

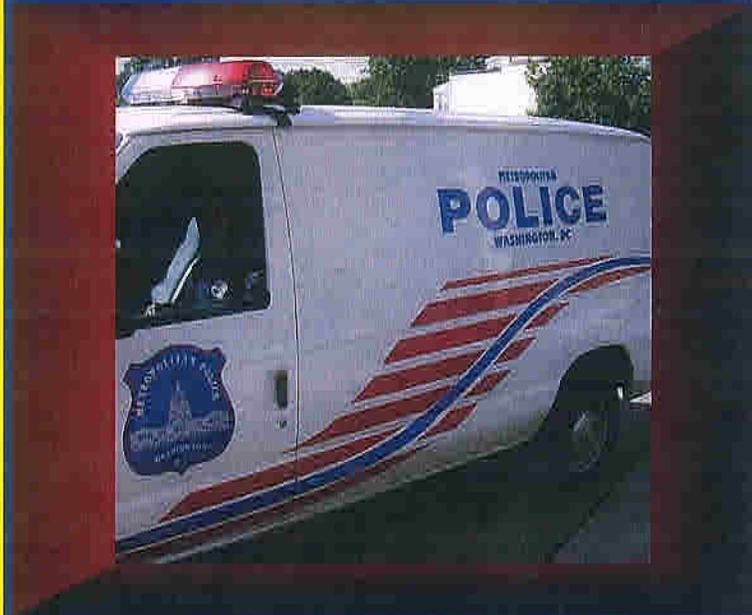
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# Metropolitan Police Department

Evidence Control  
Branch

Review and  
Assessment



June, 2007

Conducted by  
Evidence Control Systems, Inc.  
Burbank, California

## REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT TEAM INTRODUCTION

### ***Review & Assessment Team***

#### ***Joseph T. Latta***

Mr. Latta is both the President of Evidence Control Systems and the Executive Director of the International Association for Property and Evidence, Inc. Joe Latta retired as a Lieutenant from the Burbank Police Department after more than thirty-one years of service as a police officer, sergeant, and lieutenant. A graduate of the 146th Session of the F.B.I. National Academy, Mr. Latta holds an M.S. degree in Public Administration. During his studies at the California Police Command College, Mr. Latta researched and wrote about Police Property and Evidence operations projected ten years into the future. He has been the primary instructor in more than 400 classes in the U.S. and Canada on the topic of Property and Evidence Management. Additionally, as the President of E.C.S., Inc. Mr. Latta has conducted numerous audits of police property sections for small, medium, and large departments. Joe Latta serves as a consultant to facilities planners and architects who are designing new police facilities and property/evidence rooms.

#### ***William P. Kiley***

Bill Kiley is a retired Deputy Chief from the Suffolk County (N.Y.) Police Department where his final assignments in his thirty year career were Deputy Chief of Detectives and Deputy Chief of Support Services. Mr. Kiley is the current President of the International Association for Property and Evidence, Inc. as well as President of Kiley Associates, LLC and Online Learning Consultant Company. A retired Colonel from the U.S. Army Reserves, Kiley holds M.S. degrees in Criminal Justice and in Educational Technology. In 1986, Bill Kiley attended the FBI National Academy and in 1988 the Senior Management Institute for Police. A past President of the New York State and Eastern Canada Chapter of the FBI National Academy Associates (FBINAA), Kiley is also a lifetime member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS), and numerous professional organizations.

## CHAPTER 5

### Movement to New Evidence Control Branch Facility

#### **5.1.0 Review of Proposed Evidence Control Branch Facility**

As a part of the review process, Evidence Control Systems, Inc. was tasked to evaluate the Program and Test Fit Approval document dated (March 21, 2007) for the proposed property and evidence building at 225 Virginia, Washington, D.C.

The review noted that evidence storage had been allocated space on SK-045 which is on the second floor (approximately 18,500 square feet) and SK-46 which is on the third floor (which is approximately 21,500 square feet).

The property and evidence function is one of the most labor-intensive units within a law enforcement agency due to the necessity to constantly move objects into and out of the facility.

The nature of evidence can be a large screen plasma television, a double door freezer, a bicycle or a piece of trace evidence that is so small that it can be stored in a tiny envelope. The methods of movement, within the warehouse, of these multi-sized items can necessitate the use of forklifts, pallet jacks and/or hand carts. In the design of any evidence warehouse, all efforts must be taken to minimize the number of multi-level trips required to store and/or retrieve evidence. The planners for the new warehouse should design it so that the Evidence Control Branch is located on the level of the facility where the most traffic is generated.

The ideal scenario for any property and evidence warehouse, whether a brand new building or one that is renovated, is to have a layout design that ensures that maximum work flow efficiency and a minimum of vertical storage, i.e. one floor of the facility to another floor, thereby requiring the least amount of staffing to accomplish the required tasks.

#### **5.1.1 General Considerations and Observations**

Within the current Metropolitan Police Department Evidence Control Branch, the element of storage design that results in a significant labor cost is the vertical storage of evidence. Evidence Control Branch staff must move items from one floor of the facility to another floor approximately 80 to 90 percent of the time. This procedure translates into hundreds of trips using either the freight elevator or the mechanical ramp to store or retrieve evidence. Whether an item is needed for the lab, for court, for an investigator or for release/destruction, a staff member must take the time to go up and down the floors of the warehouse. Based upon the current warehouse layout, if a crack pipe is needed for court, an Evidence Control Branch staff member must leave the first floor, get the freight elevator, and go to the fourth to retrieve the item and then bring it back to the first floor.

Consider how much more efficient that procedure would be if all items were stored on one floor.

E.C.S. is cognizant of the fact that there are many branches, commands and stakeholders in the planning process for the new facility on Virginia Avenue. All of the occupants of the new facility want to be on the ground floor level for easy access and most can articulate a valid reason for this request. However, planners must consider what tenants in the new facility will have to move heavy objects into and throughout the facility on a day-to-day basis. It does not make operational sense to place commands like the Equipment and Supplies Branch or the Evidence Control Branch on upper floors when large, bulky items are moved into and out of their space everyday.

Therefore, the current plan of placing the Evidence Control Branch on the second and third floor of the new facility must be reconsidered. By not providing the E.C.B. the bulk of the available space on the first floor, the Metropolitan Police Department is creating a situation that will result in many years of increased staffing costs due to the labor requirements for the daily tasks of the Evidence Control Branch. Unless the plan is modified, it is projected that labor costs may double or triple in the years to come.

