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INCIDENT REVIEW OF IN-CUSTODY FATALITY

I. INCIDENT SUMMARY

On January 27, 2026, at approximately 1:11 AM, 48-year-old inmate Marvin Knuckles was on a Special Detail crew working to remove snow and ice from the grounds of the Eastern Kentucky Correctional Complex (EKCC), which is a Kentucky Department of Corrections (“DOC”) prison. He fell down a large hill, landing next to Kentucky State Route 460. He was transported via ambulance to the hospital, where he was pronounced deceased later that morning.

The Critical Incident Review (“CIR”) team¹ finds that the death of Marvin Knuckles was an accident and that he fell either while retrieving a metal bar or going to the bathroom outside.

A. Contributing Factors

- Hazardous conditions caused by snow and ice; and
- Moisture-induced clumping caused the salt spreader to clog, forcing the crew to stop and manually break up the salt.

B. Recommendations

The CIR team recommends the following to prevent future accidents:

- Install a 6-foot-tall, 500 linear-foot fence with top and bottom rails in the area where Inmate Knuckles fell down the slope. The reason for a 6-foot-tall fence as opposed to a traditional 10-foot-tall security fence is that this fence is only a safety barrier to prevent falling in this area and will not be used to maintain custody or confinement. The area where the fence will be located is outside the secure perimeter of the facility; and
- Install signage that reads “No Entry Beyond This Point – Dangerous Slope”.

¹ Information about the CIR team members, including names and qualifications, can be found in Attachment A.

C. Inmate Information

Marvin Knuckles DOB: 06/25/1977 White/Male DOC#: 125995 PID#: 0002431

II. INVESTIGATION

A. Introduction

On January 27, 2026, at approximately 1:11 AM, a plow truck carrying a Special Detail crew with one Correctional Officer and three inmates stopped near the Toxic building.² The crew was tasked with snow removal from EKCC grounds, but the plow truck's salt spreader clogged. One of the inmates, Marvin Knuckles walked to the side of the Toxic building to either retrieve a bar to assist in breaking up the salt in the spreader or to use the restroom. He fell down a large hill leading to the road, resulting in his death.

On February 9, 2026, a CIR team was assembled at the request of DOC Commissioner Cookie Crews and Deputy Commissioner Scott Jordan to review the incident. On February 10, 2026, the CIR team arrived at EKCC and conducted their review. The CIR team visited the area where the incident occurred, reviewed the incident report and attached documents, watched all available video footage, and conducted interviews with the Correctional Officer and the two inmates who were on the snow removal detail with Inmate Knuckles.

B. Background

EKCC was built between 1986 and 1991 and began housing inmates in February of 1990. The prison is designed to hold 1,914 inmates and covers 157 acres. The Toxic building, where the incident occurred, was part of the original construction. The Toxic building is located outside the secure perimeter of EKCC next to a staff parking lot.

Staff and inmate work crews have removed snow and ice from the grounds of Kentucky DOC Adult Institutions during the overnight hours for many years. Much like state, city, and private snow removal crews, these crews work 12-hour shifts, including throughout the night, to clear ice from roads and parking lots in the community. This is done to:

- Allow safe entry for incoming staff and emergency personnel (EMS, law enforcement, etc.);
- Allow staff and inmate populations to move throughout the grounds of the institution;
- Prevent slip and fall injuries from staff, volunteers, inmates, and visitors; and
- Maintain access to all areas in the event of a large disturbance.

² The building is referred to as the "Toxic" building, because when it was originally built, it was used to store chemicals. The building currently stores motorized lawn maintenance equipment (lawnmowers, weed eaters, etc.), lawn maintenance hand tools, and oil and fuel for the motorized equipment.

Snow and ice removal crews are provided with appropriate cold-weather gear and are permitted to take breaks to warm up throughout the shift as needed.

Corrections Policy and Procedures (CPP) Inmate Wage/Time Credit Program and Institutional Policy and Procedure EKCC 18-13-04 Minimum Security Unit: Operating Procedures and Living Conditions govern special inmate work details.

C. Review of Physical Conditions

On January 24 and 25, 2026, EKCC received significant snow and ice accumulation during Winter Storm Fern. On February 10, 2025, when the CIR team conducted its review, snow and ice were still accumulated around the Toxic building, as seen in Figure 1 below.

