

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

El Dorado County Jail, South Lake Tahoe

Reason for the Report

California Penal Code authorizes and directs Grand Juries to inspect and report annually on operations of all public prisons located within the boundaries of each county.

Scope of the Investigation

Members of the Grand Jury made a comprehensive inspection of the South Lake Tahoe Jail facility on September 20, 2002:

- Jury Members were briefed on Jail operations by the Jail Commander;
- The Jail commander conducted a comprehensive tour of the facilities;
- Staffing levels were discussed and explained;
- Recommendations of previous Grand Juries were discussed;
- Implementation of the recommendations was explained to and reviewed by the inspecting members;
- Plans and location for the new Juvenile Hall to be constructed next to the Jail were reviewed and discussed;
- Grand Jury Reports for 2000/01 and 2001/02 were reviewed.

Background

The South Lake Tahoe Jail premises appear to be well maintained and exceptionally clean. Renovation/construction is underway for a second sobering cell. Although plans had been made for a new juvenile hall to attach to the jail, current plans are for the premises to be adjacent and separate.

The staff appears well groomed and cooperative. Medical Staff, which is provided through contract, is available 24 hours and appears to be adequate. Dental services currently are obtained by transporting prisoners from South Lake Tahoe to Placerville Jail. However, dental services are available locally, which may be more cost effective.

Correctional officers are scheduled for 12-hour shifts three days one week and four days the next week (3/4). In addition, they routinely work additional overtime hours. The use of overtime to supplement staffing needs is a common practice raising a concern of safety and effectiveness. Since the inspection, the new Sheriff has modified and improved the work schedules.

The design and location of the ramp for the disabled which leads into the public area poses a safety hazard to the users and a potential liability to the County. During certain weather conditions the ramp must be closed. Since 1998, \$31,860 has been appropriated from the

Criminal Justice Trust Fund for the ramp for the disabled as evidenced on the County of El Dorado Proposed Budget and Workplan (General Services, Carry-over Facility Projects, 98-21 South Lake Tahoe Sheriff Handicap Ramp). The County has been aware of the problem with the ramp and considered possible solutions, however, it has failed to take action to correct the problem.

Security in the hallway between the jail and the Court Building needs to be improved. The hallway does not have adequate camera surveillance. The hallway is accessible from outside by key. Numerous County employees have access to the area.

Findings

- F1. Prisoners are transported from South Lake Tahoe to Placerville for dental services.
- F2. The correctional officers routinely work 12 hour shifts with substantial additional overtime.
- F3. Although \$31,860 was appropriated from the Criminal Justice Trust Fund in 1998 and included in the County of El Dorado Proposed Budget and Workplan (General Services Carryover Facility Projects, 98-21 South Lake Tahoe Sheriff Handicap Ramp) necessary improvements to the ramp for the disabled entrance have not been made resulting in continued safety hazard to users and potential liability to the County.
- F4. Current camera surveillance in the hallway between the jail and Court Building is not adequate.

Recommendations

- R1. Local dental services should be utilized if appropriate.
- R2. Staffing should be adequate to minimize the need for overtime.
- R3. The ramp for the disabled should immediately be improved to meet safety conditions and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
- R4. Camera surveillance in the hallway between the jail and Court Building should be properly and adequately upgraded.

Responses Required for Findings

- F1 – F4 El Dorado County Sheriff
 El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
- F3 El Dorado County Department of General Services

Responses Required for Recommendations

R1 – R4	El Dorado County Sheriff El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
R3	El Dorado County Department of General Services