



# OREGON WILDFIRES: DOC INSTITUTION EVACUATIONS

After Action Report & Improvement Plan

December 4, 2020

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## EXPLANATION OF TERMS

AOC	Agency Operations Center
AIC	Adult-in-Custody
AAR	After Action Report
CCCF	Coffee Creek Correctional Facility
CCIC	Coffee Creek Intake Center
DOC	Department of Corrections
DRCI	Deer Ridge Correctional Institution
ECC	State Emergency Coordination Center
IC Staff	Incident Command Staff
ICS	Incident Command Structure
MCCF	Mill Creek Correctional Facility
OIC	Officer-in-Charge
OSCI	Oregon State Correctional Institution
OSP	Oregon State Penitentiary
SCI	Santiam Correctional Institution
STG	Security Threat Group
TRCI	Two Rivers Correctional Institution

## INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY OF EVENTS

In early September 2020, the Lions Head, Beachie Creek, and Riverside wildfires threatened several correctional facilities in the Salem and Wilsonville area. Consequently, 3,513 AICs from CCCF/CCIC (1,303 AICs), DRCI (766 AICs), OSCI (824 AICs), SCI (363 AICs) and MCCF (257 AICs) were evacuated, temporarily relocated, and safely returned to their home facilities when the fire danger had passed. Below is a brief overview of the events during the emergency evacuations:

### **Evacuation & Relocation of OSCI, SCI and MCCF**

On September 8, 2020, Emergency Coordination officials determined that the fire(s) would reach the Willamette Valley Floor within two hours. The Oregon Department of Corrections, in collaboration with the Governor's office, determined OSCI, SCI, and MCCF needed to be evacuated and the AICs would be moved to OSP.

- Early in the morning of September 8, 2020, members of the Department's Executive Team, the AOC, and officials at the Salem Area Institutions began discussing the possibility of evacuating institutions that were potentially in jeopardy from the wildfires.
- At approximately 10:30 a.m., Director Colette Peters was contacted by the State Fire Marshall and the State Police and advised to evacuate OSCI, SCI, and MCCF.
- All institutions immediately began preparations for evacuation. At the same time, OSP began preparing for the arrival of the relocated AICs.
- The Transport Unit began recalling resources from DRCI and TRCI to assist with transporting the AICs evacuated. The Transport Unit, as well as OCE employees and buses were used to assist during the evacuation process.
- AICs being evacuated to OSP were positively identified before departure and were processed at a central staging area upon their arrival at OSP, where once again ID was verified, and housing assignments were made. Institution priorities were focused on providing meals, medications, clothing, and hygiene for the AIC population.
- Employees who worked at the facilities evacuated assisted with loading and transporting items such as mattresses, security equipment, and other necessary items to OSP. Additionally, security staff stationed at the evacuated facilities provided additional security at OSP.
- AIC medical files, medications, and records were boxed up and separately transported to OSP.
- At approximately 8:00 p.m. on September 8, 2020, the evacuation and relocations of the AICs at OSCI, SCI, and MCCF to OSP was completed.

- The AICs were fed separately as much as possible to reduce cross contact. However, AICs intermingled with Dining Room workers and the AICs sleeping on the floors of the housing units ate with the rest of the OSP AICs. Several AIC fights occurred early in the evacuation; some were one-on-one, and some were multiple AICs (3-4). These altercations involved STG AICs and former members of their groups (dropouts). It was difficult at first to identify potential conflicts. About 50 AICs located in the Card Room requested to eat in that location rather than eat their meals in the main dining room. This request was granted. Later, more AICs made the same request and the decision was made to feed all the AICs in the Card Room rather than the Dining Room. This eventually resolved the issue of AIC fights. Meds were delivered to the AICs in their makeshift dorms.
- On September 10, 2020, AICs from MCCF and SCI returned safely to their home facilities
- The AICs from OSCI began returning to their home facility on September 14, 2020, and the relocation was completed on September 15, 2020.

#### **Evacuation & Relocation of CCCF/CCIC and DRCI**

On September 10, 2020, in collaboration with the Governor's office, it was determined CCCF/CCIC would be evacuated with most AICs moving to DRCI.

