

# WISE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT 2015



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## Message from the Sheriff

Dear Citizen,

The Wise County Sheriff's office is committed to providing quality services for all citizens. Our office has established the highest performance standards and expectations from which there can be no deviation. The employees of the Wise County Sheriff's Office are aware of the important responsibilities and duties they have as public servants. It is important that the citizens of the County of Wise and the City of Norton have complete confidence in their sheriff's office. Should we fail to meet your expectations in any manner, I want to hear about it. We welcome and appreciate your feedback.

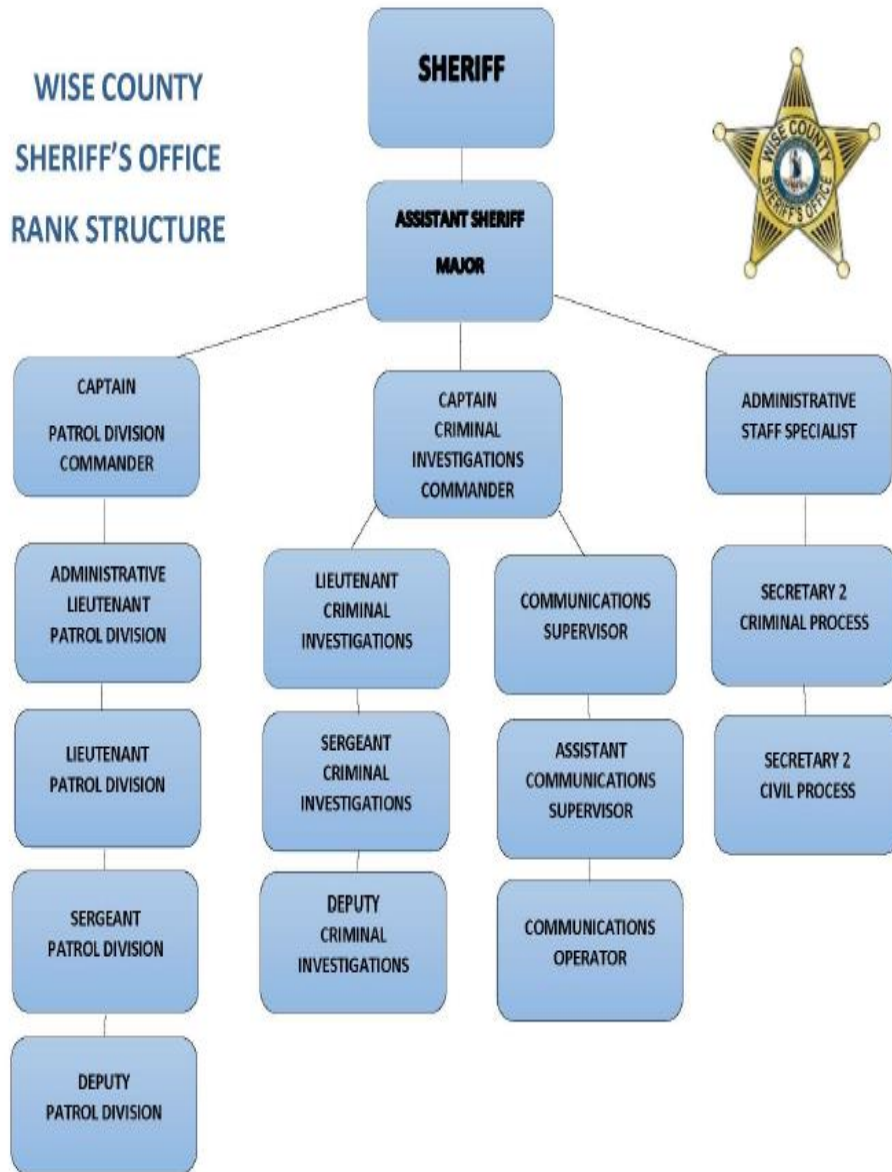
Sincerely,

R.D. Oakes  
Sheriff

**The Wise County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement:**

**“Committed  
to  
Excellence”**

# Rank Structure





## **Accreditation**

In 2002, the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC) accredited the Wise County Sheriff's Office. This agency governs law enforcement accreditation in the State of Virginia.

