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San Diego County Sheriff's Department – Media Relations

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COVID-19 and County Jails Update

We do not underestimate the challenges we face to keep COVID-19 from entering San Diego County Sheriff's Department jails, however, we have taken immediate action to safeguard the lives of people in our custody and those who work in our facilities.

We have created as much physical distancing as possible by actively reducing our inmate population. We have implemented accelerated release credits for eligible inmates with 60 days or less on their sentence, stipulated orders to release those deemed as medically high-risk and recently began releasing inmates on zero bail per an order by the State Judicial Council. At the same time, we implemented an "emergency booking criteria" to reduce the number of people being booked into our jails.

With the reduction of the inmate population and more space becoming available, we are now able to quarantine those being booked into our jails for a seven-day period. Those entering our jails are grouped by the day when they were booked, further distancing these new inmate groups from one another. This seven-day quarantine period allows for any flu-like symptoms to be identified quickly and give our Sheriff's medical staff enough time to take appropriate action.

Additional measures include:

- Temperature checks for all entering the facilities
- Daily temperature checks of all inmates in custody
- Increased cleaning, disinfecting
- Education and awareness for the inmates
- Identification and isolation of those being symptomatic
 - Empty housing units designated for isolation to separate the sick from the healthy.
- Masks for inmates and staff, as well as limiting movement at all our jails
- Emphasis on hand washing, good hygiene

It's important to note people currently being booked into our jails, as well as those still in our custody, are behind bars mostly for felonies and the most serious offenses. Making sure San Diego remains the safest urban county in the nation remains our top priority.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, we have had both inmates and Sheriff's employees test positive for the virus.

In each case, thorough contact investigations are conducted to identify inmates and staff who may have been exposed. Those individuals who test positive are then isolated for a minimum of 14 days. If that



person is in our custody, they are monitored by Sheriff's medical staff. Testing is available for inmates and is conducted at the direction of a medical provider.

We have had two inmates who have tested positive for COVID-19 following their release from custody. Both had been in our jails for less than a day and had shown minimal symptoms.

In the first case, the individual had a mild cough, so they were given a mask to minimize exposure during the booking process. They presented no other symptoms. After about six hours, the person bailed out of custody. That's why they were never assigned or moved into a housing unit. Days after being released, we were notified by County Public Health the person had received further treatment for their symptoms by a medical provider and tested positive for COVID-19. The Sheriff's Department conducted its own contact investigation and found no other inmates had been exposed to this individual. Any Sheriff's employees that had direct contact were identified. These employees were wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) the entire time they were in contact with the individual.

In the second case, an individual brought to one of our jails had a cough and was medically rejected for booking by Sheriff's medical staff. This person was taken to a hospital by the arresting agency. After being cleared as being fit for booking by the hospital staff, the individual was brought back to the jail. The person was placed directly into isolation at the jail after being processed and subsequently released on bail within the day. After the release, we were notified by County Public Health that person had tested positive for COVID-19. We conducted a contact investigation which found a very limited amount of exposure to Sheriff's employees, which were wearing PPE the entire time.

The Sheriff's Medical Services Division has implemented protocols and a discharge process for individuals housed in isolation modules and/or have tested positive for COVID-19. The medical staff is providing verbal instructions to these patients when they are placed into isolation and prior to release. Patients are also given guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on how to manage their symptoms after release.

In both cases, the protocols that were put in place mitigated the exposure of these two persons to other inmates and staff. As of today, out of a jail population of 4,112 spread out over seven jails, there is one person in custody who has tested positive for COVID-19.

We understand there may be more, but our Medical Services Division, and our entire Detention Services Bureau is working diligently every single day to prevent and mitigate as much as possible. Those in custody are also doing their part to keep themselves and others safe.

To date, nine Sheriff's employees who work in various bureaus throughout our department have tested positive and all of them are doing well. Our Sheriff's Medical Liaison Unit monitors our employees and provides support and resources if needed.

To learn more about these efforts, watch the following videos:

- Protecting Our Jails From COVID-19

Video: <https://vimeo.com/411197104>



➤ A Message From the Sheriff's Chief Medical Officer:

Video: <https://vimeo.com/411633126>

B-Roll: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/ToisdWf82d>

Inmates enrolled in programs provided by Sheriff's Reentry Services have played an important and proactive role in helping prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our jails. Watch the following videos to learn more:

➤ Keeping Our Jails Clean

Video: <https://vimeo.com/411632442>

B-Roll: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/Tla8hVGcSy>

➤ Sewing Program Students Make Face Masks

Video: <https://vimeo.com/410389723>

B-Roll: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/XHMDckZVCa>

For updates on the Sheriff's Department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, visit www.sdsheriff.net and explore our COVID-19 section. For the latest on COVID-19 in San Diego County, visit: www.coronavirus-sd.com.

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