- On September 10, 2020, at approximately 10:45 a.m., Director Colette Peters contacted and the Superintendent of the Oregon State Police and he brought in the State Fire Marshall and they advised to evacuate CCCF/CCIC.
- The AOC contacted CCCF Superintendent Paula Myers and DRCI Superintendent Tim Causey at 11:00 a.m. and notified them of the order to evacuate. The Superintendents had determined the best course of action was to move the minimum custody DRCI AICs to the DRCI minimum facility, freeing up the medium custody facility for all CCCF and CCIC AICs.
- The COVID-19 positive AICs at CCCF would be transported to OSP.
- Both CCCF and DRCI immediately began preparations for evacuation.
- The Transport Unit began recalling resources from SRCI, DRCI, and TRCI to assist the Salem Transport Unit with the move.
- At approximately 12:00 p.m. AICs from DRCI began relocating to the co-located minimum facility. The minimum facility which had not been in operation, went through a brief inspection and cleaning prior to the AICs moving in. The relocation of the AICs to the minimum facility was completed around 1:00 a.m. on September 11, 2020.

- AICs at CCCF/CCIC were notified of the evacuation and instructed to bring with them their ID cards, on person medications, and a small bag of personal hygiene items for the travel to DRCI.
- Additional transport resources (buses, drivers, and security) were needed to complete the evacuation at CCCF/CCIC. The military department and a private company supplied an additional 15 buses and drivers. Parole and Probation Officers from Linn and Douglas counties provided additional security on the buses during the transport of AICs from CCCF to DRCI.
- The evacuation was completed, and the last buses left CCCF/CCIC at 12:30 a.m. on September 11, 2020.
- AIC medical files, medications, and records were boxed up and separately transported to DRCI.
- Additionally, bedding and other supplies (including food) from CCCF/CCIC were loaded on to available DOC transportation vehicles and sent to DRCI.
- The last AIC from CCCF/CCIC was processed and received their housing assignment at DRCI at approximately 9:00 a.m. on September 11, 2020.
- AICs began to return to CCCF/CCIC on September 15, 2020. Only DOC transport vehicles were used to return AICs back to their home institution, with the final group of AICs returning to CCCF/CCIC on September 17, 2020.
- The return of the AICs in the co-located minimum facility at DRCI, back to their medium facility location began on September 18, 2020 at approximately 9:30 a.m. and was completed by 5:00 p.m.

## AFTER ACTION REPORT OVERVIEW

This report is a compilation of information from the different departments and staff who participated in the response to Oregon wildfires, DOC institution evacuations. The information was gathered by the Oregon Department of Corrections.

The issues outlined in this AAR regarding the evacuation of the correctional facilities listed above, will be addressed in the “areas of improvement” portion of the report, and corrective actions will be captured in this specific section of the document below. The Chief of Security will work with all divisions involved in the evacuation process to ensure adequate plans are developed which address all lessons learned. Facility evacuations will be included in future Functional Unit exercises.

## AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT & CORRECTIVE ACTION

During the evacuation of MCCF, the AICs were not instructed to bring their on-person medications and some personal toiletries with them during the evacuation. This created extra work for staff, as medications and other supplies were retrieved from the institution later and transferred to OSP. This resulted in a delay of AICs being able to take their medications once they were relocated. Corrective action was taken in part, to remedy this during the evacuations of OSCI, SCI, and CCCF. AICs were instructed to bring with them their on-person medications and a small bag of toiletries. This helped ensure AICs had the necessary medications to receive treatment during their relocation and promoted good hygiene.

The evacuations highlighted a need to have more regular inspections of closed or “mothballed” facilities. For example, the co-located minimum facility at DRCI had been vacant since March 2016. As a cost avoidance measure by the facility management, very little maintenance or cleaning had occurred. Housing bunks had been removed and either moved to the medium facility or used throughout the Department as emergency beds. The kitchen had been emptied of equipment and was non-functioning. There were no AIC phones or kiosks because they had been removed when the new AIC communications contract was established and had not been replaced. There were no functioning cameras inside the facility as they had been moved to the medium facility to replace broken cameras. Radios and keys had to be brought over from the medium and there were not adequate batteries to ensure radios were operational. Some doors within the facility did not operate properly including the vehicle gate which had to be hand cranked open.

