



STATE OF NEVADA
Department of Corrections

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Press Release

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Nevada Department of Corrections completes mission to transfer custody levels

The Nevada Department of Corrections has successfully completed its mission to change the designation of High Desert State Prison to a maximum-security facility. Ely State Prison, which had previously served as the state's maximum-security institution, is now medium security.

Over the course of several days, nearly 2,000 offenders were moved between the two institutions.

"We were fortunate to work with a number of agencies that helped make this a seamless transition, with no injuries to staff or offenders. Of course, it would not have been possible without our own highly trained officers in both the north and the south who handled this difficult operation with the utmost professionalism and skill," said James Dzurenda, Director of the Nevada Department of Corrections. "We believe this move will increase the efficiency of the Department and, most importantly, maintain a safer environment for our offenders, our staff and the community."

NDOC thanks its partners in successfully transporting the offenders, including the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Marshal's Service, the Nevada Governor's Office, the Nevada Department of Public Safety, the Las Vegas Metro Police Department, the City of Las Vegas, the Clark County Fire Department, the Clark County Detention Center, the White Pine County Sheriff's Department and the Las Vegas Paiute Tribal Police Department.

Staff at High Desert State Prison are receiving comprehensive training designed to instill confidence and preparedness when handling maximum-custody offenders. HDSP will also extend its training academy for two weeks to prepare new staff on procedures specific to maximum custody. They will also be trained on the use of Less Lethal Systems, such as pepper ball launchers.

Northern Nevada Correctional Center, Lovelock Correctional Center and Florence McClure Women's Correctional Center have returned to normal

operations. Phone privileges and visitation are restored. Ely State Prison, High Desert State Prison and Southern Desert Correctional Center remain on institutional lockdown.

Below, please find a list of questions asked by various media:

Was this swap prompted by the fighting and deaths in Ely a month ago?

The recent fight at Ely State Prison where three offenders were killed factored into the decision, but it was not the impetus. NDOC officials have been planning the move for several months due to an uptick in gang activity and violence, along with the remote nature of Ely State Prison. The highest-risk offenders will now be housed where staffing levels are greater, and the institution is closer to outside law-enforcement and medical services, if necessary. High Desert State Prison is also a newer facility with higher perimeter security standards.

Would that violence have been possible had these prisoners been in High Desert?

Violence is always a risk among offenders, especially at the maximum-security level. However, High Desert State Prison is a larger facility with more officers and more resources for separating offenders.

Why weren't the plans discussed beforehand?

This was a highly sensitive operation that put offenders, officers and NDOC partners at risk. During transport, offenders are in a more vulnerable position and could become the target of rival gang members or other enemies, which also puts the escorts in danger.

You mention High Desert has "higher perimeter security standards." What are the differences between High Desert and Ely?

By statute, all medium- and maximum-security facilities must be enclosed by at least two secure fences. Ely State Prison is equipped with the double fencing. High Desert State Prison is enclosed with two secure fences, along with a third additional high-voltage electric fence.

What officially makes it a "maximum-security" prison?

Some of the characteristics of a maximum-security prison include:

- Offenders are confined to single-occupancy cells except for scheduled exercise periods, showers, visits, professional interviews and hearings or telephone calls.
- Movement will be in restraint and under escort.
- Direct supervision when offenders are outside their cells.

High Desert State Prison will be the designated prison to house maximum-custody offenders. However, it will also house close-custody and medium-custody offenders. (Please see the attached Administrative Regulation for a more detailed description.)

Will this impact inmates on death row?

Yes, offenders who are sentenced to death will be housed at High Desert State Prison.

What is the plan is for the execution chamber at Ely?

The execution chamber will remain at Ely State Prison.

About High Desert State Prison:

High Desert State Prison is about 1,576,000 square feet and can hold up to 4,100 offenders. It opened Sept. 1, 2000. Ely State Prison opened in July 1989 and has the capacity for 1,183 inmates.