

The State Scanner



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Getting It Right—Agency Spotlight

Each quarter, this space will spotlight an agency that consistently receives the coveted “Perfect Audit.” We are highlighting the Alabama Department of Public Health this quarter. Their policies and procedures have ranked them as one of our top performers. This year was their third consecutive perfect audit. We asked Property Manager Jane Ellen Taylor to share their best practices with everyone.

AUD: How many locations are involved in the Department of Public Health property audit?

DPH: We have 160 locations.

AUD: How many items does DPH have in the system, and what is the value of the items?

DPH: There are 14,706 items with a value of \$30,027,239.60.

AUD: What are the biggest challenges you face in accurately tracking all the property of such a large agency with so many locations?

DPH: Our biggest challenges are updating technical equipment, keeping up with DPH's growth plan for new Health Department sites, and trying to live within our travel budget.

AUD: How have you overcome these challenges?

DPH: We do extensive filing and record keeping. Our Property Team works closely with Unit Property Managers and Computer Systems. We use fax and e-mails as much as possible. We plan Surplus routes to conserve gas.

AUD: What procedures does DPH have in place to track items, including new items, and items transferred to other agencies as well as Surplus—What are your Best Practices?

DPH: We use a Property History Card which improves our ability to track the custody of

property. The Unit Property Manager does a certification (self-audit) and we follow-up with a pre-audit. We do regular Surplus pickups to keep inventory clean; we have a good working relationship with ADECA that allows us to transfer property to Surplus or other agencies; and, we placed good people in responsible places.

AUD: What improvements were made to your agency's procedures to decrease the time and cost involved in completing the property audit, especially with an agency as large as DPH?

DPH: We have increased our Property Team to four people, which allows us to complete the audit in a fourth of the time. By utilizing the electronic inventory verification process created by Computer Systems, we are able to reduce the total amount of property we have to actually see by half. This process performs an inventory when the user turns on their PC, laptop, printer, or logs onto the network. DPH went from a 12 week audit to only three weeks as a result of this system.

AUD: What is State Health Officer, Dr. Donald Williamson's philosophy regarding the personal property of ADPH?

DPH: Dr. Donald Williamson expressed his support for property management, stating, “We place a lot of emphasis on safeguarding the property paid for by the citizens of Alabama. Several years ago, we formed a focused team consisting of property custodians, property managers, and IT staff. They worked together to train on property management procedures, and we also developed automation to keep tabs on networked equipment. We engaged all our employees, and they bought into the importance of good

Best Practices of ADPH

- EXTENSIVE FILING AND RECORD KEEPING
- USE OF PROPERTY HISTORY CARDS TO TRACK ITEMS
- CONDUCT PRE-AUDITS & EXTENSIVE PLANNING
- REGULAR SURPLUS RUNS
- GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH ADECA
- ELECTRONIC INVENTORY VERIFICATION PROCESS
- COMMITMENT FROM DR. DONALD WILLIAMSON

stewardship. As a result, we have had three consecutive perfect property audits. I am proud of our agency's accomplishments.”

Thank you Public Health for a job well done!



APDH Property Team (left to right): Shawn Rogers, Jane Ellen Taylor, Guy Woodall, Genevieve Moore, Chris Daughtry, and Peggy Harrelson with Perfect Audit certificate.

From the Desk of Sam Shaw, State Auditor

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to enjoy the premiere issue of “The State Scanner.” One of my primary goals for this newsletter is to bring awareness to others of the responsibilities of the Office of State Auditor. While most agencies know us as property auditors, did you know we also reconcile account balances between the State Comptroller and the State Treasury monthly? We have a dedicated staff performing their jobs each day with the utmost competency, and I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank them.

The Office of the State Auditor is working hard with every department in our State to achieve “perfect audits.” While “perfect” means many things to many people, with regard to our property audits, “perfect” has just one meaning. Departments achieve a “perfect audit” when every item assigned to the department is accounted for by the time our State Audit Inventory Officer (SAIO) completes their portion of the audit. If items are input into the Protégé database correctly and tagged with bar codes and property numbers, perfect audits should be achievable by every department. Attention to detail and commitment to responsible use of taxpayer money make the “perfect audit” not only desirable but also expected. When policies and procedures are in place and followed, and property is tracked throughout its life cycle, agencies should receive a perfect audit.

My primary goal for 2009 is to assist agencies in improving their tracking policies and to have all agencies on Protégé. There is no cost involved for an agency, and we provide training. Agencies on Protégé complete their property audits quicker and with greater accuracy than those agencies not on Protégé.

In closing, all State employees should be mindful of the responsibility they have to uphold the public trust and strive to maintain that level of trust through dedication, professionalism, and accountability. I am proud of the efforts of so many employees in agencies who have achieved “perfection”, and I want to support and encourage those who are striving to achieve a higher level of accountability. I am here to serve you, so please contact my office if I can be of assistance.

Sam Shaw, State Auditor



The State Scanner

Where in Alabama...?

Climbing cranes at State Docks to properly identify the equipment can be a little intimidating. With the coal fields, coal dust gets all over your clothes, shoes, and on your skin, but it is all part of the job.

Alabama State Docks is one of many unique audits we conduct.