#### Recommendation:

After reviewing all of the various options, E.C.S. strongly suggests that the first floor (SK-043) be the primary storage area for evidence. Additionally, as already planned, the Evidence Control Branch should have the SK-045 for the long term storage of evidence that is related to homicides, violent assaults, and sexual assaults. It should be noted that initially we considered the feasibility of using the top floor of the facility (SK048) for the long term storage of evidence; however, that floor would only provide 10,000 square feet of available space. There was some thought of using the top floor SK-048 for the very long term items, but the fifth floor may only have 10,000 square feet available. (Note: Should the Metropolitan Police Department consider placing the new Crime Laboratory in the Virginia Avenue facility (as recommended in this report), by placing the laboratory on the top floor there is much easier and most cost efficient opportunity for necessary venting of fuming hoods, etc.)

Based upon the requirements of the City of Washington Code and the recently enacted Millicent Allewelt Law, the Metropolitan Police Department has and will continue to have large quantities of evidence in long term storage. This evidence is not the type of evidence that will be frequently accessed nor will it be disposed of for quite some time. Therefore, placing this type of evidence on an upper floor of the facility makes logical sense and provides for efficiency in the Evidence Control Branch operations. Conversely, having to store evidence that is likely to be purged within a year or two on an upper floor only creates a process flow that requires additional staffing hours and is inefficient. With the proper shelving and fixtures on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor or the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of the Virginia Avenue facility, the allocated space may accommodate the existing inventory. However, unless there is a substantial increase in the level of staffing within the Evidence Control Branch, i.e. staff necessary to research, purge and dispose of evidence, this new

facility will not be able to accommodate the future needs of the department. Interviews with Lt. Gray and his staff indicate that there is a five to one ratio of intake versus removed evidence.

The planners of the layout for the new Virginia Avenue facility should design the space for the Evidence Control Branch so that the storage of narcotics, firearms and currency is in the most transparent part of the Branch's operational space. These three categories of evidence are the most frequent targets of theft within property rooms throughout the United States. One needs only to view the current location of the narcotics vault of the Evidence Control Branch to realize just how obscure, vulnerable and out of sight it is. Therefore, E.C.S. recommends that the storage areas for currency, narcotics and firearms be adjacent to and visible from the Evidence Control Branch administrative/office space in the new facility.



### **5.1.2 Loading Dock Requirements**

The present architectural drawings for the new Virginia Avenue facility suggest that both the Evidence Control Branch and the Equipment and Supplies Branch would be required to intake evidence and supplies via a single vehicle bay/loading dock and then these items would be moved to the freight elevator and vertically moved to the appropriate floor for storage. As currently designed, this movement of evidence would necessitate it going from the loading dock through a circuitous route that uses corridors and common work space; areas that are not designed to insure the security of evidence.

In the current Evidence Control Branch warehouse, the Evidence Control Branch shares three loading bays with the Equipment and Supplies Branch. At the present time, E.C.B. and Supplies are sharing three bays, while the new design is showing one bay for shared use. The new facility plan reduces the number of loading bays for both branches to one.



When the Evidence Control Branch is staging evidence for destruction, auction and/or removal, it frequently is moved in large containers to the loading dock where it is placed into vehicles for transport to DEA, to a smelting foundry, to a land fill, etc. There is a need for security in and around the loading dock area when the aforementioned items are being staged for transportation. The E.C.B. should have a locked vestibule for the staging of narcotics and firearms that are being readied for transportation to a destruction site. The present plan for the loading dock at the Virginia Avenue facility is woefully inadequate. Additionally, it is questionable regarding the



safeguarding of evidence during movement and staging evidence for destruction, auction or removal. As currently planned, the result may be the commingling of evidence and departmental supplies in the intake and/or storage process and during the routine movement within the facility. Such a practice would violate the principals of sound evidence management.

The movement of evidence within the facility must be accomplished in a secure environment such that the integrity of the items or access to the items can withstand challenges by defense attorneys in court. Therefore, the design of the processing of evidence into and out of the loading dock area should enable the U.S. Attorney's Office to rebuff any challenge during a hearing and/or trial by being able to demonstrate that no other Metropolitan Police Department branch, i.e. aside from the Evidence Control Branch, had access to the closed environment in which evidence is stored and moved within the building. The shared freight elevator, common loading dock and necessity to transport evidence through the hallways of the facility are unacceptable.

Lastly, based upon our interview with Mr. Michael Gee, Manager of the Equipment and Supplies Branch, his unit has deliveries from suppliers that arrive at the warehouse on a daily basis. Should a delivery be taking place when a truck containing evidence from the Districts, the DEA Lab, the courts, etc. arrives at the Evidence Control Branch warehouse, the truck will have to wait until the loading dock is available. This is both a security concern as well as a waste of precious staffing hours.

#### Recommendation:

The design of the loading dock, elevator system and corridors leading to the evidence storage areas must be focused on security, site lines and adjacencies to the various storage areas. These areas shouldn't be shared with other users of the building to insure the integrity of the evidence and the safety of the employees.

The Evidence Control Branch loading dock must be able to accommodate at least a large truck in a secure, locked environment and where the activities of the Evidence Control Branch are not visible to any other work groups or to the public.

Ideally, the evidence should be moved from the enclosed bay into a closed mantrap that can only be opened when the exterior door of the loading dock area is closed. If properly designed, the mantrap can be used for staging of evidence for destruction that is scheduled to be transported to another site or to stage items going to auction.



Closed  
Mantrap

The freight elevator should be located in an area that is within the confines of the Evidence Control Branch to ensure that non- E.C.B. employees do not compromise evidence on the elevators.

Additionally, within the suggested closed loading dock/bay should be an area that houses trash dumpsters and or trash compactors. All evidence that is to be destroyed must remain in a secure area to ensure the items are in fact destroyed and not pilfered from the trash by people passing by.



In order to provide a level of transparency and oversight, it is recommended that elevator doors and the area where items are staged for destruction be observable from the routine Evidence Control Branch area. The intention of this recommendation is to reduce the risk of illegal activity.

