



Whatcom County

SHERIFF'S

Office

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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MESSAGE FROM SHERIFF BILL ELFO



The year 2020 was a very challenging time for our entire community and law enforcement was no exception. Our ability to maintain full operational strength was affected by a hiring freeze that resulted from declines in county revenues; closures at the Police Academy that impaired our ability to train new deputies; personnel illness and mandated closures of some functions of our Office. We anticipated more significant staffing reductions but very fortunate that was, for the most part, averted.

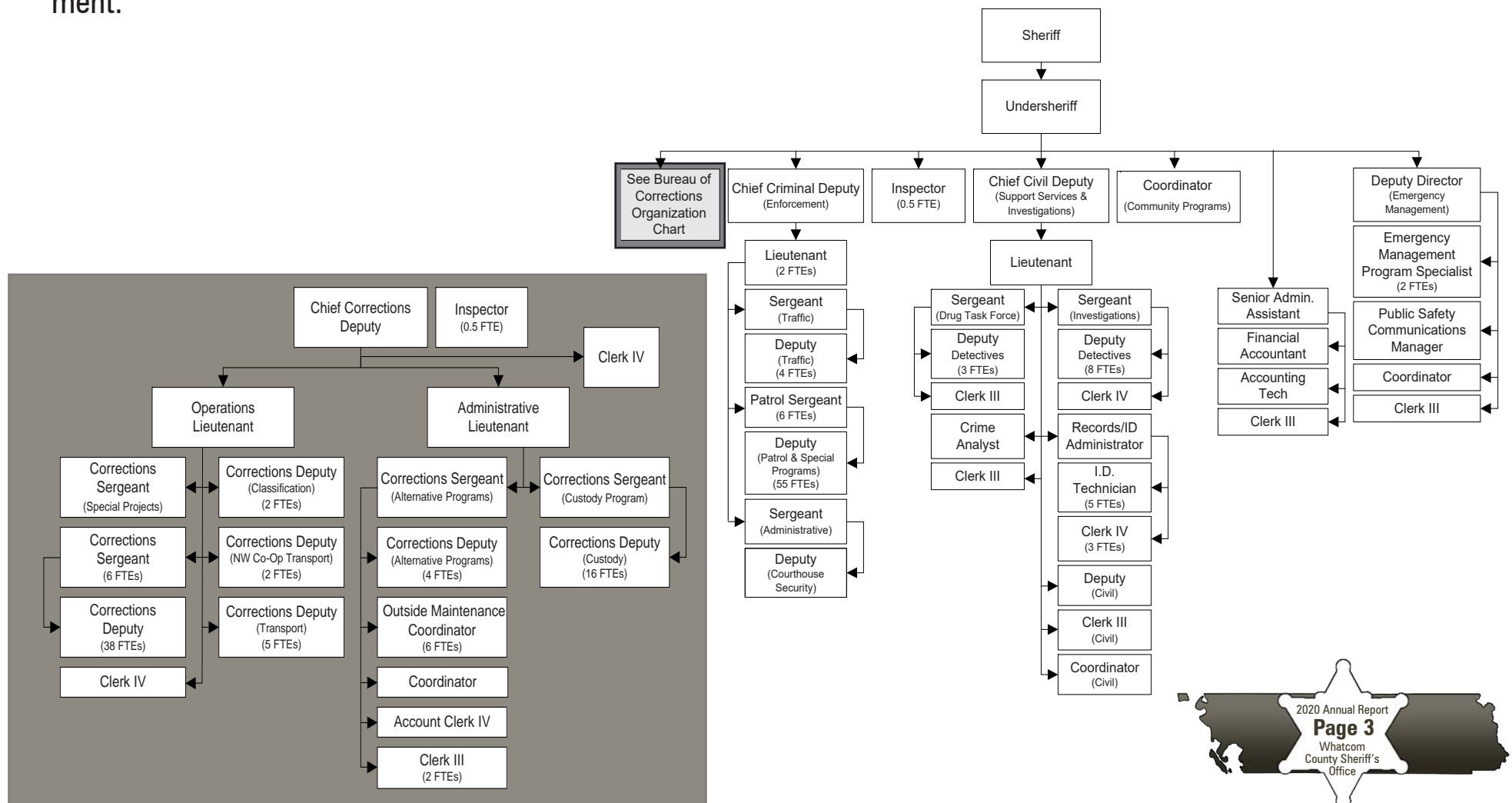
I am very proud of the members of our team who placed themselves at risk during the pandemic to carry on essential public safety functions. I further appreciate all, especially our support staff, who were involved in finding novel solutions to work flow processes, maintained flexibility, and willingly accepted adjustments to help maximize the continuity of service to the public. Our emergency management staff was particularly challenged with responsibilities related to COVID and many other members of our organization took on new duties related to the response. Despite limited resources, our law enforcement staff solved major crimes, disrupted criminal enterprises, captured dangerous criminals and embraced alternative approaches to those whose behaviors are influenced by behavioral health issues. Our corrections staff, having even greater resource challenges, ensured institutional safety and security while enduring major facility disruptions related to the repairs and replacement of systems, infrastructure and evolving pandemic needs.

Bill Elfo, Sheriff

A handwritten signature of Bill Elfo in black ink.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

As an elected official, the County Sheriff is responsible for law enforcement in the unincorporated areas of Whatcom County. The Sheriff also has several county-wide responsibilities (serving both the cities and unincorporated areas), including operating the county jail and coordinating professional and volunteer search and rescue efforts. The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) is made up of three Bureaus: Field Operations, Investigations and Support Services, and Corrections; the Office of Professional Standards, and the Division of Emergency Management.



VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Our Vision

The Office of Sheriff: Dedicated to making Whatcom County the safest in the State through excellence in public safety.

Our Mission

We will provide the highest quality Law Enforcement, Corrections, Emergency Management and Support Services by:

- Protecting the lives, property, and rights of all Whatcom County residents and visitors through proactive, professional and compassionate actions by all members in partnership with the community;
- Upholding the highest standards of performance, behavior and ethics through our conduct, appearance, demeanor and decision-making;
- Preserving, honoring and defending the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Washington.

OUR CORE VALUES

EXCELLENCE

We are committed to delivering an extraordinary level of service by performing to the best of our abilities and seeking solutions that are practical, innovative, timely and effective.

