

From the Sheriff:

If you have ever been involved in an emergency situation, you have experienced how slow time passes while you await the ambulance or law enforcement. Seconds seem like minutes and minutes seem like hours. This can be very frustrating. Just how long does it take for us to come to your aid? I think you deserve the answer.

Prior to 2003, we divided the county in two halves (STH 26) and assigned staff to each half of the county. This usually assigned two deputies responsible for approx. 450 square miles of the county. We found ourselves responding to calls in Fox Lake from Waterloo and to Ashippun from Mayville. It was not a very efficient system. It hindered our emergency response. In 2003 we further divided the county into quadrants, or quarters. This allows us to assign one deputy to each quadrant and they are responsible for just 225 square miles. This has worked out great. I give great credit to the Patrol Division for their cooperation in that transition. Our goal was to get law enforcement on scene sooner, have squads closer to emergencies so that the nervous, frustrated caller's wait for help would be minimized.

With the new Communications Center, we felt it necessary to review the past few years and study our response times to violent, life and death situations. Communication Supervisor Patricia Ninmann has the responsibility to track these efforts, our improvements or lack thereof. Though the data was not where we want to be, we are making progress.

A study of the past four years data showed that in 2002 the average response time to serious situations was 12 minutes 16 seconds. In 2005, we reduced that to 10 minutes and 44 seconds. Though this is just 1 minute and 32 second improvement, it is a 13% reduction. We can, and will do better. The times used are from the time a deputy is dispatched to an emergency call and the time he/she arrives. I know what you're thinking? Almost eleven minutes if I am dying or need your help! A lot can happen in 11 minutes! Such is the case for the rural areas.

Some of the things we do to reduce that time are the use of mutual aid. This allows the Sheriff's Dept. to ask other police agencies within the county to respond into the county on our behalf until a deputy arrives. Our study showed we had actually reduced response times to less than 9 minutes for a portion of the year when we were fully staffed. The geographical restraints such as rivers and the Horicon Marsh and Wildlife refuge also impact response times - traversing the county can be tough.

We are currently in the process of hiring to fill vacancies now. We have two new deputies in training now and we plan on identifying and filling the final three vacancies very soon. The goal of the Sheriff's Department to respond to emergency situations as quickly as a deputy can safely. Traffic and weather conditions can impede those response times. We train each of our employees that their safety and safe arrival on scene is what is critical. Becoming a victim by getting involved or causing a crash en-route negates any response.

We are confident in reducing the response times even further. We remain optimistic and pleased by our officer's responses and their improvements. By Fall 2006, we should be fully staffed and thriving for an average response time under 9 minutes, a goal that is very achievable. Thanks for listening tnehl@co.dodge.wi.us.