### **5.1.3 General Public and Metropolitan Police Department Personnel Access to Evidence Control Branch Release Counters**

Another consideration in the design and layout of the new Virginia Avenue Facility is the release of property to citizens who come to the Evidence Control Branch to claim items and the release of evidence to officers and investigators for court, the lab, etc. In reviewing the current blueprints and drawings, it appears that the general public would be required to traverse different floors of the building or possibly even have to walk through secure, interior portions of the facility in order to get to the property release point. Also, based upon the present plan there appears to be a second option that would require the Evidence Control Branch staff to go to upper floors of the facility to get property for release to a citizen or a Metropolitan Police Department employee. As noted earlier in this report, every trip from one floor to another floor to get property or evidence is time consuming and it takes away from other duties. There may be a requirement to assign someone to the release counter on a fulltime basis.

In addition to the operational and efficiency concerns, the current plans for a release area also increase the risk of safety and security to Metropolitan Police Department employees. Frequently, individuals who respond to retrieve property are defendants who have just been released on bail or individuals with extensive criminal records. Does the department really want these types of individuals walking the corridors of a police facility? Does the department want a person who is out on bail getting into the same elevator that is used by undercover officers or possibly having a situation where an arresting officer and a defendant may meet in the elevator?

Recommendation:

The location for the release of property to the public optimally belongs on the ground floor where a sidewalk accessible vestibule and a release counter are controlled by Evidence Control Branch employees and easily navigable for the public. The entrance to this release area should be on the Virginia Avenue side of the new facility. Once the citizen enters the secured vestibule (Public Release Vestibule), the E.C.B. employees can assess if the person has business that would require access to the release counter area. If so, access is approved and the citizen is allowed into the inner counter area.

The photo below provides a view of the release counter and the vestibule/front entrance from the point of view of an Evidence Control Branch employee within the office. All of the glass that is seen in these photos is bullet proof glass and there is a release mechanism that is also bullet proof.



Photo Outside



Photo Public Release Vestibule



Photo Public Release

The photo to the right demonstrates a release counter that has been modified so that the police officer release counter is immediately adjacent to the public release counter, i.e. a split-counter. However, there is a barrier between the two areas so that the public cannot see the officers and thereby enhance safety for the officers and for the Evidence Control Branch staff.



Photo Split Counter - Officer

Another option is to have a completely separate area for the release of evidence to Metropolitan Police Department officers. The adjacent photo demonstrates such an area. This design is to ensure that undercover officers are never in the presence of the public



Photo Officer  
Release

E.C.S. recommends that the department consider constructing a small, secure office that is immediately adjacent to the vestibule of the release area. By having such a room, citizens can be permitted access by Metropolitan Police Department investigative personnel for the purposes of viewing evidence and then providing a written deposition. This procedure reduces the amount of evidence that must be signed out to a detective, taken to a district location where the victim/owner views property and then the property is returned to the Evidence Control Branch.

#### **5.1.4 Work Area Requirements within the Evidence Control Branch**

As identified previously in this report, E.C.S. has observed that the current staffing level within the Evidence Control Branch is significantly below other police departments of similar size. E.C.S. recommends that the Metropolitan Police Department increase the number of employees assigned to the Evidence Control Branch. In planning for the office/administrative space requirements for the new Evidence Control Branch facility, that projection should be predicated upon the increased staffing levels. In addition to general storage areas, there is a space requirement for such functions as: employee work stations, public release counter, officer release counter, property viewing room, etc.

While there is no accurate data regarding the current inventory within the Evidence Control Branch, several of the property officers/custodians advised that for every five items received they dispose of only one. This continual imbalance of intake v. disposed items has resulted in the current storage space situation within the Branch.

#### **Recommendation:**

The Evidence Control Branch is broken up into a variety of components that need specific work areas dependent upon their various tasks and duties. The following areas need to be considered in the development of the new facility and the type of work that is performed:

Note: On the first floor (SK 043) there is an elevated platform of approximately 5,000 square feet that overlooks the main floor. E.C.S. suggests that the elevated area be enclosed and utilized as the primary administrative/clerical office area. Additionally, this office area would be in close proximity to a designated area that could be used for the property and evidence release area, i.e. the release counter for the general public and the release counter for Metropolitan Police Department officers. (Specific suggestions regarding the release area have been previously addressed in this report.)

Within the elevated platform space that is suggested for an administrative/clerical area there is sufficient space for the construction of either the Evidence Control Branch drug vault or the secure firearms storage area. (Note: Depending upon the inventory of narcotics and firearms at the time of the move, it is conceivable that both of these vaults may fit within the area. However, if the inventory is not substantially reduced, the Evidence Control Branch may only be able to get one vault within the elevated platform area.) Firearms, currency and narcotics should always be stored within the most secure area of the Evidence Control Branch. By placing the drug vault and the firearms within the office area, two of the most critical categories of items stored by the M.P.D. would be in close proximity to the Branch Manager and supervisors who would have visual observation of these storage areas on a continual basis.

### Clerical Staff

The clerical staff must have sufficient work-stations that are adjacent to both the release areas and in close proximity to the warehouse. The photograph to the right (clerical staff) represents the preferred option for this described area. The illustrated work stations are for a department in Southern California with only 400 officers.



Clerical Staff

### Work Areas Intake

When evidence is received it is recommended that work station(s) be designed in a manner that incoming evidence is removed from the transporting vehicles / lockers and placed in an incoming staging area (counter). The two photos illustrate several different options. One is designed for standing while the other allows sitting. The area needs to be contiguous to the intake doors.



Work Areas  
Intake 1



Work Areas  
Intake 2

The counters need sufficient depth and length to allow the items to be processed and not commingled with other evidence. In the case of the Evidence Control Branch, the counter could easily be 20-30 feet long.

Both of the illustrated counters (see photos) have been fabricated with stainless steel for the protection of the counter and most important the ability to sanitize after use.



Work Areas  
Intake 3

#### Work Space – Firearms

The design of the firearms intake / inspection area should be comprised of workstations similar to the clerical space shown above as well as having work counters.

Each person assigned to the station should have an individual work-space (desk) and an area to process firearms such as the ones illustrated above. The processing area, which is within the firearms vault, could be utilized for both the receipt and the staging of firearms for destruction. Additionally, video monitoring cameras should be installed within this area, thereby enabling the Evidence Control Branch manager to view activities in the vault.



