

Correctional *Newsfront*

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

Systemwide Improvements Since the 1989 Camp Hill Prison Riot

On October 25, 1989, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections was changed forever. Beginning this afternoon, inmates rioted at the state prison located just outside the state's capitol for several days. A majority of the prison's buildings were damaged or destroyed and hundreds of individuals were injured, including inmates, employees, and emergency response personnel. In the end, 18 individuals had been held hostage.

The Pennsylvania DOC has come a long way since those terrible days in 1989. This issue of "Correctional Newsfront" will show you how the DOC has worked to improve the state prison system's security and emergency response capabilities.



Photos: The top photo shows the aftermath of the rioting, which ended without the death of a single person. Pictured here is what was the prison's furniture factory. The second photo shows how the heat from fires melted mobile-home type housing. The third photo to the right shows the devastation to the auditorium, which has since been turned into an indoor gymnasium.

Secretary Beard Speaks About...

Whether a Major Riot Could Happen Again

I took over as acting superintendent at SCI Camp Hill right after the riots. I saw first-hand the devastation, the injuries to staff and inmates, the traumatic effects on everyone.

Those images will remain with me forever.

I decided then that, wherever I worked within Corrections, I would do what I could to help create more secure, safer facilities throughout the state.

Many years later, with the help of concerned governors and legislators, and the men and women of the Pennsylvania DOC, we've done just that.

In this newsletter, we'll show you that our policies and procedures are working; that our dedicated men and women in the state prison system are well-trained and have the equipment and technology necessary to safely, securely and humanely operate our facilities.

Could Camp Hill happen again? Of course, but if it does, we are far better prepared to resolve the problem quickly, with minimal disruption to the facility's operation.

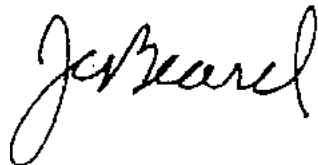
Camp Hill taught us a valuable lesson – be prepared... with well-trained staff, with the right security measures, with effective emergency plans. Today, we've really taken control of some of the biggest problems we had – like drugs and violent inmates. I can say definitively that our system is virtually drug-free, and with the special housing units for violent inmates, we've reduced staff assaults.

In terms of helping prepare inmates for life after prison, we provide effective educational and vocational support and treatment programs for all of our inmates. That means many of them will be less likely to wind up back in DOC custody after their release.

Over the years, we have made many changes to reduce the probability of these types of occurrences and ensure that our staff, inmates and the public are safe.

Why am I convinced that we can reduce the likelihood of another Camp Hill? Because we're doing everything in our power to prevent it.

Read this issue of "Correctional Newsfront". See the evidence and judge for yourself.




Jeffrey A. Beard, Ph.D.
Corrections Secretary

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A Bigger and Better Prison System

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

By Kim Stanford

Up until 1889, there were only two prisons making up the Pennsylvania Correctional System -- Eastern State Penitentiary and Western Pen. These two imposing, Victorian-era structures housed Pennsylvania's entire inmate population. Eastern handled inmates from the eastern part of the state; Western handled those from the west.

Fast forward more than a hundred years, and this is the face of the state correctional system today...

- 26 state correctional institutions,
- 14 community corrections centers,
- More than 45 private community corrections facilities, and
- A motivational boot camp in the middle of the state.

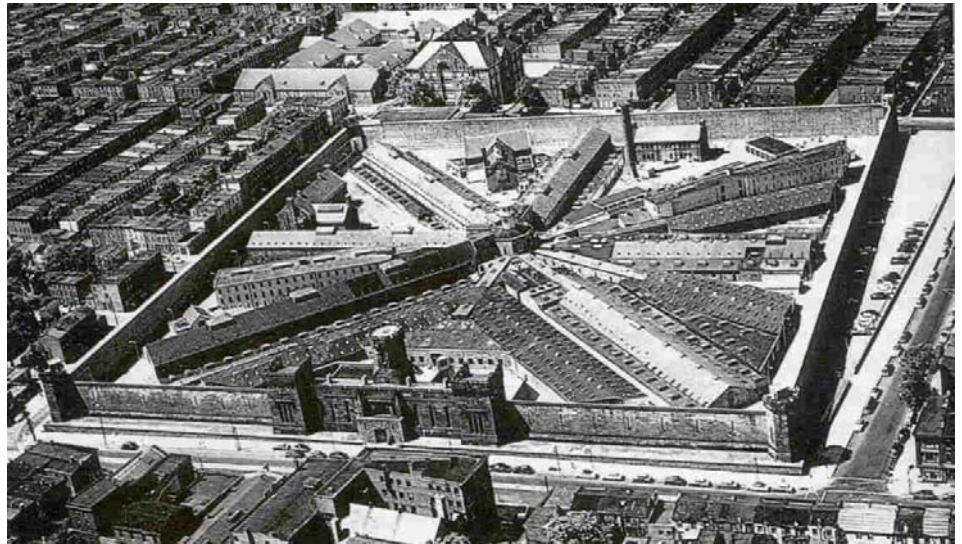
These facilities are operated by the Department of Corrections – the DOC – which employs 15,100 men and women, and is responsible for the lives of more than 41,000 inmates.

