



The 2024-2025 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury

Requires the

Watsonville City Council

to Respond by September 16, 2025

**to the Findings and Recommendations listed below
which were assigned to them in the report titled**

Handcuffing and Transport

Can Watsonville Police Reduce Trauma?

Required Responses apply to elected officials, elected agencies or department heads, elected boards, councils, and committees. The respondent is **required** to respond and to make the response available to the public under California Penal Code ([PC](#)) [§933\(c\)](#). A required response will be considered **compliant** under [PC](#) [§933.05](#) if it contains an appropriate comment on **all** findings and recommendations **which were assigned to you** in this report.

Invited Responses are encouraged but are not required by the California Penal Code.

Please follow the instructions below when preparing your response.

Instructions for Respondents

Your assigned [Findings](#) and [Recommendations](#) are listed on the following pages with check boxes and an expandable space for summaries, timeframes, and explanations. Please follow these instructions, which paraphrase [PC §933.05](#):

- 1. For the Findings, mark one of the following responses with an “X” and provide the required additional information:**
 - a. **AGREE with the Finding**, or
 - b. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE with the Finding** – specify the portion of the Finding that is disputed and include an explanation of the reasons why, or
 - c. **DISAGREE with the Finding** – provide an explanation of the reasons why.
- 2. For the Recommendations, mark one of the following actions with an “X” and provide the required additional information:**
 - a. **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – provide a summary of the action taken, or
 - b. **HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – provide a timeframe or expected date for completion, or
 - c. **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – provide an explanation, scope, and parameters of an analysis to be completed within six months, or
 - d. **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – provide an explanation of why it is not warranted or not reasonable.
- 3. Please confirm the date on which the assigned responses were approved during an official meeting:**

We approved these responses in a regular public meeting as shown in our minutes dated August 26, 2025

- 4. Please attach a PDF version of your completed responses to an email sent to:**

The Honorable Judge: Katherine Hansen Katherine.Hansen@santacruzcourt.org and

The Santa Cruz County Grand Jury: grandjury@scgrandjury.org.

If you have questions about this response form, please contact the Grand Jury by calling (831) 454-2099 or by sending an email to grandjury@scgrandjury.org.

Findings

- F1.** While handcuffing is discretionary, Watsonville Department police officers tend to overuse handcuffing, even when a person is released at the scene.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

It is nearly impossible to agree with this finding without having the opportunity to review the data used to formulate it. Every situation and interaction with community members is unique and can produce many different circumstances and outcomes. Some of these circumstances include officers' experience with an individual(s), type of violation, repeated violations with a likelihood for the behavior to continue, information provided while responding to a call, and many others.

- F2.** The WPD handcuffs and transports a much higher percentage of misdemeanor violators to department headquarters than other law enforcement agencies within the County.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Again, it is difficult to agree with a finding such as this without having the opportunity to review the documents used to formulate the finding. There are many factors and circumstances that have an impact on whether or not an individual is handcuffed and transported to the police department.

- F3.** All local law enforcement agencies handcuff individuals transported to police departments, hospitals, sobering centers, or the County jail.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

As a general rule, yes. There are exceptions, some include people who have medical issues, victims of crimes, or witnesses.

- F4.** In Watsonville, second or third breath testing is done at the Police Department, requiring handcuffing for transport. If more breath testing were done in the field, fewer people would be transported to the WPD.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Watsonville Police Department complies with the Department of Justice (DOJ) evidentiary breath test process. At times, it may require transporting to allow for a controlled evidentiary testing process in the station. Off-the-shelf screening tools are not adequate to take evidentiary samples.

F5. De-escalation training reduces the use of force, including handcuffing.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Watsonville Police Department is trained yearly and complies with POST standards on de-escalation. Watsonville Police Department's track record shows clear evidence that officers use minimum force to effect an arrest.

- F8.** The WPD salaries are at least 17% lower than the San Jose Police Department salaries.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Comparing officer wages of the City of Watsonville with the City of San Jose is not appropriate. The City of Watsonville recently completed a city-wide classification and compensation study. As part of this study, the outside consultant identifies 'comparable cities' to use for salary and benefit comparisons. Cities are included due to geography, employer size, historical practices, and economic similarity. When the City of Watsonville police officer salary and benefits were compared to our survey agencies (Gilroy, Santa Cruz, Salinas, Seaside, Hollister, Monterey, Morgan Hill, and Santa Cruz County) our police officers were found to be 3.3% above market for salary and -4.6% below market for total compensation. Comparing salaries in the City of San Jose, with a budget of over \$5 billion and a population of over 1 million, to the wages in Watsonville, with a budget of around \$300M and a population of just over 52,000 people, is not equitable.

Recommendations

- R1.** The Watsonville Police Department should update training materials and provide additional training about cite and release, so that more individuals are released in the field, and thereby reducing the number of people transported to Watsonville Police Headquarters. This should be completed by June 30, 2026. (F2, F3)

- **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- **HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- X** **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The training materials are updated and in compliance with industry standards.

- R2.** While the WPD does include de-escalation training in some courses, the Watsonville Police Department should require all officers to take the Police Officer Standards and Training De-escalation Training by June 30, 2026. (F5, F9)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The Watsonville Police Department consistently meets and exceeds POST requirements on all training, and in this case, de-escalation training. The identified “training” that was highlighted in this report is not an actual training course. Rather, it is a publication produced by POST to inform and identify the principles of de-escalation.

- R3.** The Watsonville Police Department should update training materials and provide training around handcuffing discretion so that more individuals are released on the scene without being handcuffed. This should be completed by December 31, 2025. (F1)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

WPD updates policies and training materials in alignment with state law and POST standards. Currently, WPD policies and training material are up to date.

- R4.** The Watsonville Police Department should install in every patrol car a certified breath testing apparatus so that multiple breath tests are completed in the field and fewer DUI misdemeanors are transported to WPD. This should be completed by December 31, 2025. (F4)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Watsonville Police Department uses field testing breathalyzer screening tools in addition to the evidentiary test kit at the Watsonville Police station.

- R5.** The Watsonville City Council should add incentives and raise officer total compensation for those with experience of zero to 15 years by 10% to 30% to reduce attrition, especially in regards to those officers with more than five years of experience. This should be completed by June 30, 2027. (F7, F8, F9)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The City of Watsonville has a General Fund budget of \$61,917,745. Of this, 40% of the budget is dedicated to the police department. While increasing pay and benefits for all employees to attract and retain qualified people is an important and desired goal of the City, these increases must be considered in light of the available revenues and the services that the City must provide. Recommending an increase of 10% - 30% in salaries and benefits for police is well beyond the means of the City with current revenue projections and would require significant and detrimental cuts to other general fund departments (Fire, Parks, Finance, Library, Administration, and IT) greatly limiting the City's ability to provide other critical services to the community.