



COURTHOUSE SECURITY

Design Overview of Prisoner Facilities



Fentress
INCORPORATED

The background of the page features a photograph of a grand, classical-style building with prominent columns and a pediment. In the foreground, there are trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, yellow, and red. The entire scene is partially obscured by a dark grey semi-transparent overlay that serves as a backdrop for the text.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
The Sallyport.....	6
The Central Cellblock.....	11
Prisoner Movement	17
Courtroom Holding Cells	22
Courtrooms	27
Alternative Solutions.....	37
Moving Forward.....	43

INTRODUCTION



The secured movement of prisoners in a courthouse involves a linked series of steps - each using special facilities needed to ensure control and security.

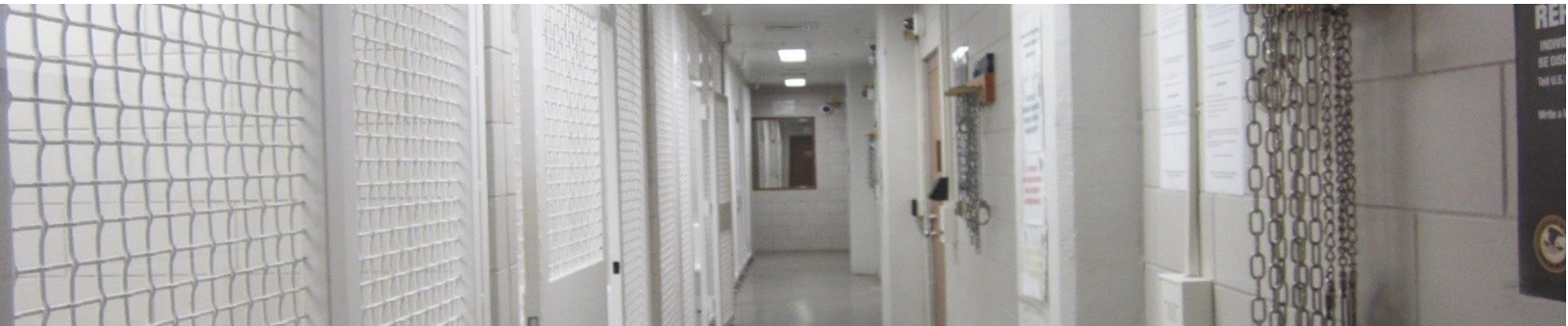
The following five chapters of this eBook individually address these steps and the spaces that support them.

The final chapter of the eBook presents an overview of alternative solutions that have proven to be effective for moving prisoners when separate, secure circulation is not possible in a courthouse.



Steps for Prisoner Movement

- Unloading prisoners in a sallyport, secure garage, or secure, exterior parking lot adjacent to the courthouse
- Moving prisoners from the sallyport through a secure elevator to the central cellblock
- Processing prisoners, including fingerprinting and photos, and awaiting court proceedings within a central cellblock
- Moving prisoners from the cellblock through a dedicated secure hallway and elevator to a courtroom holding cell
- Awaiting court proceedings in a courtroom holding cell
- Entering and exiting the courtroom from the courtroom holding cell, returning to a local detention facility, being placed on bail, or released if found not guilty



SALLYPORT



FUNCTION

Unloading prisoners who are transported from a local detention facility in a sallyport, secure garage, or secure exterior parking lot adjacent to the courthouse is the first step in delivering prisoners for court proceedings.

The use of a sallyport in a courthouse is intended to accomplish the following security objectives:

- Separating prisoners from judges, court employees, and the public, including making sure prisoners cannot see judges' vehicles
- Safeguarding court security personnel
- Avoiding chances for a prisoner to escape



Sallyport Interior Sized for a Bus and Van



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

For many courts, there are standards that apply to the design of a sallyport. These standards cover both architectural and technical requirements. These include the minimum size, door functions, lighting, power supply, access controls, alarms, communications systems, vehicle sensors, and CCTV coverage.

- The sallyport may be located adjacent to the courthouse or within the courthouse structure.
- To avoid back-up maneuvers, a drive-through sallyport is preferred.
- The sallyport is limited to prisoner transport vehicles and must accommodate vans (no less than 950 sf) or buses (no less than 1,850 sf) if the latter is part of the prisoner vehicle fleet.
- A minimum of five feet clearance should be allowed on all sides of each transport vehicle within the sallyport.
- All perimeter sallyport walls should extend from the floor to the structural slab above and be constructed of glazed masonry units reinforced with rebar.
- The ceiling should be an exposed structural slab or metal deck with a minimum height of 14 feet.
- If a door is required from the sallyport to the exterior, a man-trap type door should be provided.
- In large courthouse facilities with a bus-sized sallyport, a temporary holding cell within the sallyport should be provided for staging prisoner movement.
- The vehicle entry door should be a roll-up, overhead, coiling-type door.
- The vehicle entry door should be solid to restrict visibility from outside and inside the sallyport, insulated to protect against weather, and constructed of high-impact, resistant material.
- A vehicle barrier system (VBS) should be provided in front of all sallyport doors at all locations where the entrance is located directly off a public street or alley.

