

The State Scanner



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Getting It Right—Agency Spotlight

Each quarter, this space spotlights an agency that consistently receives the coveted “Perfect Audit.” This quarter we highlight Alabama Public Television. 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 Mary Ann Woods to share their best practices with everyone.

AUD: How many locations are involved in the Alabama Public Television property audit?

APT: Between television and radio operations, APT has 10 transmitter sites, 21 microwave/auxiliary sites, and four office/production locations that are audited.

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

APT: There are 2,345 items with a value of \$33,598,159. However, we also track an additional 77 items we deem sensitive in nature or that were purchased with grant money below the \$500 threshold valued at \$19,914.

AUD: What are the biggest challenges you and your department face in accurately tracking all the property owned by APT, and how have you overcome these challenges?

APT: We have 15 individuals directly responsible for items in addition to the assistant property manager and myself. This leads to dealing with different personalities and their views of property management. To overcome the challenge, we’ve had to get to know each person and formulate procedures which are minimally intrusive to their ‘job’ as possible. Property is only a small part of each of our duties.

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

APT: Rita Grey is our payables clerk and also serves as the assistant property manager. She monitors all invoices and flags vouchers containing items charged to inventory. I receive a copy, assign the number, and add it into our inventory. Fortunately, APT hasn’t had many issues with lost or stolen property. However, the first step is to contact the property manager so I can walk the person responsible through the procedures and paperwork. For Surplus items, we review all items. Those purchased with Federal grants have a 10-year lien and cannot be sent to Surplus prior to the expiration of the lien. Once items have been approved, the Chief Operating Officer reviews the list to see if items can be reassigned within the agency.

AUD: What improvements were made to your agency’s procedures to decrease the time and cost involved in completing the property audit?

APT: Rita and I have certain facilities where we conduct a supervised inventory. This has allowed us to become familiar with the facility layout, the location of the equipment as well as knowing what the equipment looks like. This allows us to work with the auditor on site and personnel can continue with their normal routine.

AUD: What is the philosophy of Executive Director Allan Pizzato regarding the personal property of Alabama Public Television?

APT: “We take property management and tracking very seriously at APT. We have to because we have so many expensive, technical items located all over the state. I stress to each person on our management team the importance of property management and how, if it is done right, it actually saves us time and stress in the end. We are fortunate

Best Practices of APT

- MONITOR INVOICES AND FLAG ITEMS TO ADD TO INVENTORY
- FOLLOW ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES
- KNOW LOCATION OF ALL ITEMS
- BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYEES AND EDUCATE THEM ON PROPERTY PROCEDURES
- COMMITMENT FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALLAN PIZZATO

to have a dedicated person, who among her many duties, oversees the property management function. She is a perfectionist and keeps on top of purchases, dispositions, transfers and all the necessary paperwork to ensure all property is accounted for.”

AUD: Any advice for other agencies having problems?

APT: Cultivating relationships has allowed us the opportunity of educating employees of the importance of property management. With budget cuts, there is no wiggle room.



Thanks APT for a job well done!

Alabama
Public
Television
Property
Manager
Mary Ann
Woods.

From the Desk of Sam Shaw, State Auditor

Oh the joys of Spring! Yes, Springtime in Alabama – blooming dogwoods and azaleas leave our vehicles yellow with pollen; waves of visitors descend upon the State Capitol, including many 4th graders studying Alabama History; warmer temperatures lure us to spend more time outdoors; and for many Alabamians, there is the annual spring-cleaning ritual.

With regards to the annual spring-cleaning ritual and property management, two things come to mind. First, as our State Audit Inventory Officers conduct property audits, they often come across agencies with old or unused items that need to be sent to Surplus. Take a few minutes, conduct some spring-cleaning within your agency, and get rid of those unnecessary items. Second, in the process of doing spring-cleaning at home, individuals may run across items they no longer need, and sometimes the State of Alabama is the recipient of those donated items. We have found furniture, vehicles, computers, equipment, works of art, or items with historic significance as just some of the items donated to the State of Alabama.

Often, for the Property Managers, there is confusion regarding inputting donated items into Protégé. Agencies should always obtain a letter from the donor (Exhibit P in Property Manual). Once the fair market value is determined and if the “value meets or exceeds \$500, a property number should be assigned, a bar code label affixed, and the item added to the department property inventory.” If your agency receives donated items, please refer to the Property Manual for the proper procedures. Hopefully, this clears up any confusion regarding donated items. As for the pollen, it will just have to clear up on its own.

Sam Shaw, State Auditor



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Where in Alabama...?

Above — Battleship USS Alabama with Submarine USS Drum upper right.

Battleship Memorial Park is open 364 days a year complete with Gift Shop and Snack Bar. Plan a visit this year.

...has the State Auditor's Office been lately? Recently, Robert Davis performed the property audit of the Battleship USS Alabama Memorial Park. The physical challenges associated with this audit are the narrow, steep steps you have to use in the ship, and the door openings between compartments are about a foot above the floor. It was interesting though to see where the crew slept, ate, and fought during WWII. Many items are on display.

