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**Management Alert –  
CBP Needs to Provide  
Adequate Emergency  
Back-Up Power to its Video  
Surveillance Systems at  
the Blaine Area Ports to  
Ensure Secure and  
Safe Operations  
(REDACTED)**

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January 4, 2023  
OIG-23-06



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Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 / [www.oig.dhs.gov](http://www.oig.dhs.gov)

January 4, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: Troy A. Miller  
Acting Commissioner  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

FROM: Joseph V. Cuffari, Ph.D. **JOSEPH V** Digitally signed by  
Inspector General **CUFFARI** JOSEPH V CUFFARI  
Date: 2022.12.30  
11:48:18 -05'00'

SUBJECT: *Management Alert – CBP Needs to Provide Adequate  
Emergency Back-Up Power to its Video Surveillance  
Systems at the Blaine Area Ports to Ensure Secure and  
Safe Operations – ~~For Official Use Only//Law  
Enforcement Sensitive~~*

Attached is our final *Management Alert – CBP Needs to Provide Adequate  
Emergency Back-Up Power to its Video Surveillance Systems at the Blaine Area  
Ports to Ensure Secure and Safe Operations – ~~For Official Use Only//Law  
Enforcement Sensitive~~*. This alert informs you of an urgent issue we discovered  
during an ongoing audit and the actions CBP has taken to address the issues.  
Specifically, we found inadequate emergency back-up power for operating the  
Blaine Command Center's centralized video surveillance system equipment and  
video surveillance camera equipment at Pacific Highway and Peace Arch land  
ports of entry during power outages.

We conducted this work pursuant to the *Inspector General Act of 1978, as  
amended*, and in connection with an ongoing audit being performed according  
to generally accepted government auditing standards.

Your office concurred with our recommendations in the draft management  
alert. Based on information in your office's response to the draft management  
alert, we consider the recommendations open and resolved. As appropriate, we  
incorporated your technical comments. We have appended your office's  
response verbatim to this final management alert.

As prescribed by the Department of Homeland Security Directive 077-01,  
*Follow-Up and Resolutions for the Office of Inspector General Report  
Recommendations*, within 90 days of the date of this memorandum, please  
provide our office with a written response that includes, for each  
recommendation, any update to your concurrence or nonconcurrence and any  
planned corrective action with a targeted completion date or completed  
corrective action. Also, please include information on responsible parties and

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any other supporting documentation necessary to inform us about the current status of the recommendation.

Please send your responses or closure request to [OIGAuditsFollowup@oig.dhs.gov](mailto:OIGAuditsFollowup@oig.dhs.gov).

Consistent with our responsibility under the *Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended*, we will provide copies of our report to congressional committees with oversight and appropriation responsibility over the Department of Homeland Security. We will post a redacted version of the alert on our website for public dissemination.

Please call me with any questions, or your staff may contact Bruce Miller, Deputy Inspector General for Audits, at (202) 981-6000.

Attachment



## Summary of Issues

We are issuing this management alert<sup>1</sup> to advise U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) of a security and safety issue at the Blaine, Washington area ports. During a site visit from September 27–29, 2022, we identified and were informed of inadequate emergency back-up power for operating the Blaine Command Center’s centralized video surveillance system equipment and video surveillance camera equipment at Pacific Highway and Peace Arch land ports of entry (LPOE) during power outages. Since December 2021, these LPOEs have experienced three power outages<sup>2</sup> with one lasting more than 24 hours. Inadequate emergency power during an outage poses significant security and safety risks by hindering the ability of these ports to deter and detect security incidents, capture interactions between officers and the traveling public, and capture video footage for use in law enforcement investigations.

CBP must take immediate action to bring these ports into compliance with policy to ensure secure and safe operations during power outages.

## Background

CBP’s mission is to protect the American people, safeguard our borders, and enhance the Nation’s economic prosperity. CBP’s Office of Field Operations is responsible for carrying out this mission at 167<sup>3</sup> LPOEs along the northern and southern borders, processing millions of travelers a year. To support its mission, CBP deploys a series of video surveillance cameras at LPOEs, which feed into centralized video surveillance systems monitored at command centers and/or workstations. Video surveillance is monitored and recorded for physical security, operational, and integrity purposes, including:

- deterrence and detection of security incidents,

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<sup>1</sup> We will issue a management alert when, in the course of an audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation, we identify significant matters that in our judgment should be communicated to senior Department of Homeland Security officials before that review is complete. Examples of significant matters include those that may pose a serious, imminent threat to safety, health, property, continuity of operations, or public funding, or that pose a serious, imminent risk of fraud or abuse.

