



Officer Exposed to Fentanyl at Wende Correctional Facility

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Alden, NY – After dozens of officers and civilian staff needed to be treated at local hospitals across the state after being exposed to unknown substances at several state prisons, a 55-year-old female officer tested positive for Fentanyl at Erie County Medical Center after being exposed to the deadly opioid at Wende Correctional Facility on Tuesday.

The ten-year veteran officer was performing regular duties of opening cells for inmate recreation and began to feel extremely dizzy, became nauseous, and developed a hot sensation throughout her body. Another officer observed the stricken colleague and responded to her and called for a medical response. The officer was immediately brought to the facility emergency room and was treated by staff. While they were assisting the officer, the facility continued to run recreation, business as usual. HAZMAT was deployed to Wende but not authorized to go to the affected area. After a lengthy stay in the ER, she was transported to Erie County Medical Center.

At the hospital, the officer was decontaminated. A urine test posted positive for Fentanyl in her system. She was admitted to the hospital overnight for observation and released the following day. She has not returned to work at the time of this release.

The latest incident follows a growing trend of exposures at multiple prisons across the state. Upstate, Auburn, Attica, and Clinton Correctional Facilities all have had staff transported to local hospitals after they developed similar symptoms after being exposed to unknown substances. Fishkill has members going out almost daily throughout September and already

started this month. Despite state and county HAZMAT Teams responding to the prisons, they could not determine what the substances were.

“For the first time we now were able to determine what the substance was that caused the officer at Wende to be incapacitated. For months we have had staff exposed at prisons across the state and HAZMAT teams were unable to determine what caused officers and civilian staff to develop symptoms. Thankfully, the veteran officer received toxicology tests at the hospital that determined exactly what drug got into her system, and I want to thank all the officers, medical staff, nurses, and doctors at ECMC for taking care of our member. The troubling aspect in this latest exposure is the fact that it took two hours to get her from facility emergency room to the hospital after she developed symptoms. We have all witnessed the deadly effects that Fentanyl can have on individuals and not getting her to the hospital for two hours was jeopardizing her wellbeing. The second part is not allowing the local HAZMAT team access to the area where she developed symptoms. They should have been allowed immediate access to determine what substance was in the air. Not doing so, put other staff and inmates at jeopardy as well. This should be the wake-up call that the State needs to address the exposures immediately for the safety and wellbeing of everyone who lives and works inside the prisons. DOCCS took steps in instituting legal mail scanning that has put a dent on contraband coming in through inmate legal mail and getting rid of germicide that inmates use to create toxic reactions. You cannot keep running these prisons as we still do, not have proper staffing and making exposures seem like the norm. What happened at Wende on Tuesday cannot ever happen again and the majority of state legislators need to take this incident as a wakeup call because someone will die and blood will be on their hands if something doesn’t change!”- stated Kenny Gold, NYSCOPBA Western Region Vice President.