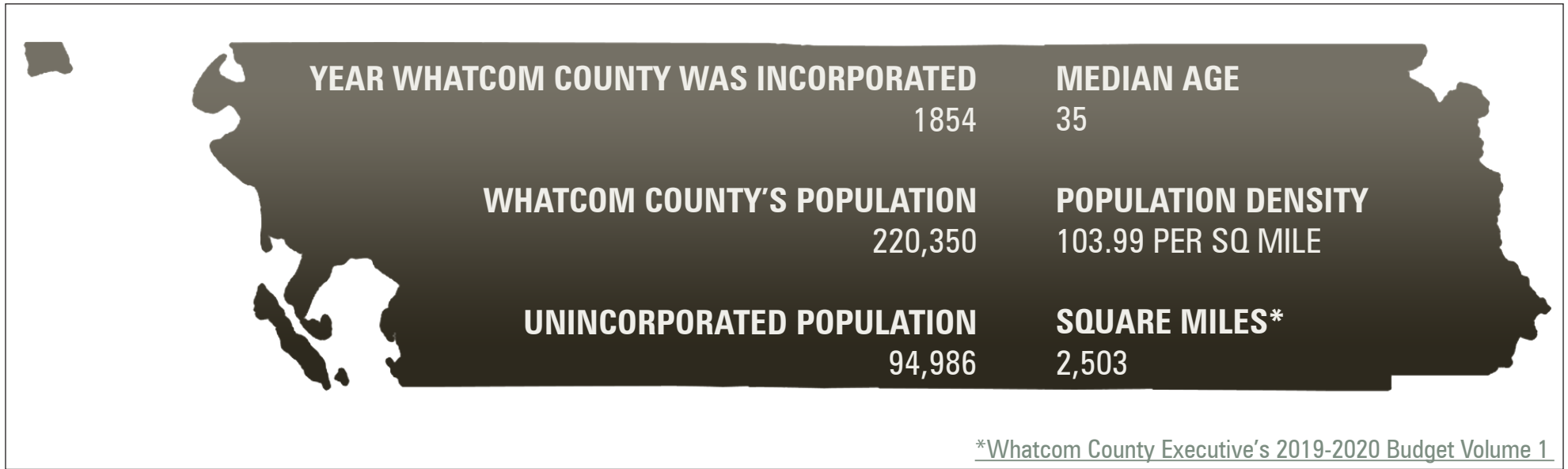
INTEGRITY

We will maintain credibility with each other and our constituents through honesty, consistency, loyalty and accountability.

TEAMWORK

We believe success is achieved by working together and in partnership with our community with openness, humility, resolve and respect.

WHATCOM COUNTY AT A GLANCE*

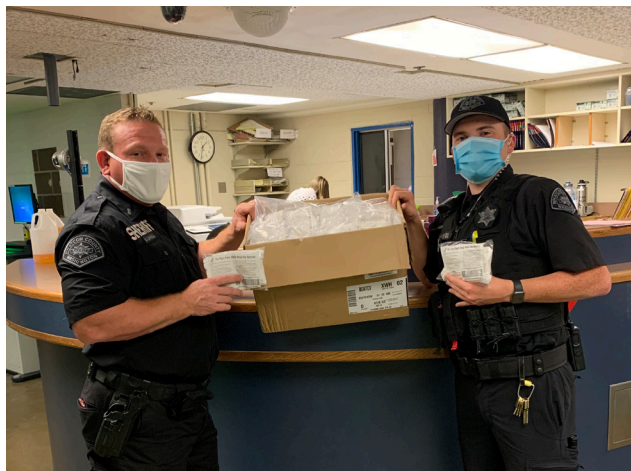


The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office provides direct law enforcement services to a community of 94,986 and additional services to 220,350 residents and visitors.

In 2020, deputies responded to 41,430 incidents. Neighborhood and Resident Deputies focus on densely populated unincorporated areas by working with residents to achieve community safety.

*This number includes the water area that WCSO's Marine Unit patrols

THE COMMUNITY



Throughout the challenges presented by COVID-19, we were humbled by the huge outpouring of support from our community. These are just a few of the kind gestures we received in 2020.



COVID-19 RESPONSE

WHATCOM UNIFIED COMMAND (WUC)



On March 15, 2020, all Whatcom County governments consolidated into Whatcom Unified Command in an effort to address the COVID-19 crisis so that issues such as border crossings, supply chain disruptions and economic impacts could be responded to through a single coordinated and common front. Using FEMA's Incident Command System, Whatcom Unified Command was comprised of the best and most qualified in Whatcom County from local, state, federal, tribal and private sector personnel. WCSO was well represented at WUC, with 24 staff members participating and contributing more than 13,000 hours for the year. The response continued into 2021.



WCSO's Wally Kost as Whatcom Unified Command's Logistics Section Chief

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

CITIZEN'S ACADEMY

The Citizen's Academy is a 12-week program that provides an opportunity for Whatcom County residents to learn about the WCSO. Participants become familiar with the WCSO's mission, values, and philosophy of policing. Citizen's Academy was scheduled for the Spring of 2020 but was cancelled due to COVID-19. Participants were able to attend a virtual Citizen's Academy in the Spring of 2021.

PROJECT SANTA

Every year we are thrilled to provide gifts to local school children through the magic of Project Santa. This magic is made possible by so many caring members of our community: Fourth Corner Elites, Whatcom County Cruisers, Gear Heads of Whatcom County, Corvettes Unlimited of Bellingham, WA, and the Cascade Cruisers from Mount Vernon. These organizations continually raise money for Project Santa, which, in turn, allows us to spread some holiday cheer. We coordinate with each County school's resource staff to determine who needs what. This year, we recruited a small number of masked elves to purchase the presents from lists the children made themselves. Just like in years past, Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) provided their sleighs. Volunteer WTA drivers delivered the gift bags to all five of the county school districts. WCSO deputies and staff distributed these gifts of toys, clothing, and grocery gift cards to 75 children and their families.



BUREAU OF FIELD OPERATIONS

PATROL UNIT

The Patrol Unit is the largest division of the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office. Patrol deputies provide a wide variety of services including responding to 911 calls for service, in-progress crimes, requests for information and assistance, investigating crimes, motor vehicle accidents and natural and unnatural deaths. Patrol deputies also make arrests, testify in court, resolve complaints, maintain the peace, and perform crisis intervention.

CALLS FOR SERVICE

2017	40,330
2018	46,632
2019	44,408
2020	41,430



Members of Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce with neighborhood Deputy Damon.

RESIDENT DEPUTY AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEPUTY PROGRAM

The WCSO utilizes both a resident deputy program and a neighborhood deputy program. The resident deputy program allows law enforcement presence and response in remote or isolated areas within Whatcom County. In 2020, WCSO had three deputies residing full-time in these areas: two in Point Roberts and one in Newhalem. The neighborhood deputy program consists of five deputies assigned full-time to specific geographical areas; Foothills (which encompasses Maple Falls and Glacier area), Birch Bay, the South Lake Whatcom area (which encompasses the Sudden Valley and Cain Lake areas), and an additional outpost position that patrols the U.S. National Forest Lands within Whatcom County (Baker Lake east of Glacier) working in cooperation with U.S. Forest Service.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DEPUTY (BHD) PROGRAM

The Behavioral Health Deputy Program is intended to assist the Patrol Division in effectively intervening and de-escalating crisis situations involving persons with behavioral health issues and/or developmental disabilities. In 2020, two deputies were assigned to focus primarily on mental-health related calls and to connect people with appropriate services, acting as liaisons between the WCSO and the behavioral health community and social service organizations. In 2020, WCSO deputies responded to 1,492 calls related to behavioral health. The BHD Program continues to reach out in partnership with support communities including monthly meetings with the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI).



BUREAU OF FIELD OPERATIONS

FIELD TRAINING UNIT

The training requirements to become a patrol deputy are extensive. After being hired, each new deputy is sent to the [Washington State Criminal Justice Training Center](#) to successfully complete the 720 hours required to receive a Washington State Peace Officer Certification. After the training academy, each new deputy must complete a three and a half month program through WCSO's Field Training Unit. The FTO Program is managed by a Lieutenant and supervised by the FTO Sergeant. Six tenured senior deputies are selected, trained, and staffed to serve as Field Training Officers (FTOs). The FTOs are certified by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission. (While FTO stands for Field Training Officer, it is the term commonly used for field training student deputies under the direction of the Field Training Unit.)

During the four phases and approximately 500 hours of training in the FTO program, deputies learn through on-the-job training and daily assessments. Every day, training is documented in Daily Observation Reports (DORs) and each phase requires an End of Phase Report (EPR). The student deputy must demonstrate an increase in knowledge, skills, and abilities related to their patrol duties before proceeding to the next FTO phase. Deputies must complete the FTO program to continue employment and subsequently be assigned as a probationary deputy for the duration of a 15-month probationary period. Upon successful completion of Field Training, each student deputy is prepared to function as an independent deputy within the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office.

