

# Benson Police Department



## 2008 Annual Report

Presented on March 2, 2009

February 25, 2009

Rob Wolfington, City Manager  
City of Benson

Re: 2008 Annual Report

Dear Rob,

This report contains a detailed overview of the Benson Police Department's activity for 2008. Included in the report are statistics related to the department's calls for service and total offenses charged. Also included is information regarding Police Department activities and updates on some of our significant programs for your review.

You will see that I have offered my opinion on why the department is seeing increases in particular areas of interest and decreases in others. This report is not an all- inclusive document, but rather a synopsis of events occurring in 2008, along with explanations/opinions on why we are seeing these trends. Also attached to this report is a all - inclusive list of statistics without any explanations of trends.

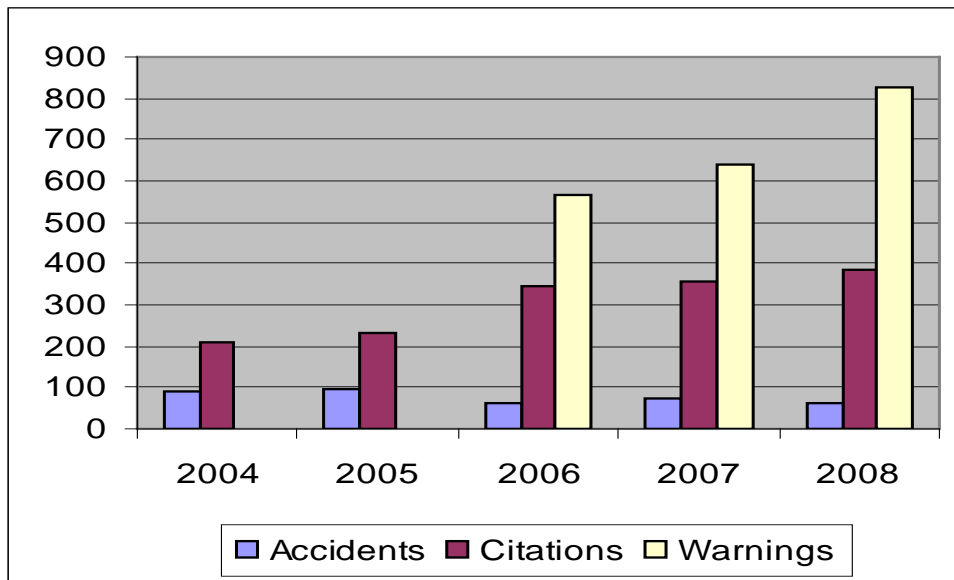
I hope you enjoy the reading and if you or anyone else should have any questions regarding this document they should feel free to call or see me. I do plan to present this at the next city council meeting and ask that you have this item put on the agenda for discussion. Thank you for your support in 2008!

