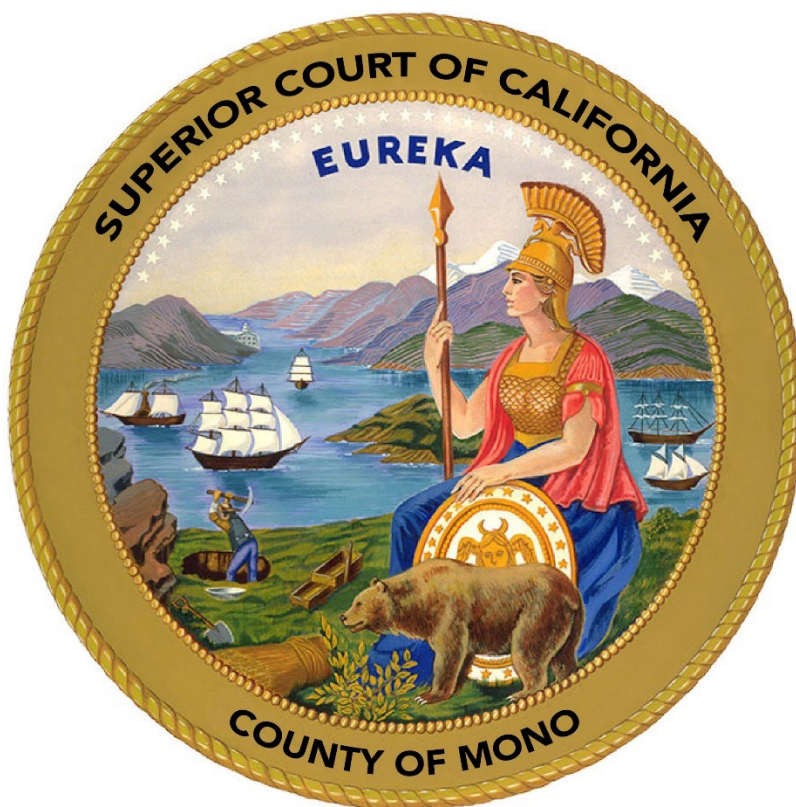


# 2025-2026 Mono County Civil Grand Jury

## Final Report Compilation



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## **2025-2026 Grand Jurors**

E. Weeks-Comeau (Foreperson) – *Mammoth Lakes*

Sherrilynn Polanco (Foreperson Pro Tem) – *Mammoth Lakes*

Melody Moore (Foreperson Pro Tem) – *Mammoth Lakes*

Connor Polcyn (Secretary) – *Mammoth Lakes*

Michael Dunne (Corresponding Secretary) – *Mammoth Lakes*

Bonnie Barnes – *Mammoth Lakes*

Christopher Rosien – *Mammoth Lakes*

Liz Warren – *Mammoth Lakes*

Viki Carter – *June Lake*

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## **Acknowledgements and Appreciation**

The 2025–2026 Mono County Civil Grand Jury would like to thank the many agencies, departments, officials, staff, and community members who participated in this year’s investigations. We are grateful for the open, professional and cooperative manner in which interviewees shared information about their departments, responsibilities, challenges, and accomplishments. Their cooperation helped support the Grand Jury’s work and its service to the public.

Additionally, the Grand Jury would like to thank the following advisors and court staff for their support during the term:

- Christopher Beck, County Counsel
- Mark Magit, Presiding Judge
- Lester Perpall
- Nancy Licari, Executive Assistant

## About the Civil Grand Jury

California's Civil Grand Jury system is an independent citizen oversight body that reviews and reports on the operations of local government. Each year, a grand jury is impaneled in each California county. In its civil "watchdog" role, the Grand Jury reviews local governmental agencies, departments, officers, facilities, programs, and special districts within its jurisdiction. The purpose of this work is to promote accountability, transparency, efficiency, and the effective delivery of public services.

The Mono County Civil Grand Jury is composed of volunteer citizens who reside in Mono County and serve a one-year term. The Grand Jury acts only as a body; individual grand jurors do not have independent authority to conduct Grand Jury business. Grand Jury meetings, deliberations, votes, complaints, interviews, and investigative materials are confidential unless and until information is lawfully released through a final report approved for public release.

The Grand Jury may receive written complaints or concerns from members of the public regarding local government operations. It may also identify matters for review based on issues raised by jurors, referrals from a prior Grand Jury, or statutory responsibilities. The Grand Jury cannot resolve private disputes, act as an advocate for an individual complainant, direct a public agency to take action, or decide matters outside its jurisdiction.

As part of its statutory duties, the Grand Jury inquires into the condition and management of public jails within the county. The Grand Jury may also conduct other inquiries or investigations by reviewing documents, interviewing witnesses, visiting facilities when appropriate, and evaluating whether the information supports findings and recommendations. Findings included

in a final report must be supported by documented evidence, such as official records, reports, or interviews attended by at least two grand jurors.

At the conclusion of an investigation, the Grand Jury prepares a factual written report, which may include background information, methodology, findings, and recommendations. Completed reports are submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court for review and approval before release to the public. After release, the reports become public records. Agencies, elected officials, or governing bodies identified in a report may be required to respond to the findings and recommendations within the timeframes established by California law.

## **How to Become a Grand Juror**

The Mono County Civil Grand Jury is made up of local residents who want to serve their community and help improve local government. Grand jurors review matters involving county government, local agencies, special districts, public facilities, and other areas within the Grand Jury's authority.

No special background or professional experience is required. A strong Grand Jury includes people with different experiences, skills, and perspectives. Grand jurors should be willing to listen carefully, ask thoughtful questions, review information fairly, work well with others, and maintain confidentiality.

Under California law, grand jurors must generally be United States citizens, at least 18 years old, and residents of Mono County for at least one year before selection. They must also have sound judgment, and good character.

Serving on the Grand Jury requires a regular time commitment. Jurors attend meetings, review documents, conduct interviews, visit facilities when appropriate, and help prepare written reports. Grand Jury work is confidential, and jurors must protect that confidentiality during and after their service.

Residents interested in serving on a future Mono County Civil Grand Jury may contact the Superior Court of California, County of Mono, or visit the Court's website for current application information.

**Interested in serving on the Mono County Civil Grand Jury? Additional information and application materials are available through the Superior Court of California, County of Mono:**

Website:

<https://www.mono.courts.ca.gov/general-information/grand-jury/grand-jury-application>

Email:

[GJ@mono.courts.ca.gov](mailto:GJ@mono.courts.ca.gov)

# Report Summaries

## **Reports Included in This Compilation**

The 2025–2026 Mono County Civil Grand Jury reviewed matters involving local government operations, public safety, emergency communication, election procedures, and prior Grand Jury recommendations. The following reports are included in this compilation.

### **Compliance and Continuity Final Report (Pages 8 to 16)**

A review of responses to selected findings and recommendations from the 2024–2025 Mono County Civil Grand Jury, including whether required responses were timely, complete, and responsive under California law.

### **Pack Fire Communications Final Report (Pages 17 to 30)**

An investigation into emergency communication and dispatch-related issues identified during the initial response to the November 13, 2025 Pack Fire, including broader systemic concerns involving dispatch structure, staffing, training, procedures, and interagency coordination.

### **Mono County Election Procedures Final Report (Pages 31 to 47)**

A follow-up investigation into Mono County election procedures, including implementation of prior Grand Jury recommendations, staffing and workload concerns, voter outreach, ballot drop box access, polling locations, and the increasing complexity of election administration.

