

# **2003-2004 GRAND JURY REPORT**

## **Unauthorized Traffic Signs**

### **City of Indio**

#### **Background**

A formal Indio town site was surveyed and a map filed in 1888 with the San Diego County Recorder. In 1893, as part of the newly designated Riverside County, Indio became one of the 12 townships, and by 1896 had 50 residents.

Indio incorporated as a city in 1930, becoming the Valley's first city, and at the time had a population of 1,875. It is a general law city with a council-manager form of municipal government. The City Council is comprised of a Mayor and four members elected bi-annually at large to four-year alternating terms, with the mayor rotating annually.

Indio is the geographic midpoint of both Riverside County and the Coachella Valley. The Valley is 50 miles long and runs from Palm Springs to the Salton Sea. It is known as both a desert resort and a major agricultural area.

Indio, known as the nation's date capital, has approximately 61,000 residents. The city budget now exceeds \$26 million, of which approximately half is expended on public safety.

The City of Indio Police Department is comprised of three Divisions: Administration, Field Services, Special Services, and accounts for \$8.5 million of the total city budget. The City of Indio Police Department employs 101 people, of whom 61 are sworn peace officers.

The City of Indio Director of Public Works is also the City Traffic Engineer. The City Engineering Program currently has 10 employees. In fiscal year 2002-2003 the City Engineering Program had an adjusted budget in excess of \$640,000. The City Engineering Program has a budget for fiscal year 2003-2004 of \$904,000.

The Engineering Program administers and enforces city street, water, traffic control, drainage standards, plans, designs, and constructs, inter alia, traffic control devices.

The duties of the City Traffic Engineer include the designation and maintenance of traffic control markings, signs, and signals within the City of Indio.

State law and city ordinances establish a system regulating vehicle and pedestrian travel on the public streets of Indio. The City of Indio Police is responsible for traffic control enforcement within the incorporated area of the city.

## **Findings**

1. Traffic signs erected without the approval of the City Traffic Engineer are not enforceable.
2. The City Traffic Engineer Department does not have procedures and/or policies in place to remove traffic control markings, signs, and signals, which have been erected without the approval of the City Traffic Engineer.
3. Employees of the Desert Sands Unified School District, acting upon the request of an Indio Police Department Patrol Officer, placed a "Right Turn Only" sign at the single lane exit leading from the Johnson Elementary School to the intersection of Clinton and Alberta Streets in Indio. A "Right Turn Only" sign was also placed at the double exit lane leading from the Johnson Elementary School to the intersection of Clinton and Palmyra Streets. Neither sign was authorized by the City Traffic Engineer.
4. Properly authorized and painted traffic flow markers at the double exit lanes from the Johnson Elementary School were altered without the approval of the City Traffic Engineer.
5. A third exit from the Johnson Elementary School onto Clinton Street also has an unauthorized "International" no left turn sign.
6. A school district bus driver was cited for violating one of these unauthorized signs. Although the citation was later dismissed, the bus driver incurred inconvenience and considerable expense.
7. The City Traffic Engineer allowed the signs to remain in place, once learning of their existence.

## **Recommendations**

Indio City Council  
City of Indio Police Department  
City of Indio City Manager  
City of Indio Director of Public Works

1. The City Traffic Engineer should remove or formally approve the unauthorized traffic control markings, signs or signals at Johnson Elementary School in accordance with state law.
2. The City Traffic Engineer must develop procedures and policies regarding the request for the placement or removal of traffic control markings, signs and signals.
3. Procedures and policies for placement or removal of traffic control markings, signs and signals are made available to the general public and law enforcement.
4. City of Indio Police Department develop procedures and policies to insure that all City of Indio Police Officers follow proper procedures for placement of enforceable traffic control signs.