

Blount County Sheriff's Office



2023 Annual Report

Blount County Profile:

Number of Sheriff's Employees 350

Number of cities and towns in Blount County (Alcoa, Friendsville, Maryville, Louisville, Rockford, and Townsend) 6

Number of Square Miles in Blount County 558.8

Miles of Serviceable Roadway 1,000 (approx.)

Population (Jul 1, 2023). Reflects a 13% growth rate since 2013. Blount County is the 11th largest county in Tennessee (population) of Tennessee's 95 counties. 141,456



BLOUNT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF JAMES LEE BERRONG

Our Mission:

The men and women of the Blount County Sheriff's Office are committed to the citizens of the county, and are committed to providing law enforcement, corrections, and criminal justice services through a partnership with the community that builds trust, reduces crime, creates a safe environment, and enhances the quality of life.



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Letter from Sheriff Berrong

Welcome to the Blount County Sheriff's 2023 Annual Report. I hope you enjoy reading about our accomplishments and looking at the photos from our past year's activities and events.

Our calls for service increased from 71,583 in 2022 to 73,892 in 2023, but overall, crimes against persons and property in Blount County have remained relatively low over the past few years. We saw a notable decrease in property crimes such as home burglaries, and we are hopeful that trend will continue, despite our population boom. Blount County and Tennessee as a whole remain consistently below the national average in regard to crime, and we continue to enjoy a great quality of life.

In early 2023, the BCSO command staff and I joined with Blount County Mayor Ed Mitchell and the Blount County Commission to work toward increasing wages for Blount County deputies. Acting on a pay study conducted in late 2022, Mayor Mitchell and the County Commission allowed us to achieve a goal that I set for 2023, and that was to assure our deputies are paid fairly for the difficult and taxing work they perform. Beginning July 1, 2023, a majority of deputies in Patrol and Corrections began receiving a wage that is worthy of the work they perform and the risks they take on a daily basis. I am grateful for our Mayor and County Commission who appreciates the work of our deputies. This pay increase has improved our retention rate, and we continue to attract quality job candidates. Moving forward, I will continue to fight to assure our deputies maintain a living wage.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the continued opioid issue in Blount County. Overall, opioid overdoses decreased more than 17 percent in 2023 as compared to 2022, but the sales and use of illicit drugs in our community is still cause for concern. In conjunction with the Fifth Judicial Drug Task Force, we continue to take a harsh stance on drug dealers who set up shop in our community. Many of these individuals are not Blount County residents. The majority of them are drug dealers from out of state who prey on our citizens. In late 2022, Blount County joined with several East Tennessee law enforcement agencies as part of TBI's 313 Initiative (313 is the area code for Detroit). Working together with TBI and other law enforcement agencies in East Tennessee and Michigan to track the drug pipeline between Tennessee and East Tennessee, we are putting a dent in drug trafficking in our area. We hope to see a continued disruption of illicit drugs reaching our citizens as the 313 Initiative continues.

On October 2, 2023, our friends at the Knox County Sheriff's Office experienced a line of duty death with the murder of KCSO Officer Tucker Blakely after he responded to a call of domestic violence. Officer Blakely's death hit our local law enforcement community hard. Because we share a border with Knox County, we've always had a close relationship with the men and women of the KCSO. As they grieved the loss of Officer Blakely, many of our deputies stepped up to help them fill the gap in Knox County. I am more grateful than ever for the continued camaraderie that we have, not only with KCSO, but the other city and county law enforcement agencies surrounding Blount County. We are always there for each other.

As I enter my 35th year serving Blount County, my goal is to continue to serve our citizens to the best of my ability, to maintain a low crime rate, and to provide you with the best service possible. Thank you for allowing me to work for you!

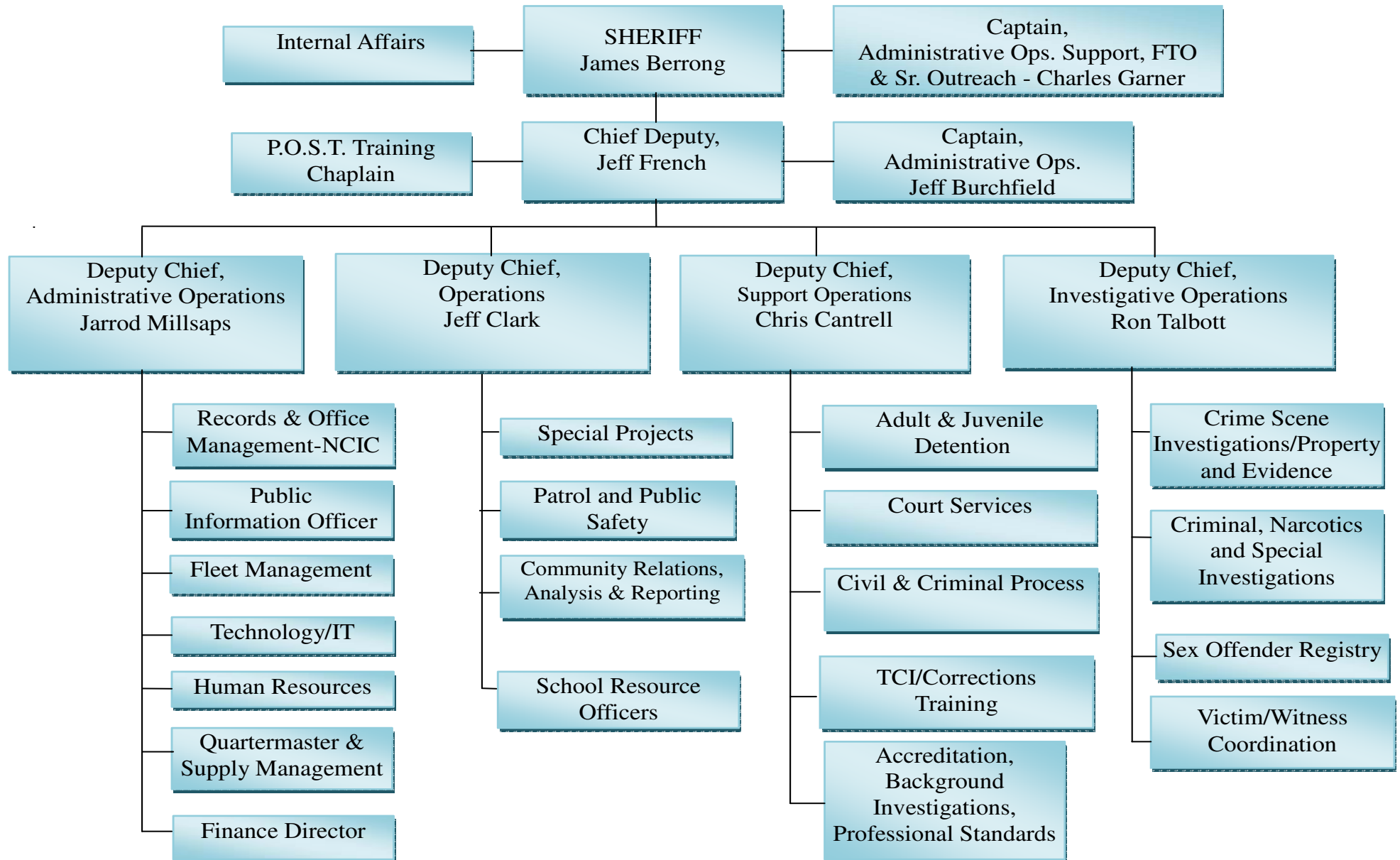
Best wishes and God Bless,

James Lee Berrong, Sheriff



Organizational Chart

BLOUNT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ORGANIZATION CHART – January 1, 2024





