

Meeker County Sheriff's Office

2023 Activity Report



Mission Statement

To provide high-quality professional services with honor, integrity, and courage. These services shall preserve the peace and safeguard the lives and property of all Meeker County residents through a proactive partnership with the community and our public safety partners.

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Sheriff Preface



The 2023 year-end report is part of a continued effort to provide information to the public about your Meeker County Sheriff's Office. Staffing shortages remained an issue throughout the year in all areas of this office. We also saw increases in some serious and assault crimes along with a dramatic increase in 911 calls. The Sheriff's Office also saw new technology to aid in our efforts to keep the public safe through the implementation of a drone program.

As with many agencies across the State of Minnesota, and the nation, we continued having staffing shortages throughout 2023. At one point we were down half of our patrol staff, yet the Sheriff's Office call load remained virtually the same from the previous year. This translated into less pro-active patrol and deputy self-initiated activity as we had to concentrate on the calls received. Since these major short falls, we have continued to increase staff and by the end of the year only had a few openings left to fill with patrol, jail, and dispatch. We have been fortunate to attract good quality people to fill these shortfalls.

Our mission statement remains a priority and thanks to the men and women of this office, even in the face of significant staffing shortfalls, they have all stepped up to provide the best service possible to all residents of this county. I can't thank our staff enough for all they do, day in and day out, to get us through these staffing shortages.

Both calls for service and 911 calls increased in 2023. We saw a 32% increase in 911 calls received in our Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) over 2022 and a 3% increase in all calls (911 and administrated) received in our PSAP. This spike in 911 calls is reflected in the increase in certain crimes reported in 2023 indicating more serious and urgent needs for service. The calls we are receiving, especially mental health related calls, require more time and resources when handled by the deputies which also takes away from pro-active patrol.

We saw significant increases in both child and adult abuse/neglect/maltreatment reports, assaults, domestic assaults, burglaries, criminal sexual conduct, harassment, protection order violations, restraining order violations and vehicle thefts. Along with

the criminal call increases we saw significant increases in mental health related calls. We did see significant decreases in theft, threats, trespass, and vandalism calls. The increases in serious crime coincides with the increase in 911 calls into our PSAP.

In 2023 we saw the implementation of a drone program. We received generous donations from businesses and individuals to get this program started. Within days of receiving our first drone we were using it on a call for service. It was also used to save a life, proving the worth of the program is immeasurable. This new piece of technology will help in not only locating suspects, but also those who are lost along with assisting in mapping accidents and crime scenes.

To the residents of this county, thank you for your support of this office. Your support and trust in this office is an extremely important piece to being responsive to the needs of our community. We rely on this partnership to effectively provide the best services possible. From me personally and on behalf of my staff, we truly appreciate your support!

As always, I hope you find this report informative and that it gives you insight into the operations of the Meeker County Sheriff's Office. As we look to 2024, we remain committed to getting our staffing shortages filled. This return to full staff will increase our pro-active patrols and allow for more time and resources to focus on the areas of crime that increased in 2023.

Respectfully,



Brian Cruze
Meeker County Sheriff

Meeker County Sheriff's Office

326 N Ramsey Avenue
Litchfield, MN 55355

Dispatch	320-693-5400
Toll-Free	866-333-3366
Jail	320-693-5415
Records	320-639-5414
Confidential Tip Line	320-693-5411
Watkins Station Office	320-764-6792

Website and Social Media

Website: <http://www.co.meeker.mn.us/217/Sheriff>



Twitter [@MeekerCoSheriff](https://twitter.com/MeekerCoSheriff)
Facebook at [Office of the Meeker County Sheriff](https://www.facebook.com/OfficeoftheMeekerCountySheriff)



Dispatching Services



The Meeker County Sheriff's Office Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) is responsible for handling all emergency and non-emergency calls for all agencies in Meeker County. The dispatcher is then responsible for assigning and dispatching the appropriate emergency responders to the reported incident.

The Meeker County PSAP received a total of 28,046 calls in 2023. Of those calls, 8,843 were 911 calls and 19,203 were administrative. While the total calls into dispatch represent a 3% increase over 2022, we saw a 32% increase in 911 calls. Our dispatch center averaged 77 calls received per day and this does not include outbound calls or 911 rebid calls. A rebid is a term used when we attempt to get a better location on a cellular 911 call.

The overall calls for service for all agencies in Meeker County was 17,276 calls in 2023. This represents a 3% increase over 2022. The Meeker County Sheriff's Office saw a slight decline in calls for service from 8,693 in 2022 to 8,266 in 2023. This can be directly attributed to Deputy staffing shortages.

In 2021 the Meeker County PSAP brought the text-to-911 answering point in-house. We provided our dispatchers with the equipment and software necessary to handle the texts ourselves. Before 2021 Meeker County was part of a regional approach to answering text-to-911 calls.

With the last installation of 911 software in 2017, we are moving forward with a software upgrade in 2024 so we can continue our transition to Next Generation (NG) 911. As NG911 moves forward our goal is to improve our ability to manage, locate and transfer calls better to enhance public safety. It will also provide opportunities to utilize technology and receive on-scene pictures and videos that can be provided to responding emergency units.



TEXT-TO-911

CALL if you can

Text if you **CAN'T**

ABOUT TEXT-TO-911

- Text-to-911 is now available throughout Minnesota. The service was deployed in December 2017.
- Text-to-911 can be the first contact option for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing or those with speech impairments.
- Text-to-911 should only be used when a person can't safely make a voice call.

Examples:

- When someone must stay quiet to remain safe.
- If peer pressure is strong.
- Text-to-911 is a discreet way to report domestic violence, home invasions, human trafficking, and suicidal individuals.

HOW TO TEXT 911

1. Enter the numbers 911 in the "To" field.
2. Text your exact location and type of emergency.
3. Send the message.
4. Promptly answer questions and follow instructions.

TIPS: Use simple words. Do not use abbreviations, emoji's, pictures or slang (BRB, IDK, THX, 2day and BTW). Do not text and drive!

Texting 911 with a false report is a crime. If you accidentally send a text to 911, send another text, or call 911 to let the dispatcher know that there is no emergency.

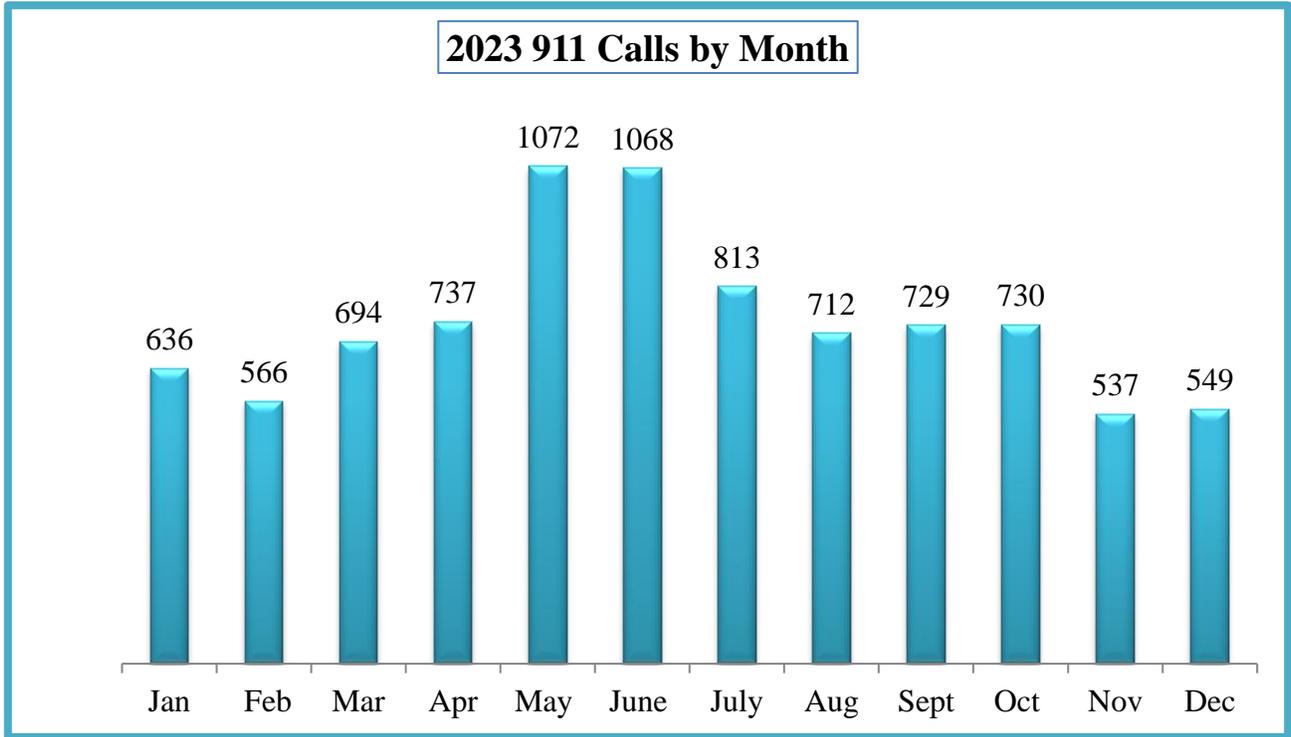
DID YOU KNOW?

Emergency response may be lengthened due to the time it takes for a text to 911 to be typed and sent. Delivery speed is not guaranteed.

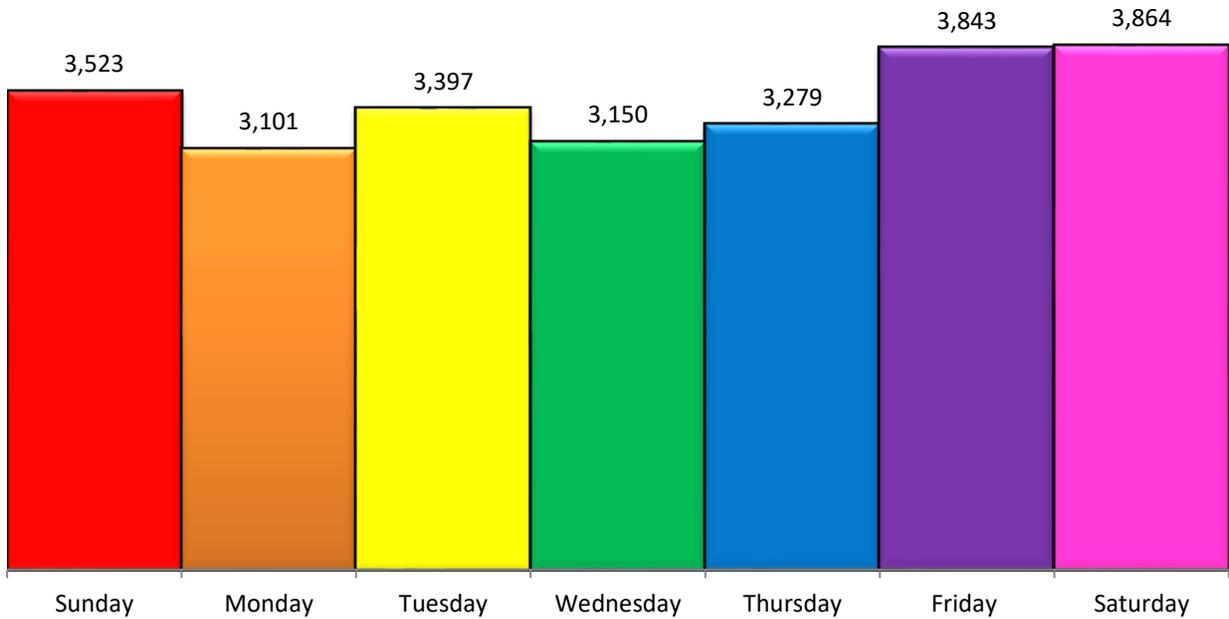
- Dispatchers prefer calls so they can get cues from background noise and voice inflections.
- If you text to 911, dispatchers will ask if they can call you.
- Location is not as accurate with text as it is with a call. Be sure to text your exact address.
- A text or data plan is required to use Text-to-911.
- Texts to 911 will get a bounce back message if you are roaming.
- Texts to 911 have a 160 character limit, can get out of order, or may not be received.
- There is no language translation service for texts to 911.



