

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**An Analysis of Adequate Inmate Transport Procedures in Sheriff
Offices throughout Texas**

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**An Administrative Research Paper
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ABSTRACT

Sheriff's Offices throughout the state of Texas, which are responsible for the safe transportation of inmates should have effective transport policies and procedures established within their agencies for Transport Deputies to follow. The purpose of this research is to determine if the Sheriff's Offices in the state of Texas have adequate procedures established for transporting inmates in a safe manner. The author sent surveys to all 254 Sheriff's Offices in Texas to determine which agencies have current policies and procedures and if there was a correlation between agencies without inmate transport procedures having a greater likelihood of incidents of escapes or assaults. The author found that only 15% of the responding agencies had incidents of escape or assaults and ten of these agencies had a transport division and an established policy. The author believes the outcome of the survey is a direct result of agencies with policies not adequately training their Transport Deputies on the policies and procedures of their agency. The author believes his study is relevant to law enforcement because it is a serious liability to any agency responsible for transporting inmates.

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INTRODUCTION

Inmate transportation poses unique security challenges to Sheriff Offices throughout the state of Texas. Officer safety and inmate security should be a top priority in every agency. Thousands of inmates are transported daily for numerous reasons and to or from places such as: Doctor's offices, hospitals, MHMR facilities, mental hospitals, Texas Department of Criminal Justice facilities, other county jails and between jail facilities for court hearings. This research will attempt to ascertain what procedures are currently in general use for prisoner transport by Sheriff Offices, what inmate transportation procedures have gained general acceptance in the field and whether a disparity exists between these two practices. In law enforcement, our mission when transporting inmates should be the safe and secure movement of inmates from one point to another. Law enforcement agencies have the duty to protect lives and property but are unable to do so if they do not establish efficient and effective procedures to follow.

The purpose of this research is to determine if Sheriff Offices in the State of Texas have adequate procedures established for transporting inmates and how inmates can be transported safely. Agencies that are

conducting inmate transports without established procedures are operating at extreme risks to themselves as well as to the public. The research set forth in this paper will give agencies that are working without procedures recommended guidelines to follow and stress the necessity to establish transport procedures. Transporting inmates is a vital role for Sheriff Departments in the State of Texas and should not be ignored. In order for departments to protect the transport officers, inmates, and the public, they must establish inmate transport procedures.

Sheriff Offices throughout Texas will be surveyed. This survey will determine if agencies have adequate procedures established within their agencies for transporting inmates. The survey is intended to determine what procedures agencies throughout Texas follow to perform this duty in an effective and safe manner. There will also be research support to develop thorough procedures for safely transporting inmates.

It is anticipated that the research will find there are numerous counties transporting inmates without having established procedures for such dangerous tasks. It is also anticipated that there will be counties that do have procedures for transporting inmates but either have deficiencies in their procedures or fail to train

adequately. The findings from the survey will probably show that agencies without procedures have more incidents during the transporting of inmates than those agencies that have procedures established.

The field of law enforcement should benefit from this research by seeing the importance in having procedures for transporting inmates. There is no agency that wants or intends to see an article on the front page of the newspaper showing an incident where a Deputy was injured or killed while transporting an inmate or inmates. Sheriff's Departments responsible for transporting inmates need to realize that inmates are opportunistic. "Virtually every person who is incarcerated thinks about escape at one time or another. The transport process affords the best opportunity to escape because of the minimal restraints." (Block, 1994, 93) This research will hopefully give agencies the necessary tools to establish inmate transport procedures. Once agencies establish procedures for transporting inmates and train their transport deputies on these procedures, they should see a trend of fewer incidents while transporting inmates.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of modern literature pertaining to inmate transportation and procedures used to conduct this high-risk function appears to be limited. Modern literature does not seem to recollect today's practices in correctional procedures. This seems to have given agencies throughout Texas nowhere to go for development of policies and procedures on inmate transportation containing accepted practices in the state of Texas. The author will partially develop this research from former accepted practices and will also rely on his personal knowledge and experience of the transport business.

In the past, procedures were not as important as they are to agencies today. Policy and procedure development is extremely important for agencies in order for Transport Deputies to perform their duties in a safe and secure manner. It is hard to imagine any agency establishing and maintaining fundamental security and offender management without first developing a game plan. Policy and procedures must be developed with and coordinated among all principals and agencies involved. Lack of uniform procedure may create problems for individual transportation officers who may have to make on-the-spot decisions about

policy and procedure without the benefit of statewide guidelines or standards (Skyline College).

