

Mansfield prison officer faces charges

Patrol accuses him of scheme to bring drugs to inmates

A Richland Correctional Institution officer will appear in court Tuesday after Ohio Highway Patrol troopers alleged he was involved in a scheme to bring illegal drugs into Richland Correctional Institution.

Troopers on Friday charged Steve A. Smith, 45, a 12-year employee at the prison, with bribery and illegal conveyance of drugs onto the grounds of a correctional facility.

Both are third-degree felonies.

Troopers and Department of Rehabilitation and Correction investigators learned the corrections officer planned to meet someone outside the prison to pick up money, drugs and tobacco, said Sgt. Mickey Gilbert of the patrol's Bucyrus post.

Smith planned to take the drugs into Richland Correctional Institution, officials say.

Troopers and METRICH officers arrested Smith around 11 a.m. Friday in the parking lot of the Salvation Army in Mansfield on U.S. 42, after he met with the person and accepted the marijuana, money and tobacco, Gilbert said.

The bribery charge stems from the accusation that Smith accepted \$600 as payment to smuggle contraband into the prison, Gilbert said.

Smith was taken to Richland County Jail to await an appearance in Mansfield Municipal Court.

If convicted, he could face up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

The patrol investigates criminal activity on state-owned or leased property.

Originally published in the News Journal on May 28, 2011.