

February, Definitely Not An “Off Season” for Law Enforcement

While watching the end of the super bowl last week one of the announcers commented the “off season” started at the end of the game. This reminded me of the times I am asked, usually in January and February when we are all waking up to below zero temperatures, if we in law enforcement are in a “slow time” or “off season” so to speak.

I normally smile and respond that we used to have an off season-back in the 1970’s-but we definitely really don’t have an off season anymore. I say that I think we’re more like many jobs today, where during these cold weather months we are busy doing different things to catch up, reorganize or prepare for the coming seasons. In our line of work many times this time of year is more hectic and intense than our “normally accepted by the public” busy summer month duties.

In law enforcement we don’t stop doing what we normally do during the months of January, February and March. We still respond to the traffic accidents and police calls and domestic disputes. We continue to conduct criminal investigations, serve the civil process papers, keep the jail, and dispatch the fire, police and ambulance units. In addition we use January, February and March to transition into another aspect of law enforcement that includes planning for the year, State of Wisconsin mandatory in-service training, policy and procedure review and revisions, self-evaluations and new this year, we added a remodeling project.

These next few months will be very important to our success in 2010. Because of family vacations scheduling we normally conduct as much training as possible early in the year. Already in 2010 many have attended police ethics training and “shoot don’t shoot” firearms training. We also have CPR, legal update and emergency vehicle operations training already scheduled.

Our remodeling project is moving our upstairs small squad room into the downstairs basement of the new courthouse building. This will enable our deputies to have a large room multiple “workstation” countertop type setting instead of sharing one workstation in a very small room. The project also includes an evidence preparation room and evidence processing area that includes running water, bright lighting and countertops. We are very

excited about this project and the upgrade has been long overdue-which makes it even more exciting and appreciated.

Probably one of the more important yet difficult and unappreciated tasks in law enforcement is “self evaluation” and “policy and procedure review, revision and updates”. The self evaluation of everyone, including myself, can be a very daunting task. We all have things we can improve on and we try to focus on how we can all get better. Similarly, policy and procedure review and revision can be very time consuming and challenging. Our law enforcement liability and practices are constantly changing because our laws and how we perform our duties is constantly changing. To keep up with these changes takes an ongoing commitment of time and energy.

In summary, rest assured, despite the bone chilling cold and the piles of snow everywhere, slowing things down and making travel extremely difficult and causing many people to hunker down and dream of Spring-we in law enforcement still have plenty to get accomplished. Stay safe and stay warm.

Sheriff Darrell Berglin