Work Areas  
Firearms or Narcotics  
Intake and Disposal

#### Work Space – Narcotics

As with the recommendation for firearms, the design of the narcotics storage area should include workstations with individual work space for each person assigned to the narcotics area, similar to the clerical space shown above, for the intake and initial phases of the destruction process. However, the narcotics work stations should not be within the narcotics vault due to the fumes and odors from the narcotics. If possible, a caged area, immediately adjacent to the narcotics storage room, should be constructed. Within this caged area, Evidence Control Branch staff can process drugs being booked into the unit as well as using this space for the preparation of the destruction of narcotics. Additionally, video monitoring cameras should be installed within this area, thereby enabling the Evidence Control Branch manager to view activities in the vault.

Ventilation – Any designed storage area for narcotics must be properly ventilated to insure the environment is safe for employees. Newly designed narcotics vaults should be engineered with an adequate ventilation system that places the room under negative pressure with at least 10 – 12 CPH (changes per hour). All of the ventilated air must be exhausted from the building.

### Work Space – Currency

Within the new Evidence Control Branch facility, it is recommended that there be a currency counting room that is immediately adjacent to the currency vault. It is further suggested that there be ceiling mounted video cameras that are positioned as to validate the count of the currency, to provide for digital documentation of the count, and to serve as an additional internal control.



### Property / Evidence for Destruction

Purging and disposition of property and evidence is a major and continuous task of the Evidence Control Branch. In designing the new Branch facility, E.C.S. recommends that space be allocated in an area that is adjacent to the Branch's loading dock. Within this securable cage/room, Evidence Control Branch staff will complete the initial steps in preparing items for disposition. Therefore, there is a need for ample work space within which the staff will examine the items to determine if they are to be destroyed, auctioned or possibly diverted for Metropolitan Police Department use. Immediately next to the work counters should be bins that are designated for items to be destroyed. Either the bins need to be able to be secured with a lock or the bins should be stored within a secured area of the Evidence Control Branch. The reason for this level of security is to insure that there is minimal possibility of theft or pilferage. In our work throughout the country, E.C.S. has become aware of many situations that have led to arrests, embarrassment to departments, etc. related to the theft of items that had been identified for destruction.



Work Areas  
Disposal Area

When planners are designing the aforementioned destruction preparation area, they should allocate sufficient space for at least two (2) staff members who would have a fulltime responsibility of preparing items for destruction. Given the quantity of property and evidence that is destroyed by the Metropolitan Police Department there are all kinds of materials that are purged. A sizeable portion of these materials may be candidates for a recycling program. In fact, some local law enforcement agencies are now defining areas within the destruction area for sorting items that may be recycled. The photo to the right shows a department in Canada that sorts most of its property /



Work Areas  
Disposal Area-  
Recycle

evidence that is being destroyed. The bins are labeled for batteries, pagers, cell phones, eyeglasses, license plates, soda cans, etc. While this concept is laudable, E.C.S. also notes that this is a staff intensive task and, in a department that already has an inadequate level of staffing within the Evidence Control Branch, this concept is merely submitted for consideration by the Metropolitan Police Department.

#### Work Space – Evidence for Auction

An operation the size of the Metropolitan Police Department's Evidence Control Branch generates a huge amount of property that can be auctioned. The present M.P.D. auction process with a private auction company (Liquidity Services) requires that Evidence Control Branch staff collect the items that are up for auction and hold them in an area where a Liquidity representative assesses the items and takes photographs for use in their



Work Areas  
Auction Area

online auction. The items must be held by the Evidence Control Branch until the person who won the bid comes to the warehouse to claim their purchase. If the M.P.D. continues to use Liquidity Services and thereby continue the existing process, there will be a need for a sizeable, secure, caged auction item storage area in the new Evidence Control Branch facility. The auction processing area needs a work station, counters, shelves and bins to store items pending release. This additional space is predicated upon an anticipation of a dramatic increase in the level of purging/disposition of property by the Branch staff.

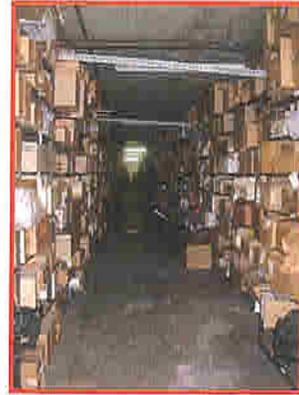
E.C.S. reiterates its suggestion, made elsewhere in this report, that the private auction company, which handles the online auction of Metropolitan Police Department property, be required to pick up the auction items from the Evidence Control Branch and handle the photographing and storage of the items until stored. The company should be required to pick up from the Evidence Control Branch on call and possibly as frequently as once each week. The conversion to this type of auction process greatly reduces the storage space required for auction items in the new facility. Using movable carts to store the items can easily eliminate handling the items twice.

The photo to the right illustrates that the items are only handled once and placed into the large plastic bin for the auction company. The item is removed from the active inventory, documented and placed in one of the large plastic pallet sized bins. When the auction company picks up the items the auctioneer has to unload the items to their vehicle from the bins or the auctioning company may just exchange empty bins for the filled bins after the items have been validated for the move.



### **5.1.5 Use of Available Storage Space within the Evidence Control Branch**

The Evidence Control Branch does not have empirical data regarding the number of items that are currently stored within the E.C.B. warehouse. Estimates by the E.C.B. staff are between one and two million items. The current Evidence Control Branch has approximately 40,000 feet of floor space; however, only about 50% of the building's storage capacity is being utilized due to inefficient storage practices, inadequate shelving, a lack of standardized packaging and poor facility layout. Much of the available space within the E.C.B. warehouse is consumed by aisles between the shelves. The aisles are approximately 100 feet long and 6 feet wide.



The E.C.B. warehouse has approximately 400,000 cubic feet of storage capacity of which only approximately 200,000 cubic feet is being utilized. The inability to utilize 50% of the available at cubic footage is indicative of an ineffective warehousing operation. The failure to use half of the available cubic footage is juxtaposed to other police property rooms that utilize from 80 to 90% of available cubic space.