A Transport Deputy is legally responsible for the custody of an inmate during any transport. The agency is liable for the Transport Deputies actions as well as the inmate and public welfare. Liability is the main reason every agency should develop policies and procedures. The safety of the Transport Deputy, inmate/s as well as the public is in the hands of the agencies developing transport procedures. Corrections administrators need to: plan, develop and become familiar with safe procedures for the transporting of inmates outside the secure perimeter. Every agency is different, but policy and procedures for the safe transportation of inmates is basically the same statewide (Topham, 1999). Whether an agency has only a few officers and transports only a few days per month, or has hundreds of officers transporting thousands of inmates daily, there must be a written policy on the handling process and movement procedures (Block, 1994).

Agencies use to not have any type of organizations where they could receive assistance in the development of policies and procedures. The State of Texas still has no guidelines to follow. The only organization that has guidelines on inmate transportation is the American

Correctional Association. The guidelines put out by the ACA are very generic and do not apply to all agencies current policies. They are instead; guidelines agencies can grow from and use to develop policies and procedures to fit their own agency. The ACA suggests how inmate transportation policies and procedures should be developed by two standards in the Standards for Adult Local Detention Facilities 3rd addition. The first standard is: Written policy, procedure, and practice provide that staff regulates inmate movement. The second standard is: Written policy and procedure govern the transportation of inmates outside the facility and from one jurisdiction to another. Guidelines for transporting inmates should emphasize safety and should be made available to all personnel involved in transporting inmates. This standard also suggests that a policy be developed governing the use of restraints.

Most of the accepted procedures from the past are still accepted in today's society. There have been numerous advancements regarding safety since the former inmate transportation guidelines were developed. In the author's research, he determined that the inmate transportation manuals that were developed in the past are becoming obsolete. Sheriff Departments in the State of

Texas need to realize that times have changed. They need to develop policies and procedures that are applicable to current standards and that are acceptable to today's society.

METHODOLOGY

The author intends to find out whether or not Sheriff Departments throughout the State of Texas have procedures within their agencies for Transport Deputies to conduct their duties. The author will also determine if there is a correlation between agencies without inmate transport procedures having incidents of escape or assaults due to lack of policy.

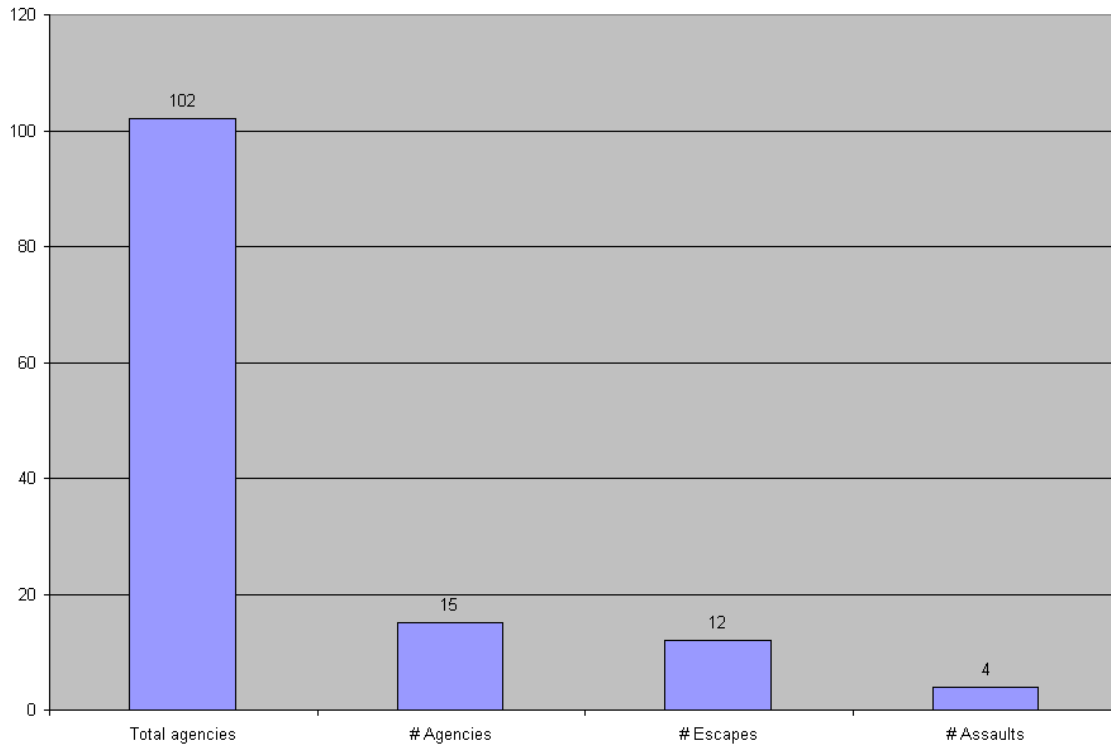
The author is going to attempt to retrieve the answer to his research question by sending out a questionnaire to the 254 Sheriff Departments in the State of Texas. The questionnaire asked agencies throughout the State of Texas questions regarding the following information: whether or not the agency has a Transport Division, If the agency has established procedures for inmate transportation, If they felt their current procedures were thorough, Types of restraints the agency uses, if the agency has had any escapes or assaults during inmate transportation since 2000, and the number of inmates the agency transports per year. The author will also apply personal observations

