

1 **2024 - 2025 Mono County Civil Grand Jury**
2 **Investigation Report**

3 **Mammoth Lakes Police Department Detainment and Arrest**
4 **Processes**

5 April 22, 2025

6 V2.1

7 **California Penal Code section 929 requires reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any**
8 **person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury.**

9 **SUMMARY**

10 The 2024-2025 Mono County Grand Jury conducted an investigation into the Mammoth Lakes
11 Police Department (MLPD) detainment processes. The investigation was due to interest among
12 grand jury members to learn more about the policies guiding their facility use, and the degree of
13 collaboration across local government agencies. The grand jury investigation conducted the
14 following activities:

- 15 • Interviewed MLPD officers, Mono County Sheriff Correctional officers, and employees of
16 Mono County department of Behavioral Health and Mammoth Hospital.
17 • Toured the MLPD offices and booking facility.

18 While the Police Department has strong arrest and detainment processes, concerns were noted
19 regarding the 5150 processes:

- 20 • Communication: There is limited communication and coordination between Mono County
21 Behavioral Health and MLPD.
22 • Resolution: There is no mechanism for the Department of Behavioral Health to "close the
23 loop" with the MLPD after a potential 5150 hold incident is vacated.

1 The grand jury made three recommendations:

- 2 • Commends the Mammoth Lakes Police Department
- 3 • Reinvigorate the Crisis Care Committee
- 4 • Encourage the Department of Health to provide MLPD officers training on de-escalation
- 5 and assessment

6 GLOSSARY

- 7 • **5150 Hold** – Refers to a section of the California Welfare and Institutions Code ([WIC](#)) that
- 8 allows for the involuntary psychiatric evaluation and temporary detention of individuals who
- 9 are deemed to be [a danger to themselves, to others, or are gravely disabled](#). It enables mental
- 10 health professionals and law enforcement officers to place individuals under a 72-hour
- 11 psychiatric hold, during which they are evaluated for their condition and potential avenues
- 12 for treatment. A 5150 hold provides immediate assessment and potentially life-saving
- 13 intervention for individuals experiencing acute mental health crises, although it is important
- 14 to note that these detainments are not arrests—though they do temporarily restrict elements
- 15 of one’s liberty for a three-day period (and potentially longer).

16 BACKGROUND

17 The MLPD facility was initially built to be a holding facility, but has been redefined as a

18 booking facility. Booking facilities focus on administrative processing, while holding facilities

19 are meant for short-term detention. The key differences are in their purpose, duration of stay, and

20 available amenities.

1 The MLPD Facility contains offices, a conference room, open space with officer and
2 administrative cubicles, secure evidence storage, firearm lockers, and two interview rooms.
3 There are no jail cells or holding areas. All arrestees are either booked and released or
4 immediately transported to the Bridgeport jail or, if appropriate to the Mammoth Hospital.

5 **DISCUSSION**

6 All personnel cooperated with the grand jury and were generous with their time answering
7 questions, and during our tour, escorting us wherever we requested. The committee was
8 impressed by MLPD staff's dedication to providing quality care for residents, and to ensuring the
9 safety and health of Mammoth Lake's residents and visitors.

10 Officers are based in Mammoth Lakes where training is conducted, evidence is maintained, and
11 non-violent arrestees can be immediately booked and released. Violent crimes - such as felonies
12 and DUI's - are usually immediately transported to Mono County jail located in Bridgeport. The
13 reason for removing alleged violent arrestees as quickly as possible is based on the need to
14 reduce risk and eliminate unnecessary steps and points of contact. If the MLPD cannot release
15 violent suspects to someone else's custody, a third officer must be called to watch the suspect if
16 the arresting officers are called out to another event. Such cases strain limited resources.

17 In the case of a road closure/weather issue where transport to Bridgeport is unavailable, officers
18 transport the suspect to Independence. As First Responders, the MLPD can move through road
19 closures, and if needed, Caltrans can be called to assist.