James Lee Berrong

SHERIFF



Chris Cantrell

DEPUTY CHIEF, SUPPORT OPERATIONS



Jeff French

CHIEF DEPUTY



Jarrod Millsaps

DEPUTY CHIEF, ADMINISTRATION



Ron Talbott

DEPUTY CHIEF, INVESTIGATIONS



Jeff Burchfield

CAPTAIN, ADMINISTRATION



Charles Garner

CAPTAIN, ADMINISTRATION



Jeff Clark

DEPUTY CHIEF, OPERATIONS



Lee Slagle

CAPTAIN, JUVENILE



James Trentham

CAPTAIN, INVESTIGATIONS



Keith Gregory

CAPTAIN, CORRECTIONS



Pam Comer

MANAGER, RECORDS



Keith Hackney

DIRECTOR, TECHNOLOGY

Command Staff

2023 Commendations

2023 Employee of the Year Deputy William Malone



Congratulations to Deputy William Malone for being named Employee of the Year! He was selected due to his life-saving efforts of an infant on September 19, 2023. He responded to the call of an infant who was not breathing. Deputy Malone, who was a newly certified EMR, used his skills to save the life of the 3-day-old infant. A supervisor with AMR Ambulance Service noted that Deputy Malone's actions saved the life of the infant. Deputy Malone was also honored by the VFW Post 5154 in Louisville for his lifesaving efforts.

2023 Employees of the Month

January	Deputy Frank Harper & Deputy Quayvaughn McCollum
February	Investigator Clark Smith
March	No selection
April	No selection
May	No selection
June	No selection
July	No selection
August	Sgt. Gary Perkins & Deputy Kristen Wathen
September	No selection
October	Deputy Chandler Clark & Deputy Hal Weeden
November	No selection
December	Denny Garner

Lifesaving Commendations

Deputy Leigha Watlington
Deputy Colton Callaway
Deputy Sharron Moore
Deputy Jole Payne
Deputy Josh Berrong
Zachery Cross, Special Deputy
Deputy William Malone
Deputy Jerry Traxler
Deputy Mandy Eggers

Citizen Service Commendations

Ms. Tami Touton
Mr. James Bethel

Programs & Services

Records Management

The Sheriff's Office Records Unit processes thousands of documents each year. In addition to providing prompt and courteous service to citizens, the Records staff maintains and archives thousands of records and documents for the Sheriff's Office. Records handles the distribution of background checks, tow slips, and incident reports to the public. Clerks are also responsible for establishing and maintaining personnel records, payroll, purchasing, accounts payable and receivable, as well as coordinating employee travel to conferences and training. Clerks complete all of the requirements for expungements and other paperwork from the courts. In addition, they update and maintain documentation related to all controllable and fixed assets, as well as employee-issued phones.

Records staff must also comply with annual audits through TBI, FBI, Department of Children's Services, and the Tennessee State Comptroller's Office. Data entry clerks who are certified through TIBRS (Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System) must prepare and submit incident data weekly to comply with certification requirements. Data entry clerks who are Basic NCIC (National Crime Information Center) certified are required to validate records, enter stolen items, missing persons, and warrants. The office also coordinates and maintains NCIC Query and Basic certification of all employees.

Many times, the Records Office acts as a liaison between the public and the rest of the Sheriff's Office employees. The clerks provide answers to many of the public's questions via telephone, email, and in-person at the window. It is the goal of the Records Office to provide as much assistance as possible to the public and employees.

Human Resources

Human Resources oversees the hiring of personnel. Job candidates are vigorously vetted, including an extensive background investigation, criminal records check, previous employment, psychological and medical exams, and a drug screen. The Sheriff's Office recruits prospective applicants from area high schools, colleges and universities, job fairs, social media, and by word of mouth.

The Sheriff's Office is always looking for the best and brightest candidates, and we actively seek female and minority applicants. To apply for a position of Deputy Sheriff, go to www.bcsso.com and click the Employment tab from the home page.

Office of Public Information

The Sheriff's PIO serves as the agency's spokesperson and acts as the liaison between the Sheriff's Office and the media. The PIO coordinates media interviews and press conferences and provides information to the media. The PIO also produces the agency's publications, media releases, maintains the agency's social media sites, and photographs special events and the daily routine of Sheriff's employees.



Senior Outreach Program

Sheriff James Berrong started the Senior Outreach Program in 2001 after witnessing firsthand the number of people in our community who were not receiving the assistance they need to maintain their health and well-being. The Sheriff's Office currently has 36 volunteers. Senior Outreach volunteers receive training on elder abuse, suicide prevention, CPR, fire and fall prevention, as well as some police procedures. In 2023, Senior Outreach volunteers dedicated 6,847 hours to the program and visited 150 citizens.

Chaplain Corps

All Sheriff's Office chaplains receive training and accreditation through the International Association of Police Chaplains (IAPC). Chaplains assist with death notifications, suicides, grief counseling, and other employee and/or victim outreach as needed. In 2023, 24 chaplains responded to 58 calls for service.

Sheriff's App



In 2023, the Sheriff's Office launched a custom smartphone app that is available for download. The app allows users to receive information real time during an emergency that threatens public safety. Users can also access Contact Us, Jail/Inmate information, Submit a Tip, News, Events, & more. The app is available for download on the App Store or Google Play at bcso.info/app.

Community Outreach

Explorer Post

The Sheriff's Explorer program is open to high school students who are currently enrolled in a Criminal Justice program through their school, or who have expressed an interest in law enforcement as a career option. Explorers meet monthly and learn about different aspects of the Sheriff's Office and law enforcement procedures. Explorers also assist the Sheriff's Office with parades, festivals, and community events. Many current and former deputies started out as Explorers before working full-time.

RAD Training

The Sheriff's Office offers RAD training - Rape Aggression Defense System, a program of realistic self-defense tactics and techniques for women that begins with awareness, prevention, risk reduction and avoidance, while progressing on the basics of hands-on defense training. The courses are led by certified RAD instructors over a period of 12 hours, usually consisting of three hours over four evenings. Classes are open to women ages 13 and up. Class sessions are announced on our Facebook page.

Citizens Academy

Since its beginnings in the 1990s, hundreds of Blount County citizens have taken part in the Sheriff's Citizens Academy. Citizens Academy allows individuals to experience different aspects of the Sheriff's Office to see for themselves the day-to-day operations. Participants are provided hands-on activities to learn about Patrol, Investigations, Crime Scene, Corrections, and Special Units including SWAT, CERT, and K-9. The mission of Citizens Academy is to increase communication between the Sheriff's Office and citizens to make them better informed. To apply for an upcoming class, go to www.bcso.com and click the "How Do I" tab at the top of the homepage, then **learn about Sheriff's Citizens Academy**.

Patrol & Public Safety



The Sheriff's Office Patrol & Public Safety is comprised of uniformed patrol deputies, Highway Traffic Safety Unit, SROs, and the K-9 Unit.