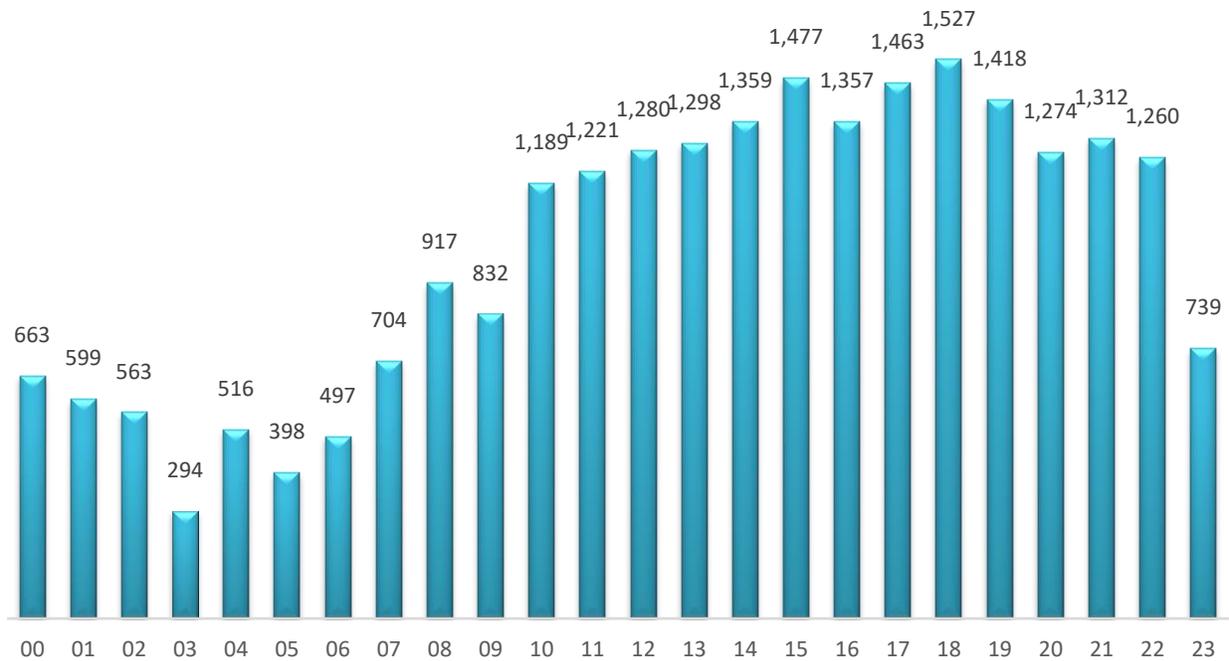
2023 - 911 calls for Meeker County: 8,843



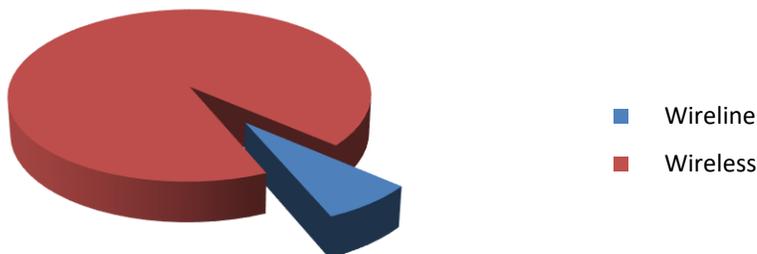
911 Call Volume by Day of Week Report Period 1/1/23 - 12/31/23



911 Call Volume by Hour of Day Report Period 1/1/23- 12/31/23



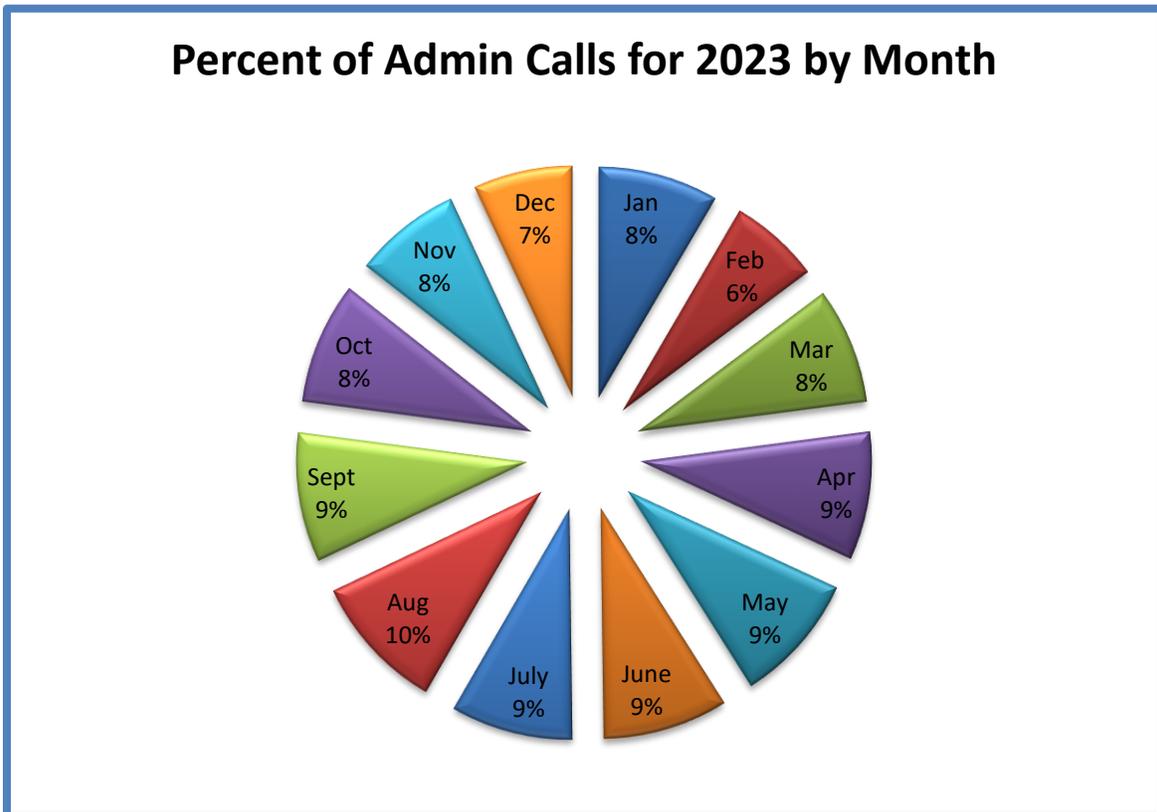
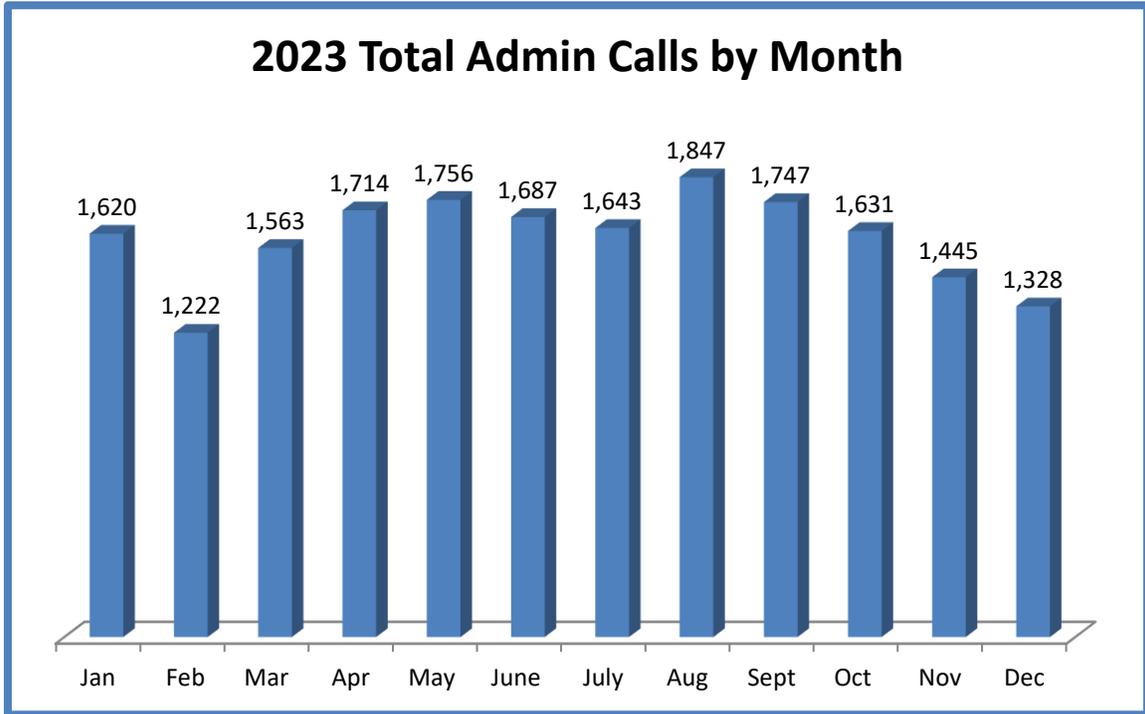
911 Calls by Cell Phone/Land Line Report Period 1/1/23 - 12/31/23



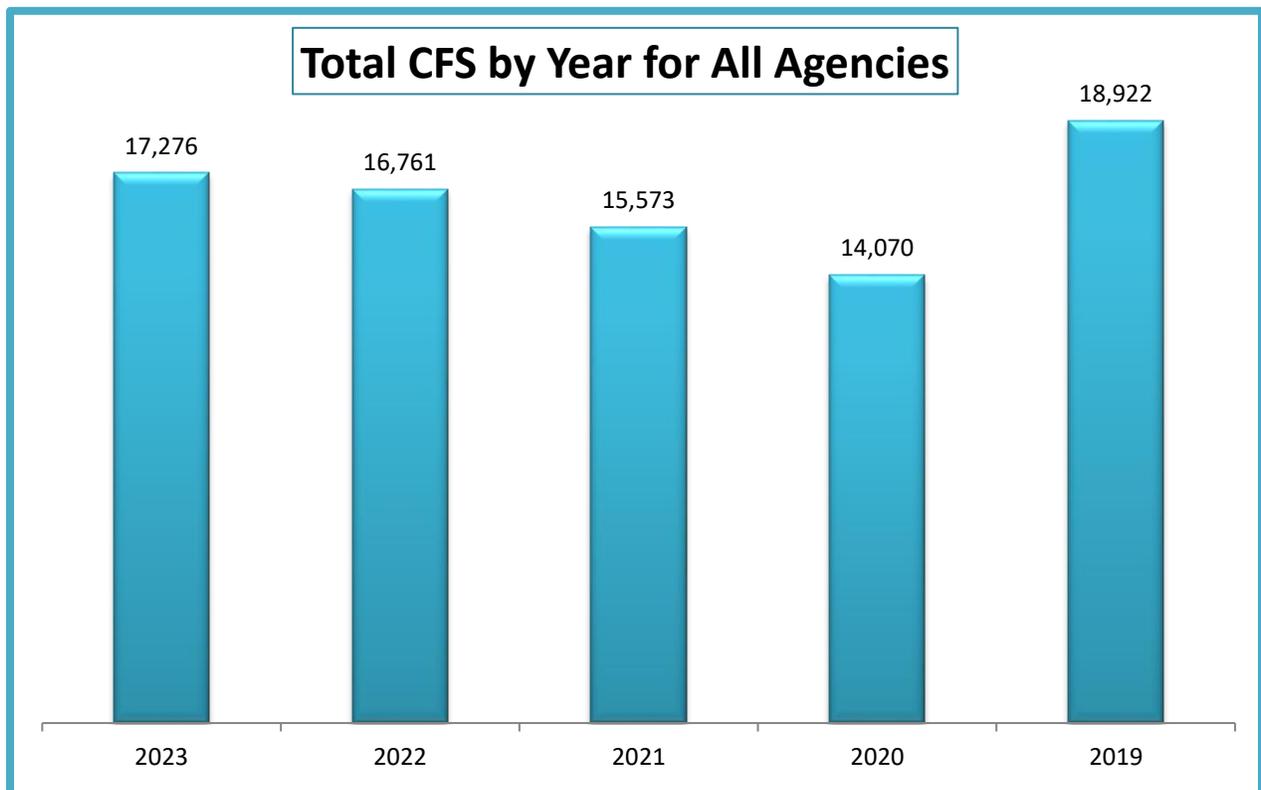
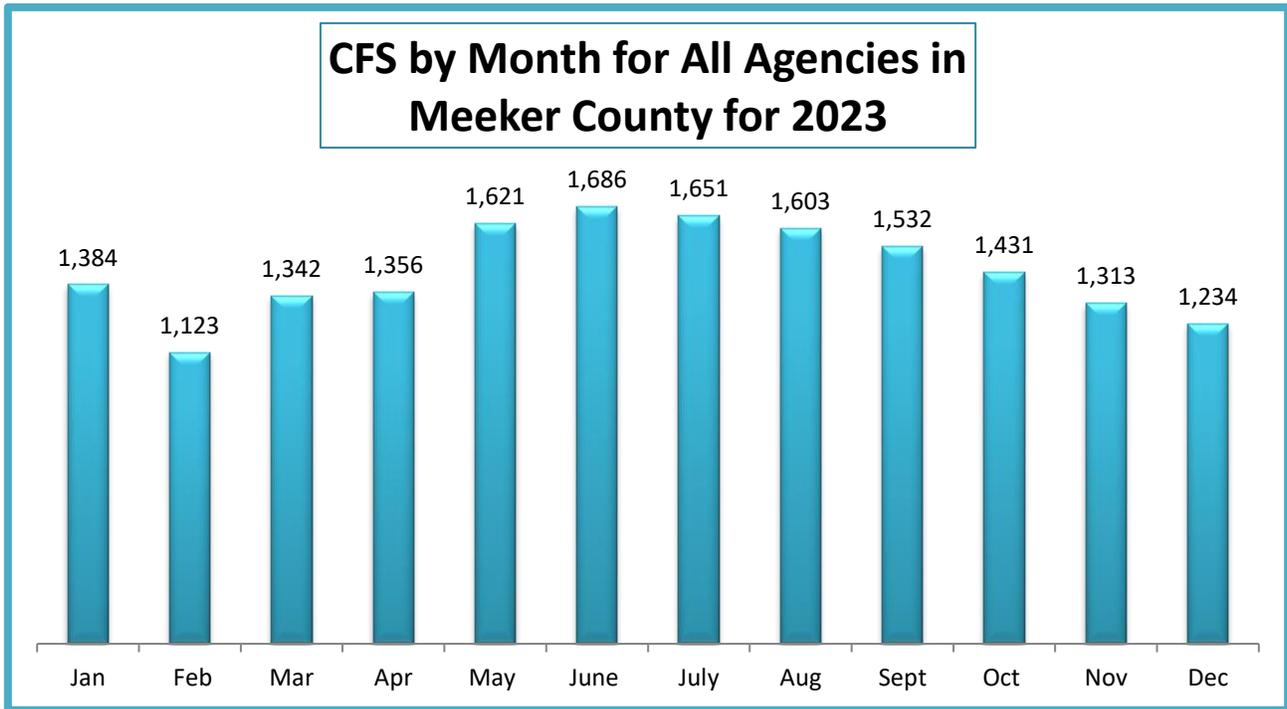
Type	Total	Percentage
■ Wireline	652	7.37
■ Wireless	8191	92.63
Total:	8843	100%

When we receive a cellular 911 call, we are set up to receive identifying information, including locations, with those calls. There are times when we don't initially receive all of that information so we "re-bid" the call in an effort to get this information from the cellular provider. In 2023 our dispatch center re-bid wireless calls 15,314 times throughout the year.

