

Hello, my name is Tiffany Forristal. I am representing myself. First I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns about and suggestions for TDCJ.

It's important to me that you know my concerns are both humanitarian in general, and deeply personal. Every week before I talk to my brother, who is imprisoned, I worry that the phone won't ring and our previous call will be the last time we get to speak. And every time I hang up, I hope it isn't the last. Especially in the summer when it is over 100 degrees outside, and inside his unit is even hotter. When on a good day they only get 2 coolers of ice every 6 hours. After sleeping on the concrete floor because everything else is too hot. On a bad day, or week, there is no running water at all, not even to flush toilets. In those cases I've been told by TDCJ staff that the provided 5 gallon of water for 84 people once every 5 hours is sufficient in the summer heat, even though that's less than 1 cup per person. And they have to watch helplessly as their peers with health conditions, and sometimes healthy ones, never return from medical, but it's inexplicably not considered heat related.

On top of being too hot, and not having reliable water, many units have large quantities of black mold and mildew in the showers, the dining halls are infected with roaches and rodents, often the food being served is spoiled, and the sack lunches they receive while on lock-down are also rotten.

When they do file grievances those frequently get "lost" or damaged beyond legibility and much of the time are followed with retaliation. I hope for all of us, we can remember that prisoners are still people who we must treat humanely lest we lose our own humanity. Food, water, and safe shelter are the bare minimum.

My suggestions for improvements include more independent oversight, work programs counting towards time served, granting parole more often for appropriate non-violent and eligible candidates, more transparency in communication of policies and decisions, and install climate control systems.

I hope we can all strive towards more humanity. Thanks again for your time and consideration.

In addition to the previous text, which is a copy of my oral comments made at the hearing on November 14th, 2024, I would like to add more concerns and evidence to the record.

In a conversation with my brother in 2022 he said when he was at the Telford Unit in New Boston, TX and they were being served spoiled food while on lock-down in 2015 it took the inmates' family members reaching out to investigative journalists who then found that TDCJ was lying in order for anything to be done any differently.

While at the Wallace Unit in Colorado City, TX he was also aware of 2 inmate deaths in that unit. Neither were attributed to heat-related conditions, despite it being well over 100 degrees and the Unit having multiple problems with their water supply.

May 15, 2022

Inmate :

Housing : H wing (heat restricted)

Passed out and pronounced deceased the same day.

July 26, 2022

Inmate :

Housing : B wing

Passed out with a heart condition. In the Hospital for 1 month then pronounced deceased.

The following are copies of correspondence with TDCJ about the heat, water, and inmates at the unit in 2022.

from: tiffany stairhime  
to: Edmundo.Cueto@tdcj.texas.gov,  
miguel.martinez@tdcj.texas.gov,  
stephen.bryant@tdcj.texas.gov  
bcc: ombudsman@tdcj.texas.gov  
date: Jun 29, 2022, 2:32 PM  
subject: Water access  
mailed-by:

Greetings,

I am writing to see what can be done about the recurring and systemic issue of ensuring inmates have water while incarcerated.

There have recently been issues at the Wallace Unit where the water supply for the entirety of Colorado City was not working. I understand this is not something that TDCJ can influence or control. What is possible to control is the response of TDCJ.

On multiple occasions this year, and 3 times in a 2-week span, a boil water notice has been issued at this unit. Of course, inmates cannot boil water for themselves. The hotpots that they are allowed to have do not get hot enough. I understand this is more so they know not to drink from the taps. The issue is that at this unit either entirely insufficient quantities of water are provided, or in some instances, specifically Tuesday, June 14th, no water was provided at all. Frequently the water that has been provided is 5 gallons every 5 hours to serve 84 inmates. That's not even enough for every inmate to get 1 cup of water every 5 hours. With the temperatures being over 100F that is entirely insufficient. When there is water at all. Sometimes there isn't any water and they can't even flush a toilet for over 24 hours.

As I understand it this is not in line with TDCJ policy. Currently, the situation is dangerous. Inmates risk heat stroke, death, or the long-term health problems possible from drinking contaminated water.

To be clear, my goal is to find ways to prevent this issue. Do they need more water trucks? In anticipation of this, should TDCJ have reserve drinking available in such a remote location? Can a deal be made with a water delivery service? Something needs to be done on a systemic level to address this. I would love to know what action plans would be feasible and action plans for implementation. I understand an entity such as TDCJ cannot pivot policy on a dime, but this is a very time-sensitive issue, and I hope something can be done to remedy the issue soon.

Thank you,  
Tiffany Forristal

from: Stephen Bryant <Stephen.Bryant@tdcj.texas.gov>  
to: tiffany stairhime  
date: Jul 1, 2022, 2:21 PM  
subject: RE: Water access  
mailed-by: tdcj.texas.gov

Mrs. Stairhime,

We thank you for your email concerning the water pressure issues and Boil Water notice issued to the Wallace Unit early this month.

