

Benson Police Department



2009 Annual Report

Presented on April 5, 2010

March 31, 2010

Rob Wolfington, City Manager
City of Benson

Re: 2009 Annual Report

Dear Rob,

This report contains a detailed overview of the Benson Police Department's activity for 2009. 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 experiencing 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 2009, along with explanations/opinions on why we are seeing these trends. Also attached to this report is an all - inclusive list of statistics without any explanations of trends.

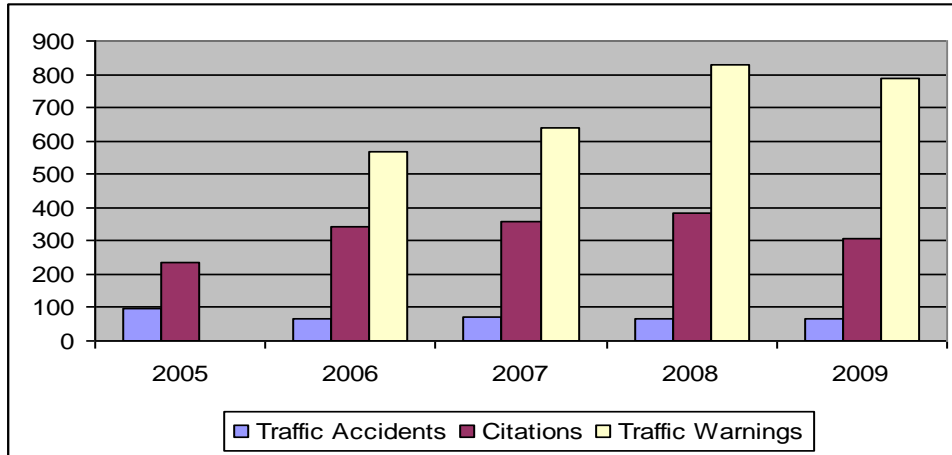
I hope you enjoy the reading and if you or anyone else should have any questions regarding this document they should feel free to call or see me. I do plan to present this at the next city council meeting and ask that you have this item put on the agenda for discussion. Thank you for your support in 2009!

Respectfully,

James M. Crace
Chief of Police

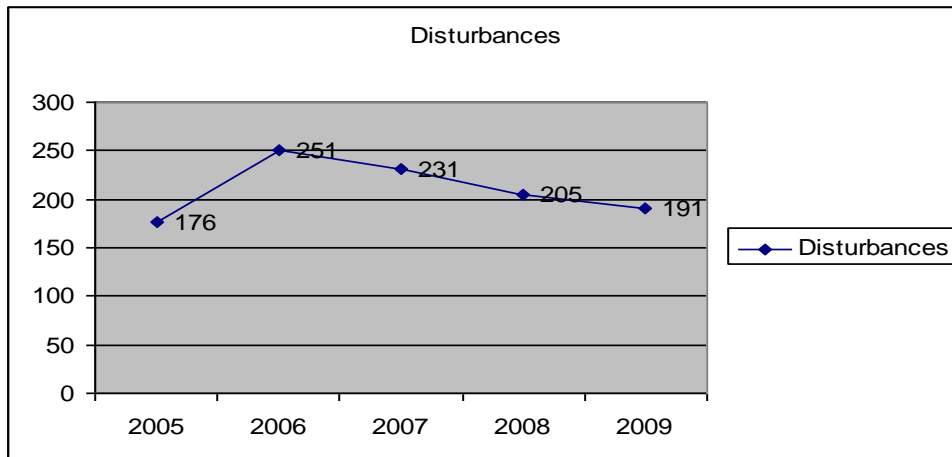
Traffic Crashes / Traffic Citations

In past decade our highest total of reported crashes was in 2001 when we responded to 119 traffic crashes. Since 2005, we have seen an average of 72 crashes per year; we experienced a decline in this area with only 64 crashes reported in 2009. I believe that our attention to enforcement of traffic laws have attributed to the decrease in crashes since the high in 2001. 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 2009 BPD officers issued 790 warnings for various traffic offenses and 307 citations. As a whole, BPD officers issue more than 2 warnings for every citation written.