The department is the second largest state agency with a budget of \$1.3 billion.

Obviously, things are a lot different today than they were a century ago. More importantly, they're much different than they were before the Camp Hill tragedy back in 1989.

What's changed? There are several key areas where we've made significant improvements to the system -- manpower, training, security, hardware and technology and inmate programs.

First, manpower. For the first time



An aerial view of Eastern State Pen from the 1950s showing the distinctive layout of the prison complex. (Pennsylvania Air National Guard)

in 30 years, all DOC facilities are fully-staffed according to our analysis of manpower needs. Now, how did we reach that conclusion? On a rotating basis, every three years, a team from Central Office visits each state correctional institution to conduct a manpower analysis survey. The surveys are then used to determine the number of corrections officers needed to run each facility in a secure and safe manner. Where there are shortages, we work diligently to find the budget resources to fill those positions with capable, trained individuals.

Here are the numbers to back that up:

Since 1992, we've added 4,100 corrections officers and improved staff-to-inmate ratio from 1 to 3.3 to

1 to 2.9. Pennsylvania has a better staff-to-inmate ratio than many other states. Compared with the 1980s and early 90s, the DOC has more staff, a better equipped staff and a better trained staff.

Having enough manpower is just part of the equation in this line of work. Our staff also needs to be well-trained. And in that, we'll take a backseat to no one.

In fact, Pennsylvania's comprehensive training program for corrections officers is used as a model for other agencies across the country. Corrections officers may not stay new recruits for long, but they're in training from the day they start to the day they leave the job.

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Officers train in baton techniques at the department's Training Academy, which is located in Elizabethtown, Lancaster County.

There are three major areas of training for PA corrections officers: pre-service, in-service, and on-the-job training.

New corrections officers spend their first several weeks at the Training Academy in Elizabethtown. Here, they go through basic training. Completing the basic training course is a condition of employment for all DOC employees.

After basic training, new hires – called trainees – move to “in-service” training. Now “on the job,” trainees work at multiple posts on each shift to gain valuable experience in every area.

The next rung up the ladder is to become a full-fledged corrections officer. At this level and throughout the officer's career, they are encouraged to continue their training through management-level and specialized courses.

But training doesn't stop there. To manage a large inmate population that is diverse and unpredictable, we know we have to be ready for anything. We are. In the unlikely event of a crisis, we have several highly-skilled tactical units ready to jump into action. These units receive advanced training, use the best and most sophisticated equipment, and hold regular drills to make sure they stay in top form.



A DOC CERT team practices at a recent demonstration.

The first line of defense in any correctional institution is an effective, well-trained staff. All corrections employees know how to isolate and contain emergency situations. But if a situation moves beyond their control, our experienced special tactical teams are there for back-up.

Overcrowding has long been a serious issue for most prison systems in this country. It's true here in Pennsylvania too. One of the ways the DOC has addressed this problem is to build new prisons. Twelve of them in fact, since 1990.

But these prisons aren't the typical prisons of the past. Newer facilities have more staff-efficient designs, like improved lines of sight, smaller housing units, enhanced video surveillance and electronic security technologies. All of which has led to a reduction in assaults and more secure facilities.

All state prisons have special units called RHUs or restricted housing units. The purpose of an RHU is to secure inmates who have received disciplinary sanctions for violating the rules.

Inmates who exhibit behavior that is disruptive, violent, or a threat to the operation of a facility are sent to a special management unit at SCI Camp Hill.

Extremely disruptive or violent inmates will be moved to SCI Fayette's long-term segregation unit (LTSU) in the western part of the state. The cells in the LTSU are self-contained, with their own showers and individual exercise yards.

