

# Temperature records forgotten at county jail

So-called 'new' policy of recording temperatures actually years old

By Josh Cozine The Trinity Journal

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Heating units at the county jail were lacking early this winter with dorm rooms dropping below acceptable levels as temperature records were seemingly not being kept. Findings were published in early January after concerns came in of low temperatures in dorm rooms at the Trinity County Correctional Facility following a prolonged records request to the county that was still ongoing ("Info slow over jail heat outage," Jan. 7). Records were received days later on Jan. 9, that provided temperature readings at the jail for the weeks of Dec. 28 through Jan. 10, despite the request having been made for temperatures going back six weeks from the week of Dec. 17. The records request was resubmitted. Finally, Friday, Feb. 20, records of emails originally requested in mid-December were received along with a further explanation from county legal counsel saying that temperature readings from November and December didn't exist. Furthermore, the response suggested that keeping temperature readings at the jail is a new policy, despite it having been in print in the sheriff's custody manual for at least three years.

## Cold winter in jail dorms

Even though it was suggested that temperature readings were not recorded prior to mid-December, emails between county jail and county General Services employees share specific temperatures recorded to the decimal point well below normal. "After checking the online link with the Johnson Controls/Total Controls, the temperature in D dorm was reportedly 46 degrees and in A Dorm the temperature was reportedly 64 degrees," an email from project specialist Peter Braga to General Services Facility Supt. Mike Webster stated as early as Dec. 1. "We are aware, we currently have three units with problems, parts are on order, they will be repaired as soon as possible," a response from Webster stated the same day. Discrepancies were again noted Dec. 26 in an email chain between the two where Braga states temperatures were down to 56 degrees in the kitchen, and it was revealed multiple units were in need of service with one said to be in cooling mode instead of heating.

“I have reached out to Mike’s Heating and Air in regards to AC units 9-11 and 13, as for SPH-3 it was in cooling mode. We switched it to heat so the temp should start to level out there,” the response read.

### **Recording discrepancies**

Within that same Dec. 26 email was also a note from Braga that “new” weekly temperature logs at the county jail will now be kept, although according to the Trinity County Sheriff’s Department Custody manual, those records should have always been kept. “Per Sheriff Tim Saxon and the Trinity County Sheriff’s Office Lexipol Policies, we are initiating a new procedure at the New Jail Facility of conducting weekly temperature checks, documenting the temperatures and reporting any temperature discrepancies to General Services,” the email stated. “When any temperature discrepancies are forwarded to General Services, the Trinity County Sheriff’s Office asks for your assistance to advise Mike’s Heating and Air of the reported problems and request their assistance with either adjusting the temperatures and/or repairing any associated problems concerning the issue so the respective temperatures can be restored to their designated levels.”

The current version of the Trinity County Sheriff’s Department Custody Manual is available publicly online and was last updated April 2023. It already had such provisions.

“Temperature readings shall be documented for each area of the facility on a weekly basis on the appropriate log. Staff shall immediately contact facility maintenance in the event that temperatures or humidity levels become uncomfortable,” the sheriff’s custody manual reads. County legal counsel also claimed the policy was only made aware to jail staff recently, despite the current version of the custody manual having been available for nearly three years. “Due to updated Lexipol policy, TCSO Jail staff were only recently made aware of the temperature log policy,” a response to a California Public Records Act request dated Feb. 20 reads. The response goes on to state that jail temperature readings for November through to the end of December do not exist before noting that temperatures are mentioned in the email records provided.