



State of Utah

GARY R. HERBERT
Governor

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Lieutenant Governor

Utah Department of Corrections

Executive Office

ROLLIN COOK
Executive Director

BROOKE ADAMS
Public Information Officer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Brooke Adams, Public Information Officer
(801) 545-5536, office
(801) 560-7608, cell
brokeeadams@utah.gov

Hunger Strike Update

As of today, 42 inmates are still participating in the organized hunger strike at the Utah State Prison. The inmates, all documented gang members housed in the Uinta 2 maximum-security unit, began the disturbance on Friday.

The Utah Department of Corrections on Tuesday began reducing privilege levels of inmates participating in the disturbance.

The move is a standard consequence for acts that are disruptive to the operation of the facility or jeopardize safety and security. The result of the decrease in privileges will vary from inmate to inmate, but include loss of personal television privileges, a decrease in the amount they may spend each week on Commissary or what they may buy, and removal of some property (Commissary, televisions) from their cells.

As officers began meeting with individual inmates in one section to discuss the action, several inmates covered their cell-door windows with paper, refused to submit to handcuffs (necessary for officers to safely enter cells) and broke sprinklers in their cells causing flooding. Also on Tuesday, two inmates began fighting within their cell. The five inmates involved in these incidents are being moved to the prison's highest security unit as a result of destruction of property, fighting and failure to follow orders.

We are grateful for and appreciate our officers and other employees who are on the frontline trying to manage and resolve this difficult situation.

UDC is continuing to offer the inmates meal trays as regularly scheduled. On Tuesday, four inmates accepted a breakfast meal tray. Two inmates with pre-existing health conditions were offered and accepted nutritional drinks.

Many of the inmates had stockpiled Commissary food prior to engaging in the hunger strike and are consuming those items. In addition, 16 inmates had placed orders last week for

Commissary items that were delivered on Monday. Those items include noodle soup, candy bars, chips, canned refried beans, tortillas, coffee, cookies and pastries, and packaged sausage.

Clinical Services and mental health employees continue to meet with the inmates to check on their well being, though the participants have largely refused health checks. In addition, correctional officers are checking on inmates in their cells every 30 minutes.

As we have shared with these inmates and several advocacy groups, UDC staff has been working for months on a new inmate classification system, ways to increase out-of-cell time and more access to programming opportunities for maximum-security inmates — all in keeping with the national trend to revise restrictive housing policies. That work continues despite the unproductive action these inmates have taken.

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