

Jail filled beyond capacity

*Security tightened
at McLennan facility*

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McLennan County Sheriff's Department officials have been spreading mattresses on jail cell floors and doing a lot of praying that the overcrowding problem at the McLennan County Jail will end soon.

Officials at the jail reported an inmate population of 273 Sunday. The jail's capacity is 239.

"We were expecting to have a large number of inmates for the weekend," Capt. Dan Weyenberg said Sunday. "We started out the weekend with about 271 inmates. We usually have 20 to 40 people come into the jail on weekends. Some of the inmates have had to sleep on mattresses on cell floors.

"We have had an inmate population ranging from 240 to about 270 for the past few weeks," he said. "There is nothing we can do but pray a lot."

A deputy who asked not to be identified said security has been increased with the higher number of inmates.

"We have guys on top of guys in here," the deputy said. "Security has been tighter because, with the increase in prisoners, things get more tense. We have had to hold four or five people in the holdover cell. The maximum amount is three.

"The Waco police department has been holding prisoners longer or until they are certain they will be bonded out once they get here," he said. "If the city jail gets overcrowded, the police department will have to dump on us. Hopefully, it won't get to that point."

The Texas Commission on Jail Standards on June 26 found the county jail overcrowded and deficient in the classification of inmates. The county jail did not receive a certificate of full compliance from the TCJS for 1985-86.

The county was given 60 days to submit a suitable plan to the commission on how the county plans to relieve conditions at the jail.

The proposed minimum-security jail will eliminate overcrowding problems and allow sheriff's officials to classify and separate prisoners into required categories, Weyenberg said.

"The county commissioners court and architects are working very hard on getting the new jail built," he said.