Respectfully,

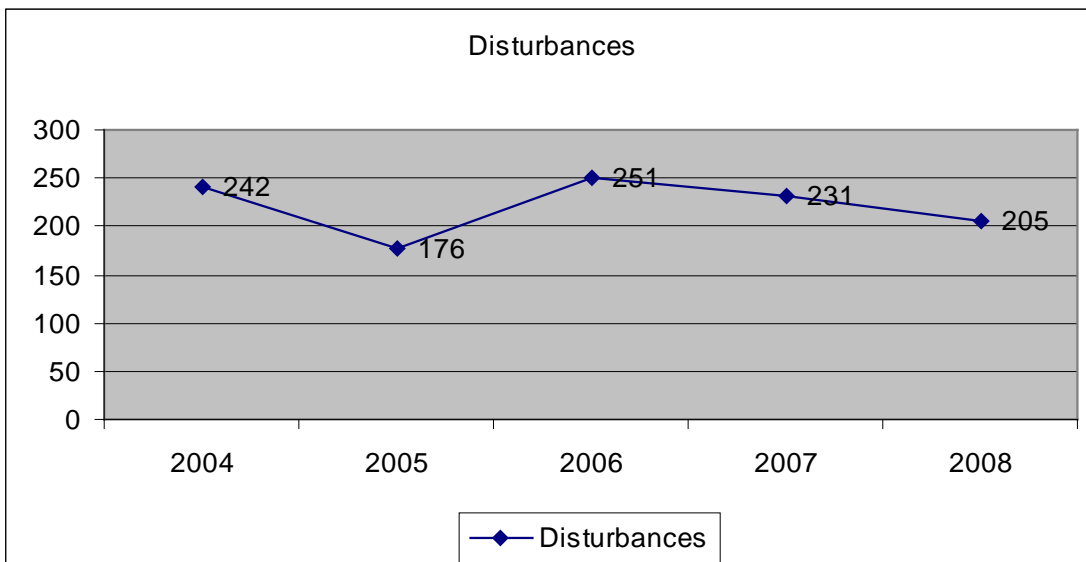
James M. Crace  
Chief of Police

## Traffic Crashes / Traffic Citations

In 2001 we experienced a high of 119 traffic crashes reported. Since 2004, we have seen an average of 77 crashes per year, until 2006 when we experienced a major decline with only 65 crashes reported. Again, in 2008 we only had 65 crashes reported. I believe that our stepped up enforcement of traffic laws have attributed to the decrease in accidents since 2002. Effective January 1, 2006, the department started to document all traffic warnings in order to have a more accurate picture of our traffic contacts with the public. In 2008 BPD officers issued 826 warnings for various traffic offenses and 384 citations. As a whole, BPD officers issue more than 2 warnings for every citation written.

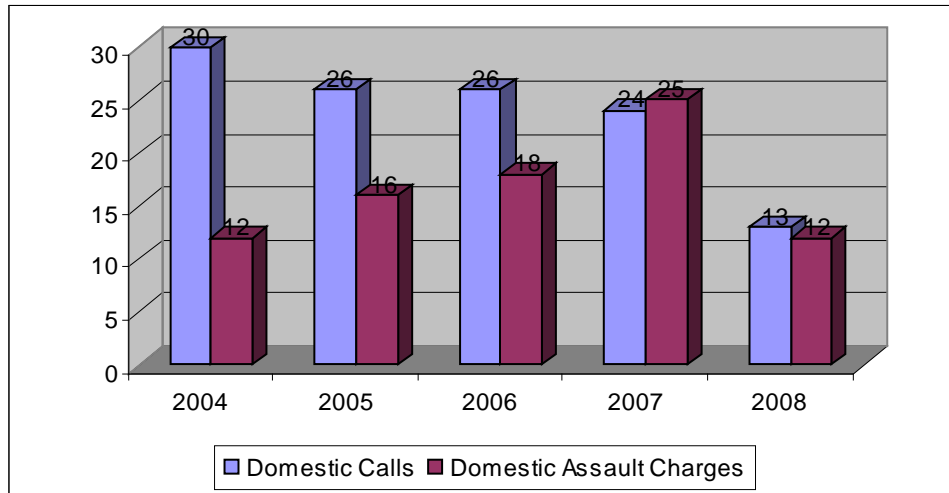


Our calls for *Disturbances* have decreased from 251 complaints in 2006 to 205 complaints in 2008.