Another common arrangement, although less secure than a sallyport, is the use of a remote parking area within a secure judges' interior parking garage or surface parking lot. Typically, in these arrangements, the judges and prisoners are required to use the same entrance to the courthouse from the garage or surface lot, which negates a principal purpose of the sallyport.

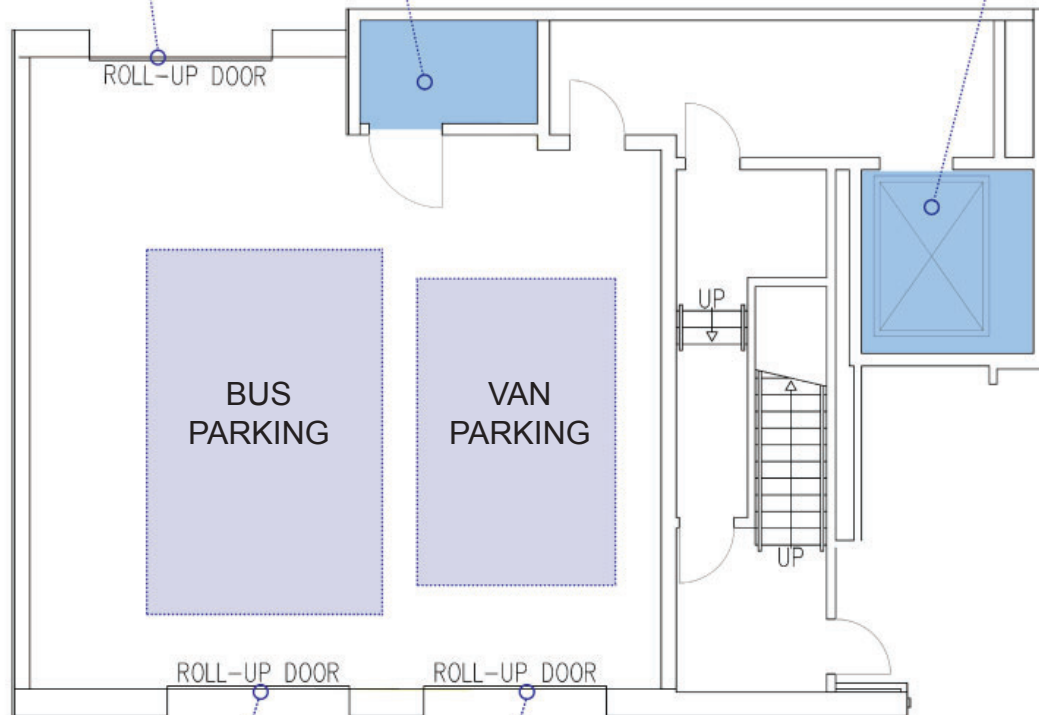
SAMPLE LAYOUT

The courthouse sallyport shown in the following plan represents a nearly ideal layout for a sallyport. This layout combines a drive-through arrangement for vehicles with parking space for a bus and a van. A holding cell and a direct connection to the prisoner elevator are also provided to enhance security.

HOLDING CELL

SALLYPORT EXIT

PRISONER
ELEVATOR



SALLYPORT ENTRANCE

CENTRAL CELLBLOCK



FUNCTION

The central cellblock is where prisoners are placed after they are brought to the courthouse while waiting to be moved to a courtroom or while waiting for transport back to a detention center. In addition to the actual cells, the cellblock should ideally support several other functions, including providing space for prisoners to be processed and for attorneys to meet with their detained clients.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The courthouse detention facilities and procedures used by many courts are generally based on the American Correctional Association's *Performance-Based Standards*. Most courts have used these standards to develop architectural, structural, and electronic requirements for prisoner cells. These standards are designed to provide the highest level of security for both court security personnel and everyone else in the courthouse. The *Performance-Based Standards* cover everything from stainless steel toilets to electronic cell door locks to CCTV and control systems monitored from a courthouse security command center.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Central cellblocks must also be safe for prisoners, offer humane physical conditions, and protect detainees' statutory and constitutional rights. The central cellblock should ideally provide:

- Enough cells to prevent overcrowding and physical and visual separation of prisoners, where necessary
- Isolation cells for unruly prisoners
- Group cells to hold prisoners being tried together
- Dedicated male prisoner cells
- Dedicated and separate female prisoner cells
- Dedicated and separate juvenile prisoner cells
- Attorney-prisoner meeting rooms
- Prisoner processing area

The photograph to the right depicts a cellblock in a new courthouse that provides the required number of cells to physically and visually separate and simultaneously detain male, female, and juvenile prisoners.



