

From the Office of the Sheriff: “Smoking Ban Enforcement”

On July 5<sup>th</sup>, the new law on smoking in public places will go into effect. This legislation passed some time ago and has recently been amended. I am not going to argue the merit or lack thereof of the legislation, each side, smoker, non-smoker, employer, employee each have their pro’s and con’s. My role as a law enforcement manager is to enforce the laws our legislators pass. We have proposed a county ordinance which is required for the department to enforce and prosecute violators of the smoking ban. I hope the ordinance is completed soon; it will then have to be approved by the county board.

One group was missing during the deliberations of the law - law enforcement. In times of increased call-for-service, reduced budgets, and the inability to hire or add staffing, we are now confronted with a law which may direct valuable resources to the roll of “smoker patrol.” I anticipate the first day the law goes into affect; we will receive calls from business owners, employers, and patrons wishing to report a smoking violation.

Common sense tells me that the first step in the oversight of the smoking ban rests upon the business owners and employees who, should they observe a violation, take the appropriate action to remedy the situation. Should the violator refuse to adhere to their direction, the next call would be to the Dodge County Sheriff’s Dept. via the non-emergency line. I can anticipate these calls will not make the priority list, especially on weekends, and we will have to take the information from the caller and obtain written statements from witnesses, and issue the citation at a later date.

It will take some time for society to conform to the new law. Regular customers will need time and signage to ensure compliance with the law. The best thing people can do for us is to cooperate, listen to the owners and managers of these businesses and if they tell you to “put it out”, do it. Cigarettes are very expensive; I figure around 25 cents apiece. Throw a significant fine on top of that and it will either motivate you to quit or ensure voluntary compliance with the law. We need your help and cooperation.

When you read this, the coffee filter count will be just five. As the end nears I have been able to reflect upon my journey and the great investment my studies have been for our county, state, and nation. I want to thank each of you for your understanding while I attended this academically challenging course. Many have asked if I have been playing “war games?” No I have not. Strictly classroom followed up by a two-week trip to Ukraine and Russia to reinforce the course of instruction. Less than half of the 231 students are military, each federal agency is represented, to include DHS, Dos, DoD, TSA, FBI, CIA, NIA, and others.

Another very important fact is that my attendance has been as much about me being a Sheriff than being a Colonel. I brought a different perspective to seminars and discussions, enabled federal agencies to learn about issues at the local, county, and state level, appreciation of “home rule” during disasters, and many other value added subjects. I return with a significant rolodex of contacts and a greater understanding of strategic issues and the planning necessary to ensure we look beyond tomorrow. I have read and reviewed department reports daily and spoken to managers on a daily basis. I have been as involved in department issues as much as if I were in Juneau everyday. I truly appreciate all your support, your words of encouragement when I needed it most, and most importantly, understanding the importance of a highly educated manager with a passion to God and country. Thanks for listening, [tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us](mailto:tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us).

