



William Musicus (l.), executive director of the New York State Mental Hygiene Facilities Improvement Fund, and Dr. Jack Hammond watch as A. W. Banks (r.), area engineer for the Department of Public Works, explains function of new water valves installed at Willowbrook State School.

Grand Jury Will Probe School Where 2 Died

By FRANK McKEOWN

District Attorney John M. Braisted Jr. will initiate an exhaustive grand jury investigation tomorrow into the operations of the Willowbrook State School for Mental Defectives in Willowbrook. The probe comes in the wake of the scalding death of a 10-year-old boy patient.

The boy's death on May 13 was the second this year. The first, that of a 40-year-old wheel-chair patient, occurred in February. Both were considered accidental. Dr. Jack Hammond, senior director at the school, which is the largest of its kind in the country, said the first resulted when one of the patients tried to give another a shower. He placed blame for the second on a temporary worker and a series of plumbing mishaps caused by new construction.

Inadequate Mixture

"Construction workers had tapped into a cold water pipe and, when they reconnected it, sediment got into the lines," Hammond said. "This caused flush valves to stick and run continuously and did not permit sufficient cold water to be mixed with hot for showers."

The school director said that an employee, who has since been dismissed, started to give the boy a shower. He was seen forming on his body. But she merely dressed him and put him to bed without notifying anyone of the accident, Hammond contended.

To prevent any recurrence of such accidents, he has had all the temperature and water pressure regulating valves replaced throughout the school. Hammond also had all the shower water mixing valves checked by the manufacturer and adjusted to deliver water of only 100 degrees.

An Automatic Turnoff

"If the temperature of the water goes up even five degrees," Hammond declared, "the water is automatically turned off."

Hammond also is seeking to have the mixing valves, which handle 30 gallons a minute, replaced by smaller ones which will shut off faster. And he wants the cold water pipes at the school completely replaced.

"We have an engineer from the State Department of Public Works at the school now," the director said, "and he is surveying the water lines to make recommendations to the department. All the cold water lines, which we found to be greatly corroded, will be replaced probably," Hammond said.

He also is seeking to have all flush valves in the institution changed to prevent them from

continuously running and adding to the danger of similar accidents, but he pointed out that his recommendations would call for an outlay of \$1 million to \$2 million.

"We have 2,200 employees, most of whom are long time career people devoted to aiding the patients," Hammond insisted. But he added that their devotion won't solve such problems as overcrowding.

"Our proposed overcrowded limit is 5,649 patients," he declared, "but as of June 3 we had a total census of 6,054 including convalescent care and leave and some family patients. And the overcrowding is not uniform, that is, not equally distributed among each of the buildings."

Greatly Overcrowded

Hammond pointed out that of the school's 20 buildings, seven of them, housing patients rated as moderate to severely retarded, are greatly overcrowded. He added that this is caused by the fact that he cannot mix the sexes, the various age groups and the patients with differing degrees of retardation.

He said the late Dr. Paul Hoch, who was state commissioner of mental hygiene, had aided him greatly in correcting conditions at the school, but more must be done.