Accreditation recognizes the Wise County Sheriff's Office as exemplifying the best in current law enforcement practices.

### **2006 (First Re-accreditation)**

On April 26, 2006 representatives from VLEPSC met with members of the Sheriff's Office to observe agency components, equipment, and programs; a standard's folder review, and a thorough inspection of the agency's equipment and organization. The team completed its assessment in well under the normal time period and gave the department high praise. Sheriff Oakes, Major Vanover, and Sgt. Meade attended the annual VLAEC Conference where Sheriff Oakes was presented with the Certificate of Re-accreditation.

### **2010 (Second Re-accreditation)**

A VLEPSC assessment team visited the Wise County Sheriff's Office on April 27-29 to thoroughly review Sheriff's Office procedures to determine compliance with program standards, which included Administration, Operations, Personnel, and Training. The team unanimously recommended the Sheriff's Office be re-accredited at the VLEPSC Board meeting in May. A Certificate of Re-accreditation was presented to Sheriff Oakes.

## **2014 (Third Re-accreditation)**

A VLEPSC assessment team visited the Wise County Sheriff's Office in May to thoroughly review Sheriff's Office procedures to determine compliance with program standards, which included Administration, Operations, Personnel, and Training. The team unanimously recommended the Sheriff's Office be re-accredited at the VLEPSC Board meeting in July. A Certificate of Re-accreditation was presented to Sheriff Oakes.

## **PATROL DIVISION**

The patrol division of the sheriff's office provides the front line of law enforcement services to the citizens of Wise County and the City of Norton. The patrol division consists of four platoons providing services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In addition, the patrol division is responsible for responding to calls for service, conducting preliminary criminal investigations, responding to emergencies, enforcing traffic laws, and investigating accidents.

Other duties of the patrol division:

- Escorts for charity events: walk-a-thons, hike-a-thons, etc...
- Funeral escorts
- Speaking arrangements for school career days
- Assist Fire and Rescue at emergency scenes/Hazmat/Disaster/Severe Weather
- Search and rescue for lost/missing person(s)
- Assist Crime Prevention Unit with presentations/demonstrations
- Transport of mentally ill to other counties
- Transport inmates to and from court
- Unlock vehicles

The patrol division provides law enforcement and peace keeping services to over 412 square miles in Wise County and the City of Norton and a population of 45,426. Our patrol deputies conduct follow-up interviews, with victims and witnesses, bringing investigations to a conclusion, which plays a very active part in law enforcement.

The sheriff's office and its' patrol division's main purpose is to serve the public while protecting and defending lives and property. The department is also dedicated to the prevention and repression of criminal and delinquent

behavior, identification, apprehension of and conviction of offenders, traffic flow and collision reduction, and the maintenance of order and public peace.

The following information is intended to provide a brief overview of some of the more notable statistics and occurrences during 2015.

Calls for Service – 19,590  
Criminal Warrants Served – 2,434  
Mental Patient Transports – 98  
Emergency Custody Orders - 58  
Juvenile Transports – 97  
Summons Issued – 773  
Reportable Motor Vehicle Accidents – 84  
DUI Charges – 72  
Out of State Extraditions – 64  
In State Transports - 35

The patrol division consists of several units including:

**Sheriff's Response Team:** The Wise County Sheriff's Office Sheriff's Response Team is a unit of specially selected, trained and equipped personnel to contain, stabilize and/or conclude situations including, but not limited to, armed and barricaded criminal or demented persons, hostage cases, high risk search warrants, sniper incidents, and any known or threatened ambush attacks with the ultimate goal to protect the lives of citizens and resolve the special situation task. The team was formed in 1994, and has made several advancements in training and equipment under the guidance of Sheriff Ronnie Oakes during its 22 year existence.

