



**Office of Inspector General  
County of Los Angeles**

**Reform and Oversight Efforts:  
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department**

**July through September 2023**

**Issued November 16, 2023**

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## ABOUT QUARTERLY REPORTS

Quarterly reports provide an overview of the Office of Inspector General's regular monitoring, auditing, and review of activities related to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Sheriff's Department) over a given three-month period. This quarterly report covers Department activities and incidents that occurred between July 1, 2023 and September 30, 2023, unless otherwise noted. Quarterly reports may also examine particular issues of interest. This report includes an update on off-duty alcohol use and firearms, which the Office of Inspector General previously addressed in [a report issued in October 2019](#).

## MONITORING SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT'S OPERATIONS

### Deputy-Involved Shootings

The Office of Inspector General reports on all deputy-involved shootings in which a deputy intentionally fired a firearm at a human, or intentionally or unintentionally fired a firearm and a human was injured or killed as a result. This quarter, there were six incidents in which people were shot or shot at by Sheriff's Department personnel. The Office of Inspector General staff responded to each of these deputy-involved shootings. Five people were struck by deputies' gunfire, three fatally.

The information in the following shooting summaries is based on the limited information provided by the Sheriff's Department and is preliminary in nature. While the Office of Inspector General receives information at the walk-through at the scene of the shooting, receives preliminary memoranda with summaries, and attends the Sheriff's Department Critical Incident Reviews, the statements of the deputies and witnesses are not provided until the Sheriff's Department completes its investigation. The Sheriff's Department permits the Office of Inspector General's staff limited access to monitor the ongoing investigations of deputy-involved shootings. The Sheriff's Department also [maintains a page on its website](#) listing deputy-involved shootings that result in injury or death, with links to incident summaries and video.

### **Santa Clarita Station: Hit Shooting – Fatal**

The Sheriff's Department reported that on July 4, 2023, at approximately 11:40 p.m., Santa Clarita Station deputies on patrol in the 24100 block of Race Street in Newhall, saw a gray Cadillac sedan that matched the description of the suspect vehicle in a shooting that occurred earlier that night in the unincorporated area of Canyon Country. When deputies conducted a traffic stop and approached the driver, the front passenger (a 24-year-old White man) fled from the vehicle. The deputies engaged in a foot pursuit

until the man ran through a residential property. Deputies coordinated a containment of the area, and shortly thereafter spotted the man and initiated a second foot pursuit. During this foot pursuit, a deputy encountered the suspect. The suspect fired his handgun at the deputy, and the deputy fired nine rounds at the suspect. The suspect sustained gunshot wounds to his torso. Los Angeles County Fire Department personnel treated him at the scene and transported him to a local hospital for further treatment. The deputies did not sustain any injuries. On July 6, 2023, the suspect died from his injuries. Investigators recovered two loaded, 9mm semi-automatic handguns at the scene.

*Areas for Further Inquiry:*

Did deputies activate all body-worn cameras in accordance with Sheriff's Department policy? Did deputies initiate and conduct the foot pursuits in accordance with Sheriff's Department policy? Did deputies use tactics consistent with Sheriff's Department training and best practices?

**Carson Station: Hit Shooting – Fatal**

The Sheriff's Department reported that on August 7, 2023, at approximately 2:20 a.m., deputies responded to a report of a suspicious person at a gas station, specifically a male causing a disturbance and screaming at the gas pumps. Upon their arrival, the responding deputies saw a Hispanic man matching the description in the radio call and approached him. The deputies observed what they believed to be the outline of a handgun in the man's left pants pocket and retreated to their patrol vehicles for cover. The deputies ordered the man to keep his hands on his head and not to reach for the object in his pocket. The man began tossing objects from a black backpack lying on the ground near his right side and then reached for the object in his left pants pocket. One deputy then fired a single less-lethal 40-millimeter projectile at the man, followed immediately by another deputy firing five rounds from a semi-automatic firearm, which struck the man in his back and buttocks. The deputies rendered first aid until Los Angeles County Fire personnel arrived. The man died at the scene. The Sheriff's Department recovered a black Daisy Powerline 426 air pistol near the man's body.

*Areas for Further Inquiry:*

What was the backdrop when deputies fired?

**Industry Station: Non-Hit**

The Sheriff's Department reported that on September 2, 2023, at 9:58 p.m., Industry Station received a call from the manager of a restaurant in Hacienda Heights. The caller advised that four black men they believed to be possible gang members were in a black Escalade in front of the restaurant. The caller reported that the location had recently

been the target of a robbery and had concerns that they were casing the location. The caller said the restaurant would close soon and indicated concern for the customers still inside the restaurant. Three deputies responded and arrived at the location in separate marked patrol vehicles.

Two deputies saw three men outside of the black Escalade. One of the three men ran. At that time, the third deputy, who arrived from the opposite direction than the other deputies, saw this suspect running away holding a handgun. The deputy fired four rounds through his closed window, causing it to shatter. The rounds hit a supermarket that had already closed. The suspect threw his gun, which deputies found about 25 feet from him. The suspect surrendered without further incident. The other two men were also taken into custody. Although the caller originally said they saw four men, deputies only observed three upon their arrival. Deputies found additional ammunition inside the car, though it remains unclear whether it matches the fleeing man's gun. Additionally, deputies discovered a baggie of pills just outside of the vehicle that was identified by deputies as possible fentanyl.

*Areas for Further Inquiry:*

What factors influenced the deputy to fire with a supermarket as the backdrop? Did the firing deputy use proper tactics when shooting through the window of their patrol vehicle? Did the responding deputies have a plan for contacting the subjects? Did responding deputies communicate during the incident and prior to their response?

**Industry Station: Hit Shooting – Fatal**

The Sheriff's Department reported that on September 4, 2023, at 5:34 a.m., they received a radio call regarding an assault with a deadly weapon involving a knife in Hacienda Heights. A woman called 911 reporting that her son, a 42-year-old White man, had just stabbed his father.

