

The American Prison Writing Archive
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ESSAY by prisoner
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Without Water

Have you ever been without continuous running water? To an average American most can't even begin to fathom the consequences of what it's like to not have access to water, prisoners unfortunately have to deal with this on a regular basis. Although American prisons are supposed to be competent in providing prisoners constant access to water, as you will see from first hand experience this is hardly the truth.

About two weeks ago our units water has been turned off due to flooding that caused a pipe leak in the city we are near. Because our water tower was dropping they decided to turn off our water. When they fixed the leak and turned the water pressure on again another pipe busted but on our units property this time. For the past week we have been waiting patiently, but it seems no matter what busted pipe they find we continuously have a major leak or our water tower is dramatically dropping. As of July 18th, 2015 we still have no access to continuous water.

The effect of this problem is not what you think. We have all seen the television and how the news says we are just restricted to having limited showers. This is not what is going on here at all. The prison is turning off all our water completely. The only thing they give us is a water cooler in the dayroom. We can't shave, shower or flush the commode. Today they only came by to turn the valve to let us flush the toilet once daily. And this is for only 10 minutes. My cellie and I are forced to poop in the cell before hand & letting it sit all day. So inhumane. My cellie is currently on restriction and forced to smell this waste all day.

Even without water continuously running, the unit is still making its kitchen workers turn out to work. I've personally talked to the ones in my section and they tell me how unsanitary it is because they can't even properly wash their hands or the food they are supposed to serve. Then to top it off they are not getting

their promised showers after working 8 hours in 99° weather. I am sitting next to two of them right now and they smell awful.

What to do? A lot of people tell me they just want to not turn out for work in their job in the kitchen. Our prison has a Farmett factory ran by inmates and they have already almost all refused to turn out on a daily bases. The morale in here is very low. Some people think they will start shipping us off the unit if they can't solve the problem. Each day we are told we are closer to a solution but always let down. Who knows maybe they will fix the problem tomorrow but for now every body is stressed.

Part of running a prison is doing continuous maintenance on your water system and pipes. Currently my section has 3 running showers that work out of 5 to shower all 48 people. The pipe in the other two showers busted. The question is why haven't they been fixed? It's been over two months since we reported this problem. Are prison is over 20 years old. We have a lot of rusted old pipes. Why not replace these before one busts? When it rains it floods and leaks everywhere inside the prison. Why not fix these leaks so mold doesn't continue to spread everywhere. Prisons have audits to evaluate their competence but truthfully these audits fail to recognize prisons temporarily fix a situation like a leaking roof with cheap material and 2 months later the roof collapses when it rains. I've seen this multiple times when I worked in the kitchen in prison.

Again a prison's budget should focus on maintaining a safe prison. A lot of money issued for other things are just unnecessary benefits that subtract from keeping the "humanity" in a prison environment.