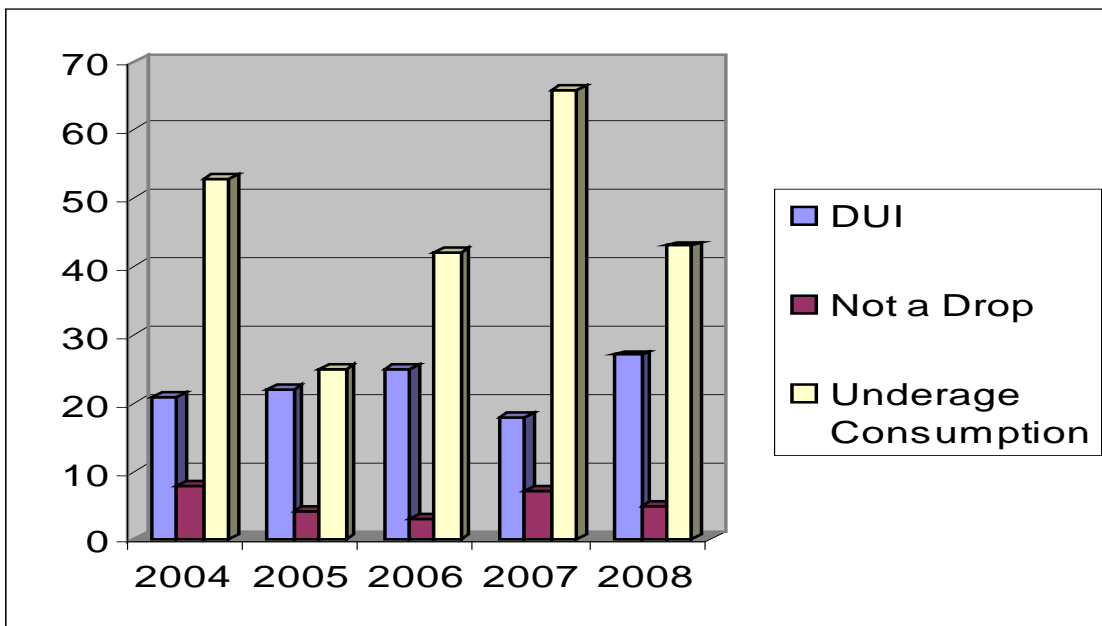
## Domestics Situations

We have noticed a decrease in reports of *Domestic Assault* and *Domestic Disturbance* in 2008. (We investigated 5 Domestic Assaults and 8 Domestic Disturbances in 2008). The department continues to work closely with the Swift County Attorney's Office, Swift County Human Services and Victim's Advocates Teams in these cases. Out of the 13 Domestic Calls in 2008, 12 suspects were charged with Domestic Assault.



## Alcohol Offenses

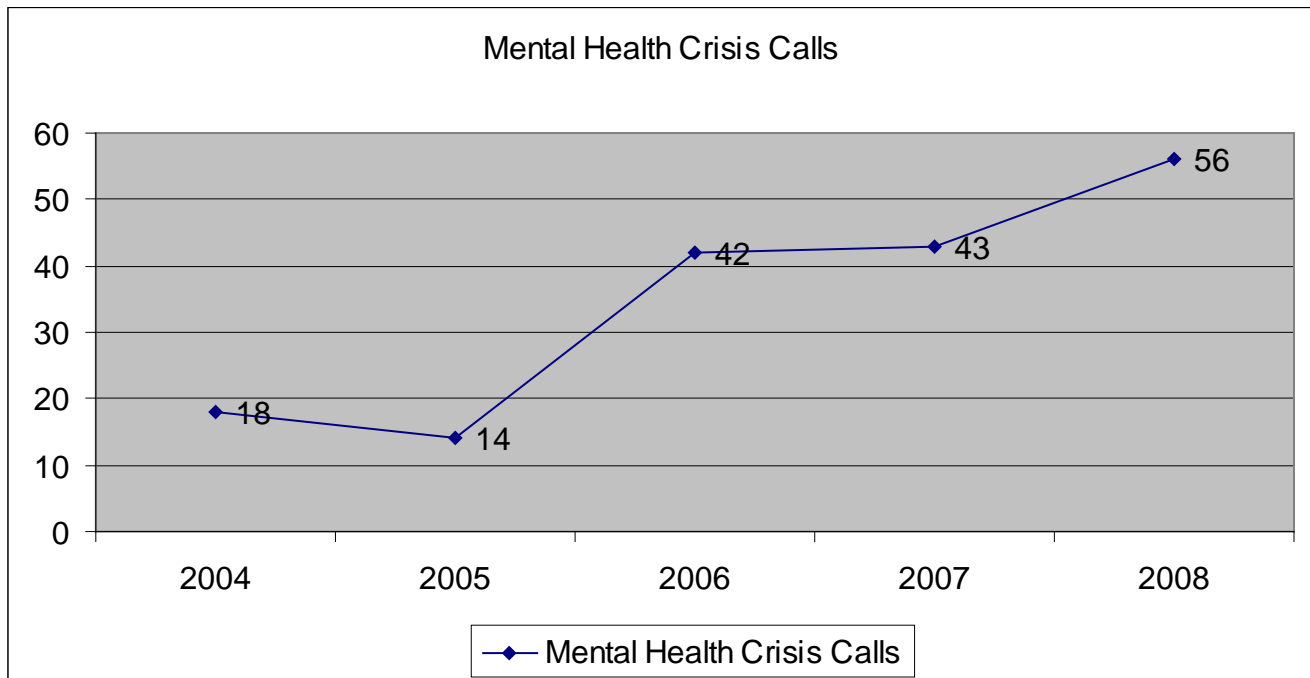
Over the past few years, we have experienced minor increases in *DUI* arrests until 2007 when *DUI* arrests dropped to 18. In 2008, *DUI* arrests rose to 27. Additionally, our five year average for *Underage Drinking Offenses* is 45.