In addition to special units, we've also stepped up our security efforts in another area: drugs. Since there is a clear, established pattern between

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staff safety and drug usage, we instituted a “Zero Tolerance” drug policy at all of our facilities. Through K-9 units, electronic drug detection systems, cell searches, and on-going drug testing, Pennsylvania prisons are now 99.9% drug free.

Next to well-trained manpower, the DOC prides itself on operating the most secure and the safest institutions in the country. All DOC facilities are accredited by the American Correctional Association (ACA). The ACA establishes



national operating standards which accredited institutions must follow. Pennsylvania is one of only seven states with full accreditation. Not only does the accreditation prove where the DOC is doing things right, but we use the accreditation process and other reviews to help us identify weaknesses in the system and find appropriate solutions.

Based on our findings, we’ve made significant security improvements to our facilities – at a cost of more than \$20 million.

We’ve installed multiple types of electronic sensors mounted on perimeter fences to provide 24/7 blanketed coverage of the fence line. Microwave motion sensors within the facility are used to alert officers to any security breach.

Proximity cards and keying systems are used in zones to help prevent “all the way out” access if a card or key ring is compromised. And every institution has been equipped with state-of-the-art surveillance cameras and X-ray scanners.

We’ve also introduced biometric technology at our facilities. Biometrics involves databasing biological features, in this case, for enhanced security. Our facilities use a fingerprint system that matches a staff’s fingerprint with their ID card.

There are also redundant back-up electrical systems in place to prevent power outages.

Low-tech improvements include: upgraded perimeter fencing and additional razor ribbon wire, tool-resistant window bars, tack-welded security screens and windows, and enhanced lighting.



And while we need all this technology to keep our facilities secure and safe, we have never used cameras or other equipment to replace the real thing: a well-trained corrections officer with the right protective gear.

DOC Corrections officers are supplied with protective vests and, if confronted with aggressive behavior, they can use impact munitions, OC and other less lethal technologies to regain inmate control. Firearms are used only as a last resort.



But as well-prepared and as well-equipped as the DOC facilities are, we can’t allow a failure of imagination or the human tendency to relax our guard when things are going well to open the door for another Camp Hill.

That’s why the DOC is involved with what’s called “Institution Vulnerability Assessments.” We know that even the most up-to-date systems can quickly become outdated or have hidden design flaws that went undetected. So it’s important to assess our security systems regularly to identify potential threats and points of vulnerabilities.

Corrections officers routinely perform security checks or tests and complacency drills as part of their normal work assignments. Emer-

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agency drills and exercises are also conducted to make sure emergency plans work and to ensure staff familiarity with the plans.

Recently, the DOC teamed up with national vulnerability experts, Sandia National Laboratories. Sandia has conducted vulnerability assessments of defense sites and nuclear power plants for years. Their work with the DOC involved developing a vulnerability assessment model that can be used to detect security weaknesses in prison environments. The results will lead to more effective security systems that may be used in prisons across the country.

At the DOC, we don't just look from the outside in – we look from the inside out. Our mission states, in part, that we will "...provide opportunities for inmates to acquire the skills and values necessary to become productive law-abiding citizens." Since 90% of Pennsylvania's inmates will be released back into society one day, we need to make sure they're ready.

Reliable, long-term research has shown that quality inmate programs do work to reduce recidivism. Not only that, but they produce better behaved inmates and reduce idleness. We focus our programs in three key areas: assessment, treatment and re-entry.

First, we have to decide where to place an inmate. This placement will determine what programs are available to him or her. The DOC uses PACT - the Pennsylvania Additive Classification Tool – to classify all inmates. This objective

assessment looks at seven key factors:

- Severity of current offense
- Severity of criminal history
- Escape history
- Prior institutional adjustment
- Number of prior commitments
- Time to expected release, and
- Stability Factors

Based on the total score, the inmate may be placed in a community corrections center, or in a minimum, medium or maximum security prison.

Next step - identify the programs which will best prepare inmates to return to their communities. The DOC believes education programs have the greatest impact. Since educated individuals are less likely to reoffend after leaving prison, the department has mandated that inmates are required to function at a high school level – if they have the mental capacity.

All inmates have access to a range of education programs – from special education up to grade 12. For those inmates with a desire to improve their vocational prospects, the DOC offers training in computer

technologies, industrial occupations, business, mechanical-technical occupations and service jobs.