In 2020 The Sheriff's Office training of recruits was very challenging due to COVID-19. Recruits were sent home early from the academy and in-person training was no longer an option for some time. Through a combination of virtual online training and partnerships with regional agencies, our trainers and trainers from other agencies successfully completed the training allowing one recruit to graduate and the other recruit to bridge the gap until the academy opened for training again. With this adaptability and expertise, our trainers have highlighted the successful field training program of the Sheriff's Office.

During 2020, WCSO's FTO Unit trained three deputies.

BUREAU OF FIELD OPERATIONS

TRAFFIC UNIT

The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Traffic Unit was formed in 2004 to provide a more coordinated effort in preventing collisions on County roadways, utilizing both motorcycles and patrol vehicles. The mission of the Traffic Unit is to provide safe roadways to all drivers through the use of engineering, education and enforcement to prevent death, injury and property damage.

2020 TRAFFIC CALLS FOR SERVICE

COLLISIONS	733	PARKING PROBLEMS	47
TRAFFIC PROBLEMS	309	WA STATE PATROL ASSISTS	255
TRAFFIC HAZARDS	715	ROAD USE INVESTIGATIONS	19
TRAFFIC STOPS/ARRESTS	559	JUNK VEHICLE INSPECTIONS	103
DUI ARRESTS	103	TRAFFIC INFRACTIONS	3300
ABANDONED VEHICLES	201	TOTAL	6344



Lt. Rodger Funk

2020 AGENCY-WIDE TRAFFIC STATISTICS

	Total Collisions	Fatal Collisions	Injury Collisions	Fatalities	Injuries	Traffic Infractions	Non-Traffic Infractions	Criminal Traffic	Criminal Non-Traffic	Total Tickets
January	54	0	11	0	13	568	0	73	36	677
February	31	0	12	0	14	456	0	67	32	555
March	37	0	10	0	12	270	0	50	19	339
April	21	0	5	0	5	38	0	16	15	69
May	30	0	6	0	9	165	6	35	31	237
June	30	0	17	0	20	161	5	49	24	239
July	40	0	13	0	15	274	79	49	18	420
August	30	0	9	0	10	276	131	37	23	467
September	41	0	14	0	17	416	20	65	21	522
October	38	0	13	0	17	266	0	52	19	337
November	51	0	10	0	17	217	0	54	22	293
December	51	0	18	0	20	193	0	51	21	265
Report Totals:	454	0	138	0	169	3300	241	598	281	4420

BUREAU OF FIELD OPERATIONS

K-9 UNIT

In 2020, WCSO had three canine (K-9) teams. The K-9s are chosen for specific traits and attributes. They are partnered with a K-9 handler deputy who works extensively with the K-9 before going into the field as a team. Because of their superior senses of smell and hearing and physical capabilities, trained K-9s are valuable law enforcement assets. The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office K-9s are used to locate missing or endangered persons (e.g., lost children, individuals who may be disoriented or in need of medical attention) and persons wanted for criminal offenses.

K-9 units may be used when there is a reasonable belief an individual poses an imminent threat of violence or serious harm, the individual is physically resisting or threatening to resist arrest, or the individual is believed to be concealed in an area where entry by other than the K-9 would pose a greater threat to the safety of deputies or the public. K-9s are also utilized to locate various controlled substances. The K-9 units go through continuous training throughout their career. They are often utilized by other police agencies throughout Whatcom County when needed.



BUREAU OF FIELD OPERATIONS

K-9 UNIT 2020 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Assisted with arrests of two suspects from Acme Park homicide.
- Assisted SWAT with the arrest of a suspect in two armed robberies.
- Assisted DEA and the Gang & Drug Taskforce with warrant service on Fentanyl investigation convincing a suspect to surrender.
- Conducted a five-hour multi-canine search on Sumas Mountain resulting in the capture of a jail escapee.
- Assisted with evidence search on an eco-terrorism case that involved sabotage to railroad tracks.
- Tracked, located, and convinced murder suspect to surrender peacefully.



K-9 Hyde poses with seized drugs and money

2020 K-9 STATISTICS

Deployments	369
Narcotic Seizures*	
Cocaine (in pounds)	22
Methamphetamine (in pounds)	488
Heroin (in pounds)	4
MDMA (Ecstasy) (in pounds)	44
Total Pounds of Narcotics Seized	588
Fentanyl pills	27,930
Firearms Seized*	25
Cash Seized*	\$399,000

*WCSO's K-9 Unit was involved in these seizures

BUREAU OF FIELD OPERATIONS

SPECIAL RESPONSE UNIT

The WCSO maintains a Special Response Unit (SRU) comprised of two teams: a Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) and a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Team.

CRISIS NEGOTIATION TEAM (CNT)

The goal of the CNT is to resolve crisis incidents while attempting to avoid unnecessary risk to deputies/officers, citizens, victims, and subjects. Crisis negotiation skills have consistently proven to be law enforcement's most risk effective method to achieve the desired outcomes. Crisis negotiators are deployed with SWAT as part of the Special Response Unit. In addition, negotiators are regularly used on Patrol to deal with barricaded subjects and to de-escalate situations involving persons with mental health issues.

SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS TEAM (SWAT)

The SWAT team provides specialized support to the WCSO or other law enforcement agency personnel in handling critical field operations where special tactical deployment methods beyond the capacity of field deputies/officers appear to be necessary.



Deputies capture a suspect wanted for armed robberies in Bellingham and Ferndale

2020 SWAT involvements:

- Assisted in locating and arresting a homicide suspect.
- Arrested a barricaded suspect for felony harassment. CNT successfully negotiated the suspect to surrender.
- Assisted DEA with the execution of a federal search warrant. One suspect was arrested for federal drug charges after barricading in a residence. CNT successfully negotiated the suspect to surrender.
- Assisted in locating and arresting a homicide suspect.
- Assisted in a manhunt for two suspects that ran away (escaped) from a Sheriff's Office work release crew.
- Assisted in locating and arresting a robbery suspect.
- Located and arrested a suspect on felony drug charges

There are many times where incidents are resolved by members of both CNT and SWAT who are on patrol, without requiring a full team activation.

BUREAU OF FIELD OPERATIONS

MARINE SERVICES UNIT

The Marine Services Unit, also known as Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Unit conducts vessel safety inspections and education pertaining to safety on the water. Marine deputies also provide enforcement of Boating Under the Influence (BUI) laws and assist with search and rescue incidents in and around county rivers, lakes and coastal areas.

OPERATIONS BETWEEN MEMORIAL DAY AND LABOR DAY 2020:

11 patrol missions on Lake Samish

15 patrol missions on Lake Whatcom

2 missions on Puget Sound

1 Search and Rescue Mission

Participated in Operation Dry Water

In 2020, RBS patrols provided:

235 vessel-on-the-water law enforcement hours

371 officer-on-the-water law enforcement hours

64 ramp inspection hours

This produced:

245 written inspections

165 spot inspections

7 infractions

In 2020, the RBS assisted 38 vessels and 95 boaters in distress.



WCSO's newest Life Proof vessel

2020 WCSO NEW VESSEL: LIFE PROOF

The Life Proof is a 2020 27ft aluminum foam collared full cabin vessel with two 4-stroke 300hp Mercury Verado outboard motors. The vessel was purchased in 2020 with the assistance of a FEMA Port Security Grant with 25% local matching funds. The vessel is new to the fleet and has 10 hours on the motors. The Life Proof is currently the primary vessel for salt-water operations in the Straits of Georgia. Tentatively this vessel will be moored in Blaine Harbor. This vessel requires a crew of two for transport operations and a three-person crew for patrol operations.