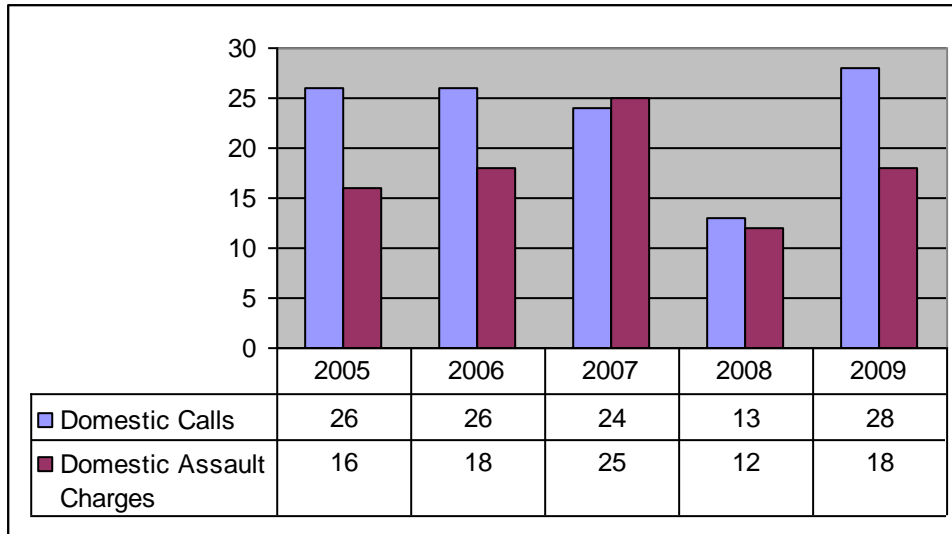
Disturbance Calls

Our calls for *Disturbances* have decreased from 251 complaints in 2006 to 191 complaints in 2009.



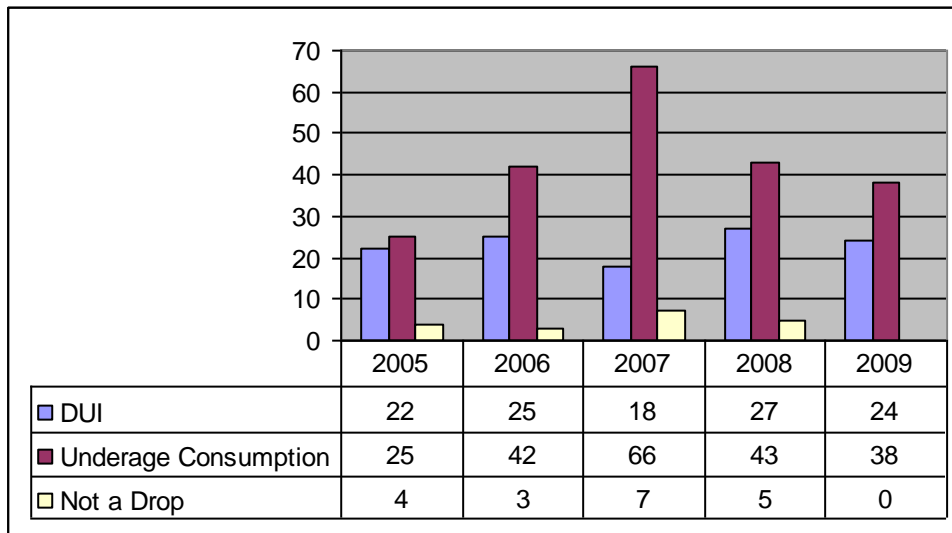
Domestics Situations

We have experienced an increase in reports of *Domestic Assault* and *Domestic Disturbance* in 2009. 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 28 Domestic Calls in 2009, 18 suspects were charged with Domestic Assault.



Alcohol Offenses

This year we experienced an overall decrease in Alcohol Related violations. The number of *DUI* arrests dropped by 10%. *Underage Drinking Offenses* also dropped considerably as illustrated in the table below.