#### **5.1.5-1 Estimated Total Current Cubic Storage Footage v. Space Requirements in New Facility**

Evidence Control Systems, Inc. has reviewed the draft plans for the new Evidence Control Branch facility on Virginia Avenue as well as having visited the site during the course of our review. Based upon the written plans and our observations, the E.C.S. team has developed several options regarding the placement of the Evidence Control Branch in the new facility. In addition to providing the options, E.C.S. recommends one option as the optimal choice for the Evidence Control Branch. It should be noted that the figures provided in the below tables are approximations as we were unable to physically measure the space within the Virginia Avenue facility. However, the E.C.S. team was able to physically measure the length, width and height of all of the storage shelves in the existing facility as well as measuring the evidence that is stacked in the aisles and other ancillary areas within the warehouse.

The following options provide a comparison of the existing storage capacity, the projected storage capacity in the new facility, i.e. using the projected shelving, and lastly a projection of the storage capacity for the new facility if high density shelving is utilized.

#### **Option 1 – Currently Programmed Space in Virginia Avenue facility**

The existing plan places the Evidence Control Branch on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors of the Virginia Avenue facility (SKO45 and SK046). The plan also utilizes standard 4 post shelves. In computing the projected figures for storage capacity using high density shelves, E.C.S. estimated that 85% of the cubic storage space would be available for storage; the remaining 15% is for circulation. If this option were selected, it would provide the Evidence Control Branch with slightly more than the existing cubic storage

space in the current warehouse (currently 400,000 cubic feet). Note: These figures are before any purging.

Room	Floor	Plans	Square Ft	Available Height	Cubic Feet	Circulation as Drawn	Shelves Drawn	High Density Cubic Feet of Storage*	
SK045	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Planned	18,500	10	185,000	50%	92,500	85%	157,250
SK046	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Planned	21,431	12	257,172	50%	128,586	85%	218,596
<b>Total</b>			<b>39,931</b>		<b>442,172</b>		<b>221,086</b>		<b>372,846</b>

\*(See Section 5.1.5.2 describing High Density Shelves)

### Option 2 - E.C.S. recommended space allocation in Virginia Avenue facility

This option places the Evidence Control Branch in the ground floor area that is currently allocated for the locker rooms (SK043) and the second floor of the building (SK045). Earlier in this report, the E.C.S. team identified the need for the Evidence Control Branch space to have appropriate adjacencies of work functions, e.g. loading and unloading of property/evidence, public release counter, etc. These adjacencies will greatly increase the efficiency of the Evidence Control Branch. Having the Evidence Control Branch on the Ground and 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor also gives the unit vertical adjacency and will reduce time spent going to other floors of the facility, e.g. 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to 5<sup>th</sup> floor. Note: As with the previous option, the 85% represents the use of high density shelving with minimal space being utilized for aisles, corridors, etc.

Room	Floor	Plans	Square Ft	Available Height	Cubic Feet	Circulation as Drawn	Shelves Drawn	High Density Cubic Feet of Storage*	
SK043	Ground	Suggested	18,115	11	199,265	50%	99,633	85%	169,375
SK045	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Planned	18,500	10	185,000	50%	92,500	85%	157,250
<b>Total</b>			<b>36,615</b>		<b>384,265</b>		<b>192,133</b>		<b>326,625</b>

### Option 3 – Placement of Evidence Control Branch on the Ground and 3<sup>rd</sup> Floors in the Virginia Avenue facility

This option places the Property Unit in the area designed for the ground floor locker rooms (SK043) and the already planned third floor of the building (SK046). By utilizing the ground floor, the previously described adjacencies of public access will greatly increase the efficiency of the Evidence Control Branch. However, this option separates the storage between the ground floor and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, increasing the time to store and/or retrieve evidence and property.

Room	Floor	Plans	Square Ft	Available Height	Cubic Feet	Circulation as Drawn	Shelves Drawn	High Density Cubic Feet of Storage*	
SK043	Ground	Suggested	18,115	11	199,265	50%	99,633	85%	169,375
SK046	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Planned	21,431	12	257,172	50%	128,586	85%	218,596
<b>Total</b>			<b>39,546</b>		<b>456,437</b>		<b>228,219</b>		<b>387,971</b>

#### Option 4 - Placement of Evidence Control Branch on the Ground and 3<sup>rd</sup> Floors in the Virginia Avenue facility

This option places the Evidence Control Branch on the ground floor and a portion of fifth floor (mechanical space [SK048]). Option 4 separates the storage between the bottom and top floors of the Virginia Avenue facility and provides the least amount of available space. Drastically needed staff time would be lost in the transit time going to and from the top floor to retrieve and store items.

Room	Floor	Plans	Square Ft	Available Height	Cubic Feet	Circulation as Drawn	Shelves Drawn	High Density Cubic Feet of Storage*
SK043	Ground	Suggested	18,115	11	199,265	50%	99,633	85% 169,375
SK048	5th	Option	10,000	15	150,000	50%	75,000	85% 127,500
<b>Total</b>			<b>28,115</b>		<b>349,265</b>		<b>174,633</b>	<b>296,875</b>

#### Synopsis of Options:

	New Virginia Avenue Facility utilizing Standard Shelving <small>Figures based upon Building Plans and/or approximation by E.C.S.</small>	If High Density Shelving is acquired
Existing Facility	197,000 Cubic Feet	N/A
Option 1	221,086 Cubic Feet	372,574 Cubic Feet
Option 2*	192,133 Cubic Feet	326,625 Cubic Feet
Option 3	228,219 Cubic Feet	387,971 Cubic Feet
Option 4	174,633 Cubic Feet	296,875 Cubic Feet

\*E.C.S. recommended option

**Note 1:** If the new Evidence Control Branch facility was completed today and either **Option 2** or **Option 4** was implemented the new facility would not be able to accommodate the existing inventory unless high density shelving was installed. If high density shelving was acquired, **Option 2** would provide at least 129,000 cubic feet for future growth and **Option 4** would provide at least 100,000 cubic feet for future growth.

**Note 2:** If either **Option 1** or **Option 3** were implemented, they would accommodate the existing inventory with approximately 25,000 cubic space for the future. If high density shelving was purchased, **Option 1** would provide 134,492 cubic feet while **Option 3** provides almost 100,000 cubic feet for the future. However, Options 1, 3 and 4 will increase the amount of time that Evidence Control Branch staff must go from one floor to the next to store or retrieve property and evidence.

