



Iowa State Penitentiary

Interoffice Memorandum

Nick Ludwick
Warden

ISP ESCAPE SUMMARY
July 4, 2015 Escape
Inmate Justin Kestner #6488594

On July 5, 2015 at approximately 0445 hours, CO Joel Davis notified Captain Kevin Birdsell that offender Justin Kestner, who resides in JBU, A Pod-Cell 9 was unresponsive for count. Captain Birdsell assembled a team of officers for a welfare check of offender Kestner.

Upon entry into the cell, the team discovered that the blankets on the bed were covering a form that appeared to be a body. The head was made of insulation, the arms were made up of milk cartons, and the rest of the body was made with pillows and clothing. Staff immediately determined that offender Kestner was missing.

Captain Birdsell notified Lieutenant Mark Shanstrom of a possible escape and at 0500 Lieutenant Shanstrom advised all ISP staff of same. At 0509 all offender workers from food service, the hospital and JBU were returned to their units. Initial contacts of the ISP Management Team and local law enforcement were made beginning at 0515. At 0525 an emergency count was initiated with the outcome determining offender Kestner was missing. Staff arriving for first shift were briefed on the situation and began searching the grounds of the institution and surrounding areas.

The Incident Command Center, led by Warden Ludwick, was initiated by 0700 in the Warden's Conference Room including representatives from the Fort Madison Police Department (FMPD), Lee County Sheriff's Office (LCSO), Iowa State Patrol (ISP) and the Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI). Surrounding state agencies were contacted by 0716. The ISP alert whistle was sounded at 0727 to notify Fort Madison residents surrounding the facility. Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility (MPCF), CERT and Anamosa State Prison (ASP), K-9 were contacted for assistance. A media checkpoint under the supervision of PIO Rebecca Bowker was established in the IPI Warehouse west of the facility.

Warden Ludwick ordered closure of A Pod with all offenders being relocated to Cell House 319.

Residents in cabins along the river reported seeing an individual between 2300 and 2400 hours moving north along the tracks on the evening of Saturday, July 4, 2015. Residents reported the male was wearing gym shorts and a light colored t-shirt. Kestner allegedly stated he had escaped from the prison and that he was not a bad guy. He stated he was just in for stealing cars and was on his way to see a girl.

At 0845 a stolen vehicle was reported. The Green Pontiac Grand Prix, License Number 030-2NA was last seen around midnight. The stolen vehicle was discovered abandoned in a wooded area near Geneseo, Illinois.

Incident Command was notified at 0955 that an individual matching offender Kestner's description was apprehended while walking along Illinois Route 82, approximately one half mile south of Interstate 80. Kestner was transported to the Henry County Jail in Cambridge, Illinois. Identity was confirmed at 1015 by the Iowa DCI. Steps were taken to ensure offender Kestner would be returned back to the Iowa State Penitentiary immediately. The transport team left ISP at 1235 to retrieve offender Kestner.

The CERT Team, including Captain John Fedler, were instructed by Warden Ludwick to take photos of offender Kestner prior to loading him in the vehicle for the return trip. The photos revealed scrapes along his torso and bruising on the legs that were not fresh bruises. Offender Kestner spoke openly during the transport stating the injuries were from prior test runs through the tight pipe chase and attic area between June, 28th and his eventual escape on July 4th.

Kestner indicated he noticed that some of the screws on his stainless steel shower were partially loose after being placed in cell A-9 on June 25th. He stated he worked a couple screws out and used them to help remove additional screws that allowed him access to the pipe chase adjacent to his cell. Upon gaining access to the chase, Kestner claimed he climbed up the chase and into the attic. He used the attic space to store the dummy, sheets fashioned into rope and additional sheets. He attached another sheet to the screw openings in the shower to pull it back into place so his absence would not be detected. He gained access to the roof after crawling through the attic and locating a vent. He reported nearly being caught by staff while making his practice runs.

Offender Kestner reported leaving the facility approximately 45 minutes after the 9:00 p.m. count on Saturday, July 4th. He claims that he waited until the fireworks display had started as tower staff would likely be distracted and it would be less likely to be noticed as he walked toward the parking lot following a shift change. Offender Kestner had sufficient rope to be within five feet of the ground from an 82 foot roof but opted to descent on the downspout attached to the building outside of the fence which was also blocked by the ongoing boiler room construction.

Offender Kestner crossed into the Willow Patch area along the river and encountered various citizens attending a local party. He was told to follow the railroad tracks north after asking how he could get to Interstate 80. He confirmed theft of the auto in Wever and reported stopping at a couple gas stations asking for directions. Kestner confirmed he was wearing a gray offender's t-shirt and shorts he had fashioned from a blue t-shirt along with white tennis shoes. He reported throwing the t-shirt out on I-80 and donning an Iowa t-shirt he found in the vehicle. Kestner was wearing an Iowa shirt upon his arrest.

Investigation of the incident confirmed many of the statements made to the transport team by offender Kestner.

Actions Taken

Investigation of escape revealed policy and procedural errors. The lack of timely rounds, accurate log book entries by housing staff, routine quartermaster inventories, frequent cell searches and rounds by Shift Commanders and above have been addressed.

The cells on A Pod and B Pod in the JBU have been taken off line and are permanently closed.

ISP Administration has made significant security enhancements at the new institution, primarily through the addition of razor wire/concertina wire and no-climb wires in several areas of the physical plant. Through a collaboration of agency-wide assistance, ISP has fortified all of the fences previously deemed as barrier fences/out of bounds areas, or fire evacuation sites, by installing the wiring mentioned. Extra rows of wire were also added to Sally Port/Stockade as well as adjacent fencing.

DOC Wardens McKinney-FDC and Daniel Craig-IMCC, addressed two major areas of concern in other locations that have since been implemented consistent with their recommendations. Cameras were installed on the Administration Building facing the prison interior above the staff and offender entrances. Although both doors are clearly marked, it was difficult to discern who was standing and waiting to enter the building. Administration discussed the possibility of offenders attempting to disguise themselves as staff and trying to blend in with a group of staff at shift change to access the staff entrance. The addition of the cameras at both locations increases the ability to prevent such an occurrence.

Warden McKinney also suggested that an additional manned desk be placed adjacent to the visitor entrance/exit door in the Visiting Room to enhance accurate verification of hand markings in addition to controlling the number of individuals being allowed access to the corridor across from the Control Center. This modification from our prior design augments best practices by conducting a double count by both COs prior to visitor's departure. The desk and security light to verify hand markings have since been installed.

The proper dispensation and inventory of offender quartermaster has always been a policy and procedural requirement. A requirement that was compromised in this instance. Staff are reminded daily by the Shift Commanders and the Unit Managers of the absolute necessity to maintain accurate cell and personal property inventories of offenders.

The expansive space between our eastern fences facing 330th Street has been leveled, graded and seeded. This provides a significant security enhancement providing a clear line of sight between our perimeter road and the adjacent highways.

Nick Ludwick, Warden