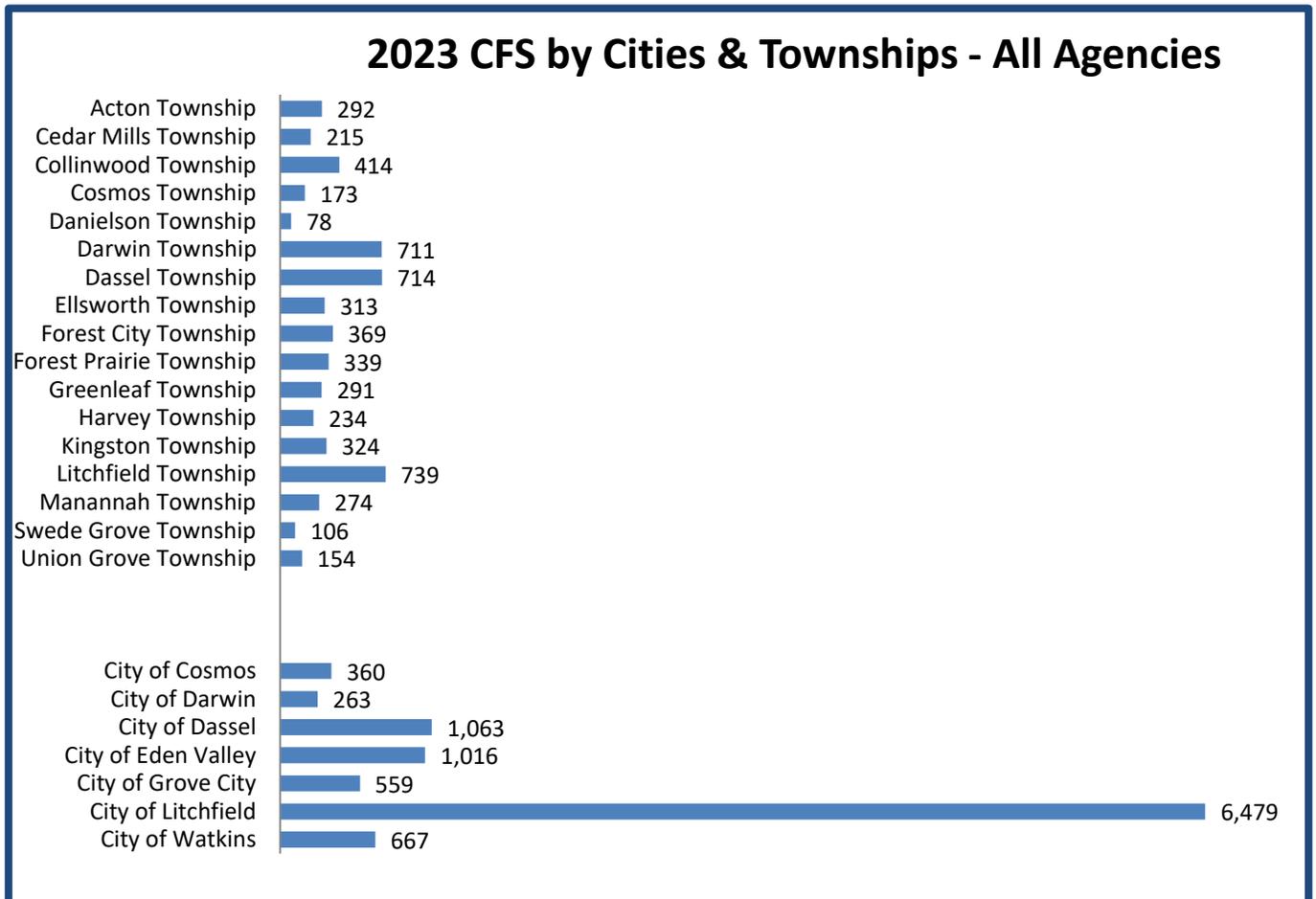
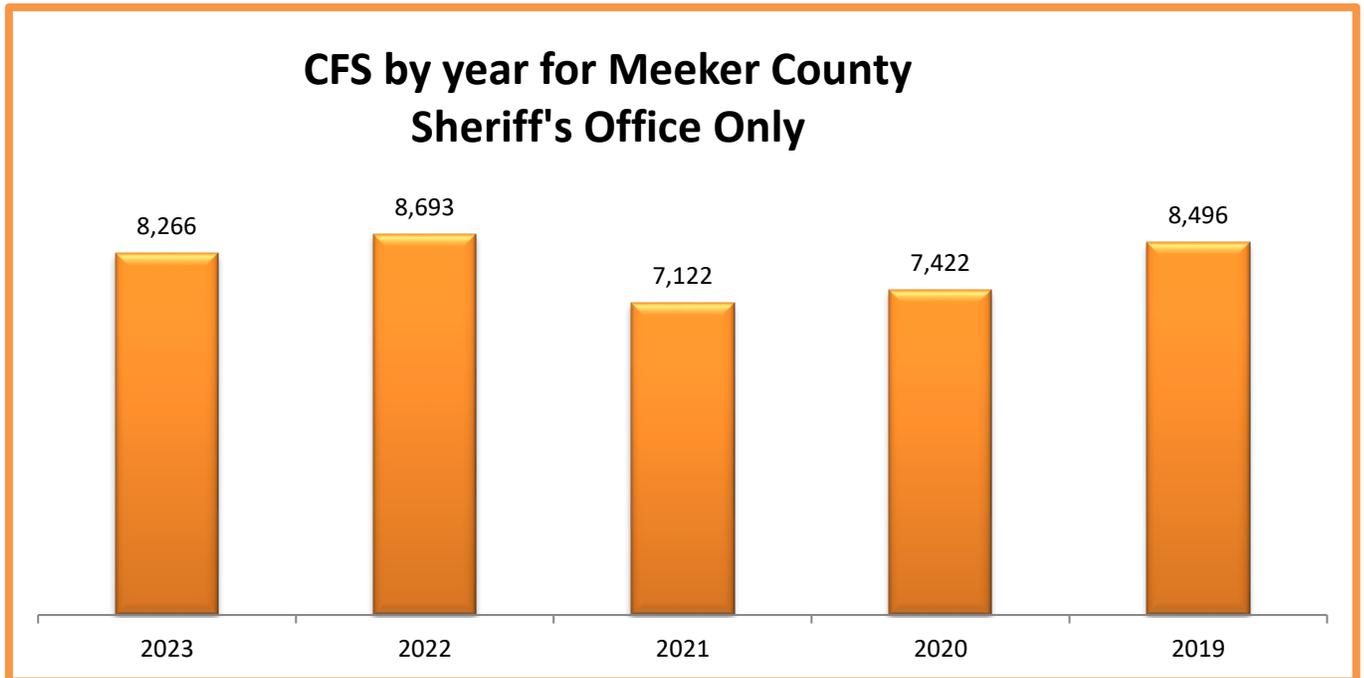
2023 Total Administrative calls for Meeker County: 19,203



2023 Total Calls for Service (CFS) for All Agencies in Meeker County: 17,276



2023 Total Calls for Service for Meeker County Sheriff's Office only: 8,266

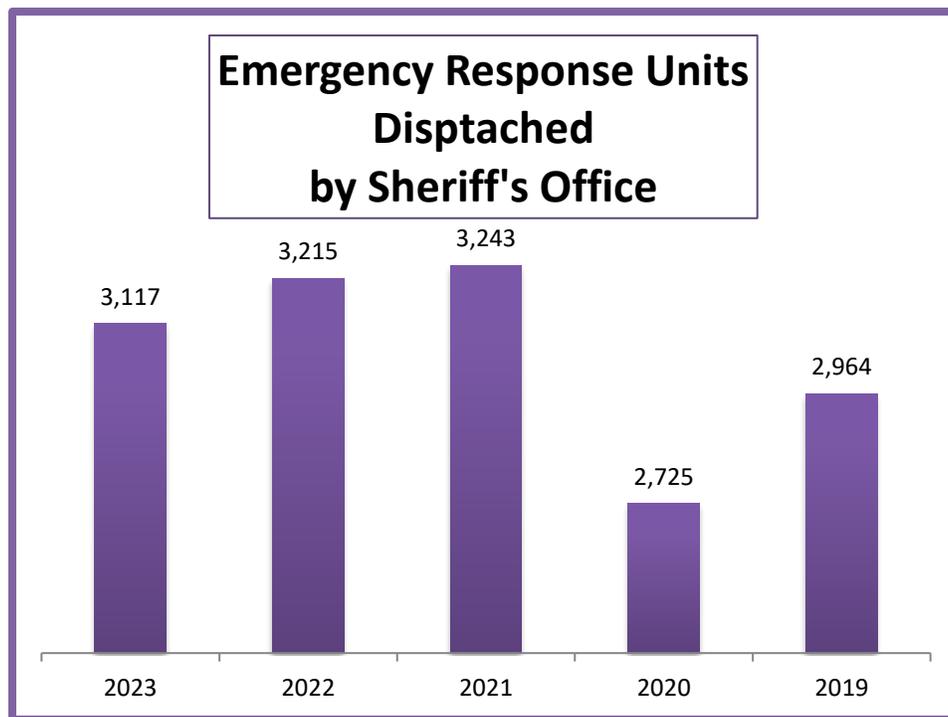




Emergency Response Units Dispatched
by Meeker County
Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center



Agency	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Cosmos Ambulance	79	81	68	58	75
Cosmos Fire & Rescue	13	36	24	16	28
Dassel Fire & Rescue	384	399	352	291	315
Eden Valley Fire	23	39	38	44	40
Eden Valley Rescue	112	123	168	124	120
Grove City Fire Department	28	38	25	29	24
Grove City Rescue	97	84	77	62	72
Litchfield Fire Department	99	124	114	124	115
Litchfield Rescue	439	429	692	477	472
Mayo Ambulance	1,234	1,213	1,152	998	1,103
Watkins Fire Department	44	58	33	31	24
Watkins Rescue & Ambulance	565	591	500	471	576
Total:	3,117	3,215	3,243	2,725	2,964





CodeRed is a free community notification system implemented by the Meeker County Sheriff's Office. The system is used to notify you of emergency and non-emergency events that could impact your safety. These notifications can go to landlines, cell phones, text messages, and email. Code Red is also available through a mobile app on your smartphone. To sign up for this free service go to our website and click on the CodeRed banner: www.co.meeker.mn.us/217/Sheriff

Patrol Services

Meeker County Deputies patrol the county, respond to medical emergencies, vehicle crashes, mental health calls, serve civil process papers, diffuse civil disputes, enforce criminal and traffic laws, respond to Calls for Service (CFS), and initiate criminal investigations.

Two of the leadership direction statements given to deputies to follow while out on patrol are 1) “Meeker County Sheriff’s Office personnel will work towards improved quality of life for all residents through pro-active patrols with an emphasis on investigations directed toward drunk driving and illegal drug activity.” 2) “Meeker County Sheriff’s Office personnel will work towards improved community relationships through pro-active community interactions (i.e. community events, presentations, training, etc.).” The high expectations of these directives will result in a more professional patrol unit that keeps public safety a top priority.

With the updated records software, we are able to get more detailed reports on specific calls. This provides a more comprehensive look at activity and allows a more focused approach in dealing with certain issues and/or crimes.

