



NAPA COUNTY OFFICE OF SHERIFF-CORONER

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JOHN R. ROBERTSON
Sheriff - Coroner

June 10, 2013

FILED

JUL 29 2013

The Honorable Diane Price
Presiding Judge
Napa County Superior Court
825 Brown Street
Napa, CA 94559

Clerk of the Napa Superior Court
By: C. Brennan
Deputy

SUBJECT: Response to the Grand Jury 2012-2013 Final Report on the Napa County Sheriff/Coroner

Dear Judge Price:

As Napa County Sheriff, I have reviewed the findings and recommendations contained in the 2012-2013 Final Report. The Grand Jury is to be commended for its work on behalf of the citizens of Napa County. This letter is intended to respond to the Findings and Recommendations.

Recommendation 1 *The Coroner's Division immediately begin a program of entering data from the old system of typewritten index cards into the current computerized system.*

Response to Recommendation R1: I agree with this recommendation. The Coroners Division will develop a process to enter older cases into the database and eliminate the step of typing an index card. The index card system has been maintained strictly as a back-up should the computerized database fail. All data has been entered into the database for the past several years.

Recommendation R2: *The NSO seek assistance, as appropriate, from the BOS, the Napa County Executive Office, and/or County Counsel to secure an agreement with a third party credit/debit card merchant service to allow the NSO to accept credit and debit cards for payment of fees and services and pass related costs to the customer.*

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Response to Recommendation R2: I agree with this finding. The NSO will begin the process immediately with the Napa County Executive Office to secure an agreement with a third party credit/debit service to allow the NSO to accept credit and debit cards for payment of fees and services.

Recommendation R3: *The NSO, County IT and the NSO budget analyst work together to develop a cost benefit analysis for a secure server with the state-of-the-art software to store, index, manage and retrieve crime scene photographs that are now routinely stored on CDs.*

Response to Recommendation R3: I agree with this finding. We recognize that the CD storage system is not ideal, but it does provide a secure and stable storage system for photograph files for the time being. We are currently researching various systems and vendors providing digital evidence storage, and are already using server-based storage for some video evidence. This is a growing field with technology improving and changing on almost a daily basis. We are striving to find a long-term, sustainable and secure system with back-up(s) that will provide a method of storing this type of evidence in a manner compliant with the Evidence Code.

Recommendation R4: *The NSO develop full documentation of policy and procedures for the collection and preservation of DNA evidence. This documentation should include the currently used standard operation procedures for handling DNA evidence.*

Response to R4: I agree with this finding. It has always been the policy of Department Crime Lab to use the most current and up to date procedures for the collection and preservation of DNA evidence. A formal Lab Policy Manual is currently being prepared which will include recommended procedures recommended by California DOJ and the Journal of Forensic Identification for handling DNA evidence.

Recommendation R5: *That no later than December 31, 2013, the NSO and District Attorney's office develop a joint policy and procedure which effectively obtains and enforces proper court orders for appropriate destruction of evidence in NSO custody in cases either fully adjudicated, dismissed or beyond the statute of limitations.*

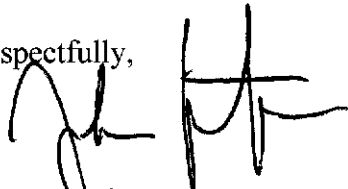
Response to R5: I agree with this finding. The backlog of destruction orders awaiting approval witnessed by the members of the Grand Jury during their investigation has been cleared and the items are being processed out of the Property/Evidence room at this time. Working with the District Attorney's office, we have gone to a more stream-lined process of smaller orders over time instead of large orders a few times a year. The current turn-around time for an order is 2 to 3 weeks. The District Attorney's office is working on a process that should dramatically reduce the need for processing these orders through their office. The NSO will continue to work with the District Attorney's office to develop a procedure by December 31, 2013.

Recommendation R6: *That within the 2013-2014 fiscal year the NSO hires a part-time or extra help person to fully staff the Property (Evidence) room.*

Response to R6: I disagree with this finding. We are currently developing procedures which will help with time management of the property room. We have also determined some procedures are redundant and those procedures have been eliminated.

Thank you for assisting with the evaluation of Napa County Sheriff's Office. If you have any questions about these responses, or if I can provide any further information, please feel free to contact me at (707) 253-4501 or john.robertson@countyofnapa.org

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John R. Robertson', written over a horizontal line.

John R. Robertson
Sheriff-Coroner