#### 5.1.5-2 High Density Shelving

Regardless of which of the above options is selected, the use of standard four post shelving will not provide the Evidence Control Branch with room to grow and address future needs, e.g. more evidence held based upon the Millicent Allewelt Law. If no additional staff is assigned to the Evidence Control Branch and the necessary purging and disposal is not accomplished, the inventory will continue to grow.

In most cases, the use of high density shelving will at least double the amount of storage space available within the same cubic footage. With regard to high density shelving:

- 1) High-density shelves utilize aisle space by replacing them with shelving carriages that are moveable.
- 2) Carriages can be purchased with hand or electronic cranks to open the aisle.
- 3) Carriages can be designed and built to meet the specific needs of the department. The height, width and depth of the shelves have a tremendous bearing on the efficiency of the system.
- 4) Shelves need to be designed around the containers, boxes, or drawers that best fit the items of evidence and/or property that are to be stored on the shelves.

The following photos illustrate the need to have the proper sized shelving units.

**Handgun Storage**

*High-density shelves (shallow) for handguns. Outstanding utilization of space.*



**Long Gun Storage**

*High-density shelves (shallow) for long guns – extremely easy to retrieve and inventory items.*



**10 x 13 Envelopes**

*High-density shelves for grocery bags (inside of boxes)*



**Grocery Bags**

*High-density shelves for grocery bags (inside of boxes)*



**Banker Boxes**

*High-density shelves designed around exact size of box – no wasted space.*



**Modular Drawers**

*Drawers are configured to fit inside of the high-density carriage.*



**Wasted Space**

*High-density shelves improperly designed – insufficient number of shelves*



**High-density shelves – poor utilization of space**



***Plastic Tubs*** – provide a “drawer” environment that allows an efficient method of storing uniform sized envelopes.



The high density units can be configured in any height, width or depth. A great deal of time needs to be spent in designing the proper configurations of shelf sizes. Design the shelf for the chosen box, bag, drawer, etc.

The utilization of high-density shelves will most likely double the linear footage of any property room.

### **5.1.5-3 Currency / High Value Jewelry Vault, Narcotics Vault, Firearms Storage Area**

The storage of currency, narcotics, firearms and jewelry is an extreme challenge for the Evidence Control Branch in that not only do these items have significant evidentiary value; they are a significant potential target for theft and misappropriation.

From news stories throughout the United States, E.C.S. has catalogued a myriad of stories wherein cash, jewelry, narcotics and firearms has been stolen. These thefts have been committed via both perpetrators from outside the property rooms and also by departmental/agency employees. Therefore, special preventative measures must be taken to protect the integrity of the evidence and insure the credibility of the system.

The storage of these high profile items must be secured in the most highly protected areas/vaults within the Evidence Control Branch. It is most desirable, for an operation the size of the Metropolitan Police Department Evidence Control Branch, to have a separate vault for currency and jewelry, firearms and for narcotics in the new facility. Below are some specific considerations regarding the vaults in the new facility:

#### **Firearms Vault Construction / Security**

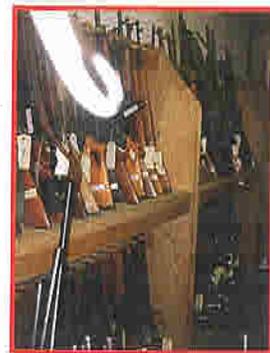
Securing all firearms in one secured vault will ensure that acceptable standards are met. It is recommended that the room be constructed of concrete block and that the ceiling be constructed of hard impenetrable materials.

Secure the firearms vault with a separate lock and/or an access control system that provides access to those authorized and denies access to those not authorized entry. Additionally, it is recommended that the firearms vault be monitored by both an alarm and a video recording system.

## Firearms Storage – Present Facility

At the present time handguns are stored in plastic bags and then filed sequentially in custom sized wooden bins as illustrated in the photo to the right.

Long guns are stored in both vertical gun racks and horizontal gun shelves as illustrated in following photos. The vertical racks are acceptable, however the shelves where the firearms are stacked one on top of another creates an extremely labor intensive retrieval process as numerous firearms may have to be moved to locate the firearm that is needed.



Long Gun  
Storage

## Firearms Storage – Handguns in new facility

The department should consider storing all handguns in handgun boxes for uniform storage as illustrated in the photo. If the handguns are submitted with some type of gun case the associated case can be booked into evidence as a separate item, i.e. if both items won't fit in the box.

The handgun boxes are 13" × 8" × 2" and shelves of those dimensions are recommended. Never use shelves that are deeper than the boxes to be stored and do not store handguns two or more boxes deep. The photo to the right is from a department of 2500 sworn officers and the guns are stored in a scheme that can easily be followed. The oldest weapon is on the top shelf on the far left, while the newest items are on the bottom shelf far right. All of the guns on the shelf are in control number order (bar code number or case number). As items are purged the remaining items need to be back shifted (right to left), always leaving the available space on the bottom right. (Note: A close look at the above photo will reveal that there are green labels on some of the boxes. This particular department utilizes the green labels to indicate that the handgun is "homicide evidence.") Basically all firearms are stored in one location in some type of evidence control number order. Over time (see top shelf) all of the older cases migrate to the same top shelf(s).



It should be noted that on the above illustrated photo (page 18) the bar-code label has been placed on the end of the box to easily facilitate the inventory process with a bar code scanner. Never store more than one gun per box for inventory purposes or secure use multiple bar codes that represent the item.



### Long Gun Storage – New Facility

Consider storing all rifles and shotguns in long gun boxes (rifle boxes) for uniform storage, even if they are submitted in a zippered gun case or a plastic gun case. (Note: Long guns that are submitted in large gun cases may require a specific shelf.) In some situations the firearm case may be booked as an additional item of general evidence. Oversized long guns, with large barrels or large scopes may also require a separate oversized firearms shelf or be stored on the top shelf of the storage shelving.



Depending upon the type and depth of the shelves in the new Evidence Control Branch facility, long guns can be stored either horizontal or vertical as illustrated in the photos to the right. (Note: When designing the shelves for the storage of firearms boxes, planners should be aware that there are two types of boxes available.



The first size is 48 ½” x 6 ½” x 2”, while there is a larger 50” x 8 ¾” x 3 ¼” for weapons with special stocks or scopes. See long gun box photo to the right.