Six deputies responded to the call. Upon arrival, deputies saw the man standing in front of the residence next door. One or more deputies ordered the man to drop the knife, which was described as a large butcher knife with a blade approximately nine inches long. The man did not drop the knife and instead charged towards the deputies, at which point one deputy fired a single round, which struck the man in the neck. The man died at the scene. The Sheriff's Department's initial reports indicate that when the deputy fired, the man was approximately 30 feet away.

The man's father suffered multiple stab wounds to his torso and also died at the scene. Investigators recovered the knife from the scene.

*Areas for Further Inquiry:*

Did deputies form a tactical plan before or upon arriving? Did deputies have any less lethal weapons available? Did deputies attempt to deescalate the situation? Did the shooting backdrop pose risks? Why did only one deputy fire? Did the Department have any prior contacts with this man? Were all body-worn cameras activated in compliance with Department policy?

**East Los Angeles Station: Hit Shooting – Non-Fatal**

On September 4, 2023, at 1:17 p.m., East Los Angeles Station deputies responded to a call reporting a man brandished a gun at a gas station in unincorporated Los Angeles. The caller reported that the suspect, later determined to be a 32-year-old Hispanic man, entered the gas station, and took several items, then brandished the gun as he fled. A short time later, deputies located the suspect walking in front of an auto repair business and saw that he was armed with a handgun. Deputies ordered him to stop, but he pointed the gun in the direction of a deputy at which time a deputy-involved shooting occurred. The deputy who shot fired through his windshield, striking suspect in the abdomen. Los Angeles County Fire personnel treated him at the scene and transported him to a local hospital, where he was in stable condition. The deputy fired six rounds at the suspect. No deputies were injured during the incident.

The suspect's firearm, a Beretta Model 92FS semi-automatic handgun, was recovered at the scene.

Deputies later learned that, after the man had left the gas station, he pointed a gun at a man approximately one-half block west of the business, who also reported that assault to the Sheriff's Department.

*Areas for Further Inquiry:*

Did the deputy consider the backdrop of the shooting? Did the deputies approach the armed suspect in a tactically sound manner, consistent with training? Was shooting through the windshield consistent with training and best practices?

**Civil Management Bureau: Hit Shooting, Non-Fatal**

The Sheriff's Department reported that on September 27, 2023, at approximately 10:38 a.m., Civil Management Bureau deputies went to a single-family residence in North Hollywood to evict the occupants pursuant to a court order. Receiving no response to their knock on the door, the deputies used a locksmith to assist them in gaining entry. The deputies entered the residence and announced their presence. One of the occupants then came out of a room and was told by deputies to wait in the living area. The deputies proceeded towards the hallway with guns drawn, continuing to

announce their presence, the hand of an occupant, a 51-year-old White man, appeared out of a doorway of one of the adjacent rooms. As the occupant's hand appeared, one of the deputies reportedly unintentionally discharged his gun a single time, striking the occupant's hand. The deputy reported that he was attempting to manipulate the flashlight on his gun when he discharged it. The man was unarmed. He was taken to the hospital and treated for his injury.

The Office of Inspector General previously reported on an increase in unintentional discharges, after the Sheriff's Department converted to guns with a lighter trigger pull and an attached flashlight that operates by squeezing the handgun grip, in a report titled, [Assessing the Rise in Unintended Discharges Following the Sheriff's Department Conversion to a New Handgun](#).

#### *Areas for Further Inquiry*

What was the tactical plan for the eviction? Who determines the tactical plan for each eviction? Are tactical plans for evictions particularized for the situation and information known to the deputies? Is background information on the occupants or the residence gathered prior to the eviction? Are deputies trained to use the weapon mounted light as a source of illumination absent a need to discharge the weapon? Why did the deputy have his finger on the trigger of his gun?

### **District Attorney Review of Deputy-Involved Shootings**

The Sheriff's Department's Homicide Bureau investigates all deputy-involved shootings in which a person is hit by a bullet. The Homicide Bureau submits the completed criminal investigation of each deputy-involved shooting that results in a person being struck by a bullet and which occurred in the County of Los Angeles to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office (District Attorney's Office or District Attorney) for review and possible filing of criminal charges.

Between July 1, 2023, and September 30, 2023, the District Attorney's Office issued five findings on deputy-involved shooting cases involving the Sheriff's Department's employees.

- In the August 7, 2020, non-fatal shooting of Rogelio Ochoa III, the District Attorney opined in a [memorandum dated August 1, 2023](#), that deputies Adam Nelson, Sebastian Pombal, and Juan Ruiz acted lawfully in self-defense and in defense of others.
- In the January 24, 2022, non-fatal shooting of Javier Arellano Torres, the District Attorney opined in a [memorandum dated August 1, 2023](#), that deputy Adrian Ines acted lawfully in self-defense and in defense of others.

- In the January 10, 2021, fatal shooting of Allen Mirzayan, the District Attorney opined in a [memorandum dated August 18, 2023](#), that deputies Raul Reyes, Roberto Sigala, and Jacob Thome reasonably believed that the use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to themselves and others.
- In the May 29, 2020, fatal shooting of Robert Colvin, the District Attorney opined in a [memorandum dated August 24, 2023](#), that deputies Jesus Chamorro and Nicholas Hernandez acted lawfully in self-defense and in defense of others.
- In the April 1, 2022, non-fatal shooting of Trinidad Velasco, the District Attorney opined in a [memorandum dated August 30, 2023](#), that there was insufficient evidence to prove deputy Ernest Magana did not act lawfully in self-defense or in defense of others.

