

After-Hours Access To Ventura County Law Enforcement Facilities

Background

It came to the attention of the Ventura County 2001-2002 Grand Jury that there might be a lack of accessibility to county law enforcement offices outside the usual business hours.

We became aware of a terrifying experience that occurred as a woman drove home from work during the early morning hours. After exiting the freeway, she noticed that she was being followed and that attempts were being made to force her off the road. Elusive measures failed. She headed for the local police station for help and upon arrival, she found a poorly lit building with no clearly marked entrance and no sign of any police personnel. She left and continued to be followed until she found a parked police cruiser out in the community.

Methodology

Grand Jurors visited all primary city and county law enforcement offices within Ventura County during the late evening or early morning hours. Several sites were visited again during business hours.

Findings (*Also See Table 1*)

- F-1. All but one facility had an outside telephone connected to dispatch. Dispatch may or may not be on-site.
- F-2. Only four of the ten offices visited had unlocked access to the lobby after hours.
- F-3. Three of ten offices were described as “hard to find” by inspecting jurors.
- F-4. Six of ten had adequate to good lighting in the parking lot and at the entrance.
- F-5. Three of ten could guarantee that a uniformed officer was on site at all times.
- F-6. Four of ten offices had no personnel on site after hours.
- F-7. Five of ten offices had 24-hour monitored and working cameras in the lobbies, at entrances and in parking lots.
- F-8. No facility provided a protected environment or alarm system at the outside telephone.
- F-9. Only one of the ten offices had personnel stationed within sight of the front door.

Conclusions (Also See Table 1)

- C-1. The majority of the law enforcement facilities in Ventura County are inaccessible after usual business hours. (F-2)
- C-2. Some facilities are hard to find and poorly lit. (F-3, F-4)
- C-3. Most facilities have no uniformed officers scheduled to be within the facility after hours. (F-5)
- C-4. The locked, unmanned sites do not have 24-hour monitored camera surveillance of the outside area. (F-7)
- C-5. Locked and unmanned law enforcement facilities provide no safe haven. (F-8)

Recommendations

- R-1. All law enforcement facilities should provide a safe haven 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (C-1 through C-5)
- R-2. All law enforcement facilities should be easy to find, clearly identifiable and well lit. (C-2)
- R-3. If unmanned and/or locked, a protected area such as access to the lobby and/or a loud, widely heard alarm system should be available and clearly marked at all facilities. (C-5)
- R-4. Written procedures and policies should be in place to address minimal response time to calls for help at all facilities. (C-5)

Reponses Required

City Managers: (R-1 through R-4)

Camarillo
 Fillmore
 Moorpark
 Ojai
 Oxnard
 Port Hueneme
 Santa Paula
 Simi Valley
 Thousand Oaks
 Ventura

Police Departments of: (R-1 through R-4)

Oxnard
 Port Hueneme
 Santa Paula
 Simi Valley
 Ventura

Ventura County Board of Supervisors (R-1 through R-4)

Ventura County Sheriff (R-1 through R-4)

Table 1 - After Hours Law Enforcement Facilities Visited

CITY	ENFORCEMENT	ACCESS	PHONE	CAMERA	LIGHTING	MANNED	OTHER
Camarillo	Ventura Co. Sheriff	LL	Yes	* PL, L, P	Good	No	Not monitored after business hours
Fillmore	Ventura Co. Sheriff	LL	Yes	No	Good	No	
Moorpark	Ventura Co. Sheriff	LL	Yes	No	Poor	No	Hard to find
Ojai	Ventura Co. Sheriff	LL	Yes	No	Poor	No	Hard to find
Oxnard	Oxnard P.D.	LO	Yes	PL, L, P	Good	D	Inadequate Sign
Port Hueneme	Pt Hueneme P.D.	LO	No*	No	Good	U, D	Dispatch within sight of front door 24/7.
Santa Paula	Santa Paula P.D.	LL	Yes	PL, L, P	Good	D	
Simi Valley	Simi Valley P.D.	LO	Yes	PL, L, P	Good	U, D	
Thousand Oaks	Ventura Co. Sheriff	LO	Yes	PL, L, P	Good	U, D	
Ventura	Ventura P.D.	LO	Yes	Not Working	Poor	D	Hard To Find

Legend:

Co. - County

LO - lobby open

Camera On:

U - uniformed

PD - Police Department

LL - lobby locked


L - lobby

D - dispatch

PL - parking lot

P - phone

LOGGED 5-23
RBBG
645



City of Port Hueneme

May 14, 2002

Honorable Bruce A. Clark
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Ventura County Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura CA 93009

Dear Judge Clark:

In reviewing the Grand Jury Report regarding *After-Hour Access to Ventura County Law Enforcement Facilities*, the Chief of Police and I concur with the findings and recommendations as they relate to the Port Hueneme Police Department.

