



JOHN D'AGOSTINI  
SHERIFF - CORONER - PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR  
COUNTY OF EL DORADO  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

---

July 11, 2017

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury  
Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court  
1354 Johnson Blvd.  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

RE: Report No. GJ 2016-001 May 9, 2017 – El Dorado County South Lake Tahoe (SLT) Jail Inspection

The Honorable Suzanne N. Kingsbury,

This Office has received and reviewed a report by the 2016-2017 Grand Jury relating to the El Dorado County South Lake Tahoe (SLT) Jail Inspection. Please find the below responses to those findings and recommendations relevant to the Sheriff's Office.

**Sheriff's Response to Specific Findings GJ 2016-001 SLT Jail Inspection**

F1. The foyer area of the South Lake Tahoe Jail has neither a full body metal detector nor scan/hand held wand detectors which present a serious safety issue for staff, visitors and inmates at the jail.

**The Sheriff agrees with the finding.**

F2. The inoperable cameras in the indoor gym area present safety issues for the Correctional Officers and inmates.

**The Sheriff disagrees wholly or partially with the finding.**

This recreation area is one of two yards. It is only used for those inmates that cannot use stairs to access our main upper level recreation yard. This yard is rarely used.

Due to the location of this recreation yard, within the older portion of the facility having a linear design, the yard is supervised by an officer in the event an immediate response is necessary.

***"Serving El Dorado County Since 1850"***  
HEADQUARTERS- 300 FAIR LANE, PLACERVILLE, CA 95667  
JAIL DIVISION- 300 FORNI ROAD, PLACERVILLE, CA 95667  
TAHOE JAIL- 1051 AL TAHOE BLVD., SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, CA 96150  
TAHOE PATROL- 1360 JOHNSON BLVD., SUITE 100, SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, CA 96150

The officer is not stationed in the yard but in a locked monitoring room adjacent to the yard. The officer has direct audio and visual audio contact when the yard is in use by inmates. While stationed in the monitoring room, the officer is equipped with a radio as well as access to a telephone. Although, the restoration of camera function in this area is included in the current plan of the jail's camera system upgrade project, there is no additional safety concerns for Correctional Officers or inmates.

- F3. There is only one safety cell at this time limiting the necessary control/placement of at risk individuals.

**The Sheriff disagrees wholly or partially with the finding.**

Safety Cells are for inmates who are suicidal and in a crisis state. They are only for inmates who are actively displaying suicidal ideation or gestures; and/or display violent behavior which results in the destruction of property or reveals intent to cause harm to self or others.

The inmate in a safety cell is checked on a minimum of twice every thirty minutes and will be removed from the safety cell when they are no longer displaying behaviors which lead to their placement.

The intent of the safety cell is not only to protect the individual from self-harm but to stabilize the individual as soon as possible for removal from the safety cell.

A second safety cell in SLT would be desirable for those infrequent occasions there are two inmates in need safety observation; but it's absence does not limit our ability to place or protect at risk persons. There are additional cells in the holding area in which they can safely be observed or restrained if needed. Or, because inmates are often transported between the facilities, due to housing/ space needs, transportation to the Placerville facility is an option.

- F4. Administrative staff appeared unaware of repairs needed in the holding area increasing the chance of further damage requiring more expensive repairs.

**The Sheriff disagrees wholly or partially with the finding.**

Administrative staff and Management are aware of repairs needed within the facility and the expenses associated with them.

Compared to buildings used during a normal business week, wear and tear on the jail is at least three to four times that of most business structures.

The Tahoe Jail was first opened in 1973 with additions and upgrades in 1978 and again in 1994. As an older building that is subject to a harsh climate, maintaining it is sometimes problematic.

The maintenance logs at the facility reflect the maintenance concerns requiring immediate attention identified by officers. The CAO Facilities Division has maintenance plans for systems and structural needs. They have been conducting ongoing major mechanical upgrades to replace the aging systems. Their maintenance crews are at the jails daily conducting repairs and inspections.

For additional information on our facility needs a Jail Needs Assessment was conducted in 2016. We are currently working with Facilities to address these needs by developing a prioritized design plan for phase construction/ repairs and/or in preparation of applying for future state construction funding.

- F5. Lack of vocational programs does not serve the rehabilitation needs of the inmates. Availability of additional vocational training programs could lessen the chances that an inmate will reoffend upon release.

**The Sheriff agrees with the finding.**

### **Sheriff's Response to the Grand Jury Recommendations SLT Jail Inspection**

- R1. Bullet resistant glass should be installed in the foyer and visitors area.

