

MEMORANDUM
Whatcom County Sheriff's Office

To: Whatcom County Council Members
Whatcom County Executive Pete Kremen

From: Whatcom County Sheriff Bill Elfo

Date: June 6th, 2006

Subject: Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Bureau of Law Enforcement and
Investigative Services Staffing Plan

PURPOSE of REPORT and STAFFING PLAN

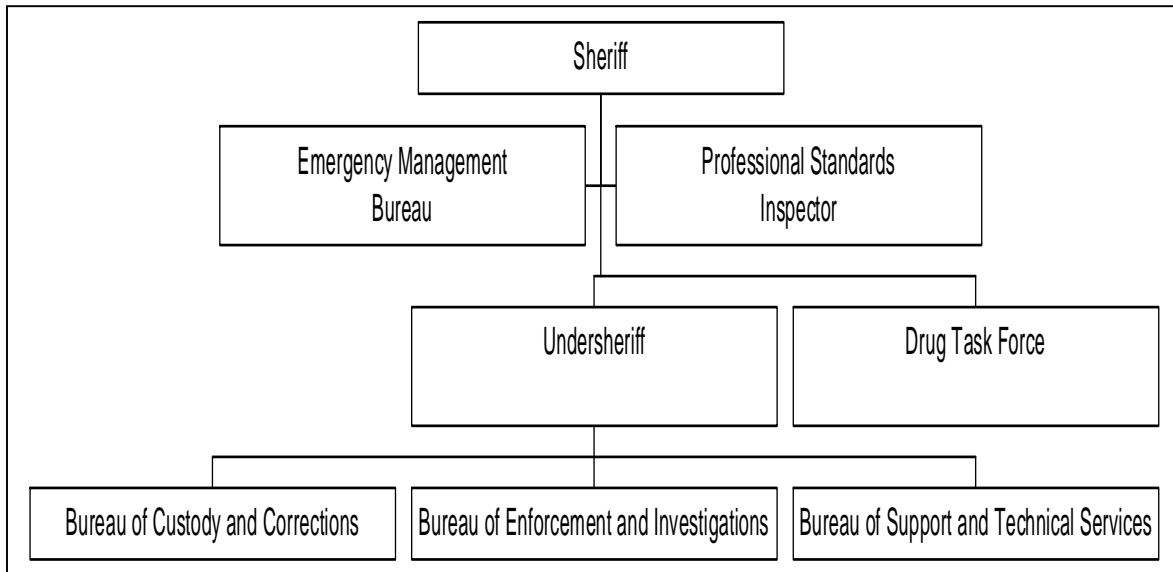
As Whatcom County grows and experiences increased challenges in the areas of crime control and public safety, it is important that the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) maintain and improve its response and prevention capabilities. While the Sheriff's Office has implemented a number of organizational programs and changes to improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, it is critical that adequate resources be devoted to emerging crime and public safety issues.

The purpose of this report is to:

- As the County Council and Executive's Office prepare for the Council budget retreat, provide information regarding Sheriff's Office Bureau of Law Enforcement and Investigative Service (BLEIS) staffing levels and outline current and projected staffing requirements commensurate with existing and emerging service needs;
- Provide answers to some of the questions of the County Council Finance Committee pertaining to Sheriff's Office staffing levels;
- Address the 2000 Whatcom County Comprehensive Law and Justice Planning Project and Cohn-Readio report which 7 years ago called the Sheriff's Office "grossly understaffed";
- Incorporation into the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office strategic plan;
- Serve as the foundation for WCSO BLEIS additional service requests for 2007-2008 and subsequent budgets.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMPONENTS of the SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Sheriff's Office is responsible for performing a wide variety of law enforcement, correctional, emergency management, regional narcotics enforcement, judicial enforcement and search and rescue functions. To efficiently perform these major tasks, the organization is divided into 5 major bureaus. The functions of four of these bureaus and their relationship to the BLEIS are described below:



Bureau of Custody and Corrections

The Bureau of Custody and Corrections is commanded by Chief Wendy Jones and is responsible for the main jail, the new interim jail and work center, jail alternative programs, the jail work crews and prisoner transportation matters associated with the courts and the Northwest Regional Jail transportation cooperative that is under the control of the WCSO.

Bureau of Support and Technical Services

The Bureau of Support and Civil Services is commanded by Chief Kevin Moyes. The Bureau serves court process and executes court orders on a countywide basis. It is also responsible for records management, evidence storage, technology implementation, special projects, concealed pistol permits and the coordination of volunteer and reserve deputy sheriff programs. Two commissioned personnel are assigned to this Bureau (Chief Civil Deputy and Civil Deputy). These personnel are not calculated in the total number of commissioned deputies in BELIS because the civil enforcement and service functions of this Bureau are unique to the Sheriff's Office and are performed on a countywide basis.

Bureau of Professional Standards

The Bureau of Professional Standards is a newly created bureau of the Sheriff's Office with responsibility for ensuring compliance with professional and accreditation standards, staff inspections, investigating internal and external allegations regarding member misconduct, applicant background investigations and the maintenance of personnel files. It is anticipated that this bureau will be staffed by the summer of 2006 (one commissioned Inspector).

Northwest Regional Drug Task Force

The Northwest Regional Drug Task Force (NWRDTF) is a multi-jurisdictional task force that primarily focuses on clandestine methamphetamine laboratories and persons trafficking in methamphetamine, opiates and cocaine. The Bellingham Police Department and the Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney's Office have participated in the Task Force for a number of years. More recently, the Ferndale Police Department has assigned an officer to the program and interest in participation has been expressed by other agencies. Although state and federal programs fund the Task Force in part, the program is largely financed through local resources. Four commissioned Sheriff's Office personnel are assigned to this function (one sergeant and three detectives). Sheriff's Office staffing levels at the NWRDTF are not discussed in the context of overall staffing levels at the WCSO as commissioned positions in this program are tied to a variety of external funding sources with anti-supplanting provisions.

