

From the Office of the Sheriff:

Last week I had a gentleman make a claim that the Sheriff's Department "had too many squad cars." As a taxpayer I respected his opinion and oversight. I then explained our current fleet status, pros and cons alike, giving the man the opportunity to form his own opinion as to whether or not we in fact "had too many squad cars."

Currently, the Dodge County Sheriff's Department has 76 vehicles assigned to the department. Of those, 64 are assigned to employees under the departments One-on-One Squad Program. The balance is used for daily transports, towing trailers, and various other tasks.

Most squads are found within our Patrol Division. The 28 patrol deputies logged 795,963 miles in 2006, averaging just over 29,000 miles each. Dodge County is very large, and with just 4-5 deputies working most times, many miles are traveled responding to calls for service. Each deputy is assigned a squad and they keep at their homes. The deputy starts and ends their shift from home. Many may claim that this is a very good "perk" for the employee. I would agree with that but the real benefactor to this is the taxpayer.

When I first started in 1987, I shared a squad with two other employees. The squad was run 24/7 and after 100k miles the car was junk and replaced. It was hard to track maintenance, even more difficult to identify those whom were hard on brakes and transmissions. The department replaced anywhere from 10 – 12 squads per year. The old cars brought little money at auction.

Now, with the one-on-one program we can track driving habits and maintenance. The cars are cared for so much better and are driven up to 150k miles before we replace them. We replace just 6-8 patrol cars per year. A new squad car costs approx. \$21,000.00 new and after five years we get around \$7-8,000 each at the auction. That equates to a capital cost of around \$3,000 per year, per squad, a number I am very pleased with.

A more important benefit is the availability of these cars during major situations. Each employee is required to sign a one-on-one squad agreement. The agreement allows me to call them in to work early or hold them over at the end of their shift w/o paying them overtime. This generates a substantial savings to the taxpayer. I credit the employees union for these concessions.

I can recall situations in the late 80's early 90's where the requirement for personnel far exceeded the number of squads available. Today, this is not the case. Recent emergencies such as the Quad Graphics collapse, the Watertown tire fire, Waupun tornado, and major traffic crashes validate this valuable program. The ability to summon employees directly from home to the emergency location ensures a very prompt and robust response. Our detectives can also respond directly to a crime scene and have all their equipment readily accessible. The visibility of these squads throughout the county also serves as an effective deterrent.

Our Detention Facility has several transport vans assigned for transporting inmates. In 2006 they logged over 460k miles completing 1,499 trips. We drive these vans to well over 200,000 miles before we replace them. Most of these miles are reimbursed by the federal government at a very favorable rate. Bottom line, we drive vehicles much longer and care for them better than most. We do have a large fleet, but we need them to carry out a tremendous task. nehls@co.dodge.wi.us.