



# FACT SHEET

Date: June 10, 2008

Report: 2007-120.1

The California State Auditor released the following report today:

## California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

*Building a Condemned Inmate Complex at San Quentin May Cost More Than Expected*

### BACKGROUND

San Quentin State Prison (San Quentin) uses three different housing units to house the 635 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 this first of two reports, we describe the following issues related to Corrections' project plans for the CIC at San Quentin:

- Corrections expects the cost of constructing the new CIC to increase to \$356 million, or 62 percent from the original projection, due to delays in beginning construction, rises in construction costs, and modifications to the original design, yet it has decreased the total number of cells planned by 25 percent. Further, Corrections:
  - Did not prepare a comparative cost analysis when it changed the design from two-story housing units to one using stacked housing units.
  - Did not estimate the costs associated with activating the new CIC until very recently at our request. Further, San Quentin will spend \$39.5 million more in staffing costs in the first full year after the new facility opens and a total of \$1.2 billion during the first 20 years the facility will be in operation.
- Corrections' cost estimates are too low for two main reasons: the escalation rate it used to project costs—though required—was unrealistic, and the projected construction start date is optimistic and will result in increased cost. Our consultant estimates costs to be more than \$39.2 million higher than Corrections' cost estimates.
- To cope with the reduced number of cells, Corrections plans to double-cell up to two-thirds of the condemned inmates as the population increases, despite concerns raised about confidentiality of an inmate's legal records and heightened risk of harm to inmates and staff.
- Of the 13 states we surveyed that have 50 or more condemned inmates, only one of the 12 that responded double-cells its condemned inmates. The other 11 do not double-cell primarily because of security concerns.
- If double-celling does not turn out to be a feasible approach, the CIC will reach its cell capacity in 2014—just three years after it is projected to open. As a result, our consultant recommends constructing an additional housing unit at a cost of \$64.1 million if constructed concurrently with the CIC. This would allow Corrections to single-cell inmates through 2028.

