3-04/040.10 - Courtroom Searching

Before Court Begins

Branch supervisors shall ensure that bailiffs shall have adequate time to accomplish the following:

- The bailiff shall check the courtroom, judge's chambers, jury room and detention facilities every morning and every afternoon before court begins.
- The primary purpose of the search is to provide maximum courtroom security by ensuring the absence or detection of the presence of weapons, explosives or other items of contraband.
- Manpower permitting, it is desirable for two deputies to conduct the search.
- The first search sweep should include all surfaces and objects from floor to waist level. The following sweep should include areas from waist to eye level, and the final sweep from eye level to ceiling.
- Searching should be done systematically, with close attention to all accessible areas and objects such as flags, blackboards, chairs, tables, file cabinets and the witness stand. Adjacent areas such as immediate hallways, detention areas, jury rooms and court chambers must also be thoroughly searched.
- Locating a single item of contraband should not end the search. Obviously, additional items may be present. Particular attention should be directed to those areas available to the defendant(s). Care must be taken to preserve prints and other evidence.
- If this search uncovers any suspicious article, the deputy shall not touch or move the article but shall immediately notify the branch supervisor.
- All persons not known to the deputy found in the private hallways, judge's chambers, jury rooms and other private areas shall be questioned as to their identity and the reason for their presence in the area. If no logical explanation is given, the deputy shall immediately notify the branch supervisor and detain said person for further investigation.

Noon Recess

The bailiff shall make sure the courtroom is locked during the noon recess. Deputies assigned to courtrooms near or next to private corridors, stairwells, emergency exits, etc., shall periodically check these areas to assure that everything is safe and proper.

End of Day

At the end of each day, all deputies shall make sure their area of responsibility including the jury room and lockup are secure before leaving, including a visual search for custodies. The deputies shall inspect the court for personal property that may have been left.