

# **YOLO COUNTY JAIL**

## **SUMMARY**

High inmate population and how it is affected by a 1992 Federal Consent Decree continues to be a high priority issue for jail staff. County Jail buildings and grounds are clean and well maintained. Correctional staff have complied with policies and procedures in all areas. The jail facilities receive 80% of their electrical power from an array of solar panels located on the property.

## **REASON FOR VISIT**

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 919(b), “The Grand Jury shall inquire into the conditions and management of the public prisons within the county”.

## **ACTIONS TAKEN**

The Grand Jury inspected the Yolo County Jail in Woodland, which consists of the Monroe Detention Center and Leinberger Memorial Center. The Monroe Center houses the higher risk offenders, while the Leinberger facility houses the lower risk population and inmates serving out jail sentences. The Grand Jury met with the Sheriff/Coroner of Yolo County as well as the Correctional Command Team. Pertinent documents reviewed included jail policies and procedures, a sampling of inmate grievances and responses, and the California Corrections Standards Authority (CSA) report dated November 3, 2010.

The inspection included viewing the “Justice Campus Solar Project”, which was activated July 27, 2010. The Grand Jury also conducted a follow-up meeting with jail command staff.

## **WHAT THE JURY DETERMINED**

Inmate overcrowding continues as an operational way of life at the jail. Inmate population is limited under a 1992 federal consent decree. The current maximum inmate capacity is 422. Releases pursuant to the decree occur when that number is exceeded. A list of potential inmates to be released is compiled daily by correctional management staff, taking into account the nature of the present charges an inmate is facing coupled with the inmate’s criminal history. Inmates posing the least risk to the community are considered first for release. During the calendar year 2010, 87 male inmates and 36 female inmates were released per the consent

decree. These inmates' status ranged from unsentenced misdemeanants to felons on probation completing their jail terms.

Funding reductions in the fall of 2010 led to the closure of 30 beds and the layoff of two correctional officers in the female section of the Leinberger facility. This closure dropped the jail's maximum capacity to from 452 to 422. These reductions further contributed to the early release of inmates.

The Grand Jury reviewed a selection of inmate grievances and staff responses and compared them to the provisions of the jail's Policy Manual. The review found the jail staff responded in a timely manner - within five business days at the first level or seven business days at the second level - and their responses were appropriate and clearly expressed.

The CSA report states the jail is current on all Fire Marshal and health inspections. It noted there was some lack of compliance with the California Code of Regulations due to space issues related to the use of temporary cells. Those cells are in the booking area and are utilized to hold inmates demonstrating or expressing suicidal tendencies. However, the report commended the collaboration between custody staff and medical/mental health personnel in their monitoring of these individuals in rather tight quarters.

A newly-formed canine unit assists correctional officers and sheriff's deputies with the search for and seizure of contraband throughout the justice complex. The unit was awarded first place at the Western States Canine Conference and Year-end Trials in Reno, Nevada in October of 2010.

The Grand Jury found all hallways in both facilities to be clear of debris, and doors were closed and locked electronically. Booking and holding areas had appropriate access to drinking water and toilet facilities, and the building exterior and grounds were clean and well kept. Sleeping areas, bedding, dayrooms and living areas were clean and well-maintained, with plentiful light and comfortable temperature. Interior and exterior walls were free of graffiti, peeling paint, unpleasant odors, and other signs of deterioration during the inspection. Cell blocks and court holding areas were secured and had access to toilets and drinking water. The kitchen area was sanitary, and all knives were secured by tethered cables.

Inmates receive adequate physical, dental and mental health services through on-site and on-call professional providers. They are offered a wide and ever-expanding array of technological, vocational, literacy, rehabilitation, and socialization programs in the evenings, provided primarily by community volunteers, to promote their transition back to society upon release from custody.

The Justice Campus Solar Project is a photovoltaic field comprised of a solar panel array on the eastern edge of the complex. It is expected to provide 80% of the electrical power used by

the jail facilities as well as the Yolo County Juvenile Detention Facility, which is also on the campus.

Two inmate suicides occurred during the year 2010, the first in May and the second in December. Both deaths occurred by asphyxiation. Accordingly, the Grand Jury reviewed two applicable sections in the Monroe Detention Center Operations Manual: “Suicide Prevention” and “Inmate Death”.

The suicide prevention section addresses an inmate expressing suicidal tendencies from the time of arrest and transport to the jail. Additionally, the jail’s Policies and Procedures regarding mental health issues address mental health screening of inmates, suicide prevention, and inmate death. The inmate death section discusses procedures to follow upon a completed suicide. Also, the Grand Jury discussed the circumstances surrounding these deaths with jail command staff.

Neither inmate displayed or expressed any suicidal tendencies at the time of their booking into the facility, nor did they show any such evidence while incarcerated. County Jail staff followed their policies and procedures in response to each suicide.

The County Jail’s Policies and Procedures require a lockdown of all jail facilities upon the initial report of the death, and the immediate area of the death is secured as a crime scene. The only officials allowed in the area are clinical responders, Sheriff’s Office management, and an officer to track and maintain a log of all movement of people in and out of the area. Next, all inmates in the vicinity of the scene are held and not allowed to move to other areas without express approval of the jail commander. The Sheriff and District Attorney are immediately notified, as well as certain Sheriff’s Office officials who would have a professional interest in the case. The County Coroner notifies the next of kin as soon as possible.

Further, all involved staff members are required to write reports on their observations and involvement in the death. The California Department of Justice (DOJ) is notified by report within ten days. All jail logs (cell counts, inmate visits, etc.) that are maintained as part of the jail’s daily operation are secured as evidence.

To date, the DOJ has not contacted jail officials regarding any inquiries regarding these deaths.

## **FINDINGS**

**F1.** County Jail officials continue to struggle with inmate overcrowding. Budget cuts have led to additional early release of inmates. Jail staff are proactive in determining which inmates are to be released from custody.

- F2.** The installation and operation of the photovoltaic solar array is an innovative and creative effort to significantly reduce electricity costs throughout the justice complex.
- F3.** County Jail staff adhered to policy and procedure guidelines concerning health and safety regulations and were responsive to inmate grievances.
- F4.** The County Jail building exteriors and grounds were clean and well maintained. All interior areas were sanitary and free of debris, and cell blocks and holding areas were properly secured.
- F5.** County Jail staff adhered to all policy and procedure guidelines and requirements during their response and investigation of the two suicides. These guidelines include scene preservation, notification of the requisite county and state agencies, and a review of the investigation upon its completion to determine whether any corrective action is necessary.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

None

## **REQUEST FOR RESPONSES**

None

## **DISCLAIMER**

This report was issued by the Yolo County Grand Jury with the exception of one member of the Grand Jury who may have had a perceived conflict of interest. This juror was excluded from all parts of the investigation including inspections, interviews, deliberations, and the making and acceptance of the reports.