## Mental Health Calls

The department responded to 56 *Mental Health* calls in 2008. This number represents a sharp increase from the four year average of 29. In late 2005 and early 2006, our community was overwhelmed with a few members taking their own lives. This fact, coupled with the reality that we are experiencing more and more mental health calls reported everyday, was enough to cause concern. I decided that the police department needed to empower its officers with more knowledge and training in the area of responding to and de-escalating mental health crisis situations. I wrote a grant that funded four officers, two from Benson PD, one from the Swift County SO and one from Appleton PD to attend a 40 hour Crisis Intervention Team course that I had attended in 2002. The officers returned from the training with increased knowledge and understanding of mental illnesses and additional skills in managing and de-escalating mental health crisis situations.

Because of the fact that BPD normally only has one Patrol Officer on duty at a time and because we only had three trained CIT officers, we quickly found that we were not able to provide adequate CIT response coverage. With these facts in mind, I wrote a proposal for another grant that would pay for additional officers to be trained in CIT. We received the grant and hosted the training in July of 2007. Officers from throughout west-central Minnesota attended the course. Currently, the department has all of its Full Time officers trained as Crisis Intervention Team officers. BPD has become a model agency in regards to CIT. Since BPD's success with CIT, the Southwest Minnesota Adult Mental Health Consortium has started to offer courses throughout West Central Minnesota; these courses are now being offered free of charge.

