



# LASSEN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

*Dean F. Growdon, Sheriff - Coroner*

1415 Sheriff Cady Lane Susanville, CA 96130

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Administration	Dispatch	Civil	Adult Detention Facility
Phone (530) 251-8013	Phone (530) 257-6121	Phone (530) 251-8014	Phone (530) 251-5245
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To: Lassen County Board of Supervisors  
From: John McGarva, Captain-Custody Division Commander  
RE: Renovation of Special Housing Unit  
Agenda Date: May 10, 2022

**Subject:** Report on Special Housing Unit Renovation

**Discussion:**

**Project Background:**

The Lassen County Jail was opened in June 1991 as the Lassen County Adult Detention Facility. The Special Housing Unit (SHU) is located on the west side of the Jail facility. This unit has the ability to house 78 inmates. The inmates housed in the SHU are medium to maximum security classifications. There are six dayrooms on the lower SHU. Two of these dayrooms have two cells which house a total of three inmates per dayroom. The remaining dayrooms have four cells with the ability to house 5-7 inmates. The Mezzanine level has 20 cells with the ability to house 40 inmates. There is an observation deck for the deputy assigned to the unit to answer intercoms and respond to the needs of the inmates.

The focus of the project was the Mezzanine level. The fencing was made of standard chain link that was powder coated. This fencing was original to the facility. The fencing stretched the length of the Mezzanine level. There are two gates, one on each side, for access. An emergency door is located on the south side of the level. The fencing began to deteriorate over the past several years. The welds began to break down and the inmates were able to break them loose. The inmates would work on this, often while the assigned deputy was tending to the needs of an inmate in another area, by trying to work the metal and break pieces of it off. This resulted in a hole in the fencing. Most of the fencing had been removed over an approximate one foot radius. This hole was located on north side of the level near the access gate commonly referred to as the "Right Gate." A person could get most of their arm through the hole and grab at someone on the other side. This hole also gave easy access for the passing of contraband. This became a safety concern for both inmates and staff.

We began to find the inmates making weapons out of the fencing material. We found shanks and stabbing instruments up to approximately 12 inches in length. These weapons were sharpened to a point for use against another person. Inmates commonly make such weapons out of available materials. The ability to use chain link readily available only enabled the population to make more sophisticated weaponry. In the past year, three inmates have been charged with possession of a weapon in the Lassen County Jail. Only good investigative work and observation had prevented their use on another person.



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The lighting on the Mezzanine level was not working properly. The lighting installed when the facility was built was made for standard office use. When the facility housed a lower classification of inmate, this was less of a concern. Since Realignment in 2011 (AB 109), we have received a higher classification of inmate. These inmates are more destructive and often a more dangerous classification than previously housed at the Jail. The lighting was accessed by a simple cover with a hinge on side. The plastic was easily breakable. Over time, approximately 65% of the lighting was not working correctly. We could no longer get the items needed to repair the lighting and realized the lighting needed to be replaced.

The cell lights installed were security grade, but the inmate population was able to work the security screws loose and remove them. This allowed access to the interior lighting. They were able to remove lightbulbs or hide contraband inside. We often found weapons and contraband inside the light fixtures. We have had to make modifications with expanded metal in some of the lights due to the destructive nature of some inmates in the population. Over time, they were able to work the welds loose and pry the metal away. This caused safety concerns with the sharpness of the metal and the ability to break it away to make possible weapons. The cell lights are now beyond repair and required replacement.

#### Project Implemented:

In March, we began preparations to make major repairs to the Mezzanine level. The Facility Maintenance Supervisor and Motor Pool Supervisor were responsible for the design and eventual installation. We met with our field representative from the Board of State and Community Corrections and submitted plans on what the renovation would look like. Our field representative approved the plans and we met with the local Fire Marshall who gave his approval.

