



The Sheriff's Report

Official newsletter for citizens served by the Pasco Sheriff's Office

December 2007

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From the Sheriff's desk

Law enforcement discipline tough issue

The Pasco Sheriff's Office is a rapidly growing agency committed to protecting and serving the citizens of our county. When I meet these dedicated men and women in uniform, I know they are among the best of what they do. Our agency now serves the sixth largest population in Florida and we do it for far less than any other agency our size.

My deputies, civilian employees, support staff and volunteers know I don't take this task lightly. I expect the best service for the citizens of Pasco. But with an agency of this size, more than 1,230 full and part time employees, there are bound be issues that will arise. You can help me ensure that the Pasco Sheriff's Office remains professional and courteous.

First of all, no Sheriff wants a "bad apple" in the ranks of his or her agency. By the same token, however, no administrator wants to see even an average employee or deputy railroaded by a false or unsubstantiated allegation.

Although law enforcement officers accused of a crime are treated in much the same way as any other person accused of a criminal act, the landscape changes when the investigation relates to internal discipline.

Law enforcement officers have, in most cases, the same protections as any other employee. But law enforcement officers also have special protections provided by the State of Florida through the Florida State Statutes when under internal investigation. These protections are commonly known as the "Police Officer's Bill of Rights" and are designed to protect deputies from overzealous internal investigators and administrators.

This law requires when doing an internal investigation we must, whenever possible, interview "all identifiable witnesses" prior to interviewing the accused law enforcement officer. The law enforcement officer then has the right to review all the evidence against him or her, including the statements made by witnesses, before answering any questions.

Pasco Deputies have an additional level of protection, by way of the Career Service Appeals Board (CSAB).

Whenever I discipline an employee that consists of more than two days suspension or a demotion of more than one rank, that employee has the right to appeal to the CSAB. The CSAB actually gets its authority from a county ordinance and is binding on the Sheriff. If the board finds that there was insufficient evidence to discipline the employee, they can reverse the discipline as they did only one time since I've been elected your Sheriff.

Also in 2003, the Florida Supreme Court allowed deputies to collectively bargain. Based on the Supreme Courts decision, deputies may be represented by a union with regard to working conditions. Now, if deputies elect to unionize and collectively

bargain, Sheriff's have to deal with them collectively, instead of one-on-one.

The Professional Standards Unit of the Pasco Sheriff's Office has a very difficult job. They must work diligently to protect the public against wrongdoing by our employees, while making sure they do not violate any of the rights granted by Federal, State and local law. They must also work hard to protect our employees against false accusations.

I believe that most of your experiences with my deputies and employees have been professional. But if you feel that you have not been treated with the utmost professionalism, I urge you to contact that employee's supervisor or if you feel the matter is more urgent, contact our Professional Standards Unit to look into any allegation. They can be reached by calling 1-800-854-2862, extension 3439.



**Bob White,
Sheriff**

"No law enforcement administrator wants a 'bad cop' in the ranks of his or her agency."

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- Child restraint law
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Florida's child restraint and safety belt law

From the Florida State Department of Transportation

Even though the availability of both child restraint and adult occupant protection systems have increased significantly in Florida since the Child Restraint Law was passed in 1982 and the Safety Belt Law in 1986, observational surveys indicate that usage remains below the national rate.

Florida's current safety belt law requires all front seat occupants to be restrained,



even if the vehicle is equipped with an air bag. The driver is held responsible for pas-

sengers under 18 years of age who are not buckled up. The law applies to all cars, pickup trucks and vans operated on Florida's roads. The penalty for violation is \$30 plus other legal assessments.

Children ages 6-17 must be belted when in either the front or rear seats of a vehicle. Traffic citations will be issued only if the car is stopped for another reason.

All 50 States and the District of Columbia have primary child restraint laws. Florida's law requires all children under six years of age to be properly restrained. Children through age three must be secured in a separate carrier or a vehicle manufacturer's integrated child safety seat, and for children four through five years of age a separate carrier, an integrated child safety seat,

or a safety belt must be used. The cost to a violator of the child restraint law is \$60 and three points on the driver's license.

Commonly asked questions

1. Can a passenger in a motor vehicle be ticketed for not wearing a safety belt?

Yes. All front seat occupants must buckle up, regardless of age. Passengers under the age of 18 must be belted in either the front or back seat of the vehicle. (FL Statute 316.614).

2. What is the fine for a safety belt violation?

Penalty for violation is \$30.00 plus other legal assessments.

