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Inside, Doing Time & Making Signs!

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In January 2010, I had the opportunity to visit the Enterprise Sign Shop operated by the North Carolina Department of Corrections. The shop was in the process of making the freeway guide signs for the Uptown Charlotte wayfinding program and will be making the egress guides signs that are currently in design development stages.

Danny Stanley who manages the shop gave a very informative tour showing how the signs are manufactured. The shop manufactures an enormous number of signs every year and their quality and workmanship is impeccable. They screen print over a million square feet of regulatory signs per year, they have the skills to register 7 colors for the NC Official State Seal on a plaque the size of a coaster and they can put out several freeway guide signs of 20' x 20' (in the case signs for the Uptown Program we are working on) in a day all without a blemish.

But the best part of the tour was entering the facility. We came up to the gate and a guard in the tower threw down a coffee can attached to a string and asked us for our license and any sharp objects such as knives, etc. He pulled up our licenses and dropped them back down after he had recorded all our identities. When we got into the prison, I was surprised to see many of the inmates using box cutters to trim excess vinyl off of sign panels. Glad I didn't bring my knife!

Kirk Lohry
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