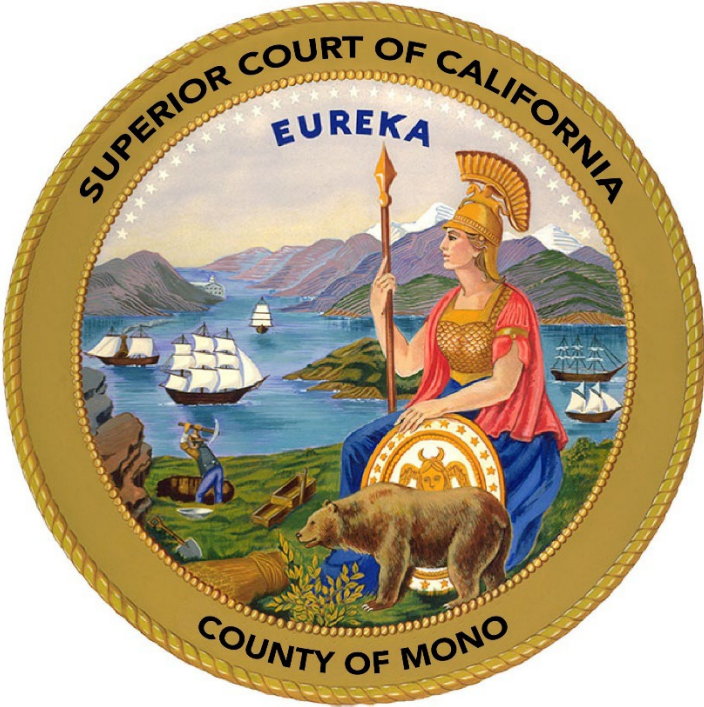
### **Mono County Jail Inspection Report (Pages 48 to 54)**

As part of its statutory duties, the 2025–2026 Mono County Civil Grand Jury toured the Mono County Jail and reviewed the condition and general management of the facility. The tour provided jurors an opportunity to observe the facility, ask questions, and better understand jail operations, staffing, safety considerations, inmate housing, services, and facility limitations.

# MONO COUNTY GRAND JURY 2025-2026

## COMPLIANCE AND CONTINUITY FINAL REPORT

June 10, 2026



## SUMMARY

The 2025-2026 Mono County Civil Grand Jury reviewed the responses to the three investigative reports issued by the 2024-2025 Mono County Grand Jury, to assess compliance with the California Penal Code. The complete text of these reports can be accessed in the Mono County Grand Jury 2024-2025 Final Report, issued on July 14, 2025, at the Mono County website <https://www.mono.courts.ca.gov/generalinfo/jury-grandjury.htm> .

## BACKGROUND

California Penal Code Section 933(a) requires the grand jury to submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its Findings and Recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year. Government bodies or department officials are required to respond to the Findings and Recommendations directed to them within 90 days of the release of a grand jury's report. Elected County officials are required to respond within 60 days. (PC §933(c)).

### **Penal Code Section §933.05 Responses to Grand Jury Reports**

**§933.05 (a).** For the purposes of subdivision(b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:

- (1) The respondent agrees with the finding.
- (2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.

b. For the purposes of subdivision(b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:

- (1) The Recommendation has been implemented, with a summary of the action taken;
- (2) It will be implemented, with a timeframe for implementation being provided;
- (3) It requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope of the analysis and a timeframe for response being provided for not more than six months from the release of the report; or
- (4) It will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation being provided.

The 2024-2025 Mono County Civil Grand Jury issued the following final reports:

- LAFCO Investigation Report
- MLPD Investigation Report
- County Cyber Security Report
- Mono County Jail Annual Inspection
  - The Mono County Jail Annual Inspection Report focuses only on the Penal Code requirements for completing an inspection by the 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury, no review is needed. The three inspection reports contained findings and recommendations, and had required responses from persons, agencies, or departments which needed to be reviewed.

# **METHODOLOGY**

The 2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury evaluated responses to the 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury Report Findings and Recommendations to ensure compliance with the governing sections of the Penal Code (PC §933.05(b)). The following criteria were considered:

1. If a response indicated that a Recommendation had been implemented, did it include a summary of what was done?
2. If a response indicated that a Recommendation would be implemented, did it include a summary and timeframe for what would be done?
3. If a response indicated that a Recommendation required further analysis or study, did it include an explanation of the scope, parameters, and timeframe of the proposed analysis or study?
4. If a response indicated that a Recommendation would not be implemented because it was unwarranted or unreasonable, did the respondent include a reasoned explanation supporting that position?

# **DISCUSSION**

The law requires county elected officials to respond to a grand jury report in writing. The elected official's response must be submitted to the presiding judge within 60 days of receiving the report. Governing boards have 90 days after receiving a grand jury report to submit their response to the presiding judge.

# LAFCO Investigation Report

The required respondents did respond within the timeframe required by law. The respondents disagreed with several of the Findings. The 2025-2026 Grand Jury concurred with the respondents' rationale for the disagreements. The 2024-2025 Grand Jury report focuses on deficient training for LAFCO commissioners, in addition to the Sphere of Influence 5 year reviews and updates falling behind schedule.

## Findings

**F1.** Regarding Commissioner training, Mono LAFCO staff provides annual high level training and encourages commissioners to attend annual CALAFCO conferences and workshops. When organizational decisions are required, targeted training is preferred to comprehensive training detailing the intricacies of state law and broad roles that Mono LAFCO commissioners will rarely, if ever, find useful.

**F2.** Mono LAFCO was behind schedule with the required 5 year Sphere of Influence reviews and updates. The Board of Supervisors did follow through with their stated intention to do a Sphere of Influence comprehensive review at the June 12, 2025 LAFCO meeting. The LAFCO Commissioners continued the SOI reviews at their October 2, 2025 meeting. As a result, SOI reviews were completed, as necessary, by the end of 2025.

## Recommendations

**R1.** Continue the annual LAFCO training and, as stated, include the Mono LAFCO Handbook training as part of the annual commissioner training.

**R2.** Follow through with the stated intention to update the Sphere of Influence and Service Review policy, as necessary, and submit for adoption by the commission at a noticed public hearing and publish as required.

## **MLPD Investigation Report**

The required respondents did respond within the timeframe required by law. The respondents disagreed with some and agreed with others of the Findings. The 2025-2026 Grand Jury concurred with the respondents' rationale for the disagreements.

The main focus of this report was the disconnect between the Mammoth Lakes Police Department and Mono County Department of Behavioral Health with disposition of 5150 holds. The term, 5150, originates from the California Welfare and Institutions Code 5150, which authorizes police officers, designated mobile crisis team members, and mental health professionals to detain someone involuntarily for up to 72 hours in a designated facility. The individuals, as a result of a mental health disorder, are a danger to themselves, a danger to others, or gravely disabled. The initial detainment is usually initiated by MLPD. Mono County Department of Behavioral Health then determines whether continued detainment is warranted. Appropriately, MLPD is not informed on any further medical treatment or disposition of the patient. This situation is mandated by HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability) Federal Law.

The major recommendations of the 2024-2025 Report were to encourage additional communication and cross-training between the 4 entities involved in these situations (MLPD, Mono County Sheriff, Mono County Department of Behavioral Health and Mammoth

Hospital). Efforts towards this goal were agreed to and begun, but with major staffing shortages have been discontinued.

## **Mono County Cyber Security Report**

The required respondents did respond within the timeframe required by law. The respondents disagreed with several of the Findings, but agreed with most of the Findings. The 2025-2026 Grand Jury concurred with the respondents' rationale for the disagreements.