Patrol consists of three shifts, and deputies are assigned to each zone at all times. Patrol deputies answer calls for service, conduct proactive patrol, traffic enforcement, traffic accident investigations, and preliminary criminal investigations. Blount County is divided into four geographical patrol zones, as well as a Zone 5 deputy who is stationed at the Blount County Justice Center to take walk-in reports and phone calls. Patrol deputies are responsible for Blount County's 558 square miles. In 2023, deputies responded to 73,892 calls for service.

In addition to our full-time patrol deputies, the Sheriff's Office also utilizes **reserve deputies**. At the end of 2023, there were five reserve deputies, four of whom are certified for solo patrol status. The Sheriff's Office requires all reserve deputies to undergo equivalent training as a full-time certified deputy. In 2023 reserve deputies worked seven special events as well as filled gaps on patrol shifts. Reserve deputies worked and trained a total of 1,026 hours in 2023.

The **Sheriff's EMR program** began in 2017 as a way to enhance medical services in Blount County, as patrol deputies are 80% more likely to arrive on scene before EMS. EMR (Emergency Medical Responder) certified deputies are able to provide some medical services to improve emergency medical care in the county and provide a faster response to begin providing lifesaving measures on those in need. EMRs are equipped with additional lifesaving skills and equipment and have the ability to

get information quickly when it comes to life-and-death emergencies. EMR-certified deputies are spread among all patrol shifts and other operations within the Sheriff's Office. This EMR program is one-of-a-kind among law enforcement agencies in Tennessee.

Deputies volunteer for the EMR program and they must pass a national certification exam to be part of the program. In 2023, EMRs responded to approximately 1,800 medical calls. There were 57 EMR certified deputies at the end of 2023.



The **Traffic Safety Unit** is comprised of deputies who concentrate on traffic issues. The Traffic Safety Unit is funded partially with grants through the Tennessee Highway Safety Office. A portion of the grant is used for saturation efforts on a portion of U.S. Highway 129 referred to as “The Dragon,” an 11.2 mile stretch of roadway with 318 hairpin curves that appeal to motorcyclists and car club enthusiasts from all corners of the earth. In 2023, deputies investigated 855 crashes on Blount County’s roadways, including 295 injuries and six fatalities.

The **Sheriff’s Office School Resource Officer (SRO) program** is one of the earliest and longest running programs in Tennessee. Sheriff James Lee Berrong formed the program in 1996 with two deputies. In the following years, the Sheriff’s Office added additional SROs in all county schools. There are three SROs each at Heritage and William Blount high schools. SROs are trained in tactical response, crisis management, conflict resolution, and child development. SROs train regularly on active shooter scenarios. During the summer months, SROs are assigned to other functions, including Special Teams, including the Marine Unit and the Horse Mounted Patrol Unit.

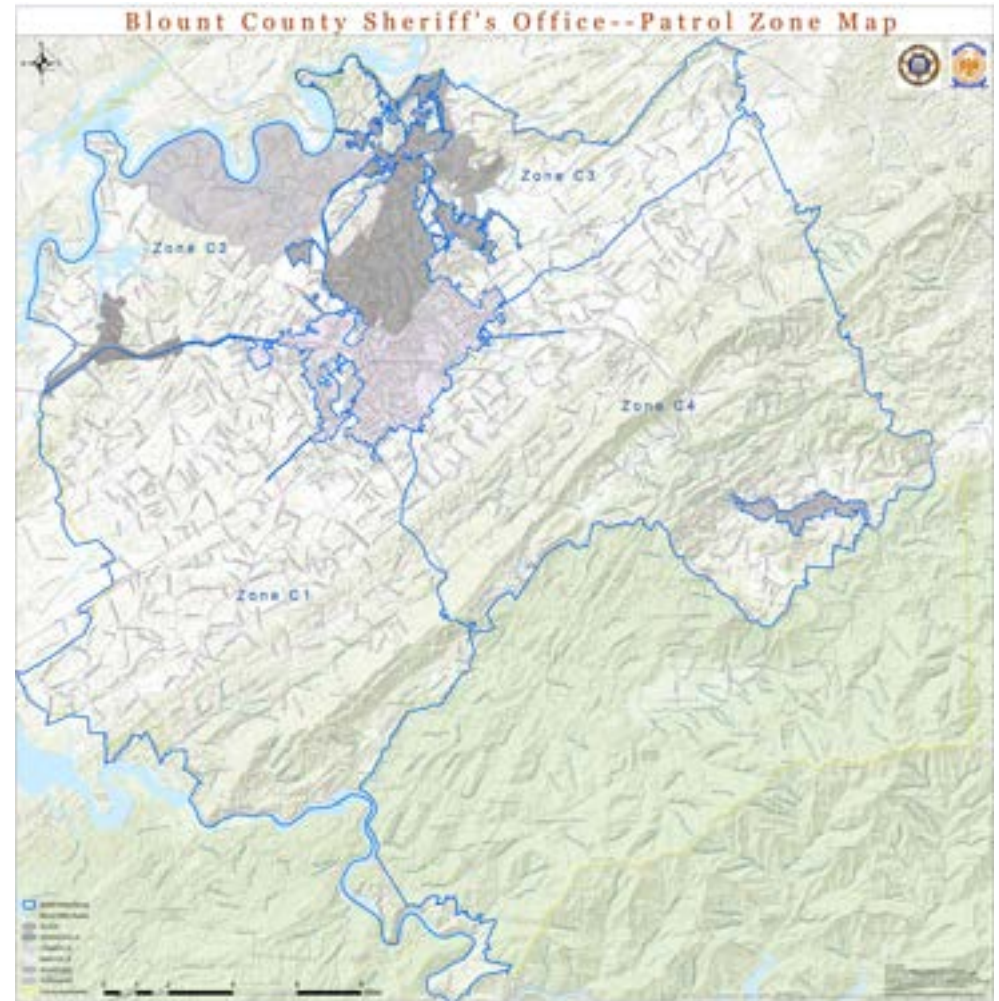
The Sheriff’s Office actively uses **Text-a-Tip and TipSoft** to allow students and the general public to anonymously report issues. SROs are able to intercede quickly on issues on bullying, child abuse, drugs, fights, and suicide prevention. For additional information, visit www.bcsoco.com and from the home page, tap “**Public Information**” and “**Text-a-Tip**.”

The Sheriff’s Office also partners with Blount County Schools by providing a deputy who teaches Criminal Justice at Eagleton College and Career Academy.

The Sheriff’s Office is divided into four patrol zones:

Zone 1: The area west of Montvale Road and south of U.S. 321 West. The area is mainly rural residential with some industry on William Blount Drive and U.S. 411 South.

Zone 2: Begins north of U.S. 321 West and west of Alcoa Highway. The area includes Louisville and sections of Fort Loudon Lake, McGhee Tyson Air-



port, and parts of Maryville and Alcoa.

Zone 3: Starts east of Alcoa Highway and north of Sevierville Road. It includes Eagleton, Rockford, and Porter communities. It is primarily residential with some industry and business on Alcoa Highway and Old Knoxville Highway.

Zone 4: Includes communities south of Sevierville Road and east of Montvale Road. Communities include Top of the World, Oakview, and Rocky Branch. This zone is primarily rural. It also includes a section of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Cades Cove.

