

What your Sheriff's Office Does?

We, as mature citizens of this great State of Alabama, know that there is a Sheriffs Office comprised of a Sheriff and his deputies in each county, as set out by our state constitution. However, in a recent survey, we found that a very small percentage of the public really knew exactly what the Sheriffs Office does.

To gain a better understanding of it all, let's start at the beginning. The work "Sheriff" is of English derivation, a contraction of the words "shire" (county) and "reeve" (an agent of the king). Remember the Sheriff of Nottingham? He and his counterparts weren't very popular, were they? They held office either because their father did, or they received what was termed "royal appointment" -based not on abilities, but instead by what particular favors they had done for the crown. Their remuneration depended upon how much taxes they collected - so you can readily understand what their principal duty was and why they resorted in some cases to less than ethical methods of collection.

You can also appreciate today's Sheriff and his organization for what they do to help turn the wheels of civilization-which, without proper law enforcement, would most certainly become a jungle!

The following material is set forth to give you a basic idea of how the typical Sheriff and his deputies function. For the most part, these are not steadfast duties or functions because you must remember that all counties differ in size, economic status and problems. However, the name and the game are the same.

Assuming that all requirements have been met, and the applicant becomes a member of that Sheriffs Office, he then embarks on a never ending voyage of education to better professionalize his chosen field.

He is first taught that the Sheriffs is a service office, which requires a high degree of tact in the handling of complaints, information, and emergency calls. Few compliments and many derogatory remarks will come his way; mainly because of the type of service the office is rendering. He or she must be able to roll with the punches and continue to perform their duties in a diligent and meaningful manner. It is also the duty of every member of the office to do his or her best to stop any and all rumors or derogatory remarks heard about the office or any officer of the organization. They must constantly search for and implement better ways in which to serve.

During this time of social unrest, versatility is the backbone of the organization. The ability to adjust and change with the times, along with additional education and training, which must be more diversified than it has

been in the past, are the only things that can now reduce the frustration of the officers and the mistrust of the populace they serve.

As an office grows in size and responsibility, it becomes necessary to establish uniform procedures that serve as a guide in the discharge of its duties. The purpose of this standardization is not to restrict or handicap its members, but rather to enable the office to become more efficient in its wide range of duties with a minimum amount of effort.

Ours is a service office and we are constantly in contact with the public. The impressions of the Sheriffs Office depend upon the attitudes of each individual of this organization. We must continue to perform our duties in such a way that we do not antagonize, if at all possible. If we, as deputy sheriffs, hope to upgrade our professions and continue to grow, we must first "sell" people it serves. We must maintain a constant vigilance against routine, set patterns, and boredom. To become lax is to take a step backward. Instead, let us as individuals combine our knowledge and look for better ways in which to serve.

Today's Sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer of his county by virtue of public acclaim, in the form of election every four years by the eligible voting populace of his county. His chief deputy is appointed by the Sheriff to help him with his duties and act as chief coordinator.

In most offices, the Sheriffs personnel are unique in that all functions of the office are performed by any deputy, whether the assignment be in the corrections field, the court system, or the law enforcement division. For example, he may act as a bailiff or a jailer, transport a prisoner, serve a civil process, or patrol a road, all in the same day. It is for this reason the Sheriff's office operates in such a smooth manner and on such an economical scale, resulting in great benefit to the taxpayers. Yes indeed, the members of the Sheriffs Office wear many hats in the fulfillment of their daily duties. This will give you some idea of the functions they perform.

General

- Investigates all complaints and crimes. Collects and preserves evidence. Interviews and/or interrogates suspects
- Makes arrests, on warrants or without if sufficient reason for belief of a crime has been committed
- Testifies in court, with or without subpoena, bringing records as required
- Transports evidence to crime lab for identification and analysis
- Acts as liaison with BCI lab for industry, banks, miscellaneous businesses, re-identification of forged and/or fictitious checks
- Escorts prisoners to court hearings and trials
- Investigates and controls civil disturbances

- Makes search warrant investigations
- Assists with strike negotiation problems
- Recovers vehicles and property stolen from other jurisdictions
- Maintains and operates boat, motor, dragging equipment, etc., for water rescue
- Issues licenses to carry concealed weapons
- Makes emergency deliveries of blood, vital organs, medication, etc. for hospitals, doctors, nursing homes, etc.
- Investigates reports of missing persons
- Delivers death messages
- Conducts storm patrols
- Makes security checks of vacant buildings, vacationers' premises, camping areas, unattended farm machinery
- Makes investigation of complaints, strays or dogs running at large
- Arbitrates fence disputes
- Acts as mediator during family disturbances
- Does family counseling, adult and/or juvenile problems
- Acts as truant officer

