

TUOLUMNE COUNTY JAIL

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

The Tuolumne County Jail is an entity the Tuolumne County Civil Grand Jury is required to investigate each year according to California Penal Code Section 919(A). This investigation was not complaint driven.

The Tuolumne County Jail is responsible for detaining persons accused of crimes, transporting such persons to and from court appearances, and housing convicted criminals with sentences of less than one (1) year. The Tuolumne County Jail is located in a three (3) story cement structure best described as a building in arrested decay.

METHODOLOGY

The Tuolumne County Civil Grand Jury toured the Tuolumne County Jail on five (5) separate occasions, both by appointment and unannounced visits. During the tours, panel members observed how an inmate would proceed from delivery to the county jail, to booking, classification, and then to a cell.

FINDINGS

1. The jail is seriously understaffed due to lack of funding.
 - a. Current staff assigned to maintain safety of jail personnel and maximum 149 inmates:
 - i. One (1) Administrative Sergeant
 - ii. Four (4) Deputies
 - iii. Two (2) Transport Deputies
 1. Note: The two (2) transport deputies leave the jail when an inmate(s) has a court appearance. This leaves just five (5) jail staff members for 149 inmates.
 - b. The second floor/west side holds the majority of inmates and is overcrowded and understaffed. Two (2) deputies maintain the security for the second floor and the majority of the 149 inmates.
 - c. If a violent event were to occur on the third floor where the exercise area is located, the coverage and response time for the lone deputy on the third floor is too long.
2. The jail is grossly outdated, unsafe and has many hazards.
 - a. Visiting/Interview area is too small with just five (5) intercom phones. One (1) of these is in a sound proof area for attorney/client conversations.
 - b. Control room is cluttered due to lack of storage space, but has improved security and safety levels.
 - c. There is a significant amount of mold on the walls migrating from the ceiling to the stairs in the stairwell between the first and second floors. This mold is professionally removed periodically. With the poor ventilation system, health hazards to staff and inmates are a possibility.
 - d. The ceilings of the jail show signs of leakage, rust, and peeling paint. The roof to the jail has been replaced since the 2008-2009 Grand Jury report.

The damage to the interior ceilings will not improve, but is not expected to get worse.

- e. The Sally Port is a secure gated vehicle bay designed for the safe transfer of arrested individuals and inmates between law enforcement vehicles and the jail itself. One third of the Sally Port is currently being utilized for storage and unavailable for use by law enforcement vehicles.
- 3. The living, sleeping, and eating conditions for inmates are adequate. The majority of these necessities is regulated by state and federal law and are vigorously observed and implemented by the Sheriff. The jail contracts with an outside private company for meal preparation. This has proven to be cost effective.
 - 4. Medical treatment of inmates is adequate.
 - a. There is a nurse on duty at all times with a physician in attendance one day a week.
 - b. Inmate medications, diabetic blood sugar issues, and communicable diseases are monitored daily.
 - c. An inmate with an emergency will be transported to the hospital by two deputies.
 - d. Dental needs for inmates are provided by transporting the inmate to a local dentist.
 - 5. Several areas of concern were noted and two (2) correction notices were issued during a recent fire inspection.
 - a. The areas of concern were:
 - i. All fire extinguishers need to be inspected monthly.
 - ii. Improve general housekeeping to maintain area in a neat and orderly manner to minimize fire loading to prevent spread and maintain fire safety.
 - iii. Penetrations in fire rated walls and ceilings must be maintained in accordance with applicable fire codes.
 - b. The corrections notices were for:
 - i. The fire extinguisher in the elevator service room needs to be serviced.
 - ii. Fire caulking in the ceiling and wall joints of the library, the female dorm area, and the “J” tank area needs to be brought up to code standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. For Finding 1, increase staffing at the jail to:
 - a. One (1) Administrative Sergeant
 - b. Six (6) Deputies
 - c. Four (4) Transportation Deputies
 - d.
- 2. For Finding 2 (a), a deputy should be present to observe inmate interactions with visitors.
- 3. For Finding 2 (e), the Sally Port should not be used for storage.
- 4. There are no recommendations for the remainder of Finding 2.

5. There are no recommendations for Findings 3 and 4.
6. For Finding 5, all areas mentioned in the annual fire inspection need to be corrected as soon as possible.
7. This recommendation does not relate to any specific finding. The problems noted can be fixed, but in the longer term, only a larger, more secure and modern jail can actually remedy the problems with the present jail.

COMMENDATIONS

The Sheriff's Administration, supervisors, deputies and support staff have done a remarkable job under extremely difficult circumstances. The Sheriff has continually been asked to do more with less. Although the Civil Grand Jury stands with the past 18 Grand Juries in condemning the Tuolumne County Jail facilities, this report has nothing but praise for the Sheriff and staff.