

CORRECTIONS 1

PRISONER TRANSPORT

TECH AND TRAINING
TO IMPROVE SAFETY

INSIDE

- Reducing inmate transport risks
 - Scenario-based prisoner transport training
 - The tech that should be on every transport vehicle
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Corrections and law enforcement officers perform prisoner transport thousands of times daily across the nation for a variety of purposes. The task can be one of the most dangerous for officers, requiring constant vigilance to ensure prisoners are both safely and securely transported.

At any time, officers could be transporting male, female and juvenile inmates. They might also move prisoners with physical disabilities or who are wheelchair-bound. In one trip, officers may find themselves transporting dangerous prisoners in the same vehicle as people charged with traffic or minor nonviolent offenses.

Keeping prisoners under control can be difficult in a controlled institutional setting, but it can be especially problematic during transport, when many prisoners may be desperately seeking opportunities to escape. Even if they're not, prisoners can misbehave and endanger the safety of correctional officers, other prisoners, and even themselves.

This eBook reviews how to reduce the risks associated with prisoner transport by implementing scenario-based prisoner transport training, the technologies that belong in every prisoner transport vehicle, and how to select and train officers for high-risk inmate transports.

We hope this publication serves as a guide for how your agency can minimize risk and improve both officer and inmate safety during transport operations.

Nancy Perry

Corrections1 Editor-in-Chief

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REDUCING THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH PRISONER TRANSPORT



The right mix of technology, training, situational awareness and effective oversight can minimize both physical and liability risks

By James Careless

[Prisoner transport](#) is a duty that many corrections officers dread, and with good reason.

When inmates are taken from their heavily secured cells and put into vehicles heading to other locations (courthouses, hospitals and other

prisons), they know that this is their best chance to escape. Many are willing to try, even if it means assaulting or even killing correctional officers and innocent bystanders.

Other inmates may try to “escape” by attempting suicide during transport. Inmates with no bad intent may still cause chaos by falling unexpectedly ill during the ride, with some even dying before officers sitting in a separate cab upfront know there’s a problem.

With all these factors in play, it is impossible to eliminate all the risks associated with prisoner transport. But it is possible to substantially reduce these risks, through the right mix of technology, training and situational awareness.

Use the right tech

To minimize the risks of prisoner transport, each vehicle should be equipped with [multiple protected cameras, microphones and speakers inside the containment area](#). These should be connected to a multi-view monitor, microphone and speaker within the cab so that officers can always watch and communicate with the prisoner(s).



Do not scrimp on equipping vehicles with proper containment and restraint systems.

These audio/video feeds should be recorded in the vehicle using a digital video recorder, and, if possible, shared using mobile/satellite transmission technology to dispatch. This will allow managers to “look into” the vehicle as needed; especially if the officers send out a call for protective or medical assistance.

All transport vehicles should always be equipped with GPS tracking and that data be shared wirelessly with dispatch. (An [automated external defibrillator](#) and [first aid kit](#) should also be onboard.)

Officers should be equipped with cellphones because radios can run into connection issues. The radios must be tuned to heavily monitored channels, rather than a jail channel that few people pay attention to.

Do not scrimp on equipping vehicles with proper containment and restraint systems, especially if one vehicle is to be used to transport inmates of differing security levels. Maximum security prisoners should be kept in secure one-person enclosures with no access to the rest of the containment area.

Properly train officers

Prison transport duty is potentially dangerous work. Therefore, only experienced officers should do it, and why they should be trained fully in all aspects of prisoner handling before doing it themselves.

Training starts with knowing how to use all aspects of the vehicle’s technology, plus [how to move prisoners safely in and out of the vehicle](#). This should be taught using other officers acting as uncooperative prisoners, so that trainees get a real-life experience of how difficult this task can be. These mock prisoners should do their best to be unhelpful and deceptive during all aspects of the prisoner transport training process, to make trainees fully aware of what they may face on actual assignments.

Since prison transports should always use two officers to ensure safety, newly graduated trainees should be sent out with seasoned transport veterans.

Know what is always happening

Situational awareness is vital to safe prisoner transport.