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

ATTORNEY-PRISONER MEETING ROOMS

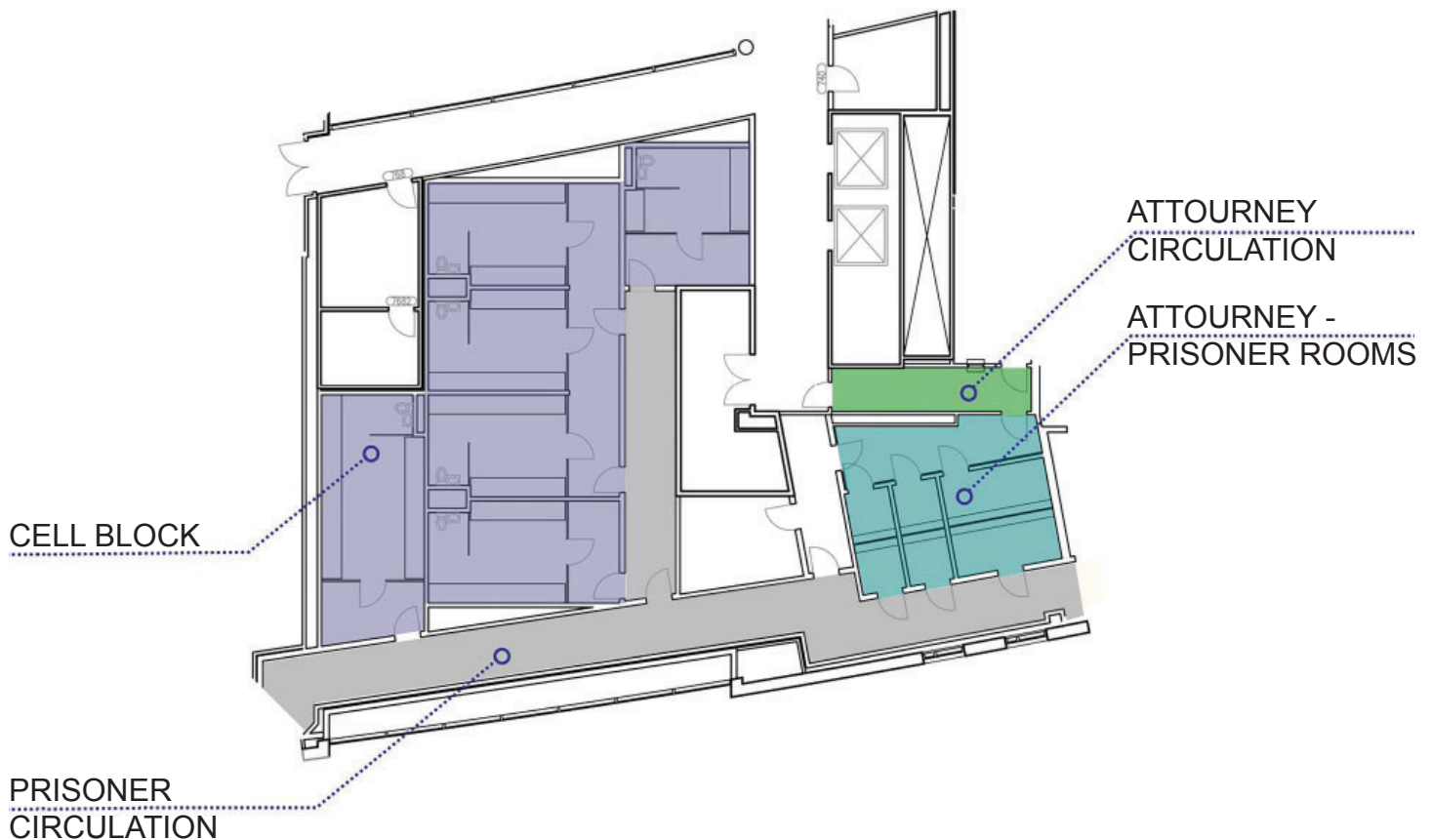
In a dedicated attorney-prisoner meeting room, the defense attorney enters from the public corridor and the prisoner is escorted to the room from within the central cellblock area to meet with his or her attorney. The room is securely divided by bars or break-resistant glass that do not allow physical contact between the parties, as pictured below. Although often overlooked, security for defense attorneys meeting with prisoners is a critical component of safe central cellblock design.

The photograph to the right shows an attorney-prisoner meeting room from the prisoner side looking out through the glass partition to the attorney side.



SAMPLE LAYOUT

The central cellblock shown in the following plan includes enough cells to separately detain male, female, and juvenile prisoners. Several attorney-prisoner meeting rooms are also provided. Attorney circulation originates at the elevator core and prisoner circulation originates at the cellblock.



