

City Auditor's Highlights

Audit of the Honolulu Police Department's Overtime Policies, Procedures, and Protocols
Resolution 21-58

Report No. 22-03



In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) spent over \$38 million on overtime expenditures, representing over 12 percent of the department's operating budget that year. Additionally, a media outlet reported that some officers more than doubled their base salary with overtime pay. The Honolulu City Council passed Resolution 21-58 on April 14, 2021, requesting the auditor to address: 1) whether HPD's overtime policies and procedures ensure fair distribution of overtime to all officers, 2) whether HPD's overtime policies and procedures ensure that overtime privileges are not abused, and 3) recommendations for improvements to HPD overtime policies and procedures. The report reviewed policies, procedures, and overtime use from FY 2016 through FY 2020, including surveying HPD staff, reviewing overtime time cards, analyzing staffing trends, and identifying best practices related to police overtime.

Overtime Policies and Procedures are Inconsistently Applied Throughout HPD

We found that although HPD has developed policies and procedures for managing department overtime, inconsistent interpretation and application of those controls has resulted in ineffective management of police overtime. Surveys of HPD administrators confirm this inconsistent interpretation and application of controls. Different divisions reported distributing overtime hours to officers based on different factors, raising the question of whether overtime is being distributed equitably and/or effectively.



HPD Overtime Cards are Managed Manually, Increasing the Risk for Error, Abuse and Fraud

Patrol districts rely on manual overtime timecards to document overtime for payroll approval. With over 2,100 authorized officers, paper overtime timecards are voluminous and difficult to monitor. Furthermore, the integrity of manual overtime timecards are at risk because they can be easily misinterpreted, altered, falsified, or lost.

In our sample review of 1,327 overtime timecards from patrol districts between FY 2016 and FY 2020, we found that many timecards were either missing or the details were unclear, overtime hours were not properly logged in the Payroll, Time, & Attendance system, or they had been paid without sufficient documentation. Specifically, we found that nearly \$30,000 in overtime had been paid without timecard verification.

HPD Officer Vacancies Increased 70 Percent From 2016 to 2020

In 2016, HPD had 178 uniformed vacancies. By 2020, there were 303 uniformed vacancies, which is 14 percent of the uniformed workforce. These vacancies are due to numerous factors.

Uniformed retirements increased 33 percent from 2016 to 2020. Additionally, dozens of officers each year are moved out of their patrol districts to other districts or divisions on special assignment. When officers are on special assignment, which can last anywhere from a few weeks to a few years, their vacancies cannot be filled, increasing the need for overtime. Finally, the graduation rates for Training Academy recruit classes dropped from 80 percent in 2016 to 54 percent in 2021. Reasons for not graduating include personal decisions, failure to pass, or injury.



HPD Allows Officers to Volunteer for Unlimited Overtime, but Staff Shortages Still Persist

HPD policies allow officers to work overtime shifts with no limits. For example, over a 2-week period in June 2019, one officer worked a total of 232 hours. These policies do not account for risks such as officer fatigue.

Despite the unlimited use of overtime allowed, certain HPD districts did not meet their minimum staffing percentages in FY 2020. The minimum staffing increased from 75 percent in 2018 to 80 percent and later 85 percent in 2019. Percentages remained at 85 percent in 2020, and decreased to 75 percent in 2021. According to HPD, the increases in 2019 were attributed to strategic initiatives from the Chief of Police. In FY 2020, Districts 5 and 7 did not meet the minimum staffing requirements.

We made six recommendations to improve the oversight and effectiveness of HPD's policies, protocols, and procedures related to overtime management.



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