from his experience in the transportation business to answer his research question.

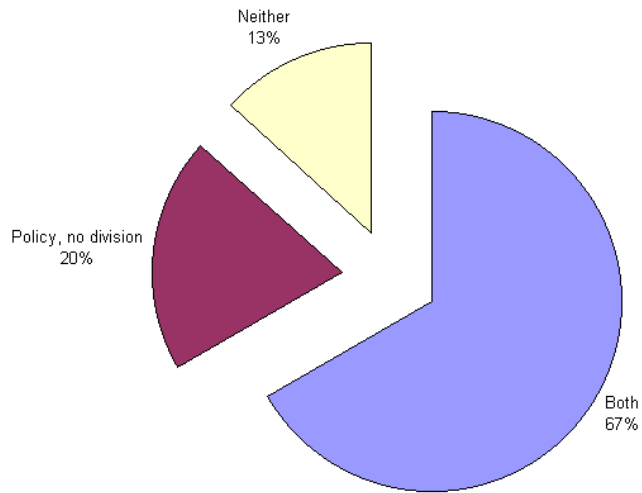
The author believes he will determine the majority of the Sheriff Departments in the State of Texas do not have an established policy and procedure governing inmate transportation. He also believes there will be a correlation between agencies that do not have established procedures and the agencies which had escapes or assaults during inmate transportation.

FINDINGS

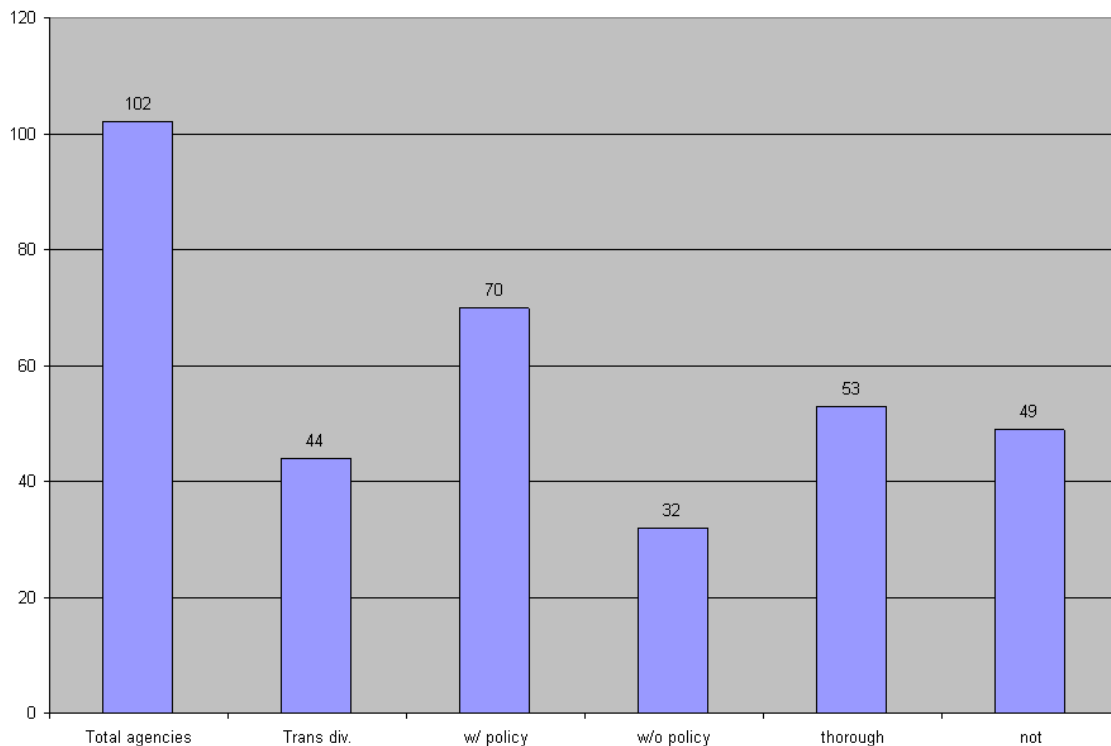
The author received 102 completed questionnaires back from the 254 Sheriff Departments surveyed in the State of Texas. The author only received a 40 % response rate. Out of the 102 responding to the questionnaire, 44 agencies stated they had a Transport Division, while 70 agencies stated they had a Transport Policy. Only 39 of the 44 agencies with a Transport Division stated they had a policy in place. The author found 15 agencies out of the 102 responding have had an escape or an assault since 2000. Two of these agencies had two incidents in this time period. Out of the 15 agencies, which had an escape or an assault, 10 of these agencies had a division and a policy, 3 had a policy but no division and 2 agencies did not have a division or a policy.