SWAT - Special Weapons and Tactics



The Sheriff's SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team is comprised of highly trained professionals who respond to incidents such as hostage situations, barricaded suspects, suicidal persons, and high risk search warrants. SWAT members are trained to make entry into structures that may contain armed subjects and take them into custody. Team members are issued additional personal protective equipment, including ballistic helmets, tactical body armor, and eye wear to protect them from chemical exposure. SWAT team members all have primary assignments in other functions and report for SWAT duty when necessary. SWAT members are on-call 24/7, and they participate in mandatory monthly training year-round.

In June 2023, the Sheriff's SWAT team partnered with the Tennessee Army National Guard MEDEVAC (Medical Evacuation) unit at Joint Base McGhee Tyson to receive TCCC - Tactical Combat Casualty Care. In addition to the TCCC training, members of the MEDEVAC unit provided basic skills to SWAT members on the proper way to load and unload a litter

into the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter. Because of Blount County's proximity to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, this valuable training will assist with BCSO responses inside the National Park.

In 2023, SWAT members were called out 37 times, including seven barricaded suspects, two hostage incidents, 14 high risk search warrants, 24 high risk suspect searches, three security details, and 14 surveillance details. Throughout the year, law enforcement agencies in East Tennessee request the BCSO SWAT team for assistance due to their stellar reputation and highly trained operators. In 2023, SWAT assisted other agencies and counties on 31 occasions. Members also participated in 29 community engagements.



Crisis Negotiations



The Sheriff's Crisis Negotiations Team works hand-in-hand with the SWAT team to diffuse and resolve critical and potentially life-threatening incidents. Team members receive advanced training in crisis communications. The mission of team members is to work with SWAT members toward a peaceful resolution of crisis situations. Crisis negotiators are on-call 24/7, and at least two negotiators remain on call at all times.

The Crisis Negotiations Team consists of 16 members, including two, seven man teams and two team leaders, which allows the team to better utilize personnel more effectively. The team trains monthly, and at least once a year they train with SWAT to ensure a seamless coordination of efforts during incidents. Crisis negotiators are representative of several Sheriff's Office functions, including Patrol, Investigations, Adult and Juvenile Corrections, and Court Services.

The team was called out nine times during 2023.

BSORT & Marine Unit



BSORT (Blount Special Operations Response Team) is a combined effort between area first responder agencies, including the Blount County Sheriff's Office, Maryville Police Department, Alcoa Fire Department, AMR, and the Blount County Rescue Squad. BSORT members specialize in search and rescue and recovery missions on water and land. Team members are well-trained and equipped, and members are ready to respond at a moment's notice. BSORT members train most months.

In 2023, BSORT responded to 22 call-outs locally and assisted other agencies on three occasions.

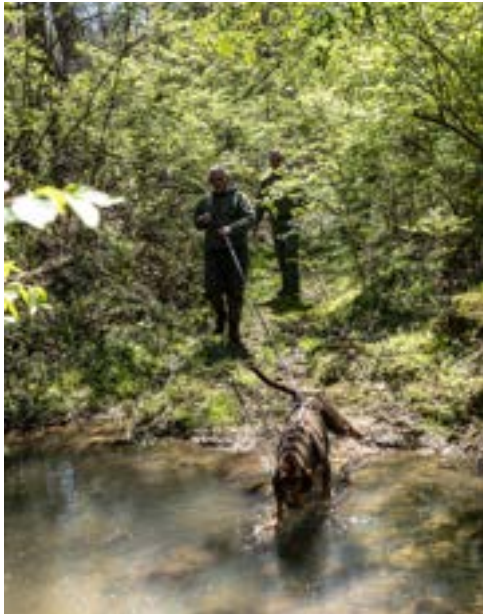
One agency assist occurred in Grainger County on December 14, 2023. TBI requested BSORT's assistance in locating a weapon used in a homicide. Upon arrival divers entered the black waters of Cherokee Lake in an attempt to locate a 9mm semi-automatic pistol. Having no luck, the BSORT underwater remote operated vehicle (ROV) operators inserted the ROV named "Bubbles" in an effort to find evidence. Within 20 minutes, BSORT operators located the gun and found the weapon's magazine a short time later.

Each year, the BSORT assists with the Gary Lindsey Firecracker Fishing Tournament. This tournament generates thousands of dollars for BSORT. The funds are used to purchase needed dive and rescue equipment.

The **Sheriff's Marine Unit** patrols Blount County's waterways during the late spring and summer. Marine patrol deputies assist stranded boaters and inspect private boats to ensure compliance with Tennessee state laws. Marine patrol operators also support BSORT divers during water rescue and recovery operations. The unit is manned by SROs during their summer break. In 2023, the Marine Unit responded to two calls for service, made 221 community contacts, conducted 57 marina and boat access checks, assisted three stranded boaters, and participated in two special events.

K-9 & Mounted Patrol

2023 K-9 Teams



The **Sheriff's K-9 Unit** is comprised of 10 teams. All K-9 teams are certified in-house and through the National Narcotic Detector Dog Association. Many of the Sheriff's K-9s are raised and trained by Shallow Creek Kennels in Sharpsburg, Pennsylvania. New K-9 handlers are now trained

in-house under the instruction of BCSO K-9 Sgt. Allen Russell, a veteran K-9 handler and instructor. All K-9 teams train continually throughout the year.

K-9 Veki and his handler are assigned to adult corrections for the purpose of keeping contraband from coming into the facility. In 2023, The team conducted 243 searches.

The nine other K-9 teams conducted 143 vehicle searches, 26 building searches, 81 apprehensions, and 33 tracks for lost persons and suspects. K-9 teams also recovered 17 grams of cocaine, 18 grams of heroin, 192 grams of methamphetamine, and 12,648 grams of marijuana. They seized \$20,070 in drug currency. In addition, they conducted 81 agency assists and participated in 34 school and public demonstrations.

- Sgt. Allen Russell & K-9 Daisy, Bloodhound
- Sgt. Gary Perkins & K-9 Celo, Belgian Malinois
- Deputy Scott Tipton & K-9 Toby, German Shepherd
- Deputy Ryan Bumbalough, K-9 Gino, Belgian Malinois
- Deputy Justin Summers, K-9 Wiskey, Belgian Malinois
- Deputy Billy Madore, K-9 Braum, Belgian Malinois
- Deputy Skip Kindig, K-9 Veki, German Shorthair Pointer
- Deputy Jole Payne, K-9 Cliff, German Shepherd
- Deputy Cory Phillips, K-9 Kodi, Belgian Malinois
- Deputy Tim Pace, K-9 Jimbo, Belgian Malinois



In 2023, the **Sheriff's Mounted Patrol Unit** consisted of two deputies and two horses, Deputy Elizabeth Best and Deputy Marshal Davis and their mounts, Good Luck Chuck and Buck. The teams conducted several direct patrols throughout Blount County communities in 2023. The equine teams are also utilized for searches for missing persons in rugged terrain, in parades, and for community outreach.

In April, the Sheriff's Office acquired Buck, a five-year-old Tennessee Walking Horse to replace Cookie, a Tennessee Walker, who retired at the end of 2022. Buck and Chuck are boarded in a facility at Heritage High School and cared for by Deputies Best and Davis. Mounted patrol deputies and their mounts participate in 40 hours of in-service training annually at Metropolitan Nashville Police Department. During the annual in-service training, the deputies and their horses learn crowd control management, desensitization with loud noises, vehicle escorts, parade riding, and other scenarios they may encounter.

