



New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

“Keeping New York Safe”

Officers Injured in Fire at Green Haven Correctional Facility

Five Officers Sustain Smoke Related Injuries Extinguishing Fire

May 13, 2021

Stormville, NY – Five officers sustained smoke inhalation, including one officer who needed to be airlifted to The Burn Center at Westchester Medical Center, after a fire was intentionally set inside a cell at Green Haven Correctional Facility, using state-issued hand sanitizer.

On Saturday, May 8, a fire alarm was activated on one of the cell blocks at the maximum security prison. Officers observed a fire and smoke coming from an inmate’s cell. The officers opened the cell, evacuated the lone occupant, as well as the remaining inmates on the cell block who were then all moved to the recreation yard while staff battled a heavy smoke condition. Ultimately staff were able to extinguish the fire, followed by ventilating the cell block until the smoke dissipated.

The investigation determined the fire was intentionally set, using matches and the state-produced hand sanitizer, NYS Clean. The inmate’s belongings inside the cell sustained minor damage.

Three officers sustained smoke-related injuries and were transferred to Vassar Brothers Medical Center for medical care.

Ultimately, one of those officers needed to be airlifted to The Burn Center at Westchester Medical Center for additional treatment. He has since been released from the hospital and is recovering at home.

Two other officers on the cell block sustained only minor smoke inhalation and were treated by facility medical staff. They remained on duty.

The inmate, whose cell the fire was intentionally started in, sustained burns to his forehead and face. He was treated by facility medical staff.

The investigation, which is on-going, has not determined who set the fire.

Also during the incident, two inmates began fighting in the yard. They were given orders to stop, and while one inmate complied, the second inmate continued to be combative and officers needed to use body holds to force him to the ground. Once on the ground, the inmate complied.

Both inmates were removed from the yard and face disciplinary charges.

During the scrum, one officer sustained minor injuries to his wrist and ankle. He remained on duty.

“First, I am very thankful that all the officers who sustained smoke-related injuries are doing well. I’m especially grateful to hear that the officer who needed to be airlifted to the Westchester Burn Unit is at home and resting. While he may be recovering at home, we do not know the long term effects of his exposure to the smoke. We are seeing a disturbing trend in our facilities where inmates are using the state-produced “NYS Clean” hand sanitizer as an accelerant. While Governor Cuomo touts its flowery-scented elegance, inmates are starting to use it as a weapon. DOCCS needs to take a hard look at ensuring the hand sanitizer is being used to fight the pandemic, not cause chaos in our prison facilities. Otherwise, we will continue to see similar situations like this occur and more people will get hurt.” - stated, Chris Moreau, NYSCOPBA Mid-Hudson Region Vice President