

STATE AUDITOR DOUG HOFFER

Press Release

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Auditor Doug Hoffer Releases Audit of Vermont Law Enforcement Training

Vermont Criminal Justice Council Did Not Have Systems in Place to Ensure Required Training Was Completed, Efforts of New Director and Staff Will be Key

MONTPELIER, VT – State Auditor Doug Hoffer released a new audit today of Vermont’s efforts to ensure Vermont law enforcement officers have received required training and that law enforcement agencies have adopted required policies. Housed within the Department of Public Safety, the Vermont Criminal Justice Council (VCJC) is responsible for certifying more than 1,300 law enforcement officers working at 80 law enforcement agencies, including their training requirements.

“There may be no greater power granted by the State than that which it gives law enforcement to perform their public safety functions,” Hoffer said. “With that power comes enormous responsibility. The training and policies required by Vermont statutes are there for a reason – to make sure officers are continuously trained to deliver the highest level of public service, and to protect the rights of Vermonters.”

The audit found that the VCJC has not established policies to ensure officers are receiving their minimum annual required training hours. In addition, the VCJC does not have a system in place to determine if law enforcement agencies have required policies in place, such as Fair and Impartial Policing. Failure to adopt acceptable policies could have significant consequences since state law prohibits an agency’s officers from receiving certification if they are not in place.

Hoffer said: “Law enforcement officers have extremely difficult jobs. Most of the training requirements are in place to help them do their jobs right. Anti-bias training, use of force, domestic violence. These and other vital training topics help the officer, and they protect Vermonters. Everyone is at greater risk if these trainings aren’t received.”

Hoffer added: “VCJC also has work to do to make sure agencies have proper policies in place. When an agency alters the Conducted Electrical Weapon model policy, for example, safety may be jeopardized. Same for Fair and Impartial policing – if an officer is following a local policy that falls short of the model policy, he or she may inadvertently trample on the rights of a Vermonter.”

Notable findings include:

- An examination of 60 officers found significant differences between the summary of officers' hours on agencies' training affidavits and the supporting documentation. In at least 12 cases, there was insufficient documentation to support the officers' assertions that they had met the 30-hour minimum requirement in one or both years evaluated. In addition, for 11 of the 60 selected officers, the documentation did not support that they took one or more specifically required courses or that they took those courses for the minimum number of hours (e.g., took two or three hours instead of the required four hours of use-of-force training).
- To satisfy training requirements, law enforcement agencies (1) included activities that VCJC staff members stated should not be treated as training under Rule 13, (2) recorded a different number of hours for the same training courses, (3) did not always document that a class was taught by an authorized instructor, and (4) did not always have documents that showed the participant's name, and the name, date, and number of hours of a course.
- Out of 12 law enforcement agencies reviewed, (1) four had policies that differed from the Fair and Impartial Policing model policy, (2) seven had policies that differed from the Conducted Electrical Weapon model policy, and (3) four had policies that differed from the body camera model policy. While not all differences were significant, some were concerning – one agency removed the guidance not to use conducted electrical weapons, commonly referred to as Tasers™, on the abdomen of pregnant women.

Hoffer said: "I'm glad the VCJC agrees with all our findings and has begun to improve their training and policy oversight. Everyone wins when we know officers are informed by the right training and are guided by appropriate policies."

To view the report, please click [here](#).