

AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

*Superior Court – Exhibit Room
495 Main Street, Placerville*

Reason for the Report

The Grand Jury selected the Superior Court Exhibit Room as a general review for 2002/2003.

Scope of the Investigation

The members of the Grand Jury:

- Made an unannounced visit to the Superior Court on March 26, 2003;
- Was provided a brief tour of the non-physical Exhibit Room courtesy of the Court Operations Supervisor; Spoke informally with the two other staff members;
- Interviewed the Assistant Court Executive Officer;
- Reviewed previous Grand Jury reports and found no reports that dealt with the Exhibit Room.

Background

The Grand Jury was briefed on the process for the filing and transfer of all exhibits (physical and non-physical). Non-physical exhibits consist of documents, pictures, courtroom charts, etc, which are entered into trial as exhibits. Physical exhibits are handled separately and are secured by the Sheriff's Department. Procedures exist for inventorying, handling and discarding of non-physical exhibits, however they are not always followed as no one is designated this responsibility.

The non-physical Exhibit Room appears to lack adequate space and shelving for storing exhibits. About 75 percent of the exhibits pertain to closed cases and therefore should be discarded. Court approval is required for disposition of closed case exhibits.

Findings

F1. The non-physical Exhibit Room appears to lack adequate space and shelving. Exhibits appear to be in disorder and are placed on the floor in this small room.

Response to F1: The respondent agrees with the finding. Superior court facilities are owned by the county, but court staff performs court functions in the facilities, including storing exhibits.

F2. Written procedures are not being followed for discarding closed-case exhibits. About 75% of exhibits in the storage area are beyond the retention period.

Response to F2: The respondent agrees with the finding.
F3. There is no person designated to manage the exhibit process.

Response to F3: The respondent agrees with the finding.
F4. No sprinkler system or fire extinguishers could be found in or near the Exhibit Room.

Response to F4: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. There is a fire hose outside the basement file room that is designated for use in both the file room and the exhibit room, which meets fire code requirements.

Recommendations

R1. The Exhibit Room should have adequate shelving.

Response to R1: The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented in the future. The County will work cooperatively with the Court to implement a solution to the court exhibit situation. The situation should be resolved by March 31, 2004.

R2. All exhibits should be inventoried and established procedures should be followed.

Response to R2: The recommendation will not be implemented, because it is not warranted. . The County has no ability to control the manner in which court exhibits are inventoried. We understand that the Court is working on resolving this situation.

R3. A person should be designated to manage the exhibit process.

Response to R3: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted
The County has no ability to control the manner in which court exhibits are inventoried or stored. We understand that the Court has designated a member of its staff to manage the exhibit process.

R4. A fire extinguisher should be installed in or near the Exhibit Room.

Response to R4: The recommendation has been implemented. As noted above in the response to F4, there is a fire hose outside the basement file room that is designated for use in both the file room and the exhibit room, which meets fire code requirements. In addition, a fire extinguisher was installed on July 10, 2003.

Responses Required for Findings

F1 through F4

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
El Dorado County Department of General Services
Chief Executive Officer for Superior Court

Responses Required for Recommendations

R1 through R4

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
El Dorado County Department of General Services
Chief Executive Officer for Superior Court