PRISONER MOVEMENT



FUNCTION

Having secure and separate circulation for judges, court employees, prisoners, and the public is the single most important security feature for courthouse safety. Secure circulation for prisoners should be through dedicated corridors and elevators controlled by court security personnel. The circulation paths should allow prisoners to be moved from the sallyport to the central cellblock, to the courtroom holding cell, and to the courtroom without encountering members of the judiciary, court staff, or the public.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

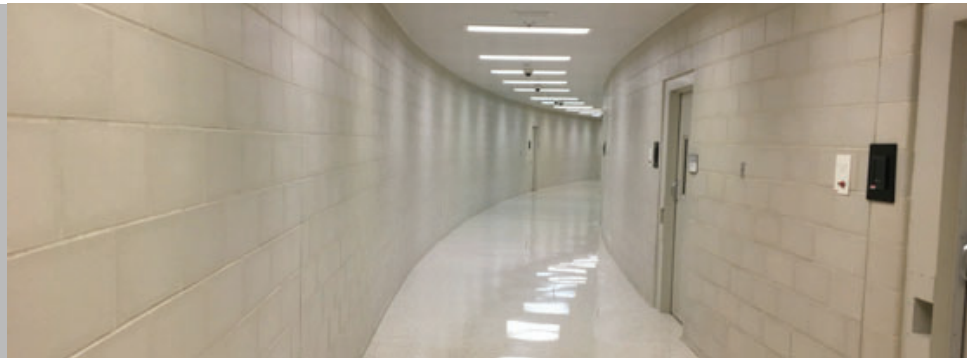
Design standards in most courts conform to the American Correctional Association's *Performance-Based Standards*.

Two aspects of secure circulation are designed to protect courthouse occupants and court security personnel from the unruliest prisoners.

SECURE CORRIDORS

Unlike standard hallways, corridors designed for prisoner movement should have enhanced security features. All perimeter walls of secured corridors should extend from the floor to the structural slab above. Perimeter walls should also be constructed of glazed masonry, reinforced with rebar.

The photo to the right shows a secure corridor with masonry walls and duress alarms.



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

SECURE ELEVATORS

Additionally, prisoner elevators should be designed with an interior wall made of wire mesh screen to separate security personnel from prisoners.

The image to the right is of a prisoner elevator with an interior wall made of wire mesh screen to separate security personnel from prisoners.

