

# Office of the Sheriff

Ernie Coleman  
SHERIFF

Office: 252-946-7111  
Fax: 252-946-0993  
Cell: 252-944-7368



August 1, 2015

TO: Chief Deputy Rose  
FROM: Lieutenant Bryan  
RE: State of the Beaufort County Detention Center

As the new Jail Administrator, it is my responsibility to conduct an assessment of the detention center to ensure that it is functioning at its best. The purpose of this is to inform you of any unsafe conditions or practices; noncompliance with current laws, administrative codes and/or best practices; and general working conditions for county employees and vendors. The impact from these circumstances varies from morale issues to safety/health issues, to exposure to liability. When possible, I have included the relevant references.

The mission of a detention center is to balance inmate safety and security with solid stewardship of county and community resources. In order to best accomplish this, we must shine a bright light on all the issues we face daily in this facility.

This list is not all-inclusive, but contains some of the most important issues:

## 1. Supervision-

### **10A NCAC 14J .0601 SUPERVISION**

*(a) Officers shall make supervision rounds and directly observe each inmate in person at least twice per hour on an irregular basis. The supervision rounds shall be documented. If remote electronic monitoring is used to supplement supervision, it shall not be substituted for supervision rounds and direct visual observation.*

*(b) In addition to the supervision rounds required in Paragraphs (a) and (c) of this Rule, each jail shall utilize one or both of the following methods of supervision:*

- (1) Direct or remote two-way voice communication with all confinement units.*
- (2) Visual contact either through direct observation or by means of electronic surveillance with all confinement units.*

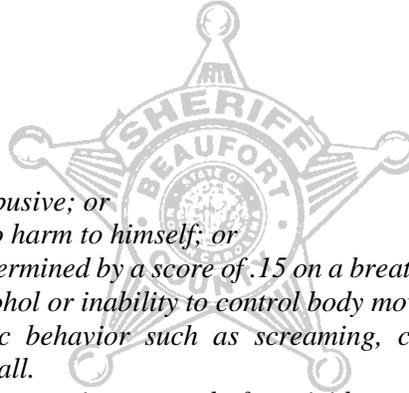
*(c) Officers shall directly observe, at least four times per hour, inmates who display the following behavior:*

- (1) physically hitting or trying to hit an officer; or*

# Office of the Sheriff

Ernie Coleman  
SHERIFF

Office: 252-946-7111  
Fax: 252-946-0993  
Cell: 252-944-7368



- (2) *being verbally abusive; or*
- (3) *stating he will do harm to himself; or*
- (4) *intoxicated, as determined by a score of .15 on a breathalyzer or displaying slurred speech or smelling of alcohol or inability to control body movement; or*
- (5) *displaying erratic behavior such as screaming, crying, laughing uncontrollably, or refusing to talk at all.*

*In addition to displayed behavior, a previous record of a suicide attempt or a previous record of mental illness shall warrant observation at least four times per hour.*

*(d) Officers shall remain awake at all times.*

*(e) Officers shall not be assigned other duties that would interfere with the continuous supervision, custody or control of inmates.*

*(f) Female officers shall be on duty when female inmates are confined.*

*(g) The sheriff or the administrator of the regional jail shall develop a contingency plan for the supervision and control of inmates during an emergency, and that plan shall provide for the ready availability of extra personnel.*

*(h) Inmates shall not be allowed to supervise or assume any control over other inmates.*

(b)(1) There is no intercom system in the inmate housing units. Inmates use this system to communicate with officers about their needs and questions, to notify officers of any problems or issues in the unit, to alert officers of fire or other imminent safety hazards, etc. As this is not a direct supervision facility, officers may only physically be in those areas twice an hour. The current method of communication is for inmates to wave a towel or sheet at the surveillance camera until noticed.

(e) Current staffing levels are inadequate. The control room officer is responsible for answering the telephone and must divert his/her attention away from the camera monitors.

## 2. Security-

### **10A NCAC 14J .0501 GENERAL SECURITY REQUIREMENTS**

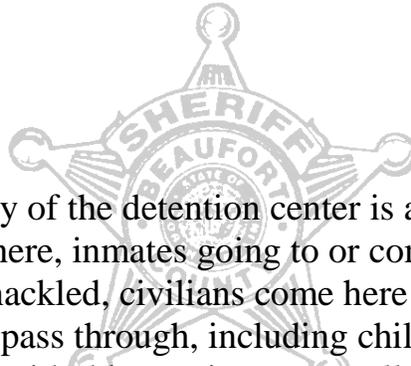
*Each jail shall meet the following security requirements:*

- (1) *provide for the secure confinement of inmates from the time of their passage through the security perimeter until release;*
- (2) *provide for the locked storage of firearms before persons enter the security perimeter;*
- (3) *prevent the passage of contraband;*
- (4) *prevent unauthorized contact between inmates and persons from outside the jail;*

# Office of the Sheriff

Ernie Coleman  
SHERIFF

Office: 252-946-7111  
Fax: 252-946-0993  
Cell: 252-944-7368



(4) The main lobby of the detention center is a congested place. All new arrestees are processed here, inmates going to or coming from court use this area to be handcuffed/shackled, civilians come here to be fingerprinted and those here for visitation pass through, including children. Given this traffic, it is impossible to comply with this requirement at all times.

