

Chapter One

Prison Basics

The first California Prison was built in 1852 at Point Quentin, more commonly referred to as San Quentin, by California state inmates. Over the next 150 years an additional 32 prisons were built throughout California. According to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the total California prison population in 2010 was approximately 170,000. Based on the maximum bed capacity of the combined prisons, California prisons were 185 percent over populated and California prisons had the highest prison population in the country. Certain prisons are known for housing the most dangerous criminals, but how is it determined where to house the worst of the worst?

California Prisons and Security Levels

Each of the 33 California prisons, camps, institutions, facilities or areas of an institution complex are designated at a classification level based on its security and housing capability, which are classified into four different security levels. Reception centers are exempted from level designations, except for assigned work crews. The general security levels are one through four. The lowest level of security housing is level one and the highest level of security housing is level four. The following is a breakdown of the four security levels:

- LEVEL 1 -** Consist primarily of open dormitories with minimal or no security perimeter. Camps consist of a similar security level.

- LEVEL 2 -** Consist primarily of open dormitories with secure perimeter fences and armed coverage.

Level one and two dorm setting

LEVEL 3 - Consist primarily of individual cells with fenced secure perimeters and armed perimeter coverage.

LEVEL 4 - Consist primarily of individual cells with secured fenced or walled perimeters with electronic security, additional staff with interior and exterior armed perimeter coverage.



Typical level three and level four setting

Types of Institution Housing

In addition to the four levels of security, there are six other classifications of housing found within California state prisons. The other classifications of housing are Reception Centers (RC), Death Row (DR), Sensitive Needs Yards (SNY), Protective Housing Unit (PHU), Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU) and Security Housing Units (SHU). The following is a breakdown of the different types of housing:

RC - Provides short term housing to process, classify and evaluate incoming inmates to determine classification and long term housing. A reception center is the first stop for an inmate for both a new term or a parole violation. Reception Center will have different levels of security.

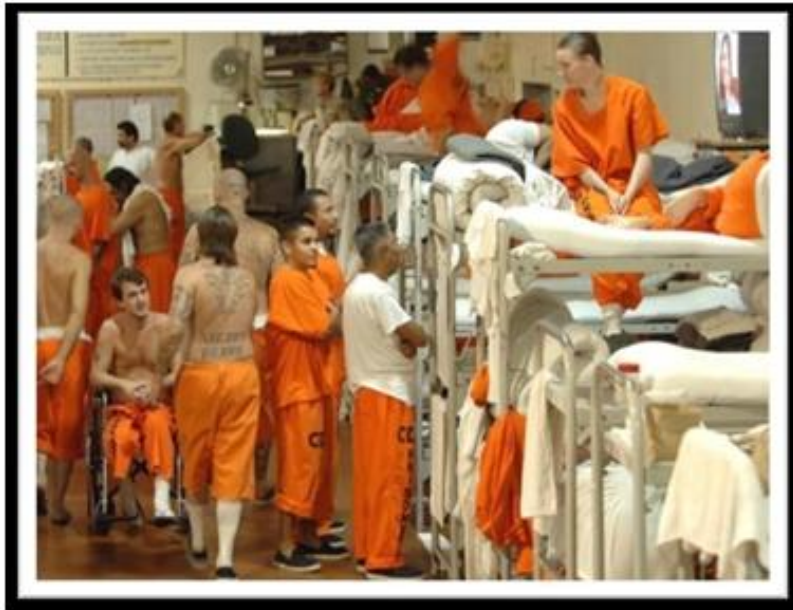
DEATH ROW - Houses inmates with death sentences. This type housing consists of single person cells with similar security to a level four facility routinely referred to as a “condemned row”.



Death row cells at San Quentin

SNY -

Can be at any of the four levels of security and generally houses inmates needing protective custody. This is similar to, but not a PHU.



Inmates in SNY housing (protective custody)

PHU -

Provide secure housing for inmates whose safety would be endangered by general population placement. This type of housing is designated for inmates being housed at level four security.

ASU -

Generally used to house inmates with disciplinary issues and inmates that can't function in general population. ASU placement is limited to those cases that endanger the security of the institution, jeopardize the integrity of a serious misconduct or criminal investigation or endanger the safety of the inmate or others. This type of housing is similar to a SHU security setting and is commonly referred to as AD SEG.