The 2024-2025 Mono County Civil Grand Jury conducted an investigation into Mono County's cybersecurity preparedness, focusing on the County's security posture and Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliance. The following issues were identified:

- The County has operated without a Chief Information Security Officer since June 2021 leaving cybersecurity responsibilities to be absorbed by existing IT staff.
- The County is lacking regular penetration testing and vulnerability testing.
- The absence of immutable backups places the County at high risk for potential ransomware attacks.
- Unsupported devices remain in the environment, creating significant cybersecurity vulnerabilities due to lack of security patches and updates.
- The County appears to be using an incorrect self-assessment questionnaire for PCI compliance attestation, and the IT department is not involved in the compliance process.

## **Findings**

**F1.** A new Chief Security Officer was hired in 2025. Under his direction, three new security trainings have been developed and are being rolled out. Full implementation is scheduled for July 2026 and is on schedule.

**F2.** The immutable backup implementation required unallocated resources for 2024-2025. Resource allocation was included in the Fiscal Year 25-26 budget process. Contracts have been signed and full immutable backups will be stored and update procedures in place by the end of July 2026.

**F3.** IT acknowledges that there are pieces of equipment that are past their End-Of-Life (EOL) still operating in the IT department. A significant amount of money was allocated in the 2025-2026 budget and is being spent to make good progress. This is an ongoing effort. A new process has been implemented and a spreadsheet identifying all equipment and its associated EOL. This allows improved monitoring and planning. The 2026-2027 budget allowance will need to include appropriate funding to maintain this status.

**F4.** There is a lack of consistent external penetration testing and vulnerability scans. IT has submitted a grant request to fund this effort, but has not yet been granted the funds. If not received, additional funding will be required from the County. The first penetration test is scheduled for the fourth quarter 2026.

**F5.** Important cybersecurity projects and initiatives have not begun or are lagging due to insufficient staffing. The 2025-2026 budget included funds for additional staffing. May 2026 saw two new IT hires. The security analyst position is in progress and a job description has been filed

with Human Resources. This position will need to be approved for funding in the 2026-2027 budget.

**F6.** Quarterly cybersecurity training is taking place with noteworthy results; however, there is a lack of visibility to compliance measurements among County executives. The first report out to the Board of Supervisors was in February 2026 and included compliance training results. The Board of Supervisors requested this practice continue with quarterly reports.

**F7.** There is a new Director of Finance who is overseeing the PCI compliance assessment and attestation process.

### **Recommendations**

**R1.** Follow through with the stated budget requests for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 to continue with updating staffing needs and program developments.

### **Required Responses**

There are no required responses. The implementation of the Recommendations have been timely and are ongoing, contingent on resource approval in Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

# **The Mono County Pack Fire**

## **Emergency Communication Issues**

November 13, 2025



# Foreword

The Mono County Grand Jury is an official judicial body with independent authority that is not answerable to administrators or legislatures. The Civil Grand Jury is an investigative body created to ensure that the best interests of all citizens of the County are being served legally and effectively by local government including all the departments, agencies, and special districts that are under the purview of Mono County government and the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

## Summary

***CBS News breaking news headline: Pack Fire explodes in Mono County, California forcing evacuations amid a backdrop described as apocalyptic.***

On November 13, 2025, Mono County experienced a storm, a firestorm. The fire started near the communities of McGee Creek and Crowley Lake at approximately 11:15 AM. What could have been a relatively easily contained brush fire, wasn't. Almost simultaneously with the breakout of the fire the winds picked up, increasing to gale force (over 50 mph) just below hurricane force level. The fire spread from 1 acre to 10 acres, then to 1000 acres in an incredibly short time frame. The high winds grounded aerial firefighting resources. The Pack Fire graduated from a brush fire to a conflagration, a fire that attains extremely high heat of such intensity that it creates its own wind system. The prevailing wind gusts of 50 mph, combined with the additional wind from the developing firestorm, were pushing a wall of flames, intense heat, and dense smoke towards the 500 plus homes and residents of the McGee Creek and Crowley Lake communities.

The Grand Jury initiated this investigation in response to a letter of concern regarding the impact of the Mono County Dispatch Department's role in the initial Pack Fire response communications. The letter of concern indicated possible delays in dispatching the appropriate agencies in a coordinated protocol.

During the course of the investigation, it became evident that the concerns raised extended beyond a single incident and reflected broader systemic issues within Mono County's emergency dispatch system. Based on interviews with key stakeholders and review of available documents, the Grand Jury finds that the current dispatch system is constrained by structural, technological, and organizational limitations. These limitations impact staffing, training, communication, and overall system reliability.

While the Pack Fire highlighted certain deficiencies, the Grand Jury finds that the underlying issues are systemic and not attributable to any single event or individual.

# Methodology

## Documents

- Mono County Dispatch Pack Fire 911 Radio Traffic Recording
- Mono County Dispatch Pack Fire Digital Call Log
- Mono County Dispatch Pack Fire Audio Call Log Recorder
- United States Forest Service (USFS) Pack Fire After Action Report (April 6, 2026)
- Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Dispatch Training Manual
- Mono County Dispatch Policy Manual (Policy 800)
- Mammoth Times Report on Crowley Lake Town Hall Meeting  
(November 19, 2025)
- U.S. Report by CBS News (November 14, 2025)
- Cal Fire Final Pack Fire Incident Report
- Regional Dispatch Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan (December 17, 2020)

## Interviews

The Grand Jury conducted six interviews with representatives from multiple public safety agencies, including law enforcement and fire services. Interviewees included leadership personnel with extensive operational experience in Mono County.

## Site Visits

- Mono County Sheriff Dispatch Center, Bridgeport, CA
- Pack Fire fire site, McGee Creek, CA

# Background

Emergency dispatching is the lifeblood of a critical incident. Dispatchers are the first point of public contact in receiving 911 calls regarding emergencies requiring fire departments, law enforcement, medical assistance, safety hazard mitigation and other miscellaneous requests for service. Sometimes these entities are dispatched individually, other times all are needed. Dispatchers are responsible for facilitating appropriate and timely field unit responses, monitoring incident activity, and providing information that is critical to both citizens and units on the scene.

The following agencies were involved in the initial stages of the Pack Fire:

- Long Valley Fire Department
- Mammoth Lakes Fire Department
- Mono County Sheriff Department
- Mono County Sheriff Search and Rescue
- Mammoth Lakes Police Department
- USFS Fire Department
- USFS law enforcement
- Bureau of Land Management
- California Highway Patrol
- Bishop Fire Department
- Bishop Police Department
- Mono County EMS
- June Lake Fire Department
- Lee Vining Fire Department
- Mono City Fire Department

- Paradise Fire Department
- Wheeler Crest Fire Department
- Bridgeport Fire Department
- Antelope Valley Fire Department
- Southern California Edison

In total, the Pack Fire response involved 795 personnel, 58 fire engines, 6 water tenders, 5 bulldozers, 27 Hand Crews, Mono County Search and Rescue, law enforcement officers from 5 agencies, and Mono County EMS units. The Pack Fire involved two fronts: fire units fighting the fire, saving what structures they could while keeping the fire at bay to facilitate the second front's endeavor, and law enforcement and search and rescue personnel, who were tasked with evacuating 1,800 residents from the communities of McGee Creek, Crowley Lake, and Long Valley.

The three dispatchers were 50 miles away in a room, in a building with no visual input of the fire scene. Initially, with no idea of the severity of the fire, dispatchers only input was from the first on scene unit. Dealing with spotty communication and incomplete information, the dispatchers were not in a position to immediately make the decision to call in every possible available agency, although that is exactly what was needed.

