice (1980), the Inspector General Act of 1978 created legislation that outlined a formal inspection program for federal law enforcement agencies. The Federal Bureau of Investigation recognizes a strong need for police departments to conduct staff inspections (Gebhardt, 1981). At the municipal level, the International City Managers' Association recommends that police departments with 400 or more officers should employ an internal audit unit (McClain, 1989). Tregarthen (1992) stated, "internal

auditing is an effective tool in determining compliance with policy and procedures” (p. 81).

Inspection activities in a police agency may be called by many names. A few of the variations are such terms as “internal audit,” “staff inspection,” “management review,” “resource evaluation,” and “management inquiry.” Regardless of the formal name, staff inspection activities generally serve the same purposes. These revolve around providing important information to executive and management staff regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of operations within the agency (McClain, 1989). The audits should follow accepted government accounting standards (GAGAS). According to the United States Government Accountability Office (2007), if the agency receives any federal financial assistance, these standards are required by the Single Audit Act of 1984. The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (1984) stated the inspectional process compares the formal expectations of the agency to the actual level of performance. Fuller (2004) stated, “staff inspections - done conscientiously and objectively - can be the eyes and ears of the chief executive” (p. 66).

Some agencies have developed inspection programs as a requirement of gaining accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). Proponents of accreditation believe that improvements in law enforcement are largely a function of organizational reform (Hoover, 1992). The accreditation process is largely based on policy and procedure standardization and requires an internal inspection component. This requirement includes an annual written evaluation of each organizational component along with numerous other annual assessments

related to recruiting, crime analysis, and task force activities (Hoover, 1996). As more agencies move to some form of accreditation, the likelihood of an internal inspectional component increases.

It is apparent that there is support for a staff inspection component on many levels. To truly understand the potential benefits of a formal inspection process, it is important to realize that benefits that may be derived are often not as easy to quantify as other police measures. Where the police line functions may be measured by factors such as number of arrests, citations, or clearance rates, most areas affected by inspections support an entirely different part of the police agency mission. These could include police accountability, integrity, and the overall level of service to the public (McClain, 1989). While all administrators would likely agree that promoting accountability, integrity, and high levels of public service are an important part of their responsibilities, in reality, fiscal and budgetary issues often will be a deciding factor on starting, maintaining, or disbanding a staff inspection program. To further complicate this issue, if any tangible fiscal benefits do occur as a result of staff inspections, they often occur in different budget years or several fiscal years down the line (More, 1992).

The benefits that can be derived from a staff inspection unit do not come without a cost. In a middle sized to large sized agency, a dedicated inspection staff would be required. This might consist of one or more designated staff members and clerical support staff. The unit will require office space, office equipment, vehicles, and a budget to absorb travel expenses. The unit should have equipment that allows them to be mobile in order to travel and work at other areas outside their office. Since many agencies use supervisor level officers as inspectors, payroll would also be a

consideration. To help with staffing issues, temporary assignment of other investigative or supervisory staff could be utilized to make up an inspection team (Marcum, 2005). For the smaller sized agency, having a dedicated full time inspector may not be an option or even a necessity. The inspection duty could be handled on a part-time basis by supervisory staff (Fuller, 2004). This approach could bring the cost down considerably.

Staff inspection units are commonly used in large municipal and county police agencies. These larger agencies usually have a greater ability to provide for the funding, personnel, and support necessary to maintain an inspection unit. The frequency of use of staff inspections units generally decreases with the size of the agency. This may partly be due to limitations of funding and personnel, or it may come from an internal idea that any issues can be dealt with on an as needed basis. In agencies large or small, the pressure to maintain professional standards, promote integrity, reduce crime, and to operate in a cost-effective manner will only continue to grow. This reinforces a need for the creation and use of a staff inspection unit in all police agencies.

The potential benefits of a formalized inspection program can affect personnel throughout a department. For the Chief Administrator, the inspection process is an opportunity to see how departmental policies, general orders, and directives are being carried out (Fuller, 2004). The inspection process may uncover gaps between policy and practice, may discover unwritten policies, or even warrant the need to create or modify a policy already in effect. Since the Chief Administrator is ultimately responsible for what occurs within a department, this information should be of great concern. The

inspection component will also help the Chief Administrator of the agency to gauge the effectiveness of his or her managers and supervisors (Marcum, 2005). For police managers and supervisors of areas being inspected, the feedback should be looked at as an administrative tool used to promote and increase effectiveness. The individual officer can benefit from the inspectional process by having clear guidelines and expectations to follow.