SRT trains on a monthly basis and was activated a total of fifteen times in 2015. These activations ranged from high risk arrest warrant service and execution of high risk search warrants.

**Canine:** This function is responsible for answering calls for service and enforcement as requested as well as providing back-up assistance, building searches, tracking/locating persons, and school searches when requested.

The K-9 teams are a critical part of this agency's work. They have a long history in this office going back 20 years with the arrival of K-9 Bau in 1996. Since then, our units have grown in numbers, skill and professionalism. Today they are valued more than ever and play a key role in building goodwill for WCSO in the local community. Through constant appearances in parades, fairs, and other community events, these teams create a



connection with people and particularly with children that is absolutely unique.

The teams consist of Canine Handler Sgt. Ryan Vanover and K-9 Jeckyll; and Canine Handler Deputy Garth Nicely and K9 Dixie.

School Resource/D.A.R.E.: This function conducts the school resource and D.A.R.E. programs in the Wise County Public School system.

The Wise County Sheriff's Office currently has seven deputies assigned to schools. They are supervised by Sgt. Steve Jones. There are currently four SROs certified as D.A.R.E. instructors, and they have taught the program to well over 400 students in 2015.

Civil Process: This function receives, processes, and serves all legal documents requiring sheriff's service. They include summons, subpoenas, writs, levies, warrants in debt, and other legal notices as disseminated by the courts.

The sheriff serves as the enforcement officer of the courts and legal community regarding civil matters. Within the Sheriff's Office, civil process servers execute and serve various legal processes issued by the non-criminal courts of the state and its subdivisions, as well as the legal community and the general public. The purpose of civil process is to give a defendant notice That a legal action or a proceeding is going to commence. Specific civil processes include income executions, property executions, evictions, orders of attachment (seizures of property which may be used to satisfy a judgment); orders of seizure (seizures of items of personal property whose ownership and possession is disputed); and civil arrests. In each case, papers must be delivered in person to the defendant.

Below is a summary of the performance of the civil process servers during 2015:

Subpoenas Received - 6,136  
Jury Summons Received - 714  
Levies Received - 87  
DMV Notices Received - 95  
Other Civil Process Received - 17,842  
Total Civil Papers Received - 24,874  
Total Civil Process Served - 21,121

Domestic Violence: This function receives, processes, and provides seventy-two hour follow up on all domestic violence cases.

The Domestic Violence Program for Wise County was established in January 1999, when Sheriff R.D. Oakes applied for and was awarded a grant through the Department of Criminal Justice Services. This program provides follow-ups to the citizens of Wise County and the city of Norton who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. The domestic violence officer conducts follow-ups, which require them to re-contact the victim and provide them with information on the resources that are available to them, such as, the Hope House, counseling centers, victim/witness program, and hotline numbers. They answer any questions the victim may have regarding referrals and the service we provide. The Wise County Sheriff's Office also has a cellular phone program whereby we issue recycled cellular phones to victims so they can call 911 should their abuser continue to harass or harm them.

The Wise County Sheriff's Office responded to 302 domestic disturbance calls in 2015.

## **COURT SECURITY**

The court security staff is responsible for maintaining order and proper decorum in all courts. Our court security staff is also responsible for assisting the public. The Wise County Courthouse went through a major security upgrade during 2014, to include secured doors, alarm systems, camera systems, and a central check-in and screening area for all visitors to the courthouse. In 2015 there were 99,306 visitors that came through this screening area before entering the courthouse.

In 2015 Court Security was responsible for the following courts and judges:

### Circuit Court

Circuit Court Days - 448

Average Number Circuit Court Judges - 2

### General District Court

General District Court Days - 241

Average Number General District Court Judges - 2

### Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court

Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Days - 201

Average Number Juvenile and Domestic Relations Judges - 2

## **COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING**

The sheriff's office promotes safety and crime protection through community involvement and targeted campaigns, which benefit and educate citizens. The sheriff's office is also proud to participate in festivals, parades and community days. Below are a few of our programs.

