

June 1 opening for new sheriff/fire stations

Tiffany Tuell

(Updated: Thursday, May 27, 2010, 4:49 PM)

Sheriff says new facility will cut costs, improve communication

A ribbon cutting ceremony and open house will take place at 10 a.m. next Tuesday for the new \$4.96 million Madera County Sheriff's Department substation and Madera County Fire Station No. 12 west of Oakhurst.

It will have been exactly 11 months since the stations' groundbreaking held July 1 last year.

The complex includes the 9,600 square foot substation, a 1,500 square foot sheriff's department evidence garage and the 6,000 square foot fire station. It was built by Mark Wilson Construction and is located off Highway 49 and Westlake Village Drive on Liberty Drive.

The substation includes interview rooms, two holding cells, evidence processing equipment, evidence storage, deputy locker room and a small dog pen for the department's canine unit.

The fire station provides space for up to four engines, a kitchen, laundry room and three bedrooms for firefighters.

Furniture was delivered and roads paved last week.

Madera County Sheriff John Anderson pushed to have the substation built in Oakhurst because his staff has been at various locations throughout Oakhurst and Bass Lake. Fire Station No. 12 will also relocate from its current quarters next to the Oakhurst Branch Library.

"Since I became sheriff 12 years ago, I've been working on getting everything centrally located," Anderson said. "I realized immediately the situation wasn't good, so I've been trying to do something ever since.

"When you have three different locations like that its not good for operations or communication, and economically, it's horrible because we're paying three bills for everything. In the long run, getting everyone under one roof will save money.

"We won't have to drive here and there and the central location is also good for the public."

District 5 Supervisor Tom Wheeler echoed Anderson's comments, enforcing the importance of having all departments centrally located.

"Having the sheriff's staff in one central location will make for a better operation," Wheeler said.

Wheeler said Anderson saved money that former Gov. Grey Davis gave to small rural sheriff departments. "Those funds are how we built the substation -- nothing came from our general budget," Wheeler said. "The sheriff has been trying to get that built for the past four or five years. One day we'll have a government center at the same location."

Anderson gave recognition to the Madera County Board of Supervisors and the Resource Management Agency for their assistance with regulations.

"It's a big relief and just good to see it accomplished," Anderson said.

Dignitaries expected for the June 1 ceremony include the Madera County Board of Supervisors and state and county fire representatives, along with U.S. Rep. George Radanovich and Sen. Dave Cogdill.