

Safety and Security Must Come First When It Comes to Prison Work Release Programs

In many parts of the US, work release programs are seen as a vital tool in rehabilitating inmates in the weeks and months prior to their release back into normal society. Under these programmes selected inmates can leave prison to do paid work in the community during the last months of their confinement. Inmates must return to custody at the end of each working day.

It teaches them about the managing in the work place, normal social interaction, time keeping, paying bills, rent etc.

But work release programmes are a double-edged sword. Access to the outside world can mean access to temptation, and that may mean drug addiction and drug smuggling.

According to a recent report in the West Fargo Pioneer: The work release program at the Cass County Jail remains off limits to inmates after Cass County Sheriff Paul Laney put the program on hold for about a year ago because of inmates smuggling drugs into the facility in their body cavities.

"The problem is," he said, "in the last couple years we started seeing a huge rise in the amount of narcotics being trafficked into the facility by work release personnel."

Like many other officers Sheriff Laney is a supporter of work release programmes but officials must balance the safety and security of inmates and the public against the benefits of rehabilitation programmes. One death from an overdose in prison that can be attributed to drugs possibly smuggled in by a work release inmate, is enough to justify putting these vital programmes on hold.

Right across the US, corrections facilities are turning to Full Body X-Ray Scanners to plug this gap. Jan Steven van Wingerden, Managing Director of ODSecurity said "We are currently installing around two Soter RS scanners per week in correctional facilities and county jails across the US. Users tell us that they are amazed at what this technology can do. The Soter RS is based on the use of a very narrow co-limited x-ray beam and the exposure dose absorbed is lower than 2 μ S making it perfectly safe. Prison officers can operate the Soter RS without the need for any formal specialist training and scanning takes less than 10 seconds to find everything hidden in or outside the human body including cell phones, weapons and organic substances like drugs."