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Agency News

Penwell bus accident claims lives of two correctional officers, eight offenders

On the morning of January 14, a TDCJ transport bus carrying three correctional officers and 12 offenders was involved in an accident while traveling from the Middleton Unit in Abilene to the Sanchez Unit in El Paso. While traveling west on Interstate 20 near Penwell, the vehicle left the roadway and collided with a freight train. Two correctional officers and eight offenders died of their injuries. One staff member and four offenders were transported to Medical Center Hospital in Odessa. An investigation into the accident is ongoing.

According to the National Transportation Safety Board's preliminary report, the metal guardrail leading up to the overpass was damaged in a vehicle collision on the day before the accident. The bus appears to have struck the damaged guardrail as it approached a highway overpass, which crossed a set of railroad tracks. The bus left the roadway, traveled between the highway traffic lanes, struck an embankment and impacted against the side of the moving freight train.

Many agency employees and other concerned individuals have donated money and



services to the families of the lost correctional officers and to aid Officer Self and his family with medical expenses. Those who wish to provide support or make a donation should contact CID's Support Operations office in Huntsville at (936) 437-8702. According to Correctional Institutions Division Director Bill Stephens, the outpouring of assistance has been overwhelming. Mr. Stephens said cards, gifts and monetary donations have been received from persons across the United States.

Memorial services for Officer Davis were conducted on January 24, 2015, at Trinity Baptist Church in Abilene, and services for Officer Garcia were held on January 19, 2015, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Abilene.

TDCJ staff lost in the line of duty:

Correctional Officer V
Christopher Davis

Correctional Officer V
Eligio Garcia Jr.

TDCJ staff injured in the line of duty:

Correctional Officer V
Jason Self

Officer Self has been released from the hospital and is now at home recovering from his injuries.

"We regret the loss of life and the injuries sustained in this tragic accident," said TDCJ Executive Director Brad Livingston. "Officers Davis, Garcia and Self are heroes who were killed or injured in the line of duty while performing a vital public service. I deeply appreciate their daily sacrifices and the sacrifices they made on January 14."

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National Correctional Officers' Week begins May 4

The 2015 National Correctional Officers' Week will take place May 4 through 10. TDCJ will hold recognition events at individual units and offices throughout the agency in honor of the dedicated men and women who have accepted the responsibility and met the challenge of preserving public safety.

TDCJ will also hold Fallen Officers' Memorial Ceremonies in remembrance of those who lost their lives in the line of duty. The Memorial Ceremony in Huntsville will be held on Friday, May 8, starting at 10:30 a.m. at the Texas Prison Museum. Coverage of the Memorial Ceremony in Huntsville will be included in the next issue of *Connections*. Memorial services will be held at units throughout the state during National Correctional Officers' Week.

For more information about events in your area, contact your regional CID director's office.

Region I: (936) 437-2600

Region II: (903) 928-2623

Region III: (281) 369-3736

Region IV: (361) 362-6328

Region V: (806) 296-4500

Region VI: (254) 248-3984