Just the previous night, a fire was reported on National Forest land in a location not far from McGee Creek. The Long Valley Fire Department was dispatched and able to extinguish the bulk of the fire until relieved by the USFS Fire Department. The USFS proceeded to finish the extinguishment and overhaul the area to ensure there were no lingering hot spots. The USFS remained on scene overnight on fire watch.

## **Discussion**

Mono County operates a central dispatch system located in Bridgeport, CA serving law enforcement, Fire, Emergency Medical Services and miscellaneous Emergency Responders.

Mono County dispatch personnel are assigned dual roles, functioning as dispatchers and as correctional (jailer) staff. This is not an ideal situation. Each of these positions requires skills, training, experience and responsibilities that do not overlap. There is a level of professionalism demanded by the roles of each position that requires full-time attention.

Recruitment and retention of qualified correctional officers/dispatchers is difficult particularly due to geographic location and the dual role job structure. Correctional officer/dispatch staffing experiences turnover, resulting in loss of institutional knowledge and training continuity.

Mono County Sheriff Dispatch personnel training is limited and may not meet the standards observed in larger or more specialized agencies. Also, they do not have comprehensive situation-specific operational protocols or quick reference guides for varied emergency scenarios.

Mono County is seriously exploring a regional dispatch model with Inyo County. Stakeholders identified potential opportunities for future dispatch infrastructure development near the Mammoth/Yosemite Airport due to geographic location, workforce access, and existing or potential public safety infrastructure in the area. Cal Fire is opening a fully manned fire station at the airport this summer.

The Grand Jury's investigation revealed that concerns regarding the Pack Fire response are part of broader systemic challenges within Mono County's Emergency Services framework.

Testimony from multiple stakeholders indicates that the County's dispatch system operates under significant structural and resource constraints. These include limited staffing, turnover, dual role responsibilities, limited training, and lack of detailed situation-specific procedures or quick reference materials. Collectively, these conditions affect the consistency and reliability of dispatch operations.

The Grand Jury also received testimony that dispatch personnel have limited opportunities for exposure to higher volume dispatch environments. Multiple interviewees noted that larger agencies may provide more structured operational models, training systems, and incident exposure than are available locally.

At the same time, the Grand Jury heard consistent testimony that dispatch is only one component of a larger emergency response system that includes law enforcement, fire services, emergency medical services, communications infrastructure, and intra-agency coordination. Deficiencies in any one of these areas may impact overall response effectiveness.

With respect to the Pack Fire, the Grand Jury finds that while dispatch performance raised concerns among stakeholders, other factors including resource availability, communication challenges in the field, and operational decision making also contributed to the outcome. The evidence does not support a conclusion that dispatch alone was determinative.

The Grand Jury also notes that Mono County faces challenges common to rural jurisdictions including limited economies of scale, geographic constraints, and funding limitations. These factors complicate efforts to recruit and retain qualified personnel and to maintain modern emergency response systems.

The Grand Jury finds that the County needs a unified short, medium, and long-term strategy for dispatch and emergency communications. Existing structures appear fragmented, with responsibilities distributed across multiple entities without a comprehensive system design.

The Grand Jury further notes that stakeholders identified potential for future dispatch infrastructure development near the Mammoth/Yosemite Airport. Interviewees noted that the area may provide operational advantages, including improved access from US Highway 395 during winter conditions, proximity to the County's primary workforce population center, and possible future public safety infrastructure development in the area.

Accordingly, the Grand Jury's recommendations focus on structural improvements, modernization of infrastructure, enhancement of training and operational procedures, and development of a more coordinated and sustainable approach to emergency dispatch services.

## **Findings**

**F1.** The cause of the Pack Fire is still under investigation by the USFS. The previous night's fire, the Magee Fire, and the Pack Fire are declared separate incidents by the USFS.

**F2.** There is no set protocol for the first Mono County arriving fire unit to notify dispatch of how many additional resources need to be dispatched immediately.

**F3.** There is no set protocol to notify all the fire departments and law enforcement agencies that there is a large working fire or other significant disaster in the County. This would be a notification call, not a dispatch.

**F4.** There is no set policy and procedure for dispatch to track and account for all departments and agencies that are on scene at the initial stages of an incident.

**F5.** Training and professional development are insufficient to support system demands. Limited training, dual role positions and limited exposure to higher volume dispatch environments contribute to variability in dispatch performance and system reliability. The lack of comprehensive situation specific procedures for quick reference materials may further limit operational consistency during critical incidents.

**F6.** The current dispatch structure is not optimized for effective emergency communication. The dual role requirement for dispatch personnel divides focus between corrections and dispatch responsibilities, reducing specialization and operational effectiveness. This may also contribute to recruitment difficulties by way of narrowing the applicant pool to only those persons interested in performing both functions.

**F7.** Geographic location contributes to persistent staffing challenges. The placement of the dispatch center in Bridgeport limits access to a broader workforce, particularly compared to population centers such as the Mammoth Lakes area.

**F8.** Dispatch deficiencies are part of a broader, under-resourced emergency response system. Evidence indicates that dispatch performance issues are intertwined with larger systemic limitations including staffing, communications, and interagency coordination.

**F9.** The Pack Fire response does not appear to be solely attributable to dispatch performance. While dispatch related concerns were identified, multiple factors - resource limitations,

communication challenges, and operational decision making - contributed to the overall incident response.

**F10.** While the County has a short-term, midterm, and long-term strategy for emergency communications and dispatch, the current structure and planning efforts are fragmented and do not reflect a comprehensive system design.

**F11.** The County contracted a private firm, Federal Engineering, to conduct a Regional Dispatch Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan. A 120-page detailed and comprehensive document was submitted in 2020. This document covered every aspect of establishing a state of the art professional Dispatch Center. The concept was initially well received by both Mono and Inyo Counties, however, COVID-19 issues stymied the project.

**F12.** The Dispatch Department has recently been under the leadership of new management. The new manager is progressive and proactive. New higher training standards are being implemented, including tactical dispatch, active shooter and emergency medical training (telephone CPR instructions). Also, dispatch personnel are being sent to agencies with higher call loads to observe, train, and shadow operations in higher volume emergency communication centers. Such exposure will improve familiarity with larger scale incident management, operational workflows, and standardized dispatch practices.

**F13.** The Pack Fire resulted in no fatalities or serious injuries to any residents. This, despite 30 structures completely destroyed and 6 others partially destroyed. On January 7th, 2025, the combined Palisades and Eaton Fires, even with the virtually unlimited resources of LA County, resulted in 28 fatalities.

## **Mono County Grand Jury Commentary:**

*Despite Mono County's lack of state of the art communications, logistical span of control issues, and emergency procedure protocols, the men and women of all the first responding departments and agencies, including the Dispatch Department, rose to the occasion. A commendation of extreme valor to everyone involved in reducing the impact of this disaster does not do justice to the scope of the valiant efforts put forth for the 24/7 days of physical and mental effort the County and Public Safety partners endured.*

## **Recommendations**

**R1.** Establish a set protocol for the first arriving fire unit to notify dispatch as to how many additional resources need to be dispatched immediately. This could be in the form of a 2nd alarm, 3rd alarm, 4th alarm, 5th alarm notification in the initial radio communication from fire unit to dispatch. With the known geographic location and the call for a 3rd alarm assignment, dispatch would have a call out list and could immediately dispatch the appropriate fire units and other designated resources.

**R2.** Establish a set protocol to notify all the fire departments and law enforcement agencies that there is a large working fire or other significant disaster in the County. This would be a notification, not a dispatch. This would give the Volunteer Fire Departments and law enforcement agencies advance notice of a possible dispatch.

