

# The Dallas Morning News

## Texas prisons brace for task of monitoring inmates' expanded phone privileges

Prisons brace for task of monitoring inmates' expanded call privileges

07:57 AM CDT on Monday, July 2, 2007

Associated Press

AUSTIN – Legislators have agreed to give the state's prison inmates greater access to phones.

Now comes the hard part: making sure convicts won't be dialing numbers to harass victims or commit more crimes.

State prison officials say that is the primary challenge of equipping the nation's second-largest prison system – with more than 154,000 inmates – with a new pay telephone system.

Inmates can only call people on approved lists, and all calls must be monitored under the new law.

"That's going to be a huge job, like keeping track of all the calls in a city the size of Waco," said John Moriarty, the prison system's inspector general.

Under the bill passed by the Legislature, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice must get the system up and running by September 2008. Texas has been the only state in the nation that didn't have a prison phone system.

Currently, inmates with good behavior records have been allowed one five-minute call to an approved person every 90 days with a warden's permission. Nonviolent offenders in state jails can make one every 30 days.

[http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/texasouthwest/stories/DN-prisonphones\\_02tex.ART.State.Edition1.43b297d.html](http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/texasouthwest/stories/DN-prisonphones_02tex.ART.State.Edition1.43b297d.html)