Lafayette jail inmates being tested for AIDS

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LAFAYETTE — Lafayette Parish Jail inmates are being tested for AIDS under a policy implemented this week.

George Armbruster, spokesman for the Lafayette Parish Sheriff’s Office, said testing for acquired immune deficiency syndrome is expected to be finished by next week. In tests completed so far, no exposure to AIDS has been detected, Armbruster said.

The AIDS testing is a safeguard for inmates and jail employees, he said.

“It’s such a serious threat that if it’s present within the jail we want to take whatever precautions are necessary to minimize the threat as far as spreading is concerned,” he said.

Testing began Monday and was to have been finished by Friday, but it has taken longer than expected and should be completed next week, he said.

If a test shows exposure to AIDS, the inmate will be tested a second time, he said.

“If they get a second positive test result back, then they will have to run a series of tests to make sure it is definitely AIDS.”

An inmate who tests positive for exposure to AIDS probably would be isolated, Armbruster said.

Every prisoner who goes into the general jail population receives the blood test, which costs the Sheriff’s Office about $8, Armbruster said.

“In other words, if you’re just arrested and booked and put in a holding cell it’s not done,” he said.

“If you can’t make bail and have to be held over without being released then that testing will be done.”

A parish is obligated to pay for inmates’ medical care, but no decision has been made about what will be done about a prisoner who has AIDS, which requires expensive treatment, Armbruster said.

The medical staff has said the inmates and jail employees are glad to have the testing done, Armbruster said.

In another policy implemented this week, prisoners will not be released from the jail for questioning by other law enforcement agencies.

The change in procedure was prompted when two prisoners fled while in police custody after they were taken from the jail for questioning, Armbruster said.

One, Cleveland Green of Lafayette, remains at large, Armbruster said. The inmate managed to slip away in mid-December when he was in custody of Lafayette city police detectives, Armbruster said.

Green faces charges of marijuana possession and unauthorized use of a movable, Armbruster said.

Wednesday, an inmate in State Police custody received a pistol from his girlfriend and escaped temporarily from a State Police detective, authorities said.

The inmate, Preston Bearb of Lafayette, was shot in the foot during a fight over a weapon, officials said. He was captured near Carencro minutes after fleeing from a State Police car. Bearb had been booked earlier into the jail with 18 counts of burglary and parole violation.

Now police officers wanting to question Lafayette Parish Jail inmates will have to conduct their interviews within the facility, Armbruster said.

Armbruster said jail Warden Mike Mouton “is not going to allow that prisoner to be signed out to another law enforcement officer.”