The Sheriff's Mounted Patrol was formed in 2003 with two donated Tennessee Walking horses, Sunshine and Star Girl, both now retired. The Sheriff's Mounted Patrol Unit is the only law enforcement mounted patrol in East Tennessee.

Investigative Operations - Criminal Investigations



Criminal Investigations is part of the Investigative Operations function of the Sheriff's Office. Investigators work jointly with members of the Fifth Judicial Drug Task Force to solve crimes. Criminal Investigations is responsible for investigating major crimes, including homicides, sex crimes, child abuse, missing persons, domestic violence, robberies, burglaries, cyber crimes, and arsons.

In 2023, Criminal Investigations worked a total of 1,872 cases involving crimes against people and property, up from 1,781 in 2022. Investigators worked three homicides in 2023, including one baby death and two as a result of domestic violence. Investigators also worked 16 suicides, down from 2022's total of 20 suicides; 27 natural deaths, 11 accidental deaths, three child-related deaths, two undetermined cause, and 22 death cases that are pending complete autopsy results.

One investigator is assigned to work the majority of the domestic violence cases that are reported each year. In 2023, the domestic violence investigator reviewed and worked 687 cases, up from 613 in 2022.

The Sheriff's Office has three arson investigators. The Sheriff's Office partners with Maryville and Alcoa Fire Departments to investigate some fires that occur throughout the county.

The Sex Offender Registry falls under Investigations. With the exception of sex offenders on state probation, the sex offender registry investigators handle all sex offender registrations in Blount County. In 2023, sex offender investigators monitored 240 sex offenders who reside, vacation, or are incarcerated in Blount County. The number of registered sex offenders has remained relatively consistent over the last few years. In 2023, investigators arrested 18 individuals on 22 warrants for violations of the sex offender registry and other related charges. Investigators arrested five sex offender absconders. A list of the estimated 240 sex offenders currently registered in Blount County and Tennessee is available through the TBI at <https://sor.tbi.tn.gov/home>.

Sheriff's Crime Scene Investigators play a vital role in solving cases. CSIs are responsible for the recovery and preservation of evidence found at crime scenes, and they are equipped with advanced equipment and technology to help in the process. All crime scenes are unique, and CSIs use a step-by-step approach to every situation including locating, recovering, securing, and documenting evidence. CSIs maintain AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Identification System) which tracks fingerprints to identify latent prints found at crime scenes. In 2023, crime scene investigators were assigned 1,789, up from 1,542 cases in 2022.

The Sheriff's Office retains a polygraph examiner, Capt. James Trentham. Capt. Trentham is certified through the American Polygraph Association and Tennessee Polygraph Association, In 2023, Capt. Trentham conducted 41 polygraphs.

Investigative Operations - Fifth Judicial Drug Task Force

The **Fifth Judicial Drug & Violent Crime Task Force** is a joint effort between the Blount County Sheriff's Office, Maryville and Alcoa Police Departments, and the Office of the Attorney General of Blount County. The Drug Task Force handles hundreds of cases each year. The Drug Task Force has investigators assigned full-time to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the FBI, as well as investigators assigned part-time to task forces with the TBI, U.S. Marshals Service, and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.

Though the illicit sales of heroin and fentanyl within our community remain a concern, an emerging concern is a drug that is as dangerous and deadly -- nitazenes, also called "ISO". Nitazenes were never approved for medical use, and they are outsourced from China and are being mixed with other drugs. Nitazenes were first identified in 2019 in the Midwest. Nitazenes are much more potent than heroin and morphine and are mixed with other drugs to make drugs more potent and cheaper to produce. Nitazenes can and have caused deadly overdoses in unsuspecting victims. In addition to being mixed with heroin and fentanyl, Nitazenes are also pressed into counterfeit pills and falsely marketed as pharmaceutical medication. According to the CDC, in 2021, U.S. drug overdose deaths hit their highest level on record -- nearly 108,000 people, and 75% of those deaths involved a synthetic opioid.

All Sheriff's deputies carry Naloxone, a medicine that rapidly reduces an opioid overdose. Naloxone attaches to opioid receptors and reverses and blocks the effects of other opioids. The number of Naloxone doses administered by BCSO personnel fell 22.6% in 2023 from the prior year. A large part of this decrease can be attributed to an increase in citizens administering their own Naloxone prior to emergency personnel arrival, or in lieu of any emergency assistance request. Naloxone was used twice on BCSO employees during the year due to drug exposure.

In 2023, the Drug Task Force, in conjunction with Criminal Investigations, investigated 35 deaths that were ruled as overdoses, with 27 cases pending lab results at the end of 2023.

In 2023, narcotic investigators worked and closed 372 cases and made 239 arrests with 331 charges and an 86% conviction rate.



Adult Corrections

More than 100 professionally trained Corrections deputies staff the Adult Corrections facility located at the Blount County Justice Center. In 2023, the average daily jail population was 360. Blount County houses inmates who are awaiting trial on state charges as well as those who are court-sentenced to less than one year in jail. The Sheriff's Office holds a contract with the U.S. Marshals Service to house a limited number of federal inmates. Since 2010, more than \$30 million in federal revenue has been generated for housing federal inmates at the Blount County Correctional Facility.

The Blount County Correctional Facility holds a Tier 2 accreditation through Tennessee Corrections Institute. Tier 1 and Tier 2 accreditation standards apply to local correctional facilities that voluntarily adopt accreditation for purposes of improving access to evidence-based inmate programming to help insure inmates' successful reentry into society, reducing recidivism within the agency's jurisdiction, improved rehabilitation services, and increased reimbursement for state-sentenced inmates. The BCSO is one of just two facilities in East Tennessee to hold Tier 2 accreditation.

Over the years, the Sheriff's Office has added a number of inmate programs and classes to help reduce the recidivism rate. These programs include Celebrate Recovery, Drug Court, AA/NA meetings, GED classes, Money Essentials, Moral Reconciliation Therapy, which focuses on crimi-

nal thinking and criminal associations, and Work Essentials. Blount County's recidivism rate over the past three years is 36.51%, well below the national average of 46%.

All Corrections deputies attend a four week Corrections Academy which is held at the Sheriff's Regional Training facility. All Corrections deputies also receive 40 hours of in-service training annually.

During booking, all inmates are screened for COVID before entering the facility. As a way to prevent the spread of illness, inmates within the facility attend court hearings by way of video conferencing with the exception of trials and sentencing hearings. This is safer for the inmates as well as deputies since deputies are not required to regularly move inmates from the Corrections facility to the courtrooms.

Two full-time jail investigators are assigned to look into incidents that occur within the facility as well as to gather intelligence. In addition, K-9 Veki and his partner work together to prevent contraband from entering the facility.

Adult Corrections also has a team similar to SWAT. CERT (Corrections Emergency Response Team) responds to high risk situations inside and outside the jail, including riot conditions, crowd control, extractions of violent inmates,



and searches for contraband inside the facility. CERT members use less-lethal means of control. The team is comprised of full-time Corrections deputies. CERT members train each month.

The facility's medical provider is MEDIKO Correctional Healthcare. MEDIKO provides medical care to inmates. Commissary services are provided by Tennessee Business Enterprises, a state office that provides vocational training and employment opportunities for individuals who are legally blind.

The inmate litter crew is deployed most weekdays to pick up trash along Blount County's roadways. In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the litter crew picked up 541,260 pounds of litter and covered 143 miles of roadway. Over the years, the litter crew has picked up thousands of pounds of trash in Blount County.

