5-09/465.40 - Seizure of High Value Property During Search Operations

High Value Property is defined as:

Any item(s) of money, narcotics, valuables, or other evidence (other than vehicles or real estate) with an estimated worth of $10,000 or more.

Receipts for seized high value property shall be given to the person from whose presence it was seized or who claims ownership of the property. If it is a secure location, the receipt may be left at the scene.

Upon discovery of any large amount of currency (believed to be over $10,000), deputy personnel shall immediately request one deputy back-up with the closest ETA. Deputy personnel shall also make notification to the field/team sergeant.

Currency shall always be bagged separately from property and valuables.

Seizures with Estimated Values of $10,000 or More

If it is anticipated that high value property will be found or seized during the service of a search warrant, the unit commander shall be notified. If the value of the seizure is expected to be $10,000 or more, the unit commander shall designate a watch commander/team lieutenant to be the incident commander. The watch commander/team lieutenant shall oversee the warrant service and the recovery of the property. During multiple location search warrants, the on scene commander for a particular location may be a sergeant. If cash or property exceeding $10,000 in value is discovered at a location, a watch commander/team lieutenant shall respond to the location, from the command post, as needed.

The seizure of cash or valuables (excluding vehicles and real estate) estimated in value at $10,000 or more shall be supervised by a watch commander/team lieutenant. If a watch commander/team lieutenant is not already assigned as the incident commander, one shall be summoned immediately to assume the duties of the incident commander. The property shall be left in place until his or her arrival absent exigent circumstances. Once the watch commander/team lieutenant has assumed control, the following shall apply:

- Uncounted currency, negotiable securities, checks, jewelry, bullion, other negotiable items, or collectibles, etc., estimated at more than $10,000 in value, shall be sealed in a transparent narcotics evidence bag, under the direct supervision of the lieutenant, who shall maintain personal custody of the bag;
- All seizures of cash or property believed to be valued in excess of $10,000 shall be documented on video tape showing its condition upon discovery and the recovery process (including the sealing of the evidence bag and the evidence bag serial number); and
- The watch commander/team lieutenant and one other sworn member shall transport the seized money or valuables to the concerned station or unit. It shall be entered in the safe ledger by the transporting watch commander/team lieutenant and secured in the unit safe by the watch commander or watch sergeant (if the transporting watch commander is the unit watch commander), two signatures required. The evidence bag serial number shall be noted in the safe ledger entry.

It is not necessary for incident commanders (sergeant or lieutenant) to personally transport large amounts of

bulky high value property or recovered cargo loads, as long as the property has been properly inventoried at the scene. The incident commander shall maintain a copy of the inventory sheet and ensure that the property is escorted by no less than two deputies to a secure holding facility. The incident commander shall ensure that the inventory sheet is reconciled against Department reports listing recovered evidence or property, and that it has been entered into the master evidence ledger by the handling deputies.

On rare occasions, it may be impractical or impossible to hold the scene for a long period of time. If a lieutenant is not available and circumstances dictate a need for immediate seizure, the senior Department member present shall supervise the seizure. This member shall, as soon as practical, provide the concerned watch commander/team lieutenant with the video recording, written reports, and receipts of the seizure for his/her review. The written report of the incident shall reflect the circumstances which dictated the need for immediate seizure.

Currency Seized for Narcotics Asset Forfeiture Proceedings

Money and valuables which are from trafficking in controlled substances are seizable for asset forfeiture proceedings under 11470 (f) HS. Cash seized for asset forfeiture (estimated to be $1,000 or more) shall be sealed uncounted into a serialized, tamper proof narcotics evidence bag and booked into the unit safe ledger by the seizing deputy.

Station/unit narcotics detectives shall be routinely notified whenever a seizure for asset forfeiture proceedings occurs. Seizures of more than $10,000 cash shall be reported without unnecessary delay to the station/unit narcotics crew or to the Narcotics Bureau on call representative. Narcotics Bureau personnel shall give direction or respond and take charge of the investigation and evidence.

A sealed narcotics evidence bag containing an uncounted amount of currency held for asset forfeiture proceedings may be entered into a unit safe by the watch commander pending transfer to the Narcotics Bureau, Asset Forfeiture Unit without being opened or the amount counted by the station/unit watch commander.

Prior to release of the sealed bag to a Narcotics Bureau supervisor for transmittal to the Narcotics Bureau's Asset Forfeiture Unit for machine counting and forfeiture processing, the watch commander shall inspect the serialized sealed bag and ensure that it has not been open or tampered with.

This procedure for initial booking of uncounted currency will allow for a single count of large amounts under controlled conditions by the Narcotics Bureau Asset Forfeiture Unit and prevent discrepancies.

Currency Seized for other than Narcotics Asset Forfeiture Proceedings

If seized currency is to remain in the custody of a station or unit, and the unit has elected to account for the currency using the “sealed bag” method, the unit may utilized the services of the Narcotic Bureau Asset Forfeiture Unit to accomplish an automated count of the currency under controlled conditions.

The Narcotics Bureau Asset Forfeiture Unit shall receive the sealed evidence bag(s), open the bags in the presence of the transporting personnel and count the contents according to established Narcotics Bureau policy and procedure. After the count is complete, the Asset Forfeiture Unit shall advise the submitting Unit of the amount, record their names and the amount on the bag, reseal it, and return it to the custody of the

submitting unit for processing.

The unit of case assignment has the responsibility to cause a final disposition of money evidence that has been entered into a unit safe. That disposition shall be made within 30 days of the initial entry.

The Narcotics Bureau Asset Forfeiture Unit is located in Room D115 at STARS Center. The hours of operation are Monday - Friday, 0900 - 1700 hours. Asset Forfeiture Unit personnel may be contacted at (562) 946-7116. Units shall give appropriate notice to the Asset Forfeiture Unit prior to transporting money for counting.

Non-Warrant Seizure of High Value Property

In the event that high value property (excluding vehicles and real estate) is found during a routine investigation, a sergeant shall be notified immediately and shall respond. If the property shall be seized for evidence or safekeeping and is believed to be valued at more than $10,000, a watch commander/team lieutenant shall be requested to respond to the location. All applicable recovery procedures noted in this section shall apply.