Bureau of Emergency Management

The Bureau of Emergency Management performs a wide range of tasks associated with preparedness and responses to natural and other disasters. The Bureau is also responsible for ensuring compliance with a myriad of mandates relating to homeland security and associated grant application and sub-recipient monitoring.

BUREAU of LAW ENFORCEMENT and INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES

The Bureau of Law Enforcement and Investigative Services (BLEIS) is the component of the Sheriff's Office with primary responsibility for providing emergency responses, law enforcement, crime prevention and policing functions. BLEIS is the primary police agency for the 79,848 persons living within the 2121 square miles of unincorporated Whatcom County. BLEIS also provides some additional law enforcement services to the 180,205 residents that live in the 2176 square miles of the County. Some of the main categories of services provided by BLEIS include patrol, traffic enforcement, crime prevention and criminal investigations.

Formerly called the Patrol Division, BLEIS was renamed to more accurately reflect the myriad of services it provides to the community. BLEIS is commanded by Chief Jeff Parks and has been reorganized into two main divisions, Patrol Operations and Special Operations.

Patrol Operations Patrol Operations is headed by Lieutenant Art Edge. The Division has primary responsibility for patrol and patrol related functions. Programs include:

- Uniformed patrol program
- Resident deputy program
- Crime scene investigation program
- Search and rescue-operations program
- Canine program
- Uniformed drug impact program
- Special response team program
- Field training program

Special Operations Special Operations is headed by Lieutenant Scott Rossmiller. The Division was formed to improve span of control issues, allow sergeants to increase focus on operational issues and improve coordination. This organizational realignment was accomplished by re-assigning existing duties and without additional supervisory staff. The Division has primary responsibility for investigative, traffic and other special programs. Programs include:

- Investigations program (detectives)
- Traffic and road use investigation program
- Whatcom County Traffic Safety coordinator program
- Boating Safety program
- Complaint desk program (station deputy)
- Courthouse security deputy program
- Crime prevention program
- Training deputy program (firearms)
- Search and rescue- liaison program
- Scheduling programs
- Administrative functions in support of operational programs
- Special deputy sheriff programs
- Crisis negotiation program
- Crime Analysis program

Overview of Specialized Programs: Full Time Assignments

A number of deputy sheriffs and sergeants are assigned on a full-time basis to specialized programs that are critical to the mission of the Sheriff's Office. These specialized programs include:

Investigations One sergeant and eight deputies (detectives) are assigned full time to the investigation of serious crimes such as homicide, significant crimes against person, child abuse and major property crimes. The unit is also responsible for registering all 446 sexual and kidnapping offenders living in Whatcom County and for classifying and monitoring the 223 that live in unincorporated Whatcom County. Nine commissioned personnel are assigned to this function (1 sergeant and 8 deputy sheriffs).

Traffic and Road Use One sergeant and four deputies are assigned to traffic and road use investigation functions. Primary responsibilities include traffic enforcement, collision investigation, civil road use investigation, DWI enforcement, traffic safety education and supporting patrol operations. The sergeant also supervises the grant funded traffic safety coordinator. Five commissioned personnel are assigned to this function (1 sergeant and 4 deputy sheriffs).

Canine Two deputy-canine teams specialize in general patrol dog functions that include searching for criminals and evidence. One deputy-canine team specializes in searching for narcotics such as methamphetamine. All canine deputies are assigned to uniformed patrol and support the patrol mission (3 deputy sheriffs).

Resident Deputies Resident deputy sheriffs provide necessary law enforcement services to remote parts of Whatcom County. They generally are required to live in county-owned housing in these regions. Currently, five deputy sheriffs are assigned to this program. Resident programs are in place at:

- Point Roberts (two resident deputy sheriffs)
- Newhalem/Diablo (paid for by Seattle City Light)
- East Foothills (Paradise)
- Baker Lake (paid in part by Forest Service but residency component of program under review)

Boating Safety Program One deputy sheriff is assigned to the boating safety program on a full-time basis. This deputy sheriff is responsible for performing boating safety and enforcement programs as well as coordinating a number of other deputy sheriffs who participate in this program on a part-time basis. The deputy is further responsible for ensuring the maintenance and readiness of Sheriff's Office vessels and specialized vehicles including the mobile command and radio interoperability vehicle and the crime scene investigation equipment vehicle. This deputy sheriff is also frequently called upon to directly support the patrol mission and coordinates Sheriff's Office programs with the United States Department of Homeland Security Air and Marine Unit (1 deputy sheriff).

Crime Prevention Program One deputy sheriff is assigned responsibility for crime prevention activities. This includes organizing neighborhood watch

programs, crime prevention education and coordinating the Citizen's Sheriff's Academy. The deputy sheriff assigned to this program also coordinate WCSO responses to emerging crime and community problems (1 deputy sheriff).

Firearms Training With policy changes in the Bureau of Corrections and the addition of the Reserve Deputy Sheriff program, the number of persons authorized and required to carry firearms and non-lethal weapons has more than doubled in the past few years. It has become necessary to assign a deputy sheriff full-time, to the coordination of these programs and to organize special training programs, remedial training, etc. (1 deputy sheriff).

Complaint Desk One deputy sheriff is assigned to the complaint desk as the "station deputy" during business hours and investigates "walk in" complaints, telephonic complaints and complaints by appointment. He or she also provides backup support to the Courthouse security deputy sheriff. This program is staffed full-time, but deputies rotate through the position (1 deputy sheriff).

Courthouse Security One deputy sheriff is assigned to patrol the Courthouse during business hours, respond to emergencies and be present in "high-risk" proceedings. This program is staff full-time, but deputies rotate through the position (1 deputy sheriff).