On the morning of September 11, DOC Statewide Safety Manager and the State Fire Marshall toured DRCM and did not raise any concerns. Additionally, cleaning supplies were available in all units, so they were able to clean as soon as their primary needs had been met. Moving forward, the minimum facility at DRCI will be maintained and kept in a state of readiness.

Having facilities house AICs above their capacity puts a strain on all the utility services. This was observed at both OSP where 1,400+ plus AICs temporarily resided, as well as DRCI with the arrival of 1,300+ AICs from CCCF/CCIC. Specifically, there was a shortage of shower and restroom facilities. When AICs were relocated to OSP and DRCI, there was a lack of restroom facilities at the staging areas. Portable restrooms could have been placed in these areas to address the need.

As an agency, we do have experience in preparing for and responding to emergency situations, such as the Cascadia earthquake disaster. Each emergency has unique circumstances that cannot be predicted and aspects of a response plan that do not go as designed. The wildfire evacuations highlighted the need for DOC to invest in additional ICS training, especially for managers and other staff asked to lead during future emergencies. DOC is currently looking into training offered by FEMA, specifically the 300 and 400 classroom trainings.

Of course, a major aspect of the evacuations was the transportation of several thousand AICs. Below are a few areas identified for improvement:

There were delays at the receiving facilities emptying the buses as only a few transport staff who were on the buses during transport removed the restraints from the AICs as they disembarked. This created a bottleneck for offloading quickly and freeing up the transport vehicles for additional trips. To correct this situation in the future, a team of DOC employees will be ready at a receiving facility to assist with the removal of restraints and speed up the disembarking process.

Non-DOC transport vehicles (school buses) were used during the evacuation of CCCF/CCIC. The school buses traveled as a caravan, meaning buses loaded waited for all the buses to finish and travel together. These buses did not have on board bathrooms. Had the AOC realized how long the evacuation would take and that rest areas along the route were closed, plans would have been made to provide portable toilets along the way and at DRCI. Due to the length of the trip and the wait to be processed out of CCCF and into DRCI, AICs who had a need to use the restroom could not, and, according to staff reports, some urinated, and in some cases defecated, in cups given to them in the sack lunches and threw them out of the windows.

A solution is portable restroom facilities need to be made available in the event of any such future emergencies where AICs are transported any great distance or are traveling for several hours. Portable restrooms can be towed behind the transport vehicles or rented and staged along the travel route. This second option was utilized by the department when CCCF/CCIC AICs returned to their facility from DRCI. Furthermore, when large numbers of AICs are evacuated, transport vehicles should leave immediately after loading. Loading should have been spaced out to allow AICs to spend as little time as possible waiting on the buses during the receiving process.

From our distribution services section which oversaw many of the logistics of the evacuations, it was evident as a department we need better contracts in place to secure equipment during emergencies. This includes transportation vehicles like buses, trucks, trailers, drivers, OCE staff and equipment, and portable restroom facilities. While some of these items were acquired through the ECC, the response time was very slow and was not adequate to meet the immediate demand. Additionally, as part of our



emergency response to incidents that require evacuations, DOC should invest in dedicated supplies such as bedding, cots, mattresses, and clothing. Having a supply of these items available that could be deployed across the state would be beneficial.

During this emergency, our need for electronic health records was re-enforced and became abundantly clear. In the middle of the evacuations, it was confusing, time consuming, and difficult to move and manage paper files. Electronic health records would have helped immensely and would have eliminated a large workload and ensured immediate access to records if needed. This would have freed up staff to focus on medications and equipment.

It became clear a better plan for meals is needed, especially during the first 24-48 hours of an evacuation. Meal services were significantly delayed during this time. Meals were delayed at OSP as well. This contributed to the stress and discomfort of AICs and affected the tone of the institutions. Once meals were restored on a regular, consistent basis, the tension seemed to decrease, and the staff were able to concentrate on other things like showers and activities to keep the AICs busy. It was learned that having sack meals prepared by non-involved facilities is key in maintaining adequate meal services. Distribution services need to be prepared to transfer these items as needed.

