



## AB109: Electronic monitoring OK'ed for Tehama County by supervisors

*By Andrea Wagner, DN Staff Writer*

It won't be a party at the county jail, but the jailhouse will be shaking loose lower-level offenders to make room as soon as they can with the newly approved alternative: electronic monitoring.

Prompted by Assembly Bill 109, Tehama County Jail and probation officials sought supervisors' approval Tuesday to start an electronic monitoring program.

AB109 is a state law, signed by Gov. Jerry Brown in April, that allows specific lowerlevel offenders to be sentenced to county jails instead of state prisons and to allow would-be parolees with low-level offenses to be put on county probation instead.

The law took effect Oct. 1.

Using GPS systems, monitoring software and ankle bracelet technology, the county will be able to release inmates under stricter supervision than before, saving money and jail space.

The county's new resolution appoints Sheriff Dave Hencratt as the county's correctional administrator, as allowed by the new law.

As such, Hencratt was given the green light to lease equipment and software from Satellite Tracking of People LLC of Texas on behalf of the jail and probation departments.

The contract with the Texas company will be effective for one year and has a budget of up to \$120,000, to be pulled from AB109 funds.

Now we can move forward, Hencratt said.

His staff will be working on policy and procedure for using the new monitoring system and beginning to buy the equipment, he said.

Assistant Sheriff Phil Johnston said the department has to come up with options.

Within the first two months of AB109 going into effect, already roughly 41 percent of the jail population in Tehama County is made up of realignment incarcerations, Johnston said.

Electronic monitoring has been available for years, but it wasn't until the pressures of AB109 that the county had any reason to look into it, he said.

They chose among four different companies that supply electronic monitoring equipment.

The new devices will make home incarceration and work programs more effective because they will allow law enforcement agents to define areas where inmates can and cannot go, Johnston said.

For example, if an inmate is not allowed to go within a certain distance from a school, the ankle bracelets can alert authorities when he crosses the line. Authorities may also create a virtual boundary which the inmate cannot go beyond, such as a residence or neighborhood.

It can be expected that some inmates won't do well with the program, Johnston said. That is why it is important to have a credible program with criteria in place before they begin.

We want to keep the most serious offenders in custody and foster public safety at the same time, Johnston said.



## AB109: Electronic monitoring OK'ed for Tehama County by supervisors, continued

That's really our main goal.

Using electronic monitoring in place of incarceration will also save money as well as free up jail space, he said. When work program participants can go home at night, the county isn't having to pay to house and feed them.

AB109 is a work in progress, he said. We'll have to do some of it through trial and error, he said.

Because it is new, they are uncertain how much money will be enough to cover the costs of the program, Johnston said. They hope the allotted \$120,000 will cover the expenses for the first year.

We're very confident we can handle AB109, he said.

It is about being willing to come up with different programs and options like electronic monitoring, Johnston said.

Chief Probation Officer Richard Muench, head of the Community Corrections Partnership which initiated the proposal for the electronic monitoring program, said there needs to be a way to keep the 200-plus jail beds open for the higher risk offenders while maintaining public safety.

The house arrest technology will help moderate jail populations while the county is building its proposed work farm, conceptually a 60-bed facility where low level offenders could work in agriculture and receive targeted assistance and counseling.

House arrest works best for front and back end service,

Muench said.

It is best for inmates awaiting trial and those at the ends of their sentences who are transitioning back into society.

Although probation has 10 devices on order for precautionary measures, they may not be needed in the department, he said.

I don't know of a time when I'll be using them, Muench said.

If a probationer needs to be under house arrest, then he or she probably needs to be in jail, he said.

It's all about public safety, he said. Electronic monitoring is just the latest Tehama County action in response to AB109 legislation.

The board also approved adding several correctional and probation officers, an office assistant, and a sheriff's sergeant to handle the increased workload.

Supervisors most recently approved soliciting bids for an office trailer for the probation department as well.

The Community Corrections Partnership is continuing to work toward an overall county realignment plan while dealing with these short-term solutions.

The group, consisting of representatives from most county departments and law enforcement agencies, will meet again Dec. 13, at 2 p.m., at the Tuscan Room of the county administration building.