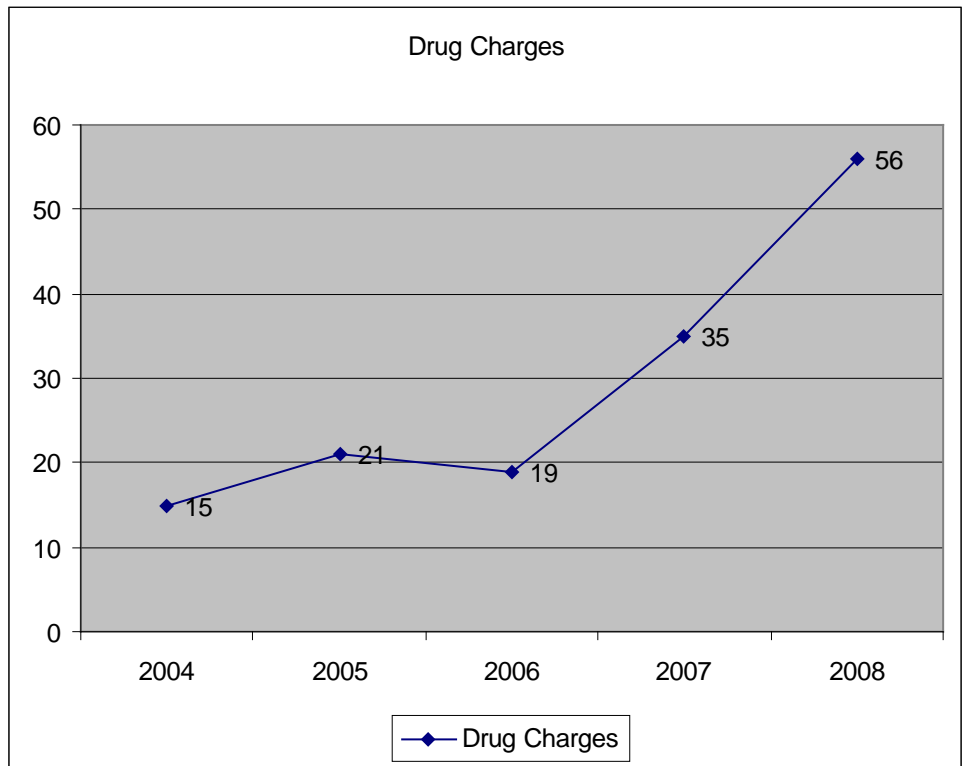


# Narcotics Investigations

We saw a major increase in *Drug Related Calls* in 2005 and it has continued into 2008. In 2004, we answered only 9 Drug Related calls; this number increased to 38 in 2008. We have answered these calls with aggressive investigation and enforcement. We continue to have an officer working, when time permits, directly with the CEE VI Drug Task Force to combat these problems.

BPD's drug enforcement efforts in 2008 resulted in 56 charges. These statistics represent narcotics incidents that the Benson Police Department investigated either as the primary agency within the City of Benson, or as an assisting agency- assisting the CEE VI Drug Task Force, outside of the City of Benson.

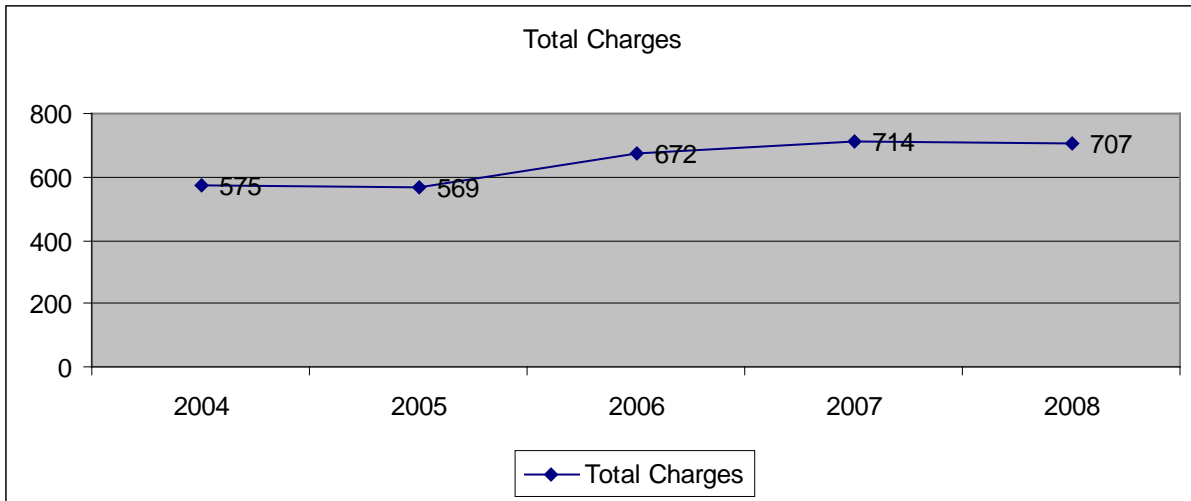
It should be noted that all of the investigations were directly related to narcotics trafficking going out of (or coming into) Benson. There is a great deal of work yet to be done in this area. In June of 2007, the City Council voted to increase the authorized full-time strength of the police department to seven officers. This boost in man-power has enabled us to spend more time on pro-active drug enforcement. BPD also added a Narcotics Detector Dog to the force in November of 2007. This move has undoubtedly had a positive effect on our efforts in this area.



