

Second prison to open in Eloy Tenn.-based CCA to be town's biggest employer

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Just three months after Eloy nearly lost hundreds of jobs at a privately owned detention center, town and prison-company officials are getting ready to open the doors to a new facility and are laying the groundwork for a third prison to open there next year.

Corrections Corporation of America is planning to host a "grand opening" Tuesday of the new Red Rock Correctional Center, a CCA prison that will house 1,596 medium-security inmates from Alaska and other states.

The \$82.5 million Red Rock Center is the company's fourth prison in Pinal County and is the second such facility to open in Eloy, employing about 317 workers. The center is expected to open July 15 for inmates.

With the opening of the prison, Nashville, Tenn.-based CCA will become the largest employer in Eloy, with more than 630 workers. Eloy's population is about 11,000.

The Eloy Detention Center – also run by CCA – employs about 320 workers and was already considered the town's largest employer.

In January, the Eloy Detention Center was facing possible closure after federal budget cuts prompted the Federal Bureau of Prisons not to renew its contract with CCA. In February, however, the city of Eloy and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, signed an intergovernmental agreement to use the detention center.

The center now houses about 1,500 non-citizen detainees for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

A third CCA-owned prison in Eloy, the Saguaro Correctional Facility, broke ground in May, about 100 yards from the Red Rock Center and is scheduled to open in 2007. The 1,896-bed Saguaro facility is expected to employ another 400 workers or so, said Kathren Laughlin, an executive assistant for Eloy Detention Center.

Eventually the three CCA prisons in Eloy should have a total of 1,300 employees, with an annual payroll of \$50 million, said Mark Brnovich, CCA's senior director of state government relations.

Once Red Rock and Saguaro open, total employees for CCA in Pinal County – including two facilities in Florence – should jump to nearly 2,000 workers and will be one of the top employers in Pinal County, Laughlin said.

"This means an awful lot to the city. It opens more job opportunities for people in the region," said Eloy Mayor Byron Jackson.

It also means a boost in tax revenue, Jackson noted.

CCA paid about \$1.7 million in property taxes last year and expects to pay nearly \$4.6 million in total property taxes once the Red Rock Center opens, Laughlin said.

Already residents of other areas of Pinal County and some Tucsonans make the drive to Eloy for jobs, Jackson said.

Wages at the Red Rock Center start at \$27,000 per year, the starting salary for state correctional officers, he said. CCA is recruiting to fill about 130 positions.

• Contact reporter Levi J. Long at 573-4179 or llong@azstarnet.com.

If you go

• The Corrections Corporation of America and Eloy town officials plan a 9 a.m. Tuesday grand opening of the Red Rock Correctional Center, 1750 E. Arica Road, in Eloy. Tours of the prison will be available to the public.

Corrections Corporation of America in Arizona

• **Red Rock Correctional Center**, 1750 E. Arica Road, Eloy

Inmate capacity: 1,596

Source of inmates: Alaska Department of Corrections and state of Hawaii.

Security level: Medium

• **Eloy Detention Center**, 1705 E. Hanna Road, Eloy

Inmate capacity: 1,500

Source of inmates: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Security level: Minimum/Medium

• **Central Arizona Detention Center**, 1155 N. Pinal Parkway, Florence

Inmate capacity: 2,304

Source of inmates: U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, U.S. Air Force.

Security level: Multilevel

• **Florence Correctional Center**, 1100 Bowling Road, Florence

Inmate capacity: 1,600

Source of inmates: U.S. Marshals Service, state of Hawaii, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, state of Alaska, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Security level: Medium

Source: Corrections Corporation of America