



# **CHUCKAWALLA VALLEY STATE PRISON**

**WARDEN JOHN SALAZAR  
ONE-YEAR AUDIT**

**OFFICE OF THE  
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**DAVID R. SHAW  
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**DECEMBER 2009**



December 16, 2009

Matthew L. Cate, Secretary  
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation  
1515 S Street, Room 502 South  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Mr. Cate:

Enclosed is the Office of the Inspector General's audit report concerning the performance of Warden John F. Salazar at Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP). The purpose of the audit was to satisfy our statutory requirement to audit each warden one year after appointment.

The report concludes that John Salazar has successfully transitioned to his role as warden and has gained a reputation as an ethical, professional, and approachable leader. CVSP employees we interviewed rated his management skills and qualities as 'outstanding' overall; and the employees we surveyed agreed that he is an effective leader, given all of the institution's challenges.

If you have questions concerning this report, please contact Jerry Twomey, Chief Assistant Inspector General, Bureau of Audits and Investigations, at (916) 830-3600.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David R. Shaw".

David R. Shaw  
Inspector General

cc: John F. Salazar, Warden, CVSP  
Scott Kernan, Chief Deputy Secretary, Adult Operations, CDCR  
Suzan Hubbard, Director, Adult Institutions, CDCR  
Elizabeth Siggins, Chief Deputy Secretary (A), Adult Programs, CDCR  
Kim Holt, External Audits Manager, CDCR

Enclosure

  
Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor



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## Results in Brief

### John F. Salazar is a well respected warden

From its review, the Office of the Inspector General found that John F. Salazar has successfully transitioned to his role as warden at Chuckawalla Valley State Prison. During his 26 years with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the warden has developed outstanding management skills and qualities. In addition, he has gained a reputation as an ethical, professional, and approachable leader. Furthermore, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) employees describe him as an excellent communicator, very knowledgeable about prison operations, and one who is always fair and firm. As a result, Warden Salazar has gained the respect of his employees, managers, and external stakeholders. Furthermore, CVSP employees told us the staff morale and communication, in general, have significantly improved since Salazar became warden in August 2007.

#### CHUCKAWALLA VALLEY STATE PRISON FACTS AT A GLANCE

**Location:** Blythe, CA

**Opened:** 1988

**Mission:** Low to Medium Security

**Inmate Population:** 3,557

**Designed Capacity:** 1,738 inmates

**Employees:** 730

**Budget:** \$107 million, FY 2008-09

During our review, we surveyed CVSP employees, key stakeholders, and department executives; analyzed operational data compiled and maintained by the department; interviewed CVSP employees, including the warden; and toured the institution and observed its operations. We compiled the results and categorized them into four areas: safety and security, inmate programming, business operations, and employee-management relations. We received mainly positive responses regarding the warden's performance. In the business operations area, where the warden scored lowest, our interviews with employees indicate that the warden appears to be aggressively addressing employee concerns. On average, the warden's managers and employees rated his overall performance as outstanding.



**Warden John F. Salazar**

# One-Year Evaluation of Warden John F. Salazar

California Penal Code section 6126(a)(2) requires the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to audit each warden of an institution one year after his or her appointment. To satisfy this requirement, we evaluated Warden Salazar's performance at Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) since his appointment in August 2007.

## Background of Warden

Warden John F. Salazar has worked for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (department) over 26 years, beginning in 1983 as a correctional officer at the California Correctional Center. Between 1987 and 2001 he worked at Mule Creek State Prison, Sierra Conservation Center and Calipatria State Prison. He held positions as a correctional sergeant, correctional counselor, facility captain, and acting correctional administrator over inmate classification. In 2001 Salazar was promoted to associate warden at Centinela State Prison and in 2005 to chief deputy warden. In January 2006, he became the acting warden at CVSP and in August 2007, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed Salazar as warden of CVSP.

## Institution Overview

CVSP is one of 33 adult prisons operated by the department. The prison was activated in December 1988 and occupies 125 acres, within 1,735 acres that are owned by the state and located near the city of Blythe in Riverside County. Ironwood State Prison (ISP) is located next to CVSP, sharing part of the 1,735 acres. CVSP operates a fire house, which responds to local mutual aid requests and provides coverage for both CVSP and ISP. CVSP also operates a water treatment plant, waste water treatment plant, vehicle maintenance garage, recycling and salvage program, and laundry facility for both CVSP and ISP.



**Aerial view of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison**

CVSP's mission is to provide long-term housing and services for male felons classified as medium and low-medium custody inmates. Designed to hold 1,738 male inmates, as of March 2009, CVSP housed 3,557 inmates—205 percent of its design capacity.

## ***Inmate Housing***

CVSP houses low-medium custody (Level II) and low custody (Level I) male felon inmates. As of March 2009, CVSP had 3,260 inmates classified as Level II and 297 inmates classified as Level I. Its Level II inmates are housed within two main complexes. One complex includes two general population facilities or yards. The other complex includes two sensitive needs yards (SNY)<sup>1</sup> as well as an administrative segregation unit. The institution's Level I inmates are housed within a separate minimum support yard.

Beginning in late 2007 and ending in December 2008, the institution deactivated and re-activated each of the four yards in its two main complexes to renovate the buildings and install new heating and air-conditioning, re-roof the housing units, and refurbish the showers in all housing units. These renovations were collectively referred to as the HVAC (heat, ventilation, and air conditioning) project. Yard-by-yard, hundreds of inmates had to transition to another yard or relocate to another institution. In addition, two general population yards were converted to SNYs during the process. According to the warden and confirmed by many employees we interviewed, the HVAC project involved collaboration by almost everyone at the institution and was accomplished very successfully. The photograph at Figure 1 above shows the new chiller plant installed at CVSP as part of the HVAC project.



**Figure 1 - CVSP's new chiller plant used for inmate housing air-conditioning**

## ***Rehabilitation Programs***

CVSP offers its inmates a variety of rehabilitative programs that provide approximately 3,500 educational and work assignment opportunities and include several self-help programs. Educational programs include a variety of academic, vocational, and bridging programs. For example, the institution's academic offerings cover adult basic education, high school general educational development courses, computer assisted education, English as a second language, and college programs. Its vocational programs range from auto mechanics and carpentry to computer technology and drafting. In addition, CVSP has 340 assigned beds available for inmates enrolled in the department's substance abuse treatment programs.

CVSP's inmate work assignments include clerical and porter positions and firefighter positions at its fire house. The institution's fire department provides training and certification to inmates for potential job placement upon parole. Also, the Prison Industry Authority (PIA) offers inmates work in the laundry facility located at the institution.

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<sup>1</sup> Because of their crimes, notoriety, or gang affiliations, for safety reasons inmates placed on sensitive needs yards cannot mix with general population inmates.

According to departmental data, as of March 2009 there were 2,500 inmates assigned to various jobs at CVSP and another 63 inmates assigned to the PIA laundry.

The institution also offers eight self-help programs including parenting, anger management, veterans and Toastmasters groups, and the Alternatives to Violence Project, a rehabilitative volunteer program. In addition, the institution currently offers five religious programs.

### ***Budget and Staffing***

For fiscal year 2008–09, CVSP’s budget for institution and education operations was \$107 million plus \$24 million for medical operations. The institution has 880 budgeted positions, of which 533 (or 61 percent) represent custody staff members. Table 1 below compares CVSP’s budgeted and filled positions as of March 31, 2009. Overall, the institution has filled only 83 percent of its total budgeted positions. However, 42 of its budgeted custody positions were activated in March 2009 for medical custody needs and the institution has not yet filled all the positions. Furthermore, according to the institution’s personnel manager, who has been in the position for ten years, CVSP’s remote location contributes to its recruitment difficulties.

