

Voluntary Safe Firearm and Ammunition Return Program Feasibility Report

March 2023



King County

I. Contents

II. Executive Summary 3

III. Background..... 4

IV. Report Requirements 5

 Item A: Process for Delivery of Unwanted Firearm and/or Ammunition to KCSO Precinct 5

 Item B: Process for KCSO Employee to Retrieve Unwanted Firearm and/or Ammunition from a Specific Location 5

 Item C: Process for Destruction/Disposal for All Unwanted Firearms and Ammunition Voluntarily Relinquished to KCSO..... 5

 Item D: Recommendation for Monetary or Other Incentives to Encourage Community Participation in the Program 7

 Item E: Description of KCSO Capacity to Hold One or More Special Buy-Back Events Each Year 7

V. Appendices 8

II. Executive Summary

The King County region is experiencing increasing rates of gun violence and King County Public Health declared gun violence a public health crisis in 2013. Using a public health approach, King County is working to address gun violence through multiple strategies. One such tactic is the potential expanded use of a voluntary gun surrender program.

For many years, the King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) has accepted unwanted firearms at precincts, which are then managed by KCSO's Property Management Unit. After reviewing national and local guidance on gun surrender programs, KCSO memorialized the process for safe firearm and ammunition return in the KCSO General Orders Manual (GOM). Specific protocols for accepting unwanted guns at either a precinct or a specified location are outlined in Section 8 of the GOM, and all unwanted firearms and ammunition are disposed of at specialized facility.

With additional funding awarded by the County Council in the 2023-2024 Biennial Budget, KCSO intends to hold at least three gun buyback events in 2023. KCSO will use monetary incentives to support the surrender of over 300 unwanted firearms during the events. KCSO estimates that the overall cost to administer the voluntary gun surrender program, including precinct turn-ins, events, and buyback incentives, to be approximately \$126,000.

III. Background

Department Overview: The King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) serves the law enforcement needs of over half a million people in unincorporated areas and twelve contract cities. KCSO also provides police departments for the Muckleshoot Tribe, Metro Transit, and the King County International Airport. KCSO's commitment to meeting the needs of all residents means that services such as helicopters and river dive units are available to 1.6 million residents in King County.

The KCSO strives to ensure the safety of people in King County, and aims to do this in a respectful manner based on core values of leadership, integrity, service, and teamwork. Every KCSO employee is expected to provide the best customer service by working with citizens to address public safety concerns.

In January 2022, KCSO transitioned from an elected sheriff to a sheriff appointed by the King County Executive. The Sheriff serves as the department director with the undersheriff serving as the deputy director.

Regional Gun Violence: Each year, nearly 40,000 Americans die by suicide, homicide, or accidents with firearms. In King County, more people are killed by firearms than by car crashes, with an annual financial cost of nearly \$200 million in medical charges and lost productivity. Seventy percent of gun deaths in King County are the result of suicide.¹

In 2013, the Executive directing Public Health began addressing gun violence with a public health approach.² Since that time, King County, together with a number of partner agencies and local communities, has worked to break the cycle of gun violence. Efforts include an active public awareness campaign, outreach to ensure that firearms are locked away at home, and collaboration with community organizations to serve as violence interrupters.³

Voluntary firearm return programs can play an integral role in the region-wide effort to combat gun violence. Through these voluntary programs, gun owners are able to turn in firearms and receive financial compensation in return. Collecting unwanted firearms and ammunition removes the possibility that such weapons would be used to commit a crime or for self-harm. The anonymous nature of such programs can also remove the stigma or risk associated with firearms.

Voluntary Gun Surrender Programs – Historical Context and Current Conditions: At both the national and regional level, voluntary gun surrender programs have demonstrated success in collecting unwanted firearms. "American cities have been running buybacks since at least the 1970s, and they are broadly popular, even in conservative, gun-friendly states....gun buyback events in Houston netted 845

¹ <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/violence-injury-prevention/violence-prevention/gun-violence.aspx>
(1/17/2023)

² <https://kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/news/release/2013/February/04gunviolence.aspx>
(1/17/2023)

³ <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/violence-injury-prevention/violence-prevention/gun-violence.aspx>
(1/17/2023)

guns, Dane County, Wisconsin, received more than 500 guns and Spartanburg, South Carolina, collected 165 guns.”⁴