The staff inspection process should be considered a tool used to uncover potential problems and to develop and recommend solutions for issues before they reach crises proportions (Boertien, 2003). According to Swan (1982), "one way for a chief executive to become informed about corruption and other misconduct, as well as positive achievements is through line and staff inspections" (p. 259). This proactive nature can keep problems from attracting public scrutiny and media attention or, at least, minimize the situation. According to Fuller (2004), there are numerous objectives of a formal staff inspection. The first objective is to determine whether the department's policies, procedures, general orders, and directives are being properly implemented. A second objective is to determine whether the department's rules, regulations, policies, procedures, general orders, and directives are adequate to meet the department's goals. A third objective is to determine whether the department's personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources are utilized efficiently and in an appropriate manner. A fourth objective is to determine whether the department's personnel, equipment, and budgetary resources are adequate to meet the department's goals and mission. A fifth objective is to discover deficiencies in integrity, training, morale, or supervision. The final objective is to assist line staff in the planning of line inspections.

The properly administered staff inspection program will work in conjunction with a line inspection program. While both types of inspections may expose weaknesses, faults, or items that need to be addressed with corrective action, they can also provide for a positive experience (Gebhardt, 1981). The programs may show the required level of compliance, document the efficiency of a work unit, demonstrate the need for more staffing, equipment or resources, and may provide for an opportunity to see officers positively interacting with the public. This can give the supervisor an opportunity to immediately commend the officer on a job well done (Marcum, 2005).

There are many variations in the size and organization of staff inspection units. Some agencies may have a single inspector who may work with a team assembled for each individual inspection. Larger agencies may have a sizeable sworn officer staff and civilian support staff to conduct inspections. In most cases, the size of the unit is directly proportional to the size of the agency (McClain, 1989). The scope of the inspection may also play a role in determining how many inspectors will be necessary to conduct the inspection. Depending on the unit being inspected and the individual goals of the inspection, the process may take several days to several months to complete.

The staff inspection unit may be placed in a variety of locations within a police agency. In many cases, the staff inspection unit is placed with other administrative units in the police agency. According to the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (1984), the staff inspections unit should not be aligned with patrol or criminal investigations functions as these areas will be subject to inspection. A considerable number of agencies place the staff inspections unit in the same area with the internal affairs unit. This poses problems in that the members of the

department may not see the difference in the mission of staff inspections versus internal affairs. More agencies are moving toward the placement of the staff inspections unit in a manner of which is independent from other functions.

Personnel of varied ranks can command the staff inspections unit. Ranks represented were Captain, Lieutenant, Commander, Assistant Chief, Major, and Director. According to the Institute of Police Technology and Management (2003), the agency member conducting the inspection should be equal in rank or exceed the rank of the person in charge of the unit being inspected. In most cases, the supervisor of the staff inspections unit reports directly to the chief executive or second highest level in the chain of command (Marcum, 2005). This is what allows staff inspections to occur outside the normal lines of authority within a police agency.

The personnel who work in the staff inspections unit may also vary, depending on the size of the unit and goals of the inspection. Some agencies utilize sworn non-supervisory officers in their unit, while other agencies only use sworn supervisory personnel. Larger agencies often employ a substantial civilian staff for inspections. This is usually to fill specialty positions such as analysts and auditors. The paperwork and records can also require a sizable clerical support staff.

The personnel selected for the staff inspections unit can be very important to the integrity and effectiveness of the unit. Officers serving in this assignment should be at least first-line supervisors and have a good combination of street and/or field experience to give them an adequate understanding of the pressures faced daily by those working on the streets. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety Office of Audit and Inspection (2002), extensive and progressive experience in supervising departmental

activities is required at the rank of Captain or above. Their background and disciplinary record should be clear, and their behavior should be an exemplary representation of that which is expected by the department. Officers in this assignment should possess strong investigation skills, maturity, integrity, and the ability to work effectively with little or no supervision. One of the key requirements of personnel in this assignment is excellent communication skills. This includes communicating with all personnel in the areas being inspected as well as those outside the agency (Fuller, 2004). Strong verbal skills, writing skills, and interpersonal skills are a must. While some agencies develop in-house training programs for inspection staff, there are some formal programs available. One such program is the Comprehensive Staff Inspections Workshop offered at the Institute of Police Technology and Management, located at the University of North Florida. According to the Institute of Police Technology and Management (2003), the target audience is law enforcement managers and supervisors responsible for the staff inspection component.