**Table 1: Staffing Levels at Chuckawalla Valley State Prison**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Filled Positions</b>	<b>Budgeted Positions</b>	<b>Percent Filled</b>
Custody	435	533	81.6%
Education	30	33	90.9%
Medical	101	113	89.4%
Support	92	115	80.0%
Trades	62	75	82.7%
Management	10	11	90.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>83.0%</b>

*Source: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, CompStat for March 31, 2009, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison. Unaudited data.*

## **Objectives, Scope, and Methodology**

To fulfill our objective of assessing the warden’s performance, we employed a three-part approach. First, we used surveys to solicit opinions and comments from employees, department management team members, and other stakeholders. Next, we analyzed operational data maintained by the department and compared it with the averages for institutions with a similar mission<sup>2</sup> and all institutions statewide. In addition, we reviewed relevant reports prepared by the department or other external agencies. Finally, we visited the institution, interviewed various employees and an inmate representative from the Inmate Advisory Council, and followed up on noteworthy concerns we identified from the surveys, operational data, or reports.

<sup>2</sup> Institutions with a similar mission include: Avenal State Prison, California Correctional Center, California Rehabilitation Center, California State Prison – Solano, Correctional Training Facility, Folsom State Prison, Ironwood State Prison, and Sierra Conservation Center.

To understand how the employees and other stakeholders view the warden's performance, we sent surveys to three distinct groups: department and CVSP managers, CVSP employees, and key stakeholders outside the department. For our employee survey, we randomly selected 200 of the institution's employees and sent them a survey. The survey provides us with information about employees' perceptions of the warden's overall performance plus information about specific operational areas at the prison— Safety and Security, Inmate Programming, Business Operations, and Employee-Management Relations.

To provide additional insight regarding the employee survey results, we grouped survey respondents into three employment categories: Custody, Health Care, and Other (which includes employees in education, plant operations, administration, and clerical positions.) Then, to identify strong trends or patterns, we classified the responses to our questions as either positive or negative. For example, if the respondent 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with our question, we classified it as positive; and if the respondent 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with our question, we classified it as negative.

Our inspectors also analyzed operational data maintained by the department (called CompStat – comparable statistics) and analyzed the responses from other surveyed groups. In addition, we analyzed reports related to the institution's operations. From these efforts, we identified topics for further review and evaluation during our on-site visit to CVSP.

While at CVSP we gained insight into the environment where the warden must perform his daily duties. We interviewed certain key employees and other randomly selected employees, using information gathered from our analysis of statistical information and from employee surveys to identify potential issues for review. Our interviews involved employees in various operational areas throughout the prison, including:

- Armory
- Business services
- Educational/vocational programs
- Employee/labor relations
- Food services
- Health care
- Housing units
- Human resources
- Information technology
- Inmate appeals
- Inmate assignments
- Inmate case records
- In-service training
- Investigative services
- Litigation
- Personnel assignment
- Plant operations
- Prison industry authority
- Receiving and release
- Substance abuse programs
- Use of force review
- Warehouse management

We performed our site visit the week of March 23, 2009. During our site visit, we interviewed 61 individuals throughout the prison and had them describe and rate the warden's performance. These individuals included custody employees, executive management team members, education and health care professionals, and an inmate representative from the Inmate Advisory Council.

## Review Results

We found that most responding stakeholders including department management, institutional managers, and employees believe the warden is doing an outstanding job overall. In the four categories of safety and security, inmate programming, business operations, and employee-management relations we received mostly positive responses.

### Category 1: Safety and Security

The department's primary mission is to enhance public safety through safe and secure incarceration of offenders. The importance of safety and security is embodied in the department's requirement that custodial security and the safety of staff, inmates, and the public must take precedence over all other considerations in the operation of all the department's programs and activities. As shown in Table 2 above, 85 percent of the prison employees we surveyed had positive opinions about the safety and security of the institution.

**Table 2: Safety and Security – Employee Survey Results**

Respondents	Positive	Negative
Custody	85%	15%
Health Care	84%	16%
Admin, Plant Operations, and Other	85%	15%
<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>15%</b>

*Source: OIG Survey of CVSP Employees. See Appendix for details.*

During our review of the safety and security category, we also heard mostly favorable opinions from the employees we interviewed during our field visit. After considering the results of our interviews, in conjunction with comments we received from the warden and our review of departmental data on use of force incidents, we identified four areas that warranted more detailed discussion: Employee Interview Results, Cell Phones and Other Safety and Security Issues, Facility Structural Improvements, and Use of Force.

#### *Employee Interview Results*

When we interviewed 38 employees in key positions, we asked what concerned them the most with regard to safety and security. Over half of those employees indicated that they had no safety and security concerns at all. In fact, one employee told us that a person is safer at CVSP than they are “walking around Los Angeles or downtown Blythe.” We heard many other positive comments from the employees we interviewed. For example, we were told that Warden Salazar is very “security conscious,” that safety and security “has tightened up” and “improved tremendously” since he arrived, and that he is “very responsive” to safety and security concerns and takes immediate action to “attack” the issues. Also, several employees commented on CVSP’s effective and efficient response to an escape that occurred in November 2008 from the minimum security facility that is outside the main institution’s perimeter fence.

When we interviewed 22 other random employees during our on-site visit, we did not specifically ask them about safety and security. However, many of those employees made favorable comments about Warden Salazar’s improvements to safety and security when they responded to other interview questions. For example, we heard that the warden has

“no tolerance for by-passing security measures for convenience,” “is always looking out for the safety of officers,” and “has addressed a lot of safety issues.”

In addition, we heard several positive comments from both groups of employees about the warden’s successful handling of the HVAC project, which involved the activation and deactivation of yards and required the safe and secure transfer of inmates from yard to yard. Some employees identified the project as one of the warden’s biggest accomplishments and others referred to it as an example of the management team’s good working relationship. Employees told us that the movement of inmates throughout the project was “very smooth” and that the transition was “safe and effective”.

### ***Cell Phones and Other Safety and Security Issues***

Those employees we interviewed who identified safety and security issues were primarily concerned about inmates’ possession of cell phones and other contraband or employees’ relaxed attitudes about safety and security in general. While cell phone smuggling has become a statewide problem for the department, the lax attitude of some employees may be a problem more unique to lower security-level facilities, such as CVSP. We were also told about other safety and security related concerns. Specifically, several employees addressed the need for facility repairs; others were concerned about inmates on one particular yard not being held accountable for their actions. However, after talking to the warden about these concerns, we concluded that the issues would be more appropriately discussed within the Business Operations and Employee-Management Relations sections of this report.

At the department level, Warden Salazar chairs the department’s Cell Phone Interdiction Advisory Committee, which is tasked with addressing the statewide cell phone smuggling issue. One of the department’s efforts to combat the cell phone problem was its support for Senate Bill 434, which would create criminal penalties for anyone engaged in smuggling cell phones into state prisons. The department is also reviewing a proposal to implement new procedures to address contraband smuggling at the institutions. Meanwhile, at the institution, the warden has increased random searches of inmate housing units and reported the discovery of 169 cell phones in 2008. Also, he no longer allows staff to bring backpacks into the institution because they often have pockets where contraband can be hidden.

Regarding employees’ complacency about safety and security, both Salazar and the employees we interviewed attributed this issue to CVSP employees becoming too relaxed because the prison houses low security level inmates and has few problems. To address this issue, the warden has implemented several operational changes that include new procedural and structural alterations to the Central Operations Control (COC) area, which is the main entry to the secured perimeter of the prison; more safety and security training for employees; and increased staff accountability for security lapses. Furthermore, several CVSP employees indicated the warden’s focus on safety and security is his biggest accomplishment since he was appointed.

