



# CALIFORNIA STATE AUDITOR

Elaine M. Howle, State Auditor

## FACT SHEET

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Report: 2007-120.2

The California State Auditor released the following report today:

### California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

*Although Building a Condemned Inmate Complex at San Quentin May Cost More Than Expected, the Costs of Other Alternatives for Housing Condemned Inmates Are Likely to Be Even Higher*

#### BACKGROUND

San Quentin State Prison (San Quentin) uses three different housing units to house the 635 male inmates who have been sentenced to death (condemned inmates). Currently, each condemned inmate has his own cell. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (Corrections) began exploring the need for a new condemned inmate complex (CIC) in 1992 due to condemned inmate population growth and safety and security reasons. In 2003 the Legislature approved Corrections' request for \$220 million to build a new CIC at San Quentin. The Joint Legislative Audit Committee asked the Bureau of State Audits to review the costs projected for the new CIC at San Quentin as well as identify and project costs for alternative sites.

#### KEY FINDINGS

In our report, we describe the following issues related to Corrections' project plans for the CIC at San Quentin:

- Despite a 25 percent reduction in the size of the CIC, our consultant estimates that the cost to construct Corrections' currently proposed CIC will be more than \$395.5 million—\$39.3 million more than Corrections' most recent estimate—and new operating costs will average \$58.8 million per year, for a total of approximately \$1.2 billion over the next 20 years.
- Corrections plans to double-cell up to two-thirds of the condemned inmates to maximize the CIC's capacity as the population increases, despite legal confidentiality and safety concerns with double-celling. If double-celling does not turn out to be a feasible approach, Corrections' currently proposed CIC will reach its cell capacity in 2014—just three years after it is projected to open.

With regards to alternative prison sites, we describe the following:

- Despite concerns we raised over four years ago when we reported that Corrections' analyses of alternatives did not consider all feasible locations and relevant costs, Corrections has not completed any additional analyses of feasible alternatives to building a new CIC at San Quentin.
- It would have been less expensive to construct a CIC at each of the three alternative prison sites we identified if construction could begin at the same time as planned for San Quentin.
- Because building a CIC at an alternate site would require various approvals and studies that would delay construction and cause increases in construction costs, transition and activation costs, and 20-year operating costs, the currently proposed CIC at San Quentin is the least costly alternative.
- The State could avoid spending approximately \$93.2 million, or an average of \$18.6 million per year, if it delayed the construction of the new CIC at San Quentin for five years because the new operating costs are higher than the costs of delaying construction. However, within three years, there will likely be more condemned inmates than Corrections can house in its current facilities. Additionally, the facilities do not meet many of Corrections' standards for housing maximum-security inmates.

