



# **SOLANO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY**

**2023-2024**

**Hazardous Work Environment for Vallejo's 911 Operators**

**June 21, 2024**

# **Hazardous Work Environment for Vallejo's 911 Operators**

## **Solano County Civil Grand Jury 2023-2024**

### **I. SUMMARY**

The 2023-24 Solano County Civil Grand Jury (SCCGJ) recently toured the facility at 111 Amador Street in Vallejo, CA. The current facility is neither a safe nor healthy work environment for the 911 operators, law enforcement and administrative staff.

This report is in addition to the 2021-22 and 2022-23 SCCGJ reports about the Vallejo Police Department (VPD) and its hazardous conditions. The Police Department staff continues to occupy a building that is deteriorating and hazardous to their health.

Vallejo Police Department 911 Operators continue to work in a hazardous and toxic work environment, being exposed to asbestos contamination, mold, lead, and human waste in a decreasingly habitable workspace.

At the time of this report, Vallejo City Council (VCC) has not approved a short- or long-term resolution for the facility, leaving the 911 Operators to work in an unhealthy work environment.

### **II. INTRODUCTION**

In October 2023, the SCCGJ toured the Vallejo Police Department facility. The current condition of the facility is neither a safe nor healthy work environment. The building conditions remain seriously inadequate for the 911 operators, law enforcement and administrative staff.

At the time of this report there is still no evidence that any long-term or effective abatement practices to deal with the known hazards have been implemented or approved. The issue of decreasingly habitable workspace had not been resolved. During our investigation, the SCCGJ could not determine who is in charge of needed repairs.

The critical nature of this situation has not been resolved by VCC. There is a lack of short- and long-term planning to overcome the issues with the VPD building. Budget constraints may have been responsible for the lack of action by the VCC.

Despite the former SCCGJ investigations, independent inspections, and facility tours, the conditions remain unhealthy. Recommendations were made over the past four years about the hazardous conditions of the building. Vallejo City Council has yet to agree upon or implement a solution.

In the meantime, the City of Vallejo 911 Operators continue to work in a hazardous environment which exposes them to immediate and future health concerns.

Many of the Departments working in this building (Patrol, Traffic, 911 Operators, etc.) are severely understaffed. Recruiting new officers or enticing transfers from outside agencies is inhibited by the current condition of the building.

### **III. STATEMENT OF FACTS**

The City of Vallejo is the largest city within Solano County with a population of approximately 123,000 inhabitants in 2023.

As far back as 2014, the City of Vallejo retained environmental health consultants to conduct tests for contaminants. Their reports contained a list of contaminants, including increased levels of lead and asbestos which are defined as health threats by Cal/OSHA. In 2019, the City of Vallejo hired an independent review group to analyze the facility at 111 Amador Street in regard to overall environmental health concerns. The analysis informed the City that the building was dangerously deteriorating and posed serious health risks.

There have been scenarios presented to the VCC ranging from relocation of the Police Department to a complete demolition of the current building, abatement of the grounds and reconstruction of a new building on the current site. These scenarios are costly, ranging from \$45 million dollars up to \$150 million dollars. The time to complete a project ranged from a year and a half up to five and a half years once the plan is approved and funded.

Within the last four years, inspections were conducted by the Vallejo Fire Inspection Division which targeted fire safety issues only. In December 2022, the VPD building was given fire inspection clearance.

City staff indicated that 911 Operators would not be moved off-site during demolition and/or reconstruction of the police station. The 911 Operators would be continually exposed to construction noise, disruption, and hazardous materials such as asbestos, lead, and airborne dust. The 911 Operator workstations have been received by the City of Vallejo and are currently in storage pending installation. Once a new location has been determined, the workstations can be quickly moved and set up.

California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) was given a formal complaint by SCCGJ in July 2023 about the conditions at VPD.

Cal/OSHA provided stipulations that testing for lead dust would be required every six months with a written report as to the findings of the test. A third party conducted the testing. The tests for lead dust revealed that in 2023, the lead dust level exceeded the legal standards which warranted reporting to Cal/OSHA.

The City of Vallejo owns the property at 111 Amador Street. The Vallejo Department of Public Works determined that the VPD building should be demolished, and the grounds abated. Approval to redesign the property was recently contracted by Public Works and the conceptual design efforts have been initiated. Estimates are that it will be an additional 3-5 years prior to the commencement of ground to shovel efforts.

The City of Vallejo acquired the property at 400 Mare Island Way for \$13 million dollars. The relocation of the VPD to the Mare Island Way location would cost less than the cost of building a new facility. The dispatchers could be relocated to this location within 12-18 months. City Council rejected the proposal, but yet has no alternative plan in place that is approved and funded.

#### **IV. FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION**

**FINDING 1** – Vallejo Police Department 911 Operators continue to work in a hazardous and toxic work environment. This situation has not been resolved for years. A resolution has not been approved or funded, leaving any long-term solution undetermined.

**RECOMMENDATION 1** – Temporarily move the 911 Operators to 400 Mare Island Way no later than the first quarter of 2025. When a long-term solution is completed, the 911 Operators can be moved to a permanent location.

#### **COMMENTS**

The move to 400 Mare Island Way is the most cost effective and quickest transition for the 911 operators while a long-term resolution is finalized.

The SCCGJ will follow the progress on the relocation of Police Department Staff until they are placed in a safe working environment.

For ten years, Vallejo City Council has been ignoring solutions to the core issues created by the hazardous conditions at 111 Amador Street.

When it comes to moving the police operations over to 400 Mare Island Way, this appears to be the most cost-effective and quickest transition. The City of Vallejo has already spent \$1 million dollars in design, but it has not produced any results.

#### **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

City of Vallejo, City Council  
City of Vallejo, Interim City Manager  
City of Vallejo, Interim Chief of Police  
City of Vallejo, Mayor  
City of Vallejo, Public Works Director  
City of Vallejo, RISK Management  
City of Vallejo, Human Resources Manager

#### **COURTESY COPIES**

Presiding Judge, Solano County Superior Court

FINAL 240621 Hazardous Work Environment for 911 Operations

## **V. METHODOLOGY**

### **Interviewed**

- Vallejo Police Department Staff
- Vallejo City Manager Department
- Vallejo Public Works Supervisor

### **Reviewed**

- 2021-22 Solano County Civil Grand Jury Report “Delays in Relocation of Vallejo Police Department are Costly.”
- 2022-23 Solano County Civil Grand Jury Report “Vallejo Police Department Facility: The Health Hazard Continues”
- Inspection Reports (Third Party)
- US Census Bureau [www.census.gov/quickfacts/vallejocitycalifornia](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/vallejocitycalifornia)
- Bureau Veritas Project Facility Condition and Assessment; November 2020
- Resolution No. 22-159 N.C. – Resolution of the City Council of the City of Vallejo approved in response to the 2021-22 Civil Grand Jury Report

### **Toured**

- Vallejo Police Department at 111 Amador Street Vallejo, CA