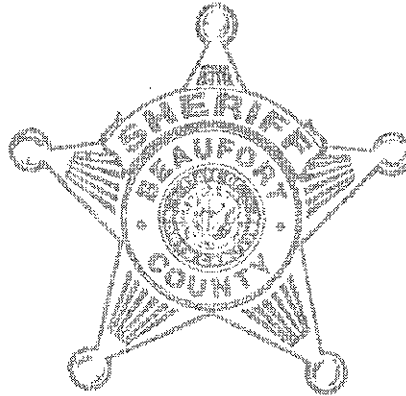


# Office of the Sheriff

Ernie Coleman  
SHERIFF

Office: 252-946-7111  
Fax: 252-946-0993  
Cell: 252-944-7368



March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Mr. Steven Lewis, Section Chief  
DHSR Construction  
2705 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27669-2705

Dear Mr. Lewis:

Jail Inspectors from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services on December 9, 2014. The following item were found to be out of compliance and required a response:

- J 34 – Direct observation of inmate: **Officers visually observing each inmate while conducting their rounds at least twice per hour on an irregular basis has been and continues to be a challenge. Inmates are allowed to have something hanging up over their cell blocks to maintain privacy while using the bathroom. A Detention Officer will be sent to the area where the blanket is put up for privacy while using the toilet. The Detention Officer will remain in the area until the inmate has used the toilet and the blanket will be taken down. Also while officers are conducting their rounds, if an inmate has any type of object hanging over their cell door and/or bars, they will be asked to remove it immediately even if it is not impairing the officers visual sight of the inmate.**

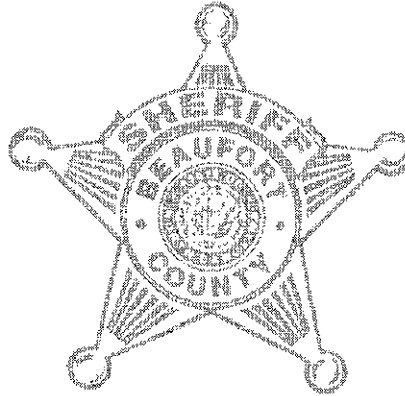
If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Ernie Coleman

# Office of the Sheriff

Ernie Coleman  
SHERIFF



Office: 252-946-7111  
Fax: 252-946-0993  
Cell: 252-944-7368

## Press Release

**Contact: Sheriff Ernie Coleman**

**for release:  
03/16/15**

---

On Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup> 2014, Deputies, Washington Fire and EMS Personnel and SBI Agents responded to the Beaufort County Detention Center in reference to a suicide that occurred inside the facility.

Investigations into the incident have been conducted by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigations, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office. Each of the investigations have found that all indications are that the subject committed suicide by hanging himself at a low level.

As the investigations were being conducted our Office reviewed all applicable laws, standard operating procedures, policies and directives in regards to supervision of inmates to make sure that our operations comply with state laws. We have interviewed our staff and supervisors to verify that our policies on supervision were being followed.

10A NCAC 14J .0601(a) Supervision, states:

- (a) Officers shall make supervision rounds and directly observe each inmate in person at least twice per hour on an irregular basis. The supervision round shall be documented. If remote electronic monitoring is used to supplement supervision, it shall not be substituted for supervision rounds and direct visual observation.

After reviewing surveillance footage and conducting interviews with staff about how rounds were being conducted we found that our Detention Officers were conducting the rounds within the time constraints of applicable laws and our policies. The rounds are documented digitally using a computerized Watchmen System and also documented on a hand-written log.

# Office of the Sheriff

Ernie Coleman  
SHERIFF



Office: 252-946-7111  
Fax: 252-946-0993  
Cell: 252-944-7368

We have known for years that our facility poses challenges for maintaining constant supervision of each inmate. The cells open up to a small day room. The day room only has one toilet that is located in an area that is within view of everyone within or around the cell block, including the Public and/or any Detention Officers of the opposite sex. The other toilets that are located in the block are within the cells that have to remain open when the inmates are in the day room. Inmates are allowed to put blankets up when they are using the toilet. This practice is unavoidable, to allow inmates the absolute minimal amount of privacy. This is an issue of human decency as well as involving rights granted by the United States Constitution.

In an effort to decrease the opportunity for an inmate to commit suicide. A Detention Officer will be sent to any area when an inmate utilizes anything to block the view of a camera or an Officer on rounds. An Officer will immediately make contact with the inmate or inmates that are involved. The Officer will have the item blocking the view removed unless the Officer finds the inmate is using the toilet. If the inmate is using the toilet the officer will make verbal contact with the inmate and will remain in the area of the cell block until the blanket is removed.

This incident is an example of how challenging it is to prevent a suicide by a truly determined individual. This subject hanged himself from such a low level that all he needed to do to stop the process was to kneel or stand up. We will do everything that we can to lessen the opportunity for events like this to occur. The changes that we have implemented are to strengthen policies and procedures that were already in compliance with general statutes.

###