Administrative Sergeant The administrative sergeant is responsible for all regular and specialized scheduling, ensuring the readiness of neighborhood field offices in fire stations and at the Cascade Business Park, supervising and supporting the complaint desk and courthouse security deputies and performing a variety of administrative and support functions that are essential to the operations of the organization (1 sergeant).

Uniformed Drug Enforcement and Criminal Interdiction Two uniformed deputy sheriffs are assigned to focus on locations and individuals suspected of involvement in clandestine methamphetamine laboratories and/or problems associated with illicit drug dealing in neighborhoods. These deputy sheriffs frequently are called upon to directly support the patrol mission. (2 deputy sheriffs).

Overview of Specialized Programs: Part-Time Assignments

Deputy sheriffs assigned to these programs perform their normal day to day duties but are also called upon to perform collateral assignments essential to the operations of the Sheriff's Office on a part-time basis. These assignments include:

Search and Rescue Deputies provide organizational support and direct operational control for search and rescue missions as well as for the approximately 400 volunteer members of the Search and Rescue Council. Most operations involve persons lost or injured in the wilderness but also include

searches for missing children and urban searches for missing persons with dementia related disorders. On average, 60 missions are completed a year and it is not uncommon for Sheriff's Office personnel to be totally consumed by missions lasting from 24 to 72 hours. Two deputy sheriffs and a sergeant staff this function as collateral assignment to their normal patrol responsibilities.

Special Response Team: The Special Response Team (SRT) is trained and equipped to rapidly respond to critical events such as those involving hostages, barricaded suspects, high-risk warrant service, active shooters and the arrest of criminals suspected of being armed and dangerous. One sergeant and 14 deputy sheriffs are assigned to this program as a collateral duty assignment and are activated on a call-out basis, when circumstances require their deployment.

Crisis Negotiations Team The Crisis Negotiations Team provides trained negotiators to respond to critical incidents, either in support of planned operations, or on a call-out basis and also in support of the SRT. Trained negotiators provide an essential component and strategy for resolving incidents without injury to the general public, hostages, deputies or suspects.

Various Training Programs Six sergeants and 8 deputy sheriffs are assigned collateral responsibilities for a number of Sheriff's Office training programs including:

- Firearms Training
- Driver and emergency vehicle operations training
- Defensive tactics training
- Use of force training
- Field training (new deputy sheriffs and reserves)
- In-service update training
- Domestic violence training
- Crime Scene Investigation
- Legal training
- Traffic training
- Personal Protective Equipment training
- Hazmat / WMD training
- First Aid / Pathogens / Biohazard training

Current Bureau of Law Enforcement Patrol Areas

Patrol Areas

Patrol deputy sheriffs are assigned to staff primary geographical patrol areas. Deputies are assigned to these geographical areas on the basis of availability. These assignments become the "beat plan" for the shift. The most common beat plans call for dividing the County into three to five geographical areas. These include variations based on the following four "Sam Areas":

Sam 1: Roughly: North, Canadian Border; South, Slater-King Tut Road, East: Guide Meridian; West, Saltwater; includes Point White Horn, Birch Bay, Blaine, Custer. Includes approximately 125 square miles.

Sam 2: Roughly: North, Canadian Border; South: Smith Road; East: Mount Baker Ski area and beyond; West: Guide Meridian. Includes Deming, Nugent's Corner, Lynden, Everson, Nooksack, Kendall, Glacier and all other small communities along the Mount Baker Highway. Includes approximately 330 square miles.

Sam 3: Roughly: North, Point Whitehorn/King Tut; South, Skagit County line; East, Guide Meridian to City Limits then I-5; West: Saltwater. Includes Lummi Island, Lummi Reservation, Chuckanut Drive; North Bellingham. Includes approximately 150 square miles.

Sam 4: Roughly: North, Mount Baker Highway/Smith Road; South, Skagit County Line; West, Guide-Meridian/I-5; East: as far east as roads south of the Mount Baker Highway reach; Includes Acme, Wickersham, Sudden Valley, areas around Lake Whatcom. Includes approximately 300 square miles.

Resident Deputy Areas

Whatcom County's 2177 square miles includes many remote and hard to access areas that require law enforcement services. Some are two or more hours driving distance from downtown Bellingham (Newhalem-Diablo to Hart's Pass). Others require an approximate 27-mile drive through Canada and achieving two Customs clearances. It is not economically practical to assign 24/7 area patrols to these geographical locations and law enforcement is generally performed by resident deputy sheriffs who live in these locations as described above, work varying hours and who are available to be called to duty in the event of an emergency.

Major Factors Affecting and Influencing BLEIS Capabilities

Jail Booking Restrictions

The jail was designed and staffed to hold 148 mixed custody inmates and routinely holds 280 or more maximum security inmates. As a means to control the jail population, booking restrictions were implemented over ten years ago that prevent law enforcement from booking individuals charged with misdemeanor offenses including theft, drunk driving, assault and other crimes affecting the safety and tranquility of the community. Even when defendants are booked for felonies, judges all too often must allow "early-release" because of crowded jail conditions. Frequently they go on to commit new crimes. When offenders do not

show up for court appearances, bench warrants are issued for their arrests. However deputies cannot serve these warrants because of booking restrictions and the offenders go on to commit new crimes without fear of being held accountable. Repeat offenders even taunt officers about this situation knowing they cannot be arrested or held accountable.

A phenomena involving persons specifically moving into our community to take advantage of what they perceive as a lax system of justice has been observed. Some former residents of rural Snohomish and Pierce counties candidly remark that they remain here, because of booking restrictions at the County Jail and our inability to arrest them for either local warrants or warrants from their counties of origin.

This is an intolerable situation that has a significant impact on crime, community safety and deputy availability. While short-range and long-range solutions are planned to rectify this situation, full relief is estimated to be 8 to ten years out.

Natural Barriers and Size of County

The physical size of Whatcom County and a number of geographical characteristics affect the ability of deputy sheriffs to respond to emergencies. Travel time associated with other law enforcement functions are also impacted by these factors.