<sup>2</sup> The Pacific Highway LPOE experienced an outage for approximately 24 hours on December 12-13, 2021, and the Peace Arch LPOE experienced outages for approximately 8 hours on December 12, 2021, and approximately 8 hours on August 8–9, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Of these 167 LPOEs, 123 are under the custody and control of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). For GSA-owned LPOEs, CBP must coordinate and receive approval from GSA for all aspects of connecting to and installing emergency back-up power supply equipment.





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- interactions between officers and the traveling public specific to inspection processes and officer integrity, and
- assistance with law enforcement investigations.

Interagency Security Committee (ISC)<sup>4</sup> physical security standards require video surveillance systems that provide camera coverage and recordings at Federal facilities. These standards also require that video surveillance systems have uninterruptible emergency power for a minimum of 4 hours. CBP's Security Management Division is responsible for physical security video surveillance requirements and has implemented policy that directly aligns with the forementioned ISC standards. However, CBP's LPOE physical security design standards require video surveillance systems "have [an uninterruptible power supply] connected to an emergency generator" and be designed to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Additionally, the CBP Border Security Deployment Program is responsible for operational and integrity video surveillance requirements at LPOEs. Its LPOE centralized video surveillance design guide standards also require video surveillance coverage and recordings at LPOEs. Further, these standards require that video cameras used for operational and integrity purposes be supplied with an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) allowing them 60 minutes of power when not connected to a generator.<sup>5</sup>

**Blaine Command Center Not Connected to Adequate Emergency Back-Up Power**

The Blaine Command Center (BCC) at the Pacific Highway LPOE is not connected to adequate emergency back-up power. Specifically, according to CBP, the BCC's centralized video surveillance system equipment<sup>6</sup> is solely connected to a UPS, providing a maximum of [REDACTED] minutes of emergency back-up power during an extended power outage. This does not comply with the ISC or CBP emergency power back-up requirements.

According to CBP records, Pacific Highway LPOE experienced a significant

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<sup>4</sup> DHS chairs the ISC, which comprises 64 Federal departments and agencies. Its mission is to develop security policies, standards, and recommendations for nonmilitary Federal facilities in the United States.

<sup>5</sup> The design standards require cameras be connected to emergency back-up generator power when available.

<sup>6</sup> The BCC's centralized video equipment includes [REDACTED]



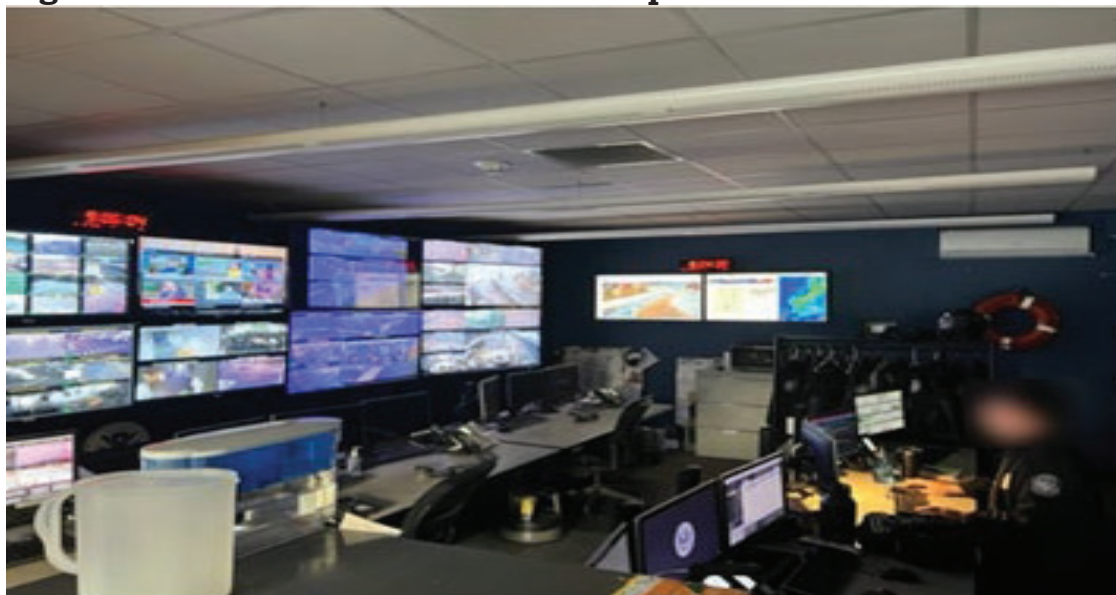
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power outage on December 12, 2021, lasting approximately 24 hours.<sup>7</sup> Following this incident, a CBP Blaine area port official emailed Blaine area port leadership on December 15, 2021, outlining the lack of power at the BCC during the outage. According to the port official, the BCC systems “were never hooked up to the main power grid of the backup generator.” The port official also wrote that the issue “poses a significant security issue throughout the Blaine area of responsibility that covers ports of entry along the entire northern border between Washington State and Canada.”

