

# **Nevada County Superior Courthouse Holding Facility**

## **Summary**

The replacement of the Nevada County Courthouse in Nevada City has long been a topic of discussion. Recently, the California Administrative Office of the Court prepared a feasibility report and held meetings on the subject. The California Penal Code requires the Nevada County Grand Jury to inspect annually the holding facility located in the Courthouse as to its condition and management.

Although the holding facility at the Courthouse was determined to be adequate for its purpose, the Nevada County Grand Jury found several issues in need of attention. These issues primarily revolve around security of inmates and the safety of the public and Courthouse employees. Since the timeframe for replacement of the current Courthouse has not been fully defined, the Nevada County Grand Jury recommends that the items of concern noted during their inspection should be addressed immediately.

## **Reasons for Investigation**

California Penal Code Section 919(b) requires: "The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." The Nevada County Grand Jury (Jury) defines public prisons as any adult or juvenile correction or detention facility within the county.

## **Procedures Followed**

The Jury inspected the holding facility at the Nevada County Courthouse (Courthouse) in Nevada City on October 12, 2010 and interviewed the staff of the holding facility. The Jury reviewed the Nevada County Sheriff's Office Court Holding Division Directive 18, dated August 11, 2000, and the Administrative Office of the Court, Superior Court of California, County of Nevada, New Nevada City Courthouse Project Feasibility Report, dated June 9, 2010. [http://www.courts.ca.gov/xbcr/cc/nevada\\_pfr.pdf](http://www.courts.ca.gov/xbcr/cc/nevada_pfr.pdf)

## **Background**

The Courthouse has occupied the present location since 1855. The current courthouse was completed in 1865 replacing the previous one destroyed by fire. In 1900, the building was remodeled and in 1936-37, an extensive renovation of the building was done under the

depression-era Works Project Administration (WPA). The courthouse annex was added in 1963. It housed the county jail until the building of the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility (WBCF) in 1992 and still houses the court holding facility. The Courthouse is jointly owned by the State of California and Nevada County.

The Jury is aware that the California Administrative Office of the Court is in the early stages of planning the replacement of the Courthouse. However, the Jury concludes it is important to highlight relevant findings concerning the current courthouse and make recommendations to improve conditions.

## **Facts**

1. There is a holding facility in the Courthouse for inmates transported from WBCF for court appearances and meetings with attorneys.
2. The external doors of vans transporting inmates from WBCF are equipped with standard factory-installed locks.
3. Transport vans are driven into the enclosed parking garage located below the Courthouse holding facility.
4. The parking garage entrance and exit have remote-access, roll-up security gates.
5. The Jury observed that the timing cycle allows roll-up gates in the parking garage to remain open longer than necessary for a vehicle to enter or exit.
6. The fenced and gated enclosure, commonly known as a sally port, allows inmates to be loaded and unloaded in a secure area before being taken by elevator to the holding cells.
7. At the time of inspection, the Jury was told the roll-up security gate on the sally port is not always lowered and secured during movement of the inmates.
8. If there is a transport van parked in the sally port, additional transports load and unload inmates in the non-secured area of the parking garage.
9. Several surveillance cameras, recommended in previous Jury reports, have been installed in the Courthouse and are monitored by Sheriff's personnel.
10. The surveillance cameras installed in the parking garage do not provide viewing of all sections of the garage.
11. The inmate transport elevator does not have a surveillance camera installed.

12. There is a surveillance camera blind spot in an area of the Courthouse used by both the public and inmates.
13. In-custody inmate movement between the holding facility and courtrooms takes place in unsecured public corridors.

### **Findings**

1. Standard factory-installed locks on inmate transportation vans do not provide sufficient safety and security for inmates and Sheriff's personnel.
2. The length of time the parking garage gates are open could allow unauthorized individuals to enter or exit the garage.
3. Inconsistent use of the sally port increases the possibility of security issues.
4. The inability to monitor all sections of the parking garage endangers those using the garage.
5. The absence of a surveillance camera in the inmate transport elevator may jeopardize the safety of Sheriff's personnel and inmates.
6. The surveillance camera blind spot in the Courthouse may jeopardize the safety of individuals in that area.
7. Employees, inmates and the public may be at risk when hallways are not cleared before moving inmates to courtrooms.