Whatcom County is 2177 square miles in size. Unincorporated Whatcom County contains 2121 square miles and is more than 36 times the size of all the incorporated cities combined. Even the Sheriff's Office smallest patrol area is more than twice as large as the size of all of the incorporated cities combined.

Topography and road conditions in these areas affect the ability of deputies to respond swiftly to critical incidents and emergencies. Barriers such as rivers, mountains, limited routes and increased traffic on the roadways due to growth, all impact area response and travel time.

Population

The Sheriff's Office provides direct law enforcement services to the 79,846 residents who live in unincorporated Whatcom County and provides additional law enforcement services to all 180,205 residents of Whatcom County. The population of the unincorporated area of the County is greater than any one its cities. Residential growth in the unincorporated area has been phenomenal and the Department of Planning and Building Services projects dramatic population increases in Birch Bay, Kendall, Sudden Valley and the areas surrounding Lake Whatcom. Projects involving over 1300 new residences and additional commercial activities are planned for the urban growth areas.

Although the majority of individuals migrating to our community from other parts of the state and nation do not constitute a menace to public safety, they do contact the Sheriff's Office for a variety of reasons. Often coming from municipalities with a high ratio of officers to residents, they have a very high expectation as to law enforcement response times and services. This increased population also impacts traffic and traffic enforcement needs.

Homeland Security and Critical Infrastructure

Unlike some similarly sized Washington counties, the WCSO is responsible for protecting and responding to incidents at a number of locations of heightened concern that include two major oil refineries, a marine port, an international airport, five land ports of entry, a system of fuel transport pipelines, liquefied fuel storage facilities, an international rails system and an international border.

In the event of heightened national security advisories, the WCSO is responsible for providing increased security around these facilities and should be enhancing its efforts even now. The consequences of an intentional, accidental or natural event at these facilities could be disastrous to our community and the WCSO must have sufficient forces to assist in the mitigation and recovery process.

International Border

Whatcom County shares a 115-mile border with Canada. The presence of the international border and five land border ports of entry create special challenges and workloads for the Sheriff's Office.

Over the past five years, the number of United States Border Patrol agents assigned to Whatcom County has grown from less than 60 to nearly 180. Last May a plan was revealed to increase that number of agents to 400. Similar rates of personnel increases have occurred at other federal law enforcement agencies with border responsibilities including Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection and the Customs and Air and Marine Unit.

Increased scrutiny by federal law enforcement at the ports of entry and at the border between the ports of entry has increased the volume of incidents handled by the WCSO. Enhanced scrutiny resulting from technology initiatives and increased staffing has resulted in corresponding increases in the detection of criminal activity.

The authority of federal officers to arrest for state crimes is very limited and violations of state law are more often than not, turned over to the Sheriff's Office for investigation and arrest. Even when there is overlapping federal jurisdiction, the United States Attorney often declines prosecution and the Sheriff's Office assumes responsibility for taking over investigations and arresting offenders.

The Sheriff’s Office arrests nearly all fugitives detected at the border crossings and handles a myriad of cases from around the country that include stolen vehicles, large-scale fraud, stolen property, child pornography, kidnappings, murder and other crimes. Deputies arrest on average, 150 out-of-state fugitives at the border every year. A recent highly publicized vehicle pursuit and the capture of two aggravated murder suspects from California at the border highlight the issue.

“Border Bounce Backs” affect local law enforcement issues in Whatcom County. A 2005 report indicated that Customs Canada refuses admission to an average of 600 persons per month who seek admission to Canada or to travel through Canada to reach Alaska. The main reasons for these refusals are indigency, obvious signs of mental illness and criminal convictions. Although most of these offenders do not remain in our county for extended periods of time, some do and cause very serious problems.

This issue was highlighted when a convicted sex offender from Colorado was denied entry into Canada and just days later, viciously murdered a woman in a city park. In another instance, a convicted felon denied entry into Canada stabbed a man to death in a local shopping center. This issue is expected to increase in severity as activity associated with preparation for the 2010 Olympics increases.

Crime Rates

Over the past five years, the WCSO has observed a 13% increase in both Part I and Part II crime. The latest count on crime may be higher than actually reported as some citizens indicate they do not report less serious events as they aware of the limited resources WCSO can devote to property crime investigations and the booking restrictions at the County Jail.

FBI Uniformed Crime Reporting (UCR)

Unincorporated Whatcom County

UCR Part One=8 major offenses

UCR Part Two=All other crimes

Year	Total Part I	Total Part II	Total I and II
2000	1901	4809	6710
2001	2004	4637	6640
2002	2181	5014	7195
2003	1989	4335	6324
2004	2059	4356	6415
2005	2147	5448	7595
	+13%	+13%	+13%

Public Satisfaction and Safety / Deputy Safety

Staffing levels sometimes directly affect deputy response times to critical incidents requiring a prompt and rapid response. Often calls must be held for

several hours before a deputy can be dispatched resulting in citizen dissatisfaction with service levels. When a deputy requests emergency assistance in the field, delays due to staffing levels endanger the deputy and the public and have the potential of requiring the deputy to escalate the amount of force needed to resolve a situation.

Calls for Service

Over the past five years, the Sheriff’s Office has experienced a 15% increase in the volume of calls for service.

Calls for Service

Year	Service Calls
2000	24,411
2001	24,468
2002	26,930
2003	27,210
2004	27,528
2005	28,003
	+15%

Methamphetamine and Other Drugs

Over the past decade, Whatcom County has experienced phenomenal growth in methamphetamine abuse, production and distribution. This growth has resulted in a prolific increase in property crime, violent crime and child abuse/neglect cases. The Sheriff’s Office has also responded to crime and crime related problems involving opiates, cocaine and other drugs.

