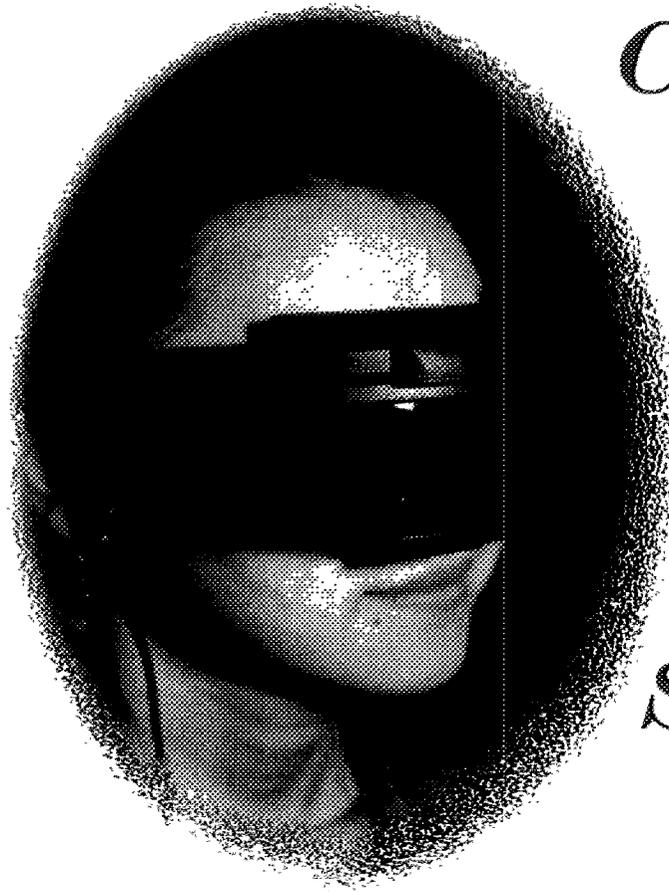


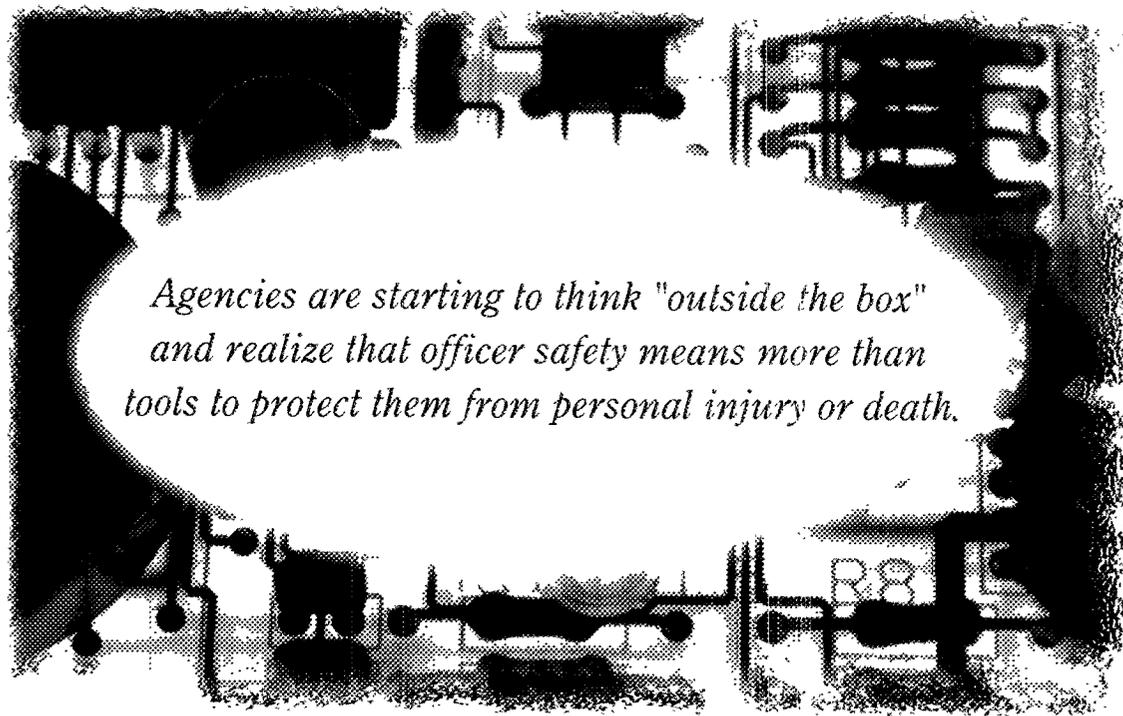
# HOW TECHNOLOGY



*Can  
Make  
Your  
Job  
Safer*

**With the emergence of new high-tech tasers (electronic stun devices), electrical disablers, oleosorin capsicum (better known as pepper) spray, stab- and slash-resistant vests and other less-than-lethal devices, do you still feel safe in your institution? In the past, officer safety encompassed the basic needs of the correctional officer, such as defensive weapons, protective vests and, possibly, chemical sprays. That no longer is the case.**

**B Y S T E V E M O R R I S O N**



*Agencies are starting to think "outside the box" and realize that officer safety means more than tools to protect them from personal injury or death.*

Agencies are starting to think "outside the box" and realize that officer safety means more than tools to protect them from personal injury or death. What about liability safety — protecting yourself and your agency from lawsuits for inattention to duty or wrongful death?