When planning the firearms storage area within the new Evidence Control Branch, E.C.S. suggests that the area include an area within which firearms that are being staged for destruction are stored. Having an additional level of security that permits limited access to the staged weapons is the goal.

## Narcotics Vault Construction / Security

Securing all narcotics evidence in one secured vault will ensure that recognized standards are met. As with firearms, it is recommended that the narcotics vault be concrete block with a hard impenetrable ceiling or other similar material as shown in the photograph. Entry into the narcotics vault should be controlled by an access control system or a unique key system. Additionally, the room should be alarmed and it should have a video monitoring/surveillance system.

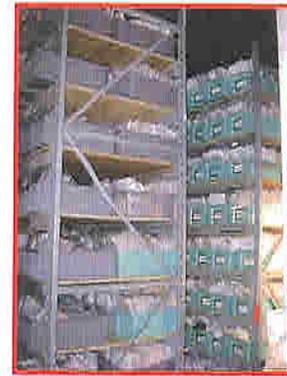


Narcotics Vault  
Ceiling

## Narcotics Storage – Present Facility

The vast majority of drugs are packaged in an approximately 10 x 13” plastic pouch and then stored numerically, in bins as shown in the photo to the right.

Unfortunately, when the bin shelving is filled to capacity all of the oldest drugs must be removed from the bin/drawer and re-secured in boxes as illustrated in the photo to the right. The boxes are stored in the rear of the narcotics vault. These boxes, when originally placed in storage were in numerical order. However, as evidence custodians have to retrieve evidence for court or for destruction, the boxes have to be shifted and over time the logical, consecutively numbered boxes are not stored in order. The result of the current situation is that it takes far longer to locate an item of evidence within the narcotics vault. Shelving is needed that will enable the boxes to be stored one deep with the boxes stored in consecutively numbered order. The boxes are returned to the same location if they are temporary removed from the shelf.



## Narcotics Storage – New Facility

E.C.S. strongly recommends that the narcotics vault in the new Virginia Avenue facility be designed in a manner that provides sufficient shelving and bins that will enable 100% of the pouch narcotics evidence bags to be stored in bins (see adjacent photographs for examples). The design of the new narcotics vault should be such that all narcotics evidence is located in one storage area.



### Notes:

The department may consider using high density shelving within the narcotics vault so as to insure that all drugs are filed in an easy to retrieve manner.

The Metropolitan Police Department should work towards abandoning the practice of transferring evidence pouches into cardboard boxes that are stored in other areas of the narcotics vault.

3) The bins in the photographs to the right illustrate how a specifically designed product can be commercially constructed to the dimensions of the shelf and maximizes the available space and reduces retrieval time ([www.flexcontainer.com](http://www.flexcontainer.com)). This type of product must be factored into the design of the selected shelves and the size of the narcotics package to ensure the most efficient fit. High-density shelves must be considered for the element of the room. The photo above shows a narcotics room that is operating with mobile shelves.

Currency Storage – New Facility

Currency coming into the possession of the Metropolitan Police Department should be stored in a secure vault that, as with the two previously described vaults, should be concrete block construction with ceiling construction that denies access to the room from above. This room should have a separate alarm system, separate access control and limited authorized access. The room should have a video surveillance system as well as digital recording of internal video monitoring. An additional consideration should be the inclusion of a currency counting table above which there is a video camera that records the counting process.

Hand Gun Storage

The following table illustrates the efficiency of high-density shelves when used with either hand-guns and/or long guns. The table represents a unit that is 21 feet long, 14 inches deep and 8 feet high.

# Shelves	Shelf Width - 42 in per bay						Total Feet
	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	
1	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
2	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
3	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
4	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
5	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
6	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
7	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
8	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
9	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
10	14 boxes	14	14	14	14	14	
<b>Total Hand Guns</b>							<b>840</b>

## 5.2.0 Planning for the Move to the New Evidence Control Branch

### Moving - Schedule

The move of the present inventory in a department the size of the Metropolitan Police Department could easily take two years of planning and purging, prior to the actual move. E.C.S. cannot overemphasize the critical importance of purging as much evidence as possible prior to the move. If the purging effort is not successful, unneeded evidence and property will be moved to the new facility only to be purged at some time in the future. While the massive purging effort will be very costly in terms of budget and necessary staffing, it will only become more costly to purge the longer it is held.

### Moving – Planning

- 1) Much of the planning is related to actually deciding where each category of evidence is going to be stored in the new facility. Unfortunately, the existing Evidence Control Branch inventory is not segmented in a manner that enables one to easily determine how much space is going to be allocated in the new facility. For example homicide evidence, biological storage, long items, various sized boxes, and envelopes are categories of evidence that should be stored in areas that are designated for each of the categories.



- 2) The vast majority of evidence that is received in any property room will fit into a standardized envelope(s), paper bag(s), and three or four different size boxes to accommodate most of the evidence. Therefore, when the property room is laid out it is suggested that one portion of the Evidence Control Branch warehouse be segmented for different sized evidence packages, such as:



Envelopes (two to three sizes)

One location for several sizes of bags

One location for three or four different size boxes (a location for each size box)

One location for handguns

One for long guns

One for drug envelopes

- 3) The shelves for the storage locations need to be designed to accommodate the various sized packages and/or boxes. Presently, the Evidence Control Branch does not have uniformly sized packaging or boxes. The photo to the right depicts a property unit that uses several standard sized packages/boxes and shelves that are designed to accommodate the packaging.



- 4) In order for the Evidence Control Branch to set up the new facility so that evidence is stored in a logical manner, there is a need for an estimate of the current inventory of existing categories of evidence. Someone from the Metropolitan Police Department should be assigned to visually inventory all of the various locations / shelves, and bins in order to determine how many different size envelopes, bags, and boxes are currently stored. The estimate of the number of envelopes is a relatively simple but time consuming task. However, based upon the number of different sized boxes stored within the Evidence Control Branch, this aspect of the assessment will be much more difficult. Small, medium, large and extra large boxes need to be purchase in order to accomplish this task. Before the move to the new facility the existing inventory of boxes are more than likely going to have to be separated in three or four different size categories. (Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large). In other words, there may be ten sizes at the present time, but the ten sizes will have to be placed in a category or certain sizes within a range. If this isn't done the new warehouse will end up like the adjacent photo on the fifth floor. It is imperative that the department start today and define specified sized envelopes, bags, and boxes and implement packaging standards that will work in the new building.
- 5) The ideal scenario in the new facility is to store evidence by type of container / package and by case or control number. Currently, general evidence is stored wherever it best fits.