### 3. Construction Standards for Existing Facilities-

*10A NCAC 14J .1507 DORMITORY AREA REQUIREMENTS IN JAILS*

(g) *Natural light shall be admitted to the dormitory in compliance with North Carolina State Building Code.*

Currently, there are two cell blocks which do not receive any natural light.

*10A NCAC 14J .1511 OTHER AREAS*

(a) *Each facility shall have sufficient storage space.*

(b) *Each county jail shall have a medical examining room that at least is equipped with an examining table and a lavatory.*

(c) *Each jail with a capacity of more than 20 inmates shall have secure conference areas, and the areas shall not have recording or listening devices.*

Currently, we are non-compliant in all three areas:

(a) The detention center has no storage space, all supplies, some records, etc. are stored off-site or in a non-secure area. This necessitates an officer leaving the facility to access the storage areas, often leaving the shift short-handed.

(b) Our medical unit only has a wash basin. There is no lavatory.

(c) There is no secure conference room without a recording or listening device, nor is there room for a conference room.

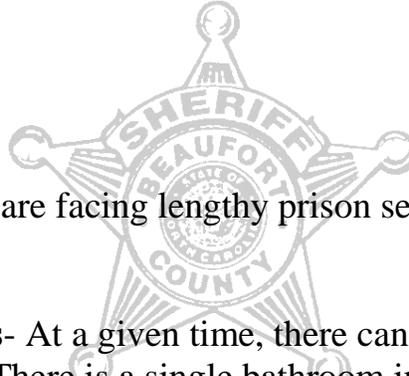
4. **Command and Control-** The offices of the Jail Administrator and Chief Detention Officer are not located in the detention facility. This causes issues with communication, command, control and safety. There is currently no room for these offices in the facility.

5. **No Sally Port-** There is no secure area for arresting officers to bring prisoners into the facility. They must park in a public area and escort the prisoner to the facility- risking an altercation, the passage of contraband, escape, etc. Additionally, when our inmates are sentenced and transferred to prison, they must leave the secure facility and go outside to the prison bus.

# Office of the Sheriff

Ernie Coleman  
SHERIFF

Office: 252-946-7111  
Fax: 252-946-0993  
Cell: 252-944-7368



Often, these inmates are facing lengthy prison sentences and may feel desperate to escape.

6. **No Staff Bathrooms-** At a given time, there can be up to 8 officers on duty, and the staff nurse. There is a single bathroom in the lobby of the jail that we use, as well as arresting officers, the public who are here to get fingerprinted, etc.
7. **No Staff Showers-** In the event of contamination (inmates throwing urine, feces, bodily fluids, cleaning fluids), there is nowhere for officers to decontaminate and/or shower. They are sent home to clean up, possibly leaving the facility short-staffed. Additionally, they are potentially putting their families at risk for contamination.
8. **Inadequate Housing for Segregation** – It is not possible to adequately segregate the following inmates:
  - a. Female Keep-Aways (enemies)-They are transferred to another facility or to safekeeping at our cost.
  - b. Medical Isolation- There is no area for inmates with infectious diseases, mobility issues, etc. They are transferred to another facility or to safekeeping at our cost.
  - c. Disciplinary Issues- We have no safe cell (padded cell) for violent inmates. We have very limited space (2 cells) for non-compliant inmates. When we don't have space, they are transferred to another facility or to safekeeping at our cost.
  - d. Vulnerable population- We have inmates who are old, young, have mental illness, etc., who are best housed away from the general population for their safety and health. We are limited to the 2 cells referenced above in #c. When we don't have space, they are transferred to another facility or to safekeeping at our cost.
9. **Surveillance-** The number of surveillance cameras is insufficient in a linear facility. There are many blind spots in the facility where the control room officer is unable to see the inmates. Many issues occur in these areas as well

# Office of the Sheriff

Ernie Coleman  
SHERIFF

Office: 252-946-7111  
Fax: 252-946-0993  
Cell: 252-944-7368

as when the officers are not directly in the cell blocks. This design is outdated and dangerous for officers, inmates and medical staff.

- 10. Evacuation-** In the event of a fire, HAZ MAT situation or weather emergency, we currently have no acceptably safe way to evacuate this facility. There is no secure area outside to contain the inmates until transportation arrives, which can come from as far away as Bertie County.