



Spokane County
— Sheriff —
Ozzie Knezovich
News Release

Sgt. Dave Reagan
477-6612
Pager 477-4209 #0348

January 24, 2011

Geiger Staff Coping with Water, Equipment Issues

At about 6 a.m. Sunday, Geiger Corrections Center lost power to the main facility control room and all of Building "A" when water four feet deep flooded the basement and knocked out pumps that keep it clear of ground water that seeps in with rainfall and melting snow.

The flooded basement contains a boiler, compressors, electrical panels and three sump pumps. Although Building "A" houses no inmates at this time, the water knocked out the staff's ability to monitor security cameras and to open and close doors remotely. It also disabled the Geiger phone system.

On Monday, Lt. Mike Rohrscheib reported that the power outage had also affected some computer systems at the facility.

On Sunday, Avista crews replaced the three damaged transformers with newer, more powerful models. However, when staff attempted to re-start the gas-fired generator, a gas leak was discovered that prevented using the boiler at all.

Power and phone service was restored to the control room at 4:15 p.m., as were lights to Building "A." The sump pumps were also working again, but back-up external pumps were set up since the system was still considered unstable.

At about 7 p.m., the sump pumps failed again and staff switched pumping duties to external gasoline powered pumps. Staff was assigned two-hour shifts to manually start the backup pumps every 15 minutes through the night.

Rohrscheib said that Sunday's event reflects the challenges of keeping the pre-World War II facility operational. Nearly all the internal Geiger systems worked on Sunday were original equipment installed when the base was constructed in the early 1940's.

The systems are failing and being repaired at an increasingly rapid rate. Roof leaks, plumbing problems and leaky floors plague the aging facility.

Electricians and other systems repair personnel were back at the site Monday working to get all systems back on-line.

The Geiger Corrections Center relieves housing pressure on the Spokane County Jail by serving as an incarceration site for minimum and some medium-security inmates. The overall jail population, including Geiger, was more than 780 inmates Monday morning.

Several inmate work programs are operated out of the center as well.

rdr