After looking at the possible materials, we made the determination to use expanded metal and metal framing to replace the fencing. We believed this would limit the ability for use as weapons material. The type of metal used has limited flexibility and the weld locations would prevent easy access by the inmates. This would limit the material that could be used by the inmates for weapons. Gaps located at the top and bottom of the old fencing allowed for the passing of contraband between the inmates. The new configuration would close these gaps. Thus limiting the passing of contraband between the two levels. The fence sections were installed in panels weighing 150-200 pounds each. Inmates assisted with the fabrication and installation of the panels.

Once we assessed the area, we were able to split the Mezzanine level into two separate dayroom areas. The installation of the dividing fence allows for more access to dayroom by the inmates. With the changing standards and regulations, we are required to allow greater access to dayroom time. The current amount is 10 hours in a seven day period, soon to increase to 14 hours. This does not include outside recreation and exercise. There are bills in the legislature, if passed, would increase this amount further. We recognize these changes and by building this dividing fence will put us ahead of the new requirements. The inmates will have greater access to dayroom recreation, telephones, tablets and



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other socialization. Studies have shown that if granted more out of cell time, there are less disturbances and physical altercations over time.

To increase inmate and officer safety, we installed a sally port between the two sides. You have to go through two separate doors in order to reach the other side. This prevents an inmate from sneaking behind a deputy and attacking an inmate on the other side of the fence. The sally port will soon be wired into the existing control board system so the doors can be opened from Central Control.

The lighting in the dayroom area was changed to more secure lighting. These lights were made of 10 gauge steel, tamper resistant screws and LED lighting. These lights weighed over 60 pounds each. All lighting on the Mezzanine level was replaced with the higher security lights. The light fixtures are more resilient and tamper resistant than the previous lighting. The LED lighting allowed for more illumination on the level allowing higher visibility for the staff and inmates.

The cell lighting was replaced with one piece units which were corner mounted. The interior hardware was secured inside Plexiglas and steel framing. The anchor bolts were affixed to the wall and ceiling and covered with a shroud to prevent tampering. The bolts were security bolts requiring a special tool for installation and removal. The location and installation should deter tampering and prevent the ability to hide weapons and/or contraband.

To complete the project, the stairwells and railings received a new coat of paint. This included the yellow hazard stripe indicating a step up or down to meet with regulatory standards.

All costs were already included in the Sheriff's Office budget for the 2021-22 Fiscal Year.

**Fiscal Impact:** No fiscal impact.

**Action Requested:** No action requested. Informational presentation to the Board of Supervisors.



April 20, 2022

Dean Growdon, Sheriff  
Lassen County Sheriff's Department  
1405 Sheriff Cady Lane  
Susanville, CA 96130

**LASSEN COUNTY ADULT DETENTION FACILITY MODULE 601 CONSTRUCTION REVIEW**

Dear Sheriff Growdon:

On April 15, 2022, Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) staff met with Captain John McGarva at the Adult Detention Facility to evaluate recent construction. During our site visit, we evaluated the metal wire mesh wall and sally port your maintenance staff installed on the upper mezzanine level of housing area 601. The wire mesh wall and sally port were installed to allow your facility to have two separate dayroom areas to maximize the out-of-cell time for your administrative separated persons.

Your staff has developed a schedule that will allow four cells out at one time on each side with a maximum number of eight persons per each the dayroom area, totaling a maximum of sixteen people. This will double the number of people out of the cells in the dayrooms from the previous single area design.

BSCC staff determined the two areas comply with the 1/1/2020 Title 24, Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities for 1231.2.9 Dayrooms and 1231.3.4 Showers. Title 24 does not regulate the size or type of metal wire mesh installed.

It is also noted that your local fire authority approved the wire mesh wall and sally port for their standards for fire life safety.

I am available to provide technical assistance and best practices when requested. I look forward to continuing to work together. Please do not hesitate to email me at [steven.wicklander@bscc.ca.gov](mailto:steven.wicklander@bscc.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

STEVEN WICKLANDER  
Field Representative – Facility Standards & Operations Division

Cc: John McGarva, Captain, Lassen County Sheriff Department (electronic copy)