Locally, gun buyback programs have also shown success. In 2013, a gun buyback operation held in Seattle by the Seattle Police Department (SPD) collected a total of 716 guns, including 348 pistols and 364 rifles. According to reporting at the time, despite the presence of private buyers near the event site, very few members of the public chose to sell their weapons, preferring to participate in the gun buyback event. State law permits private gun sales between Washington State residents without a background check, even though background checks are mandated for retail gun sales. Over \$68,000 in gift cards were handed out during SPD’s event. Rifles, handguns and shotguns were eligible for up to \$100 in gift cards, and assault weapons were eligible for up to \$200. Several members of the public dropped off unwanted weapons and did not want a gift card in return.⁵

It is important to note that KCSO, along with many law enforcement entities, has for many years accepted voluntary surrender of firearms and ammunition. KCSO’s ability to accept firearms and ammunition is contained within the Sheriff’s Office General Orders Manual (GOM). The GOM contains all policies and procedures for the general operations of KCSO. The applicable section of the GOM is attached as Appendix 2. All firearms collected by the KCSO are disposed of at a specialized facility in Spokane.

Report Methodology: KCSO developed this report based on its experience operating a firearm surrender program as well as local and national-level research.

IV. Report Requirements

This section is organized to reflect the requirements of Motion 16180. Motion items A-C are addressed together below, while items D and E are addressed separately.

Item A: Process for Delivery of Unwanted Firearm and/or Ammunition to KCSO Precinct

Item B: Process for KCSO Employee to Retrieve Unwanted Firearm and/or Ammunition from a Specific Location

Item C: Process for Destruction/Disposal for All Unwanted Firearms and Ammunition Voluntarily Relinquished to KCSO

KCSO has long accepted unwanted firearms and ammunition. These items can be turned over to KCSO deputies at precincts or, with supervisor approval, deputies can go to a residence to collect unwanted firearms and/or ammunition. As identified in the General Orders Manual, specific processes for accepting unwanted firearms and/or ammunition at a precinct include:

⁴ <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2022/08/30/gun-buybacks-are-popular-but-are-they-effective> (1/17/2023)

⁵ <https://spdblotter.seattle.gov/2013/01/28/the-gun-buyback-by-the-numbers/>

- All surrendered firearms, regardless of where they were surrendered, shall be routed to the KCSO Property Management Unit for safe storage and future disposition.
- Department members answering calls or receiving questions regarding the surrender of weapons should direct people to contact the Property Management Unit (PMU) if the question is during normal business hours.
- Weapons from walk-ins at worksites equipped with secure evidence storage will be accepted by commissioned personnel.
 - Walk-ins at location without secure evidence storage should be referred to the nearest work location with secure evidence storage or PMU. This does not prohibit a Deputy from accepting weapons at a storefront location and immediately transporting them to a Precinct with secure storage.
 - Patrol supervisors may direct the walk-in to setup an appointment at the work-site or PMU if there is:
 - A large number of weapons being surrendered; or
 - No commissioned personnel available due to workloads.
- Personnel shall not accept weapons at any King County Courthouse.
- Deputies will not refuse a weapon from a member of the public simply because the person turning in the weapon refuses to show identification. However, this will be noted in the paperwork and the weapon's serial number shall be run through Data prior to the end of the deputies shift.
- Ammunition being surrendered should be screened by the deputy receiving it.

The KCSO Property Management Unit (PMU) is responsible for the safe disposal of firearms and ammunition in good condition. PMU periodically transports these items to a facility in Spokane for destruction.

Per the procedures outlined above, ammunition in poor condition will be screened by a member of the Bomb Disposal Unit (BDU). BDU is charged with the safe destruction of high-risk ammunition.

The full procedures for current safe firearm return are contained in the KCSO General Orders Manual, Section 8.04.000, which is attached as Appendix 2. All KCSO commissioned employees are required to know all sections of the GOM. The GOM is available online at: <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/sheriff/about-us/manual.aspx>

Item D: Recommendation for Monetary or Other Incentives to Encourage Community Participation in the Program

A recent study by Montana State University with the National Bureau of Economic Research shows that firearm surrender programs are successful when they are easy to use, are well known and promoted throughout the region, and can take advantage of financial incentives. This 2021 study on the ineffectiveness of buyback events across the United States cited research stating that ineffective “buybacks offer too little money, tend to take place in low-crime areas and collect firearms that tend to be older and less functional.”⁶

To address these issues, KCSO plans to launch an awareness campaign in 2023 to increase public awareness of how and where to return unwanted firearms and ammunition. Additionally, KCSO intends to hold several gun buyback events at various locations throughout King County (see Section E for more information).

