



Message from Sheriff Atkins

Thursday, April 2, 2020

I had a very engaging conversation today with a gentleman who brought to my attention that there are those of you out there that may not have heard the news about the release of approximately 200 inmates from the Clark County Jail. If you are reading this information for the first time you have that gentleman to thank for bringing this to my attention.

First let me say that the decision to do so was not one taken lightly or one that I made by myself. The purpose of this action was to be better prepared in case a COVID-19 outbreak happened within the confined walls of the Clark County Jail. That outbreak could be of either inmates or staff or both; and it is my responsibility to do everything I can to see that this doesn't happen. Or at the very least, to have a process in place that will mitigate such an event to the best of our ability. You may not know our jail is 35+ years old and was never meant to hold the number of inmates we have. Social distancing is critical in limiting the spread of the infection and even in the best of times that is difficult in a jail setting. By lowering the number of inmates we have some options and more room to try our best to maintain a safe jail for all.

With a small working group of corrections experts, the Presiding Judges of District and Superior Court, the Prosecutor and I, it was eventually agreed upon which classifications of inmates would qualify for release and other methods to give relief to the jail. It was the authority of the Judges and the Prosecutor to determine what the criteria was for release; but in a nutshell, if you are a violent felon, sex offender, serving a sentence for a sexual crime, or if you have in custody sanctions that would deem you a high risk, you will not be released. The following briefly describes some of those areas visited to meet the inmate reduction.

- Furlough – Those already sentenced and still serving time and meet the criteria. They will return to the Clark County Jail to serve out the remainder of their time once the Pandemic is behind us. (This is only 25 individuals.)
 - Inmates identified as medically vulnerable, and meet acceptable risk/supervision criteria provided by the Clark County Prosecutor's Office
- Pre-Trial Release – These are individuals who are currently in jail but have not yet gone to trial and haven't been convicted of a crime. They will return at a later date to proceed with the process.
- Clark County District Court has deferred, for 45 days, those inmates reporting to serve sentences as of March 19, 2020.
- Washington Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretaries Warrants are not being accepted unless the subject poses a public safety threat.
- Northwest Cooperative Shuttle is suspended currently in Clark County, reducing daily bed use by 8 inmates. These are inmates being moved interstate and need to sleep over in transit.
- I have also instructed all local Law Enforcement to cite/ book and release those who meet the criteria.

Let me make it very clear, this action was one that was difficult to make but we felt it necessary for the safety of the community, staff and inmates. I hope this message finds you healthy!

Sheriff Chuck E. Atkins