

# **El Dorado County South Lake Tahoe Jail**

May 9, 2017

GJ 2016-001 El Dorado South Lake Tahoe County Jail

## **SUMMARY**

The 2016-17 Civil Grand Jury conducted its annual inspection of the South Lake Tahoe Jail on September 30, 2016. The inspection included both a physical inspection of the facilities as well as interviews with facility staff and inmates. The facility was clean, well-managed and at capacity with inmates.

The Civil Grand Jury members noted gaps in safety in the foyer and the indoor gym. There is only one safety cell for at-risk inmates. Opportunities to expand vocational training and to improve facility repairs were noted. These findings and recommendations for correction are detailed at the end of the report.

## **BACKGROUND**

California Penal Code Section 919(b) mandates an annual inspection of all county jail facilities by the Civil Grand Jury. Additionally, the jury must inquire into the condition and management of “public prisons” within the county, and any credible evidence of willful or corrupt misconduct of any public officer, but need not write a report on either type of inquiry.

## **METHODOLOGY**

- Interviewed the facility staff and inmates
- Followed the guidelines for the inspection from the Detention Facility Inspection Form
- Reviewed the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) Jails Inspection Handbook
- Reviewed latest documentation of the Fire Marshal inspection
- Reviewed the Maintenance Log

## **DISCUSSION**

Members of the 2016/2017 Civil Grand Jury met on Friday, September 30, 2016, in South Lake Tahoe for the annual inspection of the El Dorado South Lake Tahoe County Jail (SLT). The day began with an overview of the day to day operations of the jail, followed by a site inspection.

## **Overview of Operations**

The jail is a 158 bed facility with current occupancy of 134 male and 24 female inmates. There are four classifications for housing inmates (male and female) which consist of General Population Unit, Administrative Segregation Unit, Protective Custody Unit and Maximum Security Unit. Validated gang members are present in the jail and some require special housing.

Ninety percent of inmates currently incarcerated at the SLT Jail are housed on felony charges. Twenty-five percent are there as a result of Assembly Bill (AB)-109 which is the Public Safety Realignment Bill. This resulted in some inmates who had been incarcerated within California's State Prison system serving their time in county jails throughout the state. Inmates received under AB-109 pose a hardship for the general population of the jail. These inmates are often hardened offenders, gang members, and/or more violent, and are housed in county jail for longer than the 12 month maximum prior to AB-109. Many inmates contained within the jail system have mental health problems but they are not segregated unless a safety and/or behavioral issue arises.

The last Grand Jury's inspection was August, 2015. Since that inspection date, no inmates have committed suicide, although there have been two attempts. There have been no deaths from other causes and no attempted escapes.

Correctional Officers work twelve hour shifts. At the time of this inspection, there were 10 positions open in the Jail Division of Sheriff's Office. Many Correctional Officers train here and then, for various reasons, go elsewhere to work. Inclement winter weather in Lake Tahoe and higher pay with lower cost of living in other areas are the main reasons staff leave.

Medical Services are provided contractually by California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG). They provide a Registered Nurse at the jail during the day and a Licensed Vocational Nurse at night. Psychiatric/Psychologist services are also available through CFMG.

There is a contracted Registered Dietician on duty who manages both El Dorado County Jails. The goal is to provide three meals per day, two of which are hot. If a lockdown is in place a bagged meal is provided.

Due to variable weather conditions in South Lake Tahoe an outdoor exercise yard is not available. Inmates (male and female) exercise in an indoor yard one hour 2-3 times per week. They are allowed a visit from their clergy by request, or at regular church services. The only vocational training offered are culinary classes.

## **Inspection of the Facility**

The tour of the jail included an inspection of housing units, medical unit, culinary, indoor gym, library, control room, booking room and sally port where individuals are brought in from the community to be booked in by jail staff.

The main entrance of the facility is open to the public, but the glass partition protecting the lobby

receptionist is not bullet resistant. The lobby does not have a full body scan metal detector or hand wands to scan visitors.

Security controls with computer monitoring are used for the housing units. The indoor gym area contained several cameras. The cameras have been inoperative for a year and are the older analog version, and are not compatible with the newer digital cameras found elsewhere in the facility. There was no date for replacement of these cameras. There is one Custodial Officer present in the gym assigned to supervise and oversee inmate activity in the gym.