The 2023 total activity for Meeker County Sheriff's Office Deputies is as follows:

Criminal Call for Service	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Abuse/Neglect/Maltreatment	13	7	9	10	0
Abuse/Neglect/Maltreatment-Child	342	184	156	119	193
Arson	0	0	0	2	0
Assault	35	14	21	16	112
Domestic Assault*	141	111	79	100	
Burglary	45	29	39	25	45
Criminal Sexual Conduct	40	26	33	28	2
Damage to Property	61	54	61	73	65
Damage to Property -Mailbox	21	17	10	22	15
Domestic Abuse No Contact Order (DANCO) Violation	18	18	14	13	14
Drug Crimes (including drug paraphernalia)	44	61	44	63	33
Forgery	0	2	2	0	3
Fraud	24	18	30	24	6
Harassment	98	64	62	43	62
Harassment Restraining Order (HRO) Violation	23	12	6	4	8
Homicide	1	0	1	0	0
Kidnapping/False Imprisonment	0	0	0	0	0
Order for Protection (OFP) Violations	22	12	9	12	18
Ordinance Violations	212	61	58	62	68
Pursuit - Vehicle on Foot	15	12	10	12	4
Robbery	1	1	0	0	1
Search Warrants Executed	13	21	1	6	8
Theft/Stolen Property	102	145	109	110	104
Threats	38	50	30	40	30
Trespass	32	44	38	32	25
Vandalism	11	27	1	5	0
Vehicle Thefts	30	14	11	29	17
Warrant Arrests	146	119	73	69	0
Weapon Violations	1	4	1	1	6

**Prior to 2021 all assaults were counted in one category. Beginning in 2021, domestic assaults were given their own statistical category.

Other Calls for Service	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
9-1-1 Hang Ups/Misdial	604	226	142	262	115
Alarm	191	233	191	194	156
Animal Complaints-Dog	211	196	186	155	182
Animal Complaints- All Other	154	152	163	146	97
Assist Other Agencies	224	159	157	199	577
Civil Complaints	402	241	195	213	241
Deer Possession Tags Issued	28	26	23	42	38
Disturbance/Disorderly	156	83	73	99	37
Emotionally Disturbed Person	136	114	57	53	1
Fire	115	93	100	89	78
Juvenile Trouble	192	82	35	75	27
Medicals	1,616	456	148	196	256
Noise Complaints	86	27	30	33	43
Nuisance	21	10	6	12	12
Public Assists	812	438	388	288	262
Runaways	48	26	7	19	12
Scams	103	67	150	112	144
Shooting Complaint	15	15	22	27	17
Suicidal Individual	46	30	16	46	0
Suspicious Activity	316	332	298	370	292
Vacation/Security Checks	17	17	11	12	24
Vehicle Unlocks	50	46	61	61	69
Vulnerable Adult	70	74	43	36	47
Welfare Check	535	340	251	198	177

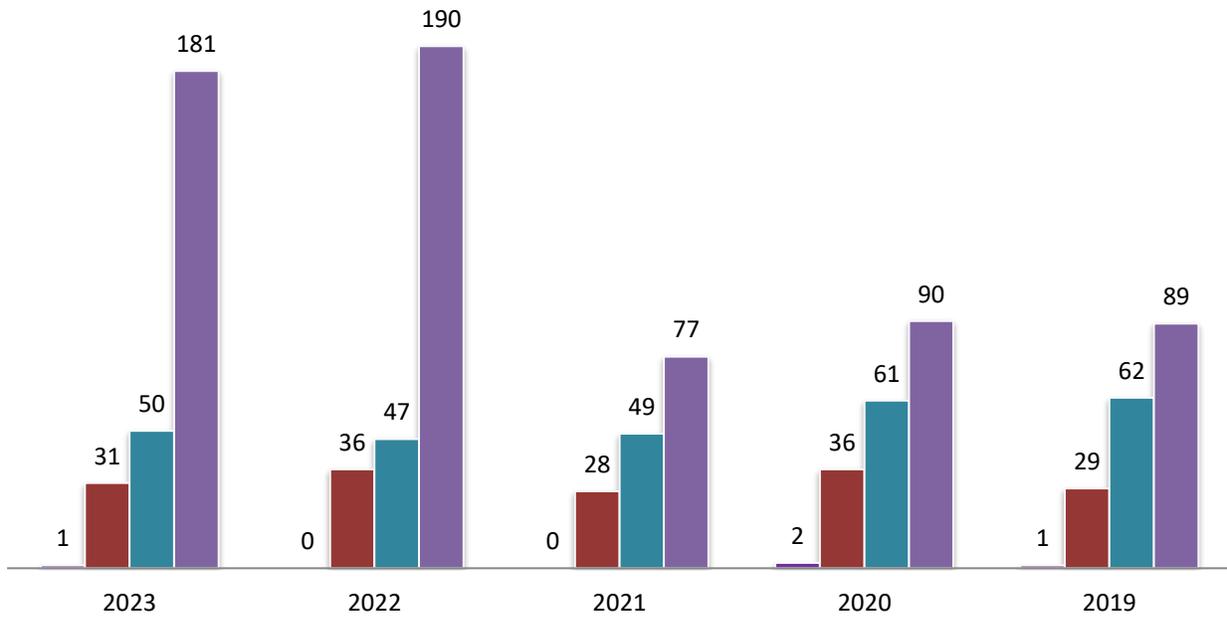
Meeker County Sheriff's Office Traffic Enforcement

Traffic Violations	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Distracted Driving/Hands Free Violations	5	6	10	9	
Driver's License Violations	53	67	54	51	35
DUI	46	55	78	62	39
Drugs/Drug Paraphernalia	4	15	14	18	
Motor Vehicle Registration	14	24	18	17	
Open Bottle	1	3	7	6	1
Parking Violations	2	19	13	3	0
Reckless/Careless Driving	5	6	10	17	7
School Bus Violations	3	8	3	4	3
Seat Belt Violations	0	2	5	6	16
Speed	162	202	264	256	208
Stop Sign Violations/Yield Violations	14	4	15	15	5
Under 21 Alcohol Consumption	8	9	20	16	1
Vehicle Registration Violations	2	3	7	7	3
All other citations	151	287	271	219	213
TOTAL:	470	710	789	706	531

Other Traffic Related Calls	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Traffic Stops	1,773	2,737	2,235	2,253	2,685
Abandoned Vehicles on Roadway	57	44	53	71	144
Driving Complaints	257	238	227	210	248
Motorist Assist	103	143	82	102	105
Traffic Hazards	115	147	88	86	98
Vehicle Off Roadway	81	92	59	63	105

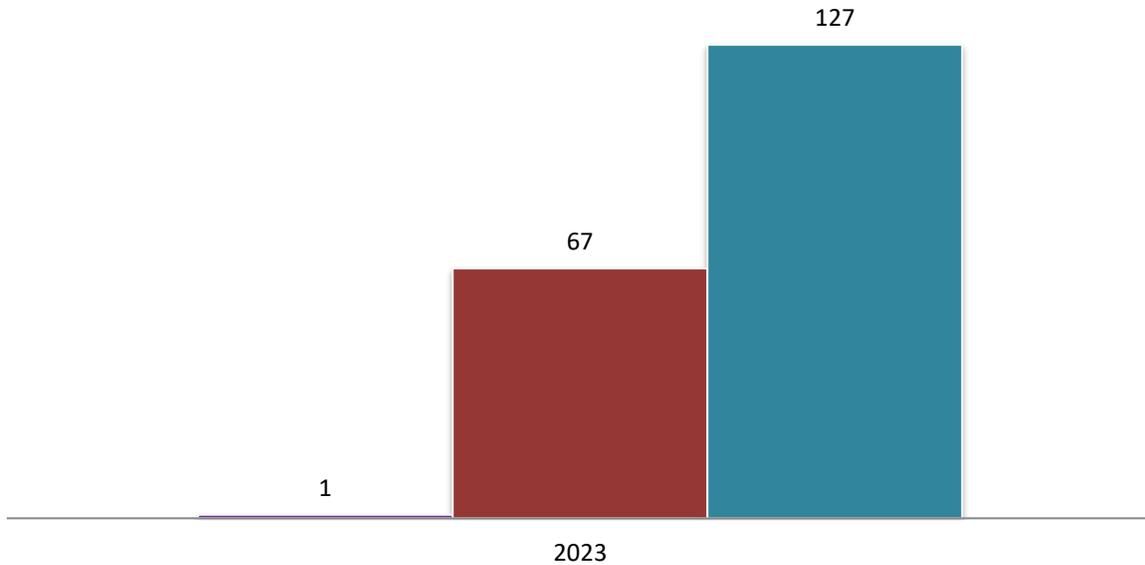
2023 Meeker County Sheriff's Office Reported Traffic Accidents

■ Fatal
 ■ Personal Injury
 ■ Property Damage
 ■ Motor Vehicle/Animal Accidents



2023 Total Traffic Accidents for All Agencies in Meeker County

■ Fatal
 ■ Personal Injury
 ■ Property Damage



Meeker County Contract Deputies

The Meeker County Sheriff's Office contracts with Dassel, Grove City, and Watkins for full-time policing services, and Cosmos for part-time policing services. The 2023 total activity for each contract city is as follows:

Contract Town Activity	2023 Calls for Service
Cosmos	300
Dassel	857
Grove City	486
Watkins	473

2023 Criminal Calls for Service	Cosmos	Dassel	Grove City	Watkins
Abuse-Neglect-Maltreatment	1	0	0	3
Assault	2	0	2	2
Burglary	2	7	4	5
Child Abuse - Neglect- Maltreatment	29	10	15	13
Check Forgery	0	0	0	0
Criminal Damage to Property	2	4	1	1
DANCO Violation	2	0	1	4
Disorderly Conduct	0	0	0	1
Disturbance	2	3	6	2
Domestics	6	8	7	9
Drugs/Paraphernalia	1	3	0	0
DUI	1	1	1	4
Forgery	0	0	0	0
Harassment/Stalking	1	7	10	9
HRO Violations	0	0	1	5
Homicides	0	0	0	0
Identity Theft	0	0	0	0
Lost/Found Property	0	2	0	0
Motor Vehicle Accident	1	18	4	5
Order for Protection (OFP) Violation	0	0	2	3

Pursuit Vehicle/Person	0	1	0	1
Robbery	0	0	0	1
Scams/Swindle	1	15	1	3
Sex Crime Offense	2	1	2	1
Stolen Vehicle	0	0	1	0
Tamper w/MV	0	0	0	0
Thefts	11	14	4	7
Threats	3	3	10	2
Trespass	0	2	5	3
Weapons Offenses	0	0	1	0

2023 Other Calls for Service	Cosmos	Dassel	Grove City	Watkins
9-1-1 Hang Ups	6	17	9	10
9-1-1 Mis or Accident Dial	10	26	19	17
Abandoned/Stalled Vehicles	1	4	2	1
Agency Standby/Assist	3	8	8	8
Alarms	1	23	15	38
Animal Complaints	7	24	24	27
Arrest Warrant	5	9	2	4
Assist Other Agencies	0	0	0	0
ATV Complaint	0	2	3	0
Burning Complaint	0	0	0	0
Carbon Monoxide Alarm	0	0	0	0
Debris on Roadway	0	0	0	0
Deliver Emergency Messages	0	0	0	0
Driving Complaints	3	24	9	7
Escorts	0	3	2	0
Fire Calls	2	5	2	1
Funeral Escort	0	0	0	0
Gas Drive Off	0	0	9	1
HAZMAT/Chemical Spill	0	1	0	0
Medicals	16	40	34	19
Motorist Assist	1	9	3	1
Noise Complaints	1	4	3	2

Ordinance Violations	2	19	1	3
Public Assist	16	44	34	37
Shooting Complaint	1	2	0	2
Suspicious Activity/Person/Vehicle	5	74	27	30
Tobacco Violation	0	0	0	0
Traffic Stops - Citations /Warnings	75	233	33	52
Unsecure Doors - Residential & Business	0	2	0	0
Vacation/Security Checks	0	2	1	0
Vehicle Lock Out	3	14	6	4
Welfare Check	19	38	16	36

K-9 Services



MCSO K-9 Maverick and Deputy Welz

We received a new K-9, Maverick, in 2022. Maverick is a purebred German Sheppard from Slovakia. Maverick and his handler, Deputy Welz, spent 12 weeks together training in 2022 before Maverick was put out on regular patrol. Maverick is United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) certified in patrol and narcotics detection.

Investigative Services

The Meeker County Sheriff’s Office currently has three full-time detectives responsible for investigating criminal activity including child abuse/neglect, vulnerable adult crimes, welfare fraud, sexual assaults, financial crimes, fraud, computer/internet crimes, thefts, burglaries, death investigations (natural, suicide and homicide), robberies, etc. Of the 8,266 Calls for Service received by Meeker County Sheriff’s Office in 2023, 296 were forwarded to the detectives for further investigation. The detectives are also responsible for background investigations of potential new hires as well as internal affairs investigations.

