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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

BILL BROWN
Sheriff - Coroner

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July 10, 2014

Mr. Ted Sten, Foreman
2013-2014 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Grand Jury Chambers
Santa Barbara County Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, California 93101

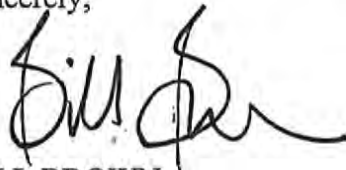
RE: Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report entitled "*Idling Sheriff's Vehicles – It Is About Dollars And Sense*"

Dear Mr. Sten:

Enclosed please find the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office response to the 2013-2014 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report entitled "*Idling Sheriff's Vehicles – It Is About Dollars And Sense.*"

Should you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me at 681-4290.

Sincerely,



BILL BROWN
Sheriff – Coroner

Enclosure

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
RESPONSE TO THE SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
GRAND JURY 2013-2014 REPORT
"IDLING SHERIFF'S VEHICLES –
IT IS ABOUT DOLLARS AND SENSE"

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding #1A: *The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office does not comply with the Santa Barbara County Vehicle and Equipment Anti-Idling Policy.*

Response to Finding #1A: **The Sheriff's Office partially disagrees with this finding.**

A vast majority of the vehicles assigned to the Sheriff's Office comply with the *Santa Barbara Vehicle and Equipment Anti-Idling Policy*. The Sheriff's Office has 257 vehicles, of which 45 are patrol units. The Sheriff's Office agrees that, at times, patrol units do not conform to the *Santa Barbara Vehicle and Equipment Anti-Idling Policy*. However, all of the non-patrol vehicles, and patrol vehicles most of the time, do conform to the policy.

Finding #1B: *The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office non-compliance is based on its stated need to keep critical electronic equipment in the vehicles constantly operating.*

Response to Finding #1B: **The Sheriff's Office agrees with this finding.**

Sheriff's patrol units are equipped with a wide variety of electronic equipment that requires power to operate. This equipment includes a computer, a mobile audio video system, and radios. The constant operation of this equipment is essential for the safe and efficient operations of the patrol units and for maintaining recordings derived from the camera systems installed in the units.

The electrical equipment in the patrol units drains their batteries quickly, in some instances in as little as 15 minutes, when the engines are turned off. Once the battery is drained to a certain point, the cameras and computer systems shut down to make sure there is enough of a charge in the battery to start the unit. Both of these systems require independent logons and passwords. It takes approximately two to three minutes to log into the MDC (Mobile Digital Computer) system, and another two minutes for the MAV (Mobile Audio Video) system. Such a delay in responding to an emergency call is an unacceptable negative impact to public safety. Likewise, requiring the deputies to conduct the logon while en-route to a call is extremely distracting and dangerous. Without these systems operating, some critical information about the call cannot be sent to the deputies.

In addition, if these systems are not running, critical evidence that may be captured by the MAV systems will be lost. Consequently, while not always conforming to the County's idling policy, the Sheriff's Office believes that the need to have the electronic equipment ready to use at all times, especially when responding to emergencies and in-progress calls, is essential.

Finding #2: *Alternate power and monitoring systems are readily available to keep critical electronic equipment in the vehicles constantly operating with minimal engine idling.*

Response to Finding #2: **The Sheriff's Office agrees with this finding.**

The Sheriff's Office has long recognized the concern with allowing its units to idle. Contrary to the Grand Jury's statement that "no discernable action was taken until March 2014," the Sheriff's Office and General Services met on March 14, 2013 to discuss alternatives. General Services staff stated they would pursue equipment and system remedies, while the Sheriff's System and Technology staff reviewed technical remedies. This meeting and efforts to fix the problem started months before the results of the idling study, as referenced in the Grand Jury report, were submitted to the Sheriff's Office.

Furthermore, Sheriff's System and Technology staff had previously tried several technological "fixes" to the problem, including extending the time from 15 minutes to one hour after the engine was turned off, for the computer and MAV systems to shut down. The results were inconsistent and did not reveal a standard adjustment that would work in all patrol units, including several instances where the battery was drained to the point that the unit would not start.

Meanwhile, General Services staff continued to look for a piece of equipment that would solve the problem. In March 2014, they finally found one that they thought would work.

Finding #3: *Considerable cost savings and reduction in hydrocarbon emissions would be realized with installation of alternative power and/or monitoring systems for these vehicles.*

Response to Finding 3: **The Sheriff's Office agrees with this finding.**

If the right alternative power and/or monitoring system is found and installed, there would undoubtedly be a cost savings and reduction in hydrocarbon emissions.

Finding #4: *The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office began testing a power monitoring system in March 2014.*

Response to Finding #4: **The Sheriff's Office partially disagrees with this finding.**

In March 2014, General Services staff identified the "Viper Car Remote Entry 2-Way System" that looked like it might solve the problem. General Services staff evaluated the system during the month on April 2014. The system was installed on one Sheriff's unit on May 2, 2014. The system worked well from the standpoint of solving the idling concern. However, there were still some technical issues that needed to be solved before a fleet-wide installation would be conducted. One such issue was that the horn would honk and the lights flashed when the system was activated as a deputy left his or her unit. This action is unacceptable from a safety standpoint

since it reveals the presence of the unit and deputy and interferes with a tactical approach. Subsequent modifications have overcome the problems with activation of the horn and lights.

Recommendation #1: *That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office expedite the installation of an alternate power and/or monitoring system to allow needed equipment to remain operational and in compliance with the Santa Barbara County Vehicle and Equipment Anti-Idling Policy.*

Response to Recommendation #1: **The recommendation is in the process of being implemented. Full implementation will be accomplished by October 1, 2014.**