

July 29th, 2025

Honorable J. David Markham
Superior Court, County of Lake
255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453

To the Honorable Judge J. David Markham

I am writing this letter in accordance with Penal Code Section 933.05 in response to the July 8th, 2025, final report from the Lake County Civil Grand Jury. I want to thank the Court for its role in facilitating this process and to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Grand Jurors who dedicated many hours to providing this important service to our community. I welcome the opportunity to have oversight and feedback regarding the Sheriff's Office operations. My dedicated staff and I constantly strive to improve the professional services provided by this agency to the people of Lake County.

I had multiple interactions with members of the Grand Jury during the previous year. The commitment of this Grand Jury was evident in their efforts to investigate and report on governmental activities. I appreciate their efforts and commend their service.

In response to the 2024-2025 Grand Jury Report, the Lake County Sheriff's Office respectfully submits the following responses:

HIGHWAY HAVOC: FIRST RESPONDERS' ADAPTATION DURING CATTLE TRUCK OVERTURNS.

Finding or Recommendations:

R-1: That all fire and Law enforcement first responders within Lake County undergo classroom training, tabletop exercises, demonstrations, and hands-on practice to enable them to make critical assessments and decisions to keep themselves and the public safe during emergency stock-trailer incidents.

AGREE has been implemented: Ongoing and consistent training for Sheriff's Office command staff and Office of Emergency Services personnel is critical to the coordination and cooperation of all agencies involved in the response to an emergency incident. During an incident involving the overturning of a cattle truck, the role of the Sheriff's Office/OES is to coordinate the requested resources of the agencies responsible for mitigation and restoration. The role of Sheriff's Office personnel (deputies) is that of scene security and traffic control when and if necessary. The Sheriff's Office conducts ongoing training related to staff response to emergency incidents.

R-2: That fire and law enforcement first responders be enabled to access reliable Starlink satellite communications capability throughout the county.

AGREE has been implemented. The Sheriff's Office and Office of Emergency Services currently possess numerous Starlink devices capable of deployment throughout Lake County.

R-3: That all fire, Sheriff's Office, and Office of Emergency Services (OES) responding personnel within Lake County undergo training to recognize the unique behavior issues that develop in severely stressed and injured livestock to help ensure the responders' safety and the animal's survival and welfare.

AGREE will be implemented within the Sheriff's Office's bi-annual Perishable Skills Training cycle for Sheriff's Office personnel.

R-4: That the emergency response guide in preparation by the fire service be finalized and distributed widely within County Government, law enforcement, and relevant animal welfare groups.

The Sheriff/Director of OES does not have the authority to direct the work of fire service personnel. Lake County OES will coordinate with and assist the fire service with development and promulgation when and if requested.

R-6: That Lake County Animal Care and Control draft operational procedures that address its responses to large animal injury incidents to be presented to the Board of Supervisors.

Lake County Animal Care and Control is a separate County department and is not a division of the Sheriff's Office. As such, the Sheriff/Director of the Office of Emergency Services does not have the authority to direct or oversee the operations of other County departments. Therefore, the Sheriff's Office does not have the authority to implement—or decline to implement—the referenced recommendation.

R-8: That Lake County Care and Control reactivate its LEAP program so that it can be activated by first responders during emergencies.

Lake County Care and Control is a separate County department and is not a division of the Sheriff's Office. As such, the Sheriff/Director of the Office of Emergency Services does not have the authority to direct or oversee the operations of other County departments. Therefore, the Sheriff's Office does not have the authority to implement—or decline to implement—the referenced recommendation.

DOES LAKE PILLSBURY HAVE A FUTURE?

Finding or Recommendations:

R-5: That the Sheriff's Office Arrange to transport from Lakeport to Goat Mountain the vault and repeater that was purchased for Lake Pillsbury Residents' use.

AGREE has been implemented. The vault has been moved to and installed at Goat Mountain. The vault was not purchased or intended for use by the residents of Lake Pillsbury. The vault was purchased and installed as a repeater vault to enhance the radio communications of first responders in the Lake Pillsbury, Indian Valley Reservoir, and Spring Valley areas. It does not, nor was it intended to improve or increase the cellular availability of those geographic areas. Neither the Sheriff's Office nor the Office of Emergency Services have the authority to expand cellular service in the Lake Pillsbury area.

"DON'T MOVE A MUSSEL", AN ALARMING NEW THREAT TO LAKE COUNTY WATERWAYS.

Finding or Recommendations:

R-4: That the Lake County Sheriff's Office add another floating officer on Clearlake from May thru September.'

AGREE has been implemented. A part-time deputy has been hired and assigned to the boat patrol unit during the boating season, May through September.

Lithium-Ion Battery Fires: Learning to Manage the Risk.

Findings or Recommendations:

R-3: That the Lakeport and Clearlake police departments and the Sheriff's Office coordinate with OES to distribute education and mitigation materials to their employees.

AGREE will be implemented within six months for the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff/Director of the Office of Emergency Services does not have the authority to dictate the policies, procedures, or training of the Lakeport, Clearlake Police Departments. The Office of Emergency Services will coordinate with and assist the Police Departments in obtaining educational materials when and if requested.

R-4 That the fire and law enforcement agencies within the County collect and disseminate data on the ignition source of lithium-ion battery fires to support accurate statistics and thus risk reduction.

DISAGREE will not be implemented. The Lake County Sheriff's Office does not investigate or determine the cause of fires.

In closing, I want to once again express my sincere appreciation for the hard work and countless hours dedicated by the members of this Grand Jury. Their oversight, guidance, and thoughtful inquiry serve as a compass for public service leaders, helping to steer their organizations in ways that best deliver the services our community expects and deserves.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "L. Bingham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "L." and the last name "Bingham" clearly visible.

Luke Bingham
Sheriff-Coroner
Emergency Services Director
County of Lake