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## **CITY AUDITOR'S FRAUD ALERT LINE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q: What is the Auditor's Fraud Alert line?**

The City Auditor established the Fraud Alert line to provide City employees and the public with a method for reporting suspected fraud, waste or misuse of City resources, and abuse of position through the EthicsPoint system. Reports will be administered by the Office of the Ombudsman, a division of the City Auditor's Office. After an initial review, reports may be investigated further by the Ombudsman or may be referred to a more appropriate authority for resolution.

**Q: What is EthicsPoint?**

EthicsPoint is a private company that provides hotline and case management solutions for over 2200 clients in over 300 industries. Their comprehensive and confidential reporting tool allows employees and the public to report suspected fraud, waste or misuse of City resources, and abuse of position. Review the [reportable incidents and definitions](#) listed at the end of the Frequently Asked Questions section.

**Q: What kinds of things should I report?**

The Auditor's Fraud Alert line was established to report suspected fraud, waste or misuse of City resources, and abuse of position. For a guideline to filing an Auditor's Fraud Alert line report, review the [reportable incidents and definitions](#) listed at the end of the Frequently Asked Questions section.

**Q: May I report using either the Internet or the telephone?**

Yes. By giving you choices, the EthicsPoint system helps ensure that individuals can file a report anonymously and in the manner most comfortable or convenient to them.

Reporters can access the Auditor's Fraud Alert line in a variety of ways:

- Proceed directly to the City of Portland EthicsPoint reporting page at [www.portlandfraudalert.com](http://www.portlandfraudalert.com) to submit an online report.
- Access EthicsPoint at this address from any computer in the world [www.ethicspoint.com](http://www.ethicspoint.com). Follow the "File New Report" link and enter "City of Portland."
- Call EthicsPoint at **1-866-342-4148** (toll free) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Reports will be taken by a live intake specialist. Calls are not recorded and caller ID is disabled.

**Q: Why do we need the Auditor's Fraud Alert line?**

- The presence of a reporting system reinforces the message that all City officials, managers, and employees are expected to follow the highest standards of ethical and legal behavior and to act as stewards of public resources.
- A reporting system administered by the elected, independent Auditor ensures objective review of reports.
- An effective reporting system can be the most useful tool in reducing losses due to fraud, waste or misuse of City resources, and abuse of position.

**Q: Do City officials and managers really want me to report?**

Yes. In fact, the City *needs* you to report. You know what is going on in the City of Portland, both good and bad. You may have initial knowledge of an activity that may be cause for concern. Your reporting can *minimize* the potential negative impact on the City of Portland, its employees, and the public. Also, offering input may help identify issues that can improve the City's organizational culture and performance.

**Q: If I see a violation, shouldn't I just report it to my supervisor or Human Resources and let them deal with it?**

Many situations – such as general concerns about a co-worker or the work environment – are more appropriately discussed with your supervisor or a Human Resources official. However there are several reasons why you may choose to use the Auditor's Fraud Alert line.

The EthicsPoint system was selected to ensure that your report gets dealt with appropriately. That may or may not happen if you simply report something to your supervisor, Human Resources, or some other official, especially when dealing with issues not under his/her control.

**Q: What if my boss or other managers are involved in a violation? Might they get the report and start a cover-up?**

The Auditor's Fraud Alert line and the EthicsPoint system are designed so that implicated parties are not notified or granted access to reports they have been named in.

**Q: It is my understanding that any report I send from a City computer generates a server log that shows every website my PC connects with, and won't this log identify me as a report originator?**

Most people prefer to report from home after hours and on the weekend. The EthicsPoint system does not generate or maintain any internal connection logs with IP addresses, so no information linking your personal PC to EthicsPoint is available. (The City of Portland has the ability to monitor Internet activity, although no Internet log would allow access to actual reports. However, if you are worried about the possibility of such an Internet log being reviewed, we recommend that no City computer be used to submit a report.)

**Q: Can I file an Auditor's Fraud Alert online report from home and still remain anonymous?**

A report from home, a neighbor's computer, or any Internet portal will remain secure and anonymous. EthicsPoint strips away Internet addresses so that anonymity is maintained. Plus, EthicsPoint is contractually committed not to pursue a reporter's identity.

**Q: Can I file an Auditor's Fraud Alert line report if I don't have access to the Internet?**

You can file an Auditor's Fraud Alert line report even if you don't have Internet access or are uncomfortable using a computer. The Auditor's Fraud Alert line is toll free and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year at 1-866-342-4148.

**Q: Is the telephone toll-free Auditor's Fraud Alert line anonymous and confidential too?**

These reports have the same security and confidentiality measures as an Internet-based report and an interviewer will type your responses into the EthicsPoint reporting system.

**Q: What if I was to be identified with my report?**

You may choose to identify yourself when making your report to the Auditor's Fraud Alert line through the EthicsPoint system. Information reported must be sufficient and credible before a preliminary review will be initiated by the Office of the Ombudsman, a division in the Auditor's Office already responsible for investigating complaints and concerns about city agencies. Having the name of the reporter and supporting documents or as much detailed information as possible included with a report can assist with expediting and facilitating a preliminary review and any subsequent formal investigation.

