

TEXAS COMMISSION ON JAIL STANDARDS


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MEMORANDUM

To: Sheriffs and Jail Administrators

From: Brandon Wood, Executive Director 

Re: Recent Suicides

Date: June 2, 2016

Since January 1, 2016, there have been five suicides in Texas County Jails. Unfortunately, a notice of non-compliance was issued for four of the deaths due to jailers not conducting the required observation checks. It would be easy to assume that the missed checks were "only a minute or two over," but this is not the case. The missed observations were not only excessive but part of a pattern that remains an issue of great concern. The frustrating problem is that all five of the individuals screened positive for mental illness, and staff placed the inmates on either a 15-minute or 30-minute observation schedule.

Issuing a notice of non-compliance is the last thing we want to do. Therefore, we are requesting that all jails review their operations for inconsistencies in required observations rounds. We also suggest sharing this information with all employees. In some instances, jailers have lost their jobs for failing to perform their duties, and in an extreme case, charges filed for tampering with and falsification of a government record.

The improvements made since last November in identifying inmates with mental health issues that are potentially suicidal has been due to the efforts of you and your officers. It has made a difference. Without dedicated professionals such as you and your staff, the reduction in the number of suicides would not have been possible.

Stanley D. Egger, Abilene, Vice Chair
Irene A. Armendariz, Austin
Jerry W. Lowry, New Caney

Sheriff Dennis D. Wilson, Groesbeck
Sheriff Gary Painter, Midland

Larry S. May, Sweetwater
Allan D. Cain, Carthage

Mission Statement

To empower local government to provide safe, secure and suitable local jail facilities through proper rules and procedures while promoting innovative programs and ideas. The Commission on Jail Standards welcomes all suggestions and will promptly respond to all complaints directed against the agency or any facilities under its purview.