

Use of Security Features for Vital Records in California
Report to the Legislature per Health and Safety Code Section 103526.6

Program Background:

The California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Center for Health Statistics and Informatics (CHSI) includes the State Registrar, who is responsible for registering each live birth, fetal death, death, and marriage that occurs in California and for providing certified copies of vital records to the public. Current law requires State Registrar to permanently preserve vital records in a systematic manner and to prepare and maintain a comprehensive and continuous index of all registered certificates.

Birth, death, and fetal death data is gathered through the collection of vital records via web enabled registries. This data is stored and used for decision-making by CDPH Vital Records (CDPH-VR) and non-CDPH-VR partners and customers.

Background:

Health and Safety Code (H&SC) Section 103526.6 (AB 1546, Olsen, Chapter 255, Statutes of 2016) requires that the State Registrar, in consultation with the County Recorders' Association and other stakeholders, study the current security features and alternative security features of paper used to print vital records, known as "banknote," for a report to the Legislature due on or before January 1, 2018.
H&SC 103526.6.

(a) The State Registrar, in consultation with the County Recorders' Association of California and other stakeholders, shall study all security features for paper used to print a vital record pursuant to Section 103525, or alternative security features that are equal to or better than those that are currently mandated.

(b) (1) On or before January 1, 2018, the State Registrar shall submit to the Legislature a report that contains the findings of the study conducted pursuant to subdivision (a) and legislative recommendations pertaining to those findings.

(2) A report submitted to the Legislature pursuant to this subdivision shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

Background:

H&SC Section 103526.5 sets forth security features required for vital records banknote paper that is used for issuance of certified copies of births, deaths, and marriages. Banknote security paper must be chemically sensitized security paper that measures 8 1/2 inches by 11 inches and that has the following features:

- (1) Intaglio print.
- (2) Latent image.
- (3) Fluorescent, consecutive numbering with matching barcode.
- (4) Microprint line.
- (5) Prismatic printing.
- (6) Watermark.

- (7) Void pantograph.
- (8) Fluorescent security threads.
- (9) Fluorescent fibers.
- (10) Any other security features deemed necessary by the State Registrar.

Each of these features ensures the security of vital records documentation as a measure to prevent counterfeiting of the documents and fraud.

Prior to June, 2015, Northern Bank Note, an Ohio-based printing company, was the supplier of banknote security paper on which certified copies of vital records were printed and met all requirements pursuant to HSC Section 103526.5. Northern Bank Note supplied paper for nearly all 61 local jurisdictions and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). In addition, Northern Bank Note provided paper to New York, Minnesota and Utah. In July 2015, Northern Bank Note closed its operations without warning. The sudden closure of Northern Bank Note resulted in a shortage of vital records security banknote paper in California, and in some other states, as this company was the only known manufacturer of secure banknote paper that printed the banknote paper using intaglio print.

California negotiated a contract with a Canadian firm, Canadian Bank Note Co., which, as of mid-November 2015, has made deliveries to the majority of jurisdictions in California including CDPH. At least five printing companies, including Canadian Bank Note Co., Banknote Corporation of America (contracts with the federal government, Department of State); VeriTrack, Pacific Bank Note, and Kramer are now able to provide intaglio print and the other security features required in California statute.

Process:

On May 22, 2017, the Deputy State Registrar invited representatives from the following organizations to convene to discuss the use of intaglio print on vital records:

- County Recordors' Association of California (CRAC);
- California Association of Clerks and Elected Officials (CACEO);
- California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO);
- County Health Executives Associates of California (CHEAC);
- Los Angeles County Recorder's Office;
- Sacramento County Recorder's Office;
- Stanislaus County Recorder's Office;
- Yolo County Recorder's Office; and
- U.S. Department of State, Fraud Prevention Unit.
- The following vendors of banknote security paper were invited to make presentations as subject matter experts on banknote security features:
 - Banknote Corporation of America/CCL Label – Security Production Division;
 - CFC International, Inc., an ITW Company;
 - Canadian Bank Note Company;

- AmeriTech, Inc.;
- Northern Bank Note Company;
- Giesecka & Devrient (G&D)/Veridos GmbH;
- US Crane Currency/U.S. Operations;
- Safety Secure;
- Pacific Bancnote Company; and
- International Security Products, Inc.
- Of those invited, representatives from the following vendors accepted the invitation and made presentations to the workgroup:
 - Canadian Bank Note Company: CBN Secure Technologies, Inc.
 - CCL Label – Security Production Division;
 - AmeriTech, Inc.;
 - Pacific Bancnote Company; and
 - International Security Products, Inc.

Summary of Presentations:

The workgroup convened on October 20, 2017, via in-person meeting and webinar to discuss the issues of vital record security and banknote requirements. Attendees were asked to submit written comments in advance of the meeting. Those comments were discussed during the meeting. After evaluating the various security features in California statute and reviewing presentations by the five vendors, the workgroup concluded that intaglio print, when combined with other security features, was the most fraud-deterrent security feature available. All vendors also agreed that California's current banknote paper security features provide the greatest security against fraud.

Additionally, a future shortage of banknote is unlikely given that there are now at least six vendors that can provide all of California's statutorily mandated security features.

Conclusion:

The workgroup's unanimous consensus was that intaglio print is the most effective fraud deterrent when combined with the other statutorily required security features. Further, the committee concluded that it is unnecessary to add to or delete any of the security features currently enumerated in California statute. When H&SC Section 103526.6 was enacted, there were no known vendors able to provide intaglio print. Today, there are several national vendors able to provide this security feature. The recommendation of the committee is, therefore, that there be no changes made to California's current security features.

Also, H&SC Section 103526.6 allows the State Registrar to suspend the use of any security feature. The State Registrar could, therefore, use this authority to ensure the state, local registrars, county recorders and county clerks are able to provide uninterrupted supply of certified copies of vital records to individuals in the unlikely event that banknote with the specific security features required by H&SC 103526.5 becomes unavailable in the future.