

Official Press Release

07/23/2015

Sheriff R. Glenn Smith again sends his sincerest condolences, thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of Ms. Sandra Bland.

Recently, the Sheriff's Office provided inmate processing forms to local and national media outlets. To clarify these forms, it is important we outline the jail booking process as it relates to inmates arriving at the Waller County Jail. Inmates are brought into the Waller County Jail intake section by the arresting officer. The arresting officer completes a Jail Book-In sheet and inventories the arrestee's property. Jail staff meets with the arrestee and arresting officer and completes a Screening form for Suicide and Medical and Mental Impairments form and Texas Department of State Health Services Correctional Tuberculosis form. These forms are provided to the main control supervisor prior to the inmate being accepted.

The inmate is walked to the booking area where they are processed by the booking officer. Depending on how many inmates are being processed at this time, an inmate's photograph may be taken in their original clothing or the inmate may be dressed out in orange. Their photograph is taken on the wall south of the booking officer's desk. We should note that if the inmate is not standing directly in the center of the backdrop, a portion of the white wall may appear.

At the booking desk, the inmate is asked the same questions listed on the Screening form for Suicide and Medical and Mental Impairments form. The book-in officer verbally asks these questions to the inmate, and then types the inmate's responses into the computer. It should be noted that jailers are required to document answers given to them by the inmates. If the answers are different at each time, this indicates the inmate changed their answer. Ms Bland was allowed to make a phone call at her time of booking, but we cannot release the name and details of that call.

The Texas Commission on Jail Standards outlines how inmates are segregated in county jails. The Waller County Jail has two sections for female inmates. Due to the offense Ms. Bland was charged with, she was classified to cell #95. Cell #95 is classified as a medium to maximum security cell. Ms. Bland was classified as medium assaultive as defined by the Texas Jail Commission. At this time there were no other inmates inside cell #95, being that no other female inmates met this classification; Ms. Bland was the single occupant of Cell #95. We can confirm that Ms. Bland was offered Emergency Medical Services prior to being transported to the Jail. Ms. Bland refused any medical treatment.

The Sheriff's Office will confirm that Ms. Bland, based on Jail Staff's observations, was not placed on any formal suicide watch.

The death of any person in the custody of any governmental entity should experience great scrutiny and be thoroughly investigated by an outside source. Sheriff Smith immediately notified the Texas Rangers who arrived within the hour. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is also actively involved in this investigation. The Waller County Sheriff's Office has provided and will continue to provide any and all documentation to the outside investigative agencies.

Sheriff Smith has asked local attorney Paul Looney to form an outside Sheriff's Commission, to take an outside view of jail procedures, evaluate personnel, discuss community relations, and any other issue this commission deems necessary. Mr. Looney has accepted the Sheriff's offer and the Sheriff looks forward to Mr. Looney's selection of committee members.

To maintain the integrity of this investigation, the Waller County Sheriff's Office is not releasing any further information, or conducting further interviews at this time.

Auth: R. Glenn Smith, Waller County Sheriff