

**NEVADA COUNTY DISPATCH CENTER
A VITAL NEED**

2018-2019 Nevada County Grand Jury

Summary

On 11 October, while inspecting the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility, the 2018-2019 Nevada County Grand Jury (Jury) also visited the Nevada County Dispatch Center (Dispatch Center) located within the Correctional Facility. As a result of the visit, observations made, and interviews conducted, the Jury decided it was necessary to report on its findings.

The Dispatch Center provides 24/7 dispatch services for all Nevada County (County) law enforcement agencies including the Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO), Truckee Police Department, Nevada City Police Department, and Grass Valley Police Department. It also provides dispatch services for animal control operations in the County, Grass Valley, and Truckee; and supports the County Public Works Department, State Department of Transportation, and the County Probation Department for after-hours emergencies.

The Dispatch Center itself consists of two rooms, one an office and storage area and the other the actual dispatch room. The windowless dispatch room is 516 square feet and has stations for four operators. There is only one restroom and no kitchen or break room. The Dispatch Center is crowded and uninviting.

The dispatch operators are highly trained and must have a calming demeanor yet be able to rapidly assess each call and ensure that action is taken to respond to any emergency.

The Jury found that the Dispatch Center does not provide an adequate working environment for the demands made on the dispatch personnel. The Jury also found that the Dispatch Center is understaffed and well below its staffing allowance resulting in excessively long shifts and overtime requirements that stress dispatch personnel.

The Jury is recommending that the NCSO relocate the Dispatch Center to an appropriate facility and that the NCSO and Nevada County Human Resources Office prioritize recruitment methods so staffing can be brought up to allocated levels.

Glossary

County	Nevada County
Dispatch Center	Nevada County Dispatch Center
Jury	2018-2019 Nevada County Grand Jury
NCSO	Nevada County Sheriff's Office

Background

In California, each of the 58 counties empanel a grand jury, whose function is to investigate the operations of the various officers, departments, and agencies of local government. A grand jury may examine all aspects of county or city government, special districts, and other tax-supported

organizations to ensure that the best interests of the citizens of the county are being served. The grand jury reviews and evaluates procedures, operations, and systems utilized by local agencies to determine whether more effective methods may be employed.

On 11 October, while inspecting the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility, the Jury also visited the Dispatch Center located within the Correctional Facility. As a result of the visit, observations made, and interviews conducted, the Jury decided it was necessary to report on its findings.

Approach

The Jury toured the Dispatch Center and interviewed key personnel.

Discussion

The Dispatch Center provides 24/7 dispatch services for all County law enforcement agencies including the NCSO, Truckee Police Department, Nevada City Police Department, and Grass Valley Police Department. It also provides dispatch services for animal control operations in the County, Grass Valley, and Truckee; and supports the County Public Works Department, State Department of Transportation, and the County Probation Department for after-hours emergencies.

All 911 calls within the County (with the exception of those from cell phones within 50 feet of a major highway which are routed directly to the California State Highway Patrol Dispatch Center) are routed to the Dispatch Center where the dispatch operators evaluate the call and take appropriate action.

Approximately 50% of all calls are true emergencies. All 911 calls are recorded and retained for 366 days. During periods of high activity, the Dispatch Center can assign an additional radio channel to police or fire agencies as needed in order to provide interference free communication.

The recruiting process for new operators is challenging. The Dispatch Supervisor screens all applications. Applicants then take the statewide Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) test. Approximately 50% pass this test. After an interview process, top candidates undergo a background check. About one third of those candidates pass this check. Those who pass then take a medical and psychological exam. Candidates who pass these exams proceed to hands-on training.

The dispatch operators are highly trained and must have a calming demeanor yet be able to rapidly assess each call and ensure that action is taken to respond to any emergency. Training for new dispatch operators takes six to nine months. The dropout rate for trainees is as high as 60%. The work is extremely demanding and stressful but can be satisfying when the outcome is positive.

The current staff includes a Supervisor and seven full-time-equivalent dispatch operators. There are five operator vacancies. Because of staff shortages, operators work five 12-hour shifts with mandatory overtime. Due to the long shifts and the lack of facilities at the Dispatch Center, personnel bring their meals and eat at their stations.

The Dispatch Center itself consists of two rooms, one an office and storage area and the other the actual dispatch room. The windowless dispatch room is 516 square feet and has stations for four operators. There is only one restroom and no kitchen or break room. The Dispatch Center is crowded and uninviting.

There has been discussion about relocating the Dispatch Center but to date, no decision has been made.

Findings

- F1** The Nevada County Dispatch Center does not provide an adequate working environment for the dispatch personnel.
- F2** The Nevada County Dispatch Center is understaffed that results in added stress to the dispatch personnel.

Recommendations

- R1** The Nevada County Sheriff's Office should take immediate steps to provide an adequate facility for the Nevada County Dispatch Center and relocate the function to that facility.
- R2** The Nevada County Human Resources Office should improve recruitment processes to increase the number of dispatch operators to the allocated numbers.

Request for Responses

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Jury requests responses from the following:

From the Nevada County Sheriff's Office to Findings F1, F2 and Recommendation R1 by 5 July 2019.

From the Nevada County Human Resources Office to Finding F2 and Recommendation R2 by 4 August 2019.