This awareness starts before a ride takes place, by keeping an ear out to hear which long-term inmates are boasting that, “I’ll be out of here soon!” It also includes knowing every detail of the route and stops along the way; including taking bathroom breaks at police stations and other truly secure locations.

Officers should also have multiple routes available, and only decide which one to take at the last minute to avoid possible deadly ambushes – because a quick check of Google reveals that they do happen. Experts also advise using unmarked vehicles and plainclothes officers to move prisoners; again, to reduce the risk of being ambushed.

Situational awareness also includes assessing each prisoner's attitude prior to being transported: Are they hostile? Are they scoping out every detail, looking for a chance to make a break whenever they can? Are they just acting "weird," as if something is up?

Once the transport process begins, the two officers need to be aware of what is always happening; from the second a prisoner enters their custody to the second they hand them off. This means keeping a close eye and ear on prisoners entering, inside and exiting the vehicle. This also includes knowing the layout of the destination(s) to cut escape attempts short and watching for hostile players who may try to aid the prisoner. (Again, bathrooms are very popular escape points; especially when officers allow the prisoner to go inside unattended.)

Management must play its part

Reducing the physical and legal risks of prisoner transport is very much a management responsibility because it is management who must provide the funds for the right technology and proper officer training. Management must also ensure that prison transport vehicles are properly maintained, monitored and supported; and that prison transport schedules are handled on a "need to know" basis.



Training starts with knowing how to use all aspects of the vehicle's technology.

A risky business

By its very nature, prisoner transport is a risky business. Prisoners are being put into less secure settings where they can see freedom close at hand – if only they can find a way to get to it. In this case, "getting to freedom" means barreling through prison transport security systems and personnel, which is why correctional facilities in particular, and law enforcement in general, need to take prison transport very seriously. **C1**)

About the author

James Careless is a freelance writer with extensive experience covering law enforcement topics.



HOW TO SELECT AND TRAIN OFFICERS FOR HIGH-RISK INMATE TRANSPORTS

Those tasked with performing high-risk transports should have a mastery of the basics before being given assignments with an added element of risk

By Rusty Ringler

There are always risks associated with taking inmates outside of the secured perimeter. These risks are magnified when [transporting inmates](#) who have been deemed high risk based on the severity of their crime, length of sentence, previous escape attempts, or other behaviors or factors that warrant concern.

When inmates are taken out of the correctional environment, transport officers can no longer rely on the safety and security measures available at the facility. While on transport duties, the officers themselves serve as the final barrier between custody and freedom for the inmate. This makes it vital that officers tasked with conducting transports are properly selected and trained. Some agencies may have criteria in place that have to be followed when selecting transport officers. This could be a function of a standardized bid process or through application and selection.

Some agencies may have additional discretion for specialized transports or high-risk transports outside of the normal scope of operations. This discretion could include the activation of specialized teams within the agency or could include the assistance of other agencies.

Selection of officers for high-risk prisoner transports

When selecting officers for high-risk transports, special consideration should be given to those who have a reputation for following [policy and procedure](#). During high-risk transports, following previously outlined protocols is imperative. Everything from the trip route to contingency plans must be reviewed and followed.

Not only should the transport officer be someone who can follow procedures, but they should also be someone who has the proven ability to use sound judgment when called upon to make quick decisions. The [list of things that can go wrong during prisoner transport](#) is

infinite. Transport officers need to be able to react to unforeseen situations and take actions that are in the best interest of public safety and the safety of the inmate.



One of the biggest killers when transporting inmates is complacency.

Due to the vulnerabilities of the transport, it makes it especially important that all searches are conducted thoroughly, [restraints are applied properly](#) and there's a commitment to expecting the unexpected. An officer who possesses these attributes may be the best choice.

Finally, transport officers should be "physically able." The term "physically able" refers to the officers' physical ability to carry out those actions necessary for the transport such as:

- Physical ability to render [life-saving aid](#);
- Physical ability to [defend oneself](#);
- Physical ability to effectively utilize issued weapons systems;
- Physical ability to restrain the inmate, or provide necessary assistance in restraining;
- Physical ability to conduct proper searches and properly apply and remove restraints.

