



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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November 22, 2020

TO: All Interested Parties

FROM: Stephen Sinclair, Secretary

SUBJECT: First Incarcerated Patient at WSP dies of COVID-19

On Saturday, November 21, 2020, a patient incarcerated at the Washington State Penitentiary, passed away due to COVID-19 related issues. Michael Cornethan, 62, had been transported to a local medical facility on November 20, 2020 for treatment of COVID-19 and other health related issues where he remained until the time of his passing.



Mr. Cornethan was admitted to the state's correctional system in May of 1983 to serve his sentence of life without parole, on charges of aggravated murder out of King County. Mr. Cornethan had been housed in long-term medium custody at the Washington State Penitentiary, in Walla Walla, Wash.

The Department of Corrections is saddened by this loss. The health and safety of our incarcerated individuals, staff and the community remain our top priority.

The Penitentiary's Medium Security Units are currently on quarantine status to further contain the spread of COVID-19 across the incarcerated population and staff. In August, the facility began COVID-19 testing of all staff within the facility on a weekly basis and have tested all of the incarcerated individuals housed at the Medium Security Complex.

The facility currently has:

- 38 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among staff, and 110 confirmed cases among the incarcerated population, as of November 21, 2020;
- 117 individuals in isolation, meaning the individuals have symptoms and are separated from healthy people, as of November 21, 2020; and,
- 559 individuals in quarantine as of November 21, 2020, meaning they were exposed, but do not have symptoms and are separated from healthy people.

The earlier two COVID-19 related incarcerated individual deaths occurred in June of 2020. The Department has a column on its website to [document COVID-19 related deaths](#). The Washington Department of Corrections continues to follow established [COVID-19 screening, testing and infection control guidelines](#) as the Department works to contain and mitigate any spread of the virus.

"Working Together for SAFER Communities"