Meeker County contracts with Midwest Medical Examiner’s Office for coroner services. Death Investigators respond to the scene of reported deaths and work with the Sheriff’s Office to complete the death investigation. Of the 186 reported deaths in Meeker County in 2023, nine autopsies were performed as a part of those death investigations. "Reportable, Declined" includes deaths that were investigated but the actual death certificate was signed by a local M.D. The following is a report by the Medical Examiner’s Office for reported deaths for all of Meeker County:



Meeker County Deaths	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Motor Vehicle Accident	0	1	2	2	2
Non-Motor Vehicle Accident	5	8	1	4	3
Reportable, Declined	118	113	108	165	139
Natural	7	10	7	10	6
Suicide	1	7	3	5	4
Homicide	1	0	1	0	1
Drugs/Substance Abuse	5	1			
Accident, Not Otherwise Specified	0	1			
Total	137	141	122	186	155

Drug and Gang Investigations

The Meeker County Sheriff's Office has two detectives assigned to the CEE-VI Drug and Gang Task Force. CEE stands for Cooperative Enforcement Effort and the Roman numeral VI stands for the original six counties that were a part of the cooperative when it was formed in 1990. The CEE-VI Drug and Gang Task Force currently consists of the following counties: Meeker, Chippewa, Kandiyohi, Swift, and Yellow Medicine. There is federal, state, and local funding used for this initiative. The funding includes a per capita charge of \$5.00 in each member county. The counties that provide personnel are reimbursed for salary and benefits. The following is the reported activity for all of Meeker County:

CEE-VI Drug Task Force Statistics	2023	2022	2021
Arrests	41 (0 gang)	60 (6 gang)	46 (1 gang)
Drug and/or Gang Presentations			2 for 65 people
Searches	39	42	28
Children Removed	5	7	10
Asset Seizures			
Cash	\$8,116.00	\$8,004.00	\$37,701.00
Vehicles	0	0	2
Hand Guns	0	12	1
Long Guns	0	28	8
Drugs Seizures			
Cocaine	1.30 grams	None	87.30 grams
Fentanyl/FRS Pills	17.00 pills	1064.00 pills	
Fentanyl/FRS Powder	.50 grams	0.10 grams	
Hashish	None	None	None
Heroin	None	None	None
Marijuana	125.27 grams (.28 lbs)	771.30 grams (1.70 lbs)	1654.30 grams (3.65 lbs)
Marijuana - concentrate	None	None	None
Meth	2748.22 grams (6.06 lbs)	1415.31 grams (3.12 lbs)	4849.71 grams (10.70 lbs)
Prescription	165.50 pills	59.00 pills	15.00 pills

Kandiyohi - Meeker SWAT

In 2020 we formed a partnership with the Kandiyohi County Sheriff's Office SWAT team. SWAT stands for Special Weapons and Tactics. While we recognized a need for a specialized team in Meeker County, we didn't have the call load, resources, or financial means to create an independent team based on sporadic needs. By joining an established team, we have access to resources, training, and knowledge that would otherwise not be available to us. With this partnership, the team is available for high-risk incidents throughout Meeker County. In return, we have personnel dedicated to the unit that can be utilized in Kandiyohi County. Kandiyohi County Sheriff's Office SWAT is a long-standing, well-established unit that is highly respected throughout the region.



Once this partnership was formed the name was changed to reflect the new team and is currently referred to as Kandiyohi Meeker SWAT. We currently have seven members of the Meeker County Sheriff's Office assigned to this team. The utilization of this team is based on an established threat matrix which means the team is only used in high-risk situations. This is meant to better protect the public and the deputies assigned when those situations arise.

In 2023, the threat matrix was reviewed on nine occasions and the Kandiyohi Meeker SWAT team was utilized once in Meeker County on a warrant service. This warrant service was for the arrest of individuals suspected of committing armed robberies in the Twin Cities area.

In 2021, Meeker County received an armored Humvee from the Federal Government at no cost to be utilized by the team. Thanks to some generous donations, the Humvee was upgraded and outfitted with necessary emergency equipment. This armored Humvee allows deputies better protection and the ability to approach unknown situations safely. It enhances public safety in a time when gun-related calls are on the rise and gun violence, in general, is becoming more prevalent. As with the team itself, the armored Humvee is meant to better protect the public and the deputies assigned to those high-risk situations.

Meeker County Safe Roads Coalition

The Meeker County Sheriff's Office is partnered with the Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) Meeker County Safe Roads Coalition. This coalition brings the State TZD philosophy to the local level. The Joyride program and School Safety Day are an example of the work from this coalition. Joyride is a program that gives those who are celebrating at local bars an opportunity to get a safe and sober ride home. School Safety Day brings first responders into the school to educate our young drivers on the serious consequences of distracted driving and driving under the influence. The coalition also works on bringing traffic education to the public at various health and community expos along with setting up child safety seat inspections.

What is TZD?

The Toward Zero Deaths approach is based on the belief that even one traffic-related death on our roads is unacceptable. This "zero deaths" idea was first adopted in Sweden in 1997 as "Vision Zero" and since then has evolved to several state Departments of Transportation (DOT), including Minnesota, that have identified zero deaths as a core objective in their Strategic Highway Safety Plans.

TZD uses a data-driven, interdisciplinary approach that targets areas for improvement and employs proven countermeasures, integrating the application of education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical and trauma services (the "4Es"). A combination of strategies from different focus areas is often most effective for solving a particular problem.

Mental Health Response

Meeker County patrol deputies often times are the first responder for someone in a mental health crisis. While our deputies are trained to handle these situations, we recognize they are not the best resource for the person in crisis. We have seen an increase in these calls in recent years, especially during the pandemic. Through our partnership with Meeker County Social Services and Woodland Centers, the Sheriff's Office started a pilot program in 2020 to address mental health calls. This program

allows the patrol deputies on scene to directly contact a mental health provider via telecommunications through tablets the deputies are issued. This gives the deputies the tools they need to assess the situation better and provide initial services on scene. Too often, we don't have the tools to make a proper assessment which means the person requires transport to a hospital for evaluation. Partnering with the Mental Health Professionals from Woodland Centers allows the deputies to better assess the person's needs while on the scene. Services are provided immediately to those assessed as being in a mental health crisis.

In addition to the telecommunication services, the Sheriff's Office also utilizes Woodland Centers' Mental Health Urgent Care Team. This team can respond to the scene and provide in-person assistance to those in immediate need as well. Our goal with these partnerships and programs is to get people who are in mental health crisis the proper resources as quickly and efficiently as possible.



Public Safety Community Paramedic

In 2022, we hired a Public Safety Community Paramedic full-time. Before 2022 we contracted this position for one day a week. By bringing the position in-house, we can provide services 5 days a week. The program is designed to supplement our medical and mental health response in the county.

The Public Safety Community Paramedic functions as a member of the County Public Safety / Social Service / Public Health team, providing assessment and care to persons

with medical, behavioral, mental health, social, and chemical dependency needs. They identify persons in need and assist in providing limited medical care to them, connecting these people with the available community and medical resources for future assistance. They also provide emergency response assistance to acute medical needs in the community when available to do so.

Provided Services Include:

- Mental Health Response
- Wellness Visits, Chronic Disease Monitoring and Education
- Medication Review and Medication Management
- Administration of Immunizations and Vaccinations
- Laboratory Specimen Collection
- Hospital and Emergency Room Discharge Follow-up Cares
- Home and environment safety assessment which includes: Fall Assessment, and the need for durable medical equipment for independent living.
- Researches, contacts, and schedules medical, mental health, and social service appointments.
- Responds to scheduled healthcare, mental health, social services, or chemical dependency appointments with persons needing assistance.
- Responds to medical emergencies and assists our partner emergency response units.

Drone Program

In 2023 we started looking at drone technology to assist operations within the Sheriff's Office. This was a non-budgeted item so we turned to the public to assist with funds to purchase the drone. With the support of a very generous public, we were able to implement the drone program in very short order. The drones will be used for search and rescue purposes such as looking for a lost child, a person with dementia, or the hunter who gets disoriented and lost. We will use it to aid in criminal apprehension of suspects along with mapping of crash and crimes scenes.

Within a week of getting our first drone, we used it on a call of an ATV in the Crow River. The ATV was in a location not easily accessible due to steep embankments. Through the use of the drone we were able to quickly determine there were no occupants in or around the ATV and that it was in fact a stolen ATV. During the winter



Photo Courtesy Independent Review

of 2023-2024 the drone was used to apprehend a suspect and save his life. Deputies were involved with a pursuit of a suspect who crashed his vehicle and fled the scene. Due to weather conditions, the deputies quickly lost sight of the suspect and were unable to locate him. A drone was deployed and located the suspect a quarter mile away. The suspect ran into a marshy area and couldn't get out. With the cold temperatures, blowing snow, and darkness, it is likely the deputies would have not found him through a ground search and he likely would have died of exposure. With the technology of the drone, we were able to detect a heat signature and direct deputies to his location.

We know the drone technology will save lives and we are extremely grateful for the financial support of our community to get this technology off the ground. Donations were made to the Meeker County Sheriff's Office Drone Program by the following:

Custom Products of Litchfield, Inc.; Cobank; First District Association; Tim & Lori Erickson; Randy's Towing; Doosan Bobcat; Koch Industries, Inc.; Center National Bank (and all those that attended the Community Impact Month Burger Feed); Robert and Arlene Groskreutz; Towmaster; Litchfield Rotary Club; Centra Sota Cooperative; Marge Hellzen; Kingston Lions.

The Independent Review Newspaper did a news story on the program and that story can be viewed on their website by clicking on this link: [Independent Review Story](#).

D.A.R.E. Program



In a typical school year millions of school children around the world will benefit from D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), the highly acclaimed program that gives kids the skills they need to avoid involvement in drugs, gangs, and violence. D.A.R.E. was founded in 1983

in Los Angeles and has proven so successful it is now being implemented in 75 percent of our nation’s school districts and in more than 52 countries around the world.

The Meeker County Sheriff’s Office provides this program to the 5th grade classes in both the Atwater Cosmos Grove City (ACGC) and Eden Valley-Watkins (EVW) school districts. D.A.R.E. Deputy Josh Case is assigned to EVW and D.A.R.E. Deputy Sam Swisher was assigned to ACGC. In 2017 we updated our D.A.R.E. program to the new curriculum called “Keepin’ it REAL,” which puts an emphasis on decision-making skills instead of drug lectures. D.A.R.E. envisions a



world in which students everywhere are empowered to respect others and choose to lead lives free from violence, substance abuse and other dangerous behaviors. At the completion of our 10 week program, we host a D.A.R.E. graduation for the families of the D.A.R.E. students. As a special treat, we bring in a magician who, through a very entertaining magic show, reinforces the D.A.R.E. teachings.

2023 ACGC DARE Class



2023 EVW DARE Class



Snowmobile / Boat and Water / OHV Patrols

The Meeker County Sheriff's Office is responsible for Snowmobile, Off Highway Vehicle (OHV), and Water Safety patrol and enforcement. Patrol deputies and seasonal water patrol deputies work these patrols year round. Grant monies received from the State of Minnesota help with enforcement efforts and needed equipment.

Snowmobile Safety Enforcement Grant

The Snowmobile Safety Enforcement Grant for fiscal year 2023 was \$2,046,000. The fiscal year runs from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. We received 5 snowmobile complaints in 2023 and no reports of a snowmobile accident.



OHV Safety Enforcement Grant (Off-Highway Vehicle)

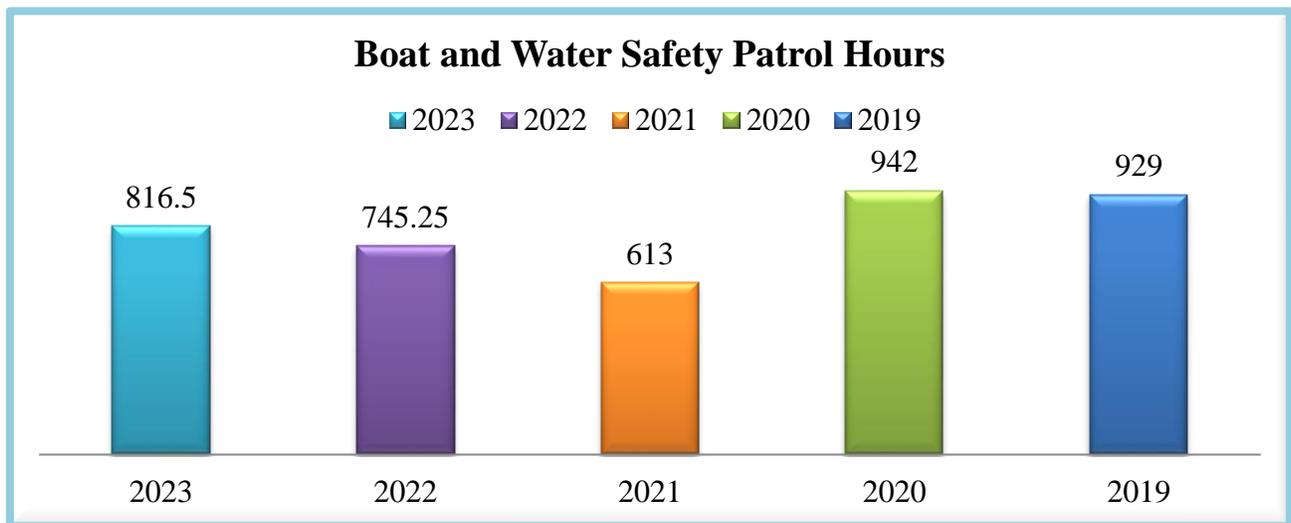
The Meeker County Sheriff’s Office received \$4,973.00 for the OHV Safety Enforcement Grant fiscal year 2023. The fiscal year runs from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. We received 21 OHV complaints in 2023 and investigated three injury OHV accidents.



