

The Need for “Man-Down” Capabilities in Correctional Life Safety Emergency Call Systems

Current conditions in U.S. corrections

Overcrowding at federal prisons is seriously jeopardizing the safety and security of guards and inmates alike. Correctional administrators agree that crowded prisons result in greater tension, frustration, and anger among the inmate population, which leads to conflicts and violence. Yet despite this dramatic increase in the prisoner population, the number of guards necessary to keep these institutions safe has not kept pace.

In fact, staffing levels in recent years have decreased. According to the American Federation of Government Employees Council on Prison Locals, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) system is currently staffed at an 87 percent level, compared to 95 percent staffing levels in the mid-1990s. The minimum level for maintaining the safety and security of staff is considered to be 90 per cent. Currently, the inmate-to-staff ratio in BOP facilities is 4.9 inmates to one staff member, whereas in 1997 the ratio was 3.7 to 1.*

Hearing the call for help

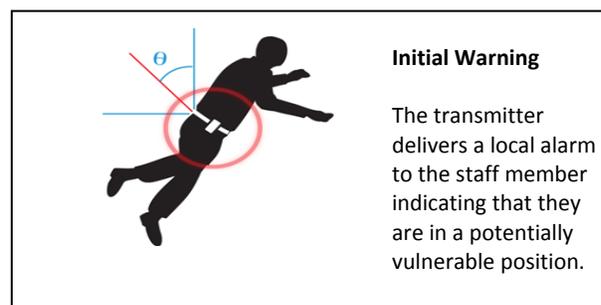
Many people might recall seeing television commercials where an elderly person falls down in their home and yells, “I have fallen down and I can’t get up”. Imagine if this were a prison worker, and that no one is there to hear their call for help or even worse, they have been attacked and are not able to make that life saving call. This situation occurs more often

now because of the overcrowding and increased violence against corrections staff. Having technology available, such as a life safety system with *man down* capabilities, could enable that call for help.

What exactly is Man Down capability?

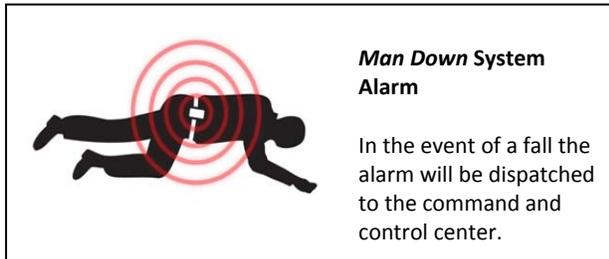
Many correctional facilities have life safety emergency call systems in place, which include devices that are worn by staff. However, a great number of them may not have the *man down* capability or may not be aware that this functionality exists.

Man down features or capabilities in a life safety emergency call system monitor the position of the device and determine whether the device is standing or on its side. These devices also provide the ability to call for assistance manually or can emit signals automatically when staff are unable to call, for example if the staff member is in a lying down state. These signals are received by the command and control center which can then dispatch other staff to respond to the emergency.



Part of the solution

Implementing the capabilities of a *man down* application will not on its own mitigate or remove risks. Most organizations find that *man down* features should form part of a total solution that also incorporates changes to procedures, dynamic risk assessment, a robust (and regularly reviewed) *man down* policy and personal safety training.



Useful questions to help in assessing a system

When considering a life safety emergency call system, there are a number of questions that security managers should ask:

- Is the system designed for the corrections market?
- What technology is being used?
- Does the system provide both location and ID?
- How does the system locate staff?
- How accurate is the location?
- Does the system have '*man down*' capabilities?
- Is the device a tilt switch or accelerometer?
- Are there additional costs to implementing this functionality?
- Are the '*man down*' settings programmable?
- Will it work indoors and outdoors?
- Does the system support pull pin functionality?

Senstar life safety solutions

With over 30 years in perimeter security and more than 20 years experience in the life safety emergency call market, Senstar is well positioned to provide the solution that is right for your facility.

The Flash, Flare and PAS products have served many sites in the corrections market globally. They have been designed and engineered specifically for this market. The Senstar life safety emergency call product line includes multiple solutions, options, features and cost points to address your facility's specific concerns. All of our systems offer *man down* and a host of other features and options which are standard.

Taking the next step

If you are looking for more information on our products and solutions and or want to learn how you can implement a man down policy within your corrections facility, our team of experts is ready to address your needs and provide you with product demonstrations and information. www.senstar.com/products/life-safety-emergency-call/

by Todd Watson, Senior Product Manager, Life Safety Emergency Call, Senstar Corporation

*Source: Matthew Harwood, "Panel: Prison Overcrowding Jeopardizes Guard and Inmate Safety." Security Management, July 21, 2009

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