WCSO MARINE SERVICES FLEET

Donzi 2008 27' Fiberglass: Primary vessel for Lake Whatcom

Heliarc 1995 20' Aluminum: Primary vessel for Nooksack River & Baker Lake

Munson 2017 19' Aluminum: Primary vessel for search and rescue & Lake Samish

Bombardier 2005 10' Personal Watercraft:

Primarily used for patrol during high traffic periods

BUREAU OF FIELD OPERATIONS

ON-GOING TRAINING

The training requirements to become a deputy sheriff are extensive. After being hired, each new deputy is sent to the [Washington State Criminal Justice Training Center](#) to successfully complete the 720 hours required to receive a Washington State Peace Officer Certification. After the training academy, each new deputy must complete a three and a half months Field Officer Training (FTO) program. During the approximately 500 hours of training in the FTO program, deputies learn through on-the-job training and daily assessments by a senior deputy who is specially trained to instruct and evaluate trainees. Deputies must complete the FTO program to continue employment and subsequently be assigned as a probationary deputy for the duration of a 15-month probationary period. After the probationary period is over, if the deputy has proven that they have learned the required skills to perform their duties, they leave the probationary status and become a non-probationary deputy. In 2020, WCSO had four deputies complete the probationary period.

After completing probation, deputies receive ongoing training. Each deputy must complete a minimum of twenty-four hours of training as mandated by the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). This training includes crisis intervention training, de-escalation training, and legal updates to name a few. Deputies also receive ongoing training in defensive tactics, emergency vehicle operations, and first aid.

Any deputy that performs additional duties such as mental health deputy, detectives, narcotics, Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), K-9, marine unit, civil deputy, traffic, Special Events Team (SET), firearms instructor, and less lethal instructor, receive initial and ongoing training related to those functions.

Any deputy promoted to sergeant, lieutenant, or chief are also required to complete additional training to receive State career level certifications in First Line Supervision (Sergeants) and Middle Management (Lieutenants and Chiefs). The Sheriff and Undersheriff are required to complete training to receive an Executive Level Career Certification.

BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Bureau of Investigations and Support Services is primarily responsible for long-term detailed investigations into crimes against persons and narcotic crimes, as well as executing processes and orders of the courts, managing WCSO records and evidence, and overseeing many of the processes that support the accomplishment of WCSO's core missions.

2020 MAJOR CRIMES HIGHLIGHTS:

- The year started with the wrap-up of the Heimsoth homicide from late December 2019. The month of January was filled with trips to Harborview, guarding the prisoner and trying to assess his mental and physical state. The case at this point still has not been charged as Mr. Heimsoth is in an assisted living facility.
- Shortly after the onset of COVID-19 in March, we investigated two Homicide cases in April. The first was the Darian Sather investigation from the 1500 block of Mosquito Lake Road. Within 48 hours, three suspects were arrested for murder and several other arrests for rendering criminal assistance. All three murder suspects have since pled guilty to Manslaughter 1st charges, and have been sentenced.
- The second April homicide investigation was the Dale Henifin murder case. He was stabbed in his residence on Mission Road after an argument with his daughter and her boyfriend. Within 24 hours, Kali McConnell and Zachary Tellez were arrested for Murder charges and booked into jail.
- The third homicide investigation of the year occurred in October with the Clinton Gulick case. He was found executed near his running vehicle in the 4000 block of Mosquito Lake Road. Through some excellent police work, two suspects were identified. One of them was taken into custody within 24 hours and the other suspect was located in North Bellingham the next day.
- The Detective Unit has worked in conjunction with the Drug Task Force on numerous Controlled Substance Homicide cases in dealing with overdose fentanyl deaths. Two from the fall of 2019 carried over into 2020 with the actual arrests being made in 2020. Also, four deaths in 2020 were worked on and arrests were made in 3 of them.
- Due to COVID-19, we did not have any "Cold Case Break-Out Investigative Sessions" in 2020, but detectives did do some further work and follow up with DNA specialists on the Jeffery Little homicide.

CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN	2019	2020
CPS Referrals	100	97
Child Abuse Case Investigations	58	63

BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

WHATCOM GANG AND DRUG TASK FORCE (WGDTF)

The WGDTF is a multi-agency task force comprised of members from the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office, Bellingham Police Department, Homeland Security Investigations and Customs and Border Protection. The WCSO oversees and manages the Task Force which focuses on mid to upper level distributors of narcotics in and around Whatcom County.

With the common goal to disrupt the illicit drug traffic in the area by immobilizing target violators and trafficking organizations, the WGDTF conducts undercover operations and surveillance to investigate, gather, and report intelligence data relating to trafficking in narcotics and dangerous drugs. In partnership and cooperation with our Federal partners, WGDTF has assisted the DEA and FBI in the following investigations:

- Several smaller, WGDTF local investigations lead to larger Fentanyl investigations, identifying other local targets and involvements related to a 2019 overdose/homicide case. These investigations resulted in multiple local and Federal arrests and included seizures of 400 grams of Cocaine, 1 gram of Heroin, 5 grams Methamphetamine, 665 Fentanyl pills, 2 firearms, and over \$200,000 in property and cash (\$100,000 in property/assets, \$103,000 cash between DTF and DEA).
- A WGDTF informant's information turned into a joint case with DEA, leading to the Lake Stevens area and resulting in Federal arrest of a larger supplier to Whatcom County, seizing 54 grams of Methamphetamine, 195 grams of Fentanyl, 134 grams of Heroin, and \$24,080 cash.
- WGDTF assisted the FBI and DEA in an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation, providing surveillance of a regional supplier and Federal arrest of 8 individuals in the King/Snohomish County area, seizing 2,800 grams of Heroin, 13,500 grams of Methamphetamine, 16,000 Fentanyl pills, and \$36,992 cash.

LOCAL INVESTIGATIONS

- A several-month investigation of a male suspect selling heroin in a Bellingham neighborhood and residence where children resided, concluded with the assistance of Skagit County Interlocal Drug Enforcement Unit (SCIDEU), Bellingham Police Department's SWAT Team, and Special Crimes Unit. The suspect was arrested after running out the back door with an AR-15 and two handguns (one stolen out of Everett), and probable cause was established for another suspect. 300 grams heroin, 6.8 grams methamphetamine, 3 firearms and ammunition, and over \$3,500 in cash were seized.
- Several local investigations include prolific local drug dealers, often utilizing the I-5 corridor, running between Whatcom, Snohomish, and King Counties to obtain a supply. These investigations resulted in 4 arrests over several months, all related to Fentanyl distribution, and seizure of nearly 300 pills, \$850 cash, an illegally possessed handgun, and a vehicle used for the conveyance of drug sales.
- Investigation and arrest in two separate cases in the City of Bellingham where subjects utilized social media to advertise sales of hallucinogens, with one residing near WWU campus and Sehome High School, targeting under-age buyers. One arrest included the seizure of 4.2 grams of Ecstasy/MDMA, 50 Xanax pills, 15 LSD tabs, 2 suboxone, 1 rifle, 1 stolen handgun, and \$3,000 cash. The second case included the arrest and seizure of 103 pounds of Marijuana, 18 pounds psilocybin mushrooms, 1895 LSD tabs, 102 grams Ecstasy/MDMA, 1 firearm, and \$19,231 in cash. These two cases highlighted the use of social media to promote the sale of illegal narcotics and black-market marijuana to minors.

BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

WHATCOM GANG AND DRUG TASK FORCE (WGDTF)

WGDTF has an assigned WCSO Detective who serves as a Task Force Officer with Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). These cases highlight our partnership with providing investigative support and enforcement related to trafficking that occurs in Border Counties, and throughout the state:

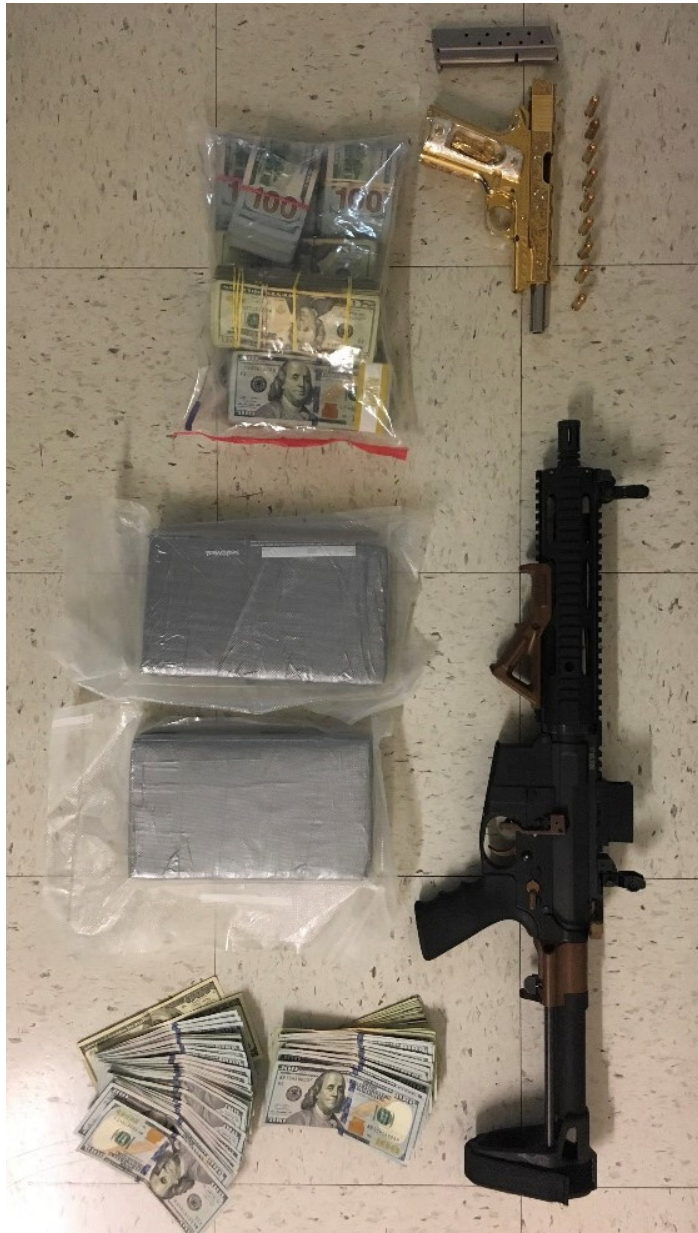
- Joint investigation with HSI related to drug trafficking across state lines. Arrest of two individuals, seizure of 50.6 pounds of Methamphetamine, and \$1,400 cash.
- HSI investigation leading to arrest of an individual receiving 6,160 grams of dimethyltryptamine (DMT) through the mail.
- HSI investigation and Federal arrest of 1 individual and seizure of 60,000 grams Cocaine.
- Investigation and arrest of 3 individuals from Yakima Valley in possession with intent to distribute 2,000 grams of cocaine, 2 firearms, and \$60,665 cash.

HOMICIDE INVESTIGATIONS

- In early 2020 investigators responded to a medical emergency related to an accidental overdose of counterfeit fentanyl-laced pills. This homicide lead to an investigation spanning several months and multiple individuals; with the assistance of electronic and social media warrants, 5 arrests were made throughout the investigation with charges ranging from manslaughter to extortion, along with the seizure of an additional 116 fentanyl pills, half a gram crack and \$3,700 cash.
- Local sources of information lead to the location of a male suspect who was actively threatening law enforcement, and where the City of Bellingham PD had PC for his arrest. WGDTF received information on the individual's location and assisted in his apprehension.
- A known felon became active in trafficking guns and drugs again. A drug case was initiated, and due to the prior history and danger presented by this individual, a plan with Whatcom County SWAT was made for his arrest. The seizure included 52 grams of Methamphetamine, 249 grams of heroin, 10.52 grams of cocaine, a stolen handgun, and \$3,100 cash.
- WGDTF assisted in locating and the arrest of multiple suspects related to a drug deal that turned into a robbery and homicide.
- WGDTF detectives assisted WCSO detectives in locating two suspects involved in a drug-related homicide. One suspect was tracked and located in Whatcom County, while the other had fled and was located and arrested in Snohomish County, with the assistance of SCIDEU and Snohomish County Sheriff's Office
- WGDTF detectives assisted in locating and the arrest of an individual with a nationwide arrest warrant for murder 1st after a man was found lying face down with multiple gunshot wounds by a passer-by.

BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

WHATCOM GANG AND DRUG TASK FORCE (WGDTF)



2020 WGDTF STATISTICS

Federal Indictments	5
Felony Whatcom County Arrests	43
Arrests of documented gang members	1
Pending Felony Cases	18

Seized approximately:

Cocaine	138 lbs
Methamphetamine	81 lbs
Heroin	8 lbs
Fentanyl powder	194.6 grams
Fentanyl pills (with DEA)	18,104
LSD Tablets	1935
Liquid LSD	10.8 grams
Psilocybin Mushrooms	18 lbs
Marijuana (black market)	103 lbs
Firearms Seized	11
Cash and property seized (between DEA and WGDTF)	\$275,000

BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

RECORDS AND EVIDENCE DIVISION

- In August of 2020 moved to an online format for Concealed Pistol License (CPL) issue and renewal with Permitium. This was needed due to COVID-19 and allowed us to begin issuing CPLs again, besides upgrading the process.
- In December of 2020, in conjunction with Whatcom County's IT Department, we replaced the main server for Spillman, the public safety software. This was a much-needed upgrade and had been several years in the making.

STATISTICS FROM RECORDS AND EVIDENCE	2019	2020
Public Disclosure Requests	2,257	2,151
Concealed Pistol Licenses (CPLs) Processed	2,397	1,829
Warrants Processed	1,828	1,242
Protection Orders Processed	1,024	1,108
Firearm Transfer Applications Processed	3,285	6,038
Evidence Items Booked	3,860	3,695
Evidence Items Destroyed	3,239	2,498



Cathy Miller fingerprints for a CPL

BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

CIVIL DIVISION

The WCSO serves legal documents, performs evictions and carries out orders of the courts. Trained WCSO personnel review all orders to be served by the Sheriff or deputies to limit their liability. The WCSO handles all of the evictions for Whatcom County. All Writs of Restitution are required to go through the Whatcom County Superior Court before they are delivered to the WCSO. Types of civil court orders carried out by the WCSO include: Orders of Sale, Writs of Execution, Writs of Attachment, Writs of Restitution, Writs of Replevin, and Writs of Habeas Corpus.

Due to moratoriums issued by the Governor in regards to evictions, the Writs of Restitution were down this year. There was narrow guidance on when someone could be evicted, limiting it to matters of public safety, or with a 60-day notice to the tenant and the owner selling or moving into the residence. Even with the moratorium, WCSO served 64 evictions. Of note, many of the 64 evictions required a physical removal of the occupant and coordination with mental health officers and the Opportunity Council.