Physical assaults are a commonplace occurrence and are normally dealt with immediately. However, officers and agencies are being faced with another type of safety issue: Inmates now are suing for officer actions or lack of action taken in situations. For example, one inmate's relatives recently filed suit against an agency contending that officials failed to properly monitor the inmate, who was suicidal, which resulted in his death (*Phillips vs. District of Columbia*, D.D.C., No. 96-CV-1801, 7-2-98). The court held that the agency could be held liable for failing to properly monitor a suicidal inmate. Suit-happy inmates and jailhouse lawyers file suits almost daily for inattention to detail by officers.

In an effort to combat this type of incident and protect the officers and agencies that house inmates, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Office of Science and Technology (OS&T) has funded projects that not only protect officers physically, but

also protect them from liability issues. OS&T and the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) devote much of their grant dollars to the development of protective systems to keep officers safe.

*Suit-happy inmates and jailhouse lawyers file suits almost daily for inattention to detail by officers.*

In identifying what technologies to fund, NIJ draws on the many years of experience of law enforcement and correctional practitioners who are appointed to serve as your representatives on the Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Advisory Committee (LECTAC). For the past five years, the No. 1 priority identified by both law enforcement and corrections has been officer safety. Several projects are being funded in this area:

**Sticky Shocker.** This is a less-than-lethal projectile that uses stun gun technology to temporarily incapacitate a person at stand-off range. The Sticky Shocker is a low-impact, wireless projectile fired from com-

pressed gas or powder launchers and is accurate to within 10 meters.

**Back-Scatter Imaging System for Concealed Weapons.** This system utilizes a back-scatter imager to detect weapons and contraband. The major advantage of this device over current walk-through portals is that it can detect nonmetallic as well as metallic weapons. It uses low-power X-rays equal to about five minutes of exposure to the sun at sea level. While these X-rays penetrate clothing, they do not penetrate the body.

**Body Scanning Screening System.** This is a stationary screening system to detect non-metallic weapons and contraband in the lower body cavities. It uses simplified magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) as a noninvasive alternative to X-ray and physical body cavity searches. The stationary screening system makes use of first-generation medical MRI.

**Face Recognition Technology for Internet-Based Gang Tracking.** This is a database software engine that will be integrated into the existing Gang Reporting Evaluation and Tracking infrastructure (GREAT), currently being used by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office. The system will add the capability to query the GREAT database for matches with a

photograph, thereby circumventing the false identification cards and information that often are presented by gang members.

**Spoken Language Translation.**

This system automatically translates spoken words into computer-spoken words in a second language. Current demonstration systems translate spoken English to computer-spoken Spanish, Korean or Mandarin Chinese, and spoken Spanish or Mandarin Chinese to computer-spoken English.

**Telemedicine.** NIJ currently has two cost-effective telemedicine systems in place that are undergoing testing: One is with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and the other is in jail sites in Kansas, Kentucky and South Carolina. The jail system is a single-application unit for evaluating mental health inmates. NIJ has been able to provide a complete telemedicine system for less than \$4,000.

These are but a few of the many projects NIJ has funded that are relat-

ed to officer protection and safety. There are several other projects being developed as well, including the following:

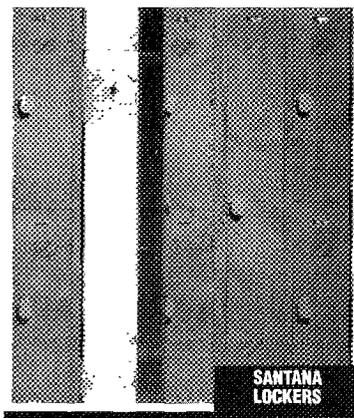
**Personal Health Status Monitor.**

NLECTC-Southeast and the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (SPAWAR) in Charleston, S.C., under the direction of the Joint Program Steering Group (JPSG) and BOP, is developing a personal health status monitor utilizing current sensor technology. This system will be capable of monitoring certain vital signs of an inmate from restrained and unrestrained positions such as heartbeat and respiration. The device will have an alarm system to alert the officer if an inmate is in physical distress so the officer can respond and take immediate action. This system is expected to help prevent suicides and provide the officer on duty sufficient time to respond to an inmate before serious injury or death results, thereby reducing officer and agency liability. The system also will help prevent incidents of positional

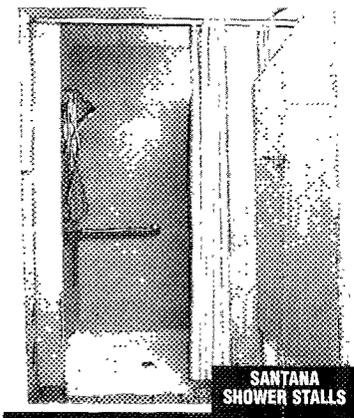
asphyxia or other breathing problems during the use of four-point restraints.

