



The 2024-2025 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury
Invites the

Watsonville Police Department Chief of Police

to Respond by August 18, 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 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 the finding. Every situation and interaction with community members is unique and can produce many different circumstances and outcomes. Some of these circumstances include officers' past 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.

The report calls out DUI as one of the opportunities for the Watsonville Police Department to complete the investigation in the field, eliminating the need to transport individuals back to the department. When formulating the percentage noted in this finding and comparing that to other departments, such as the Sheriff's Office, the investigation did not note that the Sheriff's Office turns over its DUI investigations to the California Highway Patrol, thus significantly lowering their percentage of individuals transported, since CHP is completing the investigation. This would mean that a general comparison to that agency in the county would not be as accurate or as straightforward a comparison as asserted.

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**):

While it is common practice to transport arrestees in a handcuffed position, officers also commonly transport other individuals, such as witnesses, victims, and other non-criminal offenders, without the use of handcuffs.

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**):

This investigation failed to take an in-depth look at DUI processes, procedures, and prosecution. There is a distinct difference between alcohol “screening” and “evidentiary” tests. While utilizing a breathalyzer device in the field is a useful screening tool, it does not qualify as an evidentiary test that can be utilized for prosecution. A breathalyzer screening device is a common tool utilized by this department and holds as much value as any of the other field sobriety tests used in the field. Once a DUI arrest is made, the officer is required to wait 15 minutes prior to administering an evidentiary breath test to determine blood alcohol content. This evidentiary test system allows all data to be stored and transferred securely to the Department of Justice through a statewide, secure computer network. These specific breath tests are utilized in court for prosecution. If an individual who is arrested for DUI refuses to voluntarily submit to breath testing, then that individual is automatically transported to the hospital for blood testing.

Furthermore, DUI investigations are typically time-consuming. Even after field testing and evidentiary testing, there is additional documentation needed to complete the DUI reporting that other arrests do not require. By attempting to do all of this in the field, it would increase the amount of time an individual is detained in view of the public eye, which could also cause more stress and embarrassment to the arrestee.

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

☐

AGREE

☒

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

☐

DISAGREE

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

While de-escalation training equips officers with more tools that can be utilized when determining how to respond to a call for service or during an interaction with a community member, there is no guarantee that it will reduce or eliminate the need to use force, including handcuffing. There are many variables and factors that impact the outcomes of these interactions.

F7 . The WPD has a lower retention rate of officers with more than five years of experience.

☐

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 data used to formulate the finding.

F9 . Officers with more years of service in the department have better relationships with the community and more experience in de-escalation, leading to fewer negative interactions.

☐ **AGREE**
☒ **PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
☐ **DISAGREE**

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

Experience, as with any field, undoubtedly helps officers become more comfortable with their roles as officers, become more informed of the many solutions that can be utilized when responding to a call for service, and become more versed in the variety of resources that exist in the community.

While experience is critical, it isn't the only thing that matters. Hiring officers from within the community or neighboring communities also helps in terms of building strong relationships with our community. Oftentimes, the department hires officers who meet this criteria. Many of these officers already arrive at the department with established relationships within the community, a deeper investment in the community, and a strong sense of passion and commitment to help produce positive outcomes throughout the community.

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)
- ☒ **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

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.

Through the POST Perishable Skills training cycles, the department trains officers in Arrest and Control, Strategic Communications, and Use of Force. Within Arrest and Control, officers are trained in de-escalation and verbal commands, and expected to show proficiency and understanding by the end of the course. Furthermore, within Strategic Communications, officers are trained in the concepts of escalation versus de-escalation. Finally, within the Use of Force course, officers are again trained in de-escalation and how to achieve a safe outcome utilizing clear verbal commands.

In addition to the POST mandated perishable skills courses, the department has made an even greater time and monetary investment to bring specialized training to the department. This includes Why’d You Stop Me? CP 21 training, which was sponsored by POST. While the report did identify this specific training, it did not adequately convey the importance of the training and the critical topics that it covered. These topics included de-escalation, implicit bias, procedural justice, strategic communication, and community trust-building.

Finally, the department invested about \$30,000 to bring in two additional trainings to expand on the CP 21 training, both of which covered de-escalation principles among other critical topics. One of these was trainings was geared towards supervisors and managers to provide additional guidance to them on how to uphold and encourage principle of de-escalation within the department.

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)

X **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.

R6 . The Watsonville Police Department should institute quarterly meetings with community groups to strengthen relationships with the community. These meetings should begin by October 1, 2025. (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:

This is already standard practice for the department. One of the most critical meetings that is scheduled on a quarterly basis is the Chief's Advisory Board meeting. The Chief's Advisory Board is comprised of community members from different segments of the community, including faith-based organizations, education, non-profit, business, and others. This board is in place to help guide, advise, and inform the Chief and the department.

Additionally, the department collaborates with non-profits, such as Community Action Board, Monarch Services, and Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance (PVPSA) to help inform the department on the needs and issues facing our community. The department also holds a seat on the board of directors for PVPSA, which strengthens our partnership with the organization.

Finally, the department supports a program named Agua Con La Chota, which is a program geared towards bringing police department personnel and resources to the agriculture fields to learn more about the issues facing our labor community and strengthen our relationship with this essential segment of our community.