Clandestine Laboratories 2001-2005

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
2	12	38	28	13

- Methamphetamine Association with Crime

The frequency with which deputies reference a report with the word “methamphetamine” can indicate trends and a rough summary of the frequency with which deputies encounter methamphetamine related problems. The following anecdotal evidence shows a 1073% increase in these references from 2000-2004.

2000	2002	2004
19	107	223
	463% increase from 2000	1073% increase from 2000

- Continued Sources of Methamphetamine

While the number of laboratories in Whatcom County peaked in 2003 and has fallen in subsequent years, the WCSO have observed an increase in the incidence of methamphetamine abuse and related crimes. The clandestine laboratories detected are often larger in terms of production capacity and in the complexity of the organizations that operate them. The NWRDTF disrupted a major methamphetamine production facility operating in two upscale neighborhoods that was responsible for distributing methamphetamine nationwide. Another long-term investigation into the role of organized crime and local methamphetamine distribution led to the arrests and convictions of the leadership of an outlaw motorcycle gang with notorious involvement in racketeering, violence and the distribution of methamphetamine.

A partial shift in the methamphetamine distribution paradigm shows an increase in the availability of methamphetamine manufactured in “super-labs” in Mexico that is shipped to our community through traditional drug trafficking networks. This phenomenon has been well documented through a variety of credible intelligence reports and confirmed through investigation. The NWRDTF recently disrupted one such organization that was involved in trafficking in methamphetamine produced in Mexico to a Lynden area warehouse.

During the early 2000s when Pierce and Snohomish County were waging aggressive enforcement efforts against methamphetamine manufacturing, we witnessed a number of methamphetamine producers and users migrate to Whatcom County from these areas. As our enforcement efforts have increased, we have received intelligence indicating that some appreciable level of methamphetamine is now being produced in smaller rural counties and shipped back into our community.

- Property Crime Linked to Methamphetamine

Three property crime offenses traditionally linked with methamphetamine are burglary, felonious possession of stolen property and identity theft. A review of bookings in the Whatcom County Jail show a sharp increase in persons arrested for these offenses that correlates to the emergence of the methamphetamine problem in our community. The volume of arrests continues to rise despite the fact that increased work loads have decreased the Sheriff’s Office ability to fully investigate all property crime.

Jail Bookings

	1995	2000	2005	10 Year Increase
Burglary	135	211	309	129%
Stolen Property	49	127	272	455%
Identity Theft	*	4	75	1775%

- 2005 Property Crime-Meth Connection Study

In 2005, the Whatcom County Sheriff's Crime Analysis Unit analyzed the cases of 158 individuals arrested by sheriff's deputies in 2004 for burglary and theft. The study revealed that 101, or 64% of these persons had been arrested for drugs or were linked through analysis, to methamphetamine issues.

- Child Abuse and Methamphetamine

Although the WCSO does not capture information demonstrating the frequency with which methamphetamine is a factor in child neglect and abuse cases, all too frequently children are found living in methamphetamine labs or are being parented by dysfunctional or semi-functional methamphetamine abusers. Not only are these children exposed to the harmful health safety issues that surround this drug, but they also are put at risk by the associated violence. Our child abuse detectives estimate that about sixty percent of child neglect cases involve parents with drug abuse issues. The State Attorney General reports that 70% of child removal proceedings initiated by his office involve children living with a methamphetamine-addicted parent.

- Violent Crime and Methamphetamine

Empirical evidence suggests that a number of persons arrested for violent crime, including domestic violence related offenses, are methamphetamine abusers. We are also finding that methamphetamine abusers are more frequently becoming the victims of crime.

In late 2004 during the course of a robbery, a methamphetamine abuser attempted to shoot his victim in a crowded city park. This individual was an eight time convicted felon who was just released from jail on low bail on charges of being a felon in possession of a firearm, burglary and assaulting an injuring a deputy. During the course of trying to bring him back into custody, he tried to run over a deputy sheriff with his vehicle and opened fire on a deputy and a federal agent. The suspect was shot by law enforcement and post-arrest medical bills are anticipated to exceed \$125,000. This case provides anecdotal evidence on the dangers and cost of early jail releases and the impact of methamphetamine.

- Organized Criminal Activity and Gangs

In 2005, the leadership of a major international criminal organization headquartered in Whatcom County were indicted and subsequently plead

guilty to a variety of federal charges including racketeering, VICAR, methamphetamine trafficking and firearms violations. Information revealed during the course of that investigation showed a shocking level of organized crime and racketeering in our community. With our proximity to the international border, other career criminals will seek to fill any void in the lucrative world of organized crime.

Deputies also report a significant increase in the presence of other forms of gang activity associated with national street and ethnic gangs and the presence of the leadership of a white supremacy group. A gang member who shot and killed a police officer in King County was found to have taken refuge with his associates in Whatcom County. If control is lost in this area, it will be very difficult to reassert and our quality of life will dramatically diminish.

- Mental Health Issues

Reductions in a number of programs serving persons with some specific mental health issues has resulted in an increase in these untreated persons committing crime and being dealt with in the criminal justice system rather than the mental health system. While a project proposed for Whatcom County to deal with this problem may be a model for the state, the fact remains that current conditions increased demands for service by the WCSO.

Sheriff’s Office Staffing Levels Compared with Other Comparable Washington Counties

The County Council Finance Committee inquired as how deputy sheriff staffing in Whatcom County compared with similar counties in Washington. Whatcom County uses the counties contained in the below chart as “comparables” with Whatcom for a variety of purposes.

Comparison of Number of Commissioned Deputies With County’s Established List of “Comparable Counties”

County	Unincorporated Population	Commissioned Deputy Sheriffs	Ratio of Deputies per 1000 population
Benton County	38645	56	1.45
Cowlitz County	40000	41	1.03
Kitsap County	164960	119	.72
Skagit County	48805	55	1.13
Thurston County	122265	84	.69
Whatcom County	79848	71	.88
Yakima County	89705	70	.83

None of these comparable counties deal with the volume of state criminal cases initiated by federal law enforcement, homeland security concerns or border related issues that anywhere approach the levels that exist in Whatcom County.