Juvenile Corrections

The Blount County Juvenile Detention Center is located on the 2nd floor of the Blount County Courthouse. The facility holds 33 beds. The hardware secure facility is used to detain youth who are awaiting adjudication and/or disposition in Juvenile Court. The facility is operated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is staffed by 23 Sheriff's deputies. All Juvenile Corrections deputies receive training specific to supervision of youth in custody and complete 40 hours of in-service training annually. Each employee places an emphasis with juveniles on accountability, fairness, education, and rehabilitation. The mission of the Detention Center is to encourage positive life skills and attitudes with each juvenile as well as encourage continual personal, positive community involvement.

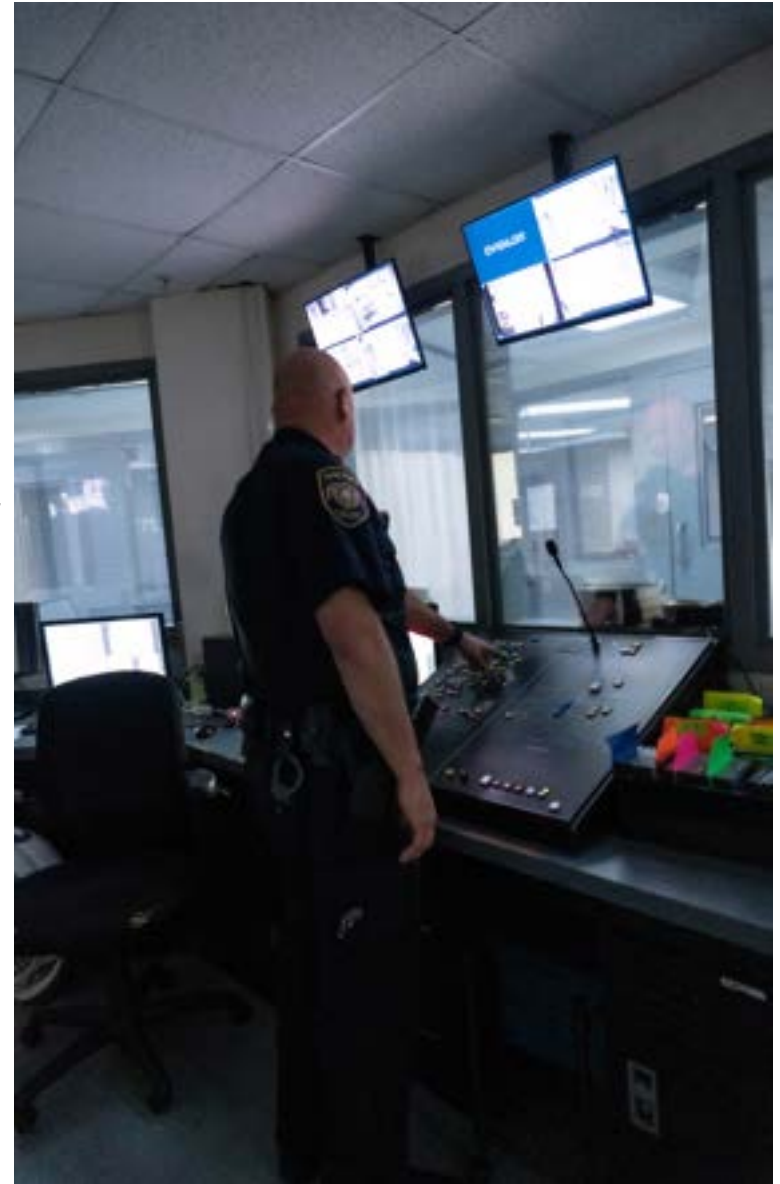
During the booking process, each detainee is assessed for medical, emotional, and educational needs. Immediate emergency and mental health services are always available and non-emergency and mental health issues are communicated to Juvenile Court and other appropriate agencies. Each detainee is also classified to ensure their safety and the safety of others while detained. Medical services for juveniles in custody are provided by MEDIKO. In cooperation with Blount County Schools, two part-time educators teach life-skills, continue his or her current level of education, and prepare for the GED/diploma testing, if applicable.

The facility is available for use, on a per diem basis, for Federal, State, and County agencies for the housing of juveniles in their custody.

The facility is inspected on a regular basis by Department of Children's Services, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, Department of Education, U.S. Marshals Service, Fire Marshal, and Tennessee Health Inspector. The facility passed all inspections with no violations.

In 2023, the facility processed 269 youth. Deputies also conducted 22 transports of juvenile detainees to facilities throughout the state.

The Blount County Juvenile Detention Center is part of the Secret Safe Place for Newborns, under the Tennessee Safe Haven Law.



Court Services

Court Services serves 11 courts in the Blount County Justice Center and Juvenile which is located at the Blount County Courthouse. Court Services deputies have many responsibilities, including the movement of offenders in and out of the courtrooms. They also provide support and assistance to agencies and individuals in the judicial process.

A major task of Court Services is to keep up with the thousands of criminal and civil process papers that flow in and out of the Sheriff's Office. In 2023, Court Services deputies served 6,516 civil papers and served 233 warrants. They also moved 5,842 inmates for court proceedings.

Though most COVID protocols were disbanded beginning in 2021 and into 2022, county, state, and federal inmates continue to attend most of their hearings by way of video conferencing from the jail facility with the exception of trial and sentencing hearings. The general public attended court in-person.

All persons who enter the Justice Center and Juvenile Court must pass through a metal detector, and all purses, packages, and briefcases are reviewed through an X-ray scanner. Firearms, knives, and chemical spray are prohibited. A new change went into effect in 2022. The public can bring their cell phones and electronic devices into the Justice Center, but they must remain on the first floor only. Cell phones and electronic devices are not allowed in the Courtrooms. In 2023, Court Services deputies screened 113,396 people who entered the Blount County Justice Center.

When court is not in session, deputies assigned to court security assist in serving civil judicial documents. Court Services is also responsible for collecting unpaid business, property, and personal taxes. This also extends to seizures mandated by court order.



Information Technology & sUAS

The **Office of Information Technology** is comprised of I.T. professionals who are responsible for establishing and maintaining all of the computers and information systems and cyber security for the Sheriff's Office. The unit also maintains the video cameras and security system in the Justice Center. Another large responsibility is the maintenance of the communication systems in Sheriff's Office vehicles.

The unit also manages the Sheriff's records management system, Spillman. This system allows for reporting from the mobile data terminals (MDT) in the patrol cruisers. The system streamlines the booking process and allows personnel to track and manage various records, such as name, property, and incident reports and it stores it all in a centralized database. The system allows connectivity of records to one another with a goal of more easily identifying relationships within the data and streamlining processes within the agency. It is a paperless system, which saves patrol deputies time by inputting reports directly into the system. All patrol vehicles are outfitted with MDTs that connect wirelessly to the Sheriff's Office servers.

I.T. is responsible for maintaining in-car and body-worn cameras utilized by front-line deputies. The Sheriff's Office uses Axon Body 3 body-worn cameras and Axon Fleet 3 in-car cameras. Data from these systems is uploaded in a cloud as opposed to a server, and data is uploaded to the cloud when deputies return to the Justice Center.



