

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Office of the Inspector General**

Inspector General



June 16, 2008

The Honorable Adrian M. Fenty  
Mayor  
District of Columbia  
Mayor's Correspondence Unit, Suite 316  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mayor Fenty:

Enclosed please find a copy of a Management Alert Report (MAR 08-I-004) issued March 14, 2008, to the Department of Corrections (DOC). The MAR addresses case managers' safety risks inside DOC cellblocks. Also enclosed are DOC's March 17, 2008, response to the MAR, and a May 27, 2008, letter to DOC regarding additional information gathered by our inspectors about case managers' safety.

Although the OIG is conducting a re-inspection of DOC and a full report will be completed later this fiscal year, we are providing this information to you now so that you are aware of the issues addressed in the MAR and the corrective actions agreed upon by DOC.

If you have questions, please contact Alvin Wright, Jr., Assistant Inspector General for Inspections and Evaluations, at (202) 727-2540.

Sincerely,

  
Charles J. Willoughby  
Inspector General

CJW/ebs

Enclosures

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**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**  
**CHARLES J. WILLOUGHBY**  
**INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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**INSPECTIONS AND EVALUATIONS DIVISION**  
***MANAGEMENT ALERT REPORT***

**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

**CASE MANAGERS' SAFETY AT RISK INSIDE  
CELLBLOCKS**

**MAR 08 - I - 004**  
**MARCH 14, 2008**

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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General



March 14, 2008

Mr. Devon Brown  
Director  
Department of Corrections  
Government of the District of Columbia  
1923 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 207N  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Brown:

This is a Management Alert Report (MAR-08-I-004) to inform you that the District of Columbia (District) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has determined that Department of Corrections (DOC) Correctional Treatment Specialists (Case Managers) are performing their duties without sufficient communication devices for their personal safety while working with inmates in cellblocks. This issue has come to our attention during our ongoing re-inspection of the DOC Central Detention Facility (CDF). The OIG provides these reports when we believe a matter requires the immediate attention of District government officials.

### **Background**

During interviews, DOC officials informed the re-inspection team (team) that case managers provide a full array of services to inmates that includes intake activities for newly arriving inmates, assessment of services inmates will need while incarcerated, classification for housing assignment, re-classification for transition to halfway houses, consultation on legal status, and inmate records management. Several case managers stated that they provide services for up to 160 inmates each.

### **Observations**

#### **Case Managers' safety is at risk inside cellblocks.**

According to a senior manager, case managers frequently work alone with inmates in offices within CDF cellblocks. The official stated that the offices are out of sight of correctional officers stationed in the cellblock's observation booth (known as the Bubble).<sup>1</sup> A case manager requiring assistance when in danger may not be heard by the correctional officer in the Bubble. The official also indicated that sometimes there is no response when a case manager contacts a correctional officer in the Bubble.

The team was told that although case managers' cellblock offices have telephones, most case managers do not have emergency communication devices such as two-way radios or intercoms to request assistance if they face danger or if they need to be made aware of danger elsewhere within

<sup>1</sup> The "Bubble" is a glass enclosed booth staffed by a correctional officer. Every cellblock has a Bubble. It contains controls for opening and closing cellblock doors.

the facility.<sup>2</sup> A DOC security official stated that telephones do not allow prompt or immediate communication when there is danger or an emergency situation. In December 2007, DOC issued body alarms (hand held personal devices) to case managers to notify DOC personnel when they need assistance. However, according to a senior manager, the sound from the body alarm is not readily heard by the correctional officer in the Bubble.

The team reviewed assault reports on case managers at the CDF and found that between June 2005 and February 2007, four case managers were assaulted and injured by inmates in the cellblocks as detailed in the table below.

DATE	TYPE OF ASSAULT
June 2, 2005	Liquid substance thrown at male case manager.
April 21, 2006	Inmate pulled female case manager's hair.
December 11, 2006	Inmate assaulted male case manager with his fists.
February 22, 2007	Inmate shoved male case manager.

