

Orange County is 409 square miles. Within those boundaries live approximately 145,000 people. The duties of a modern sheriff's office are complex, but protecting people and property is our primary responsibility.

In this month's edition of *The Lowdown*, I want to take you inside the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) and describe how we approach that responsibility from a structural perspective, examining our larger divisions.

One of the main ways we protect people and property is through our patrol division. This is likely the area of law enforcement with which you are most familiar. The county is divided into geographical areas; a deputy patrols each area assessing and promoting safety, conducting house/building/church checks, responding to calls for service, and enforcing traffic laws within that area. We accomplish this with approximately 40 deputies assigned to four rotating shifts, covering the county 24 hours a day throughout the year. Perhaps most importantly, we are out in the community, making personal contacts with residents and business owners, and generally meeting people where they are.

The OCSO also protects the community through its management of the detention center. Often called a jail, the detention center houses people awaiting trial, defendants serving sentences for misdemeanor crimes, and federal inmates who need a bed. The detention center also provides temporary custody for public inebriates and those under domestic violence safety holds. Our average daily census is at or near our capacity of 129. The detention center is always open; inmates receive three meals a day and any necessary medical care. The approximate cost per inmate is \$111 per day.

The specially trained detention officers and deputies who work in the jail are tasked with providing a safe, secure, and clean environment for persons committed there. Most road deputies in Orange County start their careers working in the detention center. Deputies report this experience as invaluable for learning the communication skills they will need working with the public. The detention center staff also includes dietary, medical, and transport personnel. Transport officers coordinate transfers between jails and prisons, and to and from hospitals and medical facilities. Approximately 45 people serve in the detention center division.

When crimes are reported and not resolved immediately by the responding deputy, cases are referred to our Criminal Investigations Division. These 11 men and women have specialized training in investigative techniques, crime scene analysis, and case management. Some of them further specialize in death scene investigation, arson, fraud, larceny, burglary, sex crimes, and cyber-crimes. Investigators analyze large quantities of information, establish leads, and conduct interviews. Some investigators serve on specialized task forces where multiple agencies share information, training, and resources to address crimes that cross jurisdictional boundaries, such as internet crimes against children.

The OCSO also has additional investigators working undercover in narcotics; they strive to minimize the sale and delivery of illegal substances within our county and in the surrounding areas. The investigative division is also responsible for our K9 teams who focus on narcotics detection, tracking, article search, and criminal apprehension of violent offenders. We have three such partnerships; these pairs complete 16 hours of training per month.

Another way we protect the people of Orange County is through the School Resource Officer program, which began during the 1993-1994 school year. A School Resource Officer (SRO) is a certified law enforcement officer permanently assigned to provide coverage to a school. We have 18 deputies serving as SROs – at least one in each of the schools in the Orange County School System. These officers support student success in school using skills gained in their specialized training. SROs are fully aware of the dangers of the school to prison pipeline. They provide mentorship to vulnerable students; they guide students toward positive decisions; they search for appropriate resolutions to disputes; and they promote diversion programs designed to keep students out of the judicial system. Essentially, SROs seek to instill in each student an exciting vision for that student's future, and they help him or her avoid roadblocks to achieving those goals.

The divisions described above account for approximately 75% of personnel assignments at the OCSO. Next month, I will write about our smaller divisions and the areas of our office less well known to the public, including our crisis unit, the civil division, the court security team, crime prevention, records, training, and administration. As always, please let me know what questions you have or what topics you would like me to explore in future editions of *The Lowdown*. Email your thoughts and inquiries to my Public Information Officer at astemper@orangecountync.gov.

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