**Q: Where do these reports go? Who can access them?**

Auditor's Fraud Alert line reports are entered directly on the EthicsPoint secure server to prevent any possible breach in security. The reports are screened by staff in the City Auditor's Office of the Ombudsman, who can then communicate with the reporter using the EthicsPoint system.

When you file a report at the EthicsPoint website or through the EthicsPoint call center, you receive a unique user name and are asked to choose a password. You can return to the EthicsPoint system again either by Internet or telephone and access the original report to answer questions posed by the Office of the Ombudsman and add further information that will help resolve open issues.

**Q: Are follow-ups on reports as secure as the first report?**

All subsequent EthicsPoint correspondence is as secure as the initial report.

**Q: I am not sure what I have observed is a violation of City policy, or involves fraud, but it just does not look right to me. What should I do?**

Review the [reportable incidents and definitions](#) listed in the next section of this document, and use those as your guideline for filing an Auditor's Fraud Alert line report.

**Reportable Incidents**

The Auditor's Fraud Alert line is designed to accept reports of suspected fraud, waste or misuse of City resources, and abuse of position.

**Fraud** is defined as the intentional misappropriation of City assets by any act including, but not limited to, theft, embezzlement, or misrepresentation. Fraud can be internal or external, in that it can be perpetrated by contractors or vendors as well as by City officials and employees.

Examples of fraud:

- Misappropriation of City cash and other funds
- Submitting invoices for fictitious or personal goods and services
- Theft or unauthorized removal of City records or property
- Willful destruction or damage of City records or City property
- Forgery of any document or account belonging to the City
- Falsification of records such as time cards or travel and other expense vouchers
- Impropriety in the handling or reporting of money or financial transactions
- Stealing a check the City issued to another payee
- Computer fraud or information theft

**Waste** is defined as the needless, careless or extravagant expenditure of City funds as result of inefficient or ineffective practices, systems or controls, or misuse of resources for personal use.

Examples of waste and misuse of City resources:

- Unauthorized use or misuse of City property
- Not working when being paid to work except for authorized administrative leave

**Abuse** is defined as use of employment with the City to obtain personal gain or benefit from the City to which one is not entitled for the employee or someone else such as a friend or family member. Such actions constitute **abuse of position** and abuse of public trust.

Examples of abuse of position:

- Obtaining a benefit or service from the City for which they do not qualify
- Providing a benefit or service to someone for which they do not qualify
- Unauthorized reduction of fines or fees
- Bid-fixing
- Suspending or terminating enforcement action based on a personal relationship

- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential and proprietary information

**Additional Resources**

The Auditor’s Fraud Alert line does not accept all types of complaints.

The site is for fraud, waste, and abuse tips involving City of Portland government - not complaints about services (i.e., potholes, taxes, etc.). To file those types of complaints, call the Office of the Ombudsman at 503-823-0144.

Bureau information is available at [www.portlandonline.com](http://www.portlandonline.com) or by calling City and County Information and Referral at 503-823-4000. In addition, The City of Portland and Multnomah County’s Pocket Phone Directory is available as a PDF here <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=52554>.

The following are additional types of complaints out of our jurisdiction.

<b>Type of Complaint</b>	<b>Who to Contact</b>
City & County Information and Referral	503-823-4000
City campaign and lobbying violations	City Elections Officer at (503) 823-3546
Oregon Government Ethics Commission	503-378-5105 or <a href="http://www.oregon.gov/OGEC/index.shtml">http://www.oregon.gov/OGEC/index.shtml</a>
Multnomah County employee or contractor	Multnomah County Auditor <a href="http://www.GoodGovHotline.com">www.GoodGovHotline.com</a> or 1-888-289-6839
Metro employee or contractor	Metro Auditor <a href="http://www.metroethicsline.org">www.metroethicsline.org</a> or 1-888-299-5460
State of Oregon Government Waste Hotline	Secretary of State Audits Division at 1-800-336-8218 <a href="http://www.sos.state.or.us/audits/fraud/">http://www.sos.state.or.us/audits/fraud/</a>
DHS Client Fraud (Food stamps, Oregon Health Plan, TANF, Oregon Trail Card, etc.)	Department of Human Services at 1-888-372-8301 or <a href="http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/aboutdhs/fraud/">http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/aboutdhs/fraud/</a>
Accidents, unsafe working conditions, or safety & health violations	Occupational Safety & Health Administration at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742)
Wage & Hour and Civil Rights complaints	Oregon Bureau of Labor & Industries (BOLI) at 971-673-0761
Federal Stimulus monies	Federal Recovery Board Fraud Hotline at 1-877-FWA-DESK (1-877-392-3375)
Utility company complaints	State Public Utilities Commission at 1-800-522-2404
Attorney General’s Consumer Hotline (Consumer protection, financial fraud, and mortgage related scams)	Oregon Department of Justice 503-229-5576 or 1-877-877-9392 <a href="http://www.doj.state.or.us/finfraud/index.shtml">http://www.doj.state.or.us/finfraud/index.shtml</a>
Hazardous Materials Spills or Pipeline Leaks	US Department of Transportation at 1-800-424-8802