A comparison was also made with municipalities in Whatcom County demonstrating that although the Sheriff’s Office covers an area approximately 40 times as large as all cities combined, in has only one-third the deputies per population as the combined average “officer per citizen ratio” of the cities.

**Comparison of Number of Law Enforcement Officers With
Municipalities within Whatcom County**

Whatcom County Law Enforcement Agency	Population Served	Commissioned Officers	Ratio of Officers to 1000 Population	Square Miles (rounded off)	Officers per square mile
Bellingham	71080	109	1.54	34	3.12
Blaine	4115	12	2.91	8	1.50
Everson-Nooksack	2965	6	2.03	2	3.00
Ferndale	9305	17	1.92	6	3.52
Lynden	10010	14	1.39	5	3.56
Sumas	1079	6	5.56	1	6.00
Unincorporated Whatcom County	79848	71	.88	2121 (unincorporated)	0.29

The Finance Committee requested information on deputy sheriff deployment:

BLEIS Deputy Sheriff Assignments

Command	3 (1 chief and 2 lieutenants)
Area Patrol Deputies	38 (including 6 sergeants)
Resident Deputies	5
Specialized Assignments	25
	Total: 71

The Finance Committee requested information on deputy sheriff “actual available time for patrol” with hours assigned. Actual availability is governed by a number of factors including law, collective bargaining agreements and the need to meet training requirements. An internal “time loss” study was conducted in 2003 and revealed that deputies were available on average of 1712 hours per year for duties operational duties related to emergency response and law enforcement.

2003 Patrol Deputy Time Loss Study

Hours Compensated	2080
Average Vacation Time	220
Average Sick/Family Medical Leave Act	45
Compensatory Time (earned lieu of overtime)	55
Training	40
Miscellaneous (bereavement, other contract use)	8
Total of Time Off	368
Time Available for Operational Duties	1712

Protecting the Community – Providing Minimally Adequate BLEIS Service Levels

The number of BLEIS commissioned deputies is inadequate to address current and emerging community safety needs. In 2000 the County commissioned consultants Alvin Cohn and Stuart Readio to conduct an intensive examination of the county's law and justice system. This included a review and a series of recommendations regarding the law enforcement functions at the WCSO. The work of Cohn-Readio served as the foundation for the 2000 Whatcom County Comprehensive Law and Justice Planning Project report.

It should be noted that the 2000 report was approved:

- Prior to the post 9-11 world of increased border issues and homeland security requirements;
- Prior to the onslaught of a methamphetamine epidemic and its impact on property and violent crime;
- Prior to the current decreased availability of jail space that leaves more offenders on the street and unaccountable for their crimes;
- Prior to the population growth in the County that has occurred since 2000 and the emergence of additional densely populated neighborhoods within the unincorporated area.

The report nonetheless noted:

*An examination of the calls for service as related to staffing levels **clearly reveals that the Sheriff's Department is grossly understaffed.** This not only presents administrative problems in terms of duty rosters, it reduces community safety that results further in increased fear of crime. Citizens want to believe that their law enforcement agencies are responsive to their needs and this cannot be accomplished without appropriate staffing levels.*

The report went on to recommend that the Sheriff's Office meet "*the national norm of 12 commissioned officers per 10,000 population.*" *Based on population standards at the time of the report, it was recommended that the Sheriff's Office be staffed with 98 commissioned deputies and that to meet that standard, ten deputies be hired per year for the three years following the report.*" Cohn-Readio also recommended authorizing an additional deputy sheriff position to serve as an investigator in the Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

The recommendations of the report were not fully implemented. During the time period from 2000 through 2003, only 8 additional deputy sheriffs were authorized. Since 2004, 4 deputies have been added. One of these positions is assigned to a newly created courthouse security function, and is not available in the field to respond to law enforcement issues. An investigator position for the Prosecuting Attorney's Office was not authorized and investigative services for the Prosecutor are filled with existing Sheriff's Office personnel. Additionally, as referenced above, an existing deputy sheriff position was assigned full-time to training issues leaving one less position in the field.

Applying the Cohn-Readio standard of 12 deputy sheriffs per 10,000 population, the Sheriff's Office should field a force of at least 96 deputy sheriffs. Currently there are a total of 71 deputy sheriffs assigned to the BLEIS (including supervisory and command level positions). If commissioned personnel assigned to the NWRDTF are factored into the total, the WCSO has a force of 74 deputy sheriff positions. At best, the Sheriff's Office is 24 deputy sheriffs short of the standard recommended by the Whatcom County Comprehensive Law and Justice Planning Project and Cohn-Readio reports over six years ago.

Impact of Additional BLEIS Resources on Other Service Needs of the Law and Justice System

It has been repeatedly argued that increased law enforcement resources will result in an increased number of arrests and corresponding resource needs in other parts of the law and justice system. While it is fair to anticipate some spike in arrests following an infusion of sorely needed resources into the BLEIS, the primary focus of additional law enforcement resources must be centered on proactive efforts directed towards preventing crime from occurring and reducing the increase in needs within other segments of the justice system. Consistent with resource limitations, the Sheriff's Office has implemented variations of "problem-oriented policing" and "community-policing" programs that have been very successful in reducing the incidence of crime, a sense of security and a high-degree of community satisfaction.

