



Did You Know?

## How We Execute

### Hanging:

The idea is to drop the condemned from a great height with a noose around his or her neck. If you drop the person far enough then the neck will be broken. For a judicial hanging to be successful, it should break the C2, C3 and/or C4 discs in the spine. If the person is not dropped far enough then they will strangle to death. However, if the person is dropped too far then he or she will be decapitated.

### Electric Chair:

The electric chair tends to be very messy as an execution device goes. The executed will frequently defecate and urinate during the process. The electricity literally cooks the flesh so the death chamber smells like burnt flesh after the execution. The condemned has his or her head and one leg shaved prior to the execution. Conductive jelly is rubbed into the shaved head and leg of the prisoner. One leg of the prisoner's pants is cut just above the knee. The condemned is then led to the chair and strapped in. An electrode is attached to the shaved leg and a metal skull cap is attached to the head that contains the other electrode. Placed in the skull cap will be sponge soaked in brine to aid in the current transfer from electrode to the body. A hood is then placed over the head of the prisoner.

Two-thousand four hundred (2,400) volts is delivered for seven seconds, followed by 600 volts for seventeen seconds; the process will be repeated. Witnesses report that when the switch is thrown, the condemned prisoner cringes, leaps, and fights the straps. The hands turn red, then white. The electrical current is so powerful that the prisoner's eyeballs sometimes pop out and rest on his or her cheeks. The prisoner often defecates, urinates, and vomits blood and drool. The body turns bright red as its temperature rises, and the prisoner's flesh swells and his skin stretches to the point of breaking. Sometimes the prisoner catches on fire, particularly if he or she perspires excessively. After five minutes, a physician will check the heartbeat. If the heart is still beating, the voltage will be delivered again.

### Gas Chamber:

The gas chamber while relatively clean from the participants point of view it is very painful from the condemned's point of view. Most prisoners attempt to hold their breath for as long as possible prior to taking the first fatal breath. The prisoner has a heart monitor attached to his

or her chest prior to the execution. The prisoner is then led into the chamber where they are strapped into a large chair. The chair usually has holes in it to permit the gas to flow upwards.

The chamber itself is air tight and contains windows so the witnesses can view the execution. The heart monitor is attached to an outside monitoring station so a doctor can declare the inmate dead. Placed below the inmates chair is five pints of sulfuric acid in a large bowl. Placed upon the bowl is a smaller container with one pound of potassium cyanide. When the switch is pulled the smaller container will empty in to the bowl containing the sulfuric acid. The result is cyanide gas which inhibits the bodies ability to take in oxygen. Death will usually occur in six to eighteen minutes. Ammonia gas is then pumped into the gas chamber to neutralize the cyanide gas.

### **Lethal Injection:**

The prisoner is strapped to a gurney, heart monitors are attached, and the prisoner is led into an execution chamber. The prisoner has two saline IV's inserted into each arm. After the prisoner has spoken his or her last words and the warden gives the go ahead, 400 ml of Thiopental sodium is injected into the prisoner's arm to put the prisoner to sleep. After 1000 ml of saline is put through the line to clean it out, 60 ml of Pavulon, a muscle relaxer, is injected using the other IV and washed out with saline. Shortly thereafter the prisoner stops breathing and dies. The injection team may have a hard time finding suitable veins for the IV's which may take a substantial amount of time and probing, moreover, the prisoner may have violent reactions to the drugs.