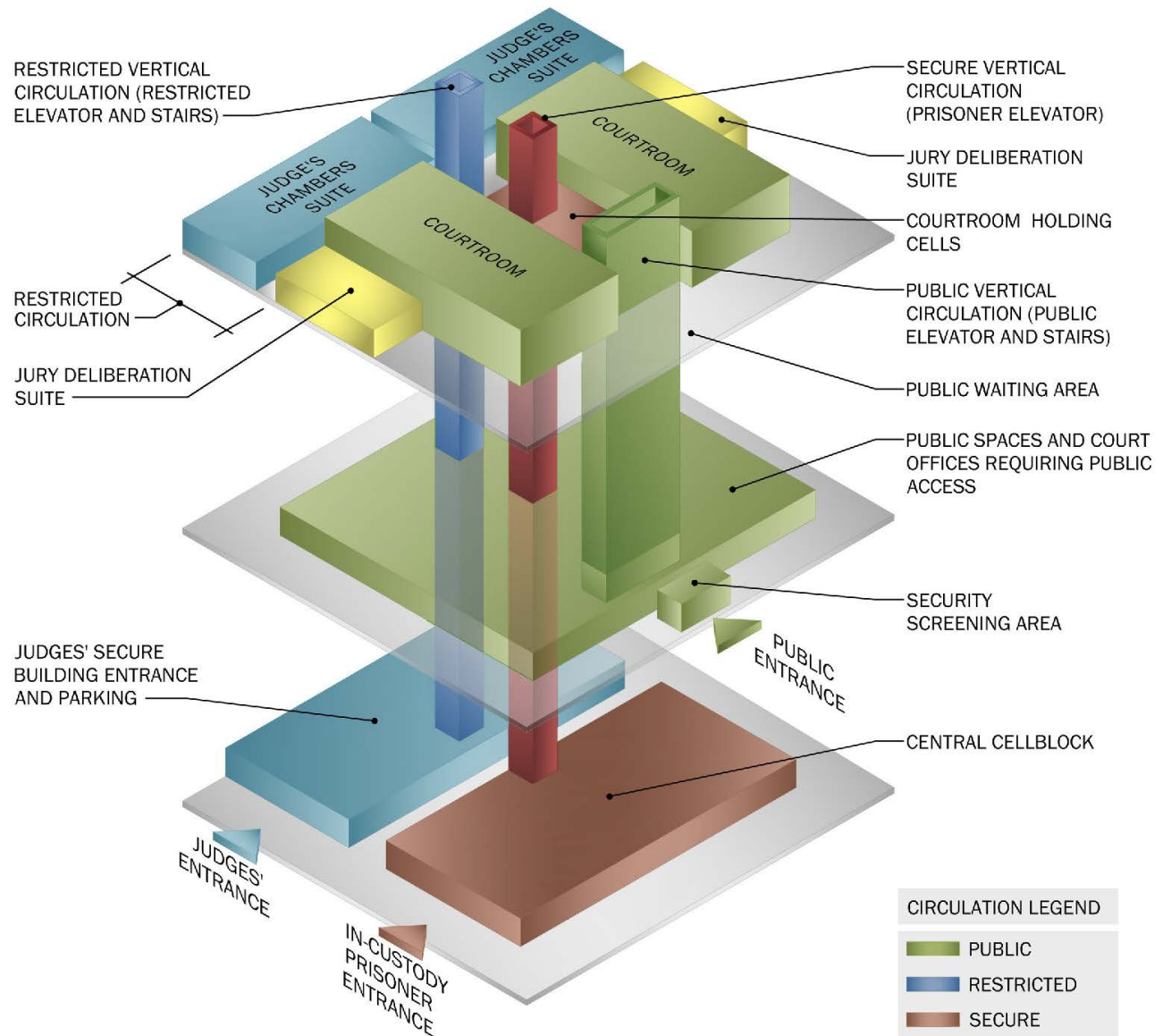


The following diagram shows an example of separate circulation patterns for judges, court employees, prisoners, and the public.

The diagram depicts:

- **Green** – public circulation and public access spaces, including the courtroom and court offices
- **Blue** – restricted circulation and restricted spaces, including judges' parking and chambers
- **Red** – secure circulation and secure spaces, including the central cellblock and courtroom holding cells

SAMPLE LAYOUT



COURTROOM HOLDING CELLS



FUNCTION

As the name implies, these facilities are located in close proximity to courtrooms and are used to house prisoners while awaiting court proceedings or waiting during court recesses. For both convenience and security, these cells should be located adjacent to the courtroom with direct access. This last point is important to keep separate circulation paths for the public, judges, and prisoners.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Most courthouses provide one holding cell for each trial courtroom. However, it is optimal to have two holding cells per courtroom to accommodate multi-prisoner proceedings, male and female prisoners, and other situations where two or more prisoners are needed in the courtroom. Another configuration that is effective is three holding cells shared between two courtrooms.

The image to the right shows a handcuff and food port in a new holding cell.



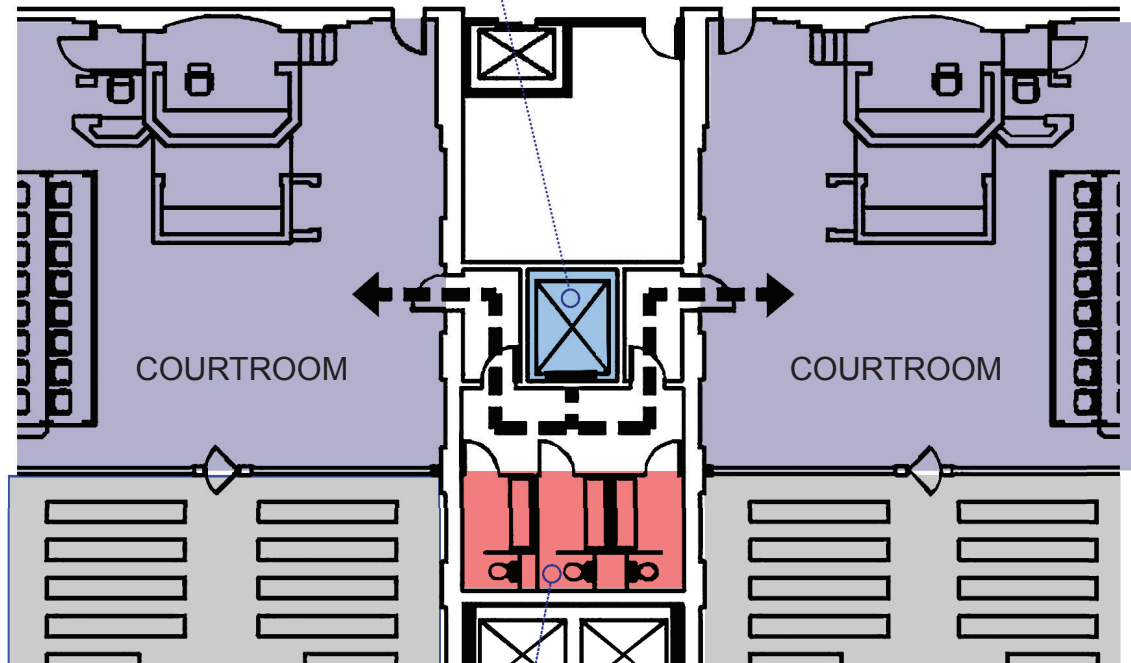
The image to the right shows a duress alarm and an intercom, which provide another way to enhance security for courthouse security personnel dealing with dangerous prisoners.



SAMPLE LAYOUT

The following plan shows a typical layout using three holding cells (shown in the red box) to serve two courtrooms.

