

CITY OF RIDGECREST POLICE DEPARTMENT

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY:

The Law and Justice Committee (Committee) of the 2010-2011 Kern County Grand Jury visited the Ridgecrest Police Department (Department) at Ridgecrest on November 9, 2010, pursuant to Penal Code §§919(b) and 925a.

PROCESS:

The Committee met with the Police Chief and the Captain at the Department for an interview and tour of the facility.

FACTS:

- A. The Department has 32 Police Officers which include one Chief, one Captain, six Sergeants, and 24 Officers. The Department also has eight Reserve Officers. There are also 14 civilian employees used for record keeping, dispatch, etc. All officers work a "4-10" shift. There are 15 to 16 Explorer Scouts that volunteer for the Police Department.
- B. The Department has two narcotics officers which are the only two on the east side of the County. The City has approximately 56 sex offenders residing within the City limits. It is an additional duty of the narcotics officers to track these individuals.
- C. The area of coverage for the Department is the City limits of Ridgecrest (21 square miles) with a population of approximately 28,000.
- D. There is no major drug or gang activity within its jurisdiction.
- E. The Animal Shelter is also under the control of the Chief of Police. The Police Department has two K-9 Units which were purchased through public donations and will assist the Sheriff's Deputies upon request.
- F. The Department has a program entitled "Teen Court" through a local church. This is for first time juvenile offenders and is managed by the Probation Department. The local Deputy District Attorney acts as the Judge and teen members who have successfully completed the program act as jurors.
- G. The tour of the facility included the Squad Room, Armory, Evidence Room, three cells, two fingerprint live scanners, and two interview rooms which are video equipped. The tapes are generally stored on the monitors for 30 days before being replaced. The Evidence Room is using "Bar Coding" to log and inventory all evidence and/or property. The Department will store firearms for citizens upon request as a public service, at no cost.

- H. By February or March, 2011, the Chief stated they will have installed a new radio system whereby the officers will have direct contact with local Sheriff Deputies and Fire Department.
- I. The Chief reported that they are anticipating a program with the local community college to set up a Ridgecrest Police Academy (Academy). They would need approximately 30 students to conduct an appropriate program.
- J. Due to budget restraints, the patrol cars are an aging fleet. Many of the cars have 150,000 to 160,000 miles of service. Two new cars are expected in November 2010. The two patrol cars being replaced will be used at the Academy for training purposes. Three motorcycles are used for traffic control enforcement
- K. The Department receives approximately 20,000 911 calls per year and issues approximately 5,000 case numbers annually.
- L. The Chief reported that they have a good relationship with the local schools through contact with the principals and /or resource officer at the local high school.
- M. There are 30 active CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) members. Over 300 have been trained for this program.
- N. They have a "Policing and Community Together" program that works through four organizations with a total of 60 volunteers. The volunteers work at such activities as animal control, records, graffiti and traffic control, etc. The volunteers do over 10,000 hours of service to aid the Department each year.

FINDINGS:

- F1. Since the Chief of Police took control of the Animal Shelter, the Department has been able to reduce the number of animals euthanized through an "adopt-out" program of the animals to Canada. The Department also sends dogs to specific breed rescue programs.
- F2. The jurors of the "Teen Court" sentence the juvenile offenders to sentences that could be community service, a fine, letters of apology or accountability. The parents or guardians of the teen have to be involved and must be present during the Court hearing. This is done in a formal setting. The Chief reported they have a low recidivism rate due to the program.

COMMENTS:

The Committee was impressed with their visit to the Ridgecrest Police Station and found it to be a well run organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

None