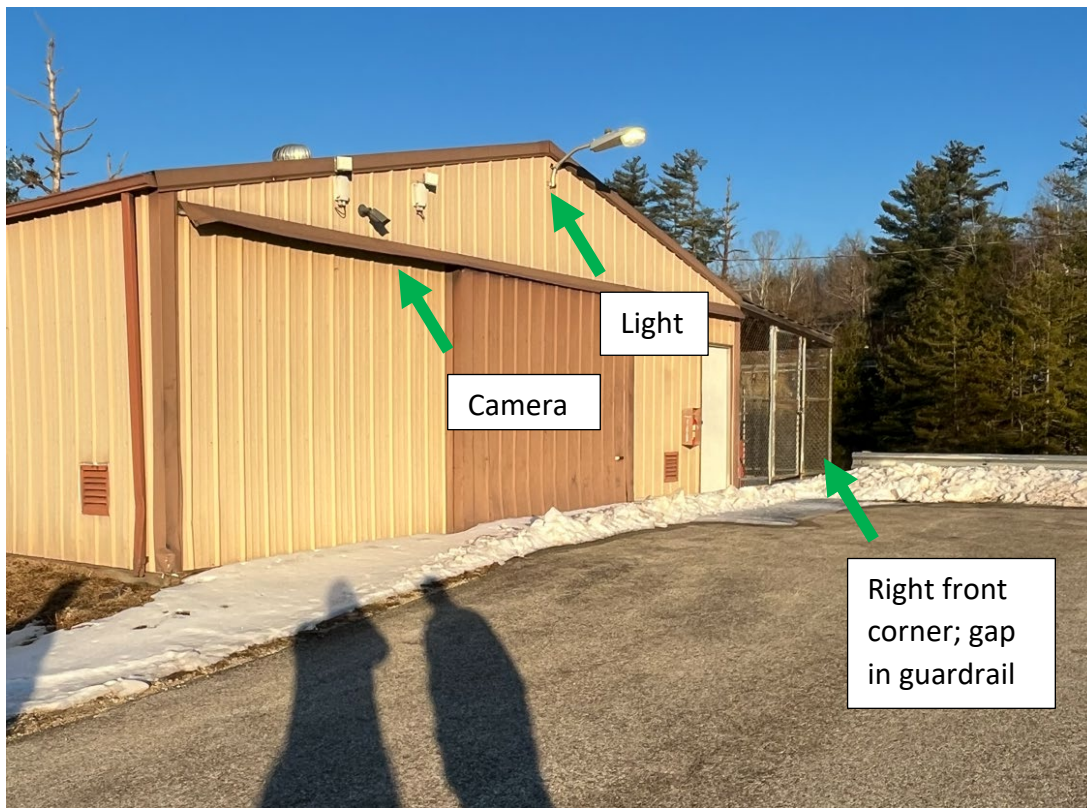


Figure 1: Front of Toxic Building. Photo taken 2/10/2026

The front of the Toxic building is equipped with a light and a video surveillance camera. (See Figure 1). There is no camera or light on the side of the building where Inmate Knuckles fell.

The right side of the building runs along a steep slope leading toward the road. At the time the CIR team visited the site, the slope was covered in a thick layer of ice and snow, which would

have also been there the night that Inmate Knuckles fell. (See Figure 2). Evidence indicates that Inmate Knuckles fell somewhere near the front right corner of the Toxic building. (See Figure 1).

