

THE LOWDOWN
Sheriff Charles S. Blackwood
“Lightning Round”
March 27, 2024

In this monthly article, I usually do a deep dive, focusing on one important law enforcement topic. This month, I’m doing a *Lowdown* Lightning Round! Let’s see how many programs, offerings, and small details I can share about our office within my 750-word allotment.

Did you know we can place a premise alert on your residence? If you have something you want us to know BEFORE an emergency occurs, we enter that information into a database. Any deputy responding to your home will know immediately what your special concerns are. For example: Grandma’s bedroom is in the back left corner of the house. She uses a wheelchair. If there is an emergency, help her first. Or maybe it is better for someone in your home if we respond to your residence without flashing lights and sirens. Let us know in advance, and we will do our best to accommodate your request.

We maintain a safe zone at our office where people can conduct buy/sell/trade transactions they arrange on social media. It should go without saying that if someone won’t agree to meet you at our office, you don’t want that person at your house!

This service might surprise you: my IT team started a livestock tracking database. It contains the names of owners of large animals, such as horses, goats, emus, mules, cows, and pigs, and the nearest cross streets to where they live. If a deputy finds a loose animal, which happens more than you may think, he or she can consult the list to help identify the owner. It also minimizes the number of times we wake up the wrong person in the middle of the night!

Upon your request, patrol deputies will conduct close patrols or house checks. In the former, deputies drive by your home more often than they would on routine patrol, and perhaps provide periods of stationary presence nearby. People request close patrols when they are out of town, having a dispute with a neighbor, or finding themselves worried about safety for any number of reasons. A house check is a similar service, but the deputy performs a closer inspection, walking around your residence, physically ensuring doors and windows are secure. A deputy who discovers any problems will call you or your emergency contact. People generally request this service when they plan to be out of town for an extended period.

We have a drop box in our lobby for expired, no longer needed, or no longer wanted medication. Such boxes help keep drugs out of the wrong hands and the water supply. People particularly value this disposal option after the death of a loved one from a long illness like cancer. The volume of medications left behind can be overwhelming. I am proud to offer this easy, no-questions-asked option for safe disposal.

Do you want to volunteer somewhere? Consider joining our Sheriff's Office Citizens' Organization (SOCO). This nonprofit helps with special fundraising initiatives throughout the year. Members enjoy selling corn at Hog Day, assisting with our Chicken Pickin' event in April, supporting our Lifetrack program, and making holiday dreams come true in December at our Shop with the Sheriff event. SOCO boasts some of the kindest people in the county, and it is a low-stress commitment that makes a big difference to others.

Our Community Service team will conduct a home security assessment upon your request. They look for ways to improve your safety and deter opportunistic criminals by examining your landscaping, lighting, and locking hardware. Deputies may make suggestions regarding where to store valuables in your home or identify places on your property that allow easy access to your residence out of sight of neighbors or those passing by. Users of this service find some of the suggestions surprisingly effective and low-cost.

We also give facility tours. Maybe you have a school class or civic group interested in an up-close look at our office. Not just for third-graders, people of all ages enjoy seeing our patrol room, sitting in a marked vehicle, and learning about our responsibilities and equipment. My office is your office, and I welcome your interest.

Finally, let us know if we can come to you. We provide safety presentations, drone and K9 demonstrations, and crime prevention consultations to social, school, church, and neighborhood civic groups.

I managed to cover nine topics in this *Lowdown* Lightning Round and – BONUS POINTS – I came in at exactly 750 words! I hope you learned something new, and thanks for reading.