Special Enforcement

- Makes arson investigations with or at the request of State Fire Marshal
- Assists State Narcotics Bureau and/or other cities in narcotics arrests
- Investigates with all railroad special agents
- Joins security force protecting a visiting President, U.S. or foreign dignitaries
- Furnishes manpower assistance to other cities and law enforcement agencies upon Bequest

Death Investigations

- Homicides
- All accidents - industrial, farm, home, drowning, etc.
- Suicides

Traffic Control

- Conducts twenty-four hour road patrol, in the course of his many duties
- Operates radar periodically
- Issues citations for traffic violations
- Makes accident investigations, including first aid, traffic direction, photographing scene, notification of kin, plus full statistical report as required bylaw
- Investigates and makes necessary disposition of animals loose on highways
- Escorts oversized vehicles

- Escorts caravans - pedestrian, bicycle, motor vehicle, charity promotions, etc.
- Assists funeral processions in traffic
- Conducts park patrol
- Controls and directs traffic at public functions

Communications

- Radio: operates full radio communication to surrounding counties, cities, state and all county mobile units
- Telephone: operation of multi-line systems, including in-watts lines. Access to open line, civil defense, NAWAS. Access to statewide warning points for severe weather warnings. Access to direct lines, Alabama bureaus.
- Teletype: access to all state ACHIC units. Access to National Law Enforcement System (NLETS). Access to National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

Officer, District Court (with Judge, Clerk of Court, or the County Attorney)

- Provides bailiffs for courts
- Summons all trial and grand jurors
- Serves bench warrants, arrests and brings prisoners before the court
- Acts as parole officer and/or supervisor
- Returns fugitives from outside of state
- Secures extradition waivers on criminals apprehended for outside jurisdictions
- Transports prisoners and patients by order of court

Records and Data Bureau

- Maintains complete files of criminal records
- Maintains complete files of fingerprints
- Maintains complete files of prisoners' photographs
- Compiles individual daily activity reports
- Compiles monthly statistical reports of crimes, activities, working hours of personnel, civil processes, jail population, cost of meals, etc.
- Prepares monthly uniform crime reports for state and federal statistics
- Furnishes applicants' record checks to FBI, all branches U.S. Armed Forces, Immigration, Civil Service Commission, etc., plus civil industry when authorized by applicant

Civil Procedures

- Serves original notices, writs, subpoenas and orders for all Alabama District and Small Claims Courts

- Collects judgments under executions, writs of attachment, distress warrants, by levy, and arranges for sale of property, or garnishment of wages, bank accounts., etc., as necessary for said collection
- Serves miscellaneous notices for Alabama and out of state attorneys, agents, etc.

Contract Law Enforcement (where in effect)

- Conducts prior negotiations and subsequent preparation of city-county contracts
- Maintains twenty-four hour coverage of each contract town
- Investigates all complaints, makes written reports
- Enforces all city ordinances as necessary
- Compiles and delivers monthly report of activities to each town council

Jail

- Admits, books, searches, fingerprints, and photographs all prisoners
- Issues clothing and bedding
- Supervises cleanliness of prisoners and their living quarters
- Arranges for health care of prisoners
- Admits visitors, attorneys, ministers, counselors, bondsmen, and police officers to jail area
- Maintains supply of reading material for prisoners
- Serves meals, supervises preparation of same
- Operates laundry services
- Does outside shopping for prisoners
- Monitors indoor and outdoor TV surveillance of cell blocks and building (where in effect)
- Conducts regular routine checks of prisoners' quarters, twenty-four hours daily

Public Relations

- Releases information to news media, prepares press releases as necessary, gives interviews as requested
- Provides speakers on all facets of law enforcement for schools, civic organizations, businessmen, study groups, etc., in the county
- Receives tour groups, shows facilities and equipment and explains workings of same and duties of personnel
- On top of all this, he must be an exemplary citizen who is active in civic and church affairs

Elections

- Serves as member of appointing board Notifies election officials of their appointments
- Notifies election officials of time and place of school of instruction

- Serves public notice of state and county elections and any special election call by Governor
- Notifies public of polling places
- Delivers supplies to voting places before polls open
- Preservation of order at all elections except municipal elections
- Receives ballots after counting and stores for safe keeping for six months, unless ordered to hold longer

Reserve Deputies

- Assist patrol duties in county same as regular deputies without county compensation
- Work civic events, PTA functions, high school football games, and college games
- Assist in raising funds for Alabama Sheriffs Youth Ranches

Alabama Sheriffs Youth Ranches

- Established to provide a good home and a secure future for Alabama's needy and worthy boys and girls
- The number 1 fundraising project of the Sheriffs of Alabama

Maybe the next time you see a representative of your Sheriff's Office, you 'll say to yourself,

"There goes a Great person with a great job"