

Nevada welfare agencies sent checks to dead people

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – Since 2007, Nevada state agencies have continued to pay welfare and food stamp benefits to a small number of recipients who had died, according to a legislative audit released Wednesday.

The report found the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services sent benefits to 27 of the 50 dead recipients analyzed by legislative auditors. The loss to the state was \$6,000.

More than \$500 million was distributed to food stamp and welfare recipients during fiscal 2011.

Assemblywoman Maggie Carlton, D-Las Vegas, said she doesn't condone the benefits being sent after the person's death. But she called it a small problem.

Since 2007, the number of Nevadans receiving food stamps grew 172 percent to 153,934 recipients. And those in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program increased 64 percent to 11,982 families.

Legislative Auditor Paul Townsend agreed it was not a "huge problem" but the division should keep a closer watch on sending electronic benefit transfer cards to dead recipients.

Steve Fisher, acting administrator of the welfare division, called it a "small problem" considering the amount of benefits paid. But he said steps have been taken to better check when a client dies.