

Nevada County Sheriff's Office Truckee Sub-Station and the Superior Court Holding Facility

Summary

The Nevada County Grand Jury is statutorily required to annually inspect public prisons within Nevada County. The Nevada County Sheriff's Office has responsibility for the management of county correctional facilities, including inmate-holding facilities at the Nevada County Sheriff's Office, Truckee Sub-Station and at the Nevada County Superior Court, Truckee Branch.

The Truckee Sub-Station was built in the early 1960s and has an inmate capacity of twelve. It is used to temporarily house persons arrested in the Truckee area and inmates who are transported daily from the Wayne Brown Correctional Center for court appearances. There is also an inmate holding facility at the Nevada County Superior Court, Truckee Branch used to briefly hold inmates awaiting court appearances.

The Nevada County Grand Jury recommends that certain improvements should be made as soon as possible. These include:

- Increased supervision of the inmate workers housed at the Truckee Sub-Station.
- Additional cameras to better observe the activities of inmates, both inside and outside of the facilities.
- Bringing the Truckee Sub-Station into compliance with the State Fire Marshal inspection.
- Replacement of the evidence/property lockers currently in use at the Truckee Sub-Station.
- Expedite construction of a secure inmate loading/unloading area at the Nevada County Superior Court with a secure enclosure, commonly known as a sally port.
- Expedite construction of a secure enclosed walkway area used to transport inmates into the Nevada County Superior Court.

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.

Background

The Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) is a county sheriff's department within the State of California as defined by the California Penal Code. The NCSO is responsible for the management of the county correctional facilities located at the Truckee Sub-Station (Sub-Station) and the Nevada County Superior Court, Truckee Branch (Truckee Court). The Sub-Station also houses the NCSO law enforcement operations in the Truckee area.

The Sub-Station and the Truckee Court are Type 1 facilities as defined by the Corrections Standards Authority, a sub-agency of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The Sub-Station and the Truckee Court are low security risk, temporary holding facilities. Inmate confinement is limited to ninety-six hours. The Sub-Station is used to house persons arrested in the Truckee area and inmates who are transported daily from the Wayne Brown Correctional Center for court appearances. The Truckee Court is used to briefly hold inmates awaiting court appearances.

Procedures Followed

On September 28, 2010, the Jury inspected the Sub-Station located at 10879 Donner Pass Road, Truckee, California and a second holding facility located within the Truckee Court located at 10075 Levon Avenue, Truckee, California. The Jury toured the facilities, interviewed representatives from the NCSO and reviewed documentation received from the following public agencies:

- Nevada County Sheriff's Office
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Corrections Standards Agency
- California Department of Forestry, Office of the State Fire Marshal

Facts

Nevada County Sheriff's Office Truckee Sub-Station

1. The existing surveillance camera system at the Sub-Station does not:
 - Completely monitor all inmate-housing areas.
 - Monitor the hallway adjacent to a work sink and an exterior door.
 - Allow adequate monitoring of the inmate worker when outside of the Sub-Station.
2. The evidence/property lockers are made of wood with a non-keyed locking system.
3. At the time of the inspection, per the *Fire Safety Correction Notice* prepared by the Office of the State Fire Marshal dated and signed on May 24, 2010, the Sub-Station had six listed deficiencies, one of which remains outstanding since May 2007.

4. "Fire clearance" has been withheld by the State Fire Marshal, pending correction of all the listed items.
5. At the time of the inspection, there were two inmate workers housed in the Sub-Station.
6. One inmate worker, a Placer County inmate, was transported to Placer County facilities by Placer County Sheriff's Office personnel each morning and returned to the Sub-Station each evening. The Jury was told the inmate was not searched for contraband by Sub-Station personnel on return from the Placer County facilities.
7. The second inmate worker was a Nevada County inmate responsible for meal preparation, general cleaning and other duties as assigned at the Sub-Station. This inmate worker was:
 - Unsupervised when outside in the area adjacent to the Sub-Station, including the parking area, the public library and the Truckee Court.
 - Not always searched for contraband on his return from outside of the Sub-Station.
 - Observed to lack overall cleanliness as required in the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility County of Nevada Inmate Informational Handbook.
8. The inmate workers' cell was observed by the Jury to lack cleanliness and did not comply with the *Wayne Brown Correctional Facility County of Nevada Inmate Informational Handbook*.

Nevada County Superior Court, Truckee Branch

9. There is a holding facility in the Truckee Court for inmates awaiting court appearances.
10. Inmates are transported in a secure vehicle by an armed correctional officer between the Wayne Brown Correctional Center, the Sub-Station and the Truckee Court.
11. At the Truckee Court inmates are moved from the secure vehicle in an outdoor, unsecured, open area located in close proximity to a public library and county offices.
12. Inmates are moved from the secure vehicle to the Truckee Court through an outdoor, unsecured, open walkway utilized by court and county employees and the public.
13. There are no surveillance cameras in the inmate loading/unloading area or in the outdoor, unsecured, open walkway through which inmates are moved in and out of the Truckee Court.
14. Inmates at the Truckee Court are moved through an unsecured, open area located in close proximity to the courtroom, the judge's chamber, the jury deliberation room and offices housing court employees.

Findings

Nevada County Sheriff's Office Truckee Sub-Station

1. Employees and inmates at the Sub-Station may be exposed to potentially dangerous situations as surveillance cameras do not monitor all inmate areas.
2. The lack of secure handling, storage and control may lead to loss, contamination, degradation and/or destruction of evidence/property.
3. The deficiency documented in the State Fire Marshal's inspection of the Sub-Station may expose employees, inmates and the public to potentially dangerous situations.
4. Employees, inmates and the public may be exposed to potentially dangerous situations because inmate workers are unsupervised when outside of the Sub-Station.
5. Employees and inmates may be exposed to potentially dangerous situations when inmate workers are not searched on return to the Sub-Station.
6. The guideline for dorms and individual housing units and the statement on hygiene in the *Wayne Brown Correctional Facility County of Nevada Inmate Informational Handbook* are not being enforced at the Sub-station.

Nevada County Superior Court, Truckee Branch

7. There is concern regarding officer and public safety, as well as potential prisoner escape, when transferring inmates between vehicles and the Truckee Court.
8. There is concern regarding employee and public safety when moving inmates within the building housing the Truckee Court.

Recommendations

The Nevada County Sheriff should initiate procedures to:

1. Ensure monitoring of all inmate areas at the Sub-Station.
2. Ensure the safety and secure storage of evidence and property. The NCSO should replace the existing wooden, non-keyed lockers with metal lockers equipped with a keyed locking system.
3. Ensure full compliance with the State Office of the Fire Marshal.
4. Supervise the inmate worker's activities when the inmate worker is outside of the Sub-Station.

5. Search inmate workers for contraband upon return from outside of the Sub-Station.
6. Ensure inmate workers are clean and properly groomed and their quarters are kept clean and orderly.

The Nevada County Sheriff should open dialogue with the Nevada County Superior Court to:

7. Secure the open inmate loading/unloading area at the Truckee Court with a sally port.
8. Secure the open walkway area used to transport inmates into the Truckee Court with a secure enclosure.
9. Review the process for the movement of inmates through unsecured areas of the building housing the Truckee Court.

Responses

Nevada County Sheriff, August 29, 2011