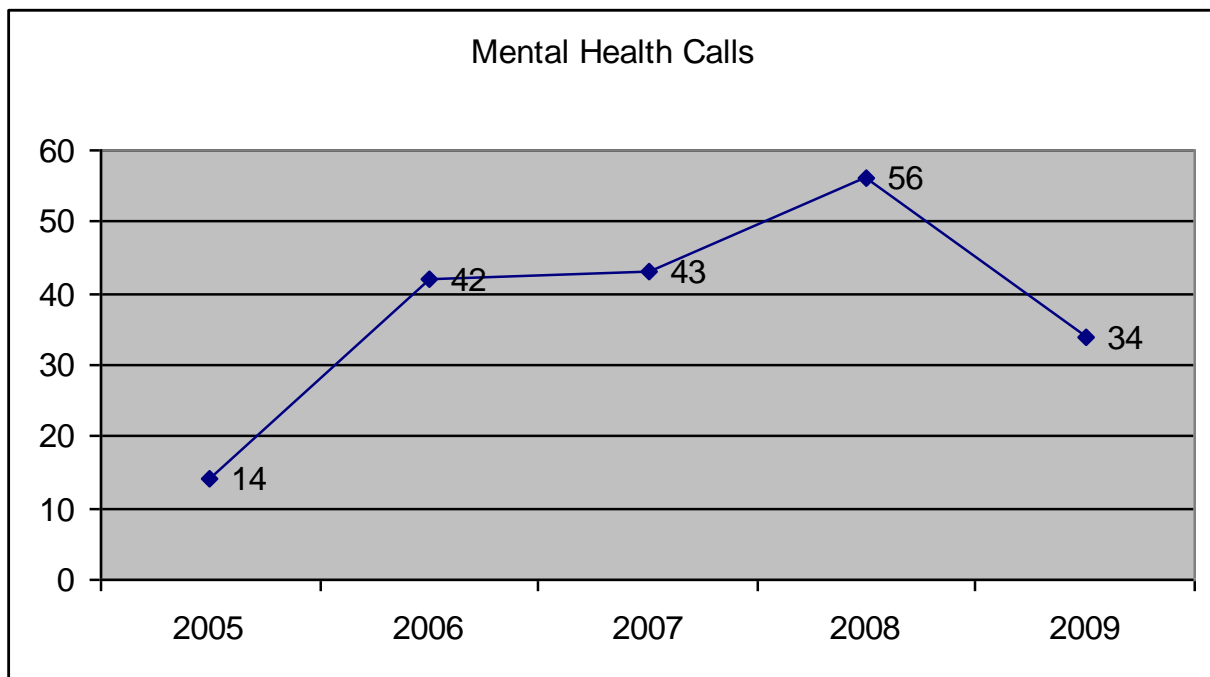


Mental Health Calls

The department responded to 34 *Mental Health* calls in 2009. This number represents a decrease from what we saw in 2008; however, it is slightly above the five year average of 37.

In late 2005 and early 2006, our community was overwhelmed with a few members taking their own lives. We were faced with the reality that we are being called upon more frequently to mental health situations. This reality; coupled with the fact that the State of Minnesota's resources for these situations have become more limited each year was enough to cause concern. At that time, I decided that the police department needed to provide our officers with more training in the area of responding to and de-escalating mental health crisis situations. I wrote a grant which funded paid for four officers to attend a 40 hour Crisis Intervention Team course (two from Benson PD, one from the Swift County SO and one from Appleton PD). 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.

We quickly realized that these officers were very valuable to the department and the community. Considering this success; 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 Benson 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. Additionally, three of our five Part-Time officers are also trained in the curriculum. BPD has become a model agency in Minnesota in regards to CIT. Following BPD's success with the CIT model; 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.