DOCUMENTS SERVED	2019	2020
Service of Subpoenas to Deputies	4,827	4,126
Service of Subpoenas on witnesses for Whatcom County Prosecutor's Office	350	135
Service of Subpoenas received from other Prosecutor's Offices within WA ST	24	11
DSHS Papers served	35	31
Attorney Papers served	303	132
(Papers served for Private attorneys and citizens)		
Total Civil Papers Served	5,539	4435
Writs of Restitution	190	64
Real Property Executions	31	11
Personal Property Executions	2	2
Writs of Attachment (Real & Personal)	1	0
Writs of Habeas Corpus	9	6
Writs of Replevin	2	0
Total Evictions, Writs and Sheriff Sales Executed	235	83
Total Documents Served	5,774	4,518

SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR)

Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council is currently comprised of six volunteer SAR units that can be activated by the WCSO for search, rescue, and recovery incidents in urban, rural, and wilderness settings. They can also be called upon for evidence searches related to criminal cases.

There are three trained SAR Deputy Coordinators plus a Lieutenant that oversees the group. SAR also works closely with partners from neighboring counties, Whidbey Naval Air Station, and Customs and Border Protection. Our partners regularly provide air assets (mostly helicopters) along with personnel. Our volunteers are also occasionally sent to assist other counties needing additional search personnel.

In 2020, the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office SAR responded to 38 search and rescue reports. Listed below are the main types of calls WCSO SAR responded to during 2020:

- Missing dementia patients
- An overdue snowmobiler who was located and found to be hypothermic
- Climber and skier accidents where victims suffered broken bones and had to be airlifted or assisted out
- Hiking accidents where subjects fell and injured themselves
- Our dive team also responded to Mt. Vernon for the recovery of a young woman who drove her car into a river.

SIX SAR UNITS:

Whatcom County Dive Search and Rescue
Whatcom Emergency Communications Group
Whatcom County 4x4 Unit
Bellingham Mountain Rescue
Summit to Sound Search and Rescue
Whatcom County Snowmobile Search and Rescue



The WCSO is also a participant in Project Lifesaver in conjunction with Dementia Support Northwest. Project Lifesaver is a program designed to locate missing persons suffering from Alzheimer's disease, autism, or other various brain ailments. Radio frequency transmitters and receivers are used to track those with a tendency to go missing and wander. Participant intake is done by Dementia Support Northwest while the search component is done by trained SAR deputies and volunteers.

CORRECTIONS BUREAU

The WCSO Corrections Bureau includes three main branches:

- The Downtown Jail which functions as the main intake facility and houses full custody offenders.
- The Sheriff's Office Work Center which manages all of the jail alternative programs and lower security offenders.
- The Corrections Transport Unit provides transportation for offenders outside of the facility.

JAIL POPULATION MANAGEMENT

2020 brought significant changes to the Corrections Bureau in terms of the jail population. The primary factor was the COVID-19 pandemic. Like the rest of the community, this disease fundamentally changed how the Bureau functioned. To help control the jail population, very stringent booking restrictions were enacted in March of 2020. This resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of individuals brought to jail and the length of time they remained in custody. The focus became arresting and booking individuals who presented an immediate and serious threat to the safety of the community. At the same time booking restrictions were instituted, the Courts adopted very liberal release practices in an effort to reduce the offender population.

Minor remodelling took place in both facilities in order for offenders to attend Court appearances remotely. All education and faith base programming stopped and for a period of time, visiting was shut down. Offenders and staff were issued Personal Protective Equipment and additional cleaning and sanitizing protocols were developed and followed.

The changes necessitated by COVID-19 intensified the rate of reduction in the jail's Average Daily Population (ADP)*. Between 2019 and 2020, the ADP dropped 27%. This is the largest 1 year drop since the current downtown jail opened, and made a significant impact to the 48.6% reduction in ADP over the past 10 years. This drop translates to an incarceration rate change from 137 offenders per 100,000 population in 2019 to 95 per 100,000 in 2020.

MOUD (Medication for Opioid Use Disorder-previously known as Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT))

This program has continued to grow, as has the number of offenders needing it. The number of offenders who were medically treated for opioid addiction increase 32%, with the largest growth in the number of offenders who were started on medication prior to being released to the community and connected with a community provider at release. This option has been especially critical with the surge in much stronger forms of Opioids entering our community.

MENTAL HEALTH CARE

The number of offenders with Serious Mental Illnesses (SMI) continues to be high. The ability to help these individuals was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 response requirements in the community and at the State level. The wait time to get a bed at one of the State hospitals for competency restoration steadily increased over the year. By years end, there was up to a 20 week wait for a bed in a restoration unit for very ill offenders diagnosed with a SMI.

*ADP=Average Daily Population: a measure of how many people, on average were in custody per day during a specific period.
The jail population can swing from 205, down to 180, then back up to 200 in 24 hours.

CORRECTIONS BUREAU

2020 JAIL ALTERNATIVES OVERVIEW



The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office runs one of the largest Jail Alternatives Programs in the state. It includes Work Release, Electronic Monitoring and both In-custody and Out-of-Custody work crews. Participation in the crews is a voluntary option for some low-risk offenders which allows them to work off jail time while performing a service for the community. Under some circumstances, individuals who owe legal fines can reduce the fine amounts by working on one of the Out of Custody work crews. These work programs help instill valuable work habits, preserve scarce jail space for more serious and dangerous offenders, reduce financial legal obligations, and provide a valuable service to the community.

Despite having to shut down the Jail Alternative programs for much of 2020, the number of participants and the quantity of work they performed was impressive. A total of 315 offenders participated in the Work Crew programs and performed over 21,600 hours of work for the community, including sandbagging during the Sumas flood, taking care of grounds maintenance on County sites, picking up over 70,000 pounds of trash and pulling and disposing of over 10,500 pounds of invasive noxious weeds.

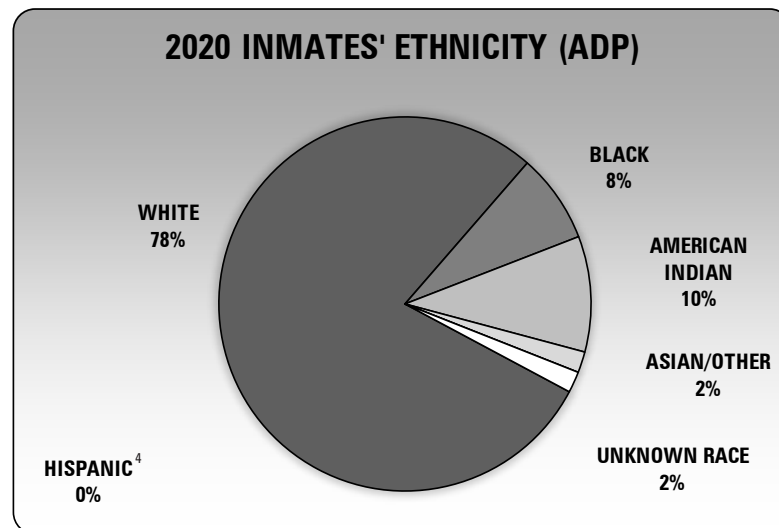
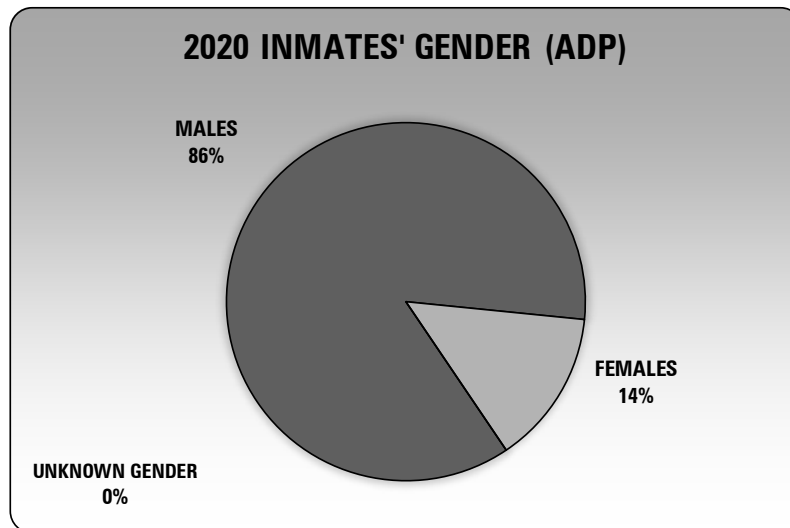
In addition to the work crews, the unit was able to continue providing Electronic Home Detention and Work Release to a reduced number of people. Even with the COVID-19 related reductions, 493 community members were able to serve their jail sentences and divert 12,921 bed days from full custody.