According to Executive Director Bill Tunnell, "We have two of only four National Historic Landmarks in Mobile, and each of those items holds thousands of artifacts that are indigenous to and came with the respective vessels. Coupled with about two dozen aircraft, several military artifacts large and small, and lots of other 'stuff', the items to be audited are relatively small in number... only 176 items with a value of \$367,928." However, the Park covers 175 acres with seven buildings. Items do shift around due to a very mobile staff working in these two large vessels, but property manager Owen Miller has done a great job at maintaining the Perfect Audit rating. Inventory took a large hit from Hurricane Katrina's 14 feet of water which destroyed all the land-based buildings and many items considered to be in 'secure locations'. Repair bills have topped \$7.1 million to date.

The Battleship and Submarine were transferred to the State of Alabama, USS Alabama Battleship Commission by the Federal Government. Although both vessels are considered property of the State, specific conditions and annual inspections are routine. Most of the aircraft are on loan from the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force which also carry additional requirements. "All employees know their responsibilities and keep up with their issued equipment. They know replacement items come from a meager budget that is self-generated by admissions and donations. Items misplaced, damaged, or destroyed require some 'explaining' prior to replacement. Spot inventory checks keep all aware of the location of items." Many artifacts are on loan and have to be accounted for at any given time. Controls are in place to monitor artifacts. Mr. Tunnell says, "I am a true believer in the audit system and welcome our property audits. Although we are self-funded, we owe the Alabama citizens the best care to preserve and protect all items in our possession." Next time you are in Mobile, plan to visit Battleship Memorial Park.



Up close and personal with the USS Alabama gun turrets.

For more information, visit www.ussalabama.com. Until next quarter, we'll be "on the road again".

Employee Corner

On Tuesday, April 21 several property managers gathered to view and listen to a webinar titled Applying Industry Leading Best Practices to Asset Management Systems sponsored by NPMA. Even though it was geared at the Federal level, there were insights gained that we can use at the State level. One thing that stood out was consistency in naming items in the system. For demonstration purposes, let's look at printers. You might be surprised at the number of different ways printers are input into Protégé, and surprisingly, many just say "printer" and don't have a serial number in the system (i.e. HP printer; HP laser printer; HP laserjet printer; HP laser color printer; Printer laserjet HP; etc.) Consistency in naming the items helps our auditors identify the equipment quicker, and the serial number is a must if one is available for the item.

To take consistency a little further, consistency in the name of the person responsible helps when pulling the annual report to give the person to verify their items (i.e. Dean Jones; D. Jones; Jones, Dean; Jones, D; The Honorable Dean Jones; etc.) Be consistent in the way you input names to avoid missing items that a person

is truly responsible for when pulling the annual report for verification. This also helps our auditors avoid missing items that should have been scanned during the audit.

One idea that was suggested during the comment segment after the webinar was a Best Practices document from all agencies. This will help 'newbie's' to property management and offer new ideas to the 'oldies' that have been involved with property since before desktop computers were deemed a necessity to complete one's daily job duties. We have strived to highlight best practices from various agencies in our newsletter, but having a document with all of them combined would be a benefit for all. Over the next few months, if property managers will send me Best Practices used by their agency for tracking items, I will compile them into one document for distribution to all. Also include things you have tried that didn't work so someone else won't repeat the mistake. I will strive to have the document ready by November when we host the one-day seminar (see below). Please e-mail your Best Practices and Mistakes to Kathie.Lynch@auditor.alabama.gov.

Did You Know? FAQs



Important Dates to Remember:

Thursday, May 14, 2009—Next Capitol City Chapter NPMA meeting at the Richard Beard Building Auditorium, 1445 Federal Drive, Montgomery (same location as the March meeting.). Please note this is a change in schedule from the original published date. Darby Forrester from State Personnel will be our guest speaker.

Tuesday, November 17, 2009—The State Auditor's Office in conjunction with the Capitol City Chapter of NPMA will host a one-day State Property Management Educational Seminar. More details will be available within the next couple of months. We are working to make this affordable for everyone, so go ahead and mark your calendar for this date.

Q: If I bring my personal laptop, desk or other equipment to use in my office, does it need to be labeled? If so, why does it need a label?

A: Any personal items with a value of \$500 and above brought from home need to be labeled to designate "Personal Property of [Name]". This avoids any confusion from our auditors thinking new items have been purchased that have not been input into the system and avoids them entering them into the system as a new item. The label also protects you and your department. Refer to VI. Miscellaneous Procedures, section I. Personally-Owned Property on page 22 of the Property Manual.

Q: When items are purchased with funds other than General Fund dollars or with grant money, are the items treated the same as those purchased with General Fund money?

A: All items purchased for use by State agencies, boards, commissions, and Administrative Office of Courts need to be properly identified with an item number and bar code label regardless of funds used for purchase. Items owned by the County should be labeled as "Property of [County]" to avoid being listed as a new item not yet entered into the system. Items purchased from grants may have additional provisions regarding the length of time an agency has to hold onto the item. For all questions, please refer to procedures listed in the Property Manual which is available on-line at The State Auditor's website, www.auditor.alabama.gov.