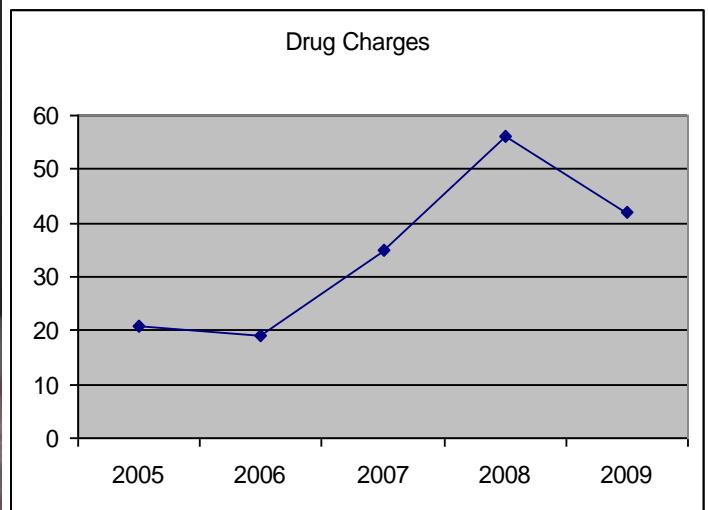


Narcotics Investigations

We saw another increase in *Drug Related Calls* in 2009; this is an unwelcome trend that we have been dealing with since 2004. We have answered these calls with insistent investigation and enforcement. We continue to have an officer, when time permits, working directly with the CEE VI Drug Task Force to combat these problems and Chief Crace has been the Vice Chair of the CEE VI Drug Task Force – Board of Directors for the past two years.

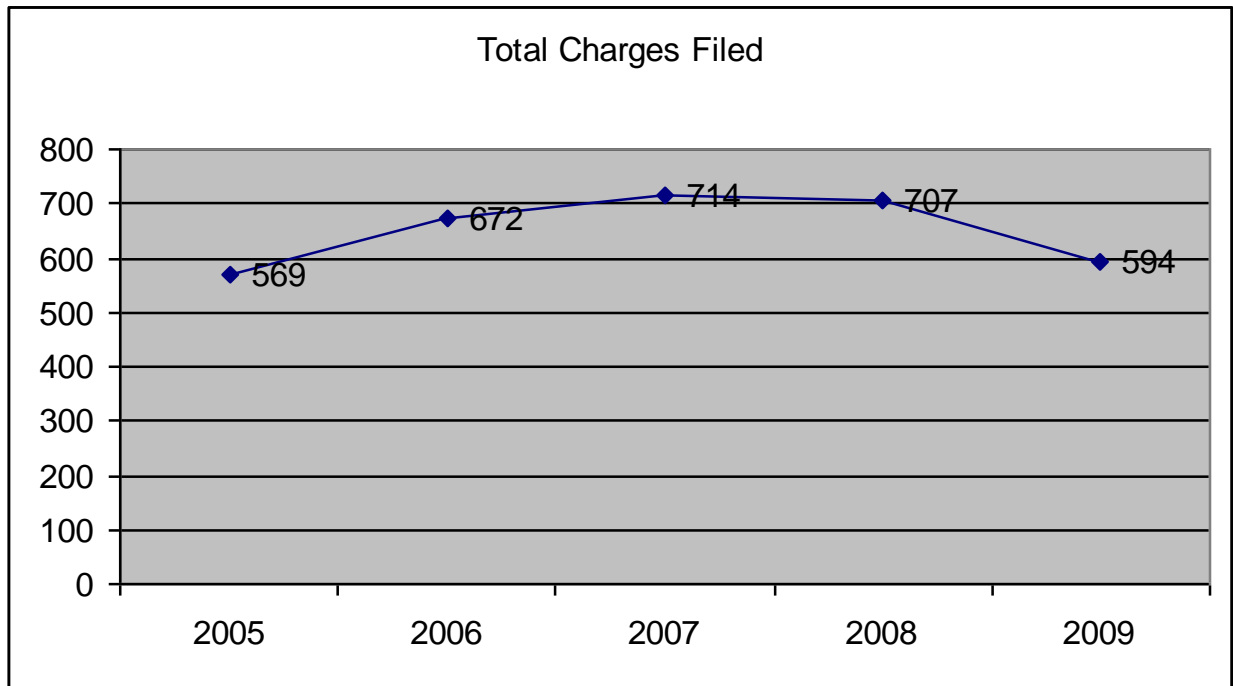
BPD's drug enforcement efforts in 2009 resulted in 42 local charges. These statistics represent narcotics incidents that the Benson Police Department investigated either as the primary agency within the City of Benson, or as an assisting agency- assisting the CEE VI Drug Task Force, in close proximity to the City of Benson.