The Sheriff's Office began using **sUAS (small Unmanned Aircraft System)** in 2017. The team now has three FAA licensed remote pilots. Together, they flew 259 flights and amassed 54 hours of flight time in 2023, covering in excess of 133.5 linear miles. The sUAS unit flew missions documenting seven crash scenes, five fire scenes, and four crime scenes. Four missions were flown to assist in locating missing persons and nine missions were flown to locate fugitives. Other missions include Patrol operations and SWAT support. The sUAS pilots also participated in a disaster drill and community demonstrations.

Two endangered missing persons were located utilizing the enhanced technologies of the aircraft. One was an autistic child found in a body of water, spotted more than 1,000 feet away using the telephoto sensor. The other was an impaired and seriously injured adult located hiding in brush on a cold night using the thermal imaging sensor.

The use of sUAS provides a unique aerial perspective to law enforcement operations. They allow for the possible detection of dangers that might not otherwise be seen without endangering personnel. They also allow deputies to more easily locate missing or wanted persons, and they serve as an investigative tool in visual reconstruction of crime or crash scenes. They are also useful for damage assessment for disasters and observation for large-scale events. The sUAS pilots also supports other agencies when they are requested.

Training & Regional Training Academy



The **BCSO Training Unit** is well-known across the state for its excellence in training. The Sheriff's Office training staff not only provides annual in-service training for all law enforcement agencies within Blount County, the staff also provides instruction to law enforcement officers from across the state by way of the Sheriff's Regional Law Enforcement Training Academy.

The Training Unit plans and coordinates much of the training deputies undertake. Deputies who are POST (Peace Officer Standards and Training) certified as well as corrections deputies in Tennessee are required to complete 40 hours of continuing education annually to maintain certifications. The training staff assures that all deputies receive this required professional development training. POST-certified deputies are trained in many law enforcement subjects, and all law enforcement officers in Blount County train together to assure efficiency and professionalism while working together on joint incidents and operations.

Most of the training takes place at the Sheriff's Training Facility off William Blount Drive. The facility includes a five acre driving track, a covered 21-lane firing range, and a high and low ropes course. The Air National Guard assisted with the financing and labor for much of the work at the firing range. In exchange, personnel with the ANG from McGhee Tyson Airbase use the facility on occasion for their training needs.

With the continued concern about mass shootings across the country, the training staff places an emphasis on preparing Blount County's law enforcement officers to remain at the ready should the threat become a reality. Deputies also provide community education and provide church and business assessments and training to help citizens prepare for a possible active shooter situation.

Since 2020, Tennessee's POST Commission began mandating additional required training for all law enforcement officers in the areas of de-escalation techniques and duty to intervene, public assembly interaction, officer wellness, and community involvement.



More than 800 law enforcement officers from across Tennessee have graduated from the **Sheriff's Regional Law Enforcement Training Academy** since its inception in 2007. Each year, the academy grows, and with it, so has its stellar reputation of graduating the best law enforcement officers in the state. During the 12 week academy, recruits learn many aspects of law enforcement, including criminal justice, firearms, emergency vehicle operations, report writing, defensive tactics, Taser and chemical spray certifications, DUI, traffic stops, accident reconstruction, domestic violence, Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC), as well as other law enforcement-related topics. Recruits are also put through a rigorous physical fitness regime to help prepare them to meet the physical standards set forth by Cooper Institute, a global leader in preventative health research. POST law enforcement academies are held at least once a year.



In 2023, the Sheriff's Regional Law Enforcement Academy held two academies. Class 026 was held from January through April, and Class 027 took place August through November. In total, 92 recruits from across the state graduated in 2023.

The Training Unit was granted permission by the Tennessee POST Commission to host a lateral transfer school to allow the training of new hires from other states and bring them up to Tennessee POST standards to be certified by the State of Tennessee. This 120 hour course consists of firearms, driving, defensive tactics, Tennessee's laws, and other law enforcement topics. This has been of great benefit, as it allows the Sheriff's Office to onboard new hires from other states quickly and cost effectively.



Pictured above: Academy Class 026

Pictured below: Academy Class 027

The BCSO is also certified through Tennessee Corrections Institute (TCI) to train agency Corrections deputies. New Corrections deputies attend a three week TCI Basic Training Course in which they learn defensive tactics, firearms, Taser and chemical spray certifications, transport procedures, and other Corrections-related topics. The Sheriff's Office holds one or two Corrections Academies a year, based on need.



Office of Accreditation

The Sheriff's Office is accredited through CALEA - Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. Initial accreditation took place in 2003, and CALEA has re-accredited the agency every accreditation cycle since. We received our last re-accreditation in April 2022, and we are working toward our next re-accreditation in 2026. The purpose of accreditation is to safeguard all personnel, improve management, provide systematic evaluation of all areas of operation, recognize achievement, and demonstrate accountability to the public. Accreditation is an ongoing program to maintain superior professional standards, and is overseen by an accreditation manager.

The Blount County Sheriff's Office is one of five Sheriff's Offices in Tennessee to hold accreditation through CALEA. In Blount County, Maryville and Alcoa police departments as well as Blount County Communications are all accredited through CALEA.

The Sheriff's Office is also accredited through the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police. The BCSO was the first Sheriff's Office in Tennessee to be awarded state accreditation in 2012. The Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation exists to improve the quality of law enforcement agencies in Tennessee and the quality of services provided to the citizens of Tennessee.



Retirements



Deputy Tony Boring retired on January 17, 2023 following a 17-year career at BCSO. During his time at BCSO, Deputy Boring served as a patrol deputy, K-9 deputy, and completed his time as a school resource officer. Deputy Boring also served on the Crisis Negotiation Team.



Patti Law retired June 2, 2023 after 35 years of service with Blount County Sheriff's Office and Blount County Government. Patti served as a record's clerk.



Deputy Jeff Ledford retired on June 14, 2023 following a 27 year career with the Blount County Sheriff's Office. During his career, Deputy Ledford served as a patrol deputy, traffic safety deputy, and school resource officer.



Sgt. Vicki Watlington Bean retired effective June 17, 2023 following a 17 year career with the Blount County Sheriff's Office. Sgt. Watlington served her whole career in Juvenile and was promoted to sergeant in 2013.



Lt. Steve "Snappy" Blankenship retired after 31 years of service. Lt. Blankenship began his career at the Sheriff's Office in 1992. During his career, Lt. Blankenship served as a patrol deputy, narcotics investigator, and retired as a supervisor at the 5th Judicial Drug Task Force.

