



ORANGE COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

# NEWS RELEASE

SHERIFF-CORONER DON BARNES

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Sheriff's Department conducts internal audit regarding booking of evidence, holds accountable policy violators**

**SANTA ANA, Ca. (Nov. 18, 2019)** – In January 2018, the Department became aware of instances in which evidence was not booked per Department policy, which dictates that evidence in a deputy's possession must be booked by the end of the deputy's shift.

The Department immediately launched audits to determine the scope of the policy violations. The audits examined two years, February 2016 to February 2018, consisting of more than 98,000 reports, more than 27,000 evidence bookings, and more than 1,500 deputies. The audits determined there were systemic problems with evidence being booked outside policy. The majority of the evidence that was not booked properly was digital evidence, consisting of items such as photographs, surveillance video, and/or audio recordings. From interviews conducted during internal investigations, the majority of the time that evidence was booked outside of policy, the evidence was maintained by the deputy until it was booked.

Following a series of audits by Internal Affairs, the Criminal Investigations Bureau and the Department's Constitutional Policing Advisor, immediate measures were taken to ensure personnel were educated on policy and procedure for booking evidence. The Department also developed procedures requiring supervisors to check that all property and evidence has been booked prior to approving any related reports.

As a result of the audit, fifteen criminal investigations were submitted to the District Attorney's Office, and no charges have been filed. To date, four deputies have been dismissed, seven have been issued discipline, and four internal affairs investigations are ongoing.

The Department took immediate corrective action and continues to audit and proactively educate personnel regarding the vital importance of booking evidence within policy.

"Once this issue came to light we initiated an audit to determine the extent of violations, identified areas for improvement and held accountable those employees who were acting out of the scope of policy," said Sheriff Don Barnes. "The audit achieved its intended goal and has made our agency better. I am confident the public will recognize that we took immediate measures to address the issue, implemented safeguards to ensure this does not recur, and have no patience for substandard performance or criminal behavior."

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