### ***Facility Structural Improvements***

During our site visit at CVSP, we observed the enhanced procedures and structural changes made in the COC area. A new magnetized door was installed at the entrance to the COC building, and the door on the other side of the building is no longer propped open. As shown in the photographs at Figures 2 and 3 below, visitors and staff must now pass through two security check points, thereby creating a sally port, before entering either of the prison's two main complexes. Custody staff members require photo identifications at both the entry and exit portals.



**Figure 2 – Secured entry portal into the COC building**



**Figure 3- Exit portal onto the prison's main yard complexes**

In addition, we visited the minimum support yard, which houses CVSP's Level I inmates. We observed recently installed window coverings on the housing units. Furthermore, as indicated in the photograph at Figure 4, new fencing has been installed on the yard to improve security.

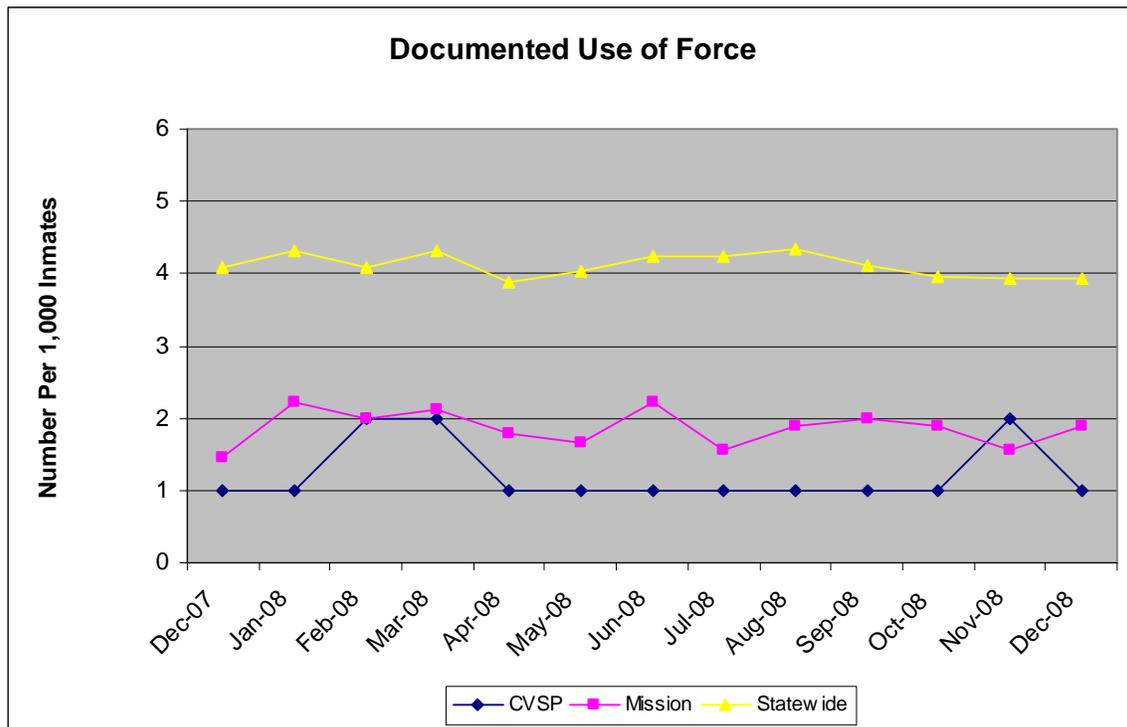


**Figure 4 - New fencing installed on CVSP's minimum support yard**

## Use of Force

The number of incidents where force is necessary to subdue an attacker, overcome resistance, effect custody, or gain compliance with a lawful order is a measure of inmate behavior and the institution's ability to safely incarcerate inmates. To assess CVSP's use of force, we reviewed the department's use of force data during the 13-month period from December 2007 through December 2008. As shown in Chart 1 below, CVSP's documented occurrences of use of force are far below the statewide average and are typically well below institutions with a similar mission. The use of force coordinator at CVSP told us that she has "no problems" regarding the institution's use of force cases. She also stated that one of the warden's biggest accomplishments is that "he is more strict" and "people tend to obey and follow the rules." Given this kind of environment, plus the fact that CVSP is unlike most other similar-mission institutions and houses only Level I and Level II inmates, it is not surprising that use of force occurrences are generally at a low level at CVSP. With regard to the November 2008 spike in use of force occurrences, custody captains and associate wardens we spoke with attributed the increase to a riot that occurred on one yard. We confirmed that a riot occurred on November 28, 2008.

**Chart 1:**



Source: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, CompStat for December 31, 2008, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison. Unaudited data.

## Category 2: Inmate Programming

Research shows that rehabilitative programming can reduce the likelihood that offenders will commit new crimes and return to prison. In fact, a 2006 Washington State Institute for Public Policy

**Table 3: Inmate Programming – Employee Survey Results**

Respondents	Positive	Negative
Custody	74%	26%
Health Care	78%	22%
Admin, Plant Operations, and Other	76%	24%
<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>24%</b>

*Source: OIG Survey of CVSP Employees. See Appendix for details.*

study of adult basic and vocational education programs found that such programs reduce inmate recidivism by an average of 5.1 percent and 12.6 percent, respectively.<sup>3</sup> The department recognizes these benefits and provides academic and vocational training and a number of self-help and self improvement services, including substance abuse treatment programs, to inmates. An added benefit is that programming requires inmates to have a more structured day and less idle time. As a general rule, inmates with a structured day tend to be easier to manage. As a result, the institution’s safety and security can be affected by the amount of inmate programming available.

During our review of inmate programming, we found that CVSP has 3,500 education and work assignments that provide a variety of programming opportunities for its inmate population. Consequently, as shown in Table 3 above, 76 percent of the employee survey respondents gave favorable ratings when questioned about the institution’s programming opportunities. We also heard favorable opinions about inmate programming from the employees we interviewed. After considering the interviews and additional information gathered from department statistics and the warden, we identified two key areas for further discussion: Inmate Program Attendance and Programming Accomplishments.

