

KINGS COUNTY MORGUE-KINGS COUNTY HOSPITAL

SYNOPSIS

The morgue is located in the basement of the now closed Kings County Hospital (KCH). A new location for the morgue has not been found to date and it continues to operate in the existing location. The disposition of the KCH building has not been decided at this time though it has been used in the past for offices.

WHY THE GRAND JURY INVESTIGATED

Public interest

AUTHORITY

California Penal Code Section 925 The Grand Jury shall investigate and report on the operations, accounts and records of the officers, departments or functions of the County.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The County Coroner and a public works employee conducted a tour of the KCH building for the Grand Jury on March 11, 2011.

BACKGROUND AND FACTS

Kings County Morgue equipment is old but still in use. Some of the suppliers are no longer in business but needed repairs can still be made. The Assistant Coroner stated that some new equipment is needed. The Morgue was well organized with additional storage space in the basement of the hospital. The Assistant Coroner explained the use of equipment and manner of caring for the deceased. The morgue consists mainly of a single room containing a cold storage area, a table, and sink and equipment storage shelves. Other rooms contained records and equipment and, in the basement are locked rooms used by the Sheriff's office for storage of records.

There are no funds available to either demolish or upgrade the building. Some believe there is historical value to the building but it would have to be brought up to code if it were to be put into use again. The County has made no determination of which action to take. The morgue is the main tenant and, for lack of finding a new location for the morgue, it remains in the KCH building. The central part of the hospital was constructed in 1907 and the wings were added in the 1930's and 1950's. The structure consisted of brick walls, concrete floors, and a tile roof. In later years the walls were reinforced with steel on the outside and covered with

stucco. The building showed no apparent signs of cracks in the ceilings, floors or walls. In two areas it was noted that there was peeling paint from the third floor ceiling. It was noted the building is being stripped of all accessories, toilets, sinks, wall fixtures, etc., except in the area that the school system is storing unused items. It was also noted a previous renter left behind old desks, computers, files, and many miscellaneous items.

FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1

The morgue is in need of some new equipment.

Recommendation 1

The County should update morgue equipment as needed.

Finding 2

Some determination needs to be made by the Board of Supervisors concerning the KCH building. The historical value is of public concern and should be considered.

Recommendation 2

A decision should be made to upgrade or demolish the KCH building, and the public should be directly involved.

COMMENTS

The KCH building offers secure storage space for Kings County archives and office space. The exterior and internal walls and the ceilings and floors did not appear to show any major problems.