

From the office of the Sheriff:

It has been a great feeling getting back and fully engaged with Sheriff's Dept. operations. My focus the first week has been the 2006 budget and the drastic increase in the counties fatalities this year. As you recall Dodge County experienced 29 fatalities on our roads and highways in 2003. It was then that I focused the Patrol Division's 2004 efforts to enhanced traffic enforcement. That year, we conducted community education programs, encouraged citizen reporting of reckless/impaired drivers and lowered the threshold for traffic stops. That effort paid huge dividends as we had a mere 12 fatalities in 2004.

To date Dodge County has 17 fatalities in 2005, compared to three at the same time last year. My question was - what changed? Are we failing in our traffic safety and enforcement efforts? To answer those important questions I gathered and studied relevant data to find the answers. I discovered that our traffic citations and warnings are down significantly. In the first seven months of 2004 we conducted 6,072 traffic stops and issued 3,231 citations or 53% of those stops resulted in a citation. We also issued 2,841 warnings. During the same period this year we have conducted 4,769 traffic stops issued 2,650 citations or 55% of those resulting in a citation. We have also issued 2,119 warnings. This tells me that our enhanced traffic enforcement and increase in citations and warning are relative when compared to fatality rates.

I then reviewed each of our 17 fatality crashed to date to determine causation. Of the 17, nine were not wearing required safety belts, five are alcohol related and four involved motorcycle operations. Inattentive driving can be contributed to a few that did not involve alcohol. Three of those killed were wearing seat belts which tells me that wearing them is a wiser choice than not.

So what is the answer to the earlier questions? Bottom line is the more man hours we spend working traffic enforcement generates more citations, more warnings and greater visibility. Greater visibility slows traffic and makes operators more aware. I see it all the time. If I only had a buck for each person who buckles up AFTER they see the squad! 2005 has been difficult for the department as we experienced several retirements and a few vacancies within the Patrol Division. This requires others to pick up the slack and takes others away from their primary duties of traffic enforcement.

Current budget constraints coupled with a lengthy hiring process will not allow for the necessary effort that will allow the Sheriff's Department to turn this situation around, we need your help. We need YOU to help US in combating this increase in our fatality crashes. Please buckle up and require all your passengers to do the same. Don't be afraid to ask or require them to do so. Slow down and be aware of other drivers, drive defensively. Do not drive after drinking in excess. Be aware of the impact of your prescription medications on your driving abilities. Lastly, report reckless drivers, impaired drivers, and those driving w/o a valid driver's license.

I hope to see all of you at the Dodge County Fair. Please stop in to our public safety booth and talk to our deputies and first responder personnel. The Sheriff Dept will also have gun locks that are free to the public so that we can work towards making our homes containing firearms safe for our children. The Dodge County Sheriff's Department works for you. I consider myself the liaison between you and its great employees. I want to hear your concerns and issues.

We have also enhanced our website features adding a recreational page. Feel free to visit [www.dodgecountysheriff.com](http://www.dodgecountysheriff.com) or email me at [tnehl@co.dodge.wi.us](mailto:tnehl@co.dodge.wi.us)