Prison guards view of a level four AD SEG or SHU

SHU -

The most secure area within a level four institution and is designed to provide maximum security coverage. The SHU generally houses the most dangerous inmates and leaders of prison gangs. Validated prison gang members will typically remain in the SHU during their entire prison term. Inmates in a SHU are confined to their cell or "lock downed" for 23 hours a day. The SHU term for validated prison gang members and associates is six years.

The five SHU locations are as follows:

Male-

Tehachapi
Pelican Bay (Short Corridor)
Corcoran
New Folsom

Female-

Chowchilla

The following is a breakdown of the 33 California state prisons and associated security levels:

Avenal State Prison (ASP)	2
California Correctional Center (CCC), Susanville	1, 2, 3
California Correctional Institution (CCI), Tehachapi	1, 2, 4, RC, SHU
California Institution for Men (CIM), Chino	1, 3, 4 ASU, RC
California Institution for Women (CIW), Corona	1, 2, 3, RC
California Medical Facility (CMF), Vacaville	1, 2, 3, PHU
California Men's Colony (CMC), San Luis Obispo	1, 2, 3
California Rehabilitation Center (CRC), Norco	SAP, 1, 2
California State Prison, Corcoran (COR)	1, 2, 3, 4, ASU, SHU
California State Prison, Los Angeles County/Lancaster (LAC)	1, 3, 4, RC
California State Prison, Sacramento (New Folsom)	1, 2, 4, ASU
California State Prison, San Quentin	1, 2, RC, DR
California State Prison-Solano (SOL), Vacaville	2, 3
California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility (SATF), Corcoran	2, 3, 4, ASU
Calipatria State Prison (CAL), Calipatria	1, 4
Centinela State Prison (CEN), Imperial	1, 3, ASU
Central Ca. Women's Facility (CCWF), Chowchilla	1, 2, 3, 4, RC, DR
Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP), Blythe	1, 2
Correctional Training Facility (CTF), Soledad	1, 2, 3
Deuel Vocational Tracy Institution (DVI),	1, 2, 3, RC
Folsom State Prison (Old Folsom)	1, 2, 3, ASU
High Desert State Prison (HDSP), Susanville	1, 2, 3, 4, RC, ASU
Ironwood State Prison (ISP), Blythe	1, 3
Kern Valley State Prison (KVSP), Delano	1, 2, 3, 4, ASU
Mule Creek State Prison (MCSP), Lone	1, 3, 4
North Kern State Prison (NKSP), Delano	1, 3, RC
Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP), Crescent City	1, 4, SHU
Pleasant Valley State Prison (PVSP), Coalinga	1, 3, 4
R.J. Donovan Cor. Fac. At Rock Mountain (RJD), San Diego	1, 3, 4, RC
Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP), Soledad	1, 4, ASU
Sierra Conservation Center (SCC), Jamestown	1, 2, 3
Valley State Prison for Women, Chowchilla	1, 2, 3, 4, RC, ASU, SHU
Wasco State Prison-Reception Center, Wasco	1, 3, RC

ASU - Administrative Housing Unit

PHU - Protective Housing Unit

RC - Reception Center

SAP - Substance Abuse Program

DR - Death Row

Out of State Facilities

With a need for reducing prison overcrowding, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is currently utilizing out of state facilities to house lower level offenders. At this point, housing inmates out of state is a temporary resolve to reducing prison overcrowding and it is unknown if it will become a permanent solution. The following is a list of the five currently utilized out of state facilities:

Florence Correctional Center (FCC)	Florence, Az.
La Palma Correctional Center (LPCC)	Eloy, Az.
Red Rock Correctional Center (RRCC)	Eloy, Az.
Tallahatchie County Correctional Facility (TCCF)	Tutwiler, Ms.
North Fork Correctional Facility (NFCF)	Sayre, Ok.