Training of officers for high-risk prisoner transports

The [training a corrections officer receives](#) is only as good as the trainer. This is certainly the case when conducting training for transport.

Basic transport training should include hands-on training in conducting personal searches and restraint application. The role of the trainer is to first properly demonstrate these functions, but also be able to evaluate the trainee to ensure their thorough grasp of the concepts.

Too often, once a trainee effectively demonstrates the ability to execute a function one time, there is no additional follow-up. Quality training provides for repetition, especially in the areas of conducting searches and restraint application. Repetition in these functions creates muscle memory allowing the officer to react when performing duties versus hesitating while trying to recall the steps.

Those tasked with performing high-risk transports should have a mastery of the basics before being given assignments with an added element of risk. Once mastery of the basics has been demonstrated, a consideration for higher-risk transport training may follow. Additional training for topics for those who conduct high-risk transports may include:

- [Firearms](#) and other weapons system;
- Tactical driving;
- [Tactical medicine](#);
- Advanced defensive tactics;
- Emergency response team or tactical training.

Preparing for high-risk transport is like preparing for any other tactical situation. You train for what you expect to happen, as well as for the unexpected. Building a foundation is vital, however. Officers must master the basics before consideration for training for high-risk transports.

Summary

As mentioned previously, there are inherent risks when an inmate is taken outside of a secured perimeter for transport. There are times when the risks associated with an inmate are known. In these instances, the best way to handle the situation is through preparedness. Ensuring that



Quality training provides for repetition, especially in the areas of conducting searches and restraint application.

the best people are selected to carry out the duties is an important part of that, as well as ensuring that they are properly trained.

From the perspective of the transporting officer, it's important to remember to treat every transport as a dangerous high-risk transport. One of the biggest killers when transporting inmates is complacency. A seemingly low-risk transport could present life-threatening situations and a danger to the public. The officer who can [avoid complacency](#) day in and day out, and who can stay constantly prepared during even the most mundane transports, shows a commitment to being able to take on higher risks. **c1)**

About the author

Rusty Ringler began his career in 1997 working as a correctional officer at a men's medium security prison. While working in the prison, he also served as K-9 sergeant, lieutenant and captain. He was a member of the Correctional Emergency Response Team for 15 years and held law enforcement instructor certifications in defensive tactics, chemical agents and firearms. In 2013 he became a full-time academy instructor where he instructed courses in several topics within the field of corrections and law enforcement. In 2019 he moved to his current position where he serves as a Department of Public Safety Bureau Chief.



IMPLEMENTING SCENARIO-BASED PRISONER TRANSPORT TRAINING

Real-world training will lead to a safer environment for both officers and inmates

By Gary York

The safety of our corrections officers and the community depend on correctional facilities providing the training and tools necessary for the [safe transport of inmates](#).

Inmate transports are the weakest link in our inmate chain of custody. This is why implementing scenario-based prisoner transport training is so important. Having officers participate in real-world training scenarios is the key to success.

When prison transport goes wrong

Officer Smith was assigned to transport one inmate on an outside medical appointment to the eye doctor.

Officer Smith searched his transport vehicle for contraband prior to departure. A vehicle inspection and fuel check were then conducted. Officer Smith conducted a radio check and inspected the [inmate restraints](#).

The inmate was escorted up to the sally port area. The escorting officer said the inmate had



Scenario-based training is designed to help improve an officer's knowledge and reaction time.

already been searched and he was good to go. As any experienced, well-trained officer would do, Officer Smith searched the inmate for contraband again. Officer Smith knew the inmate was now his sole responsibility.

Inmate restraints were placed on the inmate. Officer Smith sat the inmate in the transport vehicle and placed him in the safety belt. Officer Smith called control and informed them he was departing for the pre-determined location with one inmate. Officer Smith knew to never give the transport location over the radio. Officer Smith was on his way.