### **Homicide Bureau's Investigation of Deputy-Involved Shootings**

For the present quarter, the Homicide Bureau reports that it has sixteen shooting cases involving Sheriff's Department personnel open and under investigation. The oldest case in which the Homicide Bureau maintains an active investigation is related to an October 19, 2021, shooting in the jurisdiction of Temple Station. For further information as to that shooting, please refer to the Office of Inspector General's report [Reform and Oversight Effort: Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, October to December 2021](#). The oldest case that the Bureau has open is a 2019 shooting in Downey, which was submitted to the District Attorney's Office and for which the Sheriff's Department still awaits a filing decision.

This quarter, the Sheriff's Department reported it sent six deputy-involved shooting cases to the District Attorney's Office for filing consideration.

### **Internal Criminal Investigations Bureau**

The Sheriff's Department's Internal Criminal Investigations Bureau (ICIB) reports directly to the Division Chief and the Commander of the Professional Standards Division. ICIB investigates allegations of criminal misconduct committed by Sheriff's Department personnel in Los Angeles County.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Misconduct alleged to have occurred in other counties is investigated by the law enforcement agencies in the jurisdictions where the crimes are alleged to have occurred.



The Sheriff's Department reports that ICIB has 68 active cases. This quarter, the Sheriff's Department reports sending three cases to the District Attorney's Office for filing consideration (in addition to the three deputy-involved shooting cases sent by ICIB, discussed above). The District Attorney's Office is still reviewing 31 cases for filing. The oldest open case that ICIB has submitted to the District Attorney's Office for filing consideration is related to conduct that occurred in 2018, which ICIB presented to the District Attorney in 2018 and for which the Sheriff's Department still awaits a filing decision.

## **Internal Affairs Bureau**

The Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB) conducts administrative investigations of policy violations by Sheriff's Department employees. It also responds to and investigates deputy-involved shootings and significant use-of-force cases. If the District Attorney declines to file criminal charges against the deputies involved in a shooting, IAB reviews the shooting to determine whether Sheriff's Department personnel violated any policies during the incident.

Administrative investigations are also conducted at the unit level. The subject's unit and IAB determine whether an incident is investigated by IAB or remains a unit-level investigation based on the severity of the alleged policy violation(s).

This quarter, the Sheriff's Department reported opening 174 new administrative investigations. Of these 174 cases, 60 were assigned to IAB, 88 were designated as unit-level investigations, and 26 were entered as criminal monitors (in which IAB monitors an ongoing criminal investigation conducted by the Sheriff's Department or another agency). In the same period, IAB reports that 126 cases were closed by IAB or at the unit level. There are 529 pending administrative investigations, of which 348 are assigned to IAB and the remaining 181 are pending unit-level investigations.

## **Civil Service Commission Dispositions**

There were seven final decisions issued by the Civil Service Commission this quarter involving Sheriff's Department employees.<sup>2</sup> In four of these, the Commission sustained the department; in two, it reduced the discipline imposed; and in one, it overturned the Department's finding that the employee had violated policy.

Five of these cases concerned sworn peace officers of the rank of deputy or higher, four of which involved decisions by the Department to discharge the employee. The Civil

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<sup>2</sup> The Civil Service Commission reports its actions, including final decisions, in [minutes of its meetings posted on the County's website](#) for commission publications.

Service Commission sustained three of these discharges. In the fourth, the Commission rejected the Department's decision that the deputy had violated policy and overturned the discharge altogether, without imposing any lesser penalty. In the one case concerning a sworn officer that did not involve a decision by the Department to discharge, the Commission reduced the discipline from a fifteen-day suspension sought by the Department to a ten-day suspension.

### **The Sheriff's Department's Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems**

The Sheriff's Department reports it deployed its Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) five times between July 1, 2023, and September 30, 2023, in the following incidents:

- On July 4, 2023, to assist Special Enforcement Bureau in Altadena to locate a missing hiker, the Department used the UAS to search the area where the hiker had last been seen. The UAS did not locate the missing hiker.
- On July 19, 21, 22, and 23, 2023, to assist Special Enforcement Bureau in the Angeles National Forest to search the area where a missing hiker had last been seen. The UAS did not locate the missing hiker.
- On September 13, 2023, to assist Special Enforcement Bureau with serving a high-risk search warrant in La Puente, the Department used the UAS to search and clear the premises before law enforcement personnel entered.
- On September 29, 2023, to assist Special Enforcement Bureau in Santa Clarita to search the area where a missing person had last been seen. The UAS successfully located the missing hiker, who was experiencing medical distress.

### **Special Section: Update on the Sheriff's Department's Safety of Firearms Policy**

The Sheriff's Department's "Safety of Firearms" policy states that off-duty deputies "shall not consume any intoxicating substance to the point where the employee is unable to or does not exercise reasonable care and/or control of the firearm."<sup>3</sup> This policy presumes that a deputy with a .08 blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is unable to exercise reasonable care or control of the firearm. However, this presumption may be rebutted on evidence that the deputy "acted reasonably and without negligence."<sup>4</sup>

In 2019, the Office of Inspector General identified and reviewed 81 administrative cases charging deputies with various policy violations for being under the influence of alcohol with a firearm in reach. Based on our review, the Office of Inspector General published

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<sup>3</sup> See, [Manual of Policy and Procedures § 3-01/025.45 - Safety of Firearms](#).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

an October 2019 report entitled [Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Safety of Firearms Policy](#) (the "2019 Report"), which outlined three areas of concern with the Department's Safety of Firearms policy:

1. The .08 blood alcohol content (BAC) standard is too low and inconsistent with the .02 BAC limits set by Department policies for being under the influence of an alcoholic beverage when on duty and for operating a County vehicle.<sup>5</sup>
2. Setting the .08 BAC threshold as a rebuttable presumption that the deputy did not exercise reasonable care, rather than a clear limit, may result in increased danger to the public and to deputies. Under this rebuttable presumption, the Sheriff's Department may deem a deputy too impaired to legally operate a motor vehicle nonetheless able to exercise reasonable care in the control of a firearm and life-and-death decisions about its use.
3. The Sheriff's Department's "Off-Duty Incidents" policy states that "Deputy personnel, although technically off-duty, shall take action as deemed appropriate on any police matter coming to their attention."<sup>6</sup> But imposing a duty on deputies to act while off duty may make deputies more likely to carry firearms, even when consuming alcohol that would make the use of the firearms risky.