Drug and alcohol abuse are often the reasons behind an inmate's commitment. To help inmates change their addictive behaviors, the DOC provides intensive drug and alcohol dependency treatment programs. In 2001, more than 16,000 inmates were enrolled in addiction treatment groups. All of the treatment programs provided by the department are evidence-based programs, meaning their effectiveness has proven to show positive results.

There's also another group of inmates that require unique consideration: those with mental health problems. In recent years, we've gotten a lot better at assessing the needs of the mentally ill and providing them with special programs and separate housing. This, in turn, has led to a significant reduction in staff assaults.

Closer to release, inmates must take part in comprehensive re-entry training called, "Community Orientation and Reintegration." This training focuses on employability, character



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Keeping Drugs & Contraband Out of Prisons

During the months of April and May 2005, several visitor vehicles were searched on state prison grounds, uncovering controlled substances.

“Individuals planning to visit inmates in state prisons should be aware that searches, using officers and K-9s from the DOC’s Drug Interdiction Unit, may take place,” Corrections Secretary Jeffrey A. Beard, Ph.D., said.

“Individuals are not permitted to bring onto prison grounds drugs, weapons or alcohol,” Beard said. “Signs are clearly posted at each state prison.”

Beard said that individuals who do not consent to vehicle searches will

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development, parenting, parole and many other related subjects.

Through these programs and the re-entry practices at several community correction centers, inmates are much better prepared for life on the outside...and, hopefully, less likely to return to life on the inside.

If you’ve been wondering where the DOC spends its 1.3 billion dollar budget, you just heard it. We spend significant amounts of money on staff training, facility safety improvements and inmate programs. And we’ll continue to employ our resources where they will meet our objective of operating our facilities safely, securely and humanely.

not be permitted to visit. Also, individuals found with drugs, weapons or alcohol in their vehicles could be subject to arrest by the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP). In addition, they too, may not be permitted to visit with inmates.

“This has been our practice since 1995, when the department’s Drug Interdiction Unit was created,” Beard continued. “The searches are to ensure that contraband or drugs are not being smuggled into inmates by visitors; thus making our prisons secure and safe places for the employees who work there and the inmates who live there.

Some of the drug-related incidents that took place in April and May 2005 were:

-- At SCI Dallas two visitors were discovered by corrections officers to have two marijuana joints, and a white powdery substance was found in one person’s purse.

-- At SCI Houtzdale, a visitor’s car was found to have rolling papers and a small bag containing 4.9 grams of marijuana in a coat. Later the Drug Interdiction Unit discovered in another visitor’s vehicle two empty balloons with a small amount of green leafy substance and a small plastic baggie containing a green leafy substance, both of which tested positive for marijuana.

-- Officers at SCI Frackville discovered marijuana in the center console of a visitor’s vehicle.

-- At SCI Graterford there were four drug-related incidents: one involving the discovery of two marijuana roaches, a 4-to-5” folding lock knife



and two bottles of wine in a visitor’s vehicle; a second involving the discovery of a marijuana roach; another involving the discovery of marijuana residue, two baggies of marijuana and a marijuana pipe; and finally, one that resulted in the discovery of one roach and a small baggie containing marijuana.

-- SCI Smithfield officers discovered a small amount of marijuana in a visitor’s vehicle.

-- At SCI Somerset in May, the drug interdiction unit was performing random searches of a visitor’s vehicle when they found several items of contraband -- suspected marijuana, a digital scale, a small pair of pliers, a knife, a small drinking straw and a small leather pouch.

The department monitors such drug finds and can permanently ban individuals from visiting state prisons if subsequent finds occur.

In addition to drug-related incidents, intoxicated individuals are not permitted on prison grounds. During this period, at SCI Chester, an intoxicated individual was taken into custody by the PSP for driving under the influence.

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Camp Hill 15 Years Later -- Not the Same Prison



On the left is an aerial of SCI Camp Hill taken prior to the 1989 riot. On the right is a more recent photo of the prison showing all of the construction renovations made, making the prison essentially totally different than it was prior to 1989.



Above is a view of one of the prison's new style of housing unit. To the right is the interior view of this unit, which provides better lines of sight for staff.

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“Individuals need to be mindful of the rules if they intend to continue visits with their loved ones while they are in prison,” Beard said. “By not following the rules, they jeopardize being banned forever from visiting at any one of our state prisons or possibly even facing arrest.”

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

“Our mission is to protect the public by confining persons committed to our custody in safe, secure facilities, and to provide opportunities for inmates to acquire the skills and values necessary to become productive law-abiding citizens; while respecting the rights of crime victims.”

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