



Elaine M. Howle *State Auditor*

CONTACT: Margarita Fernández | (916) 445-0255 x 343 | MargaritaF@auditor.ca.gov

## King City Police Department

*Strengthening Management Practices Would Help Its Efforts to Prevent Officer Misconduct and to Regain the Public's Trust*

### Background

Located in Monterey County and overseen by the chief of police, the King City Police Department (Department) strives to partner with its community of 13,000 residents to protect life and property, solve neighborhood problems, and enhance the quality of life in King City (City). The Department has undergone many changes in the last few years which were prompted when seven officers—a third of its force—were either fired or resigned from the Department in 2014 with two being involved in a towing scheme.

### Key Findings

- Its investigations and discipline policies allow supervisors to decide unilaterally whether a verbal complaint has merit or whether it should be treated as an informal issue.
  - » There is no record of complaints filed by the public that were related to the towing scheme.
  - » The Department's website does not draw attention to the complaint process and only five formal complaints were filed over a two-year period.
- Its records management system's data is incomplete, which made it impossible to accurately monitor citations.
- Policies do not contain all the directives on towing vehicles that the city council approved in 2014.
- The Department does not effectively monitor gas purchases to ensure that such purchases—one of its largest expenses—are made only for police purposes.
- The Department's policy does not outline the steps staff should take to complete monthly inspections, annual audits, and physical inventories of evidence and property it collects.
- Its hiring policies and processes are inadequate.
  - » It conducts background investigations before hiring officers to prevent misconduct and conflicts of interest, but it has not identified the types of incompatible activities for the officer position.
  - » It does not always obtain complete information when interviewing officer candidates.
- The Department has not documented its approach to foster community awareness in officers and for providing outreach to the community.
- Because the City's budgeting process did not consider known future expenses from fiscal year 2010–11 through 2014–15, the Department significantly overspent in certain areas.

### Our Key Recommendations

The Department should perform the following:

- Strengthen its complaint resolution processes and public awareness protocols for filing complaints.
- Develop a process for conducting quarterly reviews of its traffic citation statistics and ensure consistency in enforcements.
- Update its towing policy and document patrol directives it provides officers.
- Create a formal community engagement plan.

The City should establish consistent screening criteria for hiring officers to identify issues that may lead to conflicts of interest.

### The Department Towed 108 Vehicles from May 2014 Through April 2016, Yet Has Not Fully Updated Its Towing Policies