PRISONER ELEVATOR



COURTROOM
HOLDING CELLS

COURTROOMS



FUNCTION

Maintaining security throughout a courthouse is important for the safety of judges, court employees, court security personnel, and the public. However, maintaining security within a courtroom when these participants are assembled near prisoners in a criminal proceeding is critical. Achieving a high level of security in a courtroom involves a combination of factors. When working together, they will ensure the safety of all participants.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

SECURITY FACTORS

- Courtroom layouts that provide separate points of entry and proper separation of participants
- Courtroom procedures that keep participants separate and secure
- Security technology that monitors and alerts court security personnel if there is a threat
- Furniture design that keeps participants separate and secure
- Facilities located adjacent to the courtroom that support proceedings

Let us consider them individually.

COURTROOM LAYOUT

Of the five points listed above, courtroom layout is perhaps the most important for security. Providing a properly designed courtroom is the foundation that supports the remaining considerations. An improper courtroom layout requires more expansive courtroom procedures and technology to compensate for the poor layout.

It is vital that potentially dangerous prisoners be kept separate from the other participants in the well area of the courtroom (the area between the judge's bench and spectator seating). For security reasons, and to avoid possible disruption during proceedings, it is also important to separate the public from the well of the courtroom.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

COURTROOM PROCEDURES

Courtroom procedures that support safety for participants are more effective in a well-designed courtroom. Such a layout allows the movement of participants in or out of the courtroom without crossing paths. It is simply a matter of assuring that each category of participant uses the separate assigned point of ingress/egress. In situations where the courtroom layout combines one or more of the assigned entries, workarounds using sequenced movement of participants must be used.

The most dangerous ingress/egress combinations from a security perspective are:

- Judge and prisoner
- Jury and prisoner
- Public and prisoner
- Judge and public
- Jury and public



SECURITY TECHNOLOGY

Despite all the security safeguards established for a courtroom, sometimes a prisoner or a spectator becomes violent during a proceeding. In case of such an event, it is essential to equip the judge's bench with a duress alarm directly connected to the courthouse security control center. Additionally, full coverage of the courtroom by CCTV cameras, also connected to the control center, will allow court security personnel the opportunity to make a rapid response to any violence occurring during a proceeding.

Disruptive prisoners can create a dangerous situation in the courtroom. In such situations, the use of an audio/video feed linking the courtroom and a holding cell, would allow the prisoner to be removed from the courtroom, yet still permit the prisoner to follow the proceeding, as is his or her legal right.

FURNITURE DESIGN

Providing adequate space between trial participants when seated in the courtroom well area is as important as the separation of entry points. Witnesses, jurors, members of the public, and the judge should not be positioned near a prisoner.

Additionally, to assure an optimal level of safety for the judge (most often the target of a prisoner's ire), it is important to build the judge's bench with a ballistic-resistant lining using a material such as Kevlar. Prisoner shackles hidden below the defendant's table can also assure a greater level of safety in the case of unruly defendants.

COURTROOM SUPPORT FACILITIES

An optimally functioning courtroom is supported by the following facilities:

- Holding cells immediately adjacent to the courtroom allow prisoners to enter and exit the courtroom without risk of intersecting with other trial participants.
- Adjacent jury deliberation suites allow jurors to enter and exit the courtroom without risk of interaction with prisoners or the public.
- Adjacent attorney-witness conference rooms allow witnesses to enter and exit the courtroom without risk of intersecting with the movement of prisoners against whom they may be testifying.
- Adjacent judge's chambers allow the judge to move back and forth between the courtroom and chambers in a safe and secured manner without the risk of intersecting with prisoners or the public.

