



# DENVER

The Mile High City

*Advance to the  
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Office of the  
Independent Monitor

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Richard Rosenthal  
Independent Monitor



# **No Evidence of Cheating on Sheriff Sergeant Promotional Exam as Alleged in an Anonymous Complaint**

## **Introduction**

In a letter dated May 14, 2011, an unknown person sent an anonymous letter to the members of the media and the Director of Corrections/Undersheriff which claimed that s/he was a person who took the Denver Sheriff Sergeant promotional examination on April 13, 2011 and that s/he was provided with a copy of the test in advance by a Sheriff Major. The anonymous person claimed to be “sorry, regretful and embarrassed” and reported that s/he provided copies of the test to three other applicants. The writer further alleged that “about five, possibly six” deputies received the answers to the test and, thereby, cheated on the exam.

This letter called into question the credibility of the Sheriff Sergeant promotional process. Upon receiving the letter, the Director of Corrections/Undersheriff promptly initiated a full investigation into the cheating allegation, during which the below described steps were taken.

## **Test Results Were Examined Quantitatively for Indicators of Cheating**

The Sheriff’s Department had the test results evaluated by an international expert in cheating detection methods. In addition, the Monitor’s Research Analyst,<sup>1</sup> compared quantitatively the 2011 test results to similar promotional tests administered in 2007 and 2008.

Neither evaluations of the test identified any patterns that would be consistent with cheating or collusion. The outside expert found “...no evidence of cheating by collusion.” He also found that the distribution was “...what one would expect if there were no cheating.” The Monitor’s Analyst reported that “...the distributional characteristics of the 2011 exam results were very similar to earlier promotional exams. Nothing in the distribution of the 2011 scores indicates cheating or collusion among a group of deputies.” The Monitor’s Analyst also found that the 2011 results had “...a smooth, approximately normal distribution that is almost identical in shape to the two previous exams.” Moreover, there was “...no noticeable outlier group of deputies clustered at the top of the distribution in 2011” as would have been expected if the anonymous letter writer’s allegations were true.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Monitor’s Analyst is a former university professor with a Ph.D. in sociology and a background in statistical analysis.

<sup>2</sup> No applicant scored higher than 89% on the 2011 promotional test. If, in fact, multiple applicants had been provided with the answers to the test, it seems unlikely that they all would have purposely scored lower than an 89%, especially since none of the applicants knew in advance what the cut-off would be for a passing score.

## **The Denver Police Internal Affairs Bureau Assisted with the Internal Investigation**

In addition to having the test results analyzed, the Director of Corrections requested that the Police Department's Internal Affairs Bureau interview members of the Sheriff committee that created the Sergeant promotional examination. Based on the information obtained from these interviews, there is no reason to believe that any Sheriff Major had access to the test such that s/he could have provided a copy of the test to anyone.

The Police Department's Crime Lab examined the anonymous letter that was received by the Department and found no physical evidence that could be used to identify the anonymous writer.

## **Completion of the Internal Investigation**

Finally, the Sheriff Department's Internal Affairs Bureau contacted all deputies who took the examination to ensure that no deputy had any information which would either prove or disprove the cheating allegation. No deputy identified him or herself as having any further information to provide regarding the cheating allegation.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, it is the Monitor's judgment that there is no credible evidence of cheating on this promotional exam. The Director of Corrections/Undersheriff took these allegations seriously, acted quickly, and obtained the assistance of an International Cheating Detection Expert, the Denver Police Department, and the Monitor's Office in order to conduct a thorough and complete investigation into the anonymous complaint. A Sheriff Department internal investigation was also conducted. None of these efforts produced any evidence to support the information in the anonymous letter. The Monitor concurs with the Department's decision to take no further action on this complaint.