

MARION COUNTY LAYS OFF LAW ENFORCEMENT



Bad news is coming for law enforcement professionals in Marion County. The sheriff's office is going to be cut back on by 12 sheriffs. While for those of us who live in major cities this sounds like a very small cut that is not the case in Marion County, where the sheriff's office is fairly small. The entire department has been cut down to only 20 people. The office should be running with 32 people. When you do that math you realize that the loss of 12 people is a cut of more than 1/3 of the staff in the department, 38% to be exact. Sheriff Tim Bailey told a reporter for the [Marion Star](#) that, "Half the department will be laid off. We're going to have to change." While his math may not be 100% accurate this change will bring the department down to a level of staffing that has not been seen in more than 25 years. The last time the Marion County Sheriffs Office had staffing numbers this low was back in 1975. The cuts are being made because of a decline in county funds. While the county officials did not cite any specific reason why the funds were lowered in most cases it is a combination of less aid coming in from the state levels and a lower amount of funds collected in the form of sales and property taxes. Though some counties also struggle with debts that they collected when the economic downturn first took hold and a sharp downturn in revenue left local governments struggling to fulfill their contracts with employee unions and other obligations. Dan Russell, one of the Marion County Commissioners, told the same reporter from the Marion Star that there will be a noticeable impact on the services that Marion County residents will get. There will be slower response times, and a definite loss of service. As calls come in, we're going to have to prioritize." He then went on to say that, "We'll take reports over the phone. We'll be providing more information on how to make a report, but the follow-up on misdemeanor calls will be non-existent." While this may not be the best thing to announce, given how a lowered law enforcement presence has had a negative impact on the crime rates in other communities, it may nonetheless be true. With less boots on the ground violent crimes and emergencies are going to have to get more of the now limited resources. The office will continue to fulfill some of the more traditional duties. These duties will include running the sheriff's sales of foreclosed properties and seized assets, delivering documents to individuals for the local court system and any other functions that they are required to complete by law. Most, if not all, of the other things that the office has taken on will either be cut entirely or scaled back in order to accommodate the lower budget levels. The layoffs will take place on the 1st of January, meaning that Marion County residents can expect to see those cutbacks soon.