On June 8, 2022 through June 14, 2022 the Wallace Unit was under a boil water notice due to Colorado City having water line breaks throughout the city on June 8, 2022. The Unit did experience low water pressure for approximately 6 hours on June 8, 2022 and once pressure was restored a boil water notice was issued by Colorado City Water Department. During the 6 hours of low pressure we did provide buckets of water inside the cells to allow for inmates to flush toilet along with portable toilets being provided. TDCJ did respond with a potable water tanker in order to provide drinking water for the staff and inmates. The potable water tanker was refilled with potable water from an unaffected area of the Boil Water Notice. Bagged ice was utilized to provide cold drinking water to staff and inmates on an as needed basis. The water coolers were refilled as needed throughout each day of the event to ensure everyone had access to drinking water. Water services to the cells was not affected and the inmates were allowed to flush their toilets at any time. Inmates were also advised of the Boil Water Notice and advised to not drink the water provided inside the cells.

TDCJ does work closely with our utility providers to ensure repairs are expedited to minimize the time for repairs. We are also prepared to handle the isolated issues that occur from time to time on a facility. This was an unforeseen circumstance; however, the agency response to the

situation was handled according to TDCJ policy. Please contact us if you any other questions or concerns.

Stephen Bryant  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice  
Director III CID Region 5

from: tiffany stairhime  
to: Stephen Bryant <Stephen.Bryant@tdcj.texas.gov>  
date: Jul 5, 2022, 1:14 PM  
subject: Re: Water access  
mailed-by:

Good afternoon Mr. Bryant,

I appreciate your response. However, I still have concerns.

Please understand my biggest concern is trying to ensure that every inmate always has sufficient water. If there is anything I can do personally to help, I am happy to do so. Also, my concerns are not exclusive to the boil water notice and pressure issues in June. There have been reports coming out of the unit throughout the year that when a boil water notice is issued that not every inmate is actually receiving a quantity of water that would be considered sufficient.

Again, I understand that there will always be circumstances beyond the control of TDCJ when it comes to the supply of utilities. Emergencies happen.

I appreciate that in June a potable water tanker was on-site to provide water, ice was provided for drinking and keeping cool in such extreme heat, and buckets of water were provided for toilet flushing. These seem like appropriate and reasonable measures to address the issue.

Still, not every inmate actually had sufficient water. You said water was provided on an as-needed basis. I'm not sure where the breakdown is in what was provided to the unit, but every time a boil water notice has been issued on this unit I hear that inmates are only supplied with 5 gallons every 5 hours to serve 84 inmates. At 16 cups per gallon, and 8 ounces per cup, 5 gallons is 640 ounces. 640 ounces divided by 84 people is 7.619 ounces per person. This basic math indicates that not every inmate is actually getting a sufficient quantity of water in these situations. Also, specifically on Tuesday, June 14th while on lock-down and under a boil water notice, some inmates did not receive any water at all.

What I want to figure out is how to get a sufficient quantity to inmates in such circumstances. As it has happened multiple times already this year, I expect this issue to come up again, and I find it

imperative to do everything I can to ensure every inmate actually gets a sufficient quantity of water into their hands. I can reach out to water supply companies and charitable organizations if that would help.

Thank you again,  
Tiffany Forristal

from: tiffany stairhime  
to: Stephen Bryant <Stephen.Bryant@tdcj.texas.gov>  
cc: Edmundo.Cueto@tdcj.texas.gov,  
miguel.martinez@tdcj.texas.gov,

,  
amitra@texastribune.org  
date: Jul 11, 2022, 11:41 AM  
subject: Re: Water access  
mailed-by:

Hello again,

As an update to this situation, I recently found out that one inmate did die at this unit this year from heat stroke.

I am further horrified by the situation, and I will not stop advocating for inmates. Something has got to change.

What can be done to amend the situation? Can I personally raise funds and order water trucks to be shipped to the unit? These human beings need more water, more ice, and some way to escape the extreme heat.

Thank you,  
Tiffany Forristal

from: Ombudsman <Ombudsman@tdcj.texas.gov>  
to: tiffany stairhime  
date: Aug 12, 2022, 3:33 PM  
subject: Re: Water access  
mailed-by: tdcj.texas.gov

Please find attached the information responsive to your inquiry.

Thank you,

Texas Board of Criminal Justice  
Office of the Independent Ombudsman

Phone:

Fax:

## Texas Board of Criminal Justice

Our mission is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime.