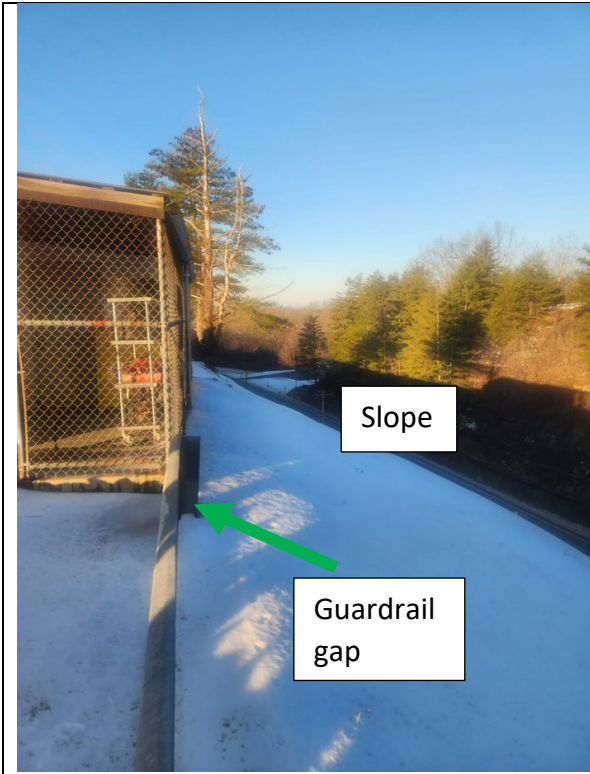


Figure 2: Side of Toxic building where Inmate Knuckles fell (day). Photo taken 2/10/2026



Figure 3: Side of Toxic building where Inmate Knuckles fell (night). Photo taken 2/12/2026



The slope is only accessible by stepping over a guardrail or walking through an approximate 12-inch gap (see Figures 5 and 6) between the end of the guardrail and a fenced storage area attached to the building. There are no warning signs next to the guardrail. An exact measurement of the sloped area in which Inmate Knuckles fell, or the distance of the fall, could not be safely obtained due to the snow and ice on the slope at the time of the review.

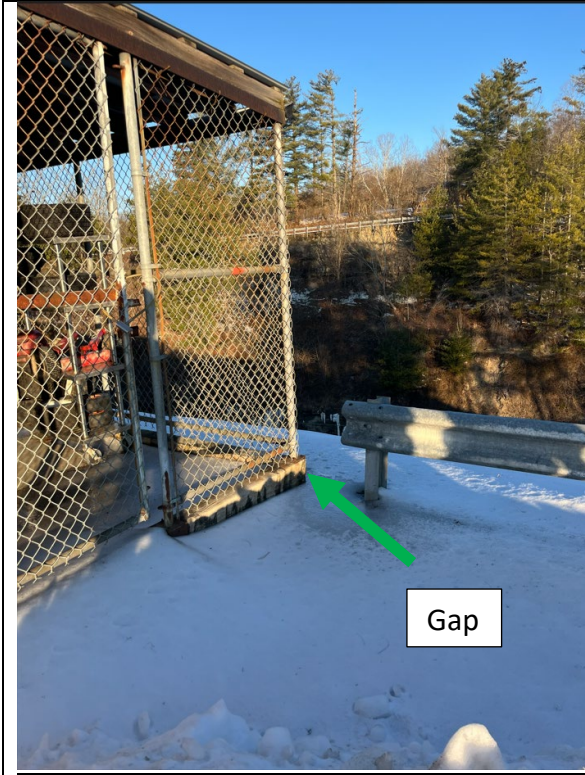


Figure 5: Gap between right front corner of Toxic building and guardrail (day). Photo taken 2/10/2026.



Figure 6: Gap between right front corner of Toxic building and guardrail (night). Photo taken 2/12/2026.

Video footage from the night of the incident shows that the light on the front of the Toxic building was on at the time of the incident. Given that a light was on the front of the building and that Inmate Knuckles is suspected to have stepped through the gap between the guardrail and the corner of the building that led to the icy slope, and the light shines in the area of the gap between the shed and the guardrail, the review team does not believe the lighting was a contributing factor to the incident.

This is the first incident in which someone has fallen down the slope beside the building.

D. Video Footage Review

As part of the investigation, the CIR team reviewed video footage from three different cameras: the Motor Pool Garage (where the plow truck is stored and crews took their breaks); the Toxic building where the incident occurred; and the EKCC entrance.