**Corrections Technology Information System.**

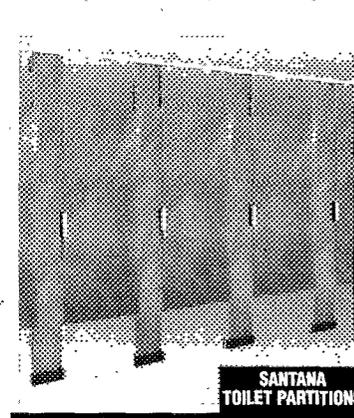
Last month, NIJ brought two new Internet-based information systems online to assist corrections personnel with technology questions and issues. The first is the Corrections Technology Information System (CTIS). CTIS is password-protected and available via the Justice Technology Information Network (JUSTNET), NLECTC's Web site. It includes a clearinghouse for new technologies under development, evaluation, pilot testing and approval/disapproval for use in every state. In addition, CTIS offers examples of several states' technology transfer committee guidelines. Some states use technology transfer committees as their approval/disapproval authorities on new technologies; their guidelines are posted as a reference tool for jurisdictions considering forming such committees. The third and final feature of CTIS is the



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corrections-specific manufacturers and products database. This database is unique in that it provides vendor names, products and services and the agency name, point of contact and telephone numbers of agencies that currently are using the vendor's products and/or services. This allows practitioners to speak directly to a product user and ask questions regarding the effectiveness of the product.

**Corrections Incident Tracker.** CIT is an Internet-based "lessons learned" database for use by agencies to report escapes and suicides. If an agency has an escape or suicide and thinks other agencies could benefit from the lessons learned, it can submit a report via the CIT and it will be e-mailed as an alert to all registered users. If the system proves useful, additional applications, such as officer assaults, may be added.

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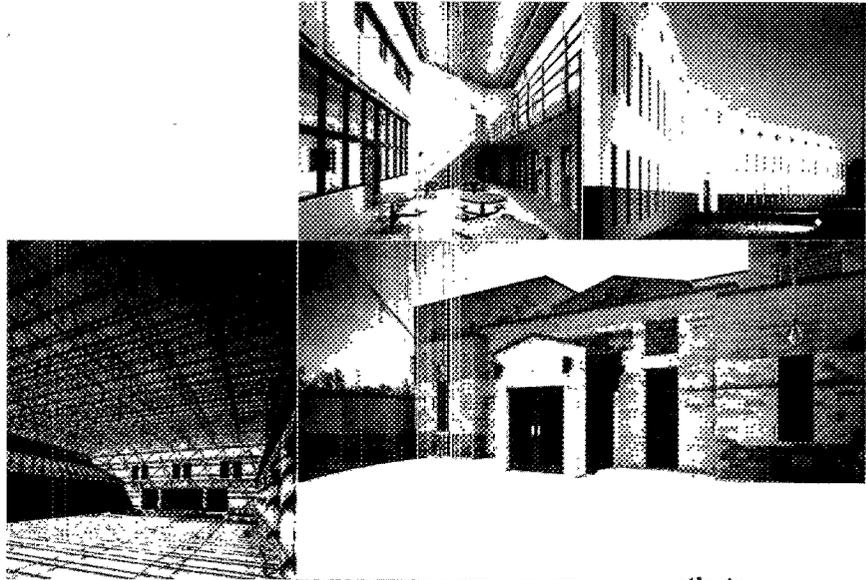
Although NIJ tries to respond to all inquiries and recommendations from practitioners, it still must prioritize projects according to LECTAC recommendations and available funding. Current projects under development with NIJ grants can be viewed by visiting JUSTNET at [www.nlectc.org](http://www.nlectc.org). Visitors to the site are encouraged to make recommendations either by e-mail at [asknlectc@nlectc.org](mailto:asknlectc@nlectc.org), by telephone at 1-800-292-4385, or in-person at conferences.

Consider safety, from a physical and liability standpoint, and please contact NIJ or NLECTC if you have recommendations to make the correctional workplace safer.

*Steve Morrison is deputy director of corrections for the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center-Southeast Region, and can be reached at (843) 760-4628.*

## Make ACA Your Employment Source

ACA's Job Bank column, which appears in each issue of *Corrections Today*, is a great opportunity for you to reach nearly 20,000 readers with information concerning vacant positions within your agency or facility. The cost is \$2 per word for ACA members and \$3 per word for nonmembers. Additionally, we will post your job advertisement on our Web site until your deadline, free of charge. The address is <http://www.corrections.com/aca>. For deadlines or more information, contact Jennifer Harry, associate editor, at (301) 918-1891; e-mail: [jharry@aca.org](mailto:jharry@aca.org). See this month's listing on page 22.



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