



CHAIRMAN'S MEMORANDUM

NO. 26-98 November 16, 1998

TO: SHERIFFS, JAIL ADMINISTRATORS, AND COMMISSIONERS OF CORRECTION

RE: Cut Down Tools Available for Suicidal Hanging Emergency Response

Unfortunately, many police department and correctional facilities will have incidents where detainees or inmates will attempt suicide by hanging. The most important first response is to be able to cut the ligature in as soon as possible and place the person in a safe area where emergency measures can be initiated.

Commission of Correction investigations have revealed that sheets, blankets, sweat shirts, pants, tee shirts, disposable blankets, shoe laces, belts, bras, socks and strips of cloth have been used as ligatures. Depending upon the thickness of the ligature, it may be very difficult to cut through the ligature in a timely manner.

In addition, pocket knives and scissors may not be readily available because of security prohibitions.

A rescue cutting device that is in use by ambulance and EMS companies to cut seat belts at auto accident scenes is now being used in correctional facility housing units. This device can cut through large ligatures without cutting the victim.

The Commission has been able to obtain literature of two different companies who manufacture these rescue tools. This information is attached for your review.

THIS IS NOT A PRODUCT ENDORSEMENT

If there are any questions as to the use of this cutting device, please contact our Forensic Medical Unit staff at (518) 485-2482.

Alan J. Croce, Chairman/Commissioner