### ***Inmate Program Attendance***

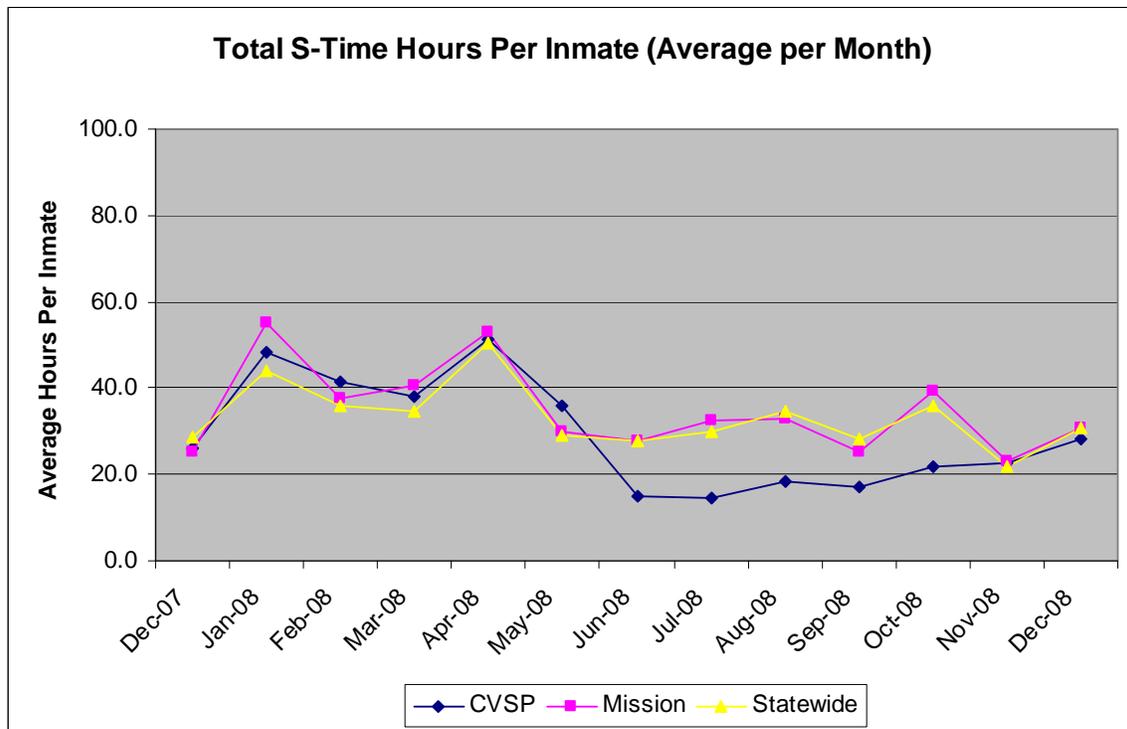
The department establishes the amount of time that assigned inmates must attend academic and vocational training classes each day. As a result, each institution can be evaluated as to how effectively it complies with school-day attendance requirements because administrators must track inmate class absences. The department refers to absences caused by circumstances beyond the inmate’s control as “S-time.” Such absences may result from security-related needs such as lockdowns, modified programming, investigations, and inmate medical appointments. Education-related absences, such as teachers calling in sick, also contribute to S-time. Institutions with high or increasing patterns of S-time indicate that prison management may be ineffectively using their academic and vocational programs, or even wasting the resources that give the inmates what they need to succeed upon parole.

As one might expect in a Level I and II institution, CVSP has few lockdowns and other disruptions to normal operations, such as modifications to inmate programming. In fact, when we reviewed CVSP’s daily status reports and the department’s data for the

<sup>3</sup> Washington State Institute for Public Policy, “Evidence-Based Adult Corrections Programs: What Works and What Does Not,” January 2006.

13-month review period from December 2007 through December 2008, we found that CVSP reported no lockdowns at all. While the institution modified inmate programming at times due to riots and a medical quarantine, such disruptions occurred during only four months of the 13-month review period. Furthermore, when we talked to the principal she indicated that, while the deactivations and activations of yards during the HVAC project sometimes precluded inmates from attending classes during 2008, the institution was still effective at getting inmates to attend programming about 90 percent of the time. Consequently, as indicated in Chart 2 below, the average per-inmate S-time absences at CVSP were below the averages for both statewide institutions and comparable mission-based institutions for six months of the 13-month period reviewed; and were at or near the averages during the other months.

**Chart 2:**



Source: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, CompStat for December 31, 2008, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison. Unaudited data.

***Programming Accomplishments***

Warden Salazar provided us with a list of CVSP’s accomplishments during 2008, which included several programming achievements. Specifically, he cited the New Directions program, a weekly youth diversion program that inmates presented to more than 600 children from local schools, for which the City of Blythe commended CVSP at its annual recognition event. Other achievements include 200 inmates graduating from the institution’s Alternative to Violence class programs, 154 inmates receiving General

Education Development examination certificates (GEDs), and 16 inmates receiving college degrees.

In addition, during our interviews with employees and an Inmate Advisory Council representative, we heard favorable comments about the warden’s programming efforts. For example, we were told that since his arrival at the institution the warden has expanded program offerings to include self-help veterans groups, Toastmasters public speaking groups, and a Spanish program. We were also told that the warden is supportive of the Substance Abuse Program (SAP) director’s plan to shift one SAP from a crowded housing area to the institution’s less-crowded minimum support yard. According to the SAP director, this change would result in many benefits. It would reduce inmate housing costs; help the institution fill vacant beds in the minimum support yard; provide continued programming for inmates nearing their parole date, and support the department’s efforts to get parolees into community-based aftercare programs once they are released from prison. Furthermore, employees told us that “education works very well and classes stay full” and inmates at this institution “are working and get work when paroled.”

### Category 3: Business Operations

An institution’s business operations include budget planning and control, personnel administration, accounting and procurement services, employee training and development, and facility maintenance and operations. It is important for the warden to be knowledgeable in these areas to effectively perform his duties.

**Table 4: Business Operations – Employee Survey Results**

Respondents	Positive	Negative
Custody	77%	23%
Health Care	55%	45%
Admin, Plant Operations, and Other	39%	61%
<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>44%</b>

*Source: OIG Survey of CVSP Employees. See Appendix for details.*

Overall, as shown in Table 4 above, surveyed employees had mixed opinions about the institution’s business operations—56 percent had positive responses and 44 percent had negative responses. Our analysis of the information gathered from the department’s data, employee survey responses, and employee interviews uncovered four specific areas that we discussed further with the warden and other management team members: Overtime Usage, Staffing Levels, Administrative Segregation Housing, and Facility Maintenance.

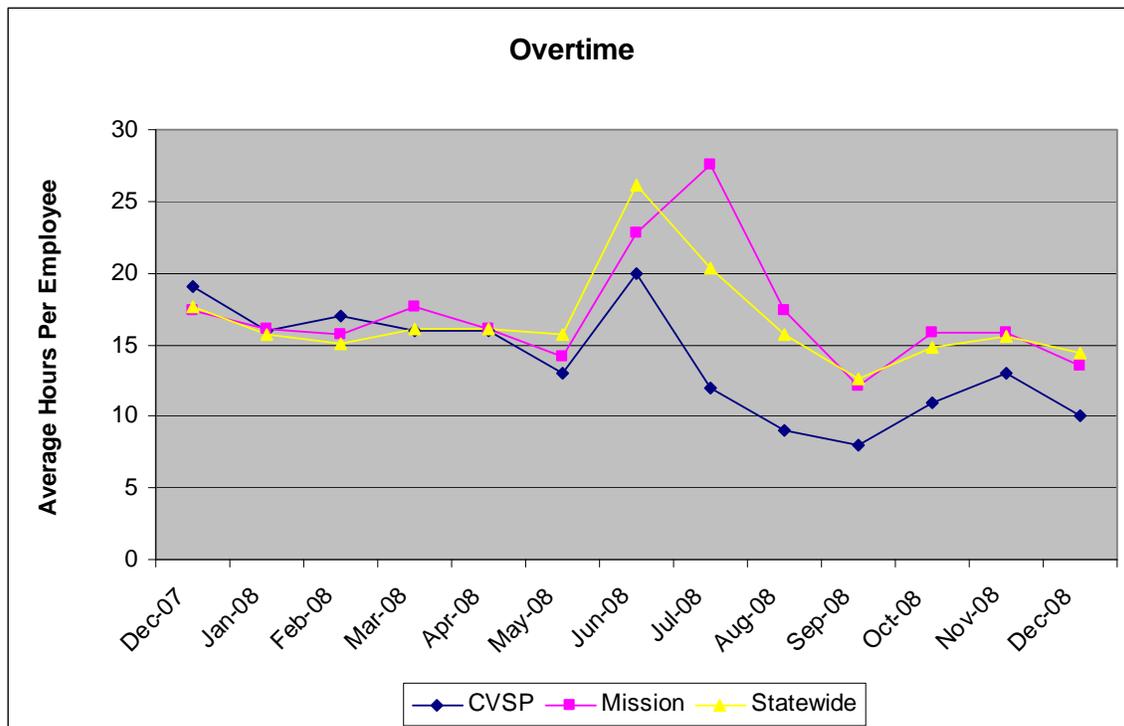
#### *Overtime Usage*

The control of overtime is one indicator of a warden’s ability to manage his institution’s overall operations because it requires the warden to ensure that good budgeting, planning, and personnel administration practices are in place. As displayed in Chart 3 below, during the 13-month review period, CVSP’s average overtime hours per employee was nearly equal to or lower than averages for both statewide institutions and comparable mission-based institutions. We asked the associate warden over business services why CVSP’s average overtime per employee was significantly lower than other institutions

during the months from June to December 2008. She attributed the decrease to the HVAC project and explained that while one yard was temporarily deactivated during that timeframe, the custody staff assigned to that yard were able to fill vacant positions elsewhere—eliminating the need to use overtime.