To address these concerns, the 2019 Report set forth six recommendations aimed at reducing incidents where deputies, who are suspected of being under the influence of alcohol, possess a firearm.

**Recommendation No. 1:** The standard of .08 blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit stated in the current Safety of Firearms policy is too high. The blood alcohol concentration limit in the Safety of Firearms policy should be lowered to the .02 BAC standard used in Department policies for being under

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<sup>5</sup> According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, alcohol causes some loss of judgment at .02 BAC and impaired judgment and loss of small motor control at .05 BAC. See U.S. Dep't of Trans., Nat'l Hwy. Traffic Safety Admin, [The Effects of Blood Alcohol: How Alcohol Affects Driving Ability](#). Manual of Policy and Procedure section 3-01/030.40, Use of Alcohol December 2016 revision states: "A Department member shall not drink or be under the influence of any kind of alcoholic beverage when on duty and/or in Department uniform. No member shall report for duty or be on duty while under the influence of alcohol, or be unfit for duty because of its use. Members will be considered under the influence of alcohol if they have a blood alcohol content of .02 or higher in their system." And Manual of Policy and Procedure section, 3-01/090.10 Operation of Vehicles December 2016 revision states: "Members, whether on duty or off, shall not operate a county vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. Members will be considered under the influence of alcohol if they have a blood alcohol content of .02 or higher in their system."

<sup>6</sup> See, MPP 3-01/050.30.

the influence of an alcoholic beverage when on duty and for operating county a county vehicle.

**Recommendation No. 2:** The Safety of Firearms policy should include a strict prohibition against carrying firearms while consuming alcohol in establishments that serve alcohol.

**Recommendation No. 3:** The rebuttable presumption language in the Safety of Firearms policy should be removed. The rebuttable presumption language undermines the intent of the policy and creates ambiguity in the interpretation and application of this policy.

**Recommendation No. 4:** The Safety of Firearms policy should include an emergency exception that allows a deputy, who has consumed alcohol, to arm himself or herself in emergency situations that require quick action to protect human life.

**Recommendation No. 5:** Language similar to MPP 3-01/090.10 Operations of Vehicles should be added to the Safety of Firearms policy.

That policy section states that if a Department member has an odor of alcoholic beverage or there is a reasonable suspicion to believe the member is under the influence of alcohol, the unit commander or higher shall order a test of the member. If the Department member refuses a direct order to be tested, the member shall be subject to discipline.

**Recommendation No. 6:** The Firearms Safety policy should mandate alcohol testing for all off-duty accidental discharges. There have been instances where deputies had accidental discharges of their firearms while off-duty either at home or in social settings. Because there is no policy requiring alcohol testing in accidental discharge scenarios, we are left to wonder if alcohol was a factor.

To date, the Sheriff's Department's Safety of Firearms policy remains unchanged, and serious problems involving deputies under the influence of alcohol in possession of firearms persist:<sup>7</sup>

- In December 2019, an outside police agency arrested a Sheriff's Department deputy for brandishing a firearm and discharging it in a negligent manner. The deputy had a blood alcohol content of .15%.

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<sup>7</sup> To identify these incidents, the Office of Inspector General reviewed completed investigations adjudicated up through and including September 2023. Because of the time required for investigation and adjudication, the conduct addressed in those matters occurred significantly earlier than current quarter.

- In April 2020, an outside police agency arrested a Sheriff's Department deputy for public intoxication and fighting. During this incident, the deputy possessed a personally owned revolver.
- In August 2020, a Sheriff's Department deputy rented a hotel room for a celebration. During the early morning hours, the deputy fought with another person in the room and left the hotel. Police officers from an outside agency responded and observed a ransacked hotel room, blood on the bed sheets, marijuana, and the deputy's off-duty firearm. Officers contacted the deputy and instructed him to return to the hotel room. The deputy provided two breath samples for a breathalyzer test, resulting in blood alcohol findings of .11% and .10%.
- In November 2020, an outside police agency stopped a Sheriff's Department deputy for driving on the wrong side of the road. The deputy refused to provide a blood or breath sample for testing. After a forced blood draw, a test of the deputy's blood resulted in a .256% blood alcohol level. Officers recovered two loaded firearms from the unlocked center console of the deputy's vehicle. A court sentenced the deputy to three years of summary probation, a nine-month alcohol program, twenty days of weekend jail, and a fine of \$1,895.
- In August 2022, the same deputy mentioned in the preceding paragraph left a firearm at a person's residence after a night of drinking. The deputy allegedly went back to the residence of some people he met at a bar and passed out there. When he awoke the next morning, the deputy could not locate the firearm and left to search for it. The person later found the firearm but had no contact information for the deputy, so she called the police. The deputy had not qualified to carry the firearm off-duty.
- In June 2021, a Sheriff's Department Sergeant engaged in a fight involving several patrons at a restaurant. During the fight, the Sergeant lost his off-duty firearm. The Sergeant left the location before the police arrived.
- In October 2021, two deputies fought multiple men at a bar. One of the deputies may have initiated the incident by brandishing a firearm and assaulting one of the other men. During this incident, both deputies possessed firearms and consumed alcohol.
- In February 2021, a group of deputies attended an off-duty gathering at a bowling alley for a deputy who was promoting and transferring stations, at which deputies consumed alcohol. When the bowling alley closed, the deputies argued with another group of patrons in the parking lot. In the course of the altercation, one of

the deputies showed a firearm in his waistband, and the incident escalated into a physical fight.

