



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

AUGUST 4, 2020

TO:
Metropolitan
King County
Councilmembers

Cybersecurity Performance Audit

FROM:
Kymber Waltmunson,
County Auditor

County governments are vulnerable to cyberattack

What are cyberattacks? The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) defines a cyberattack as “an attack, via cyberspace, targeting an enterprise’s use of cyberspace for the purpose of disrupting, disabling, destroying, or maliciously controlling a computing environment/infrastructure; or destroying the integrity of the data or stealing controlled information.” In short, it is a malicious or unauthorized activity that aims to access, disrupt, or destroy information systems or the information they hold. For example, an attack could steal data, compromise privacy, or disrupt operations. According to the King County Department of Information Technology, these incidents are common for every organization.

Is King County at risk? King County’s Office of Risk Management says it is very likely for the County to experience a significant electronic security breach within the next five years. In recent years, cyberattacks have affected many local government agencies, in some cases causing millions of dollars in damages and widespread system outages.

Audit scope and objectives

We conducted a performance audit of cybersecurity with a focus on one county agency. Our scope included current roles, responsibilities, and processes meant to ensure the cybersecurity of agency-specific technology. The objectives of this audit were to understand:

- To what extent are technology vulnerabilities identified and addressed?
- To what extent is access to technology limited to appropriate individuals and at the appropriate levels?

Audit findings

Our findings related to the County’s information technology security and infrastructure are exempt from public disclosure under RCW 42.56.420(4). As a result, this letter does not include details on our findings, or the agencies involved in the audit. We identified areas of risk where the County could improve security processes and workflows and communicated these to relevant stakeholders in a confidential report. The Auditor’s Office will follow up on our recommendations to ensure that they are implemented.

Megan Ko, Kayvon Zadeh, and Ben Thompson conducted this review.
If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact
the King County Auditor’s Office at 206-477-1033 or KCAO@KingCounty.gov.





KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Advancing Performance & Accountability

KYMBER WALTMUNSON, KING COUNTY AUDITOR

MISSION Promote improved performance, accountability, and transparency in King County government through objective and independent audits and studies.

VALUES INDEPENDENCE - CREDIBILITY - IMPACT

ABOUT US The King County Auditor's Office was created by charter in 1969 as an independent agency within the legislative branch of county government. The office conducts oversight of county government through independent audits, capital projects oversight, and other studies. The results of this work are presented to the Metropolitan King County Council and are communicated to the King County Executive and the public. The King County Auditor's Office performs its work in accordance with Government Auditing Standards.



This audit product conforms to the GAGAS standards for independence, objectivity, and quality.