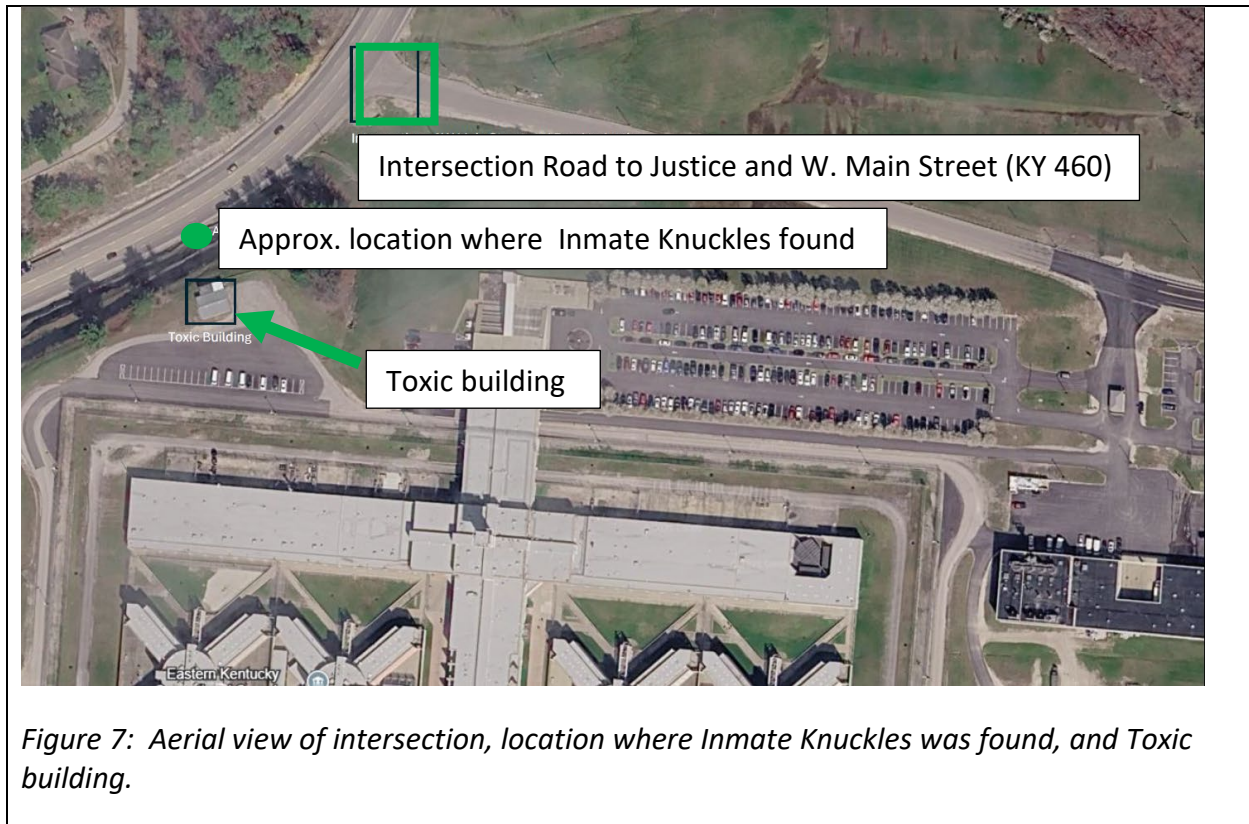
On January 26, 2026, at 4:50 PM³, the snow crew that included Inmate Knuckles left the garage to begin its shift. All three inmates were wearing orange overalls, orange jackets, toboggans, and gloves. At 5:38 PM, the crew returned, drank coffee, and used a shovel to break up the salt in the salt spreader. At 6:28 PM, the crew left the garage, and at 9:19 PM the crew returned. Again, the crew drank coffee and broke up the salt in the spreader. At 9:39 PM, the crew left the garage. At 11:07 PM, the crew returned, sat down, and drank more coffee. At 12:15 AM, the crew left the garage again.

At 1:11 AM, Inmate Knuckles walked into the Toxic building camera view. He walked toward the right side of the building. He did not appear to be in any form of distress. He walked out of the camera view approximately eighteen feet from the gap in the guardrail. He did not reappear on camera.

At 1:17 AM, the snow crew truck pulled into view of the Toxic building camera. The correctional officer and an inmate walked toward the area where Inmate Knuckles walked and, like Inmate Knuckles, exited out of view of the camera. A minute later, the inmate rushed back into the camera view waving his arms, with the correctional officer behind him. They got into the truck and left.