We also inquired about the spiked increase in overtime hours for CVSP (and other institutions) during the month of June 2008. According to the staff member who maintains data for the institution (data coordinator), the average overtime hours for June are inflated because a double pay period was accounted for that month. Employees are paid every four weeks, and as a result, each year two pay periods occur within one month—thereby inflating employees’ average hours of overtime for that monthly reporting period.

**Chart 3:**



Source: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, CompStat for December 31, 2008, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison. Unaudited data.

### Staffing Levels

We analyzed survey responses and found that, on average, only 61 percent of the institution’s employees feel that their assigned work area has enough staff to complete the required work. Although custody employees and health care employees responded favorably when asked about the adequacy of staffing levels in their work area—responses from other non-custody employees indicated that current staffing levels are inadequate. Specifically, only 38 percent of these other employees agreed with the statement “Your

assigned work area has enough staff to get all of the required work done.” When we spoke with the associate warden over business services, she indicated that more positions are needed in business services areas. She explained that business services recently lost some positions due to a reduction in the inmate population; and similar to other institutions, business services positions were “hit hard” during prior budget cuts.

In addition, we talked to both the associate warden and the personnel manager about CVSP’s current staffing level for custody positions, which we briefly addressed in the Institution Overview section of our report. We were told that there were two key reasons why the custody staff vacancy rate was higher than normal as of March 2009. First, the institution was still trying to back-fill custody positions on one yard that was reactivated in December 2008 (related to the HVAC project). Second, CVSP had just received 42 new medical transport custody positions in March 2009 and had not yet filled all those new positions. To compound matters, we were told that the department had canceled the last officer training academy, making it even more difficult to fill custody vacancies.

We were told that Salazar is actively addressing the institution’s business operations needs. For example, he regularly communicates with the department about filling vacant beds at CVSP to ensure that he maximizes his allowable operational funding. Also, he regularly communicates with his management team about issues such as staff vacancies and limited resources and how to address them. However, given the state’s current budget situation, resource issues are a common problem and not directly within Warden Salazar’s control.

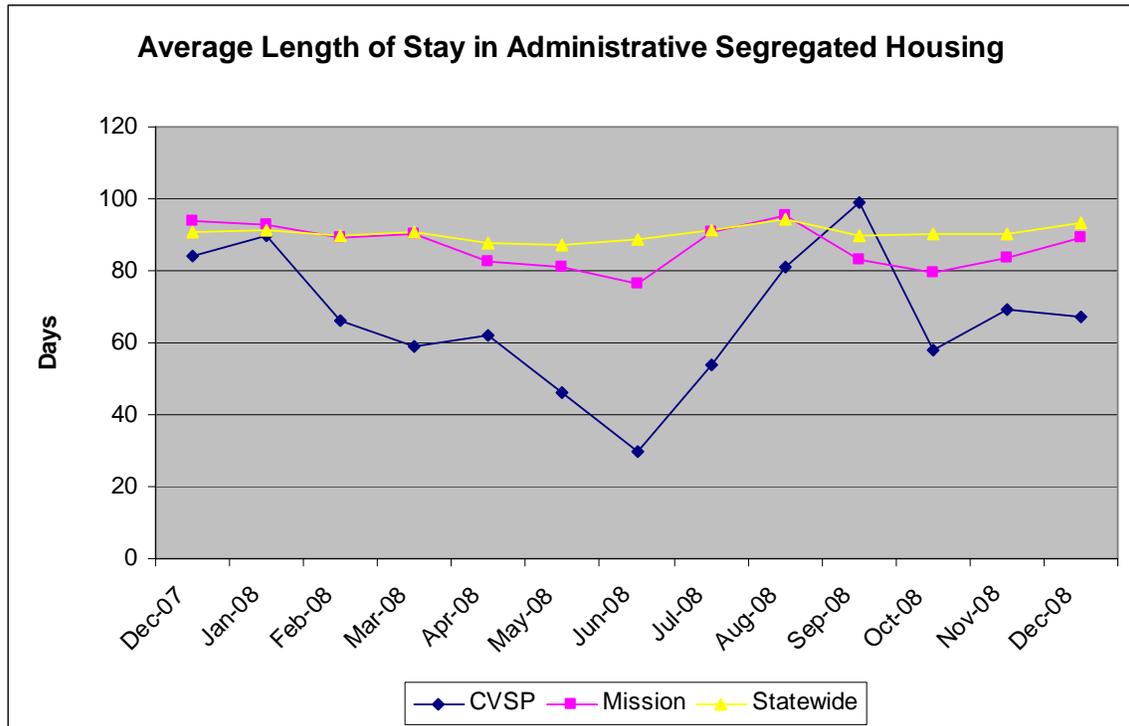
### ***Administrative Segregation Housing***

Inmates that are either disruptive or victimized by other inmates are temporarily placed in segregated housing areas known as Administrative Segregation Units (ASU) until employees investigate the level of threat to the institution or inmate. ASU housing areas are more expensive to operate than general population housing units because they have increased security requirements. Effectively managing the time it takes the institution to investigate the level of threat can significantly reduce the average length of stay and, in turn, the cost of housing an inmate in ASU. As a result, the average length of stay in ASU is an indicator of how well an institution is managing its resources.

As shown in Chart 4 below, during the 13-month review period, the average length of stay for inmates housed in an ASU at CVSP is typically much less than both the statewide average and the average of comparable mission-based institutions. When we talked to the institution’s classification and parole representative (C&PR), he indicated that Warden Salazar has emphasized the need to conduct the required inmate classification reviews on a timely basis. Also, both the C&PR and the SAP director indicated that the warden’s prior experience and extensive knowledge of classification and due process requirements have improved the institution’s ASU case processing. We were also told that Warden Salazar’s background and professional conduct during institution classification committee (ICC) reviews, has “legitimized the ICC process” and “put the ASU-ICC process on track.”

We did, however, ask the C&PR and the ASU’s facility captain why inmates’ average length of stay increased to nearly 100 days in September 2008. They attributed the increase to inmates who were either waiting for transfer to secured housing unit beds at other facilities, which are sometimes scarce, or waiting for pending court proceedings. Also, CVSP provides beds for Ironwood State Prison’s ASU overflow. And, if an inmate’s legal documents and property are not delivered (to CVSP) timely, it can cause delays in processing the inmate’s case. Moreover, we were told that CVSP’s ASU was temporarily relocated in September 2008 as part of the HVAC project; the resulting movement of inmates also delayed ASU case processing.

