

Highlights

Why We Did This Audit

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, properly dispensing and administering controlled substances is critical to patients' health and to safeguarding society against diversion of controlled substances.

Our audit work focused on whether the Fire Department implemented processes to safeguard controlled substances.

Background

The Kansas City Fire Department's responsibility for emergency medical services duties began in April 2010. The Fire Department carries controlled substances on ambulances and advanced life support (ALS) pumpers to administer to patients as medical needs arise.

The Fire Department is registered with federal and state agencies to administer controlled substances. Those agencies require Fire to provide security, track inventory from purchase to disposal, and maintain records of all controlled substances. Department emergency supply staff order, track, and inventory controlled substances.

For more information, contact the City Auditor's Office at 816-513-3300 or cityauditor@kcmo.org.

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PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Fire Department: Safeguarding Controlled Substances

What We Found

The Fire Department has implemented a number of safeguards over controlled substances used on its ambulances and ALS pumpers including:

- Securing controlled substances in-house and drugs deployed in the field in locked storage compartments;
- Disposing of contaminated drugs in front of a witness, as required by regulation; and
- Using an authorized disposal company for expired drugs.

Fire needs to strengthen some controls over drug vaults on ambulances and ALS pumpers. Some paramedics are not securing controlled substances in the vault when they forget their access cards. Additionally, the department is not deactivating vault access cards immediately following employee termination.



The department should improve safeguards over expired controlled substances by maintaining a log of expired drugs, periodically performing a physical inventory of expired drugs, and comparing the drug log to the physical inventory. Also, a comprehensive annual inventory of all controlled substances, including expired drugs, needs to be conducted.

The department has not segregated the duties of ordering, picking up, and paying for controlled substances from the pharmacy. While we found no discrepancies, segregating these duties reduces the opportunity for theft or misuse of controlled substances without detection and helps protect both the city and its employees.

Fire staff are not signing off when exchanging drug boxes in the field as required by department policy. Some of the Fire Department's written policies and procedures for safeguarding controlled substances are outdated or have not been developed.

What We Recommend

We make recommendations to protect the Fire Department's ability to administer controlled substances by:

- Strengthening the physical security of drugs;
- Improving the ability to detect inventory errors and loss; and
- Establishing and documenting appropriate employee roles and responsibilities.

Management agreed the recommendations.