3. Can a car seat be used on an airplane?

Most infant, convertible, and forward-facing seats are certified to be used on airplanes. Booster seats and travel vests are not. You should check the label on the seat and call the airline before you travel to be sure your seat meets current Federal Aviation Administration regulations.

4. What is Florida's Child Restraint Law?

All children 5 years of age or younger must be properly restrained no matter where they are sitting in the vehicle. Children through age 3 must be secured in a separate carrier or a vehicle manufacturer's integrated child safety seat. For children aged 4 through 5 years, a separate carrier, an integrated child safety seat, or a safety belt may be used. (FL Statute 316.613).

5. What is the fine for a child restraint violation?

Penalty for violation is \$60 and 3 points.

6. If the safety belt does not fit my child correctly should the shoulder belt be placed under the child's arm for a better fit?

Never put the shoulder belt under a child's arm or behind the back, as this increases the risk of severe injury in a crash. Use a booster seat to correctly position the lap and shoulder belts for children once they outgrow forward facing child safety seats at about 40 pounds and around 4 years old. Children from approximately 40-80 pounds and 4'9" should ride in a belt positioning booster seat.

7. When can my child face forward?

Infants must ride rear-facing until they are at least one year old and weigh 20 pounds or more. Rear-facing, the infant should be semi-upright at an angle or no more than 45 degrees. A forward-facing older child should ride sitting upright. Never place a child in a child safety seat in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with a passenger air bag.

8. What if my baby is over 20 pounds but is not 1 year old?

There are now several infant and convertible seats that can be used rear-facing at higher weights.

9. Which child restraint device is the safest for my child?

Child safety seats that meet current Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213 and are used according to the vehicle owner's manual and child restraint manufacturer's instructions.

10. How can I determine if my child safety seat has been recalled?

You can find out by calling the manufacturer of the Auto Safety Hotline at 888/DASH - 2 - DOT or visit the website <http://www.cpsc.gov>.

The Pasco Sheriff's Office, 8700 Citizen Drive, New Port Richey, FL 34654, is both state and nationally accredited in corrections and law enforcement operations. For questions or comments, please contact Public Information Officer, Doug Tobin, at 1-800-854-2862, extension 7732, or dtobin@pascosheriff.org

Direct deposit can reduce theft of funds

Washington, D.C. – (Oct. 23, 2007) – The popular image of a lottery or sweepstakes winner receiving a giant paper check is out-of-date, according to a new national poll. Three to one, Americans say if they hit the jackpot, they'd take the money by direct deposit, reflecting the country's growing familiarity with the safety and convenience of electronic banking.

Yet when it comes to their everyday payments, many Americans do not take the same precautions with their money, according to the poll, sponsored by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's *Go Direct*® campaign. Direct deposit eliminates check fraud and helps protect people against other financial crimes, but more than one in four Americans – including 12 million Social Security and other federal beneficiaries – still get their salary or other regular payments by paper check.

Treasury data show that nine out of 10 problems with Social Security payments are with paper checks, not direct deposit, so check recipients are significantly more likely to face unexpected delays in obtaining their money. Treas-

ury encourages senior citizens, people with disabilities and others receiving federal benefits to safeguard their money by signing up for direct deposit for free by calling (800) 333-1795 or visiting www.GoDirect.org.

Financial Crimes A Worry for Many Americans

Worries about financial crimes are widespread, according to the poll, with nearly half the respondents – 45 percent – saying they or someone they know have been a victim of identity theft. That compares to 40 percent in a similar poll a year ago.

Yet most respondents said signing up for direct deposit is an effective way to safeguard their finances. Two-thirds of the survey respondents (63 percent) said getting a paper check in the mail was risky in terms of loss or theft, compared with just one-fifth who said the same of direct deposit (19 percent). Respondents were also four times more likely to cite direct deposit as the best safeguard against identity theft than paper checks (72 percent vs. 17 percent).

In addition, the vast majority of

people who already use direct deposit said they have had a positive experience (96 percent). Most direct deposit users said that if forced to switch to paper checks, they would be concerned about financial crime and other problems, including identity theft (83 percent), loss or theft of their check (75 percent) or delays in receiving their payments (67 percent).

So why don't more people use direct deposit? Surprisingly, the lack of a bank account isn't the issue – nine out of 10 respondents in the latest poll said they have a checking or savings account. Many people say it simply isn't available to them. Forty percent of check recipients in the poll said their employers don't offer direct deposit – yet half of that group said they would choose it if they had the option.

