

Response to 2024 Grand Jury Report

County Executive Office

Santa Barbara County Coroner
Facility and Equipment a
Hazardous Environment



one
COUNTY
one
FUTURE

Summary

- The Grand Jury distributed its Report on June 11, 2024. Reports by past Grand Juries recommended improvements and/or demolition and rebuilding of the facility.
- We thank the Grand Jury for the attentiveness to the facility, which is operated by the Sheriff's Department. Like most facilities owned by the County, capital projects and building maintenance are performed by the General Services Department.
- Some of the recommendations for repair or abatement inspections have been implemented, or will be implemented. Others will not because they are not warranted.
- The County recognizes there are deferred maintenance issues with many of our aging buildings. The County prioritizes capital funding based on certain criteria, including health and safety needs. The facility is inspected by County Public Health Department Environmental Health Services and California Department of Public Health, and is in compliance with applicable standards. In addition, the General Services Facility Maintenance Division conducts annual building inspections of the Coroner Facility, and the facility is in compliance with applicable standards.

Background

- The Board of Supervisors is required to respond to the Grand Jury Report in writing within 90 days.
- The Sheriff was also required to respond to this Report. As an elected department head, the Sheriff's written response was required within 60 days.
- Pursuant to a 2015 Grand Jury report recommendation, the Coroner facility was included in the Five Year Capital Improvement Program for FY 2015-2020 to determine if a new building was needed, or whether to make improvements to the existing facility. As a result, over the past nine years there have been over \$390,000 of improvements to the facility.

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1: *The buildings that the Coroner Bureau occupies are dangerous to the health and safety of the Coroner Bureau staff; they present an ongoing health hazard to everyone who works there.*

Disagree. The Coroner facility has been inspected by the Public Health Department's Environmental Health Services Division, and the California Department of Public Health, and was in compliance with all health and safety requirements.

Recommendation 1a: *The Jury recommends the installation of new roofing, including the replacement of accompanying support beams as needed, by a licensed roofing contractor, and not by handyman employees or janitorial staff from the Sheriff's Office or General Services. Repairs shall be completed by the end of the third quarter of calendar year 2024 or sooner.*

Has been implemented. Contract awarded in Spring of 2024 and work is now complete.

Findings and Recommendations

Recommendation 1b: *The Jury recommends a licensed professional mold abatement contractor be hired to assess whether there is active mold and, as necessary, conduct all required eradication efforts. Repairs shall be completed by the end of the third quarter of calendar year 2024 or sooner.*

Will be implemented. Work is currently underway and expected to be completed shortly.

Recommendation 1c: *The Jury recommends a licensed professional exterminator be hired to assess whether there is active termite infestation and, as necessary, tent both structures. Additionally, the exterminator must perform all required sectional work to repair or replace all the termite-damaged areas. Repairs shall be completed by the end of the third quarter of calendar year 2024 or sooner.*

Has been implemented. Contract awarded in Spring of 2024 and work now complete.

Completed Recommended Repairs

Rec 1c – Repaired termite damaged area



Rec 1a - New roof

Rec 1c – Repaired termite damaged area



Rec 1b -
Completed mold abatement



Rec 1a - New roof

Rec 1c – Repaired termite damaged area



Findings and Recommendations

Recommendation 1d: *The Jury recommends the installation of a state-of-the-art ventilation system in the front autopsy building. This shall be completed by the end of calendar year 2025.*

Will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Existing ventilation systems in front autopsy building were installed in 2016.

Recommendation 1e: *The Jury recommends the entire Coroner's facility shall be demolished and rebuilt. The Sheriffs Office shall request, and the Board of Supervisors shall allocate, funding to implement a design and a timeline to replace this antiquated facility with one that ensures the safety of its employees and visitors by the end of calendar year 2024.*

Will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. Pursuant to 2015 Grand Jury report, facility was assessed for replacement and determined to improve the existing facility. Over the past nine years \$390,000 of improvements have been invested in the facility. Moreover, capital budget for this fiscal year adopted in June and no additional funding to demolish and rebuild the entire Coroner facility by the end of calendar year 2024. Note that it is contemplated that the Coroner facility will be replaced as part of the Calle Real Master Plan redevelopment.

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 2: *There have been no independent safety or health inspections or audits conducted at the Coroner's Facility.*

Disagree. The Coroner facility was inspected by County Public Health Department Environmental Health Services in June 2023 and determined to be in compliance with applicable standards. The California Department of Public Health also conducts regular inspections which document the Coroner Facility to be compliance with applicable standards. In addition, the General Services Facility Maintenance Division conducts annual fire extinguisher, HVAC system, and general building inspections of the Coroner Facility which were completed last year in October 2023 and will be completed again later this calendar year.

Recommendation 2a: *An inspection of the Coroner's facility by OSHA or Cal-OSHA, whoever is available first, shall be requested immediately.*

Will not be implemented because it is not warranted as described above.

Findings and Recommendations

Recommendation 2b: *In the event that neither OSHA nor Cal-OSHA are available within 60 days, the SB County Public Health Department shall contract with an independent, accredited entity to conduct an inspection.*

Will not be implemented because it is not warranted The Environmental Health Service division acts with independence to ensure compliance with State laws and standards set by the California Environmental Protection Agency.

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 4: *The Facilities Maintenance Division of General Services does not have a Safety Officer.*

Agree.

Recommendation 4a:

General Services shall develop a job description for a General Services Safety Officer and identify or recruit an individual to function as the Safety Officer.

Will not be implemented because it is not warranted. A dedicated General Services Department Facility Maintenance Division safety officer position would duplicate other County efforts to achieve the intent of this recommendation. Such efforts include those by, without limitation, the County Safety Officer, the County Safety Committee, the Santa Barbara County Safety Hotline, County Public Health Department's Environmental Health Division, and the County's Risk Management Division for any worker's compensation related injuries.

Findings and Recommendations

Recommendation 4b:

The Safety Officer will conduct annual, at a minimum, safety inspections of the Coroner Bureau's facility.

Will not be implemented because General Services Safety Officer position is not warranted for the reasons set forth in response to Recommendation 4a. However, General Services Facilities Maintenance will continue to inspect the property annually, including separate fire extinguisher inspections, HVAC system inspections, general building inspections, electrical system inspections and a bi-weekly generator performance check.

Recommendation 4c:

The Safety Officer shall generate reports of their findings to the Board of Supervisors.

This recommendation will not be implemented as a General Services Safety Officer position is not warranted for the reasons set forth in the response to Recommendation 4a. The intent of this recommendation will be met by continuing to have General Services Capital Division maintenance staff who have received safety training memorialize their inspections with written reports.

Recommended Actions

- a) Consider and adopt the responses in Attachment A as the Board of Supervisors' response to the 2023-24 Grand Jury report entitled "Santa Barbara County Coroner Facility and Equipment a Hazardous Environment";
- b) Authorize the Chair to sign the letter included in Attachment A, and forward the letter and responses to the Presiding Judge of Santa Barbara County Superior Court; and
- c) Determine pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15378(b)(5) that the above actions are not a project subject to CEQA review, because they are government administrative activities that do not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.



Questions?