At 1:23:57 AM , the snow crew truck drove into view of the EKCC entrance camera. The corrections officer and two inmates were in the vehicle. At the intersection of the Road to Justice and West Main Street (State Route 460) (see Figure 7), the truck turned left toward where Inmate Knuckles was found. Thereafter an outside perimeter vehicle, medical staff in personal vehicles, and two ambulances headed to that location. There are no cameras where Inmate Knuckles was found.

³ All times are approximate. All times listed are the times generated by the software that captures the video.



E. Medical Review

The facility's Extraordinary Occurrence Report IRT#: EKCC-2026-01-067 states that responding security staff performed Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and that, upon arrival, the institutional medical staff attached an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) to Inmate Knuckles. The staff followed the prompts from the AED, which delivered a shock to Inmate Knuckles, and then indicated that no further shock was advised. The team continued to perform CPR until the ambulance arrived. Inmate Knuckles was transported to the Appalachian Regional Healthcare Emergency Room, where he was pronounced deceased at 7:39 AM.

All required notifications for an incident involving the death of an offender were completed per CPP 8.7 Notification of Critical Incident.

F. Interviews

On February 10, 2026, Officer Steven Alfrey was interviewed by the CIR team. He provided the following information:

- He was called to come in to run a snow detail on January 26, 2025, at 4:30 PM.
- He and the inmate crew had to stop multiple times to break up the salt in the spreader due to it clumping up.
- They took multiple breaks throughout the night, and they stopped near the Toxic building because the spreader had clogged up again.
- One inmate was on the bobcat; the other two were trying to break up the salt with a bar while he was in the cab working the controls.
- Inmate Knuckles came to him and said there was another bar by the Toxic building and asked to retrieve it, to which he stated he could.
- After “a minute or so,” he went and looked for Inmate Knuckles and saw slide marks where Inmate Knuckles had slid down the hill.
- He drove to the area behind the hill and found Inmate Knuckles by the road.
- He checked Inmate Knuckles’s pulse, called out a “Medical Emergency”, and left when staff arrived so he could secure the two inmates he had back in their dorm.

On February 10, 2026, the CIR team interviewed both inmates who worked on the snow crew with Inmate Knuckles. They provided the following information:

- Both inmates stated that they were warm and took breaks when needed.
- Neither inmate knows if there is a bar located on the side of the Toxic building.
- One inmate stated he was on the tractor and did not know why Inmate Knuckles would have gone to the side of the building.
- The other inmate stated that Knuckles went to the side of the building to use the restroom and that Officer Alfrey was aware.

On February 10, 2026, a follow-up interview was conducted with Officer Alfrey. Officer Alfrey provided the following information:

- He does not work with the Toxic building, and he does not know if a bar was stored on the side of the building where Inmate Knuckles fell.
- After a CIR team member explained to Officer Alfrey that one of the inmates stated that Inmate Knuckles asked Officer Alfrey to use the restroom and that Officer Alfrey told him he could, the CIR team asked Officer Alfrey if that was true. He stated “No”. The CIR team asked Officer Alfrey again what Inmate Knuckles told him before heading to the Toxic building. Alfrey stated that he said, “There is a bar back there”, to which Alfrey replied, “OK”. Captain Bare asked Alfrey what he believed “back there” meant, to which he stated, “I’m guessing the side of the Toxic building.”
- He reported that the inmates had been given breaks throughout the night and that they had ample time to use the restroom. None of the inmates asked to go to the bathroom. They went to the restroom during breaks to warm up.

G. Safety Considerations

Based upon a review of the video footage, staff and inmates were wearing the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment for working in cold weather conditions. This included boots, winter coats, coveralls, sweatshirts, and gloves. Other than the tractor that was used for a short time, the plow truck and Bobcat were heated. The snow crew took appropriate breaks in the heated garage and periodically switched out on equipment as needed.

H. Kentucky State Police (“KSP”) Investigation

KSP was notified of Inmate Knuckles’s death and performed its own investigation. KSP’s preliminary determination, pending receipt of the death certificate from the coroner, is that Inmate Knuckles’s death was accidental, and was caused by snow and ice conditions that caused Inmate Knuckles to slip and fall from high ground. That finding is consistent with this report.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the evidence described above, the CIR team concluded that Inmate Knuckles fell either while retrieving a metal bar or going to the bathroom outside.