The BCC monitors 17 ports of entry and responds to emergencies and system alerts. According to CBP, the BCC fields actionable calls and non-actionable calls every day. For example, during our site visit, the BCC fielded a call from one of the LPOEs it monitors pertaining to two people suspected of involvement with terrorism-related activities. The BCC also responded to requests for video surveillance records for two significant incidents occurring in June 2022; one incident involved a port runner and the other a suspected kidnapping. Good quality video of potential suspects and their vehicles is vital to law enforcement investigations and apprehensions. During extended power outages such as the December 12, 2021 24-hour outage at the Pacific Highway LPOE, the BCC cannot operate as intended. This loss poses a significant security and safety risk for the traveling public, CBP employees, and supporting LPOE workforce in areas monitored by the BCC. Figure 1 shows the BCC in operation.

**Figure 1. Blaine Command Center in operation**



Source: DHS Office of Inspector General photo

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<sup>7</sup> The December 12–13, 2021 power outage was the most recent outage on record for the Pacific Highway LPOE.



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The BCC is one of [REDACTED] centralized area surveillance centers for LPOEs. We requested information from the other [REDACTED] command centers to determine whether other locations have experienced issues with inadequate emergency back-up power. No other command centers reported having any issue with emergency back-up power and all confirmed they were connected to a generator.

**Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOE Video Surveillance Camera Equipment Not Connected to Adequate Emergency Back-Up Power**

Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOE video surveillance camera equipment is not connected to adequate emergency back-up power. Specifically, according to CBP, some of this equipment is solely connected to a UPS, providing a maximum of [REDACTED] minutes of emergency back-up power during an extended power outage. This does not comply with ISC or CBP emergency power back-up requirements. We conducted testing by reviewing video surveillance recording status timelines during a previously scheduled power outage from August 8, 2022, at 10 PM to August 9, 2022, at 6 AM at the Peace Arch LPOE.

According to a CBP power outage “Flash” report, the power officially went off around 10:05 PM. By 10:10 PM (within 5 minutes of the power going off), the recording software for the video surveillance system showed [REDACTED] video surveillance cameras we tested, were offline, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] These cameras remained offline until power was restored more than 8 hours later (as shown in Figure 2). This poses real-time, significant security and safety risks for the traveling public, CBP employees, and the supporting workforce for the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOE areas. Additionally, video recordings will not be available for CBP and law enforcement to access and review for significant security or operational and integrity incidents.



**Figure 2. Video Recording Software Illustrating Peace Arch LPOE Video Surveillance Camera Recording Status During the August 8–9, 2022 Scheduled Power Outage**



Source: DHS OIG photo

According to GSA officials with oversight responsibilities of the CBP Blaine area ports,<sup>8</sup> the BCC's centralized video surveillance system equipment and some video surveillance camera equipment at Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs are not connected to an emergency back-up generator. The GSA officials stated any decisions on the type of emergency back-up power the equipment is connected to would have been initially made at the design stage of the LPOE. Because these LPOEs were built or last renovated more than 10 years ago, it is unclear why the equipment is not currently connected to an emergency back-up generator.