These examples demonstrate that the Sheriff's Department continues to experience problems with off-duty alcohol use by personnel who are in possession of a firearm identified in the Office of Inspector General's 2019 Report. The Sheriff's Department should revise the Safety of Firearms policy to adopt the recommendations from our 2019 Report and to address the continued serious safety issues that arise when deputies are allowed to carry firearms and consume alcohol while off-duty. In particular, the Sheriff's Department should lower the threshold blood-alcohol level for carrying or use of a firearm.

## CUSTODY DIVISION

### In-Custody Deaths

Between July 1, 2023, and September 30, 2023, nine people died while in the care and custody of the Sheriff's Department. The Office of Inspector General continues to report the information on the preliminary manner of death, which may change once the Department of Medical Examiner (DME) conducts its investigation, including an autopsy. The DME website currently reflects the manner of death for six deaths: two deaths were homicides, two deaths resulted from accidents (suspected overdose), one death was a suicide, and one death was natural. For the remaining three deaths, the preliminary findings suggest one was the result of an accident (suspected overdose) and two are undetermined. Both the preliminary manner of death and the DME's finding as to the manner of death and/or cause are included in this report.<sup>8</sup>

These deaths occurred in the facilities as follows: four of these people died at Men's Central Jail (MCJ), one died at Twin Towers Correctional Facility (TTCF), and four died in hospitals to which they had been transported. The Sheriff's Department posts the

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<sup>8</sup> In the past, the Office of Inspector General has reported on the preliminary cause of death as determined by the Medical Examiner, Correctional Health Services personnel, hospital personnel providing care at the time of death, and/or Sheriff's Department Homicide investigators. Because the information provided is preliminary, the Office of Inspector General has determined that the better practice is to report on the manner of death. There are five manner of death classifications: (1) natural, (2) accident, (3) suicide, (4) homicide, and (5) undetermined. Natural causes include illnesses and disease and thus deaths due to COVID-19 are classified as natural. Overdoses may be accidental, or the result of a purposeful ingestion, the Sheriff's Department and Correctional Health Services (CHS) use evidence gathered during the investigation to make a preliminary determination as to whether an overdose is accidental or purposeful. Where the suspected cause of death is reported by the Sheriff's Department and CHS, the Office of Inspector General will include this in parentheses.

information regarding in-custody deaths on [a dedicated page on Inmate In-Custody Deaths](#) on its website.<sup>9</sup>

Office of Inspector General Staff attended the Custody Services Division (CSD) Administrative Death Reviews for each of the 9 in-custody deaths.

The following summaries, arranged in chronological order, provide brief descriptions of each in-custody death:

On July 29, 2023, custody personnel at TTCF found an unresponsive person during their Title 15 Safety Checks. Sheriff's Department staff, Correctional Health Services (CHS) staff, and paramedics rendered emergency aid, but the person died at the scene. A review of iMatch housing criteria indicates the possibility that the deceased was not a compatible match with their cellmate. Preliminary manner of death: Homicide. The DME website currently reflects the manner of death as homicide and cause of death as asphyxia and history of neck/body compression.

On August 3, 2023, people in custody alerted custody personnel of a "man down" in a dorm at MCJ. Sheriff's Department staff, CHS staff, and paramedics rendered emergency aid, but the person died at the scene. Preliminary manner of death: Undetermined. The DME website currently reflects the manner of death as natural and cause of death as hypertensive and arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease.

On August 4, 2023, custody personnel at MCJ found an unresponsive person during Title 15 Safety Checks. Staff observed bruising on the person's face and puncture wounds to their head, right chest, and torso. Sheriff's Department staff, CHS staff, and paramedics rendered emergency aid, but the person died at the scene. Preliminary manner of death: Homicide. The DME website currently reflects the manner of death as homicide and cause of death as blunt force trauma of head and chest, and stab wounds of abdomen.

On August 9, 2023, people in custody alerted custody personnel of a "man down" during Title Safety Checks at MCJ. Sheriff's Department staff, CHS staff, and paramedics rendered emergency aid, but the person died at the scene. Preliminary manner of death: Undetermined. The DME website currently reflects the manner of death as accidental and cause of death as fentanyl and diphenhydramine toxicity.

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<sup>9</sup> As previously reported, the passage of AB 2671 amended the Penal Code to include section 10008 requiring the reporting of information on in-custody deaths within 10 days of a death, including the manner and means of death, with updates required within 30 days of a change in the information, including the manner and means of the death. This law went into effect on January 1, 2023, and requires that the information be posted on the agency's website.

On August 7, 2023, custody personnel responded to radio traffic requesting assistance for a person experiencing a medical emergency in a dorm at North County Correctional Facility (NCCF). CHS staff and paramedics rendered emergency aid, and the person was transferred to Henry Mayo Hospital where they died on August 11, 2023. Areas for further inquiry include the quality of Title 15 Safety Checks and why Narcan was not deployed by the custody and CHS personnel who responded. Preliminary manner of death: Undetermined. The DME website does not currently reflect the manner of death and the cause of death is deferred.

On August 29, 2023, custody staff at MCJ found an unresponsive person while conducting Title 15 Safety Checks. Sheriff's Department staff and CHS rendered emergency aid. Paramedics determined that lividity and rigor mortis were present and pronounced the person dead. Preliminary manner of death: Undetermined. The DME website does not currently reflect the manner of death and the cause of death is deferred.

On September 8, 2023, a person experienced a medical emergency while on an inmate bus from Antelope Valley Superior Court to NCCF. Approximately 15 minutes after the onset of the medical emergency, Sheriff's Department staff stopped the bus at a secure location and rendered emergency aid. Paramedics arrived approximately 15 minutes later, took over resuscitative efforts, and transported the person to Providence Holy Cross Medical Center, where they died five days later. Preliminary manner of death: Accident (overdose). The DME website does not currently reflect the manner of death and the cause of death is deferred.

