

Superior Court of California County of Santa Clara



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Santa Clara Superior Court Implements Electronic Search Warrants

Program Benefits the Court, Prosecutors, and Law Enforcement

SAN JOSÉ, California (October 12, 2017): In an ongoing effort to use technology to make the criminal justice process more efficient and effective, the Santa Clara County Superior Court has initiated a project to accept electronic search warrants and returns from all law enforcement agencies throughout the County, including the California Highway Patrol.

This electronic process allows judges to review search warrants at any time mutually convenient to the judge and the law enforcement officer seeking the warrant. Busy officers are no longer required to take time away from their duties to locate a judge for review of a search warrant and/or return. Superior Court Judges presiding over trials and managing heavy calendars are nevertheless able to be responsive and flexible in review of search warrants.

“The movement to an electronic system for submitting and returning search warrants is a welcome shift among law enforcement in Santa Clara County.” Sheriff Laurie Smith details, “Utilizing technology will allow investigators and patrol personnel to be more efficient in their criminal investigations without lengthy procedural delays. By remaining dedicated to their law enforcement duties in the field, this utilization of technology will allow us to better serve the Community as a whole.”

The goal attained is a more efficient and timely response to the law enforcement agencies seeking a search warrant. During the first two weeks of our electronic search warrant pilot project, our five-judge team has electronically reviewed approximately 150 search warrants and search warrant returns during the day, which amounts to a significant increase in output from our judiciary strictly based upon access to information.

As we take this process from pilot to full implementation, more judges will be able to review search warrants and returns, at any courthouse location. This will only prove to bolster the efficiencies achieved through the pilot program.

Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen articulates, “My office is grateful to the Court for spearheading this project. Whenever we improve the efficiency of the criminal justice system, we improve justice. This streamlined process for obtaining search warrants is a step forward towards our goal to quickly and efficiently seek justice for crime victims and to exonerate the innocent.”

We are pleased to announce that this pilot project has generated interest and enthusiasm from other jurisdictions, both within and outside of California. We are proud to be a leader of innovation and forward thinking with respect to the management and allocation of court resources.

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