

## Prison Escapes

**Author :** Jeff Welty

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A murderer recently escaped from a North Carolina prison. According to [this News and Observer story](#), the escapee is [James Ladd](#), who was convicted in 1981 of two counts of murder and one count of armed robbery. Mr. Ladd escaped from the minimum-security Tillery Correctional Center in Halifax County on Sunday. He was serving three consecutive life sentences, imposed under an old sentencing regime that allowed him to become eligible for parole after thirty years. He was first eligible in 2011, but was denied release. His case was scheduled for further review in 2014. Despite a large manhunt, including the use of bloodhounds, he has not yet been recaptured.

The story got me wondering about the frequency of prison escapes. The Division of Adult Correction currently houses 38,275 inmates, according to its [website](#). Its very helpful [inmate escape database](#) shows 155 inmates who have escaped and not been apprehended, though that counts escapes going back to 1947, meaning that some of the fugitives are likely deceased by now. (Some others apparently are in prison in other states.) Only five inmates have escaped since January 1, 2000, without being apprehended, including Mr. Ladd. The most recent murderers to escape without being captured, prior to Mr. Ladd, escaped in 1996 and 1987, respectively. The website also shows six escapees in 2012 who have been recaptured.

It looks like other states may have somewhat comparable incidences of escapes:

- South Carolina has an [average daily inmate population of 23,334 so far in 2012](#). It has had [between 6 and 35 escapes each year since 2000](#). I couldn't quickly find any information on how many of its escapees remain at large.
- Tennessee averaged 20,428 inmates in 2011 (page 17 of [this report](#)), and had 11 escapes that year (page 47); it averaged 20,213 inmates in 2010 (page 20 of [this report](#)), and had 7 escapes that year (page 49). The Tennessee DOC website shows [30 uncaptured escapees](#) dating back to 1946. None escaped after 2000, and there is only one murderer on the list; he escaped in 1981.

When a convicted felon escapes from a state prison, he or she commits a Class H felony under [G.S. 148-45](#). Of course, an escape or an attempt to escape [may also be considered by the Parole Commission](#) when determining whether to grant an inmate parole. I suspect that if Mr. Ladd is recaptured, the outcome of his 2014 parole review will be the same as his 2011 review.