

From the Office of the Sheriff:

This will be the last column that focuses on the Sheriff's Department vision towards the future. I have written about the MDC program, centralized dispatch, and contract law enforcement. The final piece or goal is a centralized records system.

A centralized record system is simply one large data base generated by law enforcement and accessible by all law enforcement. As I stated in the past, there are 21 different law enforcement agencies in Dodge County. The data each has can not be accessed or easily shared by one another. Should an investigator be in need of information regarding a criminal suspect, he would need to contact each and every agency by phone to get that information. This significantly delays the investigation and hampers our goal of prompt, efficient, and professional service.

A centralized record system is not a "dream" and is nothing new to law enforcement. We have had general discussions about this for approx. two years. We will begin to speak more specifically the next couple of years. Our goal is to be in a position to present a plan to each and every county law enforcement agency that is very palatable, both financially and operationally.

The effort will require every agency to use the same information management system (software) for information storage. This is not as difficult as one thinks as agencies change systems routinely. I envision each and every agency having the ability to store their data in a centralized server. Once completed, should an investigator then require information on a criminal suspect, one quick search will reveal each and every contact each of the 21 law enforcement agencies had with the suspect.

The data will allow for agencies to share common characteristics of crimes, our jail photo database, and many other items that will accelerate the investigation process and law enforcement practices in general. The records would remain under the custody of the department creating the record. The inputting departments will determine what should be shared and what information will be shielded from other agencies.

The Sheriff's Department has just upgraded its information management system. It is a popular system used nationally and many other law enforcement agencies are studying it as well. We have neighboring counties that use the same system. So in all practicality, this could eventually migrate from a county-wide database to regional system or at a minimum the ability to extract information from neighboring counties that have a similar information management system.

The current talk in every facet of government is consolidation and regionalization. Law enforcement is not exempt from these discussions. My philosophy is to lean forward in the saddle and forecast our future vs. someone else dictating it to us. We are in a great position to make this become reality. We will continue to develop the strategy towards centralized records for the betterment of law enforcement, whether that is county-wide or regionally.

We have recently enhanced our web-site, please visit www.dodgecountysheriff.com for the latest improvements. Thanks for listening. tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.