

DIVISION OF ADULT INSTITUTIONS
SIERRA CONSERVATION CENTER
5100 O'BYRNES FERRY ROAD
JAMESTOWN, CA 95327

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TUOLUMNE COUNTY



June 30, 2010

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Honorable Eric L. DuTemple
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, Tuolumne County
60 North Washington Street
Sonora CA 95370

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIF
COUNTY OF TUOLUMNE

CLERK

Dear Judge DuTemple:

I have reviewed the 2009/2010 Tuolumne County Civil Grand Jury Report as it pertains to Sierra Conservation Center. I want to thank all of the jury members for their time and effort while visiting our facility and Baseline Conservation Camp, CC 30. I also want to thank them for the positive information concerning our operation documented in the report.

I have reviewed the report findings and recommendations carefully and provide the following response:

- Finding #2: *The vocational training area consists of inmate training for welding, masonry, carpentry, auto body repair, and computer training/repair. The computer training classes have "no internet access." These facilities are designed to give inmates hardware repair and programming experience. Due to State budget restraints, the vocational programs for Graphic Arts and Printing, as well as the Mill and Cabinet shop have been shutdown.*

Recommendation: The jury recommends the State continue funding the Graphic Arts and Printing class, as well as the Mill and Cabinet Shop. Each of these programs creates inmate skills that may keep an inmate from returning to prison.

I partially agree with the finding and recommendation, however due to the Department's budgetary constraints we were forced to close these Vocational Educational Programs. The decision to eliminate these programs was two fold.

1. A Departmental study determined that the effected vocational program did not provide adequate employment opportunities upon an inmates release from prison.
2. Cost savings to the Department.

- Finding #4: *Panel members found the Level 3 medium security facility to be very similar to the Level 2 facility, just with more correctional officers present. Inmates have the option of staying locked down, thus limiting their exposure to inmate politics. Members spoke with two (2) of these inmates who indicated they only leave their cells twice a day. Once is for one (1) hour for exercise and to shower, and once to attend religious classes. These particular inmates had been incarcerated for five (5) years with eight (8) years remaining and fifteen (15) years with fourteen (14) years left. Neither chose to disclose why they were in prison. The indoor gym in this area is still being used to house inmates. The gym is grossly overcrowded with inmates sleeping on three (3) tier cots.*

Recommendation: The over crowded gym in the Level 3 facility should be closed for inmate housing just as was done with the Level 2 facility gym.

The inmates housed in the gymnasium sleep in double bunk beds. There are some triple bunk beds that are only used in emergency situations when we have exceeded our Level 3 housing capacity. This rarely occurs; when it does we expeditiously remedy the situation. The housing capacity is 150 beds, which can rise to 164 when the triple bunks are utilized.

One of the goals of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to reduce overcrowding is the elimination of emergency beds. Emergency beds are required to provide adequate living arrangements as a direct result of the increase of inmates convicted from their respective courts entering county jails, which elevates their overcrowding conditions. In the event the Departmental population is reduced, then the deactivation of the Level 3 Gymnasium will be considered.

- *Finding #6: Members toured the prison hospital and medical facilities. In 2009, with an inmate population of approximately 5,500, there were 1,700 inmate requests for medical assistance. With current budget constraints and Federal Court mandates, employee furloughs have created the need for an extreme increase in overtime to staff the medical facilities. This will be an ongoing problem with no resolution anytime soon.*

Recommendation: Staffing for the hospital and medical facilities should be reviewed for cost effectiveness. Paying overtime to staff these facilities does not appear to be the best use of limited funds.

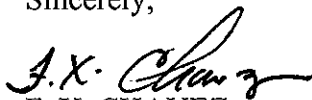
Staffing for the Health Care Services Division of our institution and throughout the Department is in a constant state of review. Every effort is made to fill vacant positions with qualified personnel to limit the use of overtime. Court mandates necessitate the utilization of qualified medical personnel to provide medical services.

The managers within the Health Care Services Division have painstakingly devised and implemented processes and schedules to minimize the impact caused by furloughs. We are prohibited to pay overtime behind vacancies created by furloughs.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the 2009/2010 Tuolumne County Civil Grand Jury satisfying the requirements of Penal Code 933 and 933.05.

If you have any questions, please contact Correctional Lieutenant R. K. Wise, Administrative Assistant, at (209) 984-5291 extension 5499.

Sincerely,


F. X. CHAVEZ
Warden (A)