**Chart 4:**



Source: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, CompStat for December 31, 2008, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison. Unaudited data.

**Facility Maintenance**

In our survey, we asked employees if the institution’s plant operations unit (plant operations) is able to meet maintenance and repair needs within the employee’s assigned work area and in inmate areas. Half of the respondents indicated that plant operations does not meet the maintenance and repair needs in their work areas, and 44 percent indicated that it does not meet the needs in inmate areas. To follow-up on these low numbers, we observed the overall appearance of the institution’s grounds and its buildings during our on-site visit. Also, during our interviews, we asked some employees about plant operations’ performance.

When we walked around the institution, we found that the grounds were well maintained and facility buildings we entered were clean and neat. During our interviews, however, some employees told us that plant operations does not always complete their requests for maintenance and repair services. Examples included a one-year-old request to replace a light bulb on a pole in the minimum support yard, a request to repair a dumbwaiter in the ASU that has been broken for four years, and requests to repair lighting and to install electrical hoists in the warehouse garage. When we talked to the warden about these concerns and plant operations priorities, he indicated that he requested plant operations to initially focus on work outside the perimeter and then work inside the perimeter. He added that the plant operations manager and custody captain use a matrix to determine when lights and other items need replacement and that costs may determine whether or not a low priority item gets repaired. Moreover, the warden took note of the items we discussed for further follow-up.

The warden also praised his plant operations team for the work they have completed and told us that CVSP has the smallest plant operations team in the state. Several employees we interviewed also indicated that plant operations is understaffed. When we spoke with the plant operations manager, he told us that Warden Salazar is very supportive of plant operations and had recently allocated several new positions to bring its staffing level up. The manager had been conducting interviews to fill vacancies. According to the institution’s personnel officer (IPO), the new plant operations positions were authorized for the reactivation of one yard related to the HVAC project. The IPO added that plant operations positions are often taken when the institution has to reduce non-custody positions. For example, in prior fiscal years when CVSP lost positions related to the department’s unallocated budget cuts, prior wardens shifted positions from plant operations and other non-critical support areas to meet institutional needs elsewhere. As a result, CVSP’s plant operations staffing level has been shrinking.

## Category 4: Employee-Management Relations

“Successful leaders invite communication, listen well, and prove themselves trustworthy by exhibiting rational, caring, and predictable behavior in their interpersonal relationships.”<sup>4</sup>

**Table 5: Employee-Management Relations – Employee Survey Results**

Respondents	Positive	Negative
Custody	84%	16%
Health Care	75%	25%
Admin, Plant Operations, and Other	80%	20%
<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>

*Source: OIG Survey of CVSP Employees. See Appendix for details.*

The warden’s ability to communicate plays an important role in employee relations and is vital in implementing the department’s vision and mission at the institution level. Not only must the warden interact with employees at all levels and communicate instructions and directions clearly and effectively, but the warden must also communicate effectively with department headquarters as well as the surrounding community.

<sup>4</sup> *Correctional Leadership Competencies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections (December 2006).

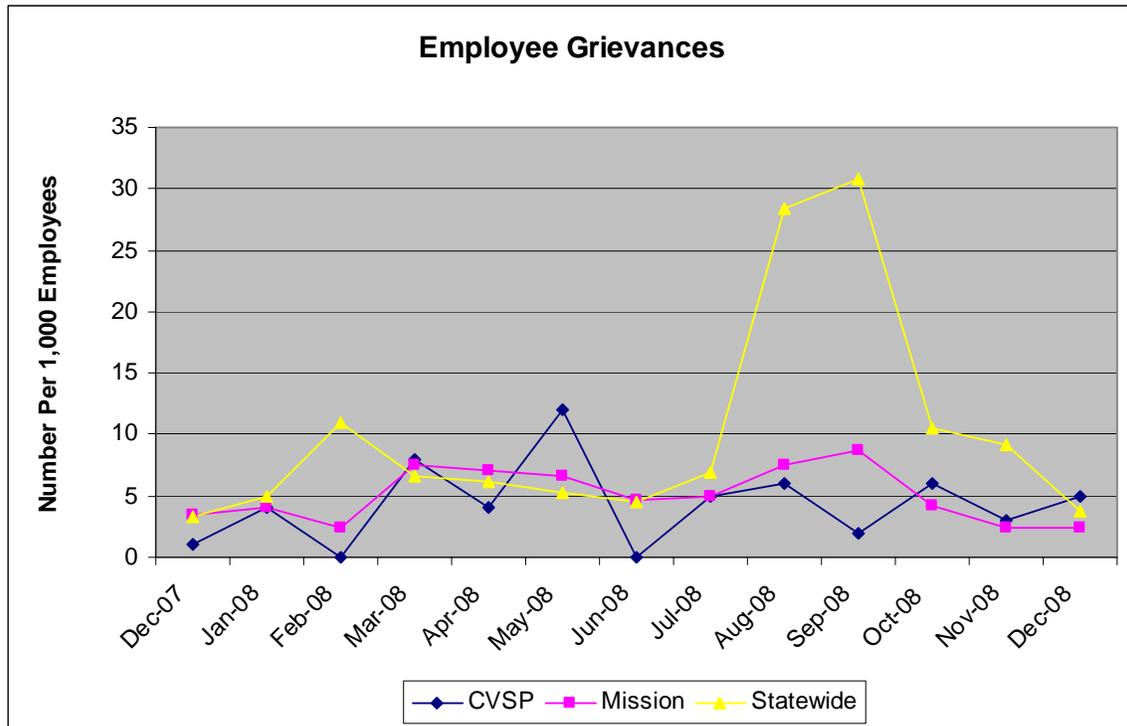
As shown in Table 5 above, 80 percent of the prison employees had positive opinions about various areas related to employee-management relations. Although the opinions of employees and other stakeholders provide one measure of the warden’s employee-management relations, another measure can be found in the number of grievances filed by the institution’s employees. Our analysis of employees’ responses to our surveys, interviews with the warden’s management team and other employees, and statistics on employee grievances formulated the collective basis of our conclusions in the four areas discussed below: Employee Grievances, Improvements in Prison Operations and Staff Morale, Special Events and Projects, and Communication.

### ***Employee Grievances***

All employees have the right to express their grievances through an established departmental procedure. Although 32 percent of the employee survey respondents felt that the employee grievance process does not work as intended, when we interviewed employees only one staff member had a negative comment about the process. Also, when we spoke with the labor relations analyst about the employee grievance process, she stated that the process is handled “textbook” at CVSP and added that few grievances are filed. For example, there were only 35 grievances in 2007, 29 in 2008, and seven as of March 25, 2009. The analyst also stated that the warden “immediately responds” to grievances.

As shown in Chart 5 below, the number of employee grievances per 1,000 employees at CVSP is typically lower than the statewide average and in-line with comparable mission-based institutions’ averages. However, the institution’s employee grievances spiked up in May 2008—above both averages. We asked the labor relations analyst and the data coordinator why the number of employee grievances more than doubled from April 2008 to May 2008. We were told that employees filed grievances during that period for a number of reasons. We reviewed nine of those grievances and confirmed that they stemmed from a variety of complaints, all of which either appeared to relate to less serious issues or showed no underlying systemic cause. And, as shown in the chart, the number of grievances dropped to zero the following month.

**Chart 5:**



Source: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, CompStat for December 31, 2008, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison. Unaudited data.

