



15 June 2016

C77960

Emmy Rākete

fyi-request-3996-f75fe9b8@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Ms Rākete

Thank you for your email dated 13 May 2016, requesting information about weapons discovered during searches in the last 10 years. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The Department's overarching vision is to create lasting change by breaking the cycle of re-offending. We place considerable emphasis on preventing contraband from entering prisons, apprehending those who attempt to smuggle it in, and stamping out opportunities for organised crime. These measures all contribute toward our bottom line of improving public safety, and our ultimate goal of reducing re-offending.

Contraband in prisons includes alcohol, communication devices, drugs, drug paraphernalia, tattoo equipment, weapons and other items. Items that are prohibited may include everyday and seemingly innocent items that while not illegal, may be used inappropriately by prisoners. On 1 July 2011 smoking was banned in all prisons and all tobacco and smoking equipment (e.g. lighters) are considered contraband from this date.

Our intelligence staff are constantly working to identify and mitigate risk areas in the physical environment and to stay informed about new methods of concealment. The Department currently employs a range of screening methods to prevent contraband from entering prisons. These measures include:

- prison perimeter security and limiting the number of entry points to prisons
- camera surveillance in prison visit rooms, perimeter and entry points
- completing background checks on all potential prison visitors
- searches of any vehicle and its occupants entering prison property
- using scanners and x-ray machines at entry points
- banning visitors who attempt to bring contraband into prisons
- requiring prisoners to wear closed overalls when in visiting areas, to prevent the smuggling of contraband
- prisoner mail and property being subject to checks for contraband
- specialist detector dog teams patrolling prison perimeters, visitor areas, and cells

- identifying and analysing criminal activities in prisons through operational intelligence teams, and
- the Crimestoppers free telephone service (0800 555 111) that enables information about crime to be provided anonymously by offenders, staff, or members of the public.

Officers have the power to conduct searches on prisoners, and of their cells, to detect unauthorised items. Under section 98 of the Corrections Act 2004 officers are authorised to carry out scanner searches, rub-down searches and strip searches of prisoners.

Strip searches are carried out when a prisoner is first admitted to a prison, immediately before the prisoner is transferred to another prison, when the prisoner is received in a prison on transfer from another prison, or leaves or returns to or from a prison for outside employment, court appearances, medical appointments, or any other reason in accordance with the Corrections Act 2004.

You have requested information about weapons that have been discovered during searches in the last 10 years. I have addressed each of your questions below.

Please note the Department reports on a financial year basis, and the parameters of your request have been altered accordingly.

1. *How often have weapons been discovered during searches in the last 10 years, and how many weapons were found during these searches? Break this data down by month and by the kind of search - for instance, if weapons were found during a strip search, during a cell search, or otherwise.*

Please note that the number of weapons seized relates only to prisoner incidents. Data showing incidents where weapons have been found between 1 December 2009 and 2015/16 (year to date as at 19 May 2016) is provided to you as Appendix One. Please note, in early 2009 we reviewed the classification of contraband incidents and changes to our processes were implemented from 1 December 2009. As a result, data collated prior to the change is not comparable with subsequent data.

The Department is unable to provide the number of items that may have been intended for introduction to the prison by visitors, as this information is not centrally collated. We are also unable to provide you with information relating to the kind of search where contraband items (weapons) were found. The Department would have to review every visitor or prisoner related incident report for the period specified. Therefore, this part of your request is declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the Act, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

2. *Provide all documentation pertaining to what the Department does or does not consider a weapon.*

It is important to note that the majority of weapons found in prisons are makeshift weapons, made from items that are readily at hand, for example a sharpened pen or toothbrush.

Further information regarding prohibited items can be found on the Department's website via the following link:

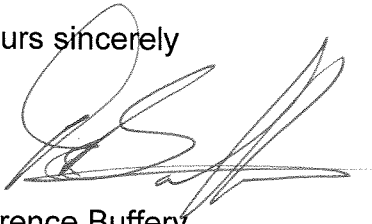
http://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/policy_and_legislation/Prison-Operations-Manual/Public-RL/P.05.Res.html

3. *Provide a comprehensive list of all weapons found during searches during this reporting period.*

We are unable to release specific information about the types of weapons discovered in prisons into the public domain, as doing so could compromise the safety of individuals or the security of prisons. Therefore, the requested information is withheld under section 6(c) of the OIA, as the making available of that information would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Department. Alternatively you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



Terence Buffery
National Commissioner (Acting)

**Appendix One – Contraband items found and categorised as weapons
between 2009/10 and 2015/16**

Contraband items found and categorised as weapons between 1 December 2009 and 2015/16 (year to date as at 19 May 2016*)	
Financial Year	Number of Weapons
2009/10	239
2010/11	452
2011/12	383
2012/13	442
2013/14	424
2014/15	395
2015/16*	467