

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: Jan. 3, 2020
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LATEST UPDATE ON LOCKDOWN

JACKSON, MISS. –A lockdown of state, private, and regional facilities will continue until further notice as the Mississippi Department of Corrections continues to investigate the most recent violence in the prison system.

“We are continuing to be vigilant and mindful of the situation,” Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall said. “These are trying times for the Mississippi Department of Corrections. It is never a good feeling for a commissioner to receive a call that a life has been lost, especially over senseless acts of violence.”

Four inmates have died and several have been injured at two state prisons and one regional during major disturbances since Sunday. One death occurred at the South Mississippi Correctional Institution, (SMCI) in Leakesville, two at the Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP) at Parchman, and one at the Chickasaw County Regional Correctional Facility (CCRF) in Houston, Miss.

MDOC investigators have determined a fifth death and a minor fire, both at MSP, are unrelated to the major disturbances.

Commissioner Hall said investigators have been working tirelessly and aggressively pursuing leads to determine what sparked the violence. The department has confirmed that some of the major disturbances are gang-related. The identities of the gangs or security threat groups will not be released to the public for security purposes.

“There is a lot of misinformation fanning the flames of fear in the community at large, especially on social media,” Commissioner Hall said. “Cellphones are contraband and have been instrumental in escalating the violence.”

“I understand the public’s right and need to know,” Commissioner Hall continued. “But my department will not rush to release information for the sake of perpetuating rumors. Contrary to what is being said, we are providing information. There is a process to releasing accurate information and that takes time.”

All movement at the three state prisons, three privately managed prisons, and 15 regional facilities is limited to emergencies only. Open bay housing units continue to be a challenge to manage at all facilities because inmates are not secured in single cells.

“The MDOC, private prison operators and sheriffs of the regionals are working together to make sure that facilities are as safe as possible because of the different housing structures,” Commissioner Hall said. “Not everyone is locked in a cell.”

In addition to the lockdown and with the help of local and state law enforcement, the department also has moved inmates at MSP to more secure housing units on prison grounds to contain the violence.

As investigations continue, once the identities of aggressors are known, the department will pursue criminal charges and any other available remedies to the full extent of the law, Commissioner Hall said.