

Oregon Jails

Oregon law requires the Sheriff of each county in Oregon to operate a jail to lodge adult pre-trial and sentenced offenders. Jails do much more than simply house prisoners. In most Oregon counties, jail staff are also responsible for inmate admissions court security, transports, rehabilitative programs, and other additional support unit work groups. Many Oregon sheriff's also run work crews, work release centers, home detention and in some counties, parole and probation services.

Oregon Sheriff's operate 31 jail facilities. On one hand, Multnomah and Lane Counties operate multiple facilities. On the other hand, several of the smaller counties east of the Cascade Mountains share a single jail facility run by NORCOR, a regional jail in The Dalles that serves Wasco, Hood River, Gilliam and Sherman Counties. Wallowa and Wheeler Counties do not operate jails but share space with other county jail facilities.

Jail vs. Prison – What is the difference?

Operating a jail is much different than operating a prison.

A jail is used to hold those who are suspected or convicted of a crime. All individuals arrested must first come to the county jail to be processed for fingerprints and photo taken for identification. Once they are brought to jail a determination by the jail, district attorney or judge is made concerning the individuals release. A jail is used for the short-term, usually to hold those awaiting trial or to hold those convicted of lower-level offenses (misdemeanors) that have sentences by statute of one year or less. Additionally, more often than not the individuals that are booked into the jails are under the influence of illegal substances, alcohol or in a crisis and medically and emotionally unstable.

In contrast, a prison is a facility that holds convicts who have committed crimes that a penalty by statute is more than one year of incarceration. Not only are all of these prisoners sentenced, they arrive from jails or other state agencies, and are generally free from substance use and have been stabilized in the local jails. In Oregon, state prisons are under the jurisdiction of the Oregon Department of Corrections, a state agency, and provide a different and unique service for more long-term sentenced felons.

The most notable difference between jails and prisons is that prison inmates have been tried and convicted of crimes, while those in jail may be found guilty serving a sentence or awaiting trial, where they may yet be found innocent. A prison is under the jurisdiction of either federal or state government, while a jail holds people accused under federal, state, county, and/or city laws. A jail holds inmates from a few hours up to multiple years while awaiting trial.

Yes, there are definitely many differences between prison and jail. To summarize, here are some of the main differences between a jail and prison:

Jails in Oregon are run by the Sheriff of each County and are designed to hold individuals awaiting disposition of their case, waiting for transport to a state prison system following conviction, or serving time after a conviction— a total of 31 jails in Oregon and about 3,300 total jails in the United States. A person who is being held in custody before a trial/has not yet paid bail/was only recently arrested will be held at a local jail, not in prison. Jails are also a place for people who have been convicted of relatively crimes where the maximum penalty is one year.

State prisons are operated by the state where the person was convicted of a felony. Federal prisons are operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and are designed to hold individuals convicted of federal crimes, such as tax evasion, bank robbery, or kidnapping, among others. Oregon Prisons are operated by the Oregon State Department of Corrections, and Federal Prisons are operated or by the federal government (the federal Bureau of Prisons). Oregon has 14 prisons with the penitentiary being the only maximum security institution. There are only about 1,800 prisons, detention centers, and correctional institutions in the U.S.