CDC Numbers

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations inmate identification numbers are commonly referred to as CDC numbers for “California Department of Corrections” or “C” numbers. This number will remain with the prisoner or parolee until they are discharged from parole or released from prison upon completing their sentence. Every person sentenced to a California State Prison after being convicted of a felony crime will receive a CDC number. This number will be issued only once and once it is discharged will not be used again.

Until recently, a CDC number consisted of a letter followed by five numbers (P12345). As a result of the large number of prisoners that have gone through the prison system, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations exhausted the letter followed by five numbers format and instituted the current format of two letters followed by four numbers (AA1234). It is possible for an inmate or parolee to have several different CDC numbers during their lifetime as a result of commitments at different points in their life.

An inmate or parolee who has been in the prison or parole system for a long period of time and have not discharged their number will have a CDC number beginning with A, B, C, D or H. The more common CDC numbers for males in the old format will begin with J, K, P, T, V, F and G. CDC numbers for females will start with a W or X and are still being issued in the letter followed by five numbers format. Additional CDC numbers will be discussed in Chapter three.

Inmate Classification System

To determine where inmates will be housed, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation utilizes a classification scoring system as the standard evaluation and primary factor to determine placement. The classification scoring system determines each inmate's custody security level with the intent of ensuring the safety of the staff and inmates while optimally utilizing institutional facilities.

Classification and Security Levels

In conjunction with the four levels of security, the classification scoring system is divided into four levels. The following is a breakdown of the classification score in relation to the corresponding security level:

SCORE	SECURITY LEVEL
0 - 18	1
19 - 27	2
28 - 51	3
52 +	4

During the classification process, inmate's classification score is established by several variables including special case factors, background factors, prior incarceration behavior and commitment offense(s).

Special case factors include:

- Mental Illness
- Safety and security issues
 - Escape risk
 - Sexual Orientation
- Public interest case
- Prior law enforcement officer

Background factors include:

- Age
- Gang Association
 - Prison Gang Member or Associate
 - Street Gang (Disruptive Group) Member or Associate
- Unfavorable prior incarceration
 - Serious disciplinary history
 - Assaults
 - Possession of weapons
 - Distribution of narcotics
- Commitment offenses
 - Violent crimes
 - Crime against a minor
 - Sexually violent crimes
- Sentence
 - Conviction for street gang act
 - Three strikes
 - Determinate sentence of more than 50 years

Specific sentences of an inmate will be assigned a minimum number of points. For example, an inmate sentence to Life without Possibility of Parole will receive a minimum of 52 points (level four), whereas an inmate who was condemned to a life sentence will receive a minimum of 19 points (level two). Inmates do not get assigned points for simply being a gang member. An inmate will get six points for gang activity. Indicators of gang activity can be extricated from a probation officers report, police reports, and CDCR 128B forms to name only a few. While an inmate will not get points assessed for gang validations, they will get points assessed for gang activity.

Inmates with a classification score in security levels one, two and three can qualify for an “override” based on good behavior. The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation attempts to encourage inmates with positive incentives to reduce their classification score and permit transfers from higher custody facilities to lower custody facilities, which allow increased privileges, movement and programming. Generally a classification score can increase or decrease by one level of security and is conducted on a yearly basis. The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation also have the authority to re-classify, transfer and house inmates apart from the classification scoring system when necessary to ensure staff, inmate and public safety.

An inmate’s classification points will also change if the inmate is charged with a serious rules violation report (CDC 115) for any criminal disruptive behavior, including assaults, drugs and other activities, which warrant some type of disciplinary reports. The inmate will be assessed six

points for the rules violation report plus added points for the actual crime that was committed.

Why it is Important?

Many law enforcement officers have asked why I focus on the inmate classification point system and the associated levels of security. My answer is simple; officer safety. There are several indicators present when a parolee states his classification score or the level of housing they were assigned to; the classification score being the primary factor for the inmate's level of housing security. The number of "points" a parolee is "sitting on" can indicate the following:

- Parolee's with higher points tend to exhibit violent behavior.
- Parolee's with higher points will show gang membership or association.
- Parolee's with higher points have generally committed violent crimes.

Utilizing the inmate classification point system is an art and not a science. I have, however, found it is a solid guideline to follow in contacting parolees.

End of Chapter

Reference:

CDCR Department Operations Manual CH6