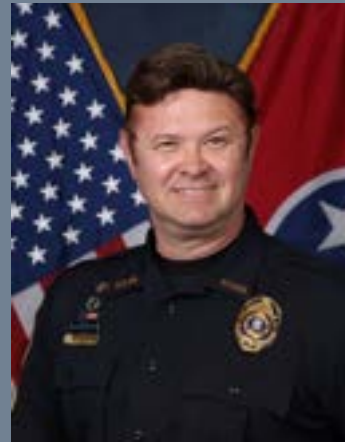
Promotions



Sgt. Nathan Payne
Fifth Judicial Drug Task Force



Sgt. Matt McKinnis
Fifth Judicial Drug Task Force



Sgt. Sam Tucker
Court Services



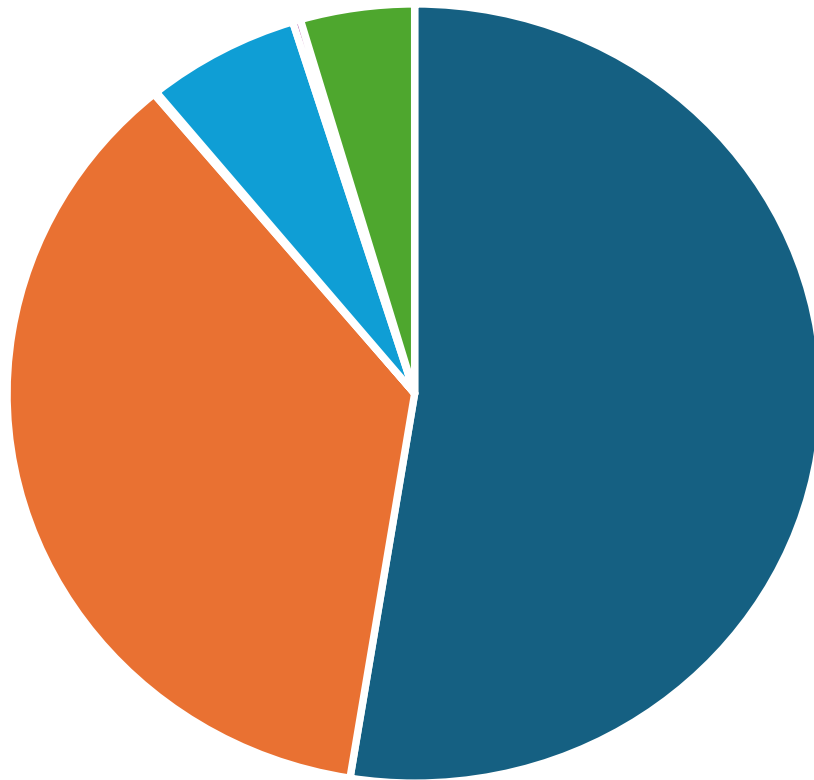
Sgt. Shannon Carswell
Investigations



Sgt. Joe McCarter
Investigations

Sheriff's 2023 - 2024 Budget

Budget



2023 - 2024 Budget	
Sheriff's Office	\$17,712,817
Jail	\$12,280,285
Sex Offender Registry	\$40,000
Juvenile	\$2,052,012
Litter & Trash Grant	\$105,195
Public Safety Projects	\$1,525,192

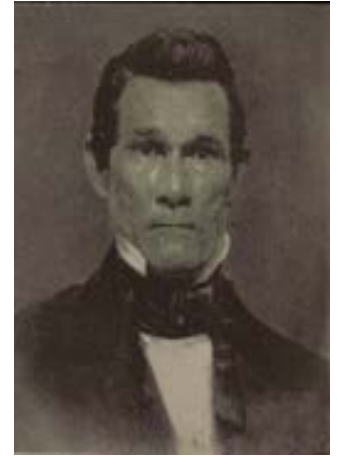
Budget Total \$33,715,501

- Sheriff's Office
- Jail
- Sex Offender Registry
- Juvenile
- Litter & Trash Grant
- Public Safety Projects

BCSO - Our History



The Blount County Sheriff's Office was established in 1795, making the BCSO 228 years old in 2023. The Blount County Sheriff's Office was born one year before Tennessee became a state. The first Sheriff was Littlepage Sims who served from 1795 - 1796. Following his departure from Blount County, Sheriff Sims moved to Alabama where he became a state senator. The first jail was built along Pistol Creek. In 1807 Blount County built a two story brick building on McCammon Avenue to house prisoners. The jail included gallows for hangings. Historians account that four hangings took place in that jail. The Sheriff's Office also had "stocks" or "pillories" for disciplinary measures. They were located in the Courthouse Square.



The Sheriff's Office has resided in six locations in Maryville. The current Sheriff's Office is located in the Blount County Justice Center. It opened in 1999 and was built on the site

of a Coca-Cola plant across from Blount Memorial Hospital on East Lamar Alexander Parkway. The Justice Center is 169,000 square feet. It also houses the Office of the District Attorney General, Court Clerk, Clerk and Master, and several courtrooms.

General William Wallace served as Blount County's eighth Sheriff from 1820-1842. Gen. Wallace served in the U.S. Army during the War of 1812. Two deputies served under Sheriff Wallace. Sheriff Wallace was the brother of Mary Houston, sister to the legendary figure Sam Houston who served as governor of both Tennessee and Texas. Wallace is Blount County's second longest running Sheriff behind our current Sheriff, James Lee Berrong.

From early beginnings 228 years ago, the Blount County Sheriff's Office has served the community faithfully and proudly.

Pictured clockwise: 1. Sheriff and deputies with confiscated moonshine still, early 1940s. 2. Gen. William Wallace, Blount County's 8th Sheriff and 2nd longest running Blount County Sheriff. 3. The fourth Blount County Jail & Courthouse, located at the corner of Harper and Cusick, 1901 - 1958.



A Look Back on '23



Deputy Brian Ailey & Cpl. Justin Beckman, Operation Safe Halloween.



Deputy Clyde Ingle, Operation Safe Halloween.



Deputy Jerry Traxler. Spring Into Action - Support Your Local Heroes Event.



Sgt. Sara Wilson, Lt. Brad Butler, and Deputy Wayne Ratledge, EMR Training.



Cpl. Pete Rivas of the Training Unit addresses a group of new recruits on Day 1 of the BCSO Regional Law Enforcement Training Academy, Class 027.



Deputies Greg Walsh, Norman Carmack, and Jason Pickell join a team of BCSO deputies for a delivery of Christmas gifts to the residents of Foothills Care and Rehabilitation. This is a yearly tradition.



Explorer advisors Deputy Zach Kee and Deputy Shelby Eggers assist Sheriff's Explorers with the property technique for packing a wound during a Stop the Bleed class.



On April 19, 2023, retired BCSO Chief Deputy Don Boring (left) joined Sheriff James Lee Berrong for a tour of Blount County Communications. Chief Boring is a legendary Blount County lawman, having served a lengthy law enforcement career with the Sheriff's Office and the Maryville Police Department.



Each year in September, the BCSO recognizes National Women in Law Enforcement Day. These deputies represent just a few of our ladies.



Deputy Scott Tipton and his K-9 partner Toby visit with students during a demonstration at Clayton Bradley Academy in March 2023. K-9 Toby specializes in bomb and arson detection.



On Saturday, June 6, 2023, the BCSO and other agencies responded to a fire at the Green Acres Flea Market in Louisville. The fire, which was ruled as undetermined cause, destroyed this well-known landmark.



Buck gets frisky with Deputy Elizabeth Best during National Night Out at the Greenbelt Pavilion in October 2023.

Capt. Jeff Burchfield joined the U.S. Army Golden Knights for the jump of a lifetime over Fort Bragg, North Carolina in April 2023. This was part of the Army's Educational Outreach Program. Capt. Burchfield teaches criminal justice at Eagleton Career Academy and Maryville High School.



Each recruit class experiences the Seven Pillars of Law Enforcement which are placed around the training academy property. The poles represent brotherhood, integrity, courage, discipline, teamwork, honor, and duty.

A Tribute to KCSO Officer Tucker Blakely

KCSO Officer Tucker Blakely succumbed to gunshot wounds he received while responding to a domestic violence call in Knoxville. You are forever in our hearts, Officer Blakely.

Never forget.



The best way to find yourself is to
lose yourself in the service of others.

Mahatma Gandhi





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