Lastly, during the evacuation there was a need for lots of communication with employees, AICs, and the agency's external stakeholders. With so many communications being crafted, there were multiple levels of review and approval which slowed down communications and the dissemination of information. Additionally, separate messaging was drafted for the legislature, employees, and the media. This created an extra workload. Looking at areas of improvement, the agency could consolidate messages for efficiency. Furthermore, having a clear plan for identifying who approves messaging during emergencies, balancing the safety and security of the AICs with sharing as much detail as possible in messages to the media, will mean communicating more quickly and providing a higher level of customer service and transparency.

## SUCSESSE(S)

### **Communication & Leadership**

- Staff reported overall communication was good, there was adequate management oversight and the evacuation and return were well organized. (MCCF)
- Working with more compliant AICs helped the team refine their evacuation operation, making the move of more challenging units easier. (OSCI)
- Staff and managers from all institutions came together during a difficult and challenging time, working together. Rank didn't matter; all came together to get the job done.
- Institution Executive Team members, managers, and staff worked constantly to remedy deficiencies, and make the situation better as they identified problems. They were on site, helping and available to the AICs. (OSP/OSCI/SCI/MCCF/CCCF)

### **Logistics**

- AIC staging was very organized because the institution's regular fire drills include lining the AICs up by unit in order of bunk assignments. (SCI)
- Coordination and assistance from Population Management to create and activate temporary beds was much appreciated.
- The return plan was staged over several days and went more smoothly.

### **Transport**

- DOC transport vehicles and the transport team were able to mobilize quickly and arrived before the institutions were ready to use them.
- Having the Transport Unit OIC on the ground and in constant communication with the institution IC staff was invaluable.

### **Safety/Security**

- OSP made room for 1,447 additional AICs from three other facilities for several days with no major incidents.
- The normal day-to-day tone of the institution as well as the hands-on supervision by the command staff and the OICs ensured issues were resolved as quickly as possible, avoiding small issues from becoming big issues.

### **Health Services**

- Health services staff worked closely with institution staff and Distribution Services to ensure necessary medications, equipment, and files were moved during the evacuation.
- While there were some delays, medications lines were established at all evacuation sites and minimal disruption to services occurred.

### **Distribution Services**

- Distributions services was able to meet the customers' needs and provided transportation of needed equipment and supplies throughout the state.

### **Community Corrections**

- DOC Community Corrections staff assisted in providing security for the CCCF/CCIC evacuation by riding in buses and accompanying support vehicles.

### **Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE)**

- OCE administration was part of the AOC. OCE provided buses for the MCCF evacuation and assisted in providing supply transportation.

### **Other Government and Community Partners**

- The Military Department provided three buses for the CCCF/CCIC evacuation.
- First Student provided twelve buses to assist with the CCCF/CCIC evacuation.

### **COVID-19**

This event occurred during an unprecedented global pandemic. However, evidence suggests no institution COVID-19 outbreaks occurred as a result of the facility evacuations.

## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The last time a DOC institution was evacuated was in 1996, when the Oregon Women's Correctional Center was evacuated due to the flood. This was a small institution. While the Department considered potential evacuations and had held some evacuation exercises over the years, most focus was on defending in place, especially in the higher custody facilities. No one could have reasonably predicted the department might have to evacuate seven facilities in one week, while in the middle of an unprecedented wildfire outbreak and global pandemic. Plans were modified very quickly, and all divisions of the department activated to facilitate these evacuations.

Now, having had this experience, each institution will improve their comprehensive evacuation plans to prepare for future events. These plans will include all the lessons learned during this event. The department will evaluate vehicle, equipment, and supply resources to ensure we are better prepared for events of this type. Community agreements will be developed to ensure needed resources are available.

The department must be better prepared to provide food, clean clothing, and medications to AICs during emergency events. While institutions did their best to provide these during the event, there were delays which impacted AICs, especially during the first two days of each evacuation. Additional ICS training needs to be conducted to ensure command and line staff understand the ICS system functioning during an emergency response of this level.

In spite of the unprecedented nature of this situation and the magnitude and complexities of the emergency response, the culture of the department, the relationships between staff and AICs, and the corporate knowledge of DOC ensured the emergency response was conducted with safety and security in mind, ensuring no escapes or significant injuries occurred during the process.