

3-04/040.15 - Search Screens at Courtroom Entrance

A "search screen" may be necessary to ensure adequate courtroom security in potentially hazardous trials involving escape risk defendants, possible lynching and hostage situations, and potential acts of violence and revenge.

The main purpose of the search screen is to prevent entry into the courtroom of weapons, explosives and other dangerous articles by searching all persons (possibly excepting properly identified court attaches, attorneys, and police officers) wanting entry into the courtroom.

The search screen can be operated by deputies using the "pat down" search, the hand held metal detectors, or the standing walk through metal detector.

A supportive court order for the search screen, although not absolutely necessary, should be requested of the judge. This order should enumerate the specific provisions of the special security measures to be affected. Copies of the order should be posted conspicuously in the search screen area, which tend to promote better cooperation and elimination of misunderstanding by those persons seeking entry. The court order may originate with the judge or be requested by supervisory personnel.

Personal searching should be done in a friendly, inoffensive, yet thorough manner, avoiding the "spread eagle" position. Persons carrying packages should be instructed to deposit them elsewhere than at the search screen. Those persons refusing to be searched will be denied access to the courtroom. Although as peace officers, deputies are expected to take necessary police action, arrests for minor offenses detected by a search screen are subject to supervisory approval.

The following procedure shall be followed whenever a branch supervisor believes a search screen is necessary:

- Notify the Area Lieutenant.
- Advise the concerned judge of the particular circumstances of the case that establish the need for a search screen. Request that the judge issue a written security order. If necessary, provide the judge with a sample security order. Suggest that a written order be issued using the recommended format, although if need be, a search screen may be set up on the strength of an oral order.
- A search screen should consist of a uniformed team of no less than one male and one female deputy if available. The minimum number should be increased depending upon the situation and information developed through intelligence and other sources.
- The search screen shall be positioned to facilitate maximum control. Every effort should be made to ensure searches are conducted out of sight and hearing of prospective jurors assigned to the case.
- If a more detailed search is required, it should be conducted out of public view. If possible, searches of females shall always be conducted by at least one female deputy.