15 Out of 102 Agencies had either an Escape or an Assault



Although only 15 percent of the responding agencies had an escape or an assault while performing an inmate transport, Sheriff Office Administrators throughout Texas should consider this an extremely high number. The author surveyed these agencies in June of 2003. All of these escapes and assaults occurred in a 2 and a half-year span.



The author's hypothesis for the research was not supported by the survey results received from the 102 responding agencies. The results of the survey showed agencies, which have a transport division and an established transport policy had the greater percentage of

escape and assault occurrences. The survey did not support the author's hypothesis that agencies without transport policies would have the greater number of escapes and assaults. The author believes the outcome of the survey is a direct result of agencies having policies not adequately training their transport Deputies on the policy and procedures of their agency. The author also believes that even if the agencies are training their transport Deputies on their policy and procedures, they probably are not providing continuing training on transport procedures.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

Inmate transportation poses unique security challenges to Sheriff's Offices throughout Texas. Officer safety and inmate security should be a top priority in every agency, due to the high volume of inmates being transported daily. This research was an attempt to ascertain what procedures are currently used, what procedures have gained acceptance and if there is a disparity.

It was anticipated there would be numerous counties found to be operating without any type of established procedures. It was also anticipated there would be counties with procedures, but have deficiencies in the procedures or fail to train officers responsible for these dangerous tasks. The final anticipation was that agencies

without procedures would have a greater percentage of incidents.

The findings from the research survey showed a greater percentage of agencies with both, a division and a policy, had the greater percentage of incidents while transporting inmates. These findings should show Administrators throughout Texas that having a transport division and a transport policy with procedures does not prevent incidents from occurring. All agencies must be able to hold their transport Deputies accountable by providing continued training on transport deputy duties.

The findings of this research did not fully support the hypothesis. The findings may have supported the hypothesis on the grounds that most agencies with policies may have deficient policies. It did not support the hypothesis in the anticipation that there would be a greater percentage of agencies without a division or policies with higher number of incidents.

The author believes several limitations hindered his research. The most damaging limitation was the low percentage of responses. Another hindering aspect of the research was the way the surveys were answered. The surveys were answered by several different ranks of officers, some of which had no idea if there had been any

escapes or assaults in the researched time frame. Some of the surveys were not answered with accurate numbers as well. It seems that there are several agencies that have a different definition of an inmate transport. There were some agencies that did not include local transports and some that did not include court dockets. Any movement of an inmate outside the confines of the secured facility is considered an inmate transport even if a separate division handles these movements. The author believes the differences in agency size and number of inmates transported in the larger agencies also altered the research. The larger agencies move thousands more inmates per year, therefore they are more likely to have an incident during an inmate transport.

The author believes his study is relevant to law enforcement because it is a serious liability to any agency responsible for transporting inmates. It does not matter what the inmate is incarcerated for when on a transport. If any inmate escapes while on a transport and ends up assaulting the officer or a person in the public, the Sheriff's Office will be held responsible for the incident if it is found they did not have an established policy, had deficient policies or failed to train their officers in their policy and procedures. Officers must have policies

and procedures to follow and protect them in their high-risk duties. This research stands to affect Administrators to the point they review, update, revise, or even develop their own policies. Administrators need to realize, transportation of inmates is one of the most high-risk assignments within a Sheriff's Office and extreme liability comes with it. Having good policies and procedures not only protects the officer and agency, but also the inmate and the public.

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