Nevada Department of Corrections

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Press Release

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Nevada Department of Corrections takes additional steps to mitigate COVID-19

CARSON CITY, NV -- Disinfectant foggers, upgraded PPE and strategic cohorts are among the additional steps being taken to battle COVID-19 within the Nevada Department of Corrections.

“Every single day here is going to count,” said Dr. Michael Minev, Medical Director for the Nevada Department of Corrections. “We are taking measures to mitigate the spread.”

The first hospital-grade disinfectant fogger has arrived at Northern Nevada Correctional Center in Carson City, where it is being used to sanitize common areas as well as individual cells.

Additional machines have been ordered and will be dispersed throughout the facilities.

The Department’s protocol on the use of personal protective equipment has also been updated to require all staff who are within six feet of inmates for more than 15 minutes to wear the N95 mask, which offer more protection against airborne particles than the cloth masks.

The Department is working with the state’s Division of Emergency Management to secure more than 400,000 N95 masks for all inmates and staff.

Correctional institutions throughout the state are also changing the way inmates and staff are grouped together.

While NDOC has been separating COVID-19 positive and COVID-19 potentially exposed inmates by way of isolation and quarantine since the inception, “due to the rapid rise of COVID-19 infection within our facilities, we must, to the extent possible taking into account safety and security issues relating to classification levels of inmates and staffing issues,

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separate our inmates at all facilities into three completely distinct cohorts," Dr. Minev directed.

The cohorts include:

- Isolation cohort comprised of only offenders who have tested positive for COVID-19
- Quarantine cohort comprised of only offenders who have been exposed to COVID-19, are exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (and awaiting COVID-19 test results) or are awaiting COVID-19 testing results
- Non-exposed cohort comprised of only offenders who are asymptomatic and have not been exposed to COVID-19

Additionally, the Department is pairing staff that has recovered from the virus with inmates who have not yet contracted the virus or who are among those most high-risk.

"We are trying to strategically place custody and medical staff in such a way as to reduce the spread," Minev said. "We are relying on those who have cleared infection to prevent the spread to our vulnerable population."

Most recent numbers show the Nevada Department of Corrections has 2,442 offenders who have tested positive with COVID-19 and 561 staff. That is about 21 percent of the total population of 11,540 across all facilities.

Taking into account recoveries, those currently positive are 1,624 inmates and 205 staff.

Eight offenders and two employees have died.

State health officials report 196,379 cumulative cases in Nevada.

"We have had a rapid rise in community infections, which has affected our custody and other staff," Minev said. "That has led to the rise in infections in the inmate population."

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