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Sheriff/Coroner

**MONO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
**- PRESS RELEASE -**

*Ralph Obenberger*  
Undersheriff

**Date: October 14, 2009**

**RE: Mono County Jail Flooding Causes Inmate Evacuation**

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During the week of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009 the Mono County Jail and Administration Facility in Bridgeport, working with Mono County Public Works and a local roofing contractor, began a long overdue roofing project which was to install a new roof over the entire complex. The initial work done was the removal of the old existing roof down to the concrete slabs. Knowing that a large winter storm was forecasted, attempts were made to cover the exposed roof and to minimize the possibility of water/snow compromising the interior of the facility.

On the morning of Tuesday October 13, 2009 a large early season winter storm moved into Mono County bringing snow, heavy rain and high winds. At approximately 10:30 A.M. the first signs of water entering the Jail and Administration facility were noticed. Soon after that it was obvious that the attempted procedures to minimize the water from entering the interior of the facility were not working. By late morning the decision was made to evacuate all inmates to another jail facility for their safety and well being.

In a meeting with Mono County Superior Court Judge Stan Eller, it was determined that a small number of inmates, with minor offenses and/or sentences, would either be released on their own recognizance or be re-sentenced to serve their time at a later date. The other inmates that remain in custody would have to be relocated to another facility, as the Sheriff deems it necessary.

A security team from the Mono County Sheriff's Department was assembled and shortly after 12:00 P.M. all inmates, with the exception of two whose cells were not affected by the water at this point, were moved over the Bridgeport Memorial Hall which was now being utilized as a temporary housing location.

Contact was made to the Inyo County Sheriff's Department, Washoe County Sheriff's Department and Douglas County Sheriff's Department, to determine which of their facilities could assist in housing upwards of thirty inmates for an undermined amount of time. Each Department agreed to house our inmates, with each having a limited amount of space due to their own inmate population issues. It was determined to move all inmates, who were to remain in custody due to the fact they could not be re-sentenced or released on their own recognizance, to the Inyo County Sheriff's Department facility in Independence.

At approximately 3:00 P.M., numerous Mono County Sheriff's Department units, along with several units from the California Highway Patrol, transported twenty two inmates to the Inyo County Jail Facility in Independence without incident, thus leaving the Mono County Jail Facility vacant.

During this incident Mono County Public Works employees, along with Sheriff's Department employees, worked to minimize further interior damage to the facility. Late in the evening, two outside companies were also called in to also assist in cleanup operations. Mono County Information Technologies employees worked throughout the day and evening maintaining integrity for the various computer systems necessary for the Sheriff's Department to conduct business relating to the 911 system and records department.

The California State Office of Emergency Services was contacted for a portable communications trailer for possible use if the situation worsens, along with a transport vehicle that might be needed due to transportation from Inyo County to Mono County Courts.

All court proceedings for inmates, both in custody and released, will still be conducted in Mono County Superior Courts as scheduled. At this time all relatives of inmates should contact the Inyo County Jail Facility for visitation or information.

The Mono County Sheriff's Department dispatch is fully operational. All 911 emergency calls and any routine calls using the business line(s) to the Sheriff's Department will be handled per usual through the Bridgeport Facility.

At this time it is unknown when the Mono County Jail Facility will re-open.

*The law requires that arrest information be made available to the public. This publication may contain suspect information about individuals booked by the Mono County Sheriff's Department recently. Names of juveniles (under 18-years-old) are not public. Suspect information and ongoing investigation details are also withheld. Since most cases have yet to be adjudicated, all charges should be considered allegations. For questions/concerns regarding any information contained in this publication, contact Undersheriff Ralph Obenberger at (760) 932-7549.*