The eye doctor had a history of hiding inmates from his general public patients, so he had all transport vehicles drive to the back of his private office building and have correctional officers bring the inmates in through the back door. Officer Smith pulled into the parking lot behind the eye doctor's office and called into control by phone that he had reached his destination. As Officer Smith was removing the inmate from the transport vehicle, he was approached by a man and woman who held him at gunpoint. They made Officer Smith remove the inmate's physical restraints and then used the restraints on Officer Smith and placed him in the backseat of the transport vehicle with a safety belt. Officer Smith's radio, phone and keys were taken by the

suspects who drove off with the inmate. Scenarios like this occur too often. Some, tragically, have ended with the murder of an officer. In this scenario, Officer Smith did everything he could for a safe trip. As we look at this scenario, we must ask:

- What went wrong?
- Who released sensitive information?
- Who is responsible for this?

Here are some things to consider in this scenario:

- Activate emergency action plans.
- Start a criminal investigation. Investigate anyone involved with transport documents and appointment set-ups, including all eye doctor employees.
- Always send two officers on outside transports or a chase vehicle. (Staff shortage is an issue, but officer safety is a bigger issue.)
- Do not allow medical professionals to dictate security procedures.
- Assign an administrative officer to run practice routes to all your outside medical facilities and document travel times and safest routes for officers to use.
- Consider alternate routes to use so the same route is not used every time.
- Find locations at outside medical facilities that have hospital security at the entrance to provide added security.
- Never isolate yourself from main security entrances or medical facility security cameras. Isolated areas place you in danger.
- Stop, look and listen before getting out of the transport vehicle.

Critical situations that can occur during prisoner transport

When preparing to set up your scenario-based training, here are some real incidents that have occurred and will occur again. Be prepared ahead of time through real-world training and knowing

your agency's policy and procedures for how to respond to these situations:

- Inmate medical emergency during transport: Is it real or fake?
- Escape attempts from inside the transport vehicle.
- Escape attempt by outside ambush.
- Family members or friends showing up at the destination point.
- Leaving an inmate behind in a transport vehicle. This has happened, so train to search the transport vehicle before and after each prisoner transport.
- Inmate contraband (search inmates and transport vehicles for contraband before and after each prisoner transport).
- Search transport vehicle for broken off seatbelts, plastic or metal as inmates use these as weapons.
- High-profile inmate where the media surrounds you.
- High-profile inmate where an angry mob surrounds you.
- A family member shows up at your outside destination with a gun. This will require cool heads, split-second thinking and good communication skills.
- Confronting deadly threats (train with holster drills and reactionary drills).
- Vendetta attacks (you are transporting a child molester and the victim's family finds out).
- Court transports.
- Medical transports.
- Jail to prison transports.
- Prison to jail or court transports.
- Transporting mentally ill inmates.

These are just some ideas to get your training started. Use your frontline officer's experience

to assist your training center with hundreds of more situations that can and will arise during prisoner transport.



Be prepared ahead of time through real-world training and knowing your agency's policy and procedures.

Improving an officer's knowledge

Scenario-based training is designed to help improve an officer's knowledge and reaction time when confronted with an emergency situation. This real-world training, along with knowing [departmental policy and procedure](#), will lead to a safer environment for everyone during prisoner transports. We must never forget that inmate transport is the weakest link in our inmate chain of custody. Stay safe and train for success. **C1**)

About the author

Gary York, author of "[Corruption Behind Bars](#)" and "[Inside The Inner Circle](#)," served in the United States Army from 1978 to 1987 and then began a career with the Department of Corrections as a correctional officer. Gary was promoted to probation officer, senior probation officer and senior prison inspector where for the next 12 years he conducted criminal, civil and administrative investigations in many state prisons. Gary was also assigned to the Inspector General Drug Interdiction Team conducting searches of staff and visitors entering the prisons for contraband during weekend prison visitation.



7 TECHNOLOGIES THAT BELONG IN EVERY PRISONER TRANSPORT VEHICLE

It is impossible to eliminate the dangers associated with moving inmates in prisoner transport vehicles, but installing the right equipment can reduce the risks

By James Careless

[Prisoner transport](#) can be one of the more hazardous parts of a correctional officer's job – but it doesn't have to be. When vehicles are equipped with the right equipment, the risks are reduced for both officers and inmates.

Here are seven technologies that belong in every prisoner transport vehicle to cut down these dangers based on expert opinions from professionals in the corrections industry

1. Video cameras

It is standard operating procedure for prisoners to be physically isolated from officers in transport vehicles, and for those officers to be keeping their eyes on the road.