### **Recommendations**

The Nevada County Sheriff should direct staff to:

1. Install upgraded locks controlled by the driver in all inmate transport vans.
2. Properly use the sally port for loading and unloading of all inmates.
3. Clear individuals from hallways when inmates are moved to courtrooms.

The Nevada County Sheriff should negotiate with the Nevada County Superior Court to:

4. Reduce the length of time the parking garage roll-up gates remain open.
5. Install additional surveillance cameras in the parking garage.

6. Install surveillance cameras in the inmate transport elevator.
7. Install additional surveillance cameras to eliminate the Courthouse blind spot.

## **Responses**

Nevada County Sheriff' Office – August 8, 2011

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**NEVADA COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**



**KEITH ROYAL  
SHERIFF/CORONER  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR**

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July 29, 2011

Honorable Judge Tom Anderson  
Presiding Judge of the Grand Jury  
201 Church Street  
Nevada City, CA 95959

**Nevada County  
Civil Grand Jury  
950 Maidu Ave.  
Nevada City, CA 95959**

*Rec'd 8/8/11  
Bo*

RE: Response to 2010-2011 Nevada City Court Holding Grand Jury Report

Dear Honorable Judge Anderson:

In response to the Grand Jury Report dated June 6, 2011 on the Nevada City Court Holding facility, seven findings were noted.

**Findings:**

1. Standard factory-installed locks on inmate transportation vans do not provide sufficient safety and security for inmates and Sheriff's personnel.

**Disagree**

Inmates and Sheriff's personnel are provided sufficient safety and security regarding the locks on the transportation vans.

The locks are industry standard; the same as equipped on our marked Patrol vehicles. We feel the locks on our transportation vans provide adequate safety and security.

2. The length of time the parking garage gates are open could allow unauthorized individuals to enter or exit the garage.

**Partially Agree**

We feel the length of time the garage gates are open is necessary to provide a safe ingress and egress from the parking garage. Sheriff's Office personnel practice measures to ensure unauthorized individuals cannot enter or exit the garage.

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CORRECTIONS: P.O. BOX 928, NEVADA CITY, CA 95959-0928 - (530) 265-1291  
TRUCKEE: P.O. BOX 699, TRUCKEE, CA 96160 - (530) 582-7838  
KEITH.ROYAL@CO.NEVADA.CA.US

3. Inconsistent use of the sally port increases the possibility of security issues.

**Agree**

After the inspection by the Grand Jury of the Sallyport area, repairs have been made to a gate and Sheriff's Office personnel have begun to consistently use the gate on all movements.

4. The inability to monitor all sections of the parking garage endangers those using the garage.

**Partially Agree**

We feel adequate security is being provided although if funding was available in the future, the Administrative Office of the Courts might consider installing additional cameras.

5. The absence of a surveillance camera in the inmate transport elevator may jeopardize the safety of Sheriff's personnel and inmates.

**Agree**

If funding was available in the future, the Administrative Office of the Courts might consider installing a camera in the transport elevator.

6. The surveillance camera blind spot in the Courthouse may jeopardize the safety of individuals in that area.

**Agree**

If funding was available in the future, the Administrative Office of the Courts might consider installing additional cameras in the Courthouse.

7. Employees, inmates and the public may be at risk when hallways are not cleared before moving inmates to courtrooms.

**Agree**

Due to the design of the building, there will be movement of prisoners in hallways open to the public. Sheriff's Office personnel are diligent in having adequate staff to conduct the movement regardless of the number of inmates moved and practice measures to ensure the public's safety and security.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. The Nevada County Sheriff should direct staff to install upgraded locks controlled by the driver in all inmate transport vans.

**The recommendation will not be implemented at this time.**



This is not necessary as factory installed locks are already controlled by driver.

