

2000-2001 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

Sheriff's Department Crime Lab

Respondent: County Executive Officer/Board of Supervisors

Recommendation R-1: The Ventura County Sheriff's Dept. Chief in charge of Special Services, and the Commander in charge of technical services should continue to make every effort to hire an Assistant Forensic Crime Lab Manager.

Response: The County Executive Officer and the Board of Supervisors recognize the importance and urgency of this recommendation. The recommendation is in the process of being implemented. During the FY 2001-02 budget process, the Sheriff agreed to convert an existing sworn allocation to the Assistant Forensic Crime Lab Manager position. The recruitment for the position has been opened, and every effort will be made to fill the position as quickly as possible.

Recommendation R-2: The planned move and modification (remodel) of the existing areas should be funded and carried out as soon as possible, complete with formalized plans.

Response: The recommendation has been partially implemented. The detectives were moved from quarters in the area of the crime lab to new leased space on September 11, 2001. It is anticipated that the laboratory administrative functions should also be moved by about the first of November. A contract has been finalized for the design phase of the remodel and work is progressing.

Funding is still a critical issue. Recent legislation has authorized \$25 million statewide for crime labs. It is hoped that Ventura County will be able to successfully compete for a portion of this allocation, however, it is unlikely that the full estimated cost of the remodel (\$3.4 million) could be obtained from this source alone. The CEO will continue to work in conjunction with the Sheriff's efforts to identify and pursue the necessary funding. One alternative to seeking the entire amount of funding from other sources may be a reallocation of resources within the Sheriff's budget.

Recommendation R-3: Every effort must be made by County Supervisors, and involved Department Heads, and Administrators to secure funding for the location and construction of a new Sheriff's Crime Lab facility by 2006, in part to implement plans in association with CSUCI.

Response: The CEO and Board of Supervisors appreciate the serious need for a new Crime Lab, and the significant challenge of funding the estimated \$19-\$20 million cost. The Board is faced with a number of high priority requirements in the immediate future and in coming years, and will seriously consider the Crime Lab funding in the context of the overall County needs and priorities.

To the extent possible, the CEO will continue to work in conjunction with the Sheriff's efforts to identify viable funding sources and mechanisms for the Board's consideration. During FY 2001-02, the CEO staff will explore potential federal and state legislation, grant opportunities, possible reallocation of existing resources within the Sheriff's budget, the possibility of regional cooperation (and contributions) from other counties which could benefit from a state of the art Crime Lab in Ventura County, and any other potential options.