### ***Improvements in Prison Operations and Staff Morale***

Based on the survey results and our interviews, the warden’s employees believe that he is knowledgeable about prison operations and has significantly improved the operations at CVSP since his appointment. For example, all but one of the employees who responded to our survey agreed that the warden was “knowledgeable about the day-to-day operations” of the prison. When we spoke with employees and asked whether overall prison operations were better or worse since the warden was appointed, 93 percent of the responding employees felt that prison operations are better—all others indicated there was no change. Some employees specifically commented that the prison operations were “100 percent better” or had “improved ten-fold.” When we spoke with employees and asked them what the warden’s biggest accomplishment was, many of them cited the overall improvement in staff morale. Employees attributed the warden’s positive effect on staff morale to his character, strong leadership abilities, and management style.

In addition, department officials and CVSP managers surveyed rated Salazar favorably for his management skills and other qualities. In our survey, we asked the officials and managers to consider the warden’s performance in six management skills and

*Table 6: Rating of Warden’s Management Skills and Qualities*

Category	Average Rating
Personal Characteristics/Traits	Outstanding
Relationships with Others	Outstanding
Leadership	Outstanding
Decision Making	Outstanding
Communication	Outstanding
Organization/Planning	Outstanding

*Source: OIG Survey of CDCR and CVSP Management*

qualities and rate the performance as either unacceptable, improvement needed, satisfactory, very good, or outstanding. As shown in Table 6, on average, the responding stakeholders believe that Warden Salazar is performing at a level of *outstanding* in all categories. In addition, CVSP employees we spoke to during our visit made various comments about Warden Salazar’s management skills and qualities that were consistent with the ratings. For example, employees described the warden as “knowledgeable” and “trustworthy,” a “people person,” “very approachable,” “leads by example,” and one who is “very responsive” to issues addressed and “prompt” in making decisions.

Moreover, many employees we interviewed praised the warden’s management team. Several employees specifically commented that the warden has put together a “strong management team” that “works well together” in planning and completing projects. Employees cited the successful implementation of the HVAC project as evidence of CVSP’s strong institutional teamwork abilities. Others spoke to us about the positive change in staff morale and attributed it to improvements in communication and to the warden’s support of special events and projects that strengthen relationships among the employees and other stakeholders.

### ***Special Events and Projects***

We were told by several employees we interviewed that the warden is very supportive of special events and projects throughout the year that enhance employee-management relationships and strengthen relationships between CVSP, the department, and the community. Furthermore, because inmates participate in several of these activities, some of these special projects also enhance inmate programming efforts. Within the warden’s listing of CVSP’s accomplishments for 2008, he cited 18 various special events or projects. These included staff appreciation events, community events, fundraisers for ill children, children’s holiday events, donations of funds and inmate art to the City of Blythe and a local college, participation in joint events with Ironwood State Prison, and a special CVSP twenty-year celebration for staff and the community.

### ***Communication***

When we separately surveyed the warden’s management team, they responded very favorably when asked about the warden’s communication skills. For example, managers indicated that the warden keeps them updated and advised on both institution and department issues. Supportive comments included: the warden “sets expectations and has a good relationship with most staff,” “takes time to listen to subordinate staff, evaluates

the situation, and provides sound recommendations,” is “able to express decisions well,” and “is highly respected” by staff “for his communications and meeting with staff always allowing them an opportunity to share their concerns.”

In addition, several of our employee survey questions focused on communication and most responses to those questions were favorable. For example, 87 percent of the respondents agreed that the warden works effectively with local bargaining unit representatives, 83 percent concurred that the warden is accessible to discuss issues, and 81 percent agreed that the warden regularly speaks or meets with inmates. However, only half of the responding employees concurred that the warden regularly visits their workplace. To follow up on this issue, we asked the same question during our interviews and employees told us the warden regularly “walks and talks,” meaning that he regularly gets out and talks to employees in their work areas. In fact, many employees stated that he walks the facility grounds and visits yards daily or weekly. However, employees in certain areas (such as plant operations, education, and third watch in general) indicated that they would like to see the warden more often. When we spoke to the warden about those comments, he told us that he gets out as much as possible and indicated that he often walks the yards in the middle of a busy day because he likes to communicate with his employees and find out what’s going on.

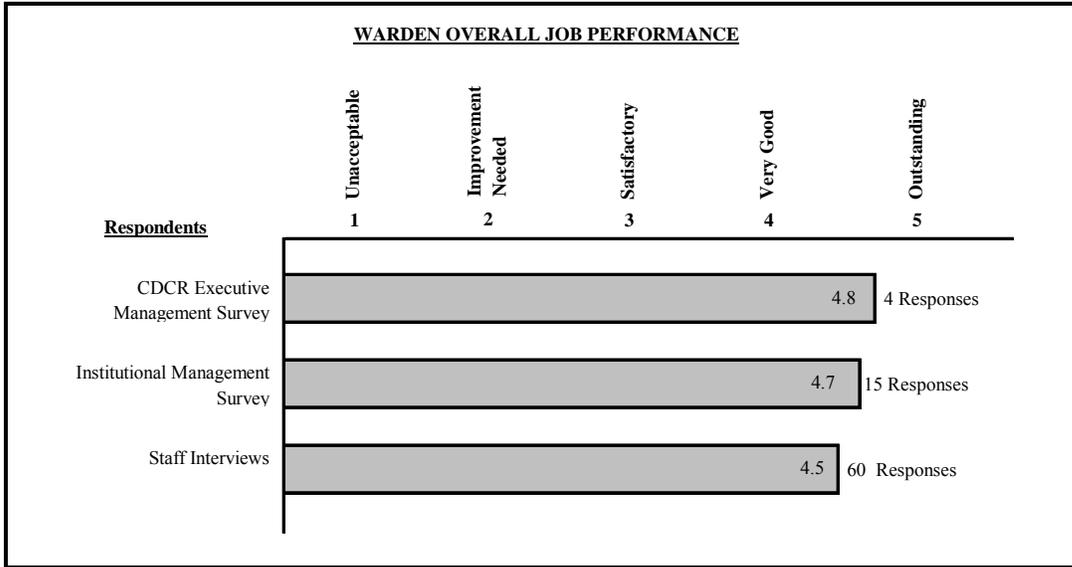
We also spoke to the warden about two other employee-management relationship issues that a few employees raised during our interviews. The first issue related to a safety and security concern about a custody official on one yard not holding inmates accountable for their inappropriate behavior. The second issue related to a non-custody manager mistreating his employees. We found that the warden was well aware of both issues and has already communicated with involved employees to resolve the matters. The warden believes that the matter regarding inmate accountability was overstated, and that the second issue primarily relates to personality conflicts. The fact that the warden was well aware of these concerns and took action to address them provides further evidence of his strong communication skills and positive relationships with his staff members.

## **Overall Summary**

In our survey, we asked employees whether they agree that, given all of the institutional challenges, the warden was an effective leader. Of those respondents who provided either a positive or negative opinion, 91 percent of them either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that the warden is an effective leader.

In addition to our review of the four key categories identified above, our assessment of the warden’s performance also included an overall performance rating. We based the rating on survey responses from department officials and CVSP managers and from interviews we conducted with CVSP employees during our site visit. As shown in Chart 6 below, those individuals rated Warden Salazar’s overall performance between *outstanding* and *very good*.

**Chart 6:**



Moreover, we received positive results when we surveyed the CVSP employees and asked them other questions about Warden Salazar’s overall leadership abilities. Specifically, 93 percent of the responding employees feel that the warden emphasizes an institutional culture calling for staff to have integrity and be highly ethical, professional, honest, motivated, and respectful; and 91 percent feel that he emphasizes an institutional culture calling for cultural sensitivity and discrimination prevention, including sexual harassment prevention. In fact, many employees we interviewed used some of those same words and same themes to describe the warden and his accomplishments. For example, employees told us he is “ethical” and “professional,” “fair and firm” and focuses on “accountability,” and that “he seeks input” and “staff feel respected.”