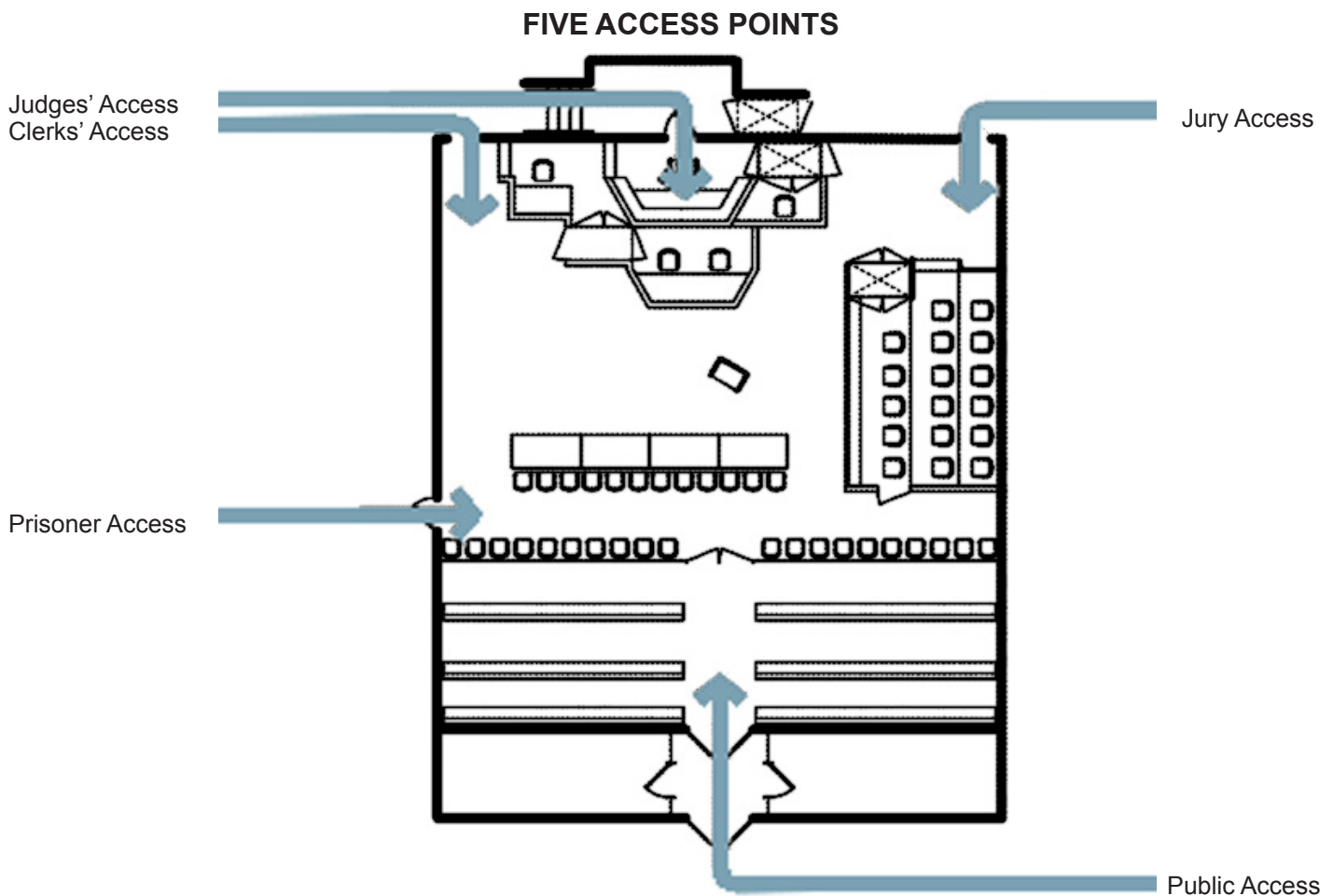
DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Providing separate points of access and proper distances between trial participants can be evidenced in the courtroom shown below.



SAMPLE LAYOUT

As shown in the following plan, a well-designed courtroom provides separate points of access for the judge, jury, prisoner, and public. (Court staff, including court reporters and court security personnel, may use either the judge's or jury's point of access. Attorneys for either the prosecution or defense use the public point of access.)



SAMPLE LAYOUT

An optimally functioning courtroom is supported by the facilities noted below and shown in the accompanying plan of a courtroom set.

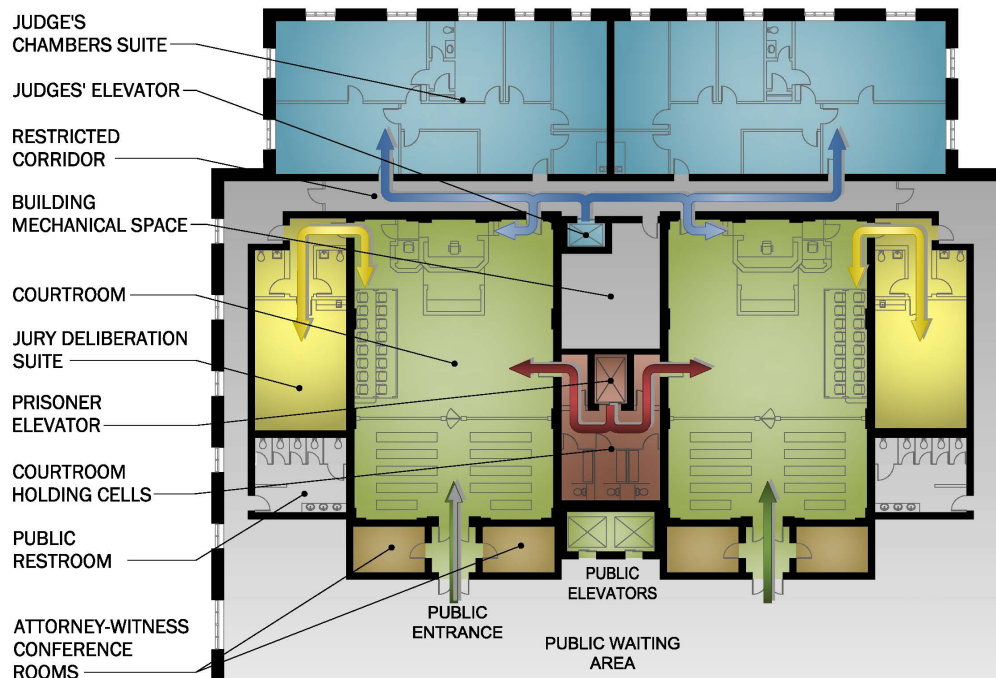
Blue - judge's chambers and elevator

Yellow - jury deliberation suite

Red - prisoner holding cells and elevator

Tan - attorney-witness conference rooms

Green - courtroom and public elevator



CIRCULATION LEGEND

 PUBLIC

 JURORS

 RESTRICTED (JUDGES AND COURT PERSONNEL)