On September 9, 2023, custody personnel at Norwalk Station Jail conducting a Title 15 Safety Check found a person unresponsive. Sheriff's Department staff rendered emergency aid. Paramedics arrived, took over resuscitative efforts, and transported the person to Norwalk Community Hospital, where they died. Preliminary manner of death: Accident (overdose). The DME website currently reflects the manner of death as accidental and cause of death as methamphetamine effects.

On September 22, 2023, custody personnel conducting Title 15 Safety Checks at TTCF found a person hanging in their cell. Sheriff's Department staff, CHS, and paramedics rendered emergency aid, and the person was transported to Los Angeles General Medical Center and ultimately died on September 29, 2023. Areas for further investigation include the quality and timeliness of Title 15 Safety Checks. Preliminary manner of death: Suicide. The DME website currently reflects the manner of death as suicide and cause of death as anoxic brain injury.



The Office of Inspector General also received additional information regarding the death of a person held in MCJ in custody on June 28, 2023, previously reported in the report, [Reform and Oversight Efforts: Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, April to June 2023](#).<sup>10</sup> Over the approximately four months that the Sheriff's Department held the person in custody, the person lost about 100 pounds. The person's family reported that they had repeatedly informed MCJ personnel and CHS staff about their concerns that the person was deteriorating and receiving inadequate care. The Sheriff's Department reports that documented complaints concerning the person's condition were not received until after the person died. Both Sheriff's Department and CHS staff did not detect the dramatic weight loss leading up to the person's death.

### Office of Inspector General Site Visits

The Office of Inspector General regularly conducts site visits and inspections at Sheriff's Department custodial facilities. In the third quarter of 2023, Office of Inspector General personnel completed 94 site visits, totaling 269 monitoring hours, to Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF), Inmate Reception Center (IRC), MCJ, Pitches Detention Center (PDC) North, PDC South, North County Correctional Facility (NCCF), and TTCF.<sup>11</sup>

As part of the Office of Inspector General's jail monitoring, Office of Inspector General staff attended 179 Custody Services Division (CSD) executive and administrative meetings and met with division executives for 237 monitoring hours related to uses of force, in-custody deaths, COVID-19 policies and protocols, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) audits, and general conditions of confinement.

### Use of Body Scanners in Custody

The Sheriff's Department continues to operate X-ray body scanners at MCJ, CRDF, PDC North, PDC South, NCCF, and IRC. The Sheriff's Department policy for body scanners requires each facility using screeners to maintain a unit order describing when and where inmates shall be screened, the staffing requirements to do so safely, and the logistical considerations pertaining to their facility.<sup>12</sup> The policy also requires handling sergeants to document the discovery of contraband into the electronic Line Operations Tracking System (e-LOTS). Although, the body scanners continue to detect anomalies

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<sup>10</sup> The Office of Inspector General cannot report on many of the facts and circumstances surrounding deaths that occur near the end of a quarter, as reporting and publication deadlines precede the Department's presentation of preliminary investigation results at Administrative Death Reviews.

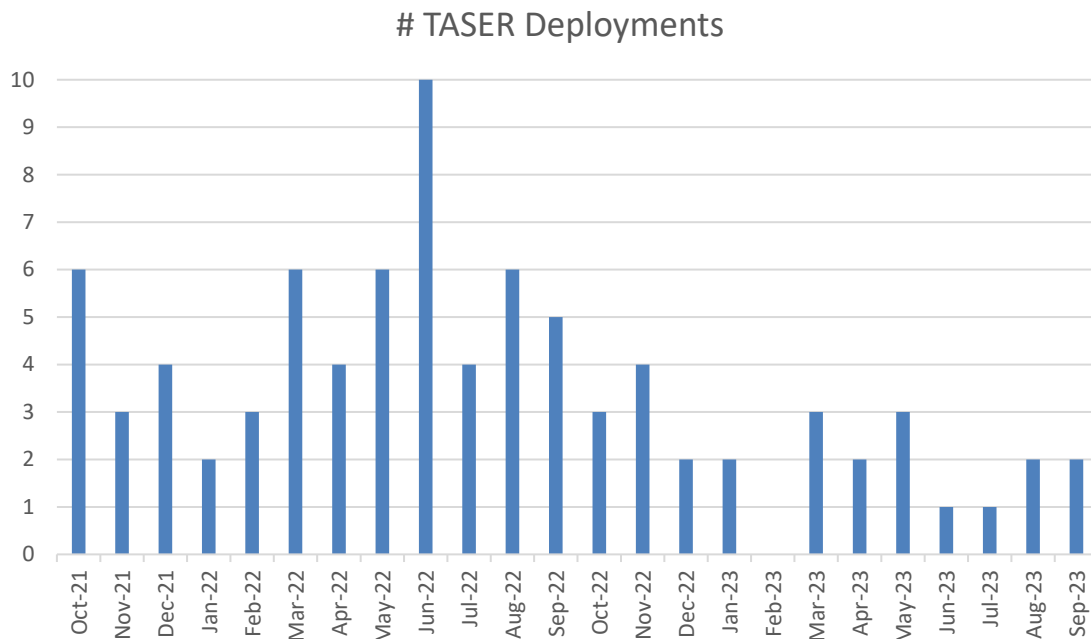
<sup>11</sup> These figures include site visits and meetings related to monitoring for compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act ("PREA").

<sup>12</sup> See Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Custody Division Manual, section 5-08/020.00, [Custody Safety Screening Program \(B-SCAN\)](#).

that may be contraband, the Sheriff's Department reports that facility staff do not consistently complete documentation for contraband detected by body scanners. Custody Support Services Bureau reports that a division wide email has been sent to all facilities outlining the policy and correct procedures for tracking detected contraband in e-LOTS. However, there continue to be discrepancies in the data reported. The Office of Inspector General recommends that The Sheriff's Department confirm data accuracy by reviewing the entries into the e-LOTS system.