### Moving – Purging

It is the opinion of the E.C.S. review team that it is absolutely imperative that significant resources be allocated to purge as many items as possible from the existing warehouse before the move to the Virginia Avenue Facility.

As previously noted failure to accomplish the necessary purging will dramatically increase the costs of the move as well as having to document and relocate each of the unneeded items. If the item is a candidate to be removed from the inventory it makes little sense to move the item only to remove it for destruction six months after the move. Additionally, failure to accomplish a massive purging effort before the move to the Virginia Avenue

facility will exponentially increase operational Evidence Control Branch costs in the future.

### Moving – Planning for the Movement

The following information is provided to educate the Metropolitan Police Department on issues that will need to be addressed before moving day:



- 1) The best estimate of the storage space presently utilized within the Evidence Control Branch is approximately 200,000 cubic feet. (Note: This figure is prior to the suggested massive purging.) Therefore, the worst-case scenario is that the entire Evidence Control Branch inventory will have to be moved.
- 2) The easiest way to move 200,000 cubic feet of evidence would be to secure as much of the items on pallets and shrink wrap the pallets. Based upon the current inventory of the Branch, E.C.S. estimates that there is at least the equivalent of 4,500 pallets (40 inches wide, 48 inches deep and stacked at 3 feet six inches).
- 3) If the boxes can withstand the weight of another pallet during transfer, a forty-foot cube trailer could possibly move 40 pallets at a time. If the pallets can't be stacked, the capacity could drop to 20 pallets per trailer load. The final result could be a mix of both.
- 4) Predicated upon 40 pallets per trailer (stacked) translates to approximately 110 trailers. If however, the pallets are not stacked, then there would be only 20 pallets per vehicle or a total of 216 trailers.
- 5) Another consideration is that there is no place to easily stage 100 to 200 trailers of evidence at either the present location or the planned facility.
- 6) Should the Metropolitan Police Department decide to have the inventory transported as freight, which E.C.S. does not recommend, it would take approximately 75 trailers.

The purpose of the above projections is only to illustrate the magnitude of the process and some of the advantages of staffing the unit to purge before the move.

### **5.3.0 Operational Adjacencies of Commands in New Facility**

As the Metropolitan Police Department continues to develop its plans for the new facility located at 225 Virginia Avenue, E.C.S. recommends that there be a particular focus upon the need for and efficiencies gained by having branches placed within the building so that there is a logical operational adjacency to the placement. The senior member of the E.C.S. Review Team, Joseph Latta, has had extensive experience in working with architects and planners for new police facilities. Often, due to a lack of knowledge of law enforcement

operations, the planners do not consider the benefit of the adjacency of commands that have day-to-day interaction with each other. The following sections of this report address several recommendations for consideration of placement of the Metropolitan Police Department branches within the new facility.

### ***5.3.1 Mobile Crime Lab (M.C.L.) Branch (Crime Scene Technicians)***

The majority of evidence that is booked into the Evidence Control Branch within the Metropolitan Police Department is processed by the Crime Scene Technicians who are assigned to the Mobile Crime Lab (M.C.L.) Branch. Biological evidence is temporarily stored by Crime Scene Technicians in refrigerators within the M.C.L. and is subsequently shipped to the E.C.B. Based upon the routine functional interaction of the Mobile Crime Lab Branch and the Evidence Control Branch, it is the recommendation of E.C.S. that the department consider moving the Mobile Crime Lab into the new facility on Virginia Avenue. The operational adjacency of these two commands will provide for cost savings, e.g. transportation time from M.C.L. to E.C.B.

### ***5.3.2 New Metropolitan Police Department Crime Laboratory Branch***

While surveying the new facility into which the Evidence Control Branch is to be relocated, the E.C.S. Team was advised that one of the Metropolitan Police Department Patrol Districts was to be moved into the same facility and that there was a possibility that the reorganized M.P.D. Crime Laboratory is to be housed in the building that is currently used for the Patrol District. That is, the District moves into the Virginia Avenue building and the lab moves into the District's former location.

It was our understanding at the time of our visit that the community surrounding the current Patrol District facility would like to see the District remain in that building so that there is a police facility in the area.

Given the daily functional interaction among the Mobile Crime Lab Branch, the Evidence Control Branch and, at a future date, the Crime Laboratory, E.C.S. recommends that these three commands be housed within the new facility 225 Virginia Avenue. By placing the Crime Laboratory in this building, evidence would move from the collectors to those who do the forensic analysis and to the Evidence Control Branch where the evidence is stored. The transfer of evidence to/from any of these three branches, all housed in the same facility, will contribute to more efficient operations. In order to facilitate the above recommendation, the Patrol District would stay in its current location.

### ***5.3.3 Equipment and Supply Branch***

During the E.C.S. review of the Evidence Control Branch operations, the team members met with Mr. Michael Gee, Manager of the Equipment and Supplies Branch (E.S.B.). Our discussions with Mr. Gee related to the use of loading locks and other areas that currently are shared by his command and the Evidence Control Branch. Both the E.C.B. and the E.S.B. utilize loading docks on a daily basis with frequent intake of both supplies

and property/evidence. The Equipment and Supply Branch has tractor trailers unloading equipment and supplies on a daily basis. All equipment and supplies are initially stored at the E.S.B. and are then issued to various components of the Metropolitan Police Department. The Equipment and Supplies Branch also has the responsibility for the storage of a Canteen Truck, a 2 ½ ton truck, a Cargo Van, two (2) forklifts and two (2) unmarked cars.

Based upon our observations of the E.S.B. area in the current warehouse, as well as the projected space in the new facility, it is the recommendation of the E.C.S. team that several more loading docks be constructed with a separate and secure loading/unloading area for the Evidence Control Branch. The Equipment and Supplies Branch needs their own loading docks, i.e. independent of that being used by the Evidence Control Branch. Additionally, given the quantity of supplies and equipment that are processed by the E.S.B., and the use of fork lifts for unloading and storage, it is recommended that adequate and accessible space be allocated to this branch.