 SECURE (PRISONER MOVEMENT)

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS



FUNCTION

In older courthouses, it may be impossible to solve deficient circulation conditions or courtroom access problems. Many older courthouses have layouts that are inflexible or are constructed of walls that cannot be moved, which may preclude improvements. Still, it is essential that secure circulation be provided for the protection of all individuals present in these courthouses. Fortunately, there are options to avoid participants meeting face-to-face in a courthouse corridor.

When separation of circulation cannot be established through an architectural layout, it may be necessary for court security personnel to manually control circulation. The specific security measures required to accomplish this are most effectively developed on a case-by-case basis. As a rule, the right solutions will be a combination of the use of court security personnel, security hardware, and improved security technologies.

Here are some of the specific options.

COURT SECURITY PERSONNEL PROCEDURES

The lack of a secure circulation route for moving prisoners between the central cellblock and the courtroom or courtroom holding cell is the most common circulation problem. An option often used by court security personnel is moving prisoners through public hallways. To ensure safety, additional court security personnel should be used to control access along the public circulation paths.

It is important to have rules in place for court security personnel that control the timing of different participants entering/exiting the courtroom when the pathways of the participants must cross. These rules will help prevent a negative interaction between proceeding participants.

CCTV AND DURESS ALARMS

Judges are often required to use public corridors, stairways, or elevators between chambers and courtrooms or between chambers and other areas of the courthouse, such as libraries or parking. In these instances, CCTV cameras and duress alarms linked to monitors in the courthouse security control center should be installed along the entire circulation path to monitor the judges' movement.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The photo to the right demonstrates CCTV in a public corridor used by judges.



DOOR LOCKOUTS

In older courthouses, restricted judges' corridors and elevators are often used for moving prisoners between the central cellblock and the courtroom or courtroom holding cell to avoid public hallways. In these instances, a process should be established to alert judges and staff prior to moving prisoners.

A door lockout system managed by court security personnel can be used when all doors bordering the restricted corridor, including elevator doors, are locked when moving prisoners. This fail-safe lockout approach is needed to prevent ill-timed or wholly unintentional entry by judges or staff when prisoners are moved.

WIRELESS CCTV CAMERAS

Courthouse security control centers have been able to significantly expand coverage in older courthouses due to the new generation of wireless CCTV cameras. This new generation technology permits cameras to be installed to increase coverage without the need for wall or ceiling modifications. This is a helpful solution for older courthouses where building constraints can limit the number or location of cameras.

CENTRAL ELECTRONIC DOOR CONTROLS

In recent years, there has been an increasing use of centrally controlled, electronic door lockout systems for restricted judges' corridors. In these systems, electronic lock hardware is used to lock and unlock each controlled door from a central access control panel located in the courthouse security control center.

The access control panel is managed by a dedicated access control computer, which may be used to manually or automatically lock and unlock doors. The same system is also connected to the elevator doors serving the judges' restricted corridor to control access on a floor-by-floor basis.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

EMERGENCY EGRESS CONTROLS

There has also been an increase in the use of electronic egress door hardware that is designed to balance egress needs and security.

Because building codes require at least two means of egress from each floor, the layout of older, and especially historic courthouses often requires public emergency egress routes to use judges' restricted corridors. Using door hardware that is electronically integrated into the fire alarm system, access to emergency egress corridors can be restricted to authorized personnel using key cards during normal building operations. When emergency alarms are activated, the locks automatically disengage, allowing the public to use the restricted corridors.

Since the use of such doors is simultaneously recorded in the courthouse security control center, an immediate response can be provided by court security personnel in the instance of improper use.

The image to the right shows a notice in a judge's corridor used for egress.



MOVING FORWARD

The procedures, equipment, and technology described above all represent courthouse security measures that have effectively been used as alternatives for providing secure circulation in existing courthouses.

They are not the only options that might be used. In fact, security technology and equipment both continue to evolve, and with these more advanced and improved tools, court security personnel can also revise and improve their procedures.

Although a full separation of circulation patterns for prisoners is always the preferred solution for any courthouse, security for all its occupants is the goal that should be achieved, although sometimes creatively.



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Fentress Incorporated
inquiry@fentress.com

Learn more about our solutions at
www.fentress.com
Phone: 888.329.0040