20 An exception to immediate booking and release or transport to the Bridgeport jail happens when
21 arresting a person who cannot walk on their own accord, or is suspected of being a danger to
22 themselves or others. In such cases, officers transport the individual to Mammoth Hospital for a
23 higher level of care. In addition, when individuals are suspected of being a danger to themselves

1 or others, a call for support is immediately placed to the Mono County Department of Behavioral
2 Health. If available, a Behavioral Health employee may join officers on-site and expedite the
3 care process. The process of instigating a potential 5150 hold was raised as a concern and
4 became the focus for this investigation.

5 In the course of our investigation, the grand jury committee found that:

- 6 ● The Mammoth Lakes Police Department responds to between 40 and 50 incidents
7 annually where they initiate a 5150 hold. Officers do not understand why many of these
8 individuals are released when they believe the individual is a danger to themselves or
9 others.
- 10 ● Mammoth Hospital admits approximately one 5150 patients per week, of which
11 approximately 50% cases are vacated.
- 12 ● The Mono County Department of Behavioral Health invokes approximately fifteen 5150
13 holds annually. These holds are initiated from MLPD, Mammoth Hospital, Mono County
14 Sheriffs and internal resources. Behavioral Health employees must follow very strict
15 guidelines to invoke a formal 5150. Due to privacy laws, Behavioral Health employees
16 are unable to explain to law enforcement officers or hospital staff why the individual is
17 ultimately held/transported or released.

18 **FINDINGS**

19 F1. The MLPD regards the safety, health and well-being of Mammoth Lakes residents and
20 visitors as a high priority by taking actions to continuously train on, follow and improve its
21 focus on positive detainment and arrest processes

1 F2. The Mono County Correctional Officers state that they have a positive relationship with the
2 MLPD officers and that procedures are well known and followed.

3 F3. The limited communication and coordination between Mono County Behavioral Health and
4 MLPD may result in the improper handling of arrestees leading to increased risks to the
5 officers and public.

6 F4. Due to the requirements of HIPAA Compliance, there is no mechanism for the Department
7 of Behavioral Health to "close the loop" with the MLPD after a potential 5150 hold incident
8 is vacated. The police are not notified of the cause which hinders their ability to understand
9 the outcomes and be better able to serve the public.

10 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

11 R1. The Grand Jury commends the Mammoth Lakes Police Department for their focus on the
12 care of the Mammoth Lakes residents and visitors as it relates to detainment and arrest
13 processes.

14 R2. The grand jury recommends that the board of supervisors encourage the reinvigoration of
15 the Crisis Care Committee by October 1, 2025 made up of the MLPD Chief of Police, the
16 Director of the Mono County Department of Behavioral Health, a representative of
17 Mammoth Hospital and the Sheriff's Department to focus on cross-training and
18 communication.

19 R3. The grand jury recommends that the Mono County Board of Supervisors encourage the
20 Department of Health to provide MLPD officers training on de-escalation and assessment,
21 similar to what they would provide their own employees, starting by January, 2026.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

The following responses are required pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05:

From the following governing bodies:

- The Mono County Board of Supervisors: Respond to Findings F3-F4, and Recommendations R2-R3 within 90 days of receipt of this report.

Invited responses

The Grand Jury invites the following individual to respond:

- Mammoth Lakes Police Department: Respond to findings F3-F4, and recommendations R2-R3 within 60 days of receipt of this report.

- Mono County Department of Behavioral Health to findings F3-F4, and recommendations R2-R3 within 60 days of receipt of this report.

- Mono County Sheriff's Department to findings F3-F4, and recommendation R2 within 60 days of receipt of this report.

- Mammoth Hospital to findings F3-F4, and recommendation R2 within 60 days of receipt of this report.

Response Submissions

Response must be submitted to the presiding judge of the Mono County Superior Court in accordance with the provisions of Penal Code section 933.05. Responses must include the information required by section 933.05.

Responses can be sent via email to: GJ@mono.courts.ca.gov or mailed to the following address:

1 Honorable Mark Magit, Presiding Judge

2 Mono County Superior Court

3 P.O. Box 1037

4 Mammoth Lakes, California 93546

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6 Also, please email a copy of the response to Nancy Licari, Staff Secretary to the Grand Jury, at

7 nlicari@mono.courts.ca.gov

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