

From the Office of the Sheriff: "Recreation activity enforcement"

Dodge County prides itself on being a great destination for recreational enthusiasts looking to camp, bike, snowmobile, ATV, and enjoy our numerous lakes. These activities help our local economy as many who travel to Dodge County come from outside the area and they spend money. The Sheriff's Dept. has a responsibility to ensure these activities remain safe and families enjoy their fun and keep coming back.

Eight years ago we had a fairly active snowmobile patrol but did little in ATV enforcement and had no boat patrol what so ever. As these activities began to generate a fair amount of complaints, injuries, and deaths, we determined something needed to be done; we needed to be far more proactive than the department had been in the past. Our first step was to purchase a boat for patrol and rescue. Prior to that we did not have a boat and relied upon private property owners for our water craft needs. We eventually added two ATVs, snowmobiles and leases for two personal water craft. These purchases are initially funded by the county and then reimbursed by the DNR Recreation Safety Program at a rate of 20% annually for five-years, for a full reimbursement. Our final step was the additional of a full-time recreation officer. Starting in 2008, this deputy has ensured that the department not only teaches safety courses but applies the standards to those enjoying the lakes and trails of the county. Similar to the equipment cost reimbursement, the majority of the deputy's wages, fringes, and expenses are reimbursed to Dodge County by the DNR.

A snapshot of the past five-years reflects the strides we have made in this area. During the years 2005 and 2006, the Sheriff's Department worked a total of 133 hours in snowmobile, ATV, and boat patrol. In 2008 and 2009, we upped our patrol hours in those areas to 1,969. This reflects the additional deputy permanently assigned to recreation patrol. The vast majority of these wages are reimbursed by the DNR. During the off-season, when there is no recreation activity, the deputy is assigned regular patrol duties. The departments' Recreation Program also conducts safety classes for the young and old alike, as well as participates in community outreach and public relations events.

While we partner with the DNR regarding safety and enforcement, we also partner with local fire departments for assistance with rescue and recovery. For example, Beaver Dam Fire Dept. has a larger boat, hover craft, and dive team, all of which we have requested visa mutual aid to assist. We also work with the Dodge County Snowmobile Association and Dodge County Parks and Recreation to ensure we are maximizing our resources and coordinate our efforts. A secondary activity of the recreation deputy is the patrol of the numerous county parks, an activity you may see while he is in a squad car or on the department bicycle.

Our main focus is safety of those who want to enjoy recreational activities. Intoxicated operation of recreational vehicles continues to be huge safety issue, along with unsafe operation of water craft, lack of life preserver use, and speeding. Currently, the state is debating Assembly Bill 841 related to impaired operations of recreational vehicles. You can access the legislation at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2009/data/AB841hst.html>.

Coffee filter count is 66, thanks for listening, tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.