### Taser Use in Custody

According to the *Monthly Force Synopsis* that the Sheriff's Department produces and provides to the Office of Inspector General each month, the following chart reflects the number of use-of-force incidents in custodial settings in which deputies employed a Taser, over the past two years:



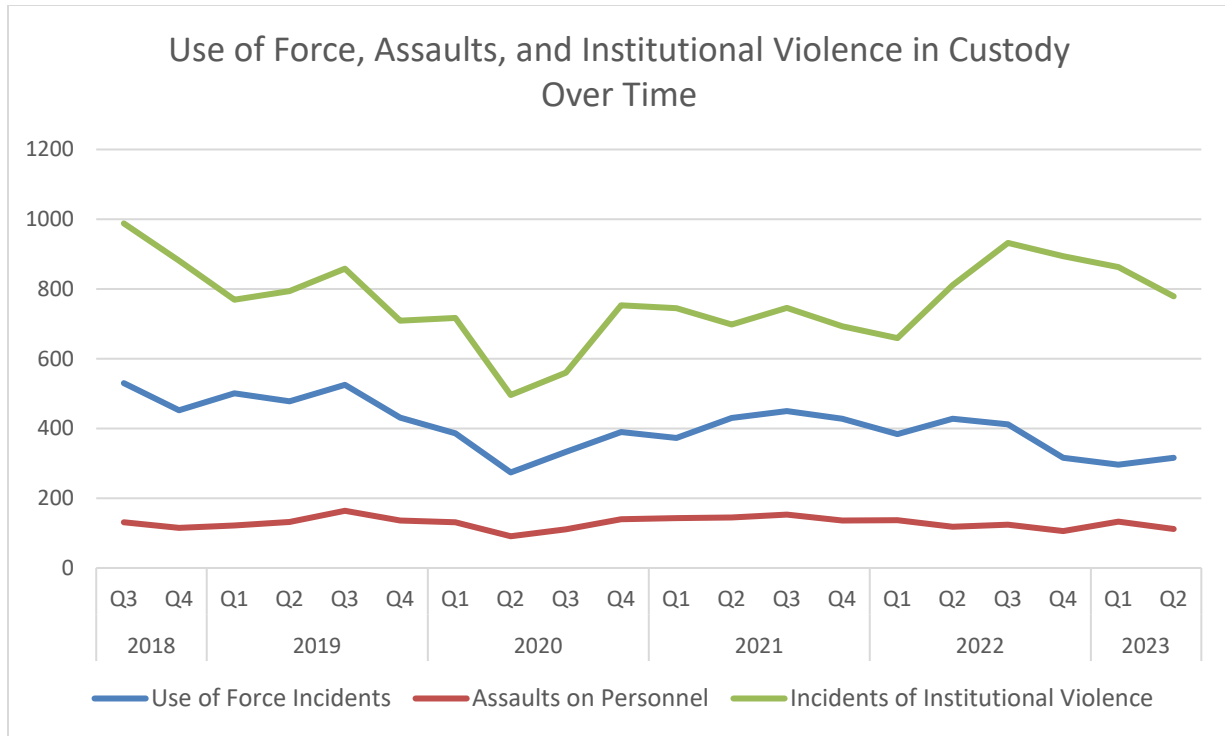
## Use-of-Force Incidents in Custody

The Office of Inspector General monitors the Sheriff's Department's use-of-force incidents, institutional violence, and assaults on Sheriff's Department or CHS personnel by people in custody.<sup>13</sup> The Sheriff's Department reports the following numbers for the uses of force and assaultive conduct for people in its custody.<sup>14</sup>

		Use of Force Incidents	Assaults on Personnel	Incidents of Institutional Violence
2018	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	530	131	988
	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	452	115	881
2019	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	501	122	769
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	478	132	794
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	525	164	858
	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	431	136	709
2020	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	386	131	717
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	274	91	496
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	333	111	560
	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	390	140	753
2021	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	373	143	745
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	430	145	698
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	450	153	746
	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	428	136	693
2022	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	384	137	659
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	428	118	811
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	412	124	932
	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	316	106	894
2023	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	296	133	863
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	316	112	779

<sup>13</sup> Institutional violence is defined as assaultive conduct by a person in custody upon another person in custody.

<sup>14</sup> The reports go through the second quarter of 2023 because the Sheriff's Department has not yet verified the accuracy of reports for the third quarter of 2023. The Sheriff's Department recently provided information to the Office of Inspector General regarding some discrepancies in the reported data based upon its internal reporting systems. The Office of Inspector General will work with the Sheriff's Department to understand the reasons for the discrepancies and to ensure accurate reporting.



## HANDLING OF GRIEVANCES AND COMMENTS

### Office of Inspector General Handling of Comments Regarding Department Operations and Jails

The Office of Inspector General received 190 new complaints in the third quarter of 2023 from members of the public, people in custody, family members and friends of people in custody, community organizations and County agencies. Each complaint was reviewed by Office of Inspector General staff.

Of these grievances, 165 were related to conditions of confinement within the Department’s custody facilities, as shown in the chart below:

Grievances/Incident Classification	Totals
Medical	77
General Services	19
Personnel Issues	14
Food	8
Mental	4
Living Condition	3
Classification	4

Clothing/Bedding	4
Property	2
Mail	6
Education	4
Visiting	3
Commissary	2
Showers	1
Other	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>

Twenty-five complaints were related to civilian contacts with Department personnel by persons who were not in custody, as shown in the chart below:

Complaint/Incident Classification	Totals
<b>Personnel</b>	
Force	5
Neglect of Duty	5
Improper Search, Detention, Arrest	4
Discourtesy	3
Improper Tactics	2
Dishonesty	2
Off Duty Conduct	1
<b>Service</b>	
Policy Procedures	2
Traffic Citation	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

## Handling of Grievances Filed by People in Custody

The Sheriff's Department has not fully implemented the use of computer tablets in its jail facilities to capture information related to requests, and eventually grievances, filed by people in custody. The number of functional iPads remains the same as last quarter. There are 165 iPads installed in jail facilities: 31 at CRDF, 49 at MCJ, and 85 at TTCF. Fewer than 25% of the iPads (41) presently function, all of which are at CRDF (6) and TTCF (35). The Sheriff's Department reports that it has 288 iPads awaiting installation, but staffing and training issues continue to delay installation.