The CIR team recommends installing a 6-foot-tall fence with top and bottom rails in the area adjacent to the slope to protect personnel and equipment from future accidents. The CIR team also recommends that signs be posted at each end of the fence that state “No entry beyond this point – Dangerous Slope”. Additionally, the fence should be installed so that no one can pass between it and the building.



Figure 8: Aerial view, Toxic building and proposed fencing.

DATED: March 5, 2026

Investigator

Have Seen:

Deputy Commissioner
Kentucky Department of Corrections

Cookie Crews

Commissioner
Kentucky Department of Corrections

Ann M. Blaylock

General Counsel & Executive Director
Office of Legal Services



Secretary
Justice & Public Safety Cabinet

ATTACHMENT A

CIR Review Team Members

Bert Bare, Internal Affairs (“IA”) Chief for the Kentucky DOC

Designated by the Department of Corrections Commissioner to provide training, support, and Central Office oversight to the DOC IA investigative process and IA system in all DOC correctional divisions.

- Conducts investigations as directed by the Commissioner.
- Serves as an outside law enforcement liaison for the DOC.
- Monitors significant internal and external threats to the DOC.
- Monitors all current, ongoing, and completed investigations to assist in quality assurance.
- Internal Affairs Administrative Investigations Certification (Legal & Liability Risk Management Institute).
- Internal Affairs Professional Standards Certification (Legal & Liability Risk Management Institute).
- Compelled Statements and Garrity Training (Legal & Liability Risk Management Institute).
- Advanced Course Completion of the Reid Technique of Interviewing and Interrogation.
- Certified PREA Investigator.
- National Crime Information Center Certified User.
- 7 years’ Internal Affairs experience.

Alan Watt, Special Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner of Adult Institutions

- Manages the administration of capital construction projects.
- Oversees professional architectural or engineering work on capital construction or maintenance projects.
- Provides professional approval for design and construction work.
- Coordinates the execution of capital construction projects with the Finance & Administration Cabinets.
- United States Marine Corps. Basic Electrician, Journeyman Electrician, and Utilities Chief training.
- 20 years USMC service as a maintenance and Supply Chief, Engineer Chief and Motor Transport Chief.
- Private Sector Construction Manager-Louisville Ky.
- Maintenance Branch Manager managing all aspects of construction and maintenance at the Roederer Correctional Complex.

- Construction Superintendent II- Kentucky DOC Capitol Construction Branch.
- Over 10 years' experience in all the following, Construction Management, Electrical Experience, Facilities Management, Project Coordination, Plumbing, Landscape Management, High voltage Repair, Low Voltage Repair, Carpentry, Construction Estimating. Equipment Repair and Staff Leadership in all areas listed.
- Project Manager of all construction projects in KY DOC.
- OSHA 30 (Construction).

Lawrence Betts, Safety Administrator

- Manages and administers safety and health programs and activities.
- Provides functional supervision of safety programs, policies, and procedures
- Enforces and ensures that all fire and life safety codes are followed.
- Serves as Workplace Violence Coordinator and Critical Incident Coordinator for Luther Luckett Correctional Complex. As the Critical Incident Coordinator, the Safety Administrator serves as the liaison to the community emergency services and is an active member of the Local Emergency Planning Committee.
- Conducts special safety and/or health investigations as required.
- Responsible for programs, inspections, and investigations involving the Local and State Department of Public Health, OSHA and any other State or Federal Agencies
- Reviews accident and investigation reports to determine if corrective actions are required.
- Responsible for the review and investigation into all workplace injuries and inmate injuries.
- Determine the need for immediate corrective actions and ensure that the work has been completed to prevent further incidents/injuries.
- National Incident Management Training Courses 100,200,300, 400, 700 & 800.
- National Fire Academy/FEMA.
- Correctional Fire and Safety Certificate Tier-1 (Eastern Kentucky University).
- Correctional Fire and Safety Certificate Tier-2 (Eastern Kentucky University).
- OSHA Training Institute (OSHA 500,501,510 and 511).
- NCBRT (Public Safety WMD Response).
- OSHA 10 and 30 Authorized Instructor.
- Certified Fire Inspector 1 and 2 (Kentucky State Fire Marshal Office).
- CPR, First-Aid and AED Instructor (AHA)