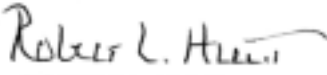
Recommendation-1 and Recommendation-3
Our facility is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Recommendation-2
Even though our Department is currently clearly marked and well lit, we plan on placing additional signs in the roadway median in front of the Police Department to make it easier to find. This will be accomplished within 60 days.

Recommendation-4
Our current response time to any call within our City is 1-7 minutes.

If there are any further questions regarding this response, please feel free to contact Chief Fernie Estrella at (805) 986-6533.

Sincerely,



ROBERT L. HUNT
CITY MANAGER

c: City Council
City Attorney
Chief of Police

RECEIVED
MAY 22 2002
RECEIVED
VENTURA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT


MAY 14 2002

**OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDING JUDGE**

250 North Ventura Road • Port Hueneme, California 93041 • Phone (805) 986-6500
<http://www.ci.port-hueneme.ca.us>

Response 1 - City of Port Hueneme

LOGGED 5-23
BAG.



CITY OF SIMI VALLEY

2529 Tapo Canyon Road, Simi Valley, CA 93063-2199 • (805) 583-6700 • <http://www.simivalley.org>

May 10, 2002

RECEIVED
VENTURA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

MAY 14 2002

RECEIVED
MAY 22 2002

OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDING JUDGE

Honorable Bruce A. Clark
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Ventura County Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Dear Judge Clark:

The City of Simi Valley has received Grand Jury Foreman Pro-tem Henry Norton's letter of May 1, 2002, which requested our response to the 2001-2002 Ventura County Grand Jury report entitled *After-Hours Access to Ventura County Law Enforcement Facilities*. The City found this report to be informative, and validated our intent to provide a "safe haven" at our Police Facility. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations on this matter.

With regard to the Grand Jury's findings, we concur with the survey results and accept their findings at face value. The findings (F-1 through F-9) were based upon site visits, but were not agency specific. As presented, it may be somewhat difficult to correlate a specific finding with an agency. However, we found the summarized survey results, as reflected in the Appendix, to accurately depict the conditions at the Simi Valley Police Department. We cannot speak for the other agencies.

Recommendations R-1 and R-2 have already been implemented at the Simi Valley Police Facility. With regard to R-3, we are not convinced that an alarm is necessary at our Police Facility. Our Police Lobby is open 24/7, staffed from 0600-2400 daily, equipped with a ring down phone to Dispatch, and monitored by security video and audio from 0001-0600 hours. Should someone need emergency assistance in the Lobby, their presence will be known to our Watch Commander and/or Dispatch Center, who can provide for immediate assistance.

We currently have a multitude of alarms at the Police Facility. Periodically, it takes time to determine where we have an activation and what resources need to be deployed. This assumes that the citizen in distress knows where and how to activate the alarm. Hearing or seeing what is occurring, or receiving a phone call explaining what is needed is probably much more efficient. Furthermore, once someone in distress reaches the Lobby and/or the Police Facility grounds, our experience has been that the pursuer typically terminates following the victim for fear of detection and apprehension.

LL DAVIS
Mayor

GLEN T. BECERRA
Mayor Pro Tem

BARBRA WILLIAMSON
Council Member

PAUL MILLER
Council Member


STEVEN T. SOJKA
Council Member

As indicated in Recommendation R-4, procedures and policies should be in place to address minimal response times for urgent calls for assistance at the Police Facility. The Simi Valley Police Department already has procedures that delineate the assignment and priority of calls. We would not recommend a separate procedure for calls for service in the Police Lobby as these calls would need to be assigned based upon urgency and priority taking into account the total service needs of the community known at that time. However, certainly an urgent matter in the Police Lobby would receive a high priority and commitment of resources as soon as possible.

As an added safety measure, the Police Department recommends everyone carry a cellular phone whenever possible, to summon emergency assistance when needed. This may negate the need of someone seeking refuge in the Lobby of a Police Facility and give the authorities an opportunity to intercede while the victim is being directed by Police Dispatch Personnel.

We are hopeful that the input that we have offered will be of assistance to you during the final evaluation of this issue. Should you require any further information, please feel free to contact Chief of Police, Randy G. Adams, at 805-583-6901 for further assistance.

Sincerely,



Mike Sedell
City Manager

cc: City Council
Grand Jury
Chief of Police

Response 2 - City of Simi Valley (continued)