

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE INFORMATION ON INCIDENT REVIEW

Introduction:

This review is a summary of the circumstances surrounding the escape from custody of an offender while being transported from the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility to the Dartmouth Provincial Court by Sheriff Services on February 15, 2012.

Consideration:

The review considered:

- The actions taken in response to the incident
- Whether all applicable policies and procedures were followed
- Whether staff were in compliance with operational standards and requirements

Issue:

The offender was being taken to a court appearance in Dartmouth in a Sheriff Services secure-transport van on the morning of Feb. 15. The offender was able to escape custody during the transport and was at large in the community until arrested by police several hours later.

Facts:

The offender was remanded to the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility on July 29, 2011.

The offender was loaded into a Sheriff Services secure transport van with seven other offenders on February 15, 2012 to be taken to a court appearance in Dartmouth.

At approximately 9:30 am, the offender broke a window of a secure containment unit inside the transport van and exited the containment unit. He opened the van's exterior rear cargo door, left the van and rode on the step bumper on the rear of the vehicle while the vehicle was en route to Dartmouth Provincial Court. He left the step bumper of the vehicle prior to its arrival at the Provincial Court building.

Findings:

The two Deputy Sheriffs assigned for the transport of offenders to the Dartmouth Provincial Court did not handcuff the offender before placing him in the secure-transport van on February 15, 2012, contrary to Sheriff Services policy.

The two Deputy Sheriffs assigned to the transport of offenders to the Dartmouth Provincial Court did not account for the extra set of handcuffs that was left over after restraining the offenders.

The two Deputy Sheriffs assigned for the transport of offenders to the Dartmouth Provincial Court did not maintain constant observation and supervision of the offenders in the transport vehicle, contrary to Sheriff Services policy.

Leg restraints were put on the offender, but the offender subsequently managed to remove the restraint from one leg while he was at large in the community.

The offender successfully breached the window of the secure compartment unit and exited the transport van.

The window in the secure containment unit was found to be defective, and did not meet the specifications as required by Sheriff Services.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS AS A RESULT OF THE REVIEW

The issue of restraints and handcuffs, accounting for the extra handcuffs and offender observation has been addressed with staff through discipline measures.

Sheriff Managers are required to monitor all restraints for defective mechanisms and replace as necessary.

Secure glass in all secure transport prisoner vans has been examined or replaced and reinforced by metal screens or bars.

The process of loading prisoners and risk assessment at Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility is being reviewed.