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*“Seven cities opt for a new kind of regional jail in terms of ownership, supervision modes, and technology” The SCORE jail outside Seattle breaks some new jail design ground with a combination of efficient staffing and low construction costs*

**By William Buursma**

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### **Forming a jointly operated regional jail entity**

The large regional jail that is under construction outside Seattle is generating a lot of inquiries from corrections officials from across the country. The reasons for this interest include the unique form of regional ownership and a very low construction cost. When the facility opens in 2011 the efficient staffing profile for the jail will garner additional interest.

Seven cities decided to build and operate a regional jail because they could lower their per-bed-per-day costs. A study showed that this group of adjoining cities could reduce their costs if they jointly attained a larger more efficient scale of operations. A bed need projection of 800 beds was established which includes future growth. Excess bed capacity will be rented in the interim.

The regional jail has a form of joint ownership called a Public Development Authority (PDA). All seven cities had prior PDA joint ownership experience from building, operating, and managing a 911 service covering the same geographic area. The new undertaking was named SCORE, the South Correctional Entity.

### **Stretching the governmental budget**

The new regional entity under the guidance of Interim Director Penny Bartley developed a set of cost parameters by reviewing the staffing profiles and construction costs of various existing jail prototypes. DLR Group was selected for the design commission. The general outcome in terms of construction cost for an 800 bed facility was set at the start of design in the summer of 2009. The design documents were competitively bid in December 2009 and the average-cost-per-bed came in at \$ 61,500 which is half the cost of other jail proposals in Washington State communities. This strikingly low per-bed cost for a full service jail built to ACA Standards has focused a lot of attention on the SCORE design. Hans Hansen of Lydig Construction, the successful general contractor, said “I think you are going to see this design used again and again”. Officials from counties and cities, both regionally and nationally, are contacting SCORE to find out “How we have been able to pull this together,” says SCORE Interim Director Penny Bartley.

### **Two interchangeable supervision staffing modes**

The SCORE communities are even more focused on staffing and operations cost because over the long term these costs far exceed the cost to build a facility. The economy of the regional jail concept is driven by the cost-per-bed-per day to be charged back to the communities. These costs include construction amortization, insurance, operations, staffing, maintenance, etc. A DLR Group life cycle cost analysis (LCCA) for the State of Washington showed that in a 50 year span a detention facility will spend 25% on construction, 20% on facility operation, and 55% on staffing. Achieving staffing efficiency is the sublime element in jail design.

**Vacuum Packing of Property:** The booking operation is equipped with two vacuum packing machines. One machine compresses bulky items. The second machine vacuum packs valuables onto a cardboard sheet which the offender holds up at chest high during the mug shot to substantiate the extent of the offender's property when booked

**Automated Medication Dispenser:** The medical unit is equipped with an automated machine resembling a large refrigerator that is stocked with bulk medications by a licensed pharmacy service. The medical staff programs each offender's daily medications and the machine dispenses the medication packs at the required time. The dispensing machine qualifies as a state certified "pharmacy".

**Entrée Bulk Food Reheat:** Food service staffing, kitchen size and the industrialization of the jail is diminished by buying bulk pre-cooked food and re-heating it in roll-in ovens. Bulk food can now be purchased at attractive prices from state food factories and private purveyors.

**Resilient Flooring in Exercise Courts:** The incidence of injuries during exercise periods will be reduced by employing deeply resilient sport track flooring in all exercise courts.

### **A direct relationship between the security system operator and the housing environment**

The security control rooms are located in mezzanine height "control towers" at the centers of the two 400 bed housing unit arrays. These control stations offer direct-line-of-sight viewing of the housing unit dayrooms and cells. The view includes the Direct Supervision station inside the dayroom entrance door. The security control operator overlooks all the housing units no matter whether they are in indirect or direct supervision mode. The offenders in the dayrooms are highly aware of the live presence of the security personnel in the control tower.

The security control tower design has 360 degree uninterrupted views into housing and exercise through a full height mirrored security glass wall. There is a walkway for staff to walk the window line. The control station itself is elevated on a 30" podium to achieve the best sight lines. The control station has a dual set of controls so workload can be divided in busy periods or to allow training to occur concurrently. The adjustable control stations are designed for seated or standing operation and the upper podium level is designed to furnish walk around space to alleviate long periods of sitting. The control stations each have video screens adjacent to the touch screen control surface for active commands. Approximately 6' out in front of the control stations is a low podium with multiple large screen security video displays. These displays are arranged to be just below the operator's seated viewing angle into the dayrooms. This allows the operator to view the monitors by adjusting his viewing angle downward only a few degrees. This ergonomic relationship improves operator cognizance of the monitors and reduces the extent of head movements.

### **Applying new construction technologies**

The SCORE jail utilizes contemporary construction technologies and in some instances these technologies are deployed in new applications. Examples are;

1. **Modular Metal Cell Fabrication:** DLR Group has expanded the use of pre-fabricated metal cell construction to include more unitized components. Some of these new applications include; using panels for a built-in bunk structure, internal diaphragms in the plumbing chase to provide ducted supply and return air, and prefabricated duct collars at the top of mechanical chases.
2. **Anti-Microbial Paint Systems:** DLR Group has specified a paint system with integral anti-microbial properties at all cell surfaces and cell furniture. This coating system is also used in medical and intake departments.