**R3.** Establish a policy and procedure for dispatch to track and account for all departments and agencies that are on scene at the initial stages of an incident. Once the Unified Command is set up and running, this information could be relayed to them. Unified Command could then take over this function.

**R4.** Establish written situation-specific procedures including quick reference materials that dispatchers can utilize in their decision making process for critical incidents and emergency scenarios.

**R5.** Establish Dispatch as a stand alone professional function. The County could separate dispatch responsibilities from corrections duties to improve recruitment, retention, and performance. Consider lateral hiring of dispatchers from other agencies or those with prior training and experience.

**R6.** Evaluate relocation of the primary dispatch center. Even given the lack of continued participation of Inyo County, a feasibility study could be conducted regarding placement of a future primary dispatch center closer to population centers such as Bishop and Mammoth Lakes.

Several potential advantages associated with the airport area include:

- Proximity to the County's primary workforce population centers.
- Immediate access from US Highway 395, including during winter conditions.
- Potential coordination with future public safety infrastructure development in the area.

**R7.** In addition to sending current dispatch personnel to train at higher volume emergency communication centers, consideration could be given to combining this field training concept to the initial POST dispatch training in Riverside or San Bernardino.

**R8.** Even if Inyo County is not willing to participate with the regional dispatch approach, many of the concepts and procedures formulated in the Fire Engineering, 120-page, Regional Dispatch Feasibility Study and Implementation plan can be utilized in restructuring of the Mono County Dispatch Program.

## **Required Responses**

Penal Code governs response content. Penal Code Section 933.05(a) requires that for each relevant finding the respondent must give one of two possible responses:

1. Agrees with the Finding; or
2. Disagrees wholly or partly with the finding, with an explanation of the reasons for the disagreement.

For each relevant Recommendation, the respondent is required to select one of the four possible responses per Penal Code 933.05(b):

1. The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary of the action taken; or
2. The recommendation will be implemented, with a time frame for implementation; or
3. The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope of the analysis, and a time frame for further discussion of up to six months from the release of this report; or
4. The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation.

## **Required Respondents**

Sheriff Ingrid Braun shall respond to findings F1-F13 and Recommendations R1-R8 within 60 days of the date of this report.

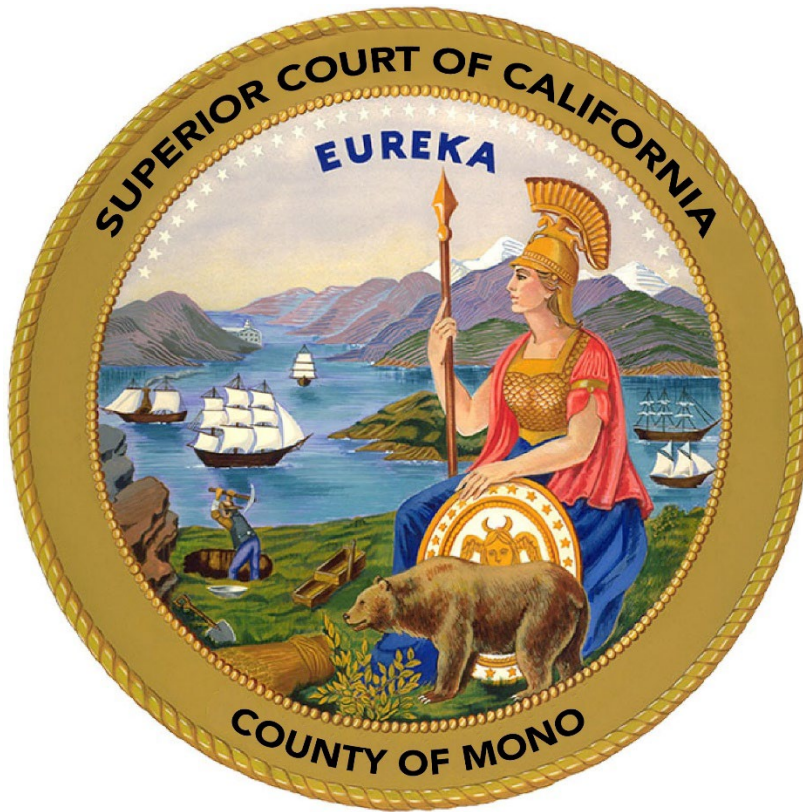
The Mono County Board of Supervisors shall respond to findings F6-F13 and Recommendations R5-R7 within 90 days of the date of this report.

**2025-2026**

**Mono County Civil Grand Jury**

**Investigative Report**

Published: June 10, 2026





## **Foreword**

The Mono County Grand Jury is an official judicial body with independent authority that is not answerable to administrators or legislatures. The Civil Grand Jury is an investigative body created to ensure that the best interests of all citizens of the County are being served legally and effectively by local government including all the departments, agencies, and special districts that are under the purview of Mono County government and the Town of Mammoth Lakes.

## **Summary**

The Mono County Civil Grand Jury for the year 2016-2017 published a Report about Mono County Elections and the Office of the Registrar of Voters. That Report had five Findings and five Recommendations. All the Recommendations were accepted in full by the Board of Supervisors.

The 2025-2026 Mono County Civil Grand Jury chose to follow-up on the original report to determine which Recommendations and subsequent legislative and regulatory changes to the management of elections had been effectively implemented. The Grand Jury also inquired about challenges preventing the Office of the Registrar of Voters from effectively and accurately conducting elections in accordance with all federal, state and Mono County requirements.

The Grand Jury found that although the 2016-2017 Recommendations have been mostly implemented, the administration of elections has expanded and become more complex in the intervening years. This expansion and complexity in administrative responsibility has led to a substantially increased workload that has not been matched by an increase in the number of staff. The Grand Jury also found that the expected expansion of outreach and voter education work has not occurred and that some communities were under-served in options for casting ballots.

# Background

The 2016-2017 Mono County Civil Grand Jury Report found that:

1. The Registrar of Voters Office was generally unprepared to the elections held in 2016;
2. The Registrar of Voters lacked the skill required to manage a complex department;
3. Mono County could lobby the State to expand the number of voters eligible to cast absentee ballots;
4. Mono County's voting machines were obsolete;
5. The Office should conduct additional voter education and outreach, should ensure sample and absentee ballots are accurate and are distributed and received by voters in a timely manner.

These Findings resulted in five Recommendations, all of which were agreed to by The Board of Supervisors in their Response to the Report dated August 8, 2017. The Board of Supervisors agreed to implement the Recommendations within the timelines specified in the Report.

Briefly, these Recommendations were that: R-1 Staff should receive continuing training and education, and procedure manuals should be updated and additional staff should be employed during election periods; R-2 An experienced Registrar of Voters should be appointed; R-3 Research should be undertaken to see whether Mono County might increase the number of voters able to cast absentee ballots; R-4 New voting machines should be purchased if budgets allowed; and R-5 The Registrar of Voters should communicate to voters information about the voting process, the regulations and procedures; and produce accurate printed information, and maintain the elections page on the Mono County website.

The 2017-2018 Mono County Civil Grand Jury sent a letter of Inquiry to the Registrar of Voters asking about the status of the previous Grand Jury's Recommendations. The County Clerk replied on October 3, 2017 stating that modifications in election processes and procedures had been implemented. No further follow-up has been undertaken by the Grand Jury. Since then, numerous legislative and regulatory changes have been made to the management of elections, all of which impact the Office of the Registrar of Voters and its ability to conduct elections in Mono County.

