



**SHERIFF-CORONER DEPARTMENT  
COUNTY OF ORANGE  
CALIFORNIA**

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June 20, 2005

The Honorable Frederick Horn  
Presiding Judge  
Orange County Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Subject: Response to the Orange County Grand Jury Report, "The State of  
Orange County Jails, 2005"

Dear Judge Horn:

Per your request and in accordance with California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, you will find my response to the FY 04-05 Grand Jury Report enclosed. If you have any questions, please contact Assistant Sheriff Kim Markuson at (714) 647-1815.

Respectfully,

Michael S. Carona  
Sheriff-Coroner

CC: B. Lewis Avera Jr., Grand Jury Foreman  
Thomas G. Mauk, County Executive Officer

**PROUDLY SERVING THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF ORANGE COUNTY AND THE FOLLOWING CITIES AND AGENCIES:**

ALISO VIEJO • DANA POINT • LAGUNA HILLS • LAGUNA NIGUEL • LAGUNA WOODS • LAKE FOREST • MISSION VIEJO  
RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA • SAN CLEMENTE • SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO • STANTON • VILLA PARK  
HARBORS, BEACHES & PARKS • JOHN WAYNE AIRPORT • OCTA • SUPERIOR COURT

**DRUG USE  
IS  
LIFE ABUSE**

**Response to the Grand Jury**  
**“The State of Orange County Jails”**  
Final Report 2004-2005



**Sheriff-Coroner Michael S. Carona**

Orange County Sheriff's Department

Kim Markuson, Assistant Sheriff  
Chief of Jail Operations  
Santa Ana, California  
June 2005

## **The State of Orange County Jails**

California Penal Code section 919(b) mandates the Grand Jury to inquire into the state of all jails (county and city), holding cells, and other detention facilities for adults and juveniles located in the county and issue comments based upon the findings and recommendations of these inquiries.

### **Findings**

Under California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, responses are required to all findings. The 2004-2005 Grand Jury arrived at the following findings. The Sheriff's Department's response is noted below each finding:

**Finding 6.1** ***Overcrowded jails***: *Orange County's adult jails remain overcrowded by standards used by state Board of Corrections.*

The Sheriff-Coroner concurs with the Grand Jury's finding.

**Finding 6.2** ***Prisoner holding facility***: *The need remains for a new sheriff's prisoner holding facility in south Orange County.*

The Sheriff-Coroner concurs with the Grand Jury's finding.

### **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 7.1** ***Overcrowded jails***: *In order to ease jail overcrowding as set forth by the state Board of Corrections, the county Sheriff's Department should expedite the opening of the new cellblock at Theo Lacy Jail. (See Finding 6.1.)*

The growing inmate population in Orange County Jails is a continuing challenge. The Sheriff-Coroner will continue to diligently pursue compliance with Board of Corrections standards while constructing new facilities to ease overcrowding.

The first floor of Building B at the Theo Lacy Facility has been opened to accommodate the recent increase in jail population. These 192 additional bunks have eased the burden temporarily. Due to budgetary and staffing restraints it is estimated that further floors in Building B will not be operational until mid-year 2006.

**Recommendation 7.2**     **Prisoner holding facility:** *A new sheriff's prisoner holding facility should be established in south Orange County as soon as possible. (See Finding 6.2.)*

The Sheriff-Coroner continues to explore options in this regard. However, two overriding factors inhibit progress toward this goal. As noted in the Grand Jury report, the "NIMBY" factor is prevalent and any new jail facilities in South County would meet with significant opposition. The second factor involves budgetary shortfalls that have impacted the County and delayed the opening of current jail expansion projects at the Theo Lacy Facility.

The Sheriff-Coroner has identified two primary alternatives. The first involves the construction of a holding facility at the Harbor Justice Center in Laguna Niguel to coincide with the proposed expansion of existing court facilities. However, as noted in the response to the 03-04 Grand Jury report, the City of Laguna Niguel is strongly opposed to this option. The second alternative involves a jail expansion project at the James A. Musick Facility in Irvine. This option is still in the feasibility study stage. Actual construction is not anticipated for the near future and depends greatly upon the availability of funding.

In the meantime, the Sheriff-Coroner seeks temporary solutions to reduce the transportation costs of prisoner transportation from South County areas to the Central Jail Complex in Santa Ana and from existing jail facilities to the Harbor Justice Center in Laguna Niguel.