CBP Blaine area port officials believe the equipment should have been connected to an emergency back-up generator and have been proactive in addressing these issues. Specifically, CBP Blaine area port officials provided Action Issue Papers to the Seattle Field Office (SFO) in July 2022, requesting emergency back-up generator upgrades for Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs.<sup>9</sup> The SFO approved both requests on July 13, 2022, resulting in these

<sup>8</sup> GSA owns the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs with CBP as the tenant.

<sup>9</sup> The Pacific Highway LPOE Action Issue Paper requests an emergency back-up generator for the BCC, while the Peace Arch LPOE Action Issue Paper requests emergency back-up generator to supply inspection booths. The Peace Arch LPOE Action Issue Paper does not include a request for an emergency back-up generator for use with the video surveillance camera equipment because CBP was not aware of the issue until OIG conducted testing.





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requests being added to the Office of Field Operations priority list to await funding approval. The priority list of September 2022 indicates the BCC is ranked No. 63 and the Peace Arch LPOE is ranked No. 68, out of a total of 130 requests.

In FY 2020 we observed similar challenges with aging infrastructure, such as video surveillance used on the Southwest border. We reported<sup>10</sup> that U.S. Border Patrol's remote video surveillance cameras often ranged from 15 to 20 years old at several Southwest Border Patrol sectors and suffered from frequent malfunctions or repair issues. For example, during a site visit to a U.S. Border Patrol sector in California, we witnessed a camera unable to provide video feed to a command center because it had been out of service for approximately 3 months while awaiting repair. Additionally, because nearly all of U.S. Border Patrol's surveillance technology platforms were developed separately, many years ago, each were unable to interact or share information. This resulted in the need for U.S. Border Patrol command centers to operate different cameras for each platform. Many Border Patrol sectors also struggled with limited bandwidth and slow network speeds, which degraded field agents' ability to access and process information. Officials from one sector said that every station in their area had limited bandwidth, which routinely impeded technology operations, such as tower-based surveillance cameras.

### Other Related Matter

#### **Primary Inspection Computer Equipment at Peace Arch LPOE Not Connected to Adequate Emergency Back-Up Power**

According to CBP, some of the primary vehicle inspection booths (computer equipment) at Peace Arch LPOE are not connected to an adequate emergency back-up power supply. As reported by CBP, the last time there was a power outage at one of the LPOEs, only some of the primary processing booths had computer equipment connected to an emergency back-up generator, resulting in lanes having to close or be provisioned temporarily with laptop computers or mobile devices. During extended power outages, this significantly impacts CBP's ability to process and thoroughly vet travelers in an efficient manner.

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<sup>10</sup> *CBP Has Improved Southwest Border Technology, but Significant Challenges Remain*, OIG-21-21, February 23, 2021.



## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Office of Field Operations, Executive Assistant Commissioner take immediate action to ensure the Blaine Command Center is connected to adequate emergency back-up power. To accomplish this, CBP should work closely with the U.S. General Services Administration to determine the most efficient and effective method for connecting the Blaine Command Center to adequate emergency back-up power.

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Office of Field Operations, Executive Assistant Commissioner take immediate action to ensure video surveillance camera equipment at the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch land ports of entry is connected to adequate emergency back-up power.

As part of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's corrective action plan, it should consider assessing its operational areas at the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch land ports of entry to determine any additional equipment requiring connection to adequate emergency back-up power.

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Office of Field Operations, Executive Assistant Commissioner:

- conduct assessments at its land ports of entry to identify video surveillance camera equipment not connected to adequate emergency back-up power as required; and
- develop and implement a strategy to fund and timely resolve issues identified during the assessment of land ports of entry.

## Management Comments and OIG Analysis

CBP concurred with all three recommendations. We included a copy of CBP's management comments in their entirety in Appendix B. We also received technical comments on the draft alert and revised the alert as appropriate. A summary of CBP's management comments and our analysis follow.

**CBP Comments to Recommendation 1:** Concur. CBP met with GSA on November 14, 2022, to assess and identify any immediate action required to ensure adequate emergency back-up power at the BCC. The first step identified for this process is the completion of a power study and an assessment of operational requirements to evaluate the BCC's centralized video surveillance equipment, coverage, and back-up power needs. This information will then be used to refine existing cost estimates and develop a scope of work



and final cost estimate to provide additional emergency power, as needed, and pending availability of funding. The estimated completion date is July 31, 2023.

