TO: Pam Dubov, Pinellas County Property Appraiser  
Erin Moore, Deputy for Assessment Administration  
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FROM: Hector Collazo, Jr., Director  
Division of Inspector General  

DIST: Ken Burke, CPA, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller  

SUBJECT: Continuous Audit of Property Appraiser Employees’ Use of Driver and Vehicle Express (DAVE) Personal Data  

DATE: August 27, 2013  

The Property Appraiser entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) to access the Drivers License and/or Motor Vehicle Record Data Exchange (DAVE) system. At the Property Appraiser’s request, the Division of Inspector General conducted an attestation engagement on internal controls over DAVE information, and issued a report dated December 15, 2011. One of the results of the engagement was to establish an internal control for the on-going monitoring of Property Appraiser employees’ use of DAVE data. The Property Appraiser requested that the Division of Inspector General assist with implementation of this recommendation and provide monitoring twice annually.

DAVE is a multifaceted database that affords retrieval of Florida driver information such as information about driver licenses, driver records, and vehicle titles and registrations. Property Appraiser employees access the DAVE system to obtain pertinent information to carry out duties related to homestead exemptions and mobile homes. The DAVE system contains confidential personal information protected by Chapter 119 Florida Statutes and the Driver Privacy Protection Act.
The DHSMV offers the service of rendering reports by DAVE users that details user access for a selected one-week period for up to 20 users. Analyzing these reports supports MOU requirement V. Safeguarding Information: "All access to the information must be monitored on an on-going basis by the Requesting Party."

The scope of our limited audit was to analyze the DHSMV access reports for Property Appraiser employees with the objective to determine if DAVE information was obtained for legitimate business purposes. To meet our objective, we tested, on a sample basis, user DAVE access during the audit period to verify the following:

- The inquiry date and time was within normal Property Appraiser business hours.
- The inquiry was related to a proper business function.
- Repeated searches were appropriate.
- The inquiry was not performed on relatives, celebrities, or political figures.
- Access to Emergency Contact Information was appropriate.

Our limited audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing and the Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General, and accordingly, included such tests of records and other auditing procedures, as we considered necessary in the circumstances. The audit period was June 2, 2013 through June 8, 2013.

Our testing found that the use of DAVE information was for legitimate Property Appraiser business purposes except in one instance.

The Director of the Property Appraiser Tyrone Office conducted three DAVE inquires on June 3, 2013 for personal use, inquiring on family members and herself. The employee stated that a supervisor (who no longer works for the Property Appraiser) granted verbal approval for the inquiries. The MOU states:

"V. Safeguarding Information,
A. Information exchanged will not be used for any purposes not specifically authorized by this agreement. Unauthorized use includes, but is not limited to, queries not related to a legitimate business purpose, personal use, and the dissemination, sharing, copying or passing of this information to unauthorized persons."

The MOU does not state that an employee of an agency can use DAVE information for personal use inquiring on family members. However, the MOU Attachment does present a remedy for this issue.

MOU Attachment 1, Driver Privacy Protection Act Exceptions states:

"13. For any use if the requesting person demonstrates that he or she has obtained the written consent of the person who is the subject of the motor vehicle record."

We recommend written approval for the DAVE inquires be obtained from the two query subjects dated June 3, 2013, with an “as of date” of when the approval document is signed. We recommend the signatures on the approval document be notarized. If written approval is not obtained, we recommend the Property Appraiser notify the DHSMV and affected individuals, and remove the employee’s access as required in the MOU.

In addition, we recommend management send an email to all Property Appraiser staff with DAVE access reminding that personal use of DAVE is not authorized and violators are subject to legal consequences.

Management concurs with both recommendations. Management obtained signed (but not notarized) approval documents from the query subjects at issue and removed the employee’s access to DAVE. In addition, an email was sent to all Property Appraiser staff with DAVE access, as well as their directors, reminding them that personal use of DAVE is not authorized, and reinforcing their duties under the DAVE MOU. A similar reminder is sent to all DAVE users quarterly.

We appreciate the cooperation shown by the staff of the Property Appraiser’s Office during the course of this review.