

# ✓ Grand jury wants security

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SANTA CRUZ — Sweeping security measures are needed at the County Government Center for the sake of workers and visitors alike, the Santa Cruz County grand jury said Thursday.

"What we found was a lot of people who thought it was a time bomb wait-

ing to go off," grand jury forewoman Linda Gilcrest said. "They were all

nervous and scared and thought tragedy was going to strike."

At least one supervisor said some of the recommendations may be difficult to enact.

"I did appreciate the fact they're concerned about the people who work here, we're concerned, too," First District Supervisor Jan Beautz said. "It's difficult when a building has all these public meetings at night. It's got to be accessible."

The five-story building at 701 Ocean St., housing county offices and the courthouse, was built in the late 1960s. Since then, the county has undergone a "dramatic change" from a "rural seaside community to a quasi-urban area," grand jury members said in an in-

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## Recommendations

Here are highlights of the recommendations by the county Grand Jury for improved security:

### 701 Ocean Street, interior

- Control access after hours, initiating employee identification badges and an after-hours sign-in system, and installing a motion-activated camera.
- Establish a security patrol/escort system to all workers, nights, weekends and holidays.
- Install emergency fire evacuation equipment on the fifth floor.
- Designate people in each department to ensure all office doors are locked after business hours.
- Check adequacy of lighting in restrooms, public telephones and halls; check bathroom lights daily and replace if necessary.
- Have each department prepare a plan for all types of emergencies, including natural disasters, threats and criminal acts.

### Court building, interior

- Install metal detectors at all entrances to courtrooms; perform security screening at public entrances to the courtrooms.
- Move bailiffs closer to the exterior doors in the modular courtrooms.
- Install "panic buttons" or telephones on court clerks' desks.
- Build at least one more holding cell for inmates.
- Install a fence or gate around the entrance to the holding cells in the basement "tombs."
- Install emergency alarms in the holding cells to summon bailiffs in case of emergency.

### County center, exterior

- Ensure adequate lighting for the parking areas after-hours.
- Discourage employees from using the path to the jail parking lot after-hours.
- Install a crosswalk on Water Street between the center and the Jail, with warning lights to advise motorists of pedestrian traffic.
- Require security to routinely patrol the parking areas and bridge leading to jail.
- Locate emergency telephones outside in convenient locations.

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terim report.

More than 200 county and court employees responded to a survey on the subject, and the grand jury interviewed judges, court staff and bailiffs, county supervisors, Sheriff's Office employees and the county administrative officer.

For the courthouse, which is connected to the government center by an atrium, some type of metal-detector system should be installed to prevent weapons from being brought into court, forewoman Gilcrest said.

Such a measure should be taken especially in light of violent incidents that have occurred in courtrooms elsewhere, she said.

This week, three shootings were reported in courthouses in three states; six people were wounded, including a judge who was critically injured. One woman was killed.

Judge John Marlo, presiding judge of the Superior Court, said he agreed with the grand jury recommendations.

"People should be able to go to court and not worry about being shot by some crazy," he said.

Special metal detectors are set up if officers suspect a particular court appearance might attract trouble.

No one was ever been shot or seriously injured at the county building, but bailiffs have been called upon to break up occasional fights and confiscate knives, Sheriff's Sgt. Craig Little said.

The grand jury made no estimate of how much additional security might cost.

"Whatever it would cost to save a life," Marlo said. "And it's not

**'People should be able to go to court and not worry about being shot by some crazy.'**

— Judge John Marlo

just the judge. If someone started shooting, they'd hit the clerks, the public, whatever. I don't think cost is a question when it comes to safety."

The grand jury members decided to investigate the security issue after meeting at the county center evenings and weekends, and noting "no apparent building or parking lot security."

"It's clear to us, in walking in and out, that there's a lot of people in that building that have no business being there," Gilcrest said.

A better job needs to be done "locking down" the building after hours, she said.

During the rainy season, she said, it was not uncommon to go into a restroom and see people "camping out."

According to Sgt. Craig Little of the Sheriff's Office, 19 bailiffs are assigned to courtroom security. Last year, the cost was \$1.74 million.

Little said Sheriff Al Noren had seen the report, but deferred comment on it to the county's General Service Office. GSO Director Roy

Holmberg said the recommendations are being reviewed.

"Some of their recommendations would be extremely costly," he said. "We have been working on an improved security plan before the report came out, which we believe would significantly improve security."

One of the grand jury's concerns was dim lighting at night, inside the building and out. Lighting has been reduced in recent years, according to Holmberg, to save ener-

gy and money. But he said, a balance between security and savings can be struck.

Beautz said the report did include some "good suggestions that weren't really expensive."

According to Little, any increased security measures would have to be coordinated with the Sheriff's Office, which has responsibility for the courts, Santa Cruz police, who have jurisdiction in the city limits, and the county administrative officer.