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# **BRACKEN COUNTY**

## **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**Howard W. Niemeier, Sheriff**

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### **CORONAVIRUS CHANGES TO SHERIFF OFFICE OPERATIONS**

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March 20, 2020

Due to the Coronavirus issues that our nation is facing it is critical that the Sheriff's Office takes unusual steps to protect our personnel so that they are available at all times. The purpose of this memo is to outline considerations with respect to law enforcement operations during this ongoing state of emergency. Law enforcement, like healthcare is going to be an essential function during the current state of emergency. As with other emergencies and natural disasters consideration has to be given to how law enforcement will function during the emergency. In order to maintain a high level of public safety it is essential that law enforcement consider how operations will impact close contact spread of Covid19 and what steps law enforcement can consider to aid in controlling the virus. The following steps will be taken by the Bracken County Sheriff Office:

- Sheriff's Office will limit law enforcement operations to those calls of a serious nature where there is an immediate need for investigation i.e. murder, rape, robbery, arson, kidnapping or where there is a threat of injury to a person i.e. domestic assault, assault in progress, murder, rape, robbery, arson, kidnapping etc. Note this is not meant to be an exhaustive list but should convey the idea that if no person is in danger than law enforcement should not respond and expose officers.
- Sheriff's Office will handle calls where no one is in danger telephonically or through email. Reports of thefts, property damage, and even minor vehicle accidents can be taken over the telephone. All reports that can be taken by telephone or through email will be completed by the deputies utilizing these technologies to avoid contact with citizens and potential contact with the coronavirus.
- On every person to person contact deputies are potentially exposed to persons who are contagious. In every traffic stop, every pedestrian stop, and any other contact, the deputy will be in close proximity to the subject and may be handling items, i.e. license and registration that the subject just handled. As such, deputies can become exposed and be placed under a 14-day quarantine or worse. In such events the overall numbers of public safety personnel available will thereby be diminished leaving not enough deputies available to handle serious public safety events. I would note that common practices in natural disasters, deputies are placed in a fixed-position and do not respond

to most calls for service during the heightened phase of the storm. Our current storm is Covid19 and a similar approach makes sense.

- Deputies will be directed to maintain safe distances during interviews and other contacts with victims, witnesses, suspects, or any citizen with whom they have contact.
- Every arrest has the potential to expose a deputy who will be in close contact with the individual during searching and handcuffing, as well as transport and booking. When deputies become exposed or ill due to exposure they will not be available to handle urgent public safety matters. Thus, deputies should use extreme caution and take all precautions necessary when dealing with these situations.
- Every contact that law enforcement has with any member of the public has the potential for exposure to Covid19. In much the same way that the healthcare profession may be overburdened by a spike in patients, public safety will be dramatically impacted by a spike in exposed officers who are forced into quarantine. As with weather related disasters where law enforcement activities are limited during the height of the storm, law enforcement will be utilizing these same principles during this health related emergency.
- Where charging with a crime is necessary, consideration will be given to citing and releasing the individual rather than taking the subject to a lockup facility.
- Deputies will also take the following transportation protections. Due to the responsibility law enforcement has to the health and safety of arrestees, it must be recognized that vehicles must be disinfected after the transport of a prisoner so that the next arrestee will not be exposed. Thus, limiting the number of transports by discouraging non-essential arrests reduces the number of exposures.

These precautions are not meant to discourage citizens from calling for assistance when they need it but strictly for the protections of our personnel, their families and other citizens that the deputies comes in contact with. It is our hope that these trying times will quickly resolve themselves, but in the meantime our deputies will be following these guidelines until further notice. [bcso@maysvilleky.net](mailto:bcso@maysvilleky.net) office phone: 606-735-3233 dispatch: 606-735-2700.

Thank You,

Sheriff Howard W. Niemeier