Project Lifesaver - Project Lifesaver is an innovative and rapidly growing program aiding the victims and families suffering Alzheimer's Disease and related disorders such as Down's Syndrome and Autism. Project Lifesaver uses state-of-the-art technology employing wristband transmitters to locate wandering and lost adults and children.

Good Morning Wise County Program – This is a program where a volunteer assists the Sheriff's Office in contacting senior citizens, who have enrolled in the program, and checks on their welfare. It creates a mechanism to provide family members peace of mind knowing the Sheriff's Office is checking on their loved one.

Neighborhood Watch Program – This is a program that brings community members together that are devoted to crime prevention. Meetings are conducted that are led by the crime prevention officer. Community members can express concerns and report any suspicious activity, as well as receive updates on crime occurring in the area.

## **TRAINING & GRANTS**

The Wise County Sheriff's Office currently has 22 instructors certified through the Department of Criminal Justice Services and are responsible for teaching academy curriculum. In addition to teaching at the academy instructors conduct in-house training at the sheriff's office. Many are certified in more than one specialty. Their certifications are as follows:

General Instructors – 22  
Firearms – 10  
Defensive Tactics – 4  
Driver Training – 3  
Standardized Field Sobriety Testing – 1  
ASP Baton – 3  
Less Lethal Devices – 2  
Taser – 5  
VCIN – 1  
CPR/First Aid – 3

Active Shooter – 4  
Active Shooter (Woodland) - 3

In 2015, sheriff's personnel received 5,537 hours of training.

The Wise County Sheriff's Office actively seeks grant funding to improve the capabilities of this office, without placing an additional financial burden on the tax payers of Wise County. During 2015 the sheriff's office received a total of \$308,804.14 in grant funding. Grant funds of \$141,500 covered the costs of three additional positions, two school resource officers and one domestic violence officer. Equipment with a value of \$137,304.14 was funded, along with \$15,000 that was allocated for overtime pay. Grant funds in the amount of \$15,000 were awarded that were used to implement a new Synthetic Drug Education Outreach program. This grant funded program has provided educational materials to be handed out in schools, neighborhood watch meetings, and community outreach events to help combat the growing synthetic drug problem Wise County faces.

## **COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION**

The communications division provides a central location for the public and all emergency services to report and receive emergency assistance. This is achieved primarily through the use of the emergency phone number 911, however, they also answer four administrative phone lines. The call volume for all lines averages to over 12,500 calls per month. This volume includes more than 25% of cellular phone calls. From the communications center we dispatch assistance to the public from the following agencies: the Sheriff's Office, police departments, rescue and fire for the towns of Appalachia, Big Stone Gap, Coeburn, Pound, St. Paul, and Wise. We also dispatch for other entities including the University of Virginia's College at Wise Campus Police Department, Animal Control Wardens, Litter Wardens, Social Services, Court Service Units, the Conservation Police (Game Warden), and the Federal and State Forestry Officers.

In addition to providing a basic communications service, the dispatch center is able to provide officers and others with mapping, blueprints, and other information critical to successfully managing an emergency situation.

Each dispatcher is trained and certified through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. This certification includes access to the VCIN/NCIC files for information regarding histories, stolen guns, articles, boats, and motor vehicles. Another required certification is Emergency Medical Dispatch through the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch. This certification provides dispatchers with professional training as well as proven emergency

dispatch medical protocols which help them deliver quality care and instruction to the public with emergency medical needs.

Radio communications with all agencies are handled through the 911 communications center. Our radio system supports the sheriff's office, all municipal police departments, rescue and fire agencies in the county. Expansion capabilities are built in to accommodate additional radio frequencies as the need arises which ensures the ability to expand should we have additional departments that require dispatch.