The team observed and also heard during interviews that the correctional officer in the Bubble controls the doors to several offices used by case managers. Therefore, case managers cannot exit the office during times of danger until the correctional officer opens the door. There is no door release mechanism to allow case managers to exit or allow entry by a correctional officer in case of an emergency.

Based on observations from the command center and through interviews, the team learned that all case managers' offices have surveillance cameras that allow these offices to be observed by correctional officers in the CDF Command Center or the Bubbles. However, the team learned through interviews and observations that neither correctional officers working in the Bubble nor those in the CDF Command Center continuously monitor activities in each cellblock office and may not see that a case manager needs assistance during an emergency. According to a DOC security official, it is not the responsibility of the correctional officers in the cell blocks to continuously monitor the video feeds from case managers' offices. Furthermore, the correctional officer in the Bubble handles multiple safety and routine administrative tasks simultaneously and cannot focus exclusively on monitoring the feed from a surveillance camera within a case manager's office. The team also learned that there have been instances of inoperative monitoring equipment in the Bubbles, and found instances where such equipment was not installed in the Bubbles.

While in the Command Center, the team viewed the video feeds from all 18 surveillance cameras in case managers' offices. The team learned from a DOC security official that the correctional officers in the Command Center can view the video feeds for up to 4 of the 18 case manager offices simultaneously.<sup>3</sup> The team also observed that video feed from a surveillance camera in one case manager's office provided only a partial view of activities in the office.

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<sup>2</sup> One to two case managers are assigned two-way radios. The team was informed by the case manager who works in DOC's mental health unit cellblock that a correctional officer with a radio is present in his office during sessions with inmates.

<sup>3</sup> While in the Command Center or in a cell block, a correctional officer has the capability to typically view up to 10-15 video feeds from a specific cellblock. A cellblock can include a case manager office, housing tiers, recreation area, and hallways.

## Recommendations

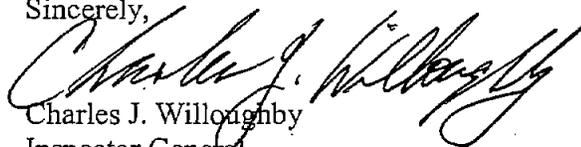
We recommend that the Director, DOC:

1. Provide two-way radios, intercoms, panic buttons, or some other emergency communication device in case managers' cellblock offices so they can quickly request assistance or be contacted in an emergency.
2. Ensure that case manager office doors with automated opening and closing features controlled by the correctional officer in the Bubble have an emergency door release mechanism for case managers' use. This mechanism should be known only to case managers and not the inmates.
3. Ensure that surveillance cameras can capture all activities in case manager offices.
4. Assign dedicated correctional staff in the command center to monitor the video feed from all occupied case manager offices on a continuous basis.

Please provide your comments on this MAR by April 4, 2008. Your response should include actions taken or planned, dates for completion of planned actions, and reason for any disagreement with the concerns and recommendation presented. Please distribute this MAR only to those who will be directly involved in preparing your response.

Should you have any questions or desire a conference prior to preparing your response, please contact [REDACTED], Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Inspections and Evaluations, at 202-727-[REDACTED].

Sincerely,

  
Charles J. Willoughby  
Inspector General

CW/ld

cc: Daniel M. Tangherlini, City Administrator  
The Honorable Carol Schwartz, Chairperson, Committee of Workforce Development and Government Operations  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairperson, Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary, Council of the District of Columbia

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Office of the Director



RECEIVED  
3/19/08

#9029

March 17, 2008

Charles J. Willoughby  
Inspector General  
Government of the District of Columbia  
717 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Willoughby:

This correspondence acknowledges receipt of your March 14<sup>th</sup>, Management Alert Report on the Department of Corrections entitled, "Case Managers' Safety At Risk Inside Cellblocks." In that submittal, you related "that Department of Corrections (DOC) Correctional Treatment Specialists (Case Managers) are performing their duties without communication devices for their personal safety while working with inmates in cellblocks." In support of your conclusions, you cite four (4) instances in which such employees were assaulted by inmates without serious injury over the past two years and eight months period. Based upon this observation, you have recommended the following:

