

DETENTION FACILITIES REPORT

SUMMARY

This report constitutes a review of the jails, holding facilities and the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office-Coroner's Bureau by the 2013-2014 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury (Jury). The *California Penal Code Section 919(b)* states that "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." The Jury found the overall operation and condition of the detention facilities to be within state guidelines, except for the overcrowding conditions at the Main Jail.

METHODOLOGY

The Jury reviewed safety issues, cleanliness, medical facilities, nutrition, and special accommodations as well as law enforcement practices, policies, and procedures. Inspections were conducted at each location by teams of two or more members of the Jury. In some instances, the Jury visited facilities more than once. On-duty staff members at all locations were interviewed, inquiries relevant to operations were addressed, and operating procedures were reviewed.

Detention facilities in the county fall into three categories, those under the jurisdiction of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office (including the Coroner's Bureau), facilities administered by the Santa Barbara County Probation Department, and those overseen by municipal police departments. The following sites were inspected:

Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office-Coroner's Bureau

Santa Barbara County Main Jail
Coroner's Bureau
Santa Maria Station
Carpinteria Station
Isla Vista Foot Patrol Station
New Cuyama Station
Solvang/Santa Ynez Station
Court Holding Facility, Santa Barbara
Court Holding Facility, Lompoc
Court Holding Facility, Santa Maria

Santa Barbara County Probation Department

Los Prietos Boys Camp
Susan J. Gionfriddo Juvenile Justice Center, Santa Maria
La Posada Juvenile Hall, Santa Barbara

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Municipal Jails

Santa Barbara

Santa Maria

Lompoc

OBSERVATIONS

The California Board of State and Community Corrections issued its biennial report on Santa Barbara County facilities in July 2013 noting that, “We did not identify any items of noncompliance with federal or state regulations during our visit and review of policy and procedures.” While the Jury does not disagree with the conclusions of the report, it observed issues that warranted further attention. Facilities where no issues were found are not addressed in this report.

Santa Barbara County Main Jail

The Santa Barbara County Main Jail, constructed in 1971, is currently housing more prisoners than the facility was originally intended to house, as noted by previous Grand Juries. Overcrowding can be attributed to a steady increase in the number of inmates without a corresponding increase in jail capacity. In addition, AB 109 (Public Safety Realignment Act), enacted in 2011, mandated that state prisons reduce inmate population. As a result, county jail populations have swelled. The addition of a new facility, the Northern Branch Jail, scheduled to begin operations in 2018, will alleviate the chronic overcrowding of the Santa Barbara County Main Jail. Until then, the problem of overcrowding will persist.

Coroner’s Bureau

The 2012-13 Grand Jury issued a report on the Coroner’s Bureau identifying several deficiencies. These included an inadequate ventilation system, improper temperature monitoring, lack of an eyewash station, obsolete audio recording equipment, and a “rodent infestation” on the facility grounds. With the exception of the ventilation system upgrade now in process, the Jury noted that all of these conditions have been corrected. The full report, titled “The Manner of Death – A Final Diagnosis,” can be found on the Jury’s website at www.sbcgj.org.

Santa Maria Station

In 2011, due to budget constraints, the Santa Maria Station curtailed twenty-four hour operations and became a short-term holding facility only. Arrestees were, therefore, transported to the Main Jail in Santa Barbara. The transportation of inmates proved costly, time-consuming, and resulted in Sheriff’s personnel, Santa Maria Police officers, and California Highway Patrol officers being diverted from patrol duties.

As a result, the 2012-13 Grand Jury recommended that the Sheriff extend the hours at this facility to operate twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In December 2013, the Board of Supervisors agreed to fund the facility to resume full time operating hours. This change is scheduled to take effect July 1, 2014, and will benefit the Main Jail by providing the capability

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of detaining up to twenty-six prisoners while reducing transportation costs. Additional interim funding facilitated the transportation of inmates from January to July 2014.

Court Holding Facility, Santa Barbara

In the basement of the Figueroa Courthouse, there is a holding facility for inmates awaiting court appearances. This facility has eight holding cells as well as four isolation cells, all monitored by video cameras. Deputies routinely escort inmates across Figueroa Street to the historic courthouse, which poses a continuing safety issue for inmates, staff, and the general public. The Sheriff's Office responded to the Jury's concern in a letter dated August 29, 2013 as follows: "The Sheriff's Office consistently reviews new ways to ensure that the movement of inmates is completed in the safest manner possible. This included inmate movement from the buses into and out of the holding cell area. Within the past two years, there are no reports of any incidents, including fights, escapes, or escape attempts in this area." These hazards are projected to be corrected with construction of the proposed new criminal courthouse facility.

The Jury was informed of an intermittent problem with malfunctioning locks on some of the holding cell doors. The Jury requested and received current maintenance reports from the Office of Real Estate and Facilities Management, the state agency responsible for maintaining all court facilities. Upon further investigation, the Jury learned that the problem had been addressed and resolved.

Isla Vista Foot Patrol Station

The Isla Vista Foot Patrol Station covers the area of Isla Vista surrounding the campus of the University of California Santa Barbara. This substation utilizes bike patrol and a partnership with officers from the California Highway Patrol and the University Police to provide safety and law enforcement for the community. The station is well maintained, in very good condition, neat and clean. The building is approximately four years old and was designed and built as a "state-of-the-art" facility.

Halloween partying in Isla Vista poses significant challenges to law enforcement. This annual unsponsored event lures thousands of visitors, primarily students from other schools, to Isla Vista. The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, in concert with several law enforcement and public safety agencies, are tasked with maintaining order and safety. Arrests, mainly alcohol-related number in the hundreds. The annual cost to tax-payers for law enforcement and public safety is approaching three-quarters of a million dollars.

The Jury observed the preparation and efficiency of law enforcement personnel and the tremendous logistical and tactical planning by the Sheriff's Office in managing this event.

Los Prietos Boys Camp

Located twenty miles north of Santa Barbara in the Los Padres National Forest, this seventeen acre, county-owned, twenty-four hour correctional facility provides early intervention programs to adolescent males thirteen to eighteen years old. The facility's programs emphasize building self-esteem through on-site education and vocational training intended to develop self-confidence, personal accountability and responsibility. After a thorough tour and inspection, the

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Jury believes that the staff at Los Prietos deserves accolades for maintaining an environment conducive to successful rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

The Jury finds that Santa Barbara County law enforcement facilities are staffed with professional and dedicated personnel. The 2013-14 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury commends all law enforcement officers and support personnel for their dedicated service within Santa Barbara County.