**The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.**

The SLT Jail Lobby is currently undergoing construction for security purposes to include: Bullet resistant glass and walls, a full body metal detector, and an upgraded security door with a controlled access system leading to the visitor area.

Because of the full body metal detector and secured, controlled access to the visitor's area the bullet resistant glass will not be necessary at that location.

This project will be complete within 6-12 months.

- R2. Installation of a full body metal detector scan in the foyer. Additional hand wand detectors should also be made available for visitors screening.

**The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.**

The installation of a full body metal detector is included as part of the current lobby improvement project to be completed within 6-12 months.

Additional hand held metal detectors with updated technology will be researched and purchased within the next month.

- R3. Installation of digital camera surveillance equipment in the indoor gym.

**The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.**

The restoration of operational surveillance cameras in the downstairs recreation yard is included in the camera system upgrade project. This will include the conversion of the analog cameras to digital.

The anticipated time of completion for the project is 6-12 months

- R4. Develop a plan to expand the number of safety cells and present it to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

**The recommendation will not be implemented, because it is not warranted.**

The safety cell is an empty cell, with padded walls and, a hole in the floor for sanitation. An individual is isolated and placed in the cell because they actively pose a threat to themselves or others due to a mental disorder. Only inmates who are actively displaying suicidal ideation or gestures; and/or display violent behavior which results in the destruction of property or reveals intent to cause harm to self or others will be placed in a safety cell.

The inmate in a safety cell is checked on a minimum of twice every thirty minutes and will be removed from the safety cell when they are no longer displaying behaviors which lead to their placement.

Further analysis of the need for additional safety cells was determined not warranted. A second safety cell in Tahoe would be desirable for those infrequent occasions there are two inmates in need of safety observation; but its absence does not limit our ability to place or protect at risk persons. There are additional options as stated in Finding #3.

During further analysis of the need for converting a cell into an improved safety cell we determined it would be more cost efficient and beneficial to our inmates to convert one of our two Sobering cells into a Transitional/ Step down cell for those individuals coming out of the safety cell.

The inmate in the Transitional cell receives twice every thirty minutes checks from the Floor Officer and is also monitored via camera by the control personnel. It is also padded for safety but similar to the traditional housing cell the inmate will be returning to.

This conversion cell will provide a higher level of care for mental health inmates at SLT. This cell conversion is currently underway and expected to be in operation within six months.

- R5. Assign a point of contact to perform a walk through at regular intervals to ensure needed repairs are added to the maintenance log.

**The recommendation will not be implemented, because it is not warranted.**

Per policy and procedure all staff are to conduct daily facility inspections and document any areas of concern on our Maintenance Log. Facilities maintenance staff check the Jail Maintenance Log daily.

- R6. Expand the culinary program and add more vocational training opportunities for the inmates.

**The recommendation has been implemented.**

The Culinary program has been expanded to include the Placerville Jail inmates. Its scope has also been expanded to include catering curriculum and participation in culinary competitions. The Culinary program staff are always seeking ways to improve the program and help the inmates learn vital job skills.

The Sheriff's Office would like to offer more vocational programs and are always looking for opportunities to increase them. The challenge for the jail is the limited classroom space, security considerations, and inmate classifications.

The jail only has one classroom (for the rated capacity of 158 inmates) to provide our current programs; scheduled 7-days a week. We currently offer: MRT (Moral Reconciliation Therapy), Substance Abuse Treatment, Anger Management, Parenting Class, Pre- Release Class, HEARTS, and

Adult Education. The classroom is also used for multiple religious services and volunteer groups such as: Men's and Women's AA, Men's and Women's NA, Al-anon (women's), Spanish Speaking Ministries, Celebrate recovery, Free on the Inside, and U turn for Christ.


Vocational programs require tools, equipment and space. The culinary program is afforded these accommodations within the facility because we must maintain a kitchen and staff to feed the inmates. The equipment/potential weapons can be monitored more easily. Other vocational programs are not as easy to accommodate.

Being a small jail with the variety of classifications of inmates the number of inmates who could participate together in other vocational training would be limited and cost prohibitive.

The Sheriff's Office is currently reviewing an RFP which includes an education based tablet computer system. With this system we will be able to offer additional educational programs to all inmates. The vendor for his RFP will be chosen within the next six months.

As always, we will continue to look for additional programs and services, we may offer within the confines of our facilities limiting conditions, to assist our inmates with re-entry and recidivism reduction.

Sincerely,



JOHN D'AGOSTINI  
Sheriff-Coroner  
Public Administrator