1. Provide two-way radios, intercoms, panic buttons or some other emergency communication device in case managers' cellblock offices so they can quickly request assistance or be contacted in emergency.
2. Ensure that case manager office doors with automated opening and closing features controlled by the correctional officer Bubble have an emergency door release mechanism for case managers' use. This mechanism should be known only to case managers and not the inmates.
3. Ensure that surveillance camera can capture all activities in case manager offices.
4. Assign dedicated correctional staff in the command center to monitor the video feed from all occupied case manager offices on a continuous basis.

Charles J. Willoughby  
Page 2  
March 17, 2008

With respect to this concern, please know that on Friday, January 11, I met with Inspectors [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] of your office to discuss this and other topics germane to the operations of the Department of Corrections. At that time, I informed these individuals that a concerted effort has been made to avail each case manager with an audible, duress alarm to alert unit correctional officers in the event of an emergency. With regard to this matter, I advised your staff that during the week of November 27, 2006, these devices were purchased and made available for dissemination to all case managers. Moreover, during our meeting, I further informed your staff that plans are currently underway to establish a stand alone Surveillance Center in which the entire premises of the Central Detention Facility would be constantly monitored by seasoned, correctional personnel each day on a 24 hour basis. The areas under vigilance are to include the offices assigned to case managers.

I further advised these officials that principal among the security enhancements planned in the upcoming months is the installation of a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) system throughout the complex. This state of the art technology would provide the means to immediately assess the movement and exact location of every individual in the jail. This tool will include a sophisticated, "man down" or body alarm feature that will spontaneously alert the security force whenever activated by those encountering an emergency. Thus, notification of exigent situations will not be dependent upon a given location and/or office but will promote greater security as it will apply to the individual rather than a particular site.

In addition to these electronically driven measures, I pointed out that the correctional officer complement within the cell blocks of our jail far exceeds industry standards. In this regard, I explained that unlike other correctional operations, four (4) correctional officers are assigned to each inmate housing unit of which three (3) are detailed to patrol each cell block at all times. These individuals are furnished with a two-way radio that enables them to rapidly communicate the existence of an emergency occurrence. It should be noted that all radio transmittals are constantly monitored by the Control Center and correctional supervisors including the Warden. As can be readily discerned, our deployment of custodial staff within cell blocks more adequately assures the safety of those employees who perform duties in these areas as well as the inmates who reside within them.

With the above considerations in mind, I am confident that the measures that the Department of Corrections has implemented to date as well as those that are imminent in

Charles J. Willoughby  
Page 3  
March 17, 2008

their initiation sufficiently address the concerns and recommendations that you have delineated relative to the safety of its case management personnel. Nonetheless, I welcome your assessment of our efforts and any further suggestions for improvement that you deem appropriate.

Please know that I am highly appreciative of your report. Should you require additional information and/or clarification of any elements of my response, please contact me as your schedule permits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Devon Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping tail.

Devon Brown  
Director

C: Daniel M. Tangherlini, City Administrator  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairperson, Committee on Public Safety and the  
Judiciary  
The Honorable Carol Schwartz, Chairperson, Committee on Workforce  
Development and Government Operations

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Office of the Inspector General



Inspector General

May 27, 2008

Devon Brown  
Director  
Department of Corrections  
Government of the District of Columbia  
1923 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 207N  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Brown:

On March 14, 2008, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) issued a Management Alert Report (MAR 08-I-004) titled "Case Managers' Safety at Risk Inside Cellblocks." The MAR pointed out that our OIG re-inspection team was advised by D.C. Jail officials that most Department of Corrections (DOC) case managers do not have emergency communication devices that are sufficient for their personal safety. On March 17, 2008, we received your response letter in which you cited DOC actions taken to improve the security of case managers and other D.C. Jail employees. The following responds to the comments in your letter concerning: (1) the distribution to case managers of an "audible, duress alarm" to alert correctional officers to an emergency; and (2) the number of correctional officers assigned to patrol each cellblock. We also include information gathered about the case managers' slider office doors since there is a discrepancy between the directives that have been issued and the staff's professed lack of awareness of these directives.