Boat and Water Safety Grant



The Boat and Water Safety Grant runs from January 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. The grant for the 2023 fiscal year was \$11,635. The Meeker County Sheriff’s Office also partnered with the county Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program and has additional resources for dedicated AIS inspections. We received seven boating complaints, with no boat injuries. In 2023, the total AIS hours were 154 for which the AIS committee reimbursed the Sheriff’s Office \$2,672.28.



Boat and Water	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Complaints	7	10	7	14	17
Temporary Structure Permits	28	26	24	26	25

Training

The Meeker County Sheriff's Office remains committed to making the Sheriff's Office the best it can be and one the public can be proud of and trust. This is achieved through continued professionalism and highly trained Sheriff's Office personnel. The Minnesota Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board is responsible for licensing Peace Officers in the State of Minnesota. As a requirement of this license, each deputy is required to complete a minimum of 48 hours of continuing education every three years. It is not uncommon for deputies to have two to three times the minimum number of hours. We train on all aspects of law enforcement including those we rarely encounter. The public expects we will be trained and able to handle whatever situation we encounter. We take this responsibility very seriously and spend countless hours each year to better our skills and knowledge of this job. In addition to all the law enforcement training, deputies are also certified Emergency Medical Responders (EMR). Deputies routinely respond to and provide EMR level services on a variety of medical calls in the county.



ICLD

All full time employees are enrolled in the Institute for Credible Learning and Development (ICLD) leadership program through a partnership with the Minnesota's Sheriff's Association (MSA). The leadership program is a comprehensive, career-long leadership education and developmental program. Participants complete an in-depth journey by addressing relevant topics and proven theories offered by ICLD.

A majority of law enforcement professionals attending the ICLD program report the following positive outcomes:

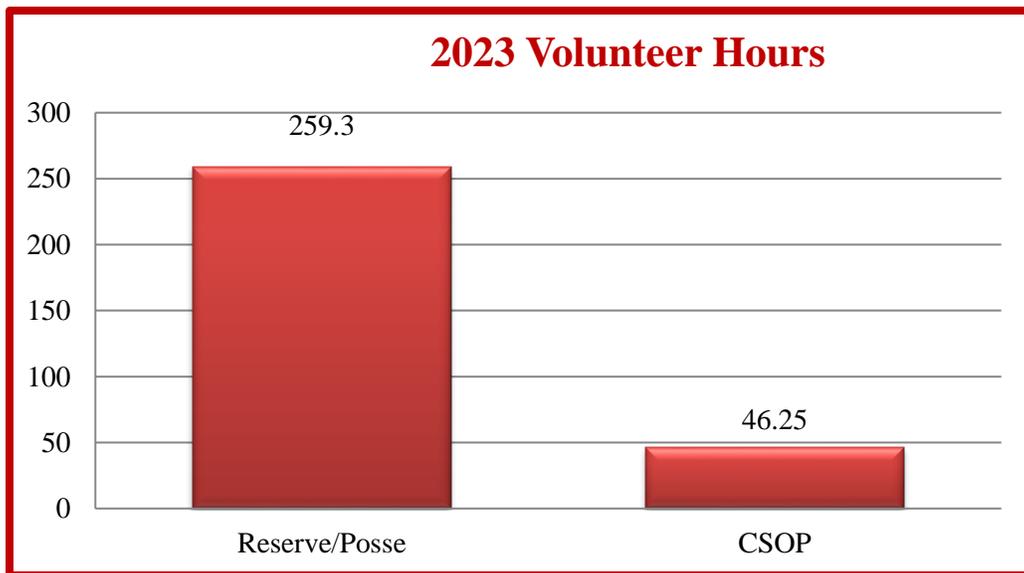
- Increased officer safety.



- Increased organizational thought.
- Reduction in stress.
- Reduction in citizen complaints.
- Increased capacity in character building behaviors.
- Increased accountability and responsibility.
- Increased personnel engagement and job satisfaction.
- Improved personal self-awareness and decision-making.
- Improved integrity of personal and professional conduct.
- Enhanced personnel civic mindedness and involvement in the community.
- Increased cross-cultural awareness, understanding and tolerance.
- Increased ability to develop partnerships with community representatives.

Community Engagement

One of the leadership direction statements to staff is “Meeker County Sheriff’s Office personnel will work towards improved community relationships through pro-active community interactions.” We understand the importance of a positive relationship with the public and we make efforts to attend public events and civic organization meetings along with programs such as I Got Caught and Shop With A Cop. We also have volunteers that donate time to assist in operations to include the Reserve, Posse and Community Service Officer Paramedics (CSOP).



National Night Out

National Night Out is a nationwide annual event held on the first Tuesday in August. The goal of National Night Out is to enhance relationships between neighbors and law enforcement with an emphasis on ensuring a true sense of community. These positive interactions are a great opportunity for the public to see law enforcement on a personal level. The Meeker County Sheriff's Office was a part of four organized events in 2023; Cosmos, Dassel, Grove City, Litchfield, and Watkins.





Shop With A Cop

Through generous donations from the Litchfield Police Association, Meeker County Sheriff's Deputy Association and private donors, local law enforcement is able to help families make Christmas a little brighter for their children. Based on need, children are selected and then paired with a member of law enforcement for an evening of Christmas shopping. It's a fun night and a great positive interaction for all attending.



I Got Caught

Through a partnership with AAA, Dairy Queen, MN Chief's of Police Association and the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association, Deputies handed out "I Got Caught" coupons to kids who were observed wearing a helmet while riding bikes or scooters, skate boarding or skating. The coupon is for a free ice cream cone at Dairy Queen.



Litchfield Bike Rodeo

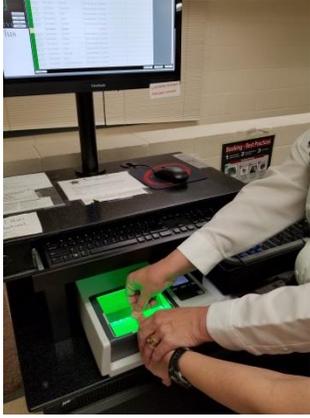


Trunk or Treat – Litchfield and Watkins



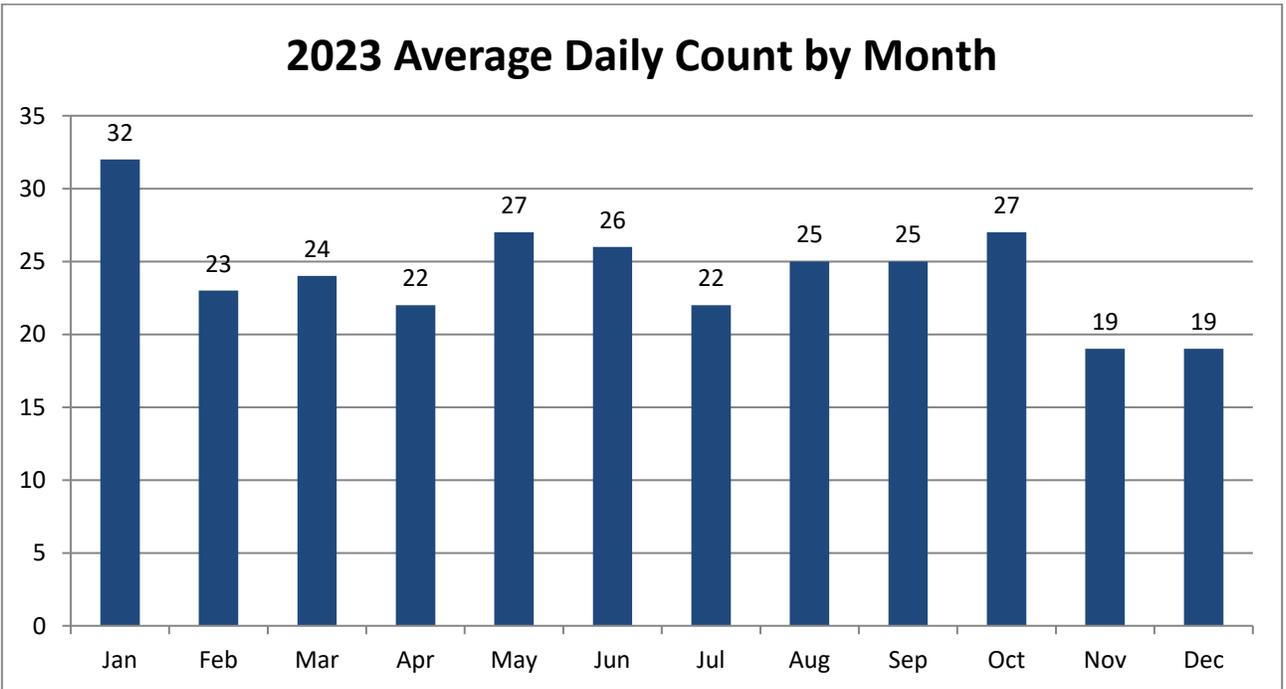
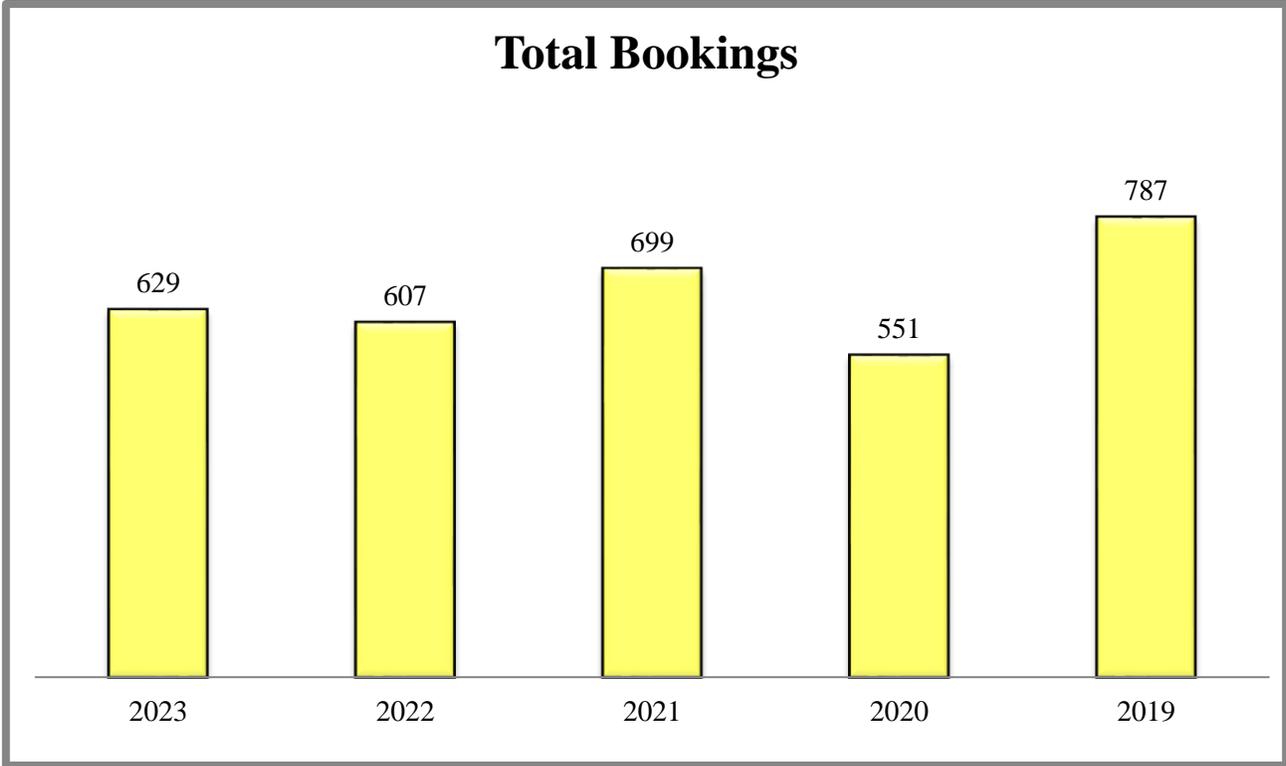
Meeker County Jail

The Meeker County Sheriff's Office Jail is responsible for housing inmates awaiting court, as well as those who are sentenced for misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor offenses. The average daily population for 2023 was 24 inmates per day. The Jail also boards inmates from other counties and the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC). The Meeker County Sheriff's Office charged \$65.00 per day in 2023 for inmates who were boarded for other jurisdictions. The boarding revenue received for 2023 was \$146,962.13. The average stay for all inmates booked into our facility in 2023 was 11 days.

