

SAN MATEO COUNTY SHERIFF'S CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES "GO GREEN"

SIGNIFICANT STRIDES BEING MADE TO REDUCE WASTE AND SAVE TAXPAYER MONEY

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office has made significant strides in an ongoing effort to "go green" in its correctional facilities. "We have an obligation to use resources wisely. Now that alternative and eco-friendly products are available, we can minimize impact on the environment and save taxpayers money at the same time," Sheriff Greg Munks recently explained to his staff. He reiterated these efforts during a recent budget hearing where the Sheriff pulled a Spork from his pocket as symbolic of just one of the latest green efforts.

Sporks replace conventional plastic dinnerware with a single plastic spoon-fork combination that is both reusable and recyclable. Previously inmates were issued spoons at every meal. Now they're issued a Spork which they will be expected to wash and reuse. This may sound insignificant, but eliminates the need to issue 3,000 spoons a day. If 3,000 spoons were lined end to end, they would form a chain long enough to reach the top of the Golden Gate Bridge. In one week, that same measurement would extend almost one mile or equivalent to the depth of the Grand Canyon.

The jails only use environmentally safe cleaners. Captain John Quinlan, the Correctional Division Commander, said "It is essential that we use only high-grade, nontoxic and environmentally safe cleaners because hundreds of gallons of product go down drains each month. For safety and health reasons we have to do our utmost to make sure this facility is absolutely clean, but we also have to ensure we do it in a responsible way."

The jails also began selling cardboard and wooden palettes to recycling and using the funds to support the Sheriff's Inmate Welfare Fund, an added source of money which supports inmate programs.

Additional green efforts include replacing jail lighting with low energy fixtures and bulbs as well as composting all food waste products. Composting the food waste saves the landfill 340 cubic yards of waste each month.

Prior to the very strong effort at reducing the Jails "Carbon Footprint", all waste was going to landfill. Since April of 2008 the monthly compost would easily cover a football field two inches thick. *Imagine the twelve football fields per year covered in waste; now that waste is being turned to compost for use by farmers and other environmentally friendly services.*

A weight measurement was taken of the facilities trash compactor. In less than six months of work we now send one ton of trash to compost each day. Refer attached fact sheet.

All staff dining implements are made of a potato/corn based material which is also composted. There is no polystyrene allowed in the facility at all. This supports the County wide polystyrene ban enacted by the Board of Supervisors.

Captain Quinlan commented that the jail's green effort has been in conjunction with the County's Green Team, chaired by Deputy County Manager Peggy Jensen as well as support from the Department of Public Works, Recycle Works. Captain Quinlan also known as "Captain Carbon" due to his determined efforts in making the San Mateo County Sheriff's facilities the only 100% "Green Jail" in California, went on to explain that these efforts also act to instruct the over one thousand inmates housed in the facilities about conservation and a sense of responsibility.

The Captain said that the efforts are actually well received by many inmates. Inmate Bobby Kang commented: "It is good to know that despite being incarcerated we can still help the environment. Introduction of Sporks and other recyclable and reusable items has been good." The fact that a large population of inmates who are incarcerated for not following the rules have actually embraced the green environmental actions of the Sheriff is remarkable in itself.

Sheriff Munks wants to further build on these efforts. "Institutions our size have a real impact environmentally and it's particularly satisfying to see the dramatic positive impact we can have. I fully support the Board of Supervisor's move to "go green" in all county facilities and this is a big step in the Sheriff's Office toward that goal," he said.

Any questions regarding these "Green" efforts may forwarded to Captain John Quinlan, San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, Corrections Division: (650) 363-4452 or jquinlan@co.sanmateo.ca.us