



#408.09, Dry Cell Status

Policy Information

Chapter: Security and Supervision

Supersedes: New

Local Procedure(s) Required: No

Applicability: All staff (including contractors and volunteers)

Security Level: "B" – Anyone may have access to this document.

Approved:

Date Signed: 8/31/2026

SIGNED

Date Effective: 9/15/2026

Jon Murad, Commissioner

Purpose

This policy outlines the Vermont Department of Corrections' (DOC's) policy and procedures for placing, maintaining, and removing an incarcerated individual on dry cell status.

Authority

28 V.S.A. §§ 101(1), 102(b)(2), 102(c)(1, 5, 6); and APA Rule 15-032, Searches for the Purpose of Limiting the Introduction of Contraband into Correctional Facilities

Definitions

Dry Cell Status: A monitoring process that, after reasonable suspicion has been established, allows for the placement of an incarcerated individual in a cell for the safe recovery of internally concealed instruments and other contraband.

Policy

The DOC's policy is to promote safety and security for all individuals, in all its interactions. The DOC recognizes that a majority of the population has experienced a traumatic event in their lifetimes, and that incarcerated individuals under the custody of the Department represent a population with higher rates of exposure to trauma than the general population. The DOC strives to ensure individuals are not unnecessarily re-traumatized through our search practices.

The experience of being segregated and observed while on dry cell status could be traumatic for some incarcerated individuals and could trigger a stress response. The DOC recognizes this and will seek to mitigate negative impacts when staff use dry cell status as necessary to meet the DOC's mission of providing court-ordered custody and supervision with compassion and care. Staff shall interact with incarcerated individuals in a manner that is respectful at all times.

General Procedures

A. Placement on Dry Cell Status

1. Staff shall only place an incarcerated individual on dry cell status when there is reasonable suspicion that the individual has contraband in a body orifice. When an individual is on dry cell status, it shall be considered a form of administrative segregation, and staff shall follow the policy on placement on administrative segregation.
2. Prior to placing any incarcerated individual on dry cell status, facility staff shall:
 - a. Conduct an unclothed search of the individual; and/or
 - b. Use a security body scanner (SBS) to search the individual, unless otherwise prohibited by this policy.
3. Whenever possible, an incarcerated individual who is on dry cell status shall be placed in a camera cell.
4. Staff shall document the placement in an incident in the Offender Management System (OMS).

B. During Dry Cell Status

1. When an incarcerated individual is on dry cell status, there shall be 15-minute observation, in accordance with the policy on observations.
2. When an incarcerated individual is on dry cell status and is suspected of having ingested contraband or concealed contraband in their rectum, staff shall:

- a. Provide the individual with a commode, or other similar device that does not have the ability to flush waste, for the purpose of collecting any ingested or concealed contraband, and conduct an unclothed search of the individual before and after its use; and
 - b. Use personal protective equipment to physically inspect any bowel movement or other items expelled from the individual's body for the purpose of identifying contraband.
3. Whenever an incarcerated individual remains on dry cell status overnight:
 - a. Contracted health services staff shall discuss the status of the individual with:
 - i. The Superintendent, or designee, on business days; or
 - ii. The Correctional Facility Shift Supervisor (CFSS) on weekends and holidays. The CFSS shall inform the Superintendent of the discussion.
 - b. The CFSS shall document the conversation with a narrative in the incident in OMS.

C. Removal from Dry Cell Status

1. The Superintendent, or designee, may remove an incarcerated individual from dry cell status at any time, for placement in another suitable housing assignment. Such decisions shall be documented in the incident in OMS.
2. Whenever an incarcerated individual on dry cell status produces contraband or a contraband-free bowel movement, staff shall use an SBS to conduct a search, unless otherwise prohibited by policy, to determine if the individual is free of all contraband. Staff shall document this search and its results in the incident in OMS.
 - a. If the incarcerated individual is free of contraband, staff shall remove the individual from dry cell status and assign a suitable housing placement.
 - b. If the SBS search indicates that the incarcerated individual is not free of all suspected contraband, the incarcerated individual may be returned to dry cell status.
 - c. If the SBS search is unclear, the incarcerated individual may be returned to the dry cell status.
3. When an incarcerated individual is suspected of having ingested contraband or concealed contraband in the rectum, and SBS searches are inconclusive, the individual may remain on dry cell status until the individual produces two contraband-free bowel movements.
4. In cases when an incarcerated individual on dry cell status has produced contraband or a contraband-free bowel movement and an SBS search is prohibited under policy, staff shall remove the individual from dry cell status and assign a suitable housing placement.

- a. If there is reasonable suspicion that the incarcerated individual still has contraband in a body orifice, the Superintendent may approve leaving the individual on dry cell status until the individual is believed to be free of contraband, in accordance with this policy.
 - b. The CFSS shall document the removal of the individual from dry cell status, or its continuation, in the incident in OMS.
- 5. Whenever an incarcerated individual remains on dry cell status overnight, staff shall use an SBS to conduct a search the following morning, unless otherwise prohibited by this policy, to determine if the individual is still suspected of concealing contraband. Staff shall document this search and its results in the incident in OMS.
 - a. If the SBS search indicates that the incarcerated individual is not concealing contraband, staff shall remove the individual from dry cell status and assign a suitable housing placement.
 - b. If the SBS search indicates that incarcerated individual may be concealing contraband:
 - i. Staff shall return the incarcerated individual to dry cell status; and
 - ii. The CFSS shall notify the Superintendent.
- 6. Whenever an incarcerated individual remains on a dry cell status for more than 72 hours:
 - a. The Superintendent, or designee, shall contact the Facilities Division Director, or designee, to discuss whether or not the dry cell status should continue. The Director may consult with any appropriate staff to inform the discussion.
 - b. The Superintendent shall document the discussion with the Facilities Division Director in the incident in OMS, and include the names of any staff with whom the Director consulted. The Superintendent shall then make and document the determination.
 - i. If the Superintendent determines that the dry cell status should be ended, facility staff shall remove the individual from dry cell status and assign a suitable housing placement.
 - ii. If the Superintendent determines that the dry cell status should be continued, and the incarcerated individual remains on dry cell status for another 24 hours the Superintendent, or designee, shall contact the Facilities Division Director, or designee, to discuss the case again. This discussion shall be documented in the incident in OMS. Such discussions shall continue on a daily basis until the incarcerated individual is removed from dry cell status.