



MONTEREY COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Keeping the peace since 1850

STEVE BERNAL
Sheriff-Coroner

Recently there have been a number of questions concerning the Sheriff's Office authorizing the early release of inmates from the Monterey County Jail due to the Coronavirus. Some of the questions are related to concerns over mass releases of inmates without concern for public safety, while other questions have revolved around the misconception that we are just sending COVID-19 positive inmates into the community without any coordination with local Public Health officials. The Sheriff's Office wants to assure the community that neither of the above described scenarios is occurring.

The Sheriff's Office has gone through different stages of early releases since the beginning of the shelter in place order for Monterey County. At the onset of the Shelter in Place order, the Sheriff's Office reviewed a list of at-risk inmates (as defined by the Federal Centers for Disease Control). This list was provided to the District Attorney's Office and Superior Court to be considered for inmate release on their Own Recognizance, release from their sentence early, or give them future surrender dates to finish their sentences at a later time. This process involved looking at their current charges, current sentence (If sentenced), and past charges to determine their risk level to the community before release. This process was duplicated in early July after the Monterey County Jail experienced a COVID-19 outbreak.

On March 19, 2020 the Superior Court for Monterey County issued a modified Temporary Own Recognizance (OR) Policy that further expanded our existing OR policy. On April 13, 2020 the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court issued an order that instituted \$0 bail for California. This order expired on June 20, 2020. On Friday, July 10, 2020 Sheriff Steve Bernal utilized his emergency release authority under Government Code section 8658 to release inmates early due to the COVID-19 outbreak at the jail. These inmates were screened as stated above. The Superior Court for Monterey County re-issued a modified Temporary Jail OR Policy on July 21, 2020.

Up until July 6, 2020 the Monterey County Jail did not have any inmates that tested positive for COVID-19. After the jail experienced a COVID-19 outbreak during the week of July 6, 2020 we began coordinating all releases with Public Health to determine whether individuals being released needed to be quarantined and whether they needed housing due to their quarantine status. The Sheriff's Office has deputies assigned from each shift that are responsible to follow up with Public Health on any releases, no matter what time of day or night they occur. This is being done in the interest of protecting public safety.