The Grand Jurors observed the kitchen trustees bringing meals into the day room on a cart. Inmates are called out of their cells to obtain their meals. The kitchen and pantries were clean, organized and well managed. Special dietary restrictions are followed.

The jail has a vocational program which trains inmates in the culinary field providing job skills for when they are released. This culinary program has received many awards.

The Grand Jurors could see the facility is clean and well-organized, however the building is beginning to show signs of age with the visibility of cracks in the walls and floors of the holding area. The maintenance log did not reflect these needed repairs.

An individual had been brought in and placed in the only Safety Cell in the jail. A Custodial Officer remained positioned outside the door to observe the inmate to make sure he would not hurt himself. If more than one detainee requires a safety cell at the same time, the practice is to transport the additional individual(s) to the Placerville facility.

At the time of the inspection a full body metal scan detector was available but inoperable. It had been out of service for over a year. As of this report the body scanner is now operable and placed at the entrance of the booking room. However the foyer did not have a full body scan metal detector or hand wands to scan visitors.

Telephones are the only method of communication between visitors and inmates during visitation. Their conversations are conducted in a booth through a glass window, which is not bullet resistant.

### **Interviews with Inmates**

Immediately following the physical inspection, the Grand Jurors separated into two groups and interviewed several female and male inmates. Topics discussed were: culinary (food), availability of religious services, library services, medical services, and educational opportunities within the jail. The inmates interviewed had positive comments about the facility and Correctional Officers. They reported that the food is outstanding, especially compared to other facilities.

## **FINDINGS**

- F1. The foyer area of the South Lake Tahoe Jail has neither a full body metal detector or scan/hand wand detectors which present a serious safety issue for staff, visitors and inmates at the jail.
- F2. The inoperable cameras in the indoor gym area present safety issues for the Correctional Officer and inmates.
- F3. There is only one safety cell at this time limiting the necessary control/placement of at risk individuals.
- F4. Administrative staff appeared unaware of repairs needed in the holding area increasing the chance of further damage requiring more expensive repairs.
- 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.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- R1. Bullet resistant glass should be installed in the foyer and visitors area.
- R2. Installation of a full body metal detector scan in the foyer. Additional hand wand detectors should also be made available for visitor screening.
- R3. Installation of digital camera surveillance equipment in the indoor gym.
- R4. Develop a plan to expand the number of safety cells and present it to the Board of Supervisors for approval.
- R5. Assign a point of contact to perform a walk through at regular intervals to ensure needed repairs are added to the maintenance log.
- R6. Expand the culinary program and add more vocational training opportunities for the inmates.

## **REQUEST FOR RESPONSES**

Responses to findings and recommendations in this report are required by law in accordance with California Penal Code §933 and §933.05

From the following individuals:

- El Dorado County Sheriff on or before August 15, 2017

From the following governing bodies

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on or before August 15, 2017

**Address response to:**

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

The Presiding Judge of the El Dorado County Superior Court additionally requests that responses be sent electronically as a Word or PDF file to facilitate the economical and timely distribution of such responses. Please email responses to El Dorado County Grand Jury reports to:  
[courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org](mailto:courtadmin@eldoradocourt.org)

**DISCLAIMER**

Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Inspection Form can be found on the California Civil Grand Jury website:**

**[Detention Facilities Inspection Forms](#)**

Go to Section: Documents Related to Investigations

**<http://cgja.org/grand-jury-sample-documents>**

APPENDIX

El Dorado County Fire Protection District

P.O. Box 807 • 4040 Carson Road Camino, California 95709 • (530) 644-9630 Fax (530) 644-9636

FIRE SAFETY INSPECTION REPORT

Business Address: 2350 FAIR LANE CT Suite: 120 Inspection Date: 6.15.2016  
 Business Name: E.D.C. SHERIFF JAIL HOLDING Business Phone: 621-6008  
 Owner/Property Management: E.D.C. SHERIFF JAIL / SHERIFF OFFICE Phone: SAME  
 Address: 300 FORNI RA City: PLACERVILLE State: CA Zip: 95667