The backbone of our emergency system is the 911 phone system and related equipment. Our communications office has the capability of answering 911 calls from land lines, cell phones and text messages. This system allows our dispatch personnel to have visual information regarding the call location and phone number display immediately upon receiving the call. This helps not only with location of emergency but the ability to contact a caller back should the line be disconnected. This is vital in today's environment with the expansion that has taken place in our county as there are many rural and remote areas where emergency personnel need to respond. The mapping provided by the communications center ensures a quicker response to these areas in our county. Additionally, on duty units are displayed on the map for the dispatcher to have immediate knowledge of their location so they know who would be the quickest unit to respond to a specific call. This system is supported financially with a monthly surcharge placed on all telephone lines.

There are currently twelve full time telecommunicators working in central dispatch.

The 911 communications center is fully operational 24 hours a day 7, days a week.

The total number of calls received for 2015 was 150,727. Wise County Central dispatched over 75,000 of those calls received to the different agencies they handle communications for. The Wise County Sheriff's Office handled 21,104 of those total calls.

### **Criminal Investigative Division**

When a citizen reports a crime most often a patrol deputy is the first to respond to the incident. If the responding patrol deputy cannot resolve the reported case it is referred to an investigator.

The Wise County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigative Division is comprised of five full time certified deputies. The investigators are veteran deputies who have experience and extensive training in investigation techniques. Their primary duty is to provide in-depth investigation of cases.

Investigator's primary duty is for case and crime scene management. Through their training in criminal investigation techniques they have the experience to approach the crime in a systematic method to bring the case to a conclusion. Our investigators analyze large quantities of information, establish leads and pursue those leads through contacting and questioning victims, witnesses and potential perpetrators.

Our investigators have completed comprehensive instruction in death, arson, fraud, larceny, burglary, sex crimes, cybercrime and juvenile investigations. Investigators have completed the Virginia Forensic Science Academy, a 10-week school of crime scene technology, taught by the Department of Forensic Science.

One investigator is assigned full time duty to investigate controlled substance violations. This investigator has the responsibility to follow up on complaints or information provided by citizens or law enforcement. This investigator also has the responsibility of apprehension and arrest of persons possessing illegal controlled substance with intent to sell or distribute.

Some Specific functions of the criminal investigative division are as follows:

- Investigate serious crime - and less serious crimes upon request or as needed
- Perform drug suppression operations
- Collect, analyze and disseminate criminal intelligence
- Liaison with other local, state and Federal investigative agencies/units
- Liaison with Commonwealth Attorneys, Attorney General, and the United States Attorney's Offices
- Conduct pre-employment background investigations
- Conduct internal affairs investigations
- Collect and examine evidence at crime scenes
- Maintain custody of physical and drug evidence
- Provide protective services
- Conduct sensitive or special interest investigations as directed by the Sheriff

CID investigated the following cases in 2015:

Narcotic Violations - 88

Drug Overdose Deaths – 4  
Accidental deaths--3  
Suicides - 5  
DOA – 38  
Fire DOA -1  
Homicides – 5  
Infant/Child Deaths—3  
Sex Offences Against Children – 26  
Sex Offences Against Adults -9  
Child Pornography - 3  
Child Abuse – 6  
Felony Assault – 6  
Shooting Assault -2  
Weapon Violations – 6  
Robbery – 2  
Terrorist Threats – 2  
Internet Threats – 8  
Documented Agency Assist – 12  
Suspicious Activity – 6  
Pursuit – 1  
Fugitive Service - 3  
Breaking & Entering - 19  
Grand Larceny - 25  
Identity Theft, Fraud, Forgery, Embezzlement - 7  
Threats - 10  
Arson/Fire - 6

Citizens are encouraged to call or contact an Investigator should they have information regarding a crime or ongoing criminal activity.

## **CONCLUSION**

As you can see from our annual report the Wise County Sheriff's Office has been extremely busy during 2015. Our dispatch center received 150,727 calls, of which the Sheriff's Office was dispatched to 21,104 of them. We have seen the retirement of three deputies, the resignation of two employees, the hiring of four patrol deputies, three court security deputies, and one dispatcher. We have continually tried to improve our training, equipment, and capabilities to better serve the citizens of Wise County and the City of Norton. We look forward to an even more successful year in 2016.