The 2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury formed an Election Procedures Committee to investigate, firstly, whether the recommendations of the 2016-2017 Grand Jury had been implemented in full; secondly, whether subsequent legislative and regulatory changes to the management of elections had been effectively implemented by the Office of the Registrar of Voters; and, thirdly, whether any challenges currently exist that prevent the Office of the Registrar of Voters from conducting elections in Mono County effectively, accurately, and in accordance with all applicable requirements.

It should be noted that the Registrar of Voters in Mono County also serves as the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors, as the Mono County Recorder, and the Mono County Clerk. The combination of roles is similar to that found in several other small California counties. The Registrar of Voter's deputy, who also deputizes in these other roles, is additionally responsible for the office budgets. Whilst this combination of roles is not of itself problematic, it is a point to bear in mind when looking at the adequacy of staffing levels.

## Methodology

The Election Procedures Committee determined the initial focus would be to follow up to the 2016-17 Report specific to the recruitment of a qualified and experienced Registrar of Voters, the accuracy of written material for candidates and voters, the production of procedural manuals for all aspects of the election process, the training and on-going education and development of election staff, and the adequacy of outreach and voter education work.

When considering the five Recommendations in the 2016-2017 Report, the Election Procedures Committee accepted that the obsolete voting machines had been replaced and the Recommendation to increase the number of voters eligible for absentee voting had been overtaken by events (as of September 2021, California became the 8th US state to permanently provide mail-in ballots to all active registered voters). Recommendations relating to these findings were not, therefore, further examined.

In addition to follow-up on the previous Report, the Committee chose to examine the methods and efficiency of maintaining the Voter Roll and the procedures and security of collecting ballots from Drop Boxes.

The Election Procedures Committee interviewed three individuals - two members of the Registrar of Voters Office and an experienced Poll Worker who performs supervisory duties on election days.

The Election Procedures Committee would like to extend their thanks and appreciation to these individuals, who gave us their time, candid views, and full co-operation.

The Elections Procedures Committee examined extensive documentation relating to the administration of elections. The Committee also asked for, and was provided with, staffing comparisons between Mono County and similar sized California counties; those counties were Calaveras, Sutter, Inyo, Mariposa, Colusa, Trinity and Tuolumne. The list of examined documents can be found at the Appendix to this report.

## **Discussion**

### **1. Maintenance of the Voter Roll and Implementation of New Legislation and**

**Regulations.** Since the 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report, much of the work undertaken by the Registrar of Voters Office has become year-round rather than seasonal. The administration of elections has expanded due to new state and federal requirements, increased public scrutiny, and increasingly complex election operations. Maintaining the Voter Roll, registering new voters, and implementing new legislation and regulations requires consistent, full-time staff to carry out responsibilities in a timely manner. Although much of the maintenance of voter rolls is automated, a significant amount of staff time is devoted to manually checking, correcting, and amending voter registrations. For example, DMV registrations are checked weekly by Mono County staff, more often at election times. Whilst the Mono County system scans for possible duplicates, manual checks are done to identify and deal with any changes identified by such

scans. Notifications of voter deaths come throughout the year from various entities; all are followed up manually for confirmation. The State of California system flags possible duplicates across different counties and staff review duplicates locally to ensure no one is registered twice in California. Duplicate registrations within California should be non-existent, but voters could possibly be registered in more than one place if they move out of State and fail to notify the first State of the move. Duplicate registration does not however equate to duplicate voting. Voters who move out of California without notification will remain on the voter roll in California until undelivered ballots, or some other notification, alerts election personnel to their status. Election personnel are then required to follow up before removing voters from the voter roll. The Mono County election personnel have written procedures to adequately manage the maintenance of the voter roll. However, the maintenance of voter rolls is now a year-round task and not an activity concentrated only around election time.

**2. Polling Days.** Despite the use of ballot machines, much of the work on and around election days requires extensive staff hours. Provisional ballots, which are issued to voters for a number of reasons, are separated from regular ballots and are individually scrutinized after election day by election personnel. In nearly all cases provisional ballots are subsequently validated.

Validation can be conducted through the verification of a new address, proper identification of first timer voters, checking to ensure only one vote has been cast, etc. While voting machines will reject a second ballot from the same voter, much of this work is done manually and is time consuming. The signature on every mail-in ballot is checked manually and compared to the signatures on record. The office maintains historical signatures for all voters so that comparisons can be effectively made even where a signature has ‘evolved’ over time; where there is any

doubt, further investigation is undertaken. Ensuring that only properly registered and eligible individuals are able to cast a vote is a critical part of the Office of the Registrar of Voters duties. The Election Procedures Committee heard testimony suggesting that changes in legislation and procedures, as well as an increasing number of elections and special elections, mean current staffing levels will need to increase to ensure high levels of integrity and reliability are maintained.

**3. Drop Box Collection and Chain of Custody Procedures.** Clear policies and procedures have been developed for Drop Box Collection and Chain of Custody responsibilities. Ballots must be retrieved from drop boxes every 96 hours (excluding Saturdays and Sundays) between the 29th and the 10th day before an election. They then have to be retrieved every 48 hours after the 10th day prior to an election and the closing of polls on election day. Two properly authorized individuals are required to collect from each location and transport the ballots to the elections office in Bridgeport. Ballot retrievers are required to sign an oath, and to individually account for the number of ballots retrieved and the time and date of retrieval. Given the geographical spread of the locations, this process is as efficient and secure a system as possible yet is incredibly time consuming, particularly when the frequency of collection and time on the road is considered. The Elections Procedures Committee received testimony suggesting that additional overview of this process would be desirable to ensure that procedures are fully adhered to on every occasion and that the integrity of the system is transparent.

**4. Location of Polling Places and Drop Boxes.** Mono County provides six polling places that serve the precincts of: Antelope, Bridgeport, Tri-Valley, June Lake, Long Valley, Mammoth

Meadow, Mammoth Minaret, Mammoth Pinecrest, Mammoth View and Old Mammoth. Mono County also provides drop boxes in six locations: Walker, Bridgeport, Chalfant, June Lake, Crowley and Mammoth Lakes. Note that three communities - Benton, Lee Vining and Swall Meadows - have neither a polling place nor a drop box location. Voters in these precincts must mail-in their ballots using the USPS, or drive to another community to deliver their ballot. The Elections Procedures Committee received testimony that ballots returned via the USPS are taking increasingly long times to reach the Elections Office in Bridgeport; in some cases in the recent Primary Election on June 2, 2026 there was a delay of two to three weeks.

**5. Temporary Staff.** Temporary staff are employed as poll workers. These individuals provide an essential service on polling day by staffing and managing polling stations and any drop boxes at those locations. Poll workers check-in voters, verify eligibility, deal with anomalies, issue ballots or provisional ballots, manage wait lines, ensure supplies (pens, etc.) are available, assist voters with disabilities, and generally ensure things run smoothly. Mono County is fortunate to have many experienced poll workers and Mono County personnel from various departments volunteering at elections on polling day. New poll workers are, however, always needed and poll workers require training, supervision, and support. Personnel from the Registrar of Voters Office reported that current staffing levels do not allow for sufficient training and supervision of temporary staff, particularly given more frequent and special elections alongside the implementation of new voting systems, protocols and procedures.

**6. Office Staff.** The combined Clerk/Recorder/Registrar Department has 6 FTE staff, none of whom work exclusively on the management of elections. There is a budget to add one additional,

temporary, part-time position over election periods. It has, however, proved difficult to recruit an appropriately qualified and experienced individual for this short term position. This position has been unfilled for the last two elections (November 2024 General Election and November 2025 Special Election) a situation that only adds to the staffing shortage.