BPD's Narcotic Detector Dog "Major"

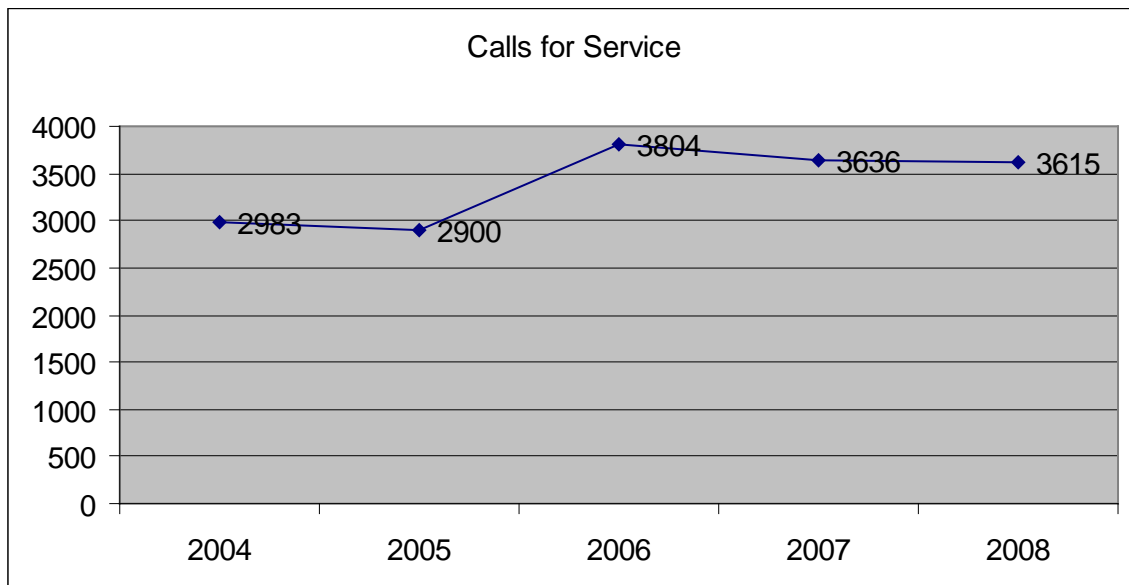
## Total Charges

The total charges filed in 2008 were consistent with the past couple of years; however, officers have issued an increasing number of warnings in lieu of citations in recent years. This trend can be partially attributed to the increase in surcharges that the State of Minnesota has attached to fines. Example: A citation for driving 40 mph in a 30 mph zone has an actual fine of \$40. After the surcharges, court fees and other fees that are attached, the total is \$130. Our officers recognize that this amount may be a considerable burden for many families; they use their best judgment when deciding what the appropriate level of enforcement is necessary to change behavior / conduct. The city may want to consider authorizing Administrative Citations. This would give officers another tool to enforce traffic laws. Typically, Administrative Citations cost a violator \$40-\$50 and serve as a “warning with a consequence” without affecting a person’s driving record.



## Total Calls for Service

Your police department answered 3,615 calls for service in 2008. One consideration to these numbers is attrition of seasoned staff and a staff injury. For six months of 2008, we were short-staffed due to an officer being out of service due to a training injury.



## Twenty-Four Hour Patrol

In January of 2006, taking into account the rise in activity and increased expectations from the community, I committed the Benson Police Department to providing the city with 24 hour active patrol coverage. Previously, the department patrolled the city for 20 - 22 hours a day and had an officer in an “on-call” status for the remaining portion of the day. Officers typically work 12 hour shifts to accomplish 24/7 patrol coverage of the city. This transition to 24 hour patrol has shown to be a benefit to the department and the community. We have had success in solving some significant cases and arrests on incidents that have occurred during hours that in the past, we did not have an officer on duty. In May of 2007, the city council voted to staff the police department with seven full-time officers showing a pledge to keep this level of service.