Therefore, having a multi-camera [surveillance system](#) (with microphones) installed in the

prisoner compartment is a must. Such a system allows the officer(s) to check what's going on in the prisoner area, and to record these events to an onboard digital video recorder (DVR) for later review/legal documentation.

Ideally, this technology should be a multi-camera system specifically built for corrections use, with the live camera feeds going to a multi-window monitor in the cab. Meanwhile, two-way microphones in both parts of the vehicle will allow officers to talk to prisoners when something happens, without having to pull the vehicle off the road and open the prisoner compartment.

To provide security around the vehicle, install a 360-degree external camera system with the feeds going to a second monitor in the

cab (and being recorded on the DVR). A 360-degree camera system will allow the driver to detect possible attempts to intercept the vehicle from any direction and enable safer driving in general while on the road.

2. Remote GPS tracking and camera access

Using GPS tracking and mobile networks, corrections departments can know where their prisoner transport vehicles are. Add the capability to tap into the vehicles' camera and microphone feeds remotely, and command can see and hear what is happening in their transport vehicles in real-time.

This kind of knowledge significantly enhances officer and public safety and helps to keep prisoners safe should a driving accident or medical emergency occur on the road.

3. Smartphone maps/apps for corrections

Ruggedized smartphones are available that provide maps and apps for first responders. When it comes to prisoner transport, these maps can tell officers the precise location of secure drop-off points and pass along any electronic documents/records that might be needed for specific transport assignments.

Since bathroom breaks happen, it makes sense to mark the location of police stations along the route so that prisoners can go to the washroom in secured facilities.

4. Satellite comms in remote areas

It is not wise for a prisoner transport vehicle to lose contact with dispatch, but it can happen when the vehicle passes through areas lacking radio/mobile coverage.

Jurisdictions whose prisoner transport vehicles encounter such issues should think seriously about installing satellite telephone

handsets in their units. Satellite phones can bridge radio/mobile coverage gaps, at prices that are affordable if used only for important [communications](#).

5. A portable defibrillator

A portable [automated external defibrillator](#) (AED) can help a corrections officer revive a prisoner who has experienced a [sudden cardiac arrest](#), assuming that the officer has been trained and tested in its use beforehand. (Modern AEDs require minimal training to use.)

The AED should be mounted in the cab to keep it away from prisoners. Again, the officer(s) should be trained on how to use it and have access to a properly maintained [first aid kit](#). Having the appropriate EMS/hospital contact is also recommended for immediate advice during medical emergencies.

6. Prisoner inserts

If a corrections department is transporting various security levels of prisoners in the same vehicle, be sure to install an [insert that divides the vehicle into separate compartments](#). Minimum security prisoners can travel side-by-side on the same bench. Maximum security prisoners can be isolated in individual compartments, to reduce their danger to officers, the public, and themselves.

7. A mini fridge

Things can go wrong during a prisoner transport, dragging out the drive much longer than intended. Play it safe and put a plug-in mini fridge in the cabin. It can hold bottles of water and basic food for the trip – providing necessary sustenance when delays occur. **C1)**

About the author

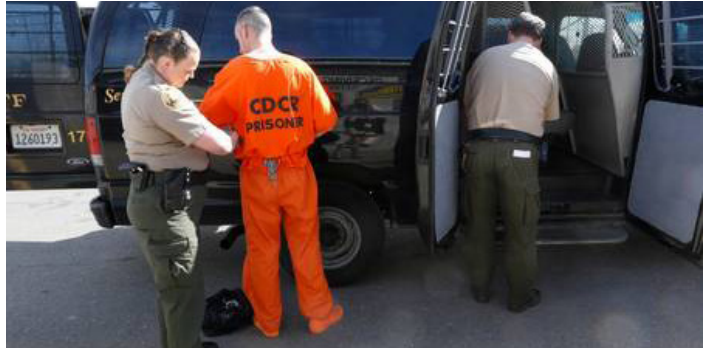
James Careless is a freelance writer with extensive experience covering law enforcement topics.

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