



State says it will close Detroit-area prison in 2009

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LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The state announced Tuesday it plans to close a female prison located in suburban Detroit.

The Robert Scott Correctional Facility in Wayne County's Plymouth Township will close in May 2009. It has been open since 1991.

Michigan Department of Corrections officials said closing the prison will save \$12 million in the next budget year starting Oct. 1 and \$36 million a year after that. The state corrections system costs \$2 billion a year.

About 860 female prisoners at Scott will be transferred to the Huron Valley Complex-Men in Ypsilanti, whose male prisoners will be moved elsewhere.

Scott is a reception center for women entering the prison system, and it also houses minimum-, medium- and maximum-security female inmates.

Corrections spokesman John Cordell said the closing will help consolidate female prisoners into a geographic location, reducing costs to transport them to health care visits. The prison also is the only one in the state with a population cap set in law — limiting management options, he said.

Mel Grieshaber, executive director of the Michigan Corrections Organization, a union representing corrections officers, expressed concern over the announcement.

"It's terrible news for the officers," he said. "It has the potential to drastically disrupt a lot of people's lives."

Grieshaber said there are rules about male guards working in female prisons, meaning officers now working at Scott and Huron Valley will be affected. Another concern is that male prisoners at Huron Valley often have serious mental illness and can't function adequately in the general prison population.

"These are prisoners who are going to be dispersed throughout the system," he said.

Cordell said men at Huron Valley will be moved to facilities where their health care needs can be addressed. A decision on their eventual placement will be made at a later date.

Of the 50,035 inmates in state prisons, 2,043 are women.

The state closed two prisons and a reception center last year to save money.

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