

**EL DORADO COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT
M E M O R A N D U M**

TO: Gayle Erbe-Hamlin, Chief Administrative Officer
CC: Kelly Webb, Principal Administrative Analyst

FROM: Joseph S. Warchol II, Chief Probation Officer



DATE: October 13, 2009

RE: Probation Department Take Home Vehicles

C.A.O.
EL DORADO COUNTY
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The Probation Department has always exercised great discretion in the assignment of “take home” vehicles, limiting the number of such vehicles assigned for specific purposes related to the furtherance of public safety and the limitation of mission related liability. Historically, the Probation Department assigned only four (4) vehicles for take home operations. In the spirit of cooperation due to the budget constraints placed upon the County, the Probation Department eliminated the two assigned take home vehicles used by managers in the South Lake Tahoe Region. Both of these two vehicles were previously driven to residences in Nevada, less than 28 miles from the South Lake Tahoe Probation Office and Juvenile Treatment Center. This exercise in cutbacks has been a failure.

The Probation Department operates facilities and programs twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Department is afforded minimal staffing to meet mandates, with no relief staffing and no on-call pay to cover return to duty requirements due to low staffing or for emergencies, special coverage or critical incidents. All on-call duties have been fulfilled by the managers assigned throughout the Department as they are the only available exempt staff who return to duty when called without additional pay. With the current retirement incentive program and Tier Three budget cuts, one of the South Lake Tahoe Region manager allocations is being eliminated, placing additional workload, both on and off duty, on the two remaining managers.

The Probation Department continues to experience desperate need for leadership and decision making for unusual incidents, emergencies, critical incidents and staff shortages. The two managers assigned in South Lake Tahoe serve as liaisons with local law enforcement agencies in addressing critical incident response, after hour’s emergencies, medical emergencies within the Juvenile Treatment Center, and in addressing requests for assistance from law enforcement during non-duty hours. Basically, the two managers are the only staff on-call and are not provided on-call compensation as other law enforcement and justice agency partners are.

In addition to the aforementioned emergencies, the two managers maintain the Department’s case management system and facilities during non-duty hours. Both the IT Department and Facilities Division (DOT) have been unreliable in addressing after-hours and weekend emergencies for the Juvenile Treatment Center and our web-based case management / records systems. Probation managers are continuously addressing power outages, facility and equipment

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failures critically affecting our mission and operations. The Probation Department's records and case management system is required to function at all times. When it fails, the County is at risk of extensive liability. During the most recent heating system failure, DOT facility staff recommended we just give the detained wards more blankets. The provision of fire and life safety standards to a detention center is not something that can be ignored without realizing substantial liability.

The Juvenile Treatment Center also faces medical and mental health related crisis situations involving detained youth that must be managed 24/7. Managers work with mental health crisis workers, medical staff, detention staff and family members of detained wards to address a number of complex issues including but not limited to emergency hospitalizations, emergency placement, suicide attempts and assaults on minors or staff. Certain medical emergencies require response to the facility or hospital during non-duty hours by these assigned managers.

The Juvenile Treatment Center, located in South Lake Tahoe also faces external dangers related to weather, power failure and wild land fires that can require response by managers. During the Angora Fire, the JTC required evacuation of twenty four detained wards. The location of the facility near the Nevada border provides additional complexity as legal mandates prohibit evacuation into Nevada.

The two Probation Department managers in South Lake Tahoe, continuously trouble shoot all of the above crisis situations both on and off duty, from home or by responding to work during nights and/or weekends. They are not provided additional compensation to complete these responsibilities and currently do so with their own transportation resources, at times denied access to the Tahoe Region during weather or fire emergencies when they face road closures to all but law enforcement vehicles.

With the reinstatement of the two take home vehicles in the South Lake Tahoe Region, the County can ensure service reliability in the Tahoe Region and reduce liability associated with all of the above-documented mission critical tasks. The two managers are dedicated and perform work for the County far beyond the call of duty. Supporting their efforts with adequate resources, to include transportation, will enhance the delivery of mission critical services and overall public safety.

Recommendation:

Reinstate the two take home county vehicles previously eliminated for the South Lake Tahoe Probation Office and the Juvenile Treatment Center.