Law enforcement officers are the "gate-keepers" of the law and justice system and can and should use resources wisely to prevent crime. Any deputy sheriffs positions added to the organization must be therefore be focused on some core strategies aimed at preventing crime and disorder:

- Target Repeat and Habitual Criminals Deputy sheriffs constantly see the same small group of individuals committing crimes over and over again. National studies and empirical local research indicates that a very small number of offenders are responsible for the majority of crime. It is estimated that in Whatcom County, 10-15% of arrested persons are responsible for 80% of the crime. Additional resources will allow an increased focus on repeat and habitual criminals. Deputies will send a message to these offenders that their activities are closely monitored. These offenders will either cease involvement in crime, leave the area or have the solid cases built against them that will lead to long-term incarceration.
- Focus on handling “small problems” before they become serious problems. A sufficient number of deputies with an ability to provide a timely and coordinated response to emerging problems is the essence of community policing and will prevent minor crime and safety problems from becoming more serious. It will discourage minor and juvenile offenders from going on to commit more serious crimes. Early intervention with neighborhood drug dealing, disorderliness, thefts, domestic violence and other offenses can prevent these matters from increasing in severity. Similarly, a concerted effort on traffic offenses and DWI enforcement can reduce traffic collisions and save lives.
- Focus on Gangs and Criminals from Outside the Area. Other communities have been severely impacted by the presence of gangs and other forms of organized criminal activities. If the expensive of hiring additional deputies is thought to be too costly, one should examine the experience of California counties struggling to regain territory taken over by street gangs.

Implementation of Staffing Recommendations

Nearly seven years have passed since the release of the Cohn-Readio recommendations and the report of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Law and Justice Planning Project. The report was prophetic in its warning that conducting “business as usual” will result in:

- The public becoming more dissatisfied with system responsiveness, feeling of cynicism pervade public opinion and both the perceived and actual safety of the population is compromised;
- Offenders become more contemptuous of the justice system;
- Dangerous offenders are released prematurely;
- First time and youthful offenders are converted into more hardened criminals.

It is strongly recommended that steps be taken in the 2007-2008 budget to begin funding the BLEIS at very least, in accordance with the seven year old recommendations of the

Comprehensive Law and Justice Planning Project. This would involve a process of budgetary authority for 23 additional deputy sheriff positions.

Critical to the implementation of these strategies are the following assumptions:

The Size of Patrol Areas Must be Reduced The size of patrol areas must be reduced. Additional geographical patrol areas must be created to ensure an adequate ability to respond to emergencies and responsibly address emerging public safety issues on a 24-hour/7 day a week basis. To accomplish this, it is proposed that the number of staffed patrol areas be increased from four to seven.

The proposed geographic patrol areas would include:

- Birch Bay/Blaine – Generally, that area North of Aldergrove Road and West of Valley View Road and bounded by the international border.
- Ferndale/Custer north – Generally that area North of Aldergrove Road / Nooksack River, West of Valley View Road, East of Guide Meridian and bounded on the North by the international border.
- Ferndale South – Generally, that area South of Aldergrove Road West of Interstate 5 and North of the Bellingham City Limits, including Lummi Island.
- Central Bellingham North - Generally, that area North of the Bellingham City Limits, East of I-5 to Hannegan Road, and bounded on the North by the Nooksack River.
- Central Bellingham South – Generally, that area South and East of the Bellingham City Limits, bounded on the North by SR 542, on the East by Y Road and North Shore, and on the South by the County Line.
- Everson-Lynden – Generally, that area bounded on the West by Hannegan Road to Lynden, the Guide Meridian North to the international border, East to Sumas and South along SR 9 to SR542 and West to Y Road.
- Sumas-Kendall-Acme – Generally all that area East of Deming, including Sumas-Kendall, SR 542, Acme Valley and Foothills.

To fully accomplish this capacity, 18 additional deputy sheriff positions will need to be authorized.

Create Neighborhood Deputy Positions

Increased population and population density in urban growth areas have resulted in these neighborhoods taking on the characteristics of municipalities. Growth in Birch

Bay has been dramatic and is expected to continue. Similar growth patterns are projected for Kendall, Sudden Valley and the areas near Lake Whatcom.

From a funding standpoint, it is not practical at the present time to assign 24/7 staffing to these relatively small but densely populated areas. The Sheriff's Office has enjoyed a high level of success and wide community support for a neighborhood deputy program implemented in Kendall two years ago. This program should be replicated in other areas of the county.

Under this concept, a neighborhood deputy is assigned to select densely populated areas on a full-time basis. The deputy is expected to be intimately involved with the community and address community safety and law enforcement needs. The deputy conducts most follow up investigations on crimes reported in the area, knows who repeat criminals are and addresses traffic safety issues. To accomplish this, the deputy is afforded flexibility in his or her work schedule and results are measured by crime reporting and community feedback.

The neighborhood deputy generally works 40 hours a week and is not a substitute for the area patrols that must be available as crime deterrents and to respond to critical incidents and emergencies 24/7. Unlike the east county neighborhood deputy who is required to reside in county housing, these new positions will not require funds to establish full resident deputy programs.

It is proposed that two neighborhood deputy positions be created and staffed:

- Birch Bay including the areas of Birch Bay, Birch Bay Village, Semiahmoo Drive and new development in the area of Jackson Road. This position would also be responsible for increasing patrols and addressing issues related the fuel refineries and liquefied gas storage facilities.
- Sudden Valley to include Glenhaven and residential areas north of Lake Whatcom

Traffic Deputies

Residents and visitors to Whatcom County are more likely to be killed or injured in a traffic collision than by other criminal acts. The single largest category of complaint to reach the Sheriff's desk relate to demands by residents for increased traffic enforcement. The primary responsibility of traffic deputies is to address speeding complaints, dangerous and aggressive driving, target areas having a high incidence of crashes, target alcohol and drug impaired drivers, perform safety and compliance surveys, educational events and activities. They also respond to major incidents to provide support with specialized equipment for documenting scenes for both criminal and civil investigations. It is proposed that two deputy sheriff positions be added to the Traffic Unit.

Proactive Criminal Response Deputy

The crime analyst program has been a huge success in providing information to deputies and other law enforcement agencies regarding criminal activity in our community. This information allows for a better deployment of resources to attack problems as they emerge. With the presence of organized crime and the emergence of criminal gang activity in our community, it is necessary to take a more proactive response to monitoring these activities and taking law enforcement action to prevent major crimes from occurring.

