



## DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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### **Pepper Spray Helps Halt Latest Plankinton Escape November 15, 1999**

(Pierre) – Three teen-aged criminals, one of them a rapist, attempted to break out from the South Dakota Juvenile Prison at Plankinton on Monday night, but prison guards stopped their escape by using non-lethal pepper spray against them.

The three boys involved in the escape attempt on Monday had broken off the heads of the fire sprinklers in their cells, then wrapped the pieces of heavy metal in cloth and used them as weapons to try to bust out the windows on their cells.

"A sprinkler head in a sock or a pillow case is a very, very dangerous weapon to deal with. It could take half of somebody's head off," Gov. Bill Janklow said. "By having pepper spray available, the prison staff had the tool to respond to these violent and out-of-control inmates, without injury to the staff or the inmates."

Pepper spray is a non-lethal chemical that serves as an irritant. It washes off and causes no permanent damage.

Janklow said fire safety regulations require sprinkler heads in the cells and the state Department of Corrections has been unable to find a source of sprinkler heads that can't be broken off by inmates.

One of the boys, a 15-year-old convicted rapist, was also among the six juveniles involved in the riot and escape attempt at the prison last month that caused \$15,000 of damage. The two other juveniles involved in the Monday incident are a 17-year-old convicted of grand theft and petty theft; and a 15-year-old convicted of vandalism and weapons violations.