***Test of Case Manager's Body Alarm.*** On March 20, 2008, a member of the OIG re-inspection team received permission from Jail officials to conduct an unannounced test of a case manager's body alarm while inside a case manager's cellblock office. The OIG inspector was escorted into the cellblock by a staff member who was not a correctional officer. (See attached OIG report on the test.) After the case manager activated the alarm, there was an immediate high-pitch tone that increased in volume for about 2 minutes. During the test, the OIG inspector and two case managers observed through the glass wall from inside the case manager's office two correctional officers sitting on a bench about 30 feet away. Another correctional officer was in the Bubble.<sup>1</sup> None of the correctional officers responded when the alarm sounded. Subsequently, two officers stated that had they heard it, they would not have recognized what it was. Another officer thought the sound was a "fire enunciator." They also stated that they were not informed by DOC management that case managers were issued body alarms.

***Only Two Correctional Officers on Patrol.*** Your response noted that "four (4) correctional officers are assigned to each inmate housing unit of which three (3) are detailed to patrol each cell block at all times."

However, on March 20, during the body alarm test cited above, the OIG inspector observed only two of four assigned correctional officers patrolling that particular cellblock during his visit. One officer was assigned to the Bubble, and according to a senior correctional officer, the fourth officer had been relieved of duty because he had worked overtime.

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<sup>1</sup> The "Bubble" is a glass-enclosed booth staffed by a correctional officer. Every cellblock has a Bubble. It contains controls for opening and closing cellblock doors.

During a meeting with you on April 4, 2008, the OIG team informed you of the results of the March 20th test of the body alarms. After the meeting, we received a memorandum from DOC's A/Training Administrator stating that DOC will implement training on the body alarms on April 8, 2008.

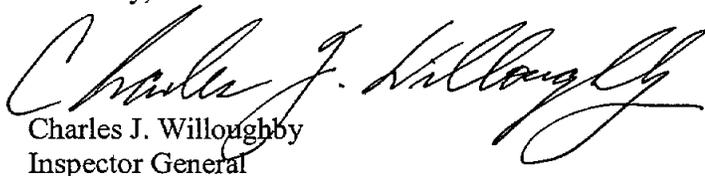
*Case managers' cellblock offices slider doors should never be closed when meeting with inmates.* After issuance of the MAR, you verbally informed the OIG that DOC had issued directives requiring that slider doors for case managers' offices should never be closed while a case manager is meeting with an inmate. During a meeting with you on April 4, 2008, OIG requested copies of these directives.

On April 8, 2008, DOC provided OIG with a page from the post orders of five different cellblocks. We did not receive the face sheet of these post orders to determine when they were issued. We observed that for three of the post orders, the required text about keeping the door open was written in a different format and font from the text on the remainder of the page. Therefore, we went to the cellblocks to review the post orders. We learned that two of the three documents were re-issued on April 8, 2008, after our meeting with you. On May 2, we learned from DOC's Deputy Director that DOC updated the post orders as a result of the OIG's MAR to require that the case managers' doors remain open.

On April 9 and 10, we interviewed five case managers to ascertain whether they were aware of a policy that their office doors are to remain open while meeting with an inmate. Three case managers responded that they were not aware of such a policy. One case manager stated that on the date of our interview, his/her office slider door was closed during meetings with inmates at his/her request, and was also closed at the initiative of the correctional officer on duty without asking the case manager. Although DOC has issued directives that the slider doors are to remain open, we are concerned that some staff were not aware of these directives or claimed to still be meeting with inmates in offices when the slider door was closed.

