

September 12, 2011

Humboldt County Grand Jury
825 Fifth Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Foreman and Members of the Grand Jury:

We wish to thank you for your service to the citizens of Humboldt County and recognize the effort it takes to put together your Grand-Jury 2011-PW-01 Final Report.

Concerning Finding/Recommendation #1; *“Limited and/or inadequate educational opportunities in our school systems for bicycle safety instruction”*. The Fortuna Police Department emphasizes bicycle safety among our youth through periodic presentations in K-6 grades by our Youth Service Officer. As part of our YSO duties, the YSO will present bicycle safety training to grammar school age children at our three elementary schools. Topics discussed are bicycle rules of the road, wearing a helmet and proper bicycle maintenance.

Concerning Finding/Recommendation #2; *“Incentive programs for obeying bicycle safety rules and laws”*. In the past the Fortuna Police Department had a very comprehensive bicycle safety program, where officers would issue citations to youth that did not have a helmet or committed violation while riding a bicycle. The juvenile would be cited to appear in a bicycle safety class along with a parent. Educational videos and demonstrations were shown to offenders by police staff and after receiving training, the juvenile would demonstrate to the officer what they had learned. If the juvenile did not have a bicycle helmet, one was provided at no cost to the juvenile. This program incurred overtime paid to the instructing officer and associated costs such as obtaining bicycles, educational materials and protective gear (helmets). Funding was provided through an Office of Traffic Safety grant, which covered all costs.

The Fortuna Police Department currently has no funds budgeted for this type of program and grant funding is extremely scarce for these types of programs.

The Fortuna Police Department’s YSO is contacting local businesses in obtaining vouchers for free ice cream cones that all officers would carry with them and give to juveniles which they observe wearing a helmet and obeying the rules of the road.

The department also has approximately 25 youth bicycle helmets that are given away to juveniles who families are in need.

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Parks and Recreation
(707) 725-7620
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5 Park Street

Public Works
(707) 725-7650
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180 Dinsmore Drive

Concerning Finding/Recommendation #3; *“Infrastructure improvements to make safe routes to schools and individual communities safer for biking”*. The Fortuna Police Department has a member (Office Supervisor Robin Paul) on the Safe Routes to Schools committee. The committee, also including the City Manager, City Engineer, School Superintendent and school staff has studied, analyzed and made recommendations through a joint response to the City of Fortuna and Fortuna Union Elementary school district. Several improvements have already been made, such as new signage, road delineators and the re-configuration of loading and un-loading zones at the schools. The Fortuna Police Department also utilizes uniformed volunteers at peak hours in the morning every school day to monitor safety issues with traffic and crosswalk safety. These volunteers are also equipped with a police radio to report violations to patrol officers in the field.

Concerning Finding/Recommendation #4; *“Death and accident rates are among the highest among the 58 counties in California/ Law Enforcement should re-evaluate how bicycle laws are enforced”*. The Fortuna Police Department actively enforces bicycle laws. If an officer observes a violation the officer is given the discretion to issue a citation or verbal warning to the violator. In the past year the Fortuna Police Department has responded to approximately 8 bicycle accidents, with no deaths and only minor to moderate injuries involved to the bicyclist.

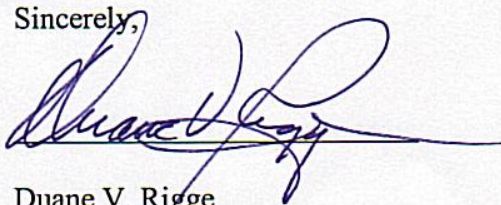
In conclusion we are exceedingly proud of all of our Fortuna Police Department personnel in regards to the emphasis put on bicycle safety and programs.

Please note that there is a growing movement from within the Fortuna community to establish a bicycle park which is being spearheaded by seventh grade class at Fortuna Elementary School. The committee has regularly scheduled meetings with City staff to explore the possibilities of establishing a “Bike Park” for the youth of Fortuna. At this point in time the concept has been established and research into funding, location and liability is underway.

Once again, thank you to all the members of the Grand Jury for your service to our communities.

If you have any questions or have need any other additional service please don't hesitate to contact Chief Dobberstein.

Sincerely,



Duane V. Rigge
City Manager



William Dobberstein
Chief of Police