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## Test for inmate wristband

**Tracking system trial set for Pitchess jail 5/31/2005**

By Amy Raisin Darvish, Staff Writer

CASTAIC -- One of the jails at Pitchess Detention Center has been tapped to test a new radio-linked wristband system designed to track inmates' movements and pinpoint their locations within a few feet, authorities said.

The East facility at Peter J. Pitchess Detention Center will be the first in the Los Angeles County jail system to use the technology, which officials plan to use to track about 1,900 inmates there, beginning in March or April 2006.

"The target of this test is to increase the safety within the custody environment, for our personnel and inmates," said Cmdr. Alexander Yim of the Correctional Services Division of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. "We want to test the effectiveness at a manageable-sized facility first, work out the bugs."

If the technology proves effective, the department may consider using the wristband devices at other county jails, Yim said.

Engineers will launch a study at the East facility next month to map everything from inmate dorms and other buildings to outdoor work areas and surrounding property. This will help determine where to install antenna boxes needed to track inmates wearing the wristbands.

The county Board of Supervisors approved the \$1.5 million needed to fund the test program, which is similar to technology used in some state prison systems, but with wristbands that are easier to fasten and take off.

After visiting other facilities that use similar technology, county jail officials realized that the state prison facilities used wristband devices that were purposely designed to be difficult to put on and remove.

That difficulty, however, would pose a problem in Los Angeles County jails, officials discovered, where inmates are far more transient; overcrowding often means shuffling inmates to different facilities, not to mention the daily transport of inmates to court for hearings and trials.

"The wristband configuration isn't new, and it's very effective in places like Illinois, where they use it in the state prisons," Yim said. "But those devices, there are four little bolts that you screw on and it's

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too cumbersome if you have to put them on and take them off on a regular basis."

In addition to the wristbands and the antennae, the system at Pitchess will include a control station where the jail deputies can monitor the inmates. The wristbands are body-heat activated, and, when the connection between the device and the body temperature is broken, an alarm will sound.

From the monitoring station, deputies will be able to pinpoint the source and location of the breach. Information about the inmate assigned to that particular wristband will come up on a screen, giving deputies a leg up on who they are looking for, should the inmate escape from the facility.

The number of inmates at Pitchess Detention Center is a figure that fluctuates daily, but the total housed at the facility has averaged about 7,000 inmates in the last month, authorities said.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

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