There are several types of inspections that can be conducted by a staff inspections unit. There are periodic inspections scheduled in advance on a regularly occurring basis, which takes place in all units within the agency. Spot or surprise inspections can also be utilized and may be in response to a specific request or need. Special inspections are another type that can be conducted to address a more specific concern and are usually narrow in focus. Follow-up inspections can be used to ensure recommendations and concerns are addressed and that required action has been implemented.

The periodic, general, or regularly scheduled inspection is done on a recurring basis with the unit being inspected having advance notice. The inspection will cover all areas related to efficiency and effectiveness, adherence to policies and procedures, proper utilization of resources, equipment and facilities maintenance, administrative practices, and supervisory effectiveness. These inspections normally occur on a two or three year cycle, and can generate follow-up inspections in response to concerns or issues in need of attention. This type of inspection will be very systematic and comprehensive and may take several months to complete.

The spot or surprise inspection is useful when there are very specific issues to address or known deficiencies that are in need of immediate attention. This might include evidence storage or handling issues, use of force issues, personal defense equipment checks, or reporting issues. This type of inspection may be in direct response to a request by a unit supervisor or management. Follow-up inspections may be required to ensure that corrective action and recommendations have been implemented. Spot inspections are usually short in duration due to the narrow scope, usually lasting a few days to a week.

The special inspection is another type that may occur without advance notice. This type of inspection may be narrowly focused on a certain area such as police driving practices, evidence handling procedures, or disciplinary practices. It usually occurs in direct response to very specific concerns by administration. In this situation, the use of representative sampling techniques is often utilized. The entire process may take several weeks to several months to complete.

The follow-up inspection is utilized to verify that recommendations that occurred based on a prior inspection have been properly implemented. They are usually narrow in focus, only dealing with areas that were in need of correction. The follow-up inspection can be generated based on the findings of all the other inspection types. Because the areas to be inspected are usually very specific, the follow-up inspection is usually short in duration, lasting from a few days to a week.

There are several key elements or guidelines that should be present in all staff inspections units. One of the most important factors is that the inspections are being conducted under the authority of the chief executive officer (Commission 1984). This should assist in the unit having full access to any records, files, and facilities that will be needed for the inspection. In addition to what the unit is required to inspect, oftentimes, there will be unsolicited opinions from personnel involved in the process. The staff inspections unit should encourage suggestions and the expression of opinions but take care to handle them in a manner where the anonymity of the employee is preserved. It is important that staff inspections unit members should avoid taking up the direct supervision role during an inspection, unless it is an emergency situation or issue that obviously is in need of immediate intervention (McClain 2004). With the exception of unannounced spot or surprise inspections, there should be at least a week's advance notice provided to the unit to be inspected.

Inspection approaches are greatly varied depending on each individual situation. Onsite visits are very useful, but the inspector must be aware of his or her affect on the work environment. Site visits usually only becomes effective several hours into the inspection. This time period is beneficial for the inspector, allowing an opportunity to

become acclimated to the environment and adjust to the role of being an observer and analyzer. A vital part of any inspection process includes interviewing the employees.

As with most interviews, inspectors will work to put the subject at ease, express the reasons for the interview, and stress that all responses will be kept strictly confidential (Gebhardt, 1981). The interview should take place in an uninterrupted setting, separate from the work location. The interview should be of a conversational format versus an interrogation format. Having inspectors perform a ride along with officers provides an opportunity to observe many facets of the job and the officer's performance in fluid situations. Use of a questionnaire preceding the visit is often considered very useful. A questionnaire can be used to ask specific questions regarding their perception of such issues as morale, job satisfaction, and equity. According to Gebhardt (1982), an additional benefit is that the persons being inspected can comment about nearly anything else that might have not been specifically asked in the questionnaire. All results must be kept confidential and must be interpreted very carefully. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Staff Inspection Guide (2007), information exchange is authorized during an inspection to allow team members to share significant information with other team members or the chief inspector.

The telephone interview is sometimes used in situations where inspectors are trying to follow up on the level of service provided to victims and citizens (Gebhardt, 1981). Inspectors often use statistical analysis to look at areas such as crime clearance rates, calls for service, response times, and numerous other measures that are generally maintained by police agencies. A variety of techniques may be used on any inspection, depending on the type of unit and overall goal of the inspection.

