

04 September 2025

C202306

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 20 August 2025 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about mobile phones in prisons. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The safety and security of our sites, our staff, and the people we manage is our top priority.

We take contraband cell phones extremely seriously, as they bypass the managed and monitored communication systems available to prisoners. These systems are critical for identifying and preventing prisoners from contacting victims, intimidating witnesses, tampering with evidence, introducing contraband, and orchestrating violence and other offending. Some prisoners go to extreme lengths to continue causing harm from inside prison, and contraband cell phones can be used by prisoners to continue coordinating criminal activities while they are in prison.

You requested:

- *The number of mobile phones and related items (including but not limited to chargers, sim cards, batteries etc) seized by Corrections from prisoners each year for the last ten years, broken down by prison.*

Corrections publishes information on contraband, including the total number of communication devices and components found in the past ten financial years and by prison, here: https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/statistics/contraband_in_prisons.

Therefore, your request to be provided with a personal copy of this document is refused in accordance with section 18(d) of the OIA, on the grounds that it is publicly available information.

- *Details on measures Corrections take to prevent prisoners from using phones (including but not limited to, jamming signals, searches etc)*

Corrections places significant emphasis on preventing and detecting contraband in prisons and we are constantly working to stay one step ahead of new methods used to introduce it. We use a wide range of methods to prevent contraband from entering prisons, including:

- Using scanners and x-ray machines at entry points.
- Extensive prison perimeter security.
- Camera surveillance in prison visit rooms, along perimeter fences and at entry points.
- Requiring prisoners to wear closed overalls when in visiting areas to prevent contraband being hidden on them.
- Checking prisoner mail and property for contraband.
- Monitoring prisoner communications, including phone calls.
- Specialist detector dog teams that detect drugs, and other items not permitted within prisons including cell phones.
- Banning visitors who attempt to bring contraband into prisons.

However, releasing further details of the measures taken by Corrections to prevent prisoners using cell phones could be used to counter such interventions if released into the public domain. Therefore, this information is withheld under section 6(c) of the OIA, as the release of the information would likely prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.

Please note that this response may be published on Corrections' website. Typically, responses are published quarterly or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

I hope this information is helpful. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response with Corrections. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Ngā mihi



Leigh Marsh
Commissioner Custodial Services