Sandbags made by a jail alternative work crew in preparation for a flood watch in January 2020

CORRECTIONS BUREAU

WHATCOM COUNTY JAIL STATISTICS	2019	2020
Design Capacity (Downtown Jail + Work Center)	298	298
Daily Bed Rate	\$131	\$198
Average Length of Stay (Days)	12	14 ¹
Percentage of Use	102%	74%
Average Daily Population (ADP)	304	222 ²
Electronic Home Detention	5,958 days	6,218 days ³
Work Release	3,102 days	1,803 days
In Custody Work Crew	5,796 days	3,499 days
Out-of-Custody Work Crew	2,664 days	1,401 days
In Custody Deaths	0	0



1 As the Court systems shut down, offenders length of time in custody grew.

2 This Jail program also provides services for approximately 20 participants per day who are on the District Court Pre-Trial Misdemeanor Supervision program.

3 Starting in March of 2020 the Jail took several steps to mitigate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the jail population. Booking restrictions were imposed, we worked with the Prosecutor's office to release lower risk offenders, out of custody and in custody work crew programs were put on hiatus, and additional offenders were placed on EHD. This resulted in a significant drop in the daily jail population in both facilities. Due to the nature of the work, all Corrections staff members were considered essential workers and reported to the facilities on their regular schedule. Deputies who were assigned to oversee the Alternative Programs were used to cover staff shortages in the full custody facilities.

4 In 2019 the Federal government moved the category of "Hispanic" from race to ethnicity. The Jail's record management system was not programmed to collect ethnicity, so individuals who would have previously identified themselves as "Hispanic" are selecting another category.

2020 CRIME STATISTICS

The following section provides WCSO offense counts for Crimes Against Persons, Crimes Against Property, and Crimes Against Society. These numbers are derived from monthly National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) submissions by Washington State law enforcement agencies. For more detailed information, visit [Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs Crime in Washington 2020 Annual Report](#).



For up to date statistics on crime, please visit [WCSO's Crime Stats Dashboard](#).

Offense Description	Reported 2019	Reported 2020	Total Arrests
Murder	4	6	8
Manslaughter	1	0	2
Rape	33	25	9
Sodomy	6	4	0
Sexual Assault w/Object	0	0	0
Fondling	25	21	5
Aggravated Assault	100	110	61
Simple Assault	286	236	124
Intimidation	126	129	38
Kidnapping	15	15	16
Incest	1	5	0
Statutory Rape	4	1	0
Human Trafficking Offenses	0	0	0
Violation of No Contact/Protect.	198	200	48
Robbery	8	10	6
Burglary	353	355	43
Larceny-Theft Offenses	779	795	39

2020 CRIME STATISTICS



For up to date statistics on crime,
please visit [WCSO's Crime Stats Dashboard](#).

Offense Description	Reported 2019	Reported 2020	Total Arrests
Motor Vehicle Theft	106	191	4
Arson	8	14	4
Destruction of Property	372	358	11
Counterfeiting/Forgery	42	42	3
Fraud Offenses	106	408	11
Embezzlement	1	0	0
Extortion/Blackmail	6	5	1
Bribery	0	0	0
Stolen Property Offenses	53	49	36
Animal Cruelty	3	3	0
Drug/Narcotic Violations	257	241	113
Drug Equipment Violations	7	14	0
Gambling Offenses	0	0	0
Pornography	4	4	0
Prostitution Offenses	1	0	0
Weapon Law Violations	30	42	12
TOTAL	2,935	3,283	594

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS (OPS)

The Office of Professional Standards (OPS) works to ensure the WCSO practices remain consistent with contemporary legal and best practice standards in the areas of policy and procedure, the management of citizen complaints and internal investigations, and the recruitment and hiring of new employees. Accountability to the citizens we serve is a fundamental element of maintaining the trust they have in our agency.

Two major projects that were started in OPS during 2020. The first is the transition to the Lexipol Policy system. This system offers hundreds of corrections and law enforcement policies that are legally defensible because they are constantly being researched and updated by Lexipol. The Lexipol system offers a convenient online review of the policies and provides periodic training on the policies directly to our staff. We are currently conducting a multi-step review of each policy, and hope to be transitioned to the system by 2022.

The second project is the transition to the BlueTeam NexGen system. This system allows WCSO to better manage, track, and report on important metrics such as complaints, vehicle pursuits, and the use of force. Previously only basic information was available in these areas, and it was sometimes difficult and time-consuming to track.

As public interest in police accountability increased in 2020, so did the requests for the public disclosure of records related to the past and present handling of complaints and internal investigations, as well as historical data about the use of force by our deputies. OPS was involved in the processing of 18 public disclosure requests, many which involved the review, redaction, and release of hundreds of pages of documents.

OPS also coordinated 290 records checks for volunteers working with Whatcom Unified Command (COVID-19) and Whatcom County Search & Rescue, and also completed records checks and coordinated polygraph examinations and background investigations for 28 individuals being considered for employment with the Sheriff's Office.



DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (DEM)

The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office, through its Division of Emergency Management (DEM), is responsible for providing emergency management services for all of unincorporated Whatcom County and for the cities of Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, Sumas, and the Port of Bellingham. The City of Bellingham Fire Department, through its Office of Emergency Management, provides emergency management services within the city limits of Bellingham.

2020 DEM ACTIVITIES SIGNIFICANT ACTIVATIONS

- Incident #20-4465 Custer Crude Oil Train Derailment

December 22, 2020-January 12, 2021: WCSO's DEM was the local on-scene coordinator for the Unified Command established for the train derailment. The response to the BNSF Railway derailment in Custer was a testament to the partnership and collaboration from area partners including Whatcom County Fire District #7, North Whatcom Fire and Rescue, Specialized Emergency Response Program (S.E.R.P), Washington State Patrol, Phillips 66 Ferndale Refinery, BP's Cherry Point Refinery, and the Ferndale School District.

- Incident #20-0050, January Winter Storm

January 10-17, 2020: Emergency Operation Center (EOC) Support, Incident Management Team, coordinated volunteer support

- FEMA PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION, 20-0256 FEMA-4539-DR-WA Super Bowl Flood

January 20-February 5, 2020, Declaration Date: April 23, 2020

The Super Bowl Flooding caused approximately \$4 million in damage to Whatcom County. Most heavily impacted was the Everson / Sumas area.

- FEMA PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION, 20-0265 FEMA-4481-DR-WA COVID-19

January 30, 2020 and continuing through 2021, Declaration Date: March 13, 2020
DEM set up the EOC and established the initial Unified Command.