Many of the benefits that may be attained by a police audit are intangible or qualitative in nature; therefore, they are extremely difficult to fully evaluate (Jiao, 1999). To further complicate matters, recommendations may require the expenditure of additional funds or even the creation of additional services to meet a demonstrated need. These audits can expose weaknesses in policies and procedures as well as inadequate training issues. Jiao and Kocher (2000) stated, "police auditing may lead to effective planned change for the police" (p. 528).

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to determine if a staff inspections program can be a useful tool for law enforcement agencies of all sizes. While there is ample research to support the effectiveness of staff inspections programs, this research is mostly based on information from larger agencies. The author will attempt to compare the tangible benefits that can occur from a well-designed staff inspections program with the costs in equipment and staffing.

The method of inquiry in this document will primarily consist of literary research. The sources utilized for this research will include material from numerous journal publications of law enforcement organizations, government documents, and several books written by well-established experts in the field of law enforcement. Standard operating procedure manuals, training manuals, department policies, and personal interviews will also be utilized. A survey based on information reported by 39 survey participants will be included. The survey will capture information regarding the size of the agency, type of law enforcement agency, and the methods of inquiry used in the staff inspection process. The survey results represented information from 33 different

agencies. The survey information analyzed will be based on findings collected from two groups participating in the Leadership Command College program at the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas.

FINDINGS

The establishment of empirical data to support the use of staff inspections is a difficult challenge. Results of the survey did capture information regarding the prevalence of staff inspections units as well as use of line inspections and accreditation within the surveyed agencies. Out of the 39 surveys included in the research, 16 respondents (41%) reported their agency utilizing the staff inspection concept. The remaining 23 respondents (59%) reported no formal staff inspection component. Information regarding line inspections was also captured in the survey. Out of the 39 surveys included in the research, line inspections were reported being used at their agency by 26 of the respondents (67%). The remaining 13 respondents (33%) reported no utilization of the line inspection component.

The survey results also included information regarding accreditation status. Out of the 39 surveys included in the research, 9 respondents (23%) reported their agency as holding accreditation status. The remaining 30 respondents (77%) reported their agency as not holding accreditation. As agencies move towards adopting high professional standards, as well as accreditation, the numbers of smaller and middle sized agencies utilizing line inspections and staff inspections seems to increase. Though agencies have variations in staff size, geographical service areas, and their service population, large or small they share similar needs.

Results of the survey also captured information regarding the particular type of law enforcement agency. The largest percentage of officers was from city police departments. These municipal officers accounted for 59% of the survey respondents. The remaining survey respondents were from county agencies (13%), school district police departments (13%), state police agencies (10%), and university police departments (5%). This may be of significance as many city police departments share similar structures, while school district, university, county, and state agencies may be set up distinctly different. The survey results did show that agencies of all types have found a use for a staff inspection program.