Patrick L. O'Daniel

Chairman

TBCJ - Office of the Independent Ombudsman

[ombudsman@tdcj.texas.gov](mailto:ombudsman@tdcj.texas.gov)

August 12, 2022

Inquiry No.:

Tiffany Forristal

RE: Wallace Unit

### Background:

This correspondence is in response to concerns you presented to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) Office of the Independent Ombudsman regarding the water at the Wallace Unit. You also expressed concern alleging the amount of drinking water provided to the inmate population by Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) during a recent boil water notice was insufficient, or that they were not provided water on June 14, 2022. You also expressed concern alleging the inmates were unable to flush their cell toilets for over a 24-hour period.

### Action Taken:

We have been advised by the Wallace Unit Administration that an investigation was conducted regarding your concerns at our request. Unit administrators relayed the unit did experience low water pressure for approximately six hours on June 8, 2022, and once pressure was restored, a boil water notice was issued by Colorado City Water Department. In addition, during the six hours of low pressure, the unit administration did provide buckets of water inside the cells to allow for inmates to flush toilets along with portable toilets being provided. Furthermore, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) did respond with a potable water tanker to provide drinking water for the staff and inmates. The potable water tanker was refilled with potable water from an unaffected area of the boil water notice. Additionally, bagged ice was utilized to provide cold drinking water to staff and inmates.

Conclusion:

The Wallace Unit Administration reported that TDCJ does work closely with utility providers to ensure repairs are expedited to minimize the time for repairs. The agency's response to the situation was handled according to TDCJ policy.

Recommendation:

None

Sincerely,  
Cindy Catoe-Ombudsman I  
TBCJ - Office of the Independent Ombudsman

from: [redacted]  
to: Tiffany Forristal  
date: Jun 30, 2022, 11:00 AM  
subject: Fw: Results from your online form - Ombudsman Request  
mailed-by:  
signed-by:

From: Ombudsman <Ombudsman@tdcj.texas.gov>  
Sent: Thursday, June 30, 2022 10:56 AM  
To: [redacted]  
Subject: RE: Results from your online form - Ombudsman Request

Thank you,  
Dianira A. Verástegui

Ombudsman 1  
Texas Board of Criminal Justice  
Office of the Independent Ombudsman

-----Original Message-----

From: webform@tdcj.texas.gov <webform@tdcj.texas.gov>  
Sent: Thursday, June 23, 2022 3:20 PM  
To: Ombudsman <Ombudsman@tdcj.texas.gov>; Webadmin <webadmin@tdcj.texas.gov>  
Subject: Results from your online form - Ombudsman Request

Submitted: Thursday, June 23rd, 2022 at 03:19 PM.

Name: [redacted]  
Relation: Parent  
Date of Incident: 06/06/2022  
Address: [redacted]  
Phone: [redacted]

E-Mail: [redacted]

Unit Currently Assigned: Wallace  
Offender Number: [redacted]  
Offender DOB: [redacted]  
Offender Name: [redacted]  
Unit of Incident: Wallace

Request: The unit is having difficulty getting water to the inmates. A 5 gallon Igloo cooler for each building is insufficient for 84 men per building. The temperature is over 100 degrees they live in an un-air conditioned concrete building and 5 gallons of water is only 8 ounces per man. I believe this constitutes Physical Harm. I have spoken to Assistant Warden West and he assures me they are following TDCJ guidelines but this doesn't seem like enough. I believe more water is needed. Colorado City had a water main break and for 2 days the Igloo cooler was the only water they had. There was no water from the faucet. Thank you for your attention to this matter.  
[redacted]

Issue Codes: 000

Assign to: \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Request:

Texas Board of Criminal Justice

Our mission is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime.

Patrick L. O'Daniel  
Chairman  
TBCJ - Office of the Independent Ombudsman

ombudsman@tdcj.texas.gov

June 30, 2022

Inquiry No.:

[redacted]

[redacted]



Re: [redacted]

#### Background

This correspondence is provided in response to concerns you directed to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) Office of the Independent Ombudsman. You expressed concerns that there is insufficient water for the unit.

#### Action Taken

A review was conducted by the Wallace Unit at our request and Senior Warden (SW) Cueto was assigned to investigate your allegations. SW Cueto interviewed Inmate [redacted] who stated that he told you about the situation with the water on the unit. On June 7, 2022, the Wallace Unit was notified to shut off the water due to a water main leak off unit in Colorado City, Texas. All proper notifications were made, and the regional maintenance water tanker, which was filled with clean water from outside of Colorado City, was dispatched to the Wallace Unit for drinking and any food preparations necessary. The boil water notice was in effect until approximately 12:20pm, Friday, June 10, 2022.

#### Conclusion

At the conclusion of this matter, Warden West was interviewed and stated that he explained to you the water issue and procedures in place for ice/water for your son.

#### Recommendation

None.

Please feel free to contact this office should you have additional concerns.

Sincerely,

Dianira Verástegui, Ombudsman I

TBCJ Office of the Independent Ombudsman

Cc: File