The Elections Procedures Committee was interested to know how election staffing levels in Mono County compared to comparative counties in California. As no two counties are exactly the same, the committee asked which counties might provide useful comparisons in terms of size, population, and service profile. This information was provided by the Registrar of Voters. In comparison to seven peer counties/towns, Mono County was shown to have the fewest number of full-time staff equivalents.

**7. Voter Education and Outreach.** Whilst some voter education has been done in the past, in particular with young people, there is currently no outreach or voter education program. There was a partnership with Mammoth High School where students volunteered as poll workers to learn about the democratic process but this has not operated in recent elections. Current outreach is limited to personal visits by the Registrar of Voters when requested by community groups. There is insufficient staffing for a more proactive program.

# Findings

**F-1** The 2025-2026 Mono County Civil Grand Jury commends the Board of Supervisors on their swift reaction to the Findings and Recommendations in the Report of the 2016-2017 Mono County Civil Grand Jury.

**F- 2** The 2025-2026 Grand Jury found that, where still relevant, the Recommendations of the 2016-2017 Grand Jury had, for the most part, been implemented. The Grand Jury found the current Registrar of Voters to be experienced, competent, thorough, and more than capable of carrying out the job requirements. Clear and comprehensive procedures have been written for every aspect of the election process. Staff are trained in these procedures, and staff development and education is on-going. Regular staff meetings are held, with the number of such meetings increasing at critical times during the election period. All written material is currently proof-read by the Registrar and her Deputy and then further scrutinized by one or two additional staff members who provide fresh eyes and a final review. The elections page on the Mono County website has been updated and is kept current. However, despite the fact that the 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report found that the “Mono County’s Registrar of Voters Office needs to conduct additional voter education and outreach to eliminate confusion during elections”, the Election Procedures Committee received testimony that, at this time, zero staff hours are allocated to voter education and outreach.

**F - 3** The current Registrar of Voters is to be commended on her management of the election process, the production of comprehensive procedural manuals, the training of staff, the production of accurate written materials, and the resulting positive staff attitude within her department.

**F - 4** Whilst the Registrar of Voters and her staff are to be commended on the quality of their work, the Elections Procedures Committee heard testimony reporting an inability to perform to the standard and timeliness desired because staffing levels have not increased to meet the current workload. The testimony stated that existing staff are operating at or beyond capacity, which increases the risk of errors and delays in the administration of elections.

**F - 5** The Grand Jury noted the observation made by election staff that ballots returned via the USPS are increasingly delayed, on occasions by a matter of weeks. This has a particular impact on voters in Benton, Swall Meadows and Lee Vining who must mail-in their ballots using the USPS or drive to a neighboring community to deliver their ballots, as their locations do not offer polling places or drop boxes. The Grand Jury found this to be unsatisfactory.

## **Recommendations**

**R - 1** In accordance with the findings of the 2016-2017 Grand Jury, the Registrar of Voters should institute a program of outreach work and voter education to eliminate confusion during elections. Such program might include:

- Expanding community partnerships, e.g. collaborating with County libraries and schools to host voter education workshops and voter registration drives
- Increase Multilingual Engagement
- Strengthen Youth Engagement
- Ensuring that all voters are aware of locations of polling places and drop boxes, and options for returning ballots.

Action: Chief Administrative Officer. Registrar of Voters

Timeframe: 3 months

**R - 2** Mono County should increase the staff of the elections office by a minimum of one full-time person to work on election management. This would enable outreach and voter education work proposed in Recommendation 1 to be carried out, ideally allowing one day per month for this work. The additional staff time would also ensure that the increasingly complex and evolving election laws and regulations are implemented in a timely manner; the more frequent and special elections can be efficiently managed; voter rolls are accurately maintained; written materials are produced that are accessible and accurate; and that all election procedures including the recruitment, training, and supervision of temporary staff is carried out.

Action: Board of Supervisors. Chief Administrative Officer. Registrar of Voters.

Timeframe: 3 months

The Mono County Civil Grand Jury is pleased to note that the Board of Supervisors, on 04.21.2026, approved an increase in staffing for the Office of the Registrar of Voters.

**R - 3** Consideration should be given to increasing the number of polling places and/or the location of drop boxes to ensure that all communities are equally able to cast a vote or return their ballots in a nearby location.

Action: Board of Supervisors.

Timeframe: 3 months

## Responses

Penal Code Section 933.05(a) requires that for each relevant Finding the respondent must give one of two possible responses: 1. Agrees with the Finding; or 2. Disagrees wholly or partly with the Finding, with an explanation of the reasons for the disagreement. For each relevant Recommendation, the respondent is required to select one of the four possible responses per Penal Code 933.05(b): The Recommendation has been implemented, with a summary of the action taken; or 2. The Recommendation will be implemented, with a time frame for implementation; or 3. The Recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope of the analysis, and a time frame for further discussion of up to six months from the release of this report; or 4. The Recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation.

### Required Responses

The Board of Supervisors is *required* to respond to F-2, F-4, and F-5 and to R-1, R-2 and R-3 within 90 days of receipt of this report.

## Invited Responses

The Chief Administrative Office and the Registrar of Elections are *invited* to respond to F-2, F-4 and F-5 and to R-1, R-2 and R-3 within 60 days of receipt of this report.

## Appendix

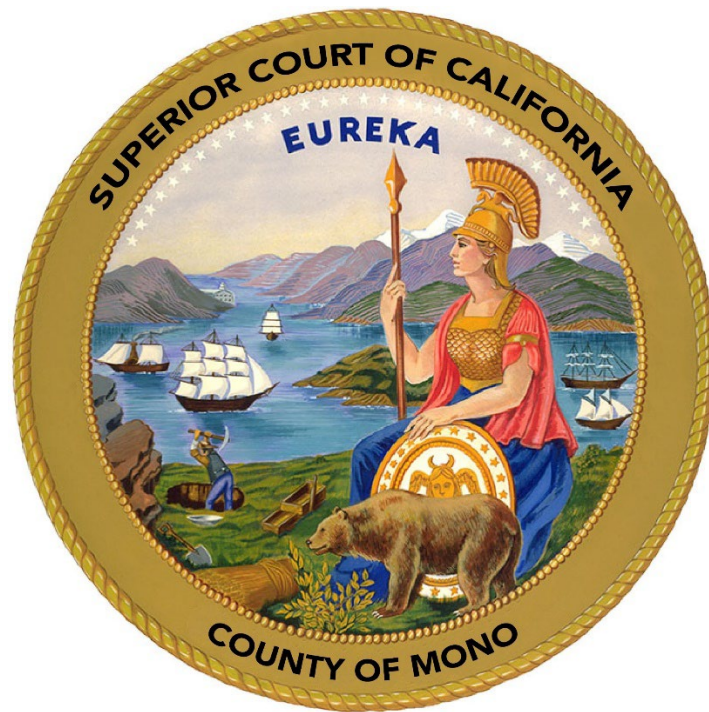
Documents reviewed by the Election Procedures Committee:

1. Mono County training and/or procedure manuals:
  1. Checking In Ballots and Verifying Signatures Procedure – Office procedures for receiving vote-by-mail ballots and verifying signatures.
  2. Inactivating Undeliverable-RTS Voters – Office procedures for inactivating undeliverable ballots, depending on return reason.
  3. Poll Worker Poll Pad Roster Guide and Instructions – Guide for Poll Workers to use to check in voters at poll places.
  4. Ballot Styling Sign-Off Forms – Sample sign off form used by Liberty Vote (formerly Dominion) during ballot proofing. These are reviewed by multiple department staff before final sign off.
2. Voter Registration, Cancellation, Revocation and Restoration
  1. County Clerk/Registrar of Voters (CC/ROV) Memorandum # 25051 re: “VoteCal: Voter Registration Cancellation, Revocation, and Restoration” – Memo from the California Secretary of State about new processes pertinent to the cancellation, revocation, and restoration of voter registration records, and associated notices, for the following reasons: mental incompetency/conservatorship, felony, death, and certain changes of address.