In light of our recent discussions, we wanted to convey to you any information gathered during our interviews and observations that might assist you in actions on these matters. Should you have any questions concerning this information, please contact [REDACTED], Director of Planning and Inspections, at 202-727-[REDACTED].

Sincerely,

  
Charles J. Willoughby  
Inspector General

CWJ/ag

Attachment

cc: Daniel M. Tangherlini, City Administrator and Deputy Mayor  
The Honorable Carol Schwartz, Chairperson, Committee of Workforce Development  
and Government Operations, Council of the District of Columbia  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairperson, Committee on Public Safety and the  
Judiciary, Council of the District of Columbia

# ATTACHMENT

**Inspections and Evaluations Re-Inspection Team Report on  
Test of Body Alarm Used by D.C. Jail Case Managers  
March 20, 2008**

On March 20, 2008, an OIG inspector requested and received permission from the DOC Deputy Warden for Operations and Deputy Warden for Programs to conduct an unannounced test of a body alarm inside the Northwest Two (NW2) case manager cellblock office. During the test, two case managers and the inspector were inside the office. The office door made of wire mesh was closed but not locked. The cellblock was on lockdown with the majority of inmates secured inside their cells. Approximately five inmates were milling about the cellblock. Two correctional officers were ushering the remaining inmates into their cells. One officer was stationed inside the cellblock's Bubble. The inspector noted it was quiet in the cellblock.

Prior to the test of the alarm, the inspector entered the Bubble to confirm whether a video feed image from the case manager's office was transmitted to a monitor within the Bubble. The monitor did not display an image of the case manager's cellblock office. The officer in the Bubble stated that the monitor has worked on only an intermittent basis since March 17, 2008. The inspector observed that the absence of a video image transmitted from the case manager office impeded the correctional officer in the Bubble from visually confirming whether the case manager could be requesting assistance in times of danger.

At 3:35 PM, a case manager activated her DOC-issued body alarm (See Attachment).<sup>2</sup> The alarm produced an immediate high-pitch tone. The volume increased as time elapsed. The case managers and inspector inside the office experienced discomfort by the high-pitch tone emitted by the alarm. After the alarm sounded for two minutes, the inspector requested that the case manager turn off the alarm. During the two-minute test, no correctional officers responded to the office or placed a phone call into the office to inquire if there was a problem.

While inside the case manager's office during the test, the case managers and the inspector observed through the office windows two correctional officers sitting on a bench approximately 30 feet away. They were separated from the case manager's office by a partially glassed office wall. The case managers and inspector had a clear line of sight of the officers sitting on the bench. During the test, the officers did not leave their seats, look in the direction of the office occupants, or appear to hear the alarm. Based on the inspector's observation, the correctional officers' actions displayed no association with the alarm sound to alert them that a case manager might need assistance.

Immediately after conducting the test, the inspector interviewed the two correctional officers sitting outside the cellblock office. The officers stated they did not hear the alarm and would not have known what the alarm sounded like even had they heard it. They also stated they were not informed by DOC management that case managers had been issued body alarms.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on information the OIG gathered, "audible, duress alarm", Model PA, 120 decibel Security Plus® Personal Alarm is designed to clip to a belt, purse, or even pants. The alarm is triggered when the pin is pulled.

The correctional officer in the cellblock's Bubble was interviewed following the test. The Bubble was approximately 70 feet away from the body alarm test. The correctional officer stated that a sound was heard and believed it to be a "fire enunciator."<sup>3</sup> The correctional officer further stated DOC management had not informed them that case managers had been issued body alarms, and the correctional officer had not heard the body alarm sound before this date.

Inspections and Evaluations Re-Inspection Team obtained image of body alarm issued to DOC Case Managers from alarm supplier, Security Plus Omni Corporation, website at <http://www.securitywholesaler.com/store.cfm?event=showcatalog&catid=3360>



Model PA, 120 decibel Security Plus® Personal Alarm

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<sup>3</sup> According to the officer, the fire enunciator is associated with the building fire alarm system.