



VENTURA COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

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SHERIFF
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July 3, 2002

Honorable Bruce A. Clark
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
800 so. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Response to the 2002-2003 Ventura County Grand Jury Report entitled "Safety and Security in Ventura County High Schools"

Dear Judge Clark:

The 2002 Ventura County Grand Jury report entitled "Safety and Security in Ventura County High Schools" contained a requirement that our Department respond to the following recommendations:

R-2 All high schools should have a full time law enforcement SRO present on campus during school hours.

R-7 All school districts, high schools, and local law enforcement, should adopt the attitude of "we are Columbine", and prepare accordingly.

R-9 All school districts should have school buildings in their districts identified on each building's rooftop to facilitate easier identification by law enforcement air surveillance.

R-2 All high schools should have a full time law enforcement SRO present on campus during school hours.

The Sheriff has law enforcement jurisdiction over all of the unincorporated communities within the county and the five incorporated cities of Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Moorpark, Fillmore and Ojai. Within these areas are 15 high schools, including community and continuation high schools, from six separate school districts. For each of these school districts, the Sheriff provides a variety of distinct programs that meet the needs and budgets of each.

SPECIAL SERVICES
6401 Telephone Road, Suite 200
Ventura, CA 93003
(805) 477-7011 FAX (805) 477-7010

PATROL SERVICES
2101 East Olsen Road
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362
(805) 494-8261 FAX (805) 494-8295

DETENTION SERVICES
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009
(805) 654-2305 FAX (805) 654-3500

SUPPORT SERVICES
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009
(805) 654-3926 FAX (805) 654-2109

For school districts residing within the five cities served under contract by the Sheriff, funding opportunities for directed law enforcement resources on high school campuses are usually more readily available than for high schools within the unincorporated communities. This is due to the fact that the municipalities themselves may be able to direct monies from their General Funds to provide full or partial costs for School Resource Officers. Within the unincorporated communities, the Sheriff often relies upon scarce Federal and State grants, in conjunction with some monies from the partnering school district, in order to place a School Resource Officer on a campus.

Even with limited funding resources in both the contract cities and the unincorporated communities, the Sheriff has created opportunities to place officers on our high school campuses through creative uses of grants, city budgets for law enforcement services, school district monies, and partnerships with local service clubs. While these strategies have not established full time School Resource Officers on every high school campus, they have dramatically enhanced the sense of safety and prevention of crime that meets the needs of the students, parents, school staffs and the Sheriff's Department personnel who strive to help our schools remain "islands of safety" for everyone.

Below is a summary of high schools within the Sheriff's jurisdiction and the direct Sheriff's services provided to the schools.

Conejo Valley Unified School District

Conejo Valley High School
Thousand Oaks High School
Newbury Park High School
Westlake High School

Two deputies from the Thousand Oaks Police Department's Special Enforcement Unit work full time as liaisons with the four high schools in this District.

Fillmore Unified School District

Fillmore Senior High School
Fillmore Community School

The Fillmore Police Department provides one full time School Resource Officer on the campus (both high schools reside on the same campus).

The Fillmore SRO is funded through a State grant that expires in 2002. The Department is seeking an extension of the funding for this position.

Moorpark Unified School District
Moorpark High School
Moorpark Community School

One School Resource Officer from the Moorpark Police Department serves full time at Moorpark High School.

Oak Park Unified School District
Oak Park High School
Oak View high School

Sheriff provides a Community Services officer within the unincorporated area of the Conejo Valley who serves as a direct liaison with the school district.

Ojai Unified School District
Nordhoff High School
Chaparral Continuation High

The Ojai Police Department provides one full time School Resource Officer at Nordhoff High School. The SRO is also responsible for serving the continuation high school as well.

Oxnard Union High School District
Adolfo Camarillo High School
Rio Mesa High School
Frontier Continuation Educational/Alternative Education

One School Resource Officer from the Camarillo Police Department serves full time at Camarillo High School. Another SRO serves Frontier and the nearby County Superintendent of Schools facility (Gateway School). A Youth Services Officer provides additional support to all of the students in Camarillo schools.

Funding for the SRO that serves Gateway and Frontier Schools expires in July 2002. Replacement funding has not yet been secured.

A full time School Resource Officer, under the direction of the Sheriff's Headquarters' Station, serves Rio Mesa High School. Funding for this officer expires in July 2002 and replacement funding has not been secured.

R-7 All school districts, high schools, and local law enforcement, should adopt the attitude of "we are Columbine", and prepare accordingly.

The recommendation that school districts, high schools and the law enforcement agencies that serve them adopt an attitude of "we are Columbine", serves as a reminder that tragedy can strike anywhere. Careful preparation, collaborative planning and crime prevention practices are key to preventing and responding to assaults on school campuses.

For decades, the Sheriff's Department has worked closely with school administrators, parents and public safety officials to plan and prepare responses to large incidents on school campuses. Though the Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services on a countywide basis and by interaction between Sheriff's managers and staff at local stations, the Department has helped schools prepare and update emergency incident plans. The Department has taught school staff what to do in emergencies and, more importantly, how to monitor rumors and talk on the campus that could indicate the possibility of future incidents. Through the sharing of intelligence information between deputies and school administrators, efforts are made to relieve tensions between students or various groups, both on and off-campus. This collaboration helps to reduce the level of violence and crime both on the campus and within the community after school hours.

During the past several years, following the Columbine incident, the Sheriff's Department has implemented training that is specifically designed to teach deputies and school administrators how the Department will respond to an active shooter on a campus. This training, designed for first-responders from Patrol and Investigative Bureaus, has been conducted on numerous high school campuses throughout the Sheriff's jurisdiction. School administrators and staff attend and view the exercises, learning what steps would be taken should such an incident occur. More importantly, they learn what actions they might take to improve the safety of their campuses.

As the Department has done for years, we take reports of threats very seriously. We respond quickly and conduct assessments to determine if the threats are credible and if a suspect can be identified. Since the Columbine incident, when schools throughout the county were recipients of numerous false threat and bomb reports, the Department responded in a manner that brought reassurance

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to students, staff, parents and the community. In those situations where a threat was determined to have occurred, the Department conducted a thorough criminal investigation and presented the evidence to the District Attorney for prosecution.

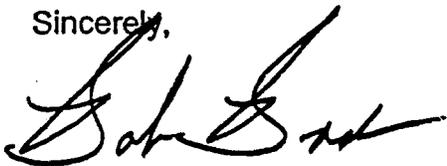
The Sheriff remains committed to the safety of all school campuses within our communities and will continue to take the lead in ensuring that all agencies and the community remain vigilant to the possibility that a "Columbine" incident could occur here and that the necessary steps are taken to prevent such an occurrence.

R-9 All school districts should have school buildings in their districts identified on each building's rooftop to facilitate easier identification by law enforcement air surveillance.

The Sheriff's Department will explore this recommendation with the school districts.

The Sheriff's Department appreciates the constructive input relating to safety and security in our local high schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Brooks", written in a cursive style.

BOB BROOKS
Ventura County Sheriff