2. Cancellation Notice - Deceased Records (Mono) – Template letter used to send to deceased voters before cancelling. Plus, Return Form.
  3. Cancellation Notice - Change of Address (Mono) - Template letter used. Plus Return Form.
  4. Voting Rights Restored - Felony Imprisonment (Mono). Template letter. Plus Return Form.
  5. Same Day Voter Registration Option (Mono). Template Letter
  6. Voter Registration Cancellation/Restoration - Mental Incompetency/Conservatorship. Plus Return Form.
  7. Change of Address and inactive voter Protocols
  8. ID Requirements for first time voters.
  9. Protocols for voter not found/voter at wrong location/other unique situations
3. The procedures and protocols for collecting ballots from drop boxes.
    1. Drop-Box Ballot Collection and Chain of Custody Procedures 2025 – Current procedures for drop-box ballot collection.
    2. Drop-Box Chain of Custody Log
  4. Election Education Series: <https://monocounty.ca.gov/elections/page/election-education-series>
  5. FAQs page for each election. June 2026 Primary pages still being updated, this is a link to the 2025 Special Election: <https://monocounty.ca.gov/elections/page/frequently-asked-questions-faqs-0>
  6. Departmental Structure for the office of Clerk-Recorder-Registrar.
  7. Staffing comparisons with peer counties/towns

# Mono County Annual Jail Inspection

March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026



**Mono County Civil Grand Jur**  
**Annual Inspection of the Mono County Jail**  
**Bridgeport, California**  
**2025 - 2026**

## **Authority**

Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 919(b), the Mono County Civil Grand Jury (MCGJ) is mandated to annually inquire into the condition and management of public detention facilities within the county.

## **Methodology**

On March 5, 2026, three members of the 2025-2026 Mono County Grand Jury conducted an on-site inspection of the Mono County Jail, located in Bridgeport, California.

Additionally, The team reviewed the BSCC State reports for 2023, 2024 and 2025.

## **Facility Overview**

- **Original Construction:** 1964
- **Renovation:** 1988
- **Facility Type:** Type II
- **Inmate Capacity:** 48 beds

A replacement facility is planned at a different location in Bridgeport and it was reported that the project is on schedule and budget. The project is being managed by the Department of Public Works with input from the detention facility staff.

## **Observations and Findings**

### **Facility Condition**

- The current jail is outdated and deteriorating.
- The jail has been painted and cleaned extensively, with a focus on maintaining the best working and living conditions.
- The Sheriff's team is working closely with the Department of Public Works to replace failing hardware by redistributing and "jerry-rigging" fixtures to maintain functionality.

### **Staffing**

Staffing levels are below standard and insufficient for optimal operation. There are 5 open positions with two in the hiring process.

- Current staffing includes 3 sergeants, allowing only partial on-site leadership coverage.
- Recruitment challenges stem from the region's harsh winters, a lack of affordable housing, and the need for recruits to have the skills of both jailers and dispatch.

### **Inmate Management**

- Inmate population has been managed conservatively to alleviate staffing constraints.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

- Fire safety protocols appear to be followed, including annual fire drills and proper maintenance of fire extinguishers.

### **Recreation and Education**

- A modest library and board games are available to inmates. Handheld devices have been added to allow communication and the ability to purchase movies/entertainment.

### **Procedures and Training**

- Documentation outlining jailer responsibilities, processes and procedures were well documented and comprehensive. Lieutenant Hernandez has focused on training and his staff's understanding.

### **Medical support**

- Efforts are made to set up appointments and transport inmates to the local clinic when needed.
- Sick inmates are isolated when an isolation cell is available; however if not available they are left in the general population with other individuals.

## **Tour Summary**

Upon arrival, Grand Jury members presented valid identification and secured all personal belongings in designated lockers. No purses or electronic devices were permitted during the tour.

The group was welcomed by Lieutenant Hernandez, and the visit began with an informational meeting in the employee community room. Ample opportunity was provided for questions and discussion regarding facility operations and ongoing challenges.

A new Health and Safety Code requirement, effective January 1, 2027, will mandate that dispatch centers provide pre-arrival medical/emergency medical instructions (e.g., bleeding control, CPR guidance). This service is not currently provided and is not permitted under existing policy, though the upcoming requirement has been acknowledged.

The department is actively engaged in a grant-funded initiative to enhance re-entry programs, which includes implementation of a new electronic health record system currently in progress. Staff report having adequate support to meet grant requirements.

Subsequent to the introductory meeting with Lieutenant Hernandez, the group conducted a tour of the dispatch and jailer control room. Staff engaged openly and provided transparency into various aspects of their complex responsibilities. A total of three staff members (excluding the Lieutenant) were present; however, Lieutenant Hernandez indicated that operations function most effectively with four staff on duty.

Lieutenant Hernandez was the supervisor on duty; however, in the event of a lapse in on-site supervision, staff would need to rely on contacting a supervisor at home. As noted above, leadership presence is only partial, which may present a potential liability.

The tour included the kitchen, which was observed to be clean, well-organized, and compliant with safety standards. The refrigerator and freezer areas were also orderly and sanitary. The cook reported the need to repair or replace the oven hood. It was noted that the cook took pride in the work he does, in both taking care of inmates dietary needs and the kitchen facilities as a whole.

All facilities seem to be very clean and freshly painted. There was a notable aesthetic improvement relative to prior visits, reflecting staff pride in maintaining the facility

Overall, it is evident that staff are doing their utmost to maintain safety and operational efficiency under difficult conditions in an aging facility.

## **Recommendations**

1. Continue to monitor construction of the new jail facility to prevent future maintenance and facility issues.
2. Continue hardware repairs where feasible, ensuring security is not compromised.
3. Consider adding a sergeant position to facilitate round the clock on-site supervision and support.
4. Obtain Board approval to implement 24/7 on-site supervisory coverage, with staffing levels designed to maintain supervisor coverage during sick leave and holiday absences.
5. Continue efforts to identify and implement solutions to support staff recruitment and retention.

6. Prioritize planning and implementation of pre-arrival medical instruction (emergency medical dispatch) capabilities to ensure compliance, including protocol development, staff training, and resource allocation.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the Mono County Jail facility in Bridgeport is operating under increasingly difficult conditions due to outdated infrastructure, persistent maintenance issues, and staffing limitations. While staff demonstrated professionalism, transparency, and a clear commitment to maintaining safety and operational efficiency, these efforts are occurring within significant structural and resource constraints. The facility itself was observed to be clean and well-maintained, reflecting staff pride and diligence despite the challenges associated with an aging environment.

In addition to the above recommendations, the Grand Jury emphasizes that a replacement facility is critical to ensuring the long-term safety and security of both inmates and personnel. The new Jail facility is now under construction. In the meantime, Mono County should continue to address staffing limitations, including supervisory coverage, overall staffing levels, and training to support emergency medical dispatch requirements. Without progress in these areas, the ability to maintain safe, compliant, and sustainable operations will remain at risk