Sgt. Jambor is assigned as a Liaison Officer to the CEE VI Drug Task Force. His work involves generating informants that assist in task force investigations. BPD submitted 9 narcotics Intelligence Reports to the CEE VI - DTF. Naturally, not all Intelligence Reports result in an arrest; however, we did see a significant impact from our efforts in 2009. Our efforts resulted in 7 Narcotics Investigation Operations which resulted in 22 controlled buys of narcotics (methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana), 14 felony charges were filed on 11 suspects. We also completed 3 search warrants for narcotics. It should be noted that all of the investigations were directly related to narcotics trafficking going in and out of Benson. There is a great deal of work yet to be done in this area. In addition, our K-9 Unit answered 14 calls for service and performed 12 narcotics searches that resulted in 6 charges. K-9 Major also completed one suspect track which resulted in an arrest and he, along with his handler, completed one community presentation.



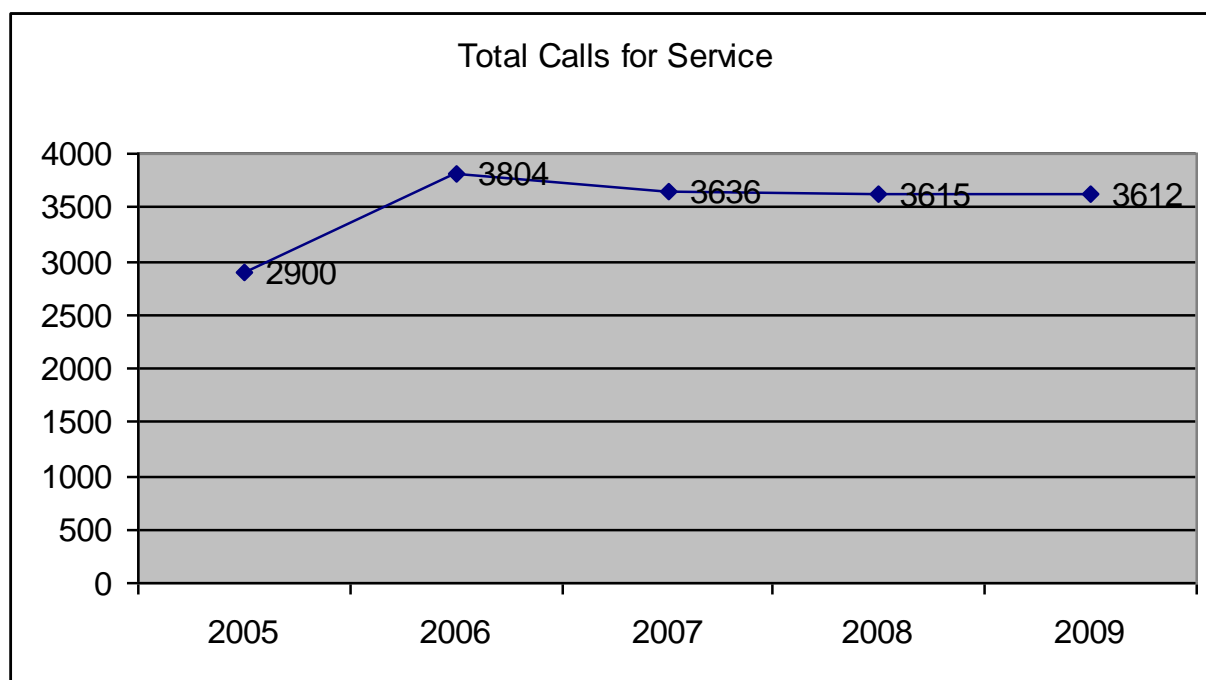
Total Charges

We saw a decrease in the total charges filed in 2009. This is in part due to being staffing levels and partially due to an increasing number of warnings that are issued in lieu of citations in recent years. This trend can be particularly 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 in our community; therefore, they use their best judgment while deciding what level of enforcement is necessary to change behavior / conduct.