## Technology Advancements

Squad computers enable your officers to run drivers license and vehicle checks through the Minnesota State Patrol’s computer-aided dispatch system. They also are able to communicate via instant messaging with State Troopers and other area officers. The department also has a server with remote access capabilities. The laptops and the server allow officers to be more effective and efficient in their daily duties. In addition to the computer technology, we have Digital Video Cameras onboard four of the five department vehicles. Officers use this technology daily; the video footage serves as evidence in court. The department has digital video, photo and audio capabilities. These files are stored on our server and linked to cases within the department’s records management system.



This picture shows the laptop, and the video camera. The monitor screen for the video camera is embedded into the mirror.



This picture shows a close-up of the mirror and the camera. The mirror also contains a rear facing camera that can monitor the prisoner area.



# Community Involvement

The Benson Police Department continues to be very active in and involved with the community. Officers are currently involved in a number of Community Policing Projects to include:

- Senior Citizen Assistance Program
- Child Seat Assistance Program
- School Resource Officer Program
- DARE Program
- Safe Communities Coalition
- CEE VI Drug Task Force Liaison
- Driver's Education
- Crosswalk Safety Campaign
- Crisis Intervention Team
- Safe & Sober
- Swift County Child Protection Team
- Swift County Adult Protection Team

In addition, Chief Crace serves on the Minnesota Chief's of Police Association's Executive Board, the CEE VI Drug Task Force Board of Directors, the Swift County Emergency Management Organization and the City of Benson Safety Committee.

Off-duty, Benson officers are active in community organizations such as: Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Deer Hunters organizations and Boy Scouts of America.



Citizens at the BPD Farm and Home Show Booth; observing information regarding illegal drugs.



The Benson Police Department's 2007 Farm and Home Show Booth.

# Training

Police Officers have to put their life on the line occasionally, but they make life and death decisions on a regular basis. They also make decisions on whether or not to take away someone's freedom by incarcerating them. With this in mind; proper training is paramount to the successful delivery of effective service to the community. Benson Police Officers are trained to the highest level possible while staying within budget constraints. Last year your officers received a total of 810 hours of training in areas ranging from narcotics investigations to crisis intervention and many other things in between. Proper training is directly related to quality delivery of service to the community and also minimizes potential for litigation. Officers attended the following courses in 2008:

- Motor Vehicle Criminal Interdiction
- Narcotics / Methamphetamine Investigations
- Critical Incident Management and Response
- Response to School Shootings Course
- High Risk Warrant Service
- Taser Recertification Course
- Leadership Academy
- Firearms Qualification Course
- Use of Force Refresher Course
- First Aid Refresher Course
- Intoxilyzer Operator Course
- Advanced Narcotics K-9 Course
- High Risk Traffic Stops Course
- Basic Spanish for Patrol Officers
- Truck Enforcement

In January 2008, the Benson Police Department entered into a cooperative agreement with the Swift County Sheriff's Office and the Appleton Police Department. The contract was for 96 hours of training for each officer. The intent of the agreement was to have all officers in the county trained in the same manner and to the same level in regards to officer tactics. Due to the program's success, the Benson Police Department and the Appleton Police Department plan to continue the agreement in 2008. The Swift County Sheriff's Office has chosen to accomplish their training needs on their own for 2009.



This picture shows officers on the range.



This picture shows officers wearing Simunition gear during a simulated High Risk Vehicle stop.