In addition, the KCSO is exploring the amount of money to provide as a monetary incentives. According to the Montana State University study:

The amount of money that officials offer for firearms at buyback events vary by community. While Nashville, Tennessee, offered \$50 Kroger gift cards for all guns in its buyback event earlier this month, Columbus, Georgia, gave out \$250 gift cards for any handgun, rifle or shotgun turned in at its event last month. Nashville netted 76 guns. Columbus, on the other hand, obtained 111 guns. Ideally, local officials should offer at least \$100 for rifles, \$200 for small caliber revolvers, \$400 for semi-automatics and \$500 for assault weapons.⁷

While the final amount of money KCSO will offer for firearms has not yet been determined, the King County Council provided \$100,000 in the 2023-2024 Biennial Budget to support KCSO buyback events.

Item E: Description of KCSO Capacity to Hold One or More Special Buy-Back Events Each Year

With sufficient lead time for planning, KCSO has the capacity to hold one or more buy back events in a single year. Components of a buyback event include staffing, a facility or location, firearm storage and transportation, and a means of payment for surrendered firearms and ammunition.

The estimated cost for a buyback event is identified below. This data has been reviewed by the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget.

Cost for Basic Safe Firearm Return Program

⁶ <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2022/08/30/gun-buybacks-are-popular-but-are-they-effective>

⁷ <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2022/08/30/gun-buybacks-are-popular-but-are-they-effective>

As previously discussed, KCSO currently accepts unwanted firearms and ammunition. At its current activity level, there is no additional cost for the program. However, with focused community outreach and awareness, program costs could rise above current budgeted capacity.

The table below outlines the costs associated with an expanded safe firearm return program. Following the table is a discussion of specific costs.

Firearm Return Program Estimated Costs		
Category	Description	Cost
Basic Program	Accepts ad hoc gun surrenders at precincts	\$0
Buyback Event: Gun Purchase	Estimated cost for purchasing unwanted firearms at four surrender events	\$100,000
Buyback Event: Administration	Estimated cost for event planning, advertising, operation, and security for four events	\$20,000
PMU/BDU Marginal Cost: Firearm Transport and Storage	Estimated cost for collection and transportation of firearms and ammunition to a secured storage facility	\$3,000
PMU/BDU Marginal Cost: Firearm Disposal	Estimated cost for travel to firearm disposal facility in Spokane (overtime, food, etc.)	\$3,000
TOTAL		\$126,000

As previously discussed, KCSO currently operates an ad hoc gun surrender program as part of regular operations. Expanding KCSO’s current gun surrender program to include up to four buyback events would cost an estimated \$126,000. The largest portion of this is the cost associated with purchasing unwanted firearms. The 2023-2024 Biennial Budget includes \$100,000 for these purchases. Additionally, gun buyback events require planning, advertising, day-of operations, and security, which is estimated to cost approximately \$20,000 in overtime, printing, and administrative expenses.

Additionally, depending on the volume of firearm and ammunition returns, KCSO would likely see increased staff costs for administration and firearm and ammunition storage and disposal, which is handled through the KCSO Bomb Disposal Unit. This staff need would be met through ancillary duties and overtime. As previously discussed, KCSO uses a specialized facility in Spokane for firearm disposal purposes. For safe storage, the estimated annual cost would be approximately \$3,000 for two specially trained BDU detectives to travel to Spokane for safe firearm disposal.

V. Appendices

Appendix 1: Motion

Appendix 2: General Orders Manual – Section 8.04.000



KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Signature Report

Motion 16180

Proposed No. 2022-0221.2

Sponsors Dembowski, Zahilay, Kohl-Welles, McDermott, Balducci and Perry

1 A MOTION requesting the King County executive assess
2 the feasibility of establishing a year-round voluntary safe
3 firearm and ammunition return program within the King
4 County sheriff's office.

5 WHEREAS, as of May 26, 2022, there have been 231 mass shootings in the
6 United States this year where 4 or more people have been shot, 27 of which occurred in
7 schools, and

8 WHEREAS, the racist attack in Buffalo, New York, on May 14, 2022, killed 10
9 innocent people, and 10 days later, the May 24, 2022, shooting at an elementary school in
10 Uvalde, Texas killed 19 fourth graders and two teachers and seriously injured many
11 others, both physically and mentally, and

12 WHEREAS, gun violence killed more than 45,000 people in the United States last
13 year including through homicides, suicides and accidental deaths, with suicides making
14 up more than half of all gun related deaths, and

15 WHEREAS, gun violence is the leading cause of death for children and teens up
16 to 19 years old in the United States, and

17 WHEREAS, with only 4 percent of the world's population, the United States
18 possesses nearly 46 percent of all civilian-owned firearms in the world, which is 393
19 million out of an estimated 857 million civilian-owned firearms worldwide, and