The Sheriff's Department cannot fully implement the use of tablets to provide information or eventually capture complaints and grievances in the jails if more than 75% of them do not function. In addition to repairing or replacing nonfunctional tablets, the Sheriff's Department should work to determine why tablets have been breaking and implement a system to ensure sufficient tablets remain operational.

As [previously reported](#), the Sheriff's Department implemented a policy in December 2017 restricting the filing of duplicate and excessive grievances by people in custody.<sup>15</sup> The Sheriff's Department reports that between July 1, 2023, and September 30, 2023, one person in custody was placed on restrictive filing. Because the Sheriff's Department transitioned grievance tracking software from the Custody Automated Reported and Tracking System (CARTS) to the Custody Inmate Grievance Application (CIGA) within the quarter, Department staff could not provide data detailing the number of grievances that it rejected under this policy.

The Office of Inspector General continues to raise concerns about the quality of grievance investigations and responses, which likely increases duplication and may prevent individuals from receiving adequate care while in Sheriff's Department custody.

## Sheriff's Department's Service Comment Reports

Under its policies, the Sheriff's Department accepts and reviews comments from members of the public about departmental service or employee performance.<sup>16</sup> The Sheriff's Department categorizes these comments into three categories:

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<sup>15</sup> See [Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Custody Division Manual, section 8-04/050.00, Duplicate or Excessive Filings of Grievances and Appeals, and Restrictions of Filing Privileges.](#)

<sup>16</sup> See [Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Manual of Policy and Procedures, 3-04/010.00, "Department Service Reviews."](#)

- External Commendation: an external communication of appreciation for and/or approval of service provided by the Sheriff's Department members;
- Service Complaint: an external communication of dissatisfaction with the Sheriff's Department service, procedure or practice, not involving employee misconduct; and
- Personnel Complaint: an external allegation of misconduct, either a violation of law or Sheriff's Department policy, against any member of the Sheriff's Department.<sup>17</sup>

The following chart lists the number and types of comments reported for each station or unit.<sup>18</sup>

INVESTIGATING BUREAU/STATION/FACILITY	COMMENDATIONS	PERSONNEL COMPLAINTS	SERVICE COMPLAINTS
ADM : NORTH PATROL ADM HQ	1	0	0
AER : AERO BUREAU	2	0	1
ALD : ALTADENA STN	4	2	2
AVA : AVALON STN	1	1	0
CEN : CENTURY STN	2	7	1
INVESTIGATING BUREAU/STATION/FACILITY	COMMENDATIONS	PERSONNEL COMPLAINTS	SERVICE COMPLAINTS
CER : CERRITOS STN	3	0	0
CMB : CIVIL MANAGEMENT BUREAU	8	7	1
COM : COMPTON STN	0	5	1
CRD : CENTURY REG DETEN FAC	0	1	0
CRV : CRESCENTA VALLEY STN	5	3	1
CSB : COUNTY SERVICES BUREAU	2	4	1
CSN : CARSON STN	12	6	1
CST : COURT SERVICES TRANSPORTATION	0	2	0
ELA : EAST LA STN	3	5	0
EOB : EMERGENCY OPER BUREAU	0	1	0
EST : COURT SERVICES EAST	1	2	2

<sup>17</sup> It is possible for an employee to get a Service Complaint and Personnel Complaint based on the same incident.

<sup>18</sup> The chart reflects data from the Sheriff's Department Performance Recording and Monitoring System current as of July 13, 2023.

FCC : FRAUD & CYBER CRIMES BUREAU	1	1	0
IND : INDUSTRY STN	10	10	1
IRC : INMATE RECEPTION CENTER	0	1	0
LCS : LANCASTER STN	9	36	4
LKD : LAKEWOOD STN	4	14	3
LMT : LOMITA STN	7	2	2
MAR : MARINA DEL REY STN	2	1	2
MCJ : MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL	1	1	0
MLH : MALIBU/LOST HILLS STN	11	12	3
MTL : METROLINK	0	1	0
NAR : NARCOTICS BUREAU	1	1	0
NCF : NORTH CO. CORRECTL FAC	0	1	0
NO : PITCHES NORTH FACILITY	0	2	0
NWK : NORWALK REGIONAL STN	6	6	1
OSS : OPERATION SAFE STREETS BUREAU	0	1	1
PER : PERSONNEL ADMIN	0	1	0
PKB : PARKS BUREAU	1	1	1
PLM : PALMDALE STN	11	19	1
PRV : PICO RIVERA STN	2	1	0
RMB : RISK MANAGEMENT BUREAU	1	1	0
<b>INVESTIGATING BUREAU/STATION/FACILITY</b>	<b>COMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>PERSONNEL COMPLAINTS</b>	<b>SERVICE COMPLAINTS</b>
SCV : SANTA CLARITA VALLEY STN	14	5	2
SDM : SAN DIMAS STN	17	8	0
SIB : SHERIFF INFORMATION BUREAU	3	0	0
SLA : SOUTH LOS ANGELES STATION	2	11	1
SO : PITCHES SOUTH FACILITY	0	1	0
SVB : SPECIAL VICTIMS BUREAU	1	3	0
TB : TRAINING BUREAU	1	1	0
TEM : TEMPLE CITY STN	10	2	0
TRP : TRAP	1	0	0
TSB : TRANSIT SERVICES BUREAU	2	2	1
TT : TWIN TOWERS	0	2	1



WAL : WALNUT/SAN DIMAS STN	3	8	3
WHD : WEST HOLLYWOOD STN	10	12	2
WST : COURT SERVICES WEST	1	5	0
<b>Total :</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>40</b>