**OIG Analysis of CBP's Response:** CBP's proposed actions are responsive to the recommendation. We consider the recommendation open and resolved until CBP provides documentation outlining the results of the power study and assessments, cost estimates, and connection of the BCC to adequate emergency back-up power.

**CBP Comments to Recommendation 2:** Concur. CBP will assess the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs to determine immediate updates to emergency back-up power for surveillance cameras, implementing near-term solutions, when possible, pending funding availability. When near-term solutions are not feasible or possible, CBP will collaborate with GSA to procure and install new equipment to provide required permanent back-up power to required systems. CBP will also assess operational areas and determine additional equipment needs, collaborating with GSA to develop a statement of work and cost estimate to procure and install any additional surveillance cameras for required operational improvements. The estimated completion date is July 31, 2023.

**OIG Analysis of CBP's Response:** CBP's proposed actions are responsive to the recommendation. We consider the recommendation open and resolved until CBP provides documentation outlining its assessments for Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs and equipment purchased and installed to ensure each LPOE has adequate emergency back-up power.

**CBP Comments to Recommendation 3:** Concur. CBP will evaluate existing data to determine the scope of video surveillance camera equipment not connected to adequate emergency back-up power at the other LPOEs. CBP and GSA will then develop and implement a strategy to include potential funding solutions to ensure timely improvements and enhancements, as necessary. The estimated completion date is September 29, 2023.

**OIG Analysis of CBP's Response:** CBP's proposed actions are responsive to the recommendation. We consider the recommendation open and resolved until CBP provides documentation outlining the results of its evaluation of other LPOEs, as well as the strategy and funding solutions implemented.



## **Appendix A**

### **Objective, Scope, and Methodology**

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Pub. L. No. 107-296), which amended the *Inspector General Act of 1978*.

We issued this management alert as part of an ongoing audit of CBP's use of video surveillance at LPOEs. The objective of our ongoing audit is to determine the extent CBP is using closed-circuit television video cameras and microphones at LPOEs to ensure the safety of the public, employees, and property. As part of our audit, from September 27, 2022, to September 29, 2022, we conducted a site visit to the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs in Blaine, Washington. As part of this site visit and follow-up, we:

- interviewed SFO and LPOE leadership and staff, including BCC and facilities personnel;
- observed video surveillance camera equipment at Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs to determine whether the placement was consistent with requirements and to identify signs of obstruction and damage;
- observed BCC centralized video surveillance system feeds for 6 LPOEs, including Pacific Highway and Peace Arch, to evaluate field of view, image quality, and operational status;
- requested information related to emergency back-up power systems testing;
- reviewed and analyzed:
  - *The Risk Management Process: An Interagency Security Committee Standard*, Appendix B: Countermeasures;
  - CBP's *Physical Security Policies and Procedures Handbook*, HB1400-02C, April 2020; *Land Port of Entry Design Standard - Physical Security Requirements*, December 2018; and *Land Port of Entry Design Standard - Centralized Audio Video Surveillance System Requirements*, January 10, 2017;
  - BCC log notes;
  - documentation on significant incidents involving video surveillance;
  - power outage records and supporting documentation;
  - surveillance system recording feeds to determine recording gaps;
  - relevant emails, issue papers, and documentation;
- sent out requests for information to all other command centers to determine whether other locations have experienced issues with inadequate emergency back-up power;





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- interviewed GSA officials with responsibilities at Blaine, Washington area ports; and
- interviewed Sentrillion contractors with responsibilities for maintenance and repair of video surveillance system equipment at LPOEs.

We did not test BCC's or Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs' emergency back-up power due to concerns with continuity of operations. However, we were able to test video recording feeds for cameras at the Peace Arch LPOE based on a previously scheduled power outage.

We conducted this work pursuant to the *Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended*, and in connection with an ongoing audit being performed according to generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require we plan and perform our audit work to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Additional information and recommendations related to the issues addressed in this management alert may be included in the report resulting from our audit.