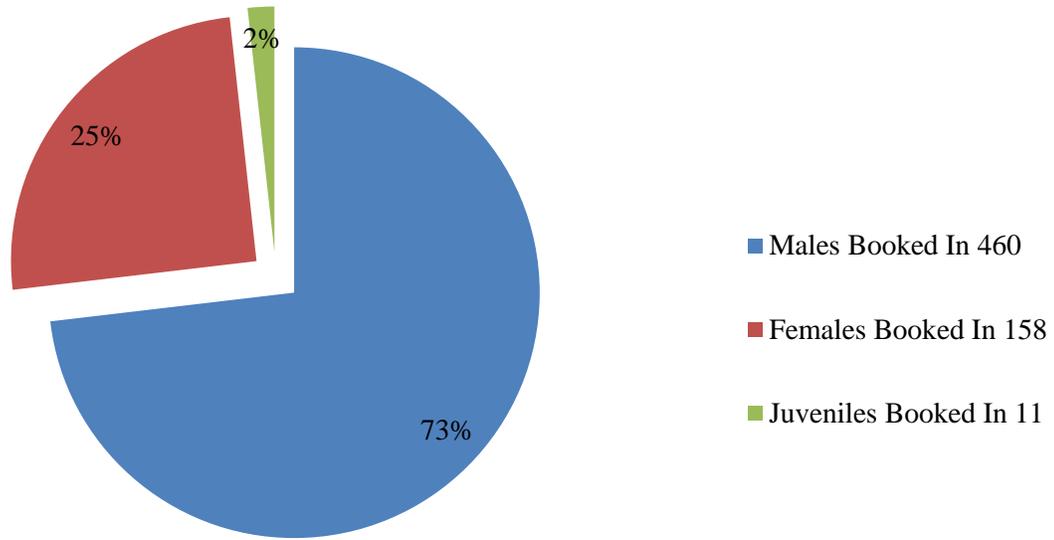


In an effort to address inmate mental health in our jail, we have teamed with Meeker County Social Services for a new pilot program in 2020. Through this partnership we have a designated Social Worker to address the mental health needs of the inmates. The Social Worker and our Jail Programmer work together to identify inmates with mental health issues and the Social Worker works to find the appropriate resources to address those needs. The Social Worker will meet with the inmate as needed and will set up assistance and resources when the person is released. Our goal is to provide the inmate proper resources upon release to address their mental health needs to reduce the possibility of future arrest.

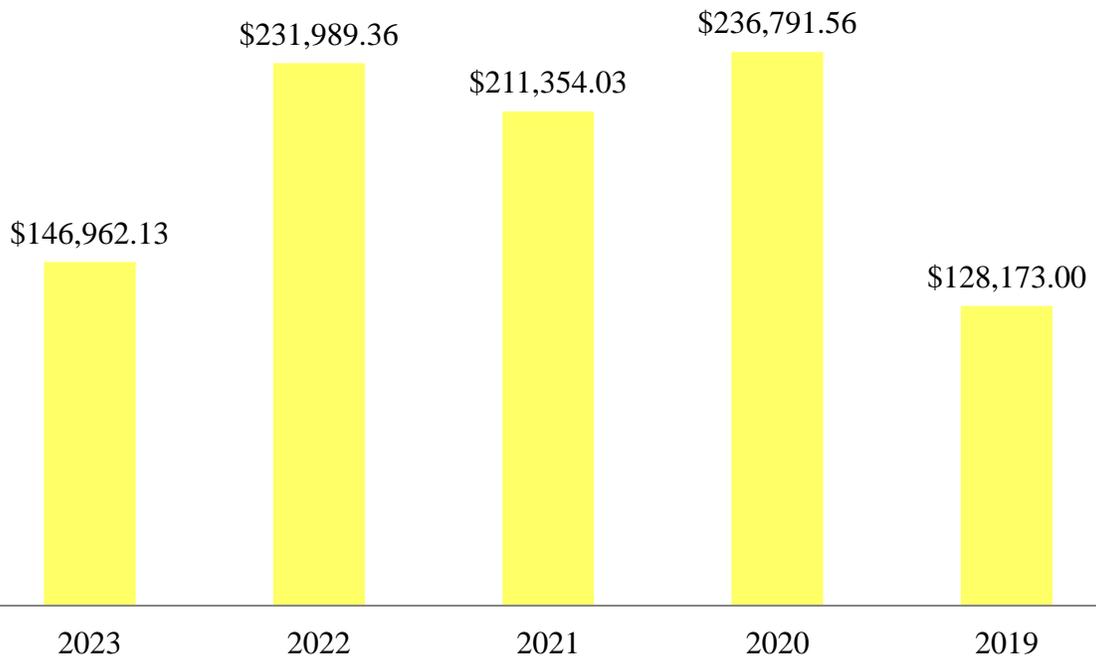
The Meeker County Jail has approximately 14 Jail Programs with volunteers who come into the jail on a weekly and monthly basis. Programs include NA, AA, Public Health, Minnesota Adult Teen Challenge, Social Services and many local church groups. Our volunteers that come into the jail to have programs for inmates at times spend a combined 60 hours per week volunteering. Our Jail volunteers are greatly appreciated by staff as those people in custody that attend programs have shown much more compliant behavior than those that do not attend. National studies have shown that Jail Programs can reduce the recidivism rate by up to 20% in county jails. Our staff is very appreciative of our volunteers for taking the time to come into a jail setting and help those people in custody.

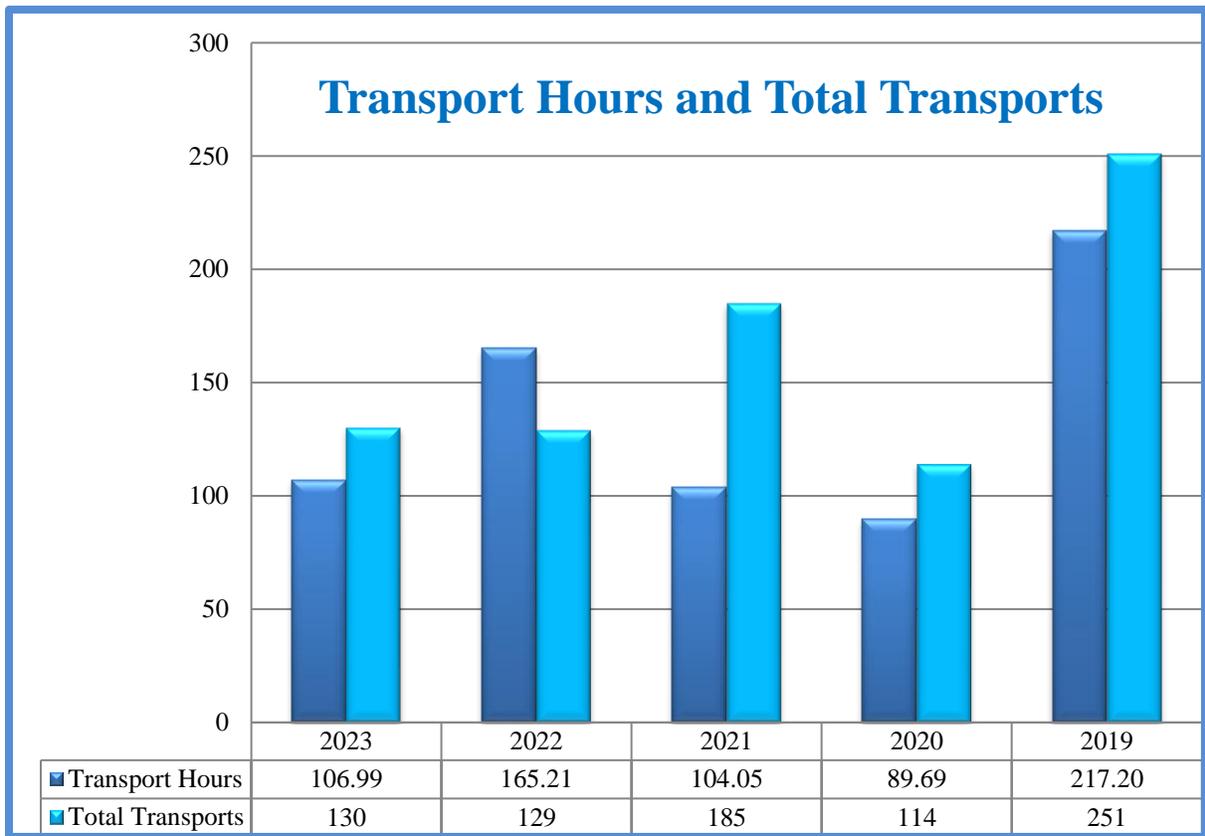


Percentage of Bookings for 2023 Total Booked: 629



Boarding Fees Received





Court Security

The security of the Meeker County Courthouse is the responsibility of the Sheriff’s Office. In 2018 we installed a security checkpoint on the court level. This checkpoint is staffed during all hours court is in session. This is in addition to armed bailiffs and a court security deputy. In 2023, 104 knives, 1 firearm, numerous scissors, bullets, multi-tools, mace, razor blades, and other sharp metal objects were seized. Twenty-three warrant arrests were made at the checkpoint. Court security remains a high priority for Meeker County and we continue to explore options to improve prisoner movement in public areas to ensure public safety. Sheriff Cruze fully supports these initiatives to improve security and safety in the Meeker County Courthouse.



Civil Process Services



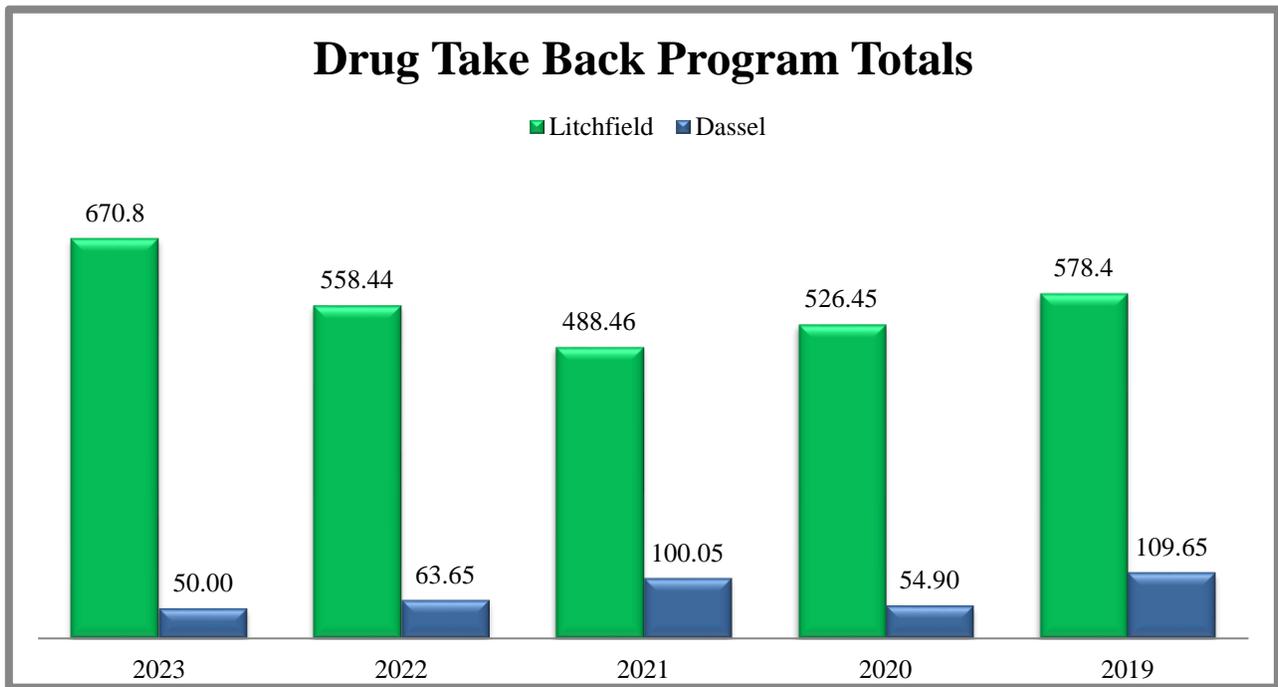
In 2023, the Meeker County Sheriff’s Office served a total of 392 civil process papers. The most common types of papers a deputy sheriff serves include Summons & Complaints, Subpoenas, Mortgage Foreclosures, Orders, Evictions, Writs of Recovery, Writs of Execution, Orders for Protection, Harassment Restraining Orders, and Affidavits. In 2023, the Sheriff’s Office collected \$14,580.79 in civil process service fees.