## Total Cases in 2008

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Abandoned Bikes	11	15	13	12	4
Accidents	88	96	65	73	65
Alarms	40	51	45	49	43
Ambulance Calls	146	109	132	111	103
Animal Complaints	25	24	28	29	16
Assaults	23	8	17	23	14
Assaults/Domestic	13	15	14	13	5
Assist Other Agencies (includes warrant arrests)	108	133	162	102	144
Bike Thefts	10	6	6	15	7
Burglaries	22	14	20	24	15
Child Abuse/Neglect Intakes	11	21	15	15	21
Civil Matters	46	48	50	42	30
Criminal Damage/Vandalism	41	42	52	41	29
Curfew	5	0	3	2	4
Death Investigation	1	2	5	6	1
Disorderly Conduct	14	14	6	7	14
Disturbance Calls	242	176	251	231	205
Dog Complaints	148	156	191	187	160
Domestic Disturbance(not including domestic asslts)	17	11	12	11	8
Driving Complaints	86	76	87	88	42
Drug Related Calls	9	28	31	29	38
DWI (alcohol and drugs)	20	20	23	16	22
Extra Patrols	29	27	29	17	14
Fire/Assist Fire Dept	16	25	25	38	19
Flee Officer (in MV and on foot)	1	1	7	5	5
Forgery and Related	5	11	3	2	3
Handgun Permits	26	22	31	24	32
Harassing Phone Calls	1	0	1	3	0
Keys Locked in Vehicle/House	226	191	191	206	168
Mental Health/Health & Welfare Calls	18	14	42	43	56
Miscellaneous	539	535	587	503	431
Missing Person/Abduction (& attempted)	0	3	6	5	4
Money Escorts	575	555	525	456	495
Motor Assists	31	19	22	29	29
Motorized Vehicle Thefts	8	9	10	3	3
Obstruct Legal Process/Crimes Against Justice	6	6	5	8	4
Open Doors/Windows	15	15	14	13	28
Presentations	33	22	26	17	25
Procure Liquor for Minor	2	0	0	0	0
Recovered Property (thefts from other jurisdictions)	1	3	1	1	0
Residence Watch	20	29	23	21	26
Runaways	3	6	2	6	4
Sex Assault and Related	9	8	3	8	7
Snowmobile/ATV Complaints	4	9	4	5	6

Solicitor Permits and complaints	6	3	3	4	0
Suicide Attempts/Suicide	3	6	4	0	3
Theft and Related	86	92	98	87	68
Traffic Offenses/City Ordinances	114	150	250	286	294
Traffic Warnings			566	639	826
Traffic Direction	27	31	32	25	41
Transports	0	3	5	3	1
Travelers Aid	2	6	3	3	1
Trespass	3	3	15	6	3
Underage Drink and Drive	5	4	0	6	4
Underage Alcohol Consumption and Possession	23	9	15	21	15
Underage Tobacco Violations	3	3	4	2	4
Violate Protection and Harassment Orders	10	7	20	11	3
Vulnerable Adults	6	6	4	3	2
Weapons	1	2	0	1	1
TOTAL	2983	2900	3804	3636	3615

## Total Charges in 2008

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Assaults	29	11	18	27	17
Assaults/Domestic	12	16	18	25	12
Burglary	11	3	7	6	8
Crimes Against Justice	14	8	18	11	13
Crim Sex	3	5	0	0	0
Criminal Damage/Trespass	17	31	25	11	0
Curfew	10	8	6	3	7
Disorderly Conduct/Disturb Peace	49	27	19	21	25
Dog Citations	11	13	16	26	18
Drugs & Paraphernalia	15	21	19	35	56
**DWI (alcohol & drug)	48	46	50	44	57
Forgery	5	3	2	1	0
Juvenile Tobacco Use	10	9	11	5	7
Miscellaneous	5	1	4	10	0
Obscenity/Indecent Exposure	0	0	0	0	0
Procure Liquor for Underage	5	4	0	0	0
Snowmobile Citations	2	0	0	3	0
Theft and Related	59	72	63	53	56
Traffic Citations/Misc City Ordinances	212	233	343	357	384
Underage Alcohol Consumption & Possession	53	25	42	66	43
Violate Protection and Harassment Order	5	5	11	8	2
Weapons	0	28	0	2	2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>707</b>
**DWI Cases	21	22	25	18	27
-charges per case differ from year to year due to new DWI laws					
**Underage Drink & Drive	8	4	3	7	5