

To the APWA and it's readers,

I hope to enlighten yall to the most recent changes of atmosphere in Texas prisons due to (1) the addition of electronic tablets, (2) the mandatory installment of air-conditioning and (3) the redesignation of prisons/prisoners related to "cool beds".

The tablets were first issued to the most violent and non-airconditioned prisons in a planned effort to avoid/reduce violence that would've increased due to the 110° heat inside prisons or the riots that would've started from being last to get the tablets (as we were at A/C Units).

The anticipated calm did actually manifest to a degree in the maximum security prisons, the prisoners were occupied with the phone app, (no more waiting lines or gang members only - dayroom phones) the games, music, e-books and podcasts/videos not only entertained prisoners, but also made it worthwhile to obey rules so you could rent the latest movies and watch it (and actually hear it!) instead of fighting over the T.V.s.

The federal court ordered TDCJ to provide airconditioning for its elderly (a subject I've written about many times), medical and mentally ill (they're prescribed medications that make them vulnerable to heat). Thus, there was a frenzy of work to be done to 'jury rig' tons of A/C equipment to very old drafty prisons which first had to be designated for such (most prisons will never get A/C) and then the eligible prisoners, like me, had to be relocated to the A/C units as the medical staff also had to be increased, and of course the younger-healthier prisoners were shipped in to replace the older ones that left for A/C.

TDCJ had known for years that they would lose the lawsuit and that they should've prepared and planned for the inevitable, but, instead it was chaos, as this system is well-known for. Medical prisoners had to be prioritized according to the probabilities of life threatening heat - even while makeshift A/C temporary units were hastily installed onto decades old prisons, cutting holes in walls and running huge inefficient plastic ductwork all throughout maximum to minimum security prisons.

I personally saw many inmates stealing parts of left-behind fencing etc... to make contraband out of, that was at Le Blanc Unit which slowly morphed into a psychiatric from its prior 'medical unit' designation.

TDCJ didn't take into account the fact that 95% of the medical prisoners who needed A/C would be approx. 60 years old, while 95% of the psych prisoners who needed A/C are younger than 30. This fact lead to the illegal assignment of younger prisoners placed in the top bunk over much older prisoners, the law states "no more than 10 years in difference."

So now, as I've written about years ago, the older prisoners are complaining and suing over being housed with 20 year old drug-smoking gang member psych prisoners. There is also an emergency issue developing at all the violent prisons because most of the older prisoners are sent to A/C prisons eventually, leaving only young prisoners to war over control of 'territory'.

There aren't enough A/C prisons to accomadate the high number of elderly prisoners in this state which issues lots of life sentences and doesn't grant much parole. The system is collapsing before my eyes.

submitted for publication.

*Perry Patterson*