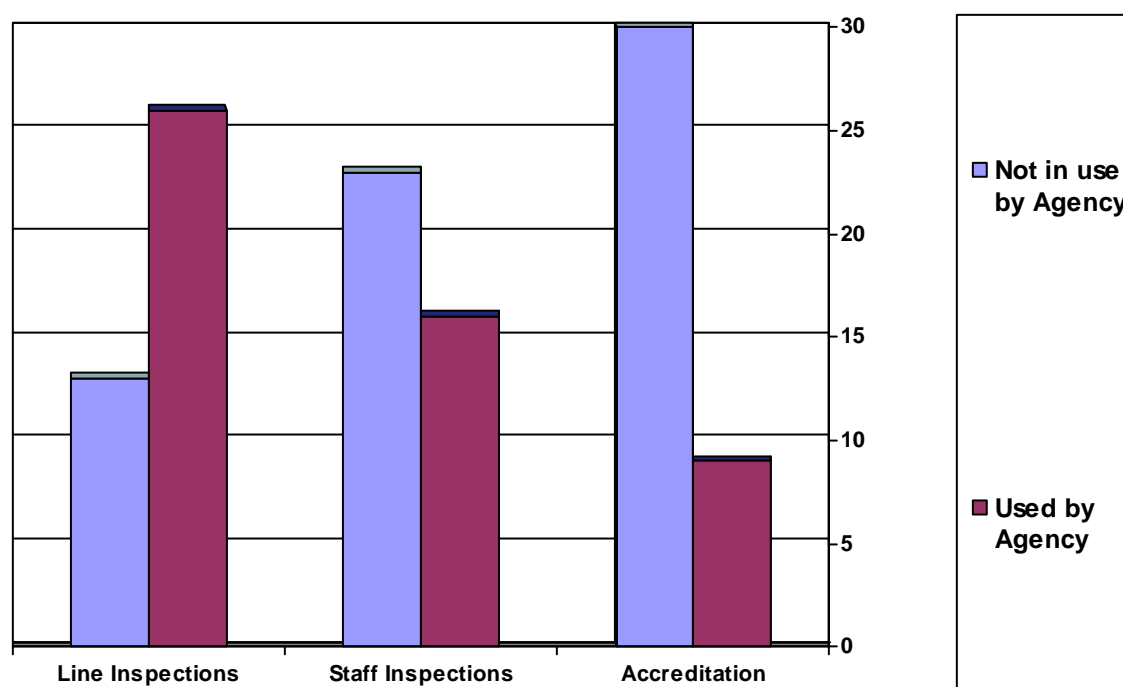


Figure 1. Law Enforcement Agencies Surveyed: Reported Use of Staff Inspection, Line Inspection and Accreditation.

Results of the survey also captured information regarding the number of sworn officers in the departments of those who took part in the survey. The results of the survey showed a relatively equal distribution of officers among the variations in agency size. Of the respondents, 54% work for agencies with 100 or less sworn officers. The remaining 46% of respondents work for agencies of over 100 sworn officers. The smallest agencies, with 1-20 officers, and the largest agencies, with over 500 officers, each accounted for only 10% of the surveys. The survey results are mostly derived from small to middle sized police agencies, with a strong emphasis on city police departments. The survey data showed that staff inspection programs are in use in departments of varied sizes instead of only being a useful tool in the large municipal agency.

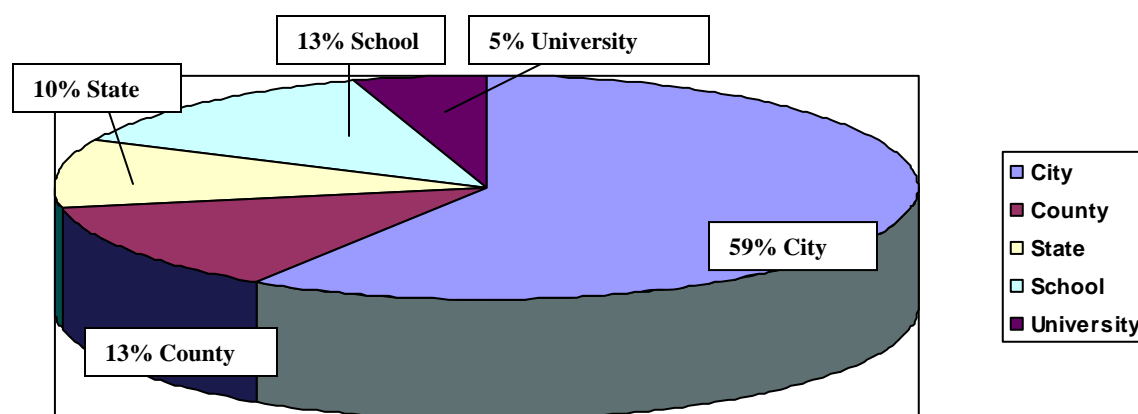


Figure 2. Law Enforcement Agencies Surveyed: Type of Agency Represented.