Total Calls for Service

Your police department answered 3,612 calls for service in 2009. Due to being staffed at 6 FT officers; manpower is spread thin 2009 in comparison to recent years. As a result each officer is handling a larger call load than in recent years.



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 which in the past, we did not have an officer on duty.

We continue to provide this 24 hour coverage despite decreased staffing levels. We are now staffed at 6 Full Time Employees, including the Chief of Police and we plan to continue at this level for the foreseeable future.

Property / Evidence Room

With our storage area bursting at the seams; we made some significant upgrades to our Property / Evidence room in 2009 which allowed us to organize and store our department property and evidence more efficiently. New, modular shelving was purchased and installed using BPD staff for labor. We now have more space and are utilizing that space more effectively.



Technology Advancements

The department has been faced with an every increasing problem with undocumented people traveling through the city. On many occasions, an officer has stopped a vehicle and during the traffic stop was unable to identify the drive because they did not have any official identification. Many of these situations involve undocumented immigrants that have recently moved to the United States to seek employment; specifically at the local Dairy Barns. Faced with this problem; I went to the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and asked for help. The result of this effort was that we are now equipped with a portable *Two Finger-Digital Fingerprint Scanner*. The scanner is used remotely, using cellular connectivity. Once the officer scans the suspect/violator's prints, the information is sent to the MN BCA fingerprint repository and if the person has previously been arrested it gives us a positive ID on the person.



Digital Recorder / Security Camera System

In 2008 the Police Department's offices were completely remodeled. The majority of the work was completed using city staff which cut costs considerably. During the remodel project we planned for an Interview Room complete with digital recording capabilities. In December of 2009 we purchased a digital video recorder, digital cameras and microphones to equip the room; there is now a digital camera and a microphone in the Interview Room. We now have the ability to conduct interviews/interrogations and have them documented digitally; these digital files are stored on the department's robust server where it is linked to the case file. When a prosecuting or defense attorney needs the file, the evidence is burned to a disk and provided quickly and efficiently. Since we had the DVR, we installed cameras covering our parking area, the evidence room and the lobby of the department at a very low cost.



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, is the Vice Chair of the CEE VI Drug Task Force Board of Directors and is the President of the Region 6 Chief's of Police Association. He also serves on the Swift County Emergency Management Organization and the City of Benson Safety Committee.

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



Officer Dosdall showing a new mother the proper way to install a car seat during a car seat clinic.



Monthly presentation / coffee hour with the elderly residents at Parkview Manor.

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 investigations / interrogations 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:

- Reid Technique Interview / Interrogation
- Domestic Abuse / Strangulation
- MN BCA Leadership Courses
- Data Practices
- Taser Recertification Course
- Leadership Academy
- Firearms Qualification Course
- Use of Force Refresher Course
- Intoxilyzer Operator Course
- Narcotics K-9 Certification
- High Risk Traffic Stops Course
- Domestic Abuse / Stalking
- Truck Enforcement

In January 2009, the Benson Police Department again entered into a cooperative agreement with the Appleton Police Department. The contract was for 48 hours of training for each officer. The intent our cooperative agreement was to have all police 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 2010. We also send officers to selected classes and participate in a MN LMC web based training program which covers a wide array of legal topics.



The above photos show BPD officers training at the Benson High School. The training was centered on reacting to an active shooter within the facility. You will notice that they are wearing helmets. Officers are trained using "Simunitions"; the training is live simulation using simulated bullets that fire out of our assigned duty weapons. The bullets are filled with soap and are safe; however, they do hurt and often leave a small bruise if impacted where there is little protection. This style and delivery of training is the nearest that we can come to the "real thing".

