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Secretary James M. Le Blanc

Construction of State's New Women's Prison is Underway

938-bed modern facility designed to provide enhanced programming

ST. GABRIEL, La. – In a ceremonial groundbreaking this morning in St. Gabriel, Louisiana, Governor John Bel Edwards, Secretary Jimmy Le Blanc, and several state and local leaders turned dirt on the property where Louisiana's newest prison is being built. After six years, construction on the highly-anticipated Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) is underway.

"This groundbreaking today is a momentous leap forward, and I want to thank everyone who worked hard to make it happen," said Governor John Bel Edwards. "I know that this new and improved facility is going to enhance access to education and vocational training programs such as cosmetology, horticulture, welding and computer programming – just to name a few. This new facility will provide more space for these reentry and vocational programs than we had at LCIW before it flooded. That's great news, and is going to help us rehabilitate a lot more women."

"Today's groundbreaking marks the end of a very trying season for both the staff and the females housed at LCIW, and a new opportunity for our state in how we facilitate corrections and reentry preparation," said Department of Public Safety and Corrections Secretary Jimmy Le Blanc. "The LCIW flood brought many challenges, but it also created an opportunity for us to design and build a new space that will help us better carry out our reform mission and transform the individuals we incarcerate."

The \$149 million dollar state-of-the-art facility will be situated on the west side of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center facility. The 938-bed facility features an efficient and modern layout and includes spaces strategically designed to enhance the Department's focus on providing rehabilitative, educational, medical and mental health, and post-partum programming.

On August 16, 2016, as floodwaters encroached on Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, approximately one thousand incarcerated women were evacuated to higher ground. Over the next several weeks those floodwaters inundated the prison, destroying the facility. Since then the state's female population has been housed at various institutions including the once shuttered Jetson Correctional Center for Youth in Baker, Elayn Hunt Correctional Center, Louisiana State Penitentiary and other local facilities.

For six years, the state has worked with FEMA to agree on whether to renovate or rebuild. The Department of Corrections made a strong case with FEMA to rebuild based on LCIW's role as an emergency operations center and the need for the prison to withstand a 500-year flood.

The new women's facility is the first prison built in more than three decades. Raymond Laborde Correctional Center was the last prison built by the state. It began operating in the summer of 1989. Construction on the new LCIW is expected to take approximately 28-30 months, and be completed at the end of 2024.

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