Motion 16180

20 WHEREAS, like the rest of the nation, King County is suffering under an
21 increase in gun violence, and

22 WHEREAS, in 2021, according to data from the King County prosecutor, the
23 total number of shots fired in King County was up approximately 54 percent, the number
24 of overall shooting victims was up 70 percent, and the number of shooting fatalities was
25 up 54 percent over the 4-year average from 2017 through 2020, and

26 WHEREAS, the 460 shooting victims reported in 2021 were disproportionately
27 people of color at 81 percent and 48 percent of fatal and nonfatal victims identified as
28 Black, and

29 WHEREAS, King County has implemented programs and policies to increase gun
30 safety, including requiring the destruction of forfeited firearms, encouraging safe firearm
31 storage and enforcement of Extreme Risk Protection Orders, and

32 WHEREAS, voluntary firearm and ammunition return programs have proven to
33 be effective in removing firearms from homes and communities and provide
34 opportunities to educate residents about gun violence reduction strategies;

35 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

36 A. The council requests the King County executive to assess the feasibility of
37 establishing a year-round voluntary safe firearm and ammunition return program within
38 the King County sheriff's office.

39 B. The assessment of the feasibility of the voluntary safe firearm and ammunition
40 return program should evaluate, but not be limited to:

41 1. A process by which any individual may peaceably deliver and abandon any
42 unwanted firearm or ammunition to any King County sheriff's office location at any time;

Motion 16180

43 2. A process by which an individual can request that a King County sheriff's
44 deputy or authorized sheriff's office employee retrieve unwanted firearms or ammunition
45 from a specified location;

46 3. The destruction or disposal of all unwanted firearms and ammunition
47 voluntarily relinquished to the King County sheriff's office;

48 4. The provision of monetary or other incentives to encourage community
49 participation in the program;

50 5. The capacity of the King County sheriff's office to hold one or more special
51 buy-back events each year; and

52 6. The cost to administer the program.

53 C. Based on the evaluation requested in section B of this motion, the executive
54 should further assess whether the voluntary safe firearm and ammunition return program

Motion 16180

55 could be developed and implemented in collaboration with local jurisdictions throughout
56 King County.

Motion 16180 was introduced on 6/7/2022 and passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on 7/26/2022, by the following vote:

Yes: 9 - Balducci, Dembowski, Dunn, Kohl-Welles, Perry, McDermott, Upthegrove, von Reichbauer and Zahilay

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

DocuSigned by:

7E1C273CE9994B6...
Claudia Balducci, Chair

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:

8DE1BB375AD3422...
Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

Attachments: None

Certificate Of Completion

Envelope Id: 5ADC570C6E504BF9939542CF3262662C	Status: Completed
Subject: Please DocuSign: Motion 16180.docx	
Source Envelope:	
Document Pages: 4	Signatures: 2
Certificate Pages: 2	Initials: 0
AutoNav: Enabled	Envelope Originator:
Envelope Stamping: Enabled	Cherie Camp
Time Zone: (UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)	401 5th Ave
	Suite 100
	Seattle, WA 98104
	Cherie.Camp@kingcounty.gov
	IP Address: 198.49.222.20

Record Tracking

Status: Original	Holder: Cherie Camp	Location: DocuSign
7/27/2022 1:31:45 PM	Cherie.Camp@kingcounty.gov	
Security Appliance Status: Connected	Pool: FedRamp	
Storage Appliance Status: Connected	Pool: King County General (ITD)	Location: DocuSign

Signer Events

Claudia Balducci
 claudia.balducci@kingcounty.gov
 Council Chair
 King County General (ITD)
 Security Level: Email, Account Authentication (None)

Signature

DocuSigned by:

 7E1C273CE9994B6...
 Signature Adoption: Pre-selected Style
 Using IP Address: 146.129.133.26

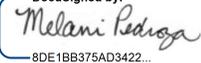
Timestamp

Sent: 7/27/2022 1:32:55 PM
 Viewed: 7/27/2022 3:50:38 PM
 Signed: 7/27/2022 3:50:44 PM

Electronic Record and Signature Disclosure:

Not Offered via DocuSign

Melani Pedroza
 melani.pedroza@kingcounty.gov
 Clerk of the Council
 King County Council
 Security Level: Email, Account Authentication (None)

DocuSigned by:

 8DE1BB375AD3422...
 Signature Adoption: Uploaded Signature Image
 Using IP Address: 198.49.222.20

Sent: 7/27/2022 3:50:44 PM
 Viewed: 7/28/2022 10:09:27 AM
 Signed: 7/28/2022 10:09:32 AM

Electronic Record and Signature Disclosure:

Not Offered via DocuSign

In Person Signer Events	Signature	Timestamp
Editor Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
Agent Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
Intermediary Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
Certified Delivery Events	Status	Timestamp
Carbon Copy Events	Status	Timestamp
Witness Events	Signature	Timestamp
Notary Events	Signature	Timestamp
Envelope Summary Events	Status	Timestamps

Envelope Summary Events	Status	Timestamps
Envelope Sent	Hashed/Encrypted	7/27/2022 1:32:55 PM
Certified Delivered	Security Checked	7/28/2022 10:09:27 AM
Signing Complete	Security Checked	7/28/2022 10:09:32 AM
Completed	Security Checked	7/28/2022 10:09:32 AM

Payment Events	Status	Timestamps
-----------------------	---------------	-------------------

Appendix 2
General Operations Manual
Sec. 8.04.000

8.04.000 SURRENDERING WEAPONS AND CONCEALED PISTOL LICENSES

8.04.005

INTRODUCTION:

Frequently, courts order persons to surrender weapons, primarily firearms and their concealed pistol licenses to their local Law Enforcement Agency. The order can originate from a variety of case types related to marriage dissolution, criminal domestic violence incidents or protective orders issued by the court. Also, citizens may want to voluntarily surrender weapons for any reason or weapons are turned over to the Sheriff's Office as a result of a community care function (i.e., a weapon recovered by aid personnel when a driver is transported to a hospital). This policy is intended to provide direction to Sheriff's Office personnel when dealing with persons surrendering weapons for any reason (court ordered or voluntary).

8.04.010

NORMAL PROCEDURES:

1. All surrendered firearms, regardless of where they were surrendered, shall be routed to the Property Management Unit for safe storage and future disposition.
2. Department members answering calls or receiving questions regarding the surrender of weapons should direct people to contact the Property Management Unit during normal business hours.
3. Department members answering calls or receiving questions regarding the surrender of CPLs should direct people to contact the Records Unit during normal business hours.
4. Upon a citizen request, deputies may be dispatched to pick up weapons in the field with a supervisor's approval.
5. Weapons from walk-ins at worksites equipped with secure evidence storage will be accepted by commissioned personnel.
 - a. Walk-ins at location without secure evidence storage should be referred to the nearest work location with secure evidence storage or PMU.
 - b. Patrol supervisors may direct the walk-in to setup an appointment at the work-site or PMU if there is:
 - A large number of weapons being surrendered.
 - No commissioned personnel available due to workloads.
6. Deputies may accept weapons in the field with a supervisor's approval.
7. Personnel shall not accept weapons at any King County Courthouse.
8. CPL surrenders will be accepted at any worksite (including all King County Courthouses) and forwarded to PMU.

8.04.015

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ACCEPTING COURT ORDERED WEAPONS AND CONCEALED PISTOL LICENSES:

1. All courts ordering weapons and CPLs to be surrendered to the King County Sheriff's Office have been asked to provide proper direction to the party obligated to surrender the weapons and CPLs.
2. Personnel shall accept court ordered weapons and CPLs when there is a court order, or document watermarked "COPY" of the court order, directing the surrender of weapons to the King County Sheriff's Office.
3. Sign the Receipt for Surrendered Weapons and Concealed Weapons License which is provided by the person surrendering the weapons and CPL.
 - i. Collect the weapons and CPL even if this receipt is not provided.
4. Make two copies of the Receipt and Court Order for the case file and return the originals to the person surrendering the weapons and CPL.
5. If there is an associated KCSO case number present on the order, use it and write a follow-up to that case.
6. If there is no related KCSO incident report for a court order or weapons and CPL that are being surrendered, personnel shall complete an incident report and Custodial Property Summary.
 - a. The incident should be titled "Civil Problem" using an FCR of 555-E with the appropriate hazard factor.
 - b. The narrative should state: "The(se) weapon(s) and/or CPL were surrendered to the King County Sheriff's Office under (court name, cause number, and type of order) or this is a voluntary surrender for (stated reason).
 - c. The owner's full name, date of birth, home address, home phone and work phone shall be included in the report.
 - d. All surrendered weapons will be listed on a Custodial Property Summary.
 - e. A surrendered CPL should be listed on a Custodial Property Summary.
 - f. A Custodial Property Receipt should be provided to the person at time of surrender or can be mailed to them at a later time if necessary. The Custodial Property Receipt is generated from the Custodial Property Summary page in Mark43.
 - g. A copy of the Receipt and Court Order will be forwarded to the Records Unit.
 - i. A copy of the Receipt will also be forwarded to the Data Unit to facilitate updating the surrender field online