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**Appendix B  
CBP Comments on the Draft Management Alert**

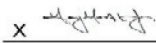
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20229



**U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection**

December 23, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: Joseph V. Cuffari, Ph.D.  
Inspector General

FROM: Henry A. Moak, Jr. 12/23/2022  
Senior Component Accountable Official  X  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection Signed by: HENRY A. MOAK JR

SUBJECT: Management Response to Draft Report: "Management Alert -  
CBP Needs to Provide Adequate Emergency Back-Up Power to  
its Video Surveillance Systems at the Blaine Area Ports to  
Ensure Secure and Safe Operations"  
(Project No. 22-058-AUD-CBP(a))

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) appreciates the work of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

CBP leadership notes OIG's recognition of CBP's Office of Field Operations (OFO) responsibility for carrying out CBP's mission at 167 Land Ports of Entry (LPOE) along the northern and southern borders, processing millions of travelers a year. CBP remains committed to its mission to protect the American people and safeguard our borders, while enhancing the Nation's economic prosperity, to include ensuring the safety and admissibility of goods and people entering the United States.

The OIG found inadequate emergency backup power for Centralized Area Video Surveillance System (CAVSS) equipment at two land ports of entry (LPOEs). CBP routinely utilizes CAVSS imagery and audio recordings to support various CBP missions, administrative functions, and judicial proceedings. Accordingly, CBP takes its role ensuring secure and safe operations during power outages seriously and will continue to strengthen its operations.

Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs are owned by the General Service Administration (GSA) and were constructed prior to the LPOE design standard which requires full back-up generator power to all CAVSS equipment. Projects to address back-up power inadequacies to CAVSS at these two locations are currently unfunded requirements and included on the FY 2023 Operational Priority List, OFO's prioritized list of facility requirements).



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The draft report contained three recommendations, with which CBP concurs. Enclosed find our detailed response to each recommendation. CBP previously submitted technical comments addressing several sensitive issues under a separate cover for OIG's consideration.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Enclosure



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**Enclosure: Management Response to Recommendations  
Contained in 22-058-AUD-CBP(a)**

OIG recommended that the CBP OFO Executive Assistant Commissioner:

**Recommendation 1:** Take immediate action to ensure the Blaine Command Center is connected to adequate emergency back-up power. To accomplish this, CBP should work closely with the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) to determine the most efficient and effective method for connecting the Blaine Command Center to adequate emergency back-up power.

**Response:** Concur. On November 14, 2022, CBP (OFO and OFAM) met with the GSA to assess and identify any immediate actions required to ensure adequate emergency backup power at Blaine Command Center. It was determined the first step in the process is to complete a power study and an assessment of operational requirements to evaluate CAVSS equipment, coverage, and backup power needs. The power study and operational requirements assessments will refine existing cost estimates and be used to develop a scope of work (SOW) and final cost estimate to provide additional emergency power, as necessary, and pending funds availability. Estimated Completion Date (ECD): July 31, 2023.

**Recommendation 2:** Take immediate action to ensure video surveillance camera equipment at the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch land ports of entry is connected to adequate emergency backup power. As part of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's corrective action plan, it should consider assessing its operational areas at the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch land ports of entry to determine any additional equipment requiring connection to adequate emergency back-up power.

**Response:** Concur. CBP will assess the Pacific Highway and Peace Arch LPOEs to determine immediate additional back up emergency power needs for surveillance cameras and implement near-term solution, as possible, pending funding availability. ECD: July 31, 2023.

If a near-term solution is not feasible or fully address deficiencies, CBP will collaborate with GSA to procure and install new equipment to provide required permanent back up power to required systems. This is subject to funds and supply. ECD: July 31, 2024

CBP will assess operational areas, and determine additional equipment needs as appropriate. As Pacific Highway and Peace Arch are GSA-owned LPOEs, CBP will collaborate with GSA to develop a SOW and a cost estimate to procure and install any necessary additional surveillance cameras for required operational improvements. ECD: July 31, 2023





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**Recommendation 3:**

- Conduct assessments at its land ports of entry to identify video surveillance camera equipment not connected to adequate emergency back-up power as required; and
- Develop and implement a strategy to fund and timely resolve issues identified during the assessment of land ports of entry.

**Response:** Concur. CBP will evaluate existing data to determine the scope of video surveillance camera equipment not connected to adequate emergency power at LPOEs beyond Pacific Highway and Peace Arch land ports of entry. CBP and GSA will then develop and implement a strategy to include potential funding solutions to ensure timely improvements/enhancements, as necessary. ECD: September 29, 2023.



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