



May 10, 2023

DOJ OIG Releases an Inspection of the BOP's Federal Correctional Institution Waseca

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of an inspection of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Waseca, a women's prison located in southern Minnesota. The on-site inspection, which occurred between January 30 and February 4, 2023, was the first unannounced inspection under the DOJ Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) new inspections program. The OIG selected this women's prison, in part, because of the significant number of investigations the OIG has recently conducted in which female inmates have been victims of sexual assault and harassment.



*Condition of Pipes and Their Proximity to Inmate Beds in a Basement Housing Floor
Source: OIG, January 2023 (Book Title Blurred in Image)*

Our inspection found that FCI Waseca is generally well-run, with dedicated staff and an environment in which both inmates and staff generally reported feeling safe. However, we also identified many significant issues. Our findings include:

- **Serious Facility Issues Affect the Conditions of Inmate Confinement.** We found that many inmates lived in basements, with some inmate beds positioned in close proximity to pipes that occasionally leak. Further, institution roofs are in disrepair, routinely leak, and need to be replaced. The BOP estimates the replacement cost to be approximately \$3.5 million.
- **Significant Staffing Shortages Have Cascading Effects on Institution Operations.** We found that, because of Correctional Officer shortages, FCI Waseca routinely uses overtime, which can negatively affect staff attentiveness and, therefore, institution safety and security. Further, the institution temporarily reassigns non-Correctional Officers to Correctional Officer posts (a practice known as augmentation), negatively affecting the ability of these non-Correctional Officers to conduct their routine duties, which include performing maintenance and teaching inmate programs.
- **An Outdated Camera System and Contraband Create Security Concerns.** We found that FCI Waseca's existing camera system produces low-resolution video that makes it difficult to monitor inmate activity. Further, the institution does not have enough cameras to provide sufficient coverage of highly trafficked inmate areas. We also found that the institution is struggling to limit the amount of contraband in the institution, specifically synthetic cannabinoids and suboxone.
- **Inmate Programming is in High Demand, but There Are Long Participation Wait Lists.** We found that wait lists for many First Step Act-related programs contained more than 300 names. Due

to excess demand for programming, inmates can, potentially, be released without the skills they need to successfully reintegrate into society.

Most of the significant issues we found at FCI Waseca were consistent with findings the OIG has made in other recent BOP oversight work, which we have conducted and reported on publicly. We did not make recommendations in this report because, in our prior work, we have recommended that the BOP address many of these issues at an enterprise level. In monitoring the BOP's efforts to address those recommendations at all of its institutions, we will track the actions the BOP takes at FCI Waseca.

Report: Today's report can be found on the OIG's website at the following link:

<https://oig.justice.gov/reports/inspection-federal-bureau-prisons-federal-correctional-institution-waseca>

Video: To accompany today's report, the OIG has released a 2-minute video of the Inspector General discussing the report's findings. The video and a downloadable transcript are available at the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4goaBfM_eM