NO	✓	VIOLATIONS	NO.	LOCATION / REMARKS	CLEARED	
<b>ACCESS</b>						
1		Maintain fire lane free of obstructions.		AT TIME OF INSPECTION	11	
2		Provide fire lane identification.		NO HAZARDOUS MATERIALS		
3		Provide address numbers/building I.D. visible from street.				
4		Provide approved key box/lock/switch and/or keys for fire dept. access.				
<b>EXITING</b>						
5		Remove obstructions at exits, doors, aisles, corridors, stairways, etc.		[Large handwritten mark]		
6		Exit door to open without a key or any special knowledge/effort.				
7		Provide "THIS DOOR TO REMAIN UNLOCKED WHEN BUSINESS IS OCCUPIED".				
8		Repair non-operable exit door hardware.			11	
9		Remove obstructions from door required to be closed.				
10		Remove locks/latches from doors with panic hardware.				
11		Remove storage from unprotected stairway.				
12		Provide/maintain exit sign/emergency lighting.			11	
<b>FIRE EXTINGUISHERS</b>						
13		Have fire extinguishers serviced and tagged.				
14		Provide/mount fire extinguisher as indicated.				11
15		Provide clear access to fire extinguisher.				
16		Post a sign indicating fire extinguisher location.				
<b>FIRE PROTECTION EQUIPMENT</b>						
17		Maintain, repair, paint, inspect, and/or test sprinkler/standpipe system/hydrant/FDC/PIV.			11	
18		Maintain 3 ft. minimum clearance for access/use of fire appliances/equipment.				
19		Secure all system control valves in the open position.				
20		Replace damaged/painted/missing sprinkler heads/FDC caps.				
21		Provide 5 year certification test for sprinkler/standpipe system.			11	
22		Provide sprinkler coverage in unprotected areas.				
23		Provide spare sprinkler heads (min. 6) and/or compatible wrench.				
24		Hood and duct extinguishing system to be serviced and tagged.			11	
25		Remove grease from hood, duct, and filters. (KEEP CLEAN)				
<b>FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS</b>						
26		Maintain, repair, inspect, and/or test fire alarm system.				
27		Provide/maintain operable smoke detectors in each dwelling unit.				
<b>FIRE SEPARATIONS</b>						
28		Repair holes in required fire resistive construction.			11	
29		Provide/repair self or automatic closing fire rated assemblies.				
30		Keep attic access and scuttle openings closed.				
<b>ELECTRICAL</b>						
31		Discontinue use of extension cords.				
32		Install permanent wiring for fixed and stationary appliances.	1st	11		
33		Provide cover plates for all junction boxes. Provide spacers for electrical panel.				
34		Remove exposed wiring or protect in approved conduit.	2nd	11		
35		Provide a 30 inch clear space to and in front of electrical panel.				
36		Maintain wiring in good condition and protect from damage.	Refer to FPB	11		
<b>HAZARDOUS MATERIALS</b>						
37		Provide a flammable liquid storage cabinet or reduce storage to 10 gallons or less.				
38		Remove all flammable liquids not used for maintenance purposes.				
39		Store Flammable liquids away from exits, stairs, or corridors.				
40		Maintain equipment, machinery and required detection equipment.				
41		Obtain a hazardous materials permit.				
42		Secure compressed gas cylinders. Identify product name.				
<b>STORAGE • HOUSEKEEPING</b>						
43		Arrange storage in an orderly manner.				
44		Remove combustible storage from boiler, mechanical, and electrical room.				
45		Reduce storage to 24 inches below ceiling or 18 inches below sprinkler heads.				
46		Provide listed container for oily rag storage.				
47		Provide metal trash can with lid.				
48		Remove waste/rubbish materials from the premises.				
49		Keep dumpsters 5 feet away from combustible walls, eaves, or openings.				
50		Provide minimum 30 foot clearance between building and combustible vegetation.				
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>						
51		Post room capacity.				
52		Other violations and comments.				
<b>NO VIOLATIONS NOTED THIS DATE - THANK YOU FOR BEING FIRE SAFE!</b>						

  

RE-INSPECTION DATES	INSPECTOR
1st	11
2nd	11
Refer to FPB	11

  

**CITATION WARNING**  
 You are hereby notified to correct all violations immediately or show cause why you should not be required to do so. A re-inspection will be conducted on \_\_\_\_\_ failure to correct violations by the re-inspection date may result in issuance of a citation. Thank you for your assistance and cooperation in minimizing the fire and life loss in your community.

**BY ORDER OF THE FIRE CHIEF**  
 Signature of Recipient: [Signature]  
 Owner  Manager  Employee  Other

Inspecting Officer: LEWANDOWSKI

FPB: \_\_\_\_\_ Company: 25 Shift: C Page: 1 of 1  
 Yellow - Station Rev 02/07/08