The spiral stairs to the top have a dizzying effect. Hope you aren't afraid of heights, and remember, don't look down.

...has the State Auditor's Office been lately? Recently, State Audit Inventory Officer Mark Lashley conducted a property audit of Alabama State Docks. They also received a perfect audit. Alabama State Docks covers a large area and has some unique characteristics.

Property manager Randy Laton says, "I think what makes the docks unique is the vast diversification of our facilities. We have your typical office areas but also bulk ore facilities, warehouses, our own railroad, a police department and other assorted departments." There are 2,167 items with a value of \$30,141,684.52. While obtaining a perfect audit might present many challenges for such a diverse operation, it is achievable. Laton states, "One thing that we have found beneficial is to assign things to specific employees. We had a lot of trouble losing radios. But once we assigned them to an individual, that has decreased significantly. We also do a second audit each year in the spring." Employee ownership and personal responsibility along with well documented procedures that are followed go a long way in producing the desired results. Commitment from agency directors is also a critical piece of the puzzle. When asked what the philosophy or commitment from Alabama State Docks Director, James Lyons is concerning personal property, Laton says, "Mr. Lyons is completely committed to getting perfect audits. He expects 100%, and you can depend on having his full support."

Property management can be an overwhelming task, especially for large departments or unique departments such as Alabama State Docks, but it is not impossible. As citizens and taxpayers of this great state, it is refreshing to know responsible individuals like Randy Laton are keeping watch over the state's many valuable assets. Thank you for your dedication!

Until next quarter, we'll be "on the road again".

Employee Corner

Each quarter we will spotlight employees from the Office of the State Auditor. This quarter, we spotlight the State Audit Inventory Officers (SAIOs). These four guys travel the state from Lauderdale County to Houston County, from Mobile County to Jackson County, and all points in between. They audit over 160 agencies, boards, commissions, and Administrative Office of Courts. These SAIOs cover a lot of ground each week, sometimes working in extreme weather and environmental conditions.

We asked each of our SAIOs to describe their most interesting or challenging audit situation they have encountered.

Robert Davis covers most of the southern counties of the state. Robert has been with the Auditor's Office since July 2003, and he also serves as our Property Manager. Robert said he didn't have one audit situation stand out above any others because, "All of them are unique."

Trent Wilkins has been with this office since July 2005. Trent's most interesting experience has been the audit of The Space

and Rocket Center. "You get to see a lot of cool stuff." Trent's most challenging audit was Administrative Office of Courts with their many locations in each county.

Ken Baker came to work for this office in March 2007 to assist Robert and Trent, obtaining valuable on-the-job training. Once the new classification opened, Ken was appointed SAIO. Ken's most unique experience happened with the Forensics audit of "scanning equipment barcodes while an actual autopsy was in progress. For the Forensic Sciences Staff, this was just another day at the office." Yikes! Ken won our Name the Newsletter contest.

Mark Lashley worked for the Auditor's Office from July 2003 to April 2005 when he transferred to the Department of Transportation. In November 2007, Mark transferred back to our office. Mark's most memorable moment was auditing the Historical Commission and "seeing all the Alabama history artifacts." Mark comments, "Many people don't realize how many nice historical places there are to see in Alabama."

Did You Know? FAQs



How do I enter a State Fund in Protégé?

Once you retrieve the asset in the detail screen, click on the accounting tab, then click the line that reads "Original Acquisition" to get the detail screen. In the detail screen, you will find the state fund field in the drop down menu, select the state fund and make any other needed changes, then click Save.

How do I set more than one Filter?

Example: Looking for assets by Person Responsible = John Doe, County = Montgomery (This person has assets in multiple counties and you only want a list of Montgomery items.) Go to Assets -Search. When the filter screen appears, put all the conditions you are looking for at that time. Type John Doe in the Person Resp field, then type Montgomery in the County field, and click 'Set Filter'. Once the filter is set, you will get a list of the items. To print or view this list, go to Reports - View Reports - Select a Report to View (normally the Examiner's Listing Report will give you an overall view of the items). Since you have already set your filter, just click OK. You will be able to preview or print the list. This method is faster than clicking on Next Page, which slows down the system.

How do I get a listing of all my assets?

First, go to Assets - Search - Advanced, assuming you want a list of all active assets. You will notice the default of the status = Active, click Set Filter. When the list appears on the screen, click Reports - View Reports. Choose the report you want, and the screen will appear that allows you to Use Current Filter. Click OK.

How do I change the Acquisition Date and Acquisition Cost? When I go to the Acquisition Tab, I can't make changes.

The Accounting Tab is where these type changes are made. The Acquisition Tab is a preview of what is on the Accounting Tab. Go to the Accounting Tab, click on the "Original Acquisition" line, and you will get a detail screen. Make changes on this screen, then click Save. **Note:** Since depreciation is now being tracked on all assets \$5,000 and over, changes cannot be made to the Original Acquisition information after depreciation has run. This is scheduled to run on 1 February annually; therefore, make sure items \$5,000 and over have the correct acquisition date and cost before 30 September. If depreciation has been processed on the item, and the acquisition date or cost is wrong, please send an email to patty.toney@auditor.alabama.gov. Patty will correct Protégé and inform the Comptroller's Office of the manual change so their system can be corrected.