



PRESS RELEASE

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Mississippi State Penitentiary Reports Progress Made On American Correctional Association Accreditation Efforts

Parchman—A major undertaking to gain American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation, begun in August is moving on schedule according to Emmitt Sparkman, Superintendent at the Mississippi State Penitentiary. Employees today marked their commitment to obtaining American Correctional Association (ACA) Accreditation in a very visible way. MSP employees unveiled a large barometer at the entrance to the prison that will show Mississippians how successful their work is in raising the standards by which the correctional system operates in the state.

“In a year we will be able to unequivocally assure Mississippians that the Mississippi State Penitentiary in particular and the Mississippi Department of Corrections as a whole are providing quality public safety and offender custody, care, control and treatment,” said MSP Superintendent Emmitt Sparkman. “American Correctional Association (ACA) Accreditation is a validation that we have a quality assurance program in place that is as good, if not better, than the best correctional systems in the country.”

MSP employees are aggressively working towards accreditation by increasing the number of self-audits pertaining to programs and procedures. These self-audits have resulted in the identification of several opportunities to enhance public safety, employee and inmate safety, and security at the prison. They include enhanced tool control procedures; strengthened protocols in the use, handling and purchasing of flammable, toxic and caustic products; and advanced specialized training for staff that enhances the skills training currently provided.

“As a team, MSP employees are strengthening the daily operation of the prison system,” said Sparkman. “In some instances we are able to identify controls that provide a true cost savings with no reduction in our overriding mission of protecting and promoting public safety.”

(more)

MDOC Commissioner Robert Johnson has set an accreditation deadline of September 1, 2002 for the three state prisons and an accreditation deadline of October 1, 2002 for all Community Corrections functions, which includes Probation, Parole, the Intensive Supervision Programs and Community Work Centers.

“I believe in the professionalism of MDOC staff and that accreditation, however difficult, can be achieved,” said Commissioner Johnson. “I refuse to accept that MDOC cannot obtain ACA Accreditation at the Mississippi State Penitentiary because of the age and condition of its facilities. My review of other states, Tennessee and Arkansas included, indicate facilities as old or older than our own, have obtained accreditation.”

To obtain ACA Accreditation is a rigorous process. It signifies compliance with national standards in correctional operation and management and focuses on the policies and procedures related to correctional services, programs, administrative and fiscal controls, staff training and development, physical plant, safety and emergency procedures, sanitation, food service, rules and discipline. ACA Accreditation is achieved through a series of reviews, evaluations, surveys and audits.

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MEDIA NOTE: The MDOC has digital photos of the briefing. If you are interested in receiving a photo(s), please call Bill Greenleaf at (601) 359-5646 or e-mail him at Bgreenleaf @mdoc.state.ms.us.