

In an effort to improve efficiency and reduce threats to safety and security by minimizing contraband, the Columbia County Jail is moving to limit incoming and outgoing inmate mail to postcards only, according to Sheriff Jeff Dickerson.

"The processing of inmate mail is very time consuming and labor intensive," Dickerson says. "Additionally, mail coming in sealed envelopes increases the likelihood that contraband will make its way through the security measures we set up.

"Going to postcards will cut down on the time we need to take in that screening process, thus saving the taxpayer the costs involved in that screening."

A number of Oregon Jails are making the transition to postcards beginning in January, with a final implementation date of March 31. On that date, the Columbia County Jail will only accept and mail out inmate mail on postcards. The exception will be for legal and official mail.

"We will begin at the first of the year to replace envelopes and writing paper with postcards in all indigent and intake packets issued to inmates," the Sheriff says. "We will also replace stamped envelopes with postcards on the commissary menu.

"We will spend the first few months of the year, letting people know of this new policy, and on March 31, the only envelope mail allowed to come into or go out of the jail will be official and legal mail."

The Sheriff's Office will be posting the new guidelines in the Sheriff's Office lobby and on the agency website at: www.co.columbia.or.us/sheriff in the coming weeks.