2. The Nevada County Sheriff should direct staff to properly use the Sallyport for loading and unloading of all inmates.

**The recommendation has already been implemented.**

3. The Nevada County Sheriff should direct staff to clear individuals from hallways when inmates are moved to courtrooms.

**The recommendation has already been implemented.**

4. The Nevada County Sheriff should negotiate with the Nevada County Superior Court to reduce the length of time the parking garage roll-up gates remain open.

**The recommendation will not be implemented at this time.**

The Sheriff's Office personnel will be more diligent in utilizing the inner Sallyport for inmate movement and continue to monitor when the gates are open to stop unauthorized traffic.

5. The Nevada County Sheriff should negotiate with the Nevada County Superior Court to install additional surveillance cameras in the parking garage.

**The recommendation will not be implemented at this time.**

Discussions with court Executive Officer Sean Metroka, found that the Administrative Office of the Courts does not have the funds to purchase any additional cameras at this time.

6. The Nevada County Sheriff should negotiate with the Nevada County Superior Court to install surveillance cameras in the inmate transport elevator.

**The recommendation will not be implemented at this time.**

Discussions with court Executive Officer Sean Metroka, found that the Administrative Office of the Courts does not have the funds to purchase any additional cameras at this time.

7. The Nevada County Sheriff should negotiate with the Nevada County Superior Court to install additional surveillance cameras to eliminate the Courthouse blind spot.

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The Sheriff's Department appreciates the concerns of the Grand Jury and is committed to providing the highest level of security for all who enter the Court House. The Administrative Office of the Courts is in the early stages of planning the replacement of the Nevada City Courthouse and Sheriff's Department personnel have been providing invaluable input regarding safety and security of the design.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Royal", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Keith Royal  
Sheriff-Coroner

CC: CEO Rick Haffey  
Board Analyst, Eve Diamond



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**NEVADA COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**



Nevada County  
Civil Grand Jury  
950 Maidu Ave.  
Nevada City, CA 95959

REC'D 8/23/11  
BR  
**KEITH ROYAL  
SHERIFF/CORONER  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR**

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July 29, 2011 (*amended response 8/17/11*)

Honorable Judge Tom Anderson  
Presiding Judge of the Grand Jury  
201 Church Street  
Nevada City, CA 95959

AUG 18 2011  
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2. The length of time the parking garage gates are open could allow unauthorized individuals to enter or exit the garage.

**Partially Agree**

We feel the length of time the garage gates are open is necessary to provide a safe ingress and egress from the parking garage. Sheriff's Office personnel practice measures to ensure unauthorized individuals cannot enter or exit the garage.

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7. Employees, inmates and the public may be at risk when hallways are not cleared before moving inmates to courtrooms.

**Agree**

Due to the design of the building, there will be movement of prisoners in hallways open to the public. Sheriff's Office personnel are diligent in having adequate staff to conduct the movement regardless of the number of inmates moved and practice measures to ensure the public's safety and security.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. The Nevada County Sheriff should direct staff to install upgraded locks controlled by the driver in all inmate transport vans.

**The recommendation will not be implemented at this time.**



This is not necessary as factory installed locks are already controlled by driver.

2. The Nevada County Sheriff should direct staff to properly use the Sallyport for loading and unloading of all inmates.

**The recommendation has already been implemented. Sheriff's Office personnel have been instructed to be more diligent in utilizing the inner Sallyport for inmate movement, and continue to recognize the dangers when the gates are open to stop unauthorized traffic.**

3. The Nevada County Sheriff should direct staff to clear individuals from hallways when inmates are moved to courtrooms.

**The recommendation has already been implemented. Sheriff's Office personnel have been instructed to be more diligent in clearing the public from hallways when inmates are moved to courtrooms.**

4. The Nevada County Sheriff should negotiate with the Nevada County Superior Court to reduce the length of time the parking garage roll-up gates remain open.

**The recommendation will not be implemented at this time.**

The Sheriff's Office personnel will be more diligent in utilizing the inner Sallyport for inmate movement and continue to monitor when the gates are open to stop unauthorized traffic.

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