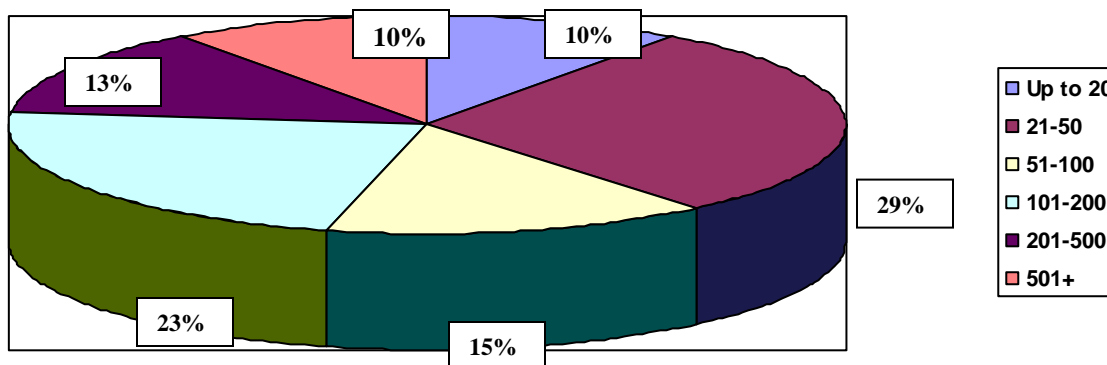


Figure 3. Law Enforcement Agencies Surveyed: Number of Sworn Officers in Agency.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The issue that was examined by the research was if a staff inspection component could be a cost effective benefit for a police agency. Research has shown that large police agencies, federal agencies, and the military have used some variation of a formal inspection program with a great deal of success. In some cases, staff inspection units were so successful at streamlining operations that they eventually were disbanded as a further cost saving measure. The more specific purpose of this research was to examine the tangible benefits of a staff inspection program and to determine if the benefits outweighed the cost of staffing and maintaining a unit. The main financial costs for staffing and maintaining a unit are not unlike other areas in police work. Payroll, office space, equipment, vehicles, and travel budgets must be considered. While these costs are relatively easy to document, that is not the case with benefits that might be derived. The benefits might be increases in efficiency, or effectiveness, or the streamlining of operations. Assessing a dollar value to these increases could be problematic.

The research question that was examined focused on if a staff inspection program would be suitable in a police agency, regardless of agency size. The benefits of an inspection program can include proper adherence to policies and procedures, proper and efficient use of resources, and discovery of deficiencies in morale, training, integrity, and supervision. Proper utilization can result in increased operational efficiency, proper use of resources, increased budget leverage, reduced liability, higher levels of service, and increased customer satisfaction. Training needs and deficiencies can be identified and addressed, and supervision and morale issues can be corrected. These are all important goals to the police administrator, whether the agency is small or large.

The researcher hypothesized that the benefits from a staff inspection program should be applicable to police agencies of any size. Since all agencies should strive for spending budget money in the most efficient manner, properly utilizing resources, and demonstrating integrity and professionalism, the benefits of a formal staff inspection program should be considered. The researcher concluded from the findings that the benefits of an inspection program are very difficult to quantify. While other police measures, such as crime rates, citations issued, clearance rates, and other statistical measures, are easy to capture, the benefits of a staff inspections program are much more difficult to measure. The resulting increases in accountability, standardization, integrity, morale, and public service are all very important to the police mission but are hard to document in a manner that may be necessary to secure budgetary funding.

The findings of the research did support the hypothesis in that all police agencies have similar demands and pressures. The prevalence of staff inspection programs has

grown to agencies of varied size and type as more administrators become interested in increasing accountability and transparency. The study of staff inspections is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because police agencies are subject to scrutiny to always do more with less and to have to explore ways to work smarter with the limited funding that they receive. The public expects their police to uphold high levels of integrity and provide proper service. To meet this goal, the police have to “police” themselves to ensure that they meet the expectations of the public and meet the police mission in the most effective and efficient manner.

Law enforcement administrators, supervisors, and officers stand to benefit from the results of this research. Whether a staff inspections unit is formulated or a person in the department takes on the responsibility on a part time basis, the benefits to be derived can be substantial. Potential problems can be identified, solutions can be formulated, and change can be implemented to improve the situation at hand. Staff inspections can be the vehicle for change in a profession that has historically been resistant to change.

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APPENDIX

Staff Inspection Survey

Please complete the following questionnaire based on information from your current agency. Please circle the answer(s) that apply.

Definitions:

Line inspection – daily or weekly audits by supervisory personnel (first line supervisor) over those they command.

Staff inspection – inspections which occur outside the normal lines of authority & responsibility, allowing greater objectivity. Results are reported directly to the chief executive.

1) Does your agency have a staff inspection unit or component.

YES NO

2) What methods of inquiry are used in staff inspections.

Ride-along survey interview report/citation audit site
visits visual uniform & equipment checks No staff inspections

3) Does your agency perform line inspections.

YES NO

4) What items are inspected in line inspections.

Vehicle uniform duty weapons no line inspections

5) Does your agency hold CALEA accreditation.

YES NO

6) What type of LE agency do you work for.

Municipal County State School District University

7) Approximate size of department (sworn officers).

1-20 21-50 51-100 101-200 201-500 501+

Please return to Gary Teeler upon completion – Thank you.