Results are from a nationally representative telephone survey of 1,406 adults, ages 18 and over, conducted September 12 - September 17, 2007, by KRC Research. The margin of error for the overall study is +/- 2.6 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

Children in need get early Christmas

Safety Town – (Dec. 8, 2007) – Sheriff Bob White and his Community Policing Team hosted the 15th Annual 2007 Bicycle Rodeo on Saturday, December 8. The annual event is held at Safety Town and benefits Pasco county children.

The highlight of the Bike Rodeo occurred when Santa Claus arrived by patrol car and assisted the Sheriff in presenting the children with a brand new bicycle and helmet. This year, donations allowed the agency to give 55 Pasco County children bicycles and helmets.

The Pasco Sheriff's Office works closely with elementary school social

workers, Housing and Urban Development area managers and other social service agencies to find children who will benefit the most from the generosity of



Unidentified child rides his new bike from Santa.

sponsors and individuals who make the event a success each year.

Increte Systems, Publix, Pepsi, Rent-a-Center/Dade City, and Domino's pizza were key sponsors to this year's event.

Several other units from the Pasco Sheriff's Office were also on hand to give children safety demonstrations including K-9, motorcycle, mounted, Explorers Post 916. Refreshments were provided by the detention center.

Donations for the 2008 Bike Rodeo can be made by contacting the Pasco Sheriff's Office Community Policing Team at 727-834-3377.

Fleet shop gives taxpayers a good value

The Pasco Sheriff's Office's Fleet Section includes eleven personnel who are responsible for more than 700 vehicles. About 300 of these vehicles are the marked patrol cars that you see patrolling your neighborhoods and roads. The remaining number of vehicles includes unmarked cars for detectives, cars for civilian child abuse investigators, and special vehicles such as trucks for our agricultural unit and transport vans to move inmates from the detention center to court and other jail facilities.

Our deputies put an average of at least 20,000 miles a year on these vehicles in some of the hardest driving conditions. Our marked patrol cars receive a complete safety inspection every 5,000 miles (more if needed) that includes everything from engine maintenance to an inspection of the tires, brakes, windshield wipers, emergency lights, and fire extinguishers in the trunk.

There are nine mechanics in our Fleet section that are highly trained to do most repair work on the vehicles. Six of these mechanics have more than 25 years of experience. They provide engine and transmission repair and maintenance, front-end alignments, brakes and tire repair. Vehicle body damage and painting is contracted out due to costly environmental requirements.

"We want to have the best trained mechanics," said Fleet Manager Brian Reilly, who has been with the Sheriff's Office 22 years and a mechanic for 30 years. "Most of our mechanics are all

ASE-certified (Automotive Society of Excellence)." The Sheriff's Office will pay for certifications for up to eight different vehicle specializations. This specialization is needed due to the complexity of components in today's cars.

"Vehicles today have computers and electronics that require specific training in order to perform maintenance



on those parts," Reilly said. "The era of the 'shade tree' mechanic is over."

PSO fleet personnel install the emergency lights and sirens for the vehicles, the laptop computers that go in each car, the radio and its components, and the "cage" that separates arrested individuals in the back seat from the deputy in the front seat.

The Sheriff's Office also processes the registrations, tags and titles for all of its vehicles. In addition, our agency

has a duty to coordinate the impounding and forfeiture of vehicles that were used in crimes, abandoned, have liens placed on them, or that have evidentiary value. The PSO handles the processing of hundreds of such vehicles a year. Vehicles that are impounded because they were used in the commission of a crime may be retained by the agency, sold at auction, or sold back

to the owner. Vehicles that are "forfeited" may have to be retained for years because they may be evidence that will be examined at trial. Often PSO mechanics are subpoenaed because they towed these vehicles and are part of the chain of custody that can be questioned by defense attorneys.

The PSO Fleet section also is tasked with the inspection of all civilian wrecker services that impound vehicles in the county. This includes inspecting tow trucks and the storage facilities where impounded vehicles are housed, and reviewing background checks on

the wrecker business owners and the drivers that work for them. Any wrecker service that moves vehicles involved in traffic accidents, DUI arrests, etc., must pass these multiple inspections before it is authorized and allowed to move vehicles on behalf of the Sheriff's Office.

As outlined above, the Pasco Sheriff's Office Fleet unit is a busy and extremely efficient part of the agency that keeps our personnel mobile so that they can perform their duties.