SHERIFF FEES 2023		
911 recordings (911 calls, radio traffic on data CD/DVD)	\$ 30.00	Per hour (1 hr minimum charged)
Credit Card Processing Fee (minimum)	\$ 1.50	Per transaction
Animal Fees:		
~ Dangerous Dog Registration Fee	\$ 100.00	Per year
~ Dangerous/Potentially Dangerous Dog Review Hearing	\$ 500.00	Per hearing
~ Pound Pickup Fee	\$ 50.00	Per animal
~ Impoundment Fee	\$ 5.00	Per day (charged after first 24 hours)
Audio/Video Recordings on CD/DVD	\$ 30.00	Per hour (1 hr minimum charged)
Background Check: In-House	\$ 5.00	Per person (for private business or agency. Does not include government agencies or branches of the Armed Forces)
Civil Process Fees:		
~Notice of Intent to Redeem	\$ 100.00	Per notice
~ Paper Service	\$ 80.00	Up to 3 attempts, mileage included
~ Each Additional Attempt	\$ 30.00	Mileage included
~ Additional Papers at Same Address	\$ 30.00	Mileage included
~ Return of Unserved Process	\$ 80.00	Mileage included
~ Redemption of Property Mortgagor	\$ 250.00	Per redemption
~ Sale Notice - Posting 3 Copies	\$ 80.00	Per parcel
~ Sheriff Sales	\$ 90.00	Per sale
~ Writ of Execution Commission Service	6%	Per writ/\$20 minimum charged
~ Writ of Execution Service	\$ 84.00	Per writ
Deputy Time:		
~ Standard	\$ 70.00	Per hour (3 hr minimum charged)
~ Deputy: Squad Required for Roadway Escorts	\$ 90.00	Per hour (3 hr minimum charged)
~ Deputy: Reserve/Posse time	\$ 20.00	Per hour
False Alarm Fees:		
~ 4th & 5th in a Year	\$ 25.00	Each

~ 6th & Subsequent in a Year	\$ 50.00	Each
Fax: Sent or Received	\$ 0.25	Per page
Firearms Storage Fee	\$ 1.00	Per day per gun (30 day minimum charged)
Gun Permits:		
~ Meeker Residents: New	\$ 40.00	Per permit
~ Meeker Residents: Renew	\$ 35.00	Per permit
~ Out-of-State Residents: New	\$ 75.00	Per permit
~ Out-of-State Residents: Renew	\$ 70.00	Per permit
~ Purchase/Transfer Permit	Free	Per permit
~ Replacement Cards	\$ 10.00	Per permit
Impound Storage Fee	\$ 15.00	Per day (effective 5 days after date of Notice of Impoundment letter)
Jail Fees:		
~ Fingerprint Cards: Out-of-County Resident	\$ 15.00	Per card
~ Fingerprint Cards: Meeker Resident	Free	Per card
~ Booking Fee	\$ 25.00	Per booking
~ Boarding Fee	\$ 65.00	Per day
~ Boarding Fee: Special Management Inmate	\$ 100.00	Per day
~ Pay-for-Stay Fee	\$ 25.00	Per day
~ Huber Fee	\$ 25.00	Per day
~ Huber Urinalysis Fee	\$ 30.00	Per sample
~ Inmate Doctor Fee	\$ 15.00	Per in-house visit
~ Inmate Nurse Fee	\$ 5.00	Per in-house visit
~ Probation Urinalysis Fee	\$ 10.00	Per sample
~ Probation Portable Breath Test fee	\$ 5.00	Per test
Photographs:		
~ Burned Onto CD/DVD	\$ 10.00	Per CD/DVD
Records Clerk	\$ 25.00	Per hour (for persons requesting documents in large volume that are time consuming, 1 hr minimum in addition to document fee)
Reports/Documents:		
~ Copies Printed	\$ 0.25	Per page
~ Copies on CD/DVD	\$ 10.00	Per CD/DVD
Scanning	\$ 10.00	Per page CD/DVD
Typing Reports/Records Services	\$ 25.00	Per hour (1 hr minimum charged)

Drug Take Back Program

The Meeker County Sheriff's Office continues this free service to Meeker County residents. This service provides a safe and secure manner of disposing of unused and expired medications. The Sheriff's Office has two Take Back boxes, one at our main office in Litchfield and one at the Dassel Office at the Dassel City Hall. In 2023 we disposed of a total of 720.8 pounds of prescription drugs.

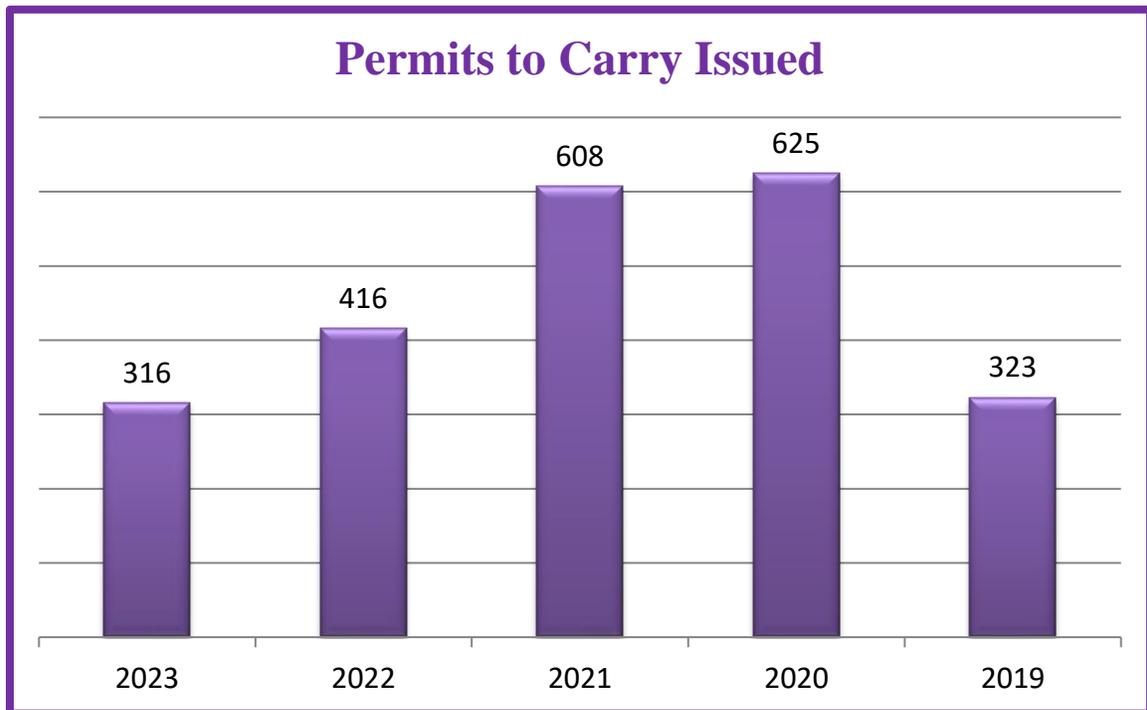


Gun Permits

The Meeker County Sheriff is responsible for issuing all Permits to Carry in the county and all Permits to Purchase for all residents who don't live in a city with an independent police department. In 2023 the Permit to Carry application fee was \$40.00 with renewals costing \$35.00. For each Permit to Carry approved, by law, \$10.00 for new and \$5.00 for renewal applications is submitted to the MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA). Each year a report is made to the BCA in reference to our permit activity. This report can be viewed at: <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/bca/bca-divisions/administrative/documents/2023-Permit-to-Carry-Report.pdf>

Permits to Purchase: In 2023, there were 189 Permits to Purchase issued.

Permits to Carry: In 2023, there were 316 Permits to Carry issued.



Meeker County Emergency Management

Meeker County Emergency Management, under the direction of the Sheriff, has multiple areas of responsibility to include planning, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. Our planning objectives and our response efforts focus on saving lives, protecting property, meeting the needs of victims, reducing the effects of an emergency on essential facilities and utilities and minimizing the disruption on our community's financial livelihood. Our preparedness process includes multiple plans, whole community input, other county agencies, neighboring county emergency managers and regional planning.

Emergency Management staff aided churches in the Cosmos area to enhance their preparedness planning and safety awareness for medicals, fires, natural disasters, and human caused events. Emergency Management staff hosted a countywide Skywarn training which was well attended by emergency responders and members of the public.

Emergency Management staff also facilitated a tabletop exercise to evaluate the capabilities of the Meeker County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Participants in the tabletop discussed the overall functionality and capabilities of the EOC and how they can be approved in the future. In addition, Emergency Management helped coordinate an active threat training and exercise for emergency response agencies within Meeker County on responding to an active threat situation which may involve victims needing medical attention and assistance.

Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) \$21,246.00 The fiscal year for these grants runs from January 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

Radiological Emergency Preparedness Grant (REP). \$3,000.00. The fiscal year for this grant runs from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

Budget

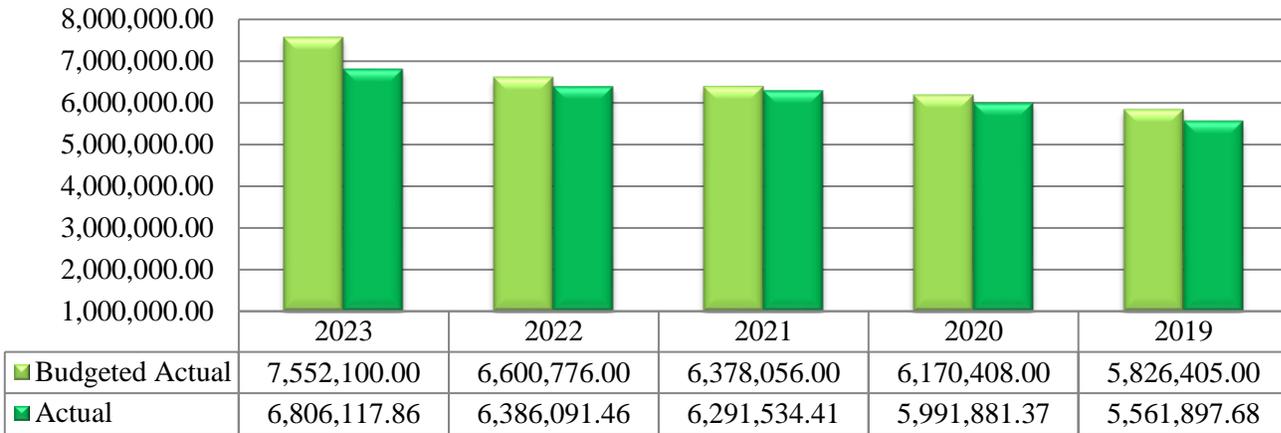


The following figures are taken from the end-of-year Revenue Expenditure Budget Report. The actual expenses for 2023 were nearly 10% under budget mainly due to staffing shortages and the inability to purchase replacement squads. We saw additional revenue in 2023 from the MN Legislature in police grants and increased 911 funds.

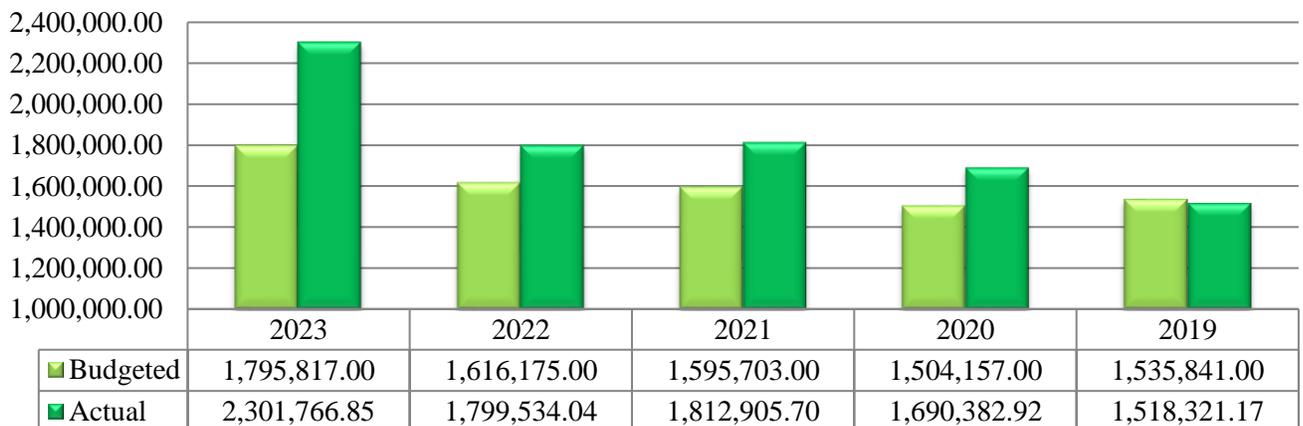
The vast majority of the budget for the Sheriff’s office is for personnel-related expenses (salaries, insurance, overtime, on-call, etc.). In 2023, 76% of the actual expenses in the Sheriff’s Office were personnel related. The remaining 24% was used for operational purposes including squads, training, equipment, maintenance agreements, supplies, vehicle repairs, fuel, etc.

2023 Budgeted vs. Actual						
Department	Budgeted Expenses	Budgeted Revenue	Budgeted Net	Actual Expenses	Actual Revenue	Actual Net
Sheriff	6,971,296.00	1,566,995.00	5,404,301.00	6,537,700.54	2,050,277.19	4,487,423.35
Emergency Management	93,040.00	23,822.00	69,218.00	103,364.28	3,000.00	100,364.28
Enhanced 911	282,276.00	190,000.00	92,276.00	106,630.01	246,837.87	(140,207.86)
Wireless Communications	205,488.00	15,000.00	190,488.00	58,423.03	1,651.79	56,771.24
Total:	7,552,100.00	1,795,817.00	5,756,283.00	6,806,117.86	2,301,766.85	4,504,351.01

Budgeted vs. Actual Expenses - Historical Review



Budgeted vs. Actual Revenue - Historical Review



Budgeted vs. Actual Net - Historical Review