The proactive criminal response deputy will work closely with crime analyst, criminal intelligence organizations and other law enforcement agencies to disrupt and deter organizations and career criminals involved in serious criminal activity. This deputy will also be responsible for tracking and apprehending fugitives that live in our community to exploit its proximity to the border. One deputy sheriff is requested to staff this position.

Improved Efficiencies

With the strong support and leadership of the Council and Executive's Office, the Sheriff's Office has worked to enhance public safety, community service and response times by implementing a number of programs designed to improve operational efficiency, effectiveness and service delivery. Several of these programs address specific recommendations of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Law and Justice Planning Project and Cohn-Readio report relating to satellite stations, technology and services. These included:

- Shift Change in Field Deputies no longer report to the Sheriff's Office in downtown Bellingham for the start and end of their shifts ensuring that there are no lapses in patrol coverage at shift change. To the extent possible, they begin and end shifts in the geographical areas in which they are assigned. Shift briefing and pass-down information is handled electronically. This change has resulted in a net gain of approximately 70-90 minutes per day per deputy.
- Overlap Shifts Following negotiations with the bargaining unit, adjustments have been made to the deputies work schedules to ensure overlapping coverage during peak demand hours.
- Central Office Patrol sergeants and traffic deputies have been re-assigned from downtown Bellingham to the more centrally located Cascade Business Park. Shift briefings, meetings and some training occur at this location, keeping deputies and supervisors more available for rapid responses. Trips to downtown Bellingham have been reduced.
- Fire District Partnerships Through partnerships with a number of fire districts, deputies can receive electronic shift briefings at several fire stations throughout

the county including Birch Bay, Sudden Valley, Britton Loop and Kendall. Deputies are assigned work space and computers at these locations where they can access county criminal justice data banks, interview witnesses/victims, maintain supplies, make telephone calls and reduce the need to leave their assigned areas to travel to downtown Bellingham.

- Crime Analysis A crime analyst provides deputies and other law enforcement agencies with information on criminal trends, repeat and dangerous offenders and other information vital to patrol. Often the crime analyst is able to link offenders to stolen property and other criminal activity and provides deputies with a wealth of leads that allows them to direct and prioritize patrol time in an efficient and effective manner.
- Special Response Team A highly trained special response team has been formed to rapidly deploy to calls involving hostages and those situations requiring the use of special weapons and tactics. The team members are also trained to rapidly deploy to situations such as “active shooters.”
- Volunteers in Policing A variety of volunteer programs and operations support patrol deputies in the field. A reserve deputy sheriff program provides for reserves to accompany deputies on patrol enhancing response capabilities and officer safety. The presence of reserves also reduces the number of times deputies are pulled from patrol areas to cover other deputies on dangerous calls. The total value of these programs for 2005, as calculated on national rates established by the Department of Justice, was \$301,090.
- Neighborhood Problem Oriented Policing Program This program involved the assignment of a resident deputy to a notoriously high crime area in the east County foothills. The result has been a sustained reduction in crime, an improved quality of life and wide public support.
- Technology Enhancements A number of technology enhancements have been implemented or are in the planning stage that will provide deputy sheriffs in the field with accurate and real time information to facilitate community safety, crime prevention and criminal investigations. These includes the “pawnshop/second hand dealer electronic reporting programs,” “mobile digital terminals,” and technology related to data integration and the “WENET project.”
- Special Deputy Program A special deputy program provides special peace officer commissions as “special deputy sheriffs” to a number of trained law enforcement professionals that provide mutual assistance to the Sheriff’s Office in a variety of matters. This program enhances the Sheriff’s Office response capabilities. Among the agencies participating are the U.S. National Forest Service, the U.S. National Park Service, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Nooksack Tribal Police and the Whatcom County Fire Marshal.

- Full Staffing It is extremely expensive to recruit, hire and train a new deputy sheriff. It may take 8 months or more until a new deputy can fully perform. Although law enforcement officers throughout western Washington are finding it difficult to recruit qualified officers to fill vacancies, the WCSO has been at full staff since January and in the past four years, has experienced only two deputy sheriff resignations (both on very good terms to pursue other goals). The WCSO has experienced success in hiring lateral level positions and drastically reduced the time it takes to put a deputy on the street. The WCSO has a list of qualified lateral officers who are waiting to join our organization. Other successes have occurred in providing a BLEIS career path for seasoned corrections deputies with outstanding work histories who want to transfer from the Jail.

CONCLUSION

While the Sheriff's Office has been able to take affirmative steps to make better use of available resources, delayed responses, the inability to adequately investigate property and nuisance crimes and other issues continue to be a source of community frustration. In April 2003, the editorial board of the Bellingham Herald published an "Opinion" editorial "*It's obvious we need more deputies*" that recognized some of the administrative changes the Sheriff's Office implemented to increase deputy availability and the assistance provided by citizens, but added "*only more bodies will really do the job...The community is clearly fed up with burglaries, vandalism and drug problems, and it should be...But citizens can only do so much. Administrative tinkering can only do so much. There comes a point when the County Council must fund more deputies-we reached it a while ago.*"

Public safety and crime issues require an increase in the number of deputy sheriffs assigned to the BELIS. While the staffing plan may seem resource intensive, in light of the 2000 Cohn-Readio Report/Whatcom County Comprehensive Law and Justice Planning Project recommendations and changed circumstances since that time, it is rather conservative. If the recommendations had been incrementally implemented over the seven-year period from 2000 through the 2007 budget year, staffing increases would have averaged by four deputies per year.

I look forward to working with the Executive's Office and with the County Council to develop a timetable for implementing this plan and for developing a strategy to ensure that law enforcement capabilities at the Sheriff's Office maintain the capacity to address growth and other issues affecting the delivery of law enforcement services.