COVID-19 Response:

- 47,896 Hours worked in EOC
- 9,884 Hours worked by Division of Emergency Management Staff

Division of Emergency Management Registered Volunteer Emergency Workers:

- 3,672 Shifts filled
- 12,452 hours worked (\$33.02/Hr = \$411,165)
- 16,945 Miles driven (0.575/M = \$9,743)
- Logistical Base and management of county-wide PPE

PLANS

- NOAA Storm Ready Certification for Whatcom County
- Wildland Urban Interface Fire Plan
- Tsunami Maritime Response and Mitigation Strategy for the Port of Bellingham



Custer crude oil train derailment, December 22, 2020

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (DEM)

2020 DEM ACTIVITIES (cont)

TRAININGS, COORDINATED

- Nearly all of the training in 2020 was conducted in support of the COVID-19 Unified Response in Whatcom County.
This focused on the hundreds of emergent volunteers who required training to be able to respond for COVID-19 in a multitude of support roles.
- FEMA AWR310 – Natural Disaster Awareness for Community Leaders
- Whatcom County Winter Storm Preparedness Training

EXERCISES, COORDINATED

- February: Golden Eagle Search and Rescue Full Scale Cross Mountain Patient Evacuation
- April: Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District Brown Muskrat Exercise
- May: EOC to EOC Statewide Emergency Communications focusing on Rapid Damage Assessment
- September: Full-scale exercise for Bellingham International Airport
- October: 2020 Great Washington ShakeOut
- December: Puget Sound Energy Dam Failure Notification Exercise

PARTICIPATED IN OTHER AGENCY EXERCISES

- January: king tide storm emergency response table-top exercise, Blaine Public Works
- March: Whatcom County mass fatality planning workshop and table-top exercise, Whatcom County Health Department
- March: Tsunami response workshop, WA-EMD, Camp Murray
- March: Border closure table-top exercise, Whatcom Council of Governments, Peace Arch Park Port of Entry
- March: Volunteer mobilization center volcano response table-top exercise, Volunteer Mobilization Center
- March: Washington State amateur radio exercise, WA-EMD, Camp Murray (remote participation)
- April: Special events team training. ACU-1000 X-Band OSCAR/Rac-2 and UAVs. (ACS and CERT also supported)
- July: WSDOT salt shaker table-top exercise, 30 participants
- September: Bellingham International Airport Security table-top exercise
- September: Isotope Crossroads table-top exercise
- October: Shell worst case spill drill
- November: BP Cherry Point Refinery worst case spill drill
- November: Phillips 66 Ferndale Refinery mid-case spill drill

PUBLICATIONS

2013 Colombia-US Binational Exchange was published by the Journal of Applied Volcanology. Driedger, C., Calvache, M., Cortés, G.P. et al.

[Leveraging lessons learned to prevent future disasters—insights from the 2013 Colombia-US binational exchange. J Appl. Volcanol. 9, 3 \(2020\).](#)



Full-scale emergency training exercise for Bellingham International Airport, September 2020

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (DEM)



Babcock site of the Public Safety Radio System tower

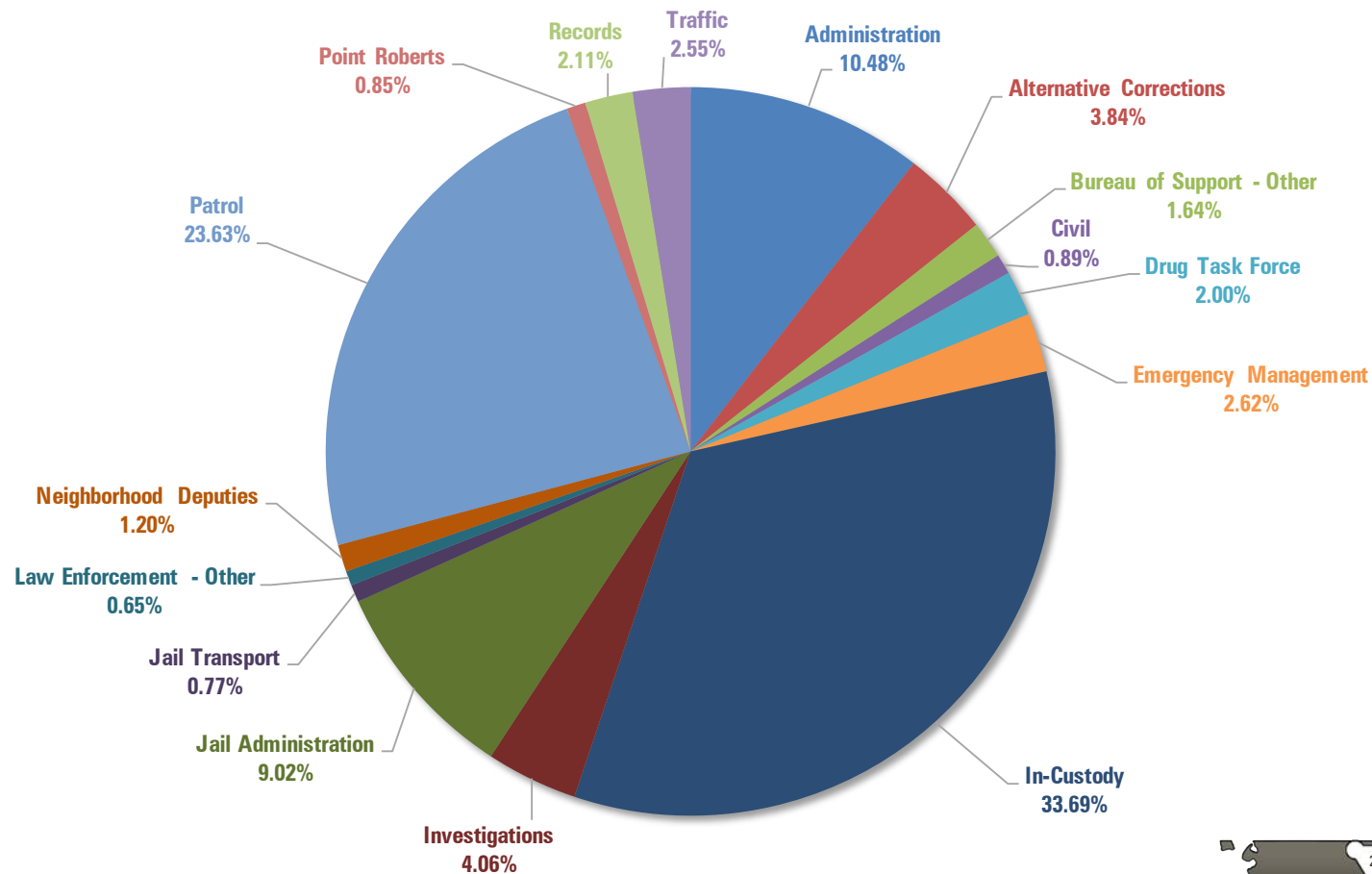
COMMUNICATIONS

WCSO's DEM is responsible for Public Safety Communications in Whatcom County and is implementing the [Whatcom County Integrated Public Safety Radio System](#). Whatcom County's communications backbone has been in use since the mid-1980s and had only minor upgrades since. The Whatcom County Integrated Public Safety Radio System Project builds a public safety radio system for use by all first responder agencies in Whatcom County, its political subdivisions, as well as adjacent counties. This major radio project involves multiple partnerships with jurisdictions across Whatcom County including the City of Bellingham, Whatcom Transportation Authority, and the Fire and EMS communities.

2019-2020 BUDGET

