

TV LINKS BOARD OF PARDONS WITH INMATES IN GUNNISON

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The Salt Lake Tribune. Salt Lake City, Utah: May 29, 1992. Pg. B4

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Using state-of-the-art telecommunications equipment, the Utah Board of Pardons members conducted parole hearings at Gunnison Correctional Facility Tuesday from the comfort of their Murray offices.

Watching television sets linked by microwave to Gunnison, board members could see and speak to inmates, and vice versa.

It was almost like being in Gunnison, minus the two-hour drive, said parole board chairman Henry L. "Pete" Haun.

"I was amazed," Mr. Haun said after conducting several hearings via microwave. "I was able to observe and relate to the body language expressed {by the inmates}, and the offenders seemed as comfortable as they ever are in our presence.

"And the time savings for us is tremendous," Mr. Haun added. "This is not a 40-hour-a-week job. We will be able to make more decisions and be able to process things quicker. I can't stress enough how it will help our efficiency."

The system could also save the parole board an estimated \$15,000 in travel and motel expenses, as well as travel-time wages, according to parole board administrative coordinator John A. Green. And as the prison population at Gunnison grows, the savings can only increase, he said.

At this point, the parole board is only testing the system, which is on loan from US WEST for 30 days at no cost.

Mr. Haun hopes the state will buy or lease the system, making tele-hearings standard at the Gunnison and Draper prison facility.

Shaun Bloyer, US WEST account manager, said, "This type of technology retails for \$60,000-\$70,000 per location, depending on options."

If the state acquires the system, Mr. Haun said other government agencies would be encouraged to share it. "We will try to maximize the use of it," he said.

Officials of other state agencies, including Corrections, Adult Probation & Parole and Utah Office of Education, have expressed interest in the system, and members have been dropping by the parole board offices for demonstrations, Mr. Haun said.

The Corrections Department, for instance, might use the system to conduct staff meetings and training sessions with the Gunnison facility, Mr. Haun said.

Bob Leishman, US WEST customer-support specialist, said the system uses cutting edge technology that is marketed across the country.