

# BODY SCANNERS

## How do body scanners work and why are they important?

Body scanners are devices that can detect items on a person's body without the need for clothing removal or a physical search. The X-ray type image enables the operator to see any contraband that someone is hiding on or in his/her body. Importantly, these devices can detect both metal and non-metal objects. Thus, this technology is particularly useful in a correctional setting where there is a need to detect contraband that metal detectors cannot detect, including:

- Titanium (e.g. scalpels)
- Non-metal weapons (e.g. ceramic, plastic)
- Metal that is hidden from metal detectors (e.g. small amounts or pieces wrapped in electrical tape)
- Drugs

Since DOC stopped using body scanners in March 2014, monthly stabbings/slashings have more than doubled from an average of 5.3 to an average of 11.3 (as of April 2017).

## Why is legislation needed to resume the use of body scanners?

In April of 2014, the State Commission on Correction issued a Commissioner's memorandum noting that the use of body scanning devices was in violation of state public health law. Article 3502 of the Public Health Law, provides that "ionizing radiation" may not be "applied to human beings" except by licensed medical personnel for a medical purpose. There is no waiver or exception provided in the law, so correction departments around the state are seeking a legislative change to allow the use of this technology in a correctional setting. A8002/S.5828 was introduced in June of 2015. S5337/A6838 was introduced in March 2017.

## How much radiation is a person (an inmate in a jail setting) exposed to during a scan?

Each scan exposes the inmate to 0.25  $\mu$ SV.

- This is comparable to the external radiation dose during three minutes of flight on an aircraft.
- 400 scans through the system equals approximately one chest x-ray.

## What are the health risks associated with this exposure?

A radiation safety professional (board-certified health physicist) with 25 years of experience with issues relating to radiation safety determined that:

- To be exposed to the lowest radiation dose ever shown to have any measurable short term medical impact, 25,000 millirem, a person would need to be scanned approximately two million times in a single day.
- To be exposed to the lowest radiation dose ever shown to have any measurable long term medical impact (i.e. a 0.5% increase in a person's odds of developing fatal cancer), a person would need to be scanned over 700,000 times over the course of a lifetime.

## What controls will DOC put in place for scanner use in order to ensure inmate health and safety?

DOHMH/SDOH would set regulations for safe use. All usage would adhere to the national standards set by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). DOC would limit use to 2 scans per day. A.6838/S5337 has specific provisions further limiting the use on 16 and 17 year olds and prohibits the use on pregnant inmates.

During the time that DOC used body scanners, exposure was well within these limits. According to DOC's use records, most inmates were scanned only once. Additionally, of the individual inmates scanned, approximately:

- 93.9% were scanned **<1 time** per month
- 6.0% were scanned **1-5 times** per month
- 0.1% were scanned **5 or more** per month