In conclusion, the Inspector General’s review of Warden Salazar’s performance since his appointment indicates that he has developed strong management and leadership skills during his 26 years of experience with the department. The warden has used these skills to improve many aspects of his institution’s operations and has clearly demonstrated a personal commitment to carrying out the institution’s mission. Overall, the warden’s managers and other employees we interviewed rated his management skills and qualities as ‘outstanding.’ As one staff member told us, “we needed him” at CVSP.

# Appendix

## **Results from our survey of institution employees**

To prepare for our site visit, we randomly selected 200 of the institution’s employees and sent them a survey. The survey provides us with information about employees’ perception of the warden’s overall performance plus information about specific operational areas at the prison—Safety and Security, Inmate Programming, Business Operations, and Employee-Management Relations. Sixty-four CVSP employees responded to our survey—a 32 percent response rate. To simplify our analysis of the survey results, we grouped survey respondents by category and identified response trends.

Specifically, we grouped the respondents into three employment categories: Custody, Health Care, and Other (which includes employees in education, plant operations, administration, and clerical positions.) Then, to identify strong trends or patterns, we classified the responses to our questions as either positive or negative. For example, if the respondent ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with our question, we classified it as positive; and if the respondent ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with our question we classified it as negative. We did not include passive responses. If employees responded that they were ‘neutral’ or responded ‘unknown’ to our question, we excluded their response.

We report the results of our employee survey in a table on the following page.

**Appendix: Summary of Institutional Employee Survey Responses – Chuckawalla Valley State Prison**

Operational Area/Question	Respondents' Employment Category						Total Responses			
	Custody		Health Care		Other					
	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	(%)	Neg	(%)
<b>Safety and Security</b>										
• You are able to complete required (mission critical) assignments in your work area.	17	1	14	0	21	4	52	91%	5	9%
• You have been issued or have access to all of the safety equipment you need.	17	1	13	1	19	4	49	89%	6	11%
• You receive all required (mandatory) training.	16	2	10	3	19	3	45	85%	8	15%
• The employee investigation/disciplinary process works as intended (is appropriate and timely).	8	4	6	3	13	4	27	71%	11	29%
• The CDC-115, inmate disciplinary process works as intended (is appropriate and timely).	13	4	5	2	15	4	33	77%	10	23%
• The CDC-602, inmate appeal process works as intended (is appropriate and timely).	14	2	6	1	17	3	37	86%	6	14%
• The use and duration of inmate lockdown time or modified program time is appropriate.	14	4	5	1	18	0	37	88%	5	12%
• The institution is meeting its mission(s) under the current warden's leadership. <sup>1</sup>	12	2					12	86%	2	14%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>292</b>		<b>53</b>	
<i>Percent of Respondents by Category</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>84%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>85%</i>		<i>15%</i>	
<b>Inmate Programming</b>										
• The inmate assignment process works as intended (appropriate placement).	13	2	4	3	15	6	32	74%	11	26%
• Inmate programming is adequate (sufficient number of education and work placements).	10	6	4	1	14	8	28	65%	15	35%
• The institution is meeting its mission(s) under the current warden's leadership. <sup>1</sup>			10	1	19	1	29	94%	2	6%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>89</b>		<b>28</b>	
<i>Percent of Respondents by Category</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>26%</i>	<i>78%</i>	<i>22%</i>	<i>76%</i>	<i>24%</i>	<i>76%</i>		<i>24%</i>	
<b>Business Operations</b>										
• Your assigned work area has enough staff to get all of the required work done.	16	3	10	4	9	15	35	61%	22	39%
• Plant Operations is able to meet maintenance / repair needs in your assigned work area.	13	3	4	8	9	15	26	50%	26	50%
• Plant Operations is able to meet maintenance / repair needs in inmate areas.	11	6	2	1	6	8	19	56%	15	44%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>80</b>		<b>63</b>	
<i>Percent of Respondents by Category</i>	<i>77%</i>	<i>23%</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>45%</i>	<i>39%</i>	<i>61%</i>	<i>56%</i>		<i>44%</i>	
<b>Employee-Management Relations</b>										
• The warden is knowledgeable about the day to day operations in your work area.	15	0	5	3	14	5	34	81%	8	19%
• The employee grievance process works as intended (is appropriate and timely).	7	3	6	3	12	6	25	68%	12	32%
• The warden works effectively with the local bargaining unit representatives.	10	1	5	1	11	2	26	87%	4	13%
• The warden regularly speaks or meets with inmates.	7	0	4	1	10	4	21	81%	5	19%
• You are kept up to date on issues that affect CDCR as a whole.	12	5	9	3	18	5	39	75%	13	25%
• The warden regularly visits your workplace.	10	6	4	8	10	10	24	50%	24	50%
• The warden welcomes feedback, including criticism from institution staff.	9	4	6	3	12	4	27	71%	11	29%
• The warden is knowledgeable about the day to day operations.	14	0	8	0	14	1	36	97%	1	3%
• The warden is accessible to you to discuss issues.	12	3	7	3	15	1	34	83%	7	17%
• The warden does not abuse his/her power or authority.	14	1	8	2	17	1	39	91%	4	9%
• The warden emphasizes an institutional culture calling for staff to have integrity and be highly ethical, professional, honest, motivated, and respectful.	14	2	10	0	18	1	42	93%	3	7%
• The warden emphasizes an institutional culture calling for cultural sensitivity and discrimination prevention, including sexual harassment prevention.	13	2	10	0	18	2	41	91%	4	9%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>388</b>		<b>96</b>	
<i>Percent of Respondents by Category</i>	<i>84%</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>75%</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>80%</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>80%</i>		<i>20%</i>	
<b>Overall Warden Rating</b>										
Considering all institutional challenges, the current warden is an effective leader.	14	2	9	2	19	0	42	91%	4	9%
<i>Percent of Respondents by Category</i>	<i>88%</i>	<i>12%</i>	<i>82%</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>91%</i>		<i>9%</i>	

Source: OIG, Institutional Employee Survey Results for CVSP

<sup>1</sup> This question applies to more than one operational area.

# California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Response

**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

P.O. Box 942883  
Sacramento, CA 94283-0001



December 2, 2009

Mr. David R. Shaw  
Inspector General  
Office of the Inspector General  
P.O. Box 348780  
Sacramento, CA 95834-8780

Dear Mr. Shaw:

We are pleased to submit this response to your draft report entitled *Chuckawalla Valley State Prison, (CVSP) Warden John Salazar, One-Year Audit* and agree with the outstanding assessment of Warden Salazar.

Your report states that Warden Salazar is well respected, an excellent communicator, very knowledgeable about prison operations, and always fair and firm. Warden Salazar is praised for his diligence about safety and security concerns and chairs the Department's Cell Phone Interdictions Advisory Committee which is tasked with addressing the statewide cell phone smuggling issue.

During Warden Salazar's tenure at CVSP the institution deactivated and reactivated each of the four yards in its two main complexes to renovate the buildings and install a new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system. This task was accomplished in a systematic and professional manner. This was a tremendous endeavor; CVSP staff attributes the successful completion of the project as an example of the management team's good working relationship.

We would like to thank the Office of the Inspector General for this outstanding report. If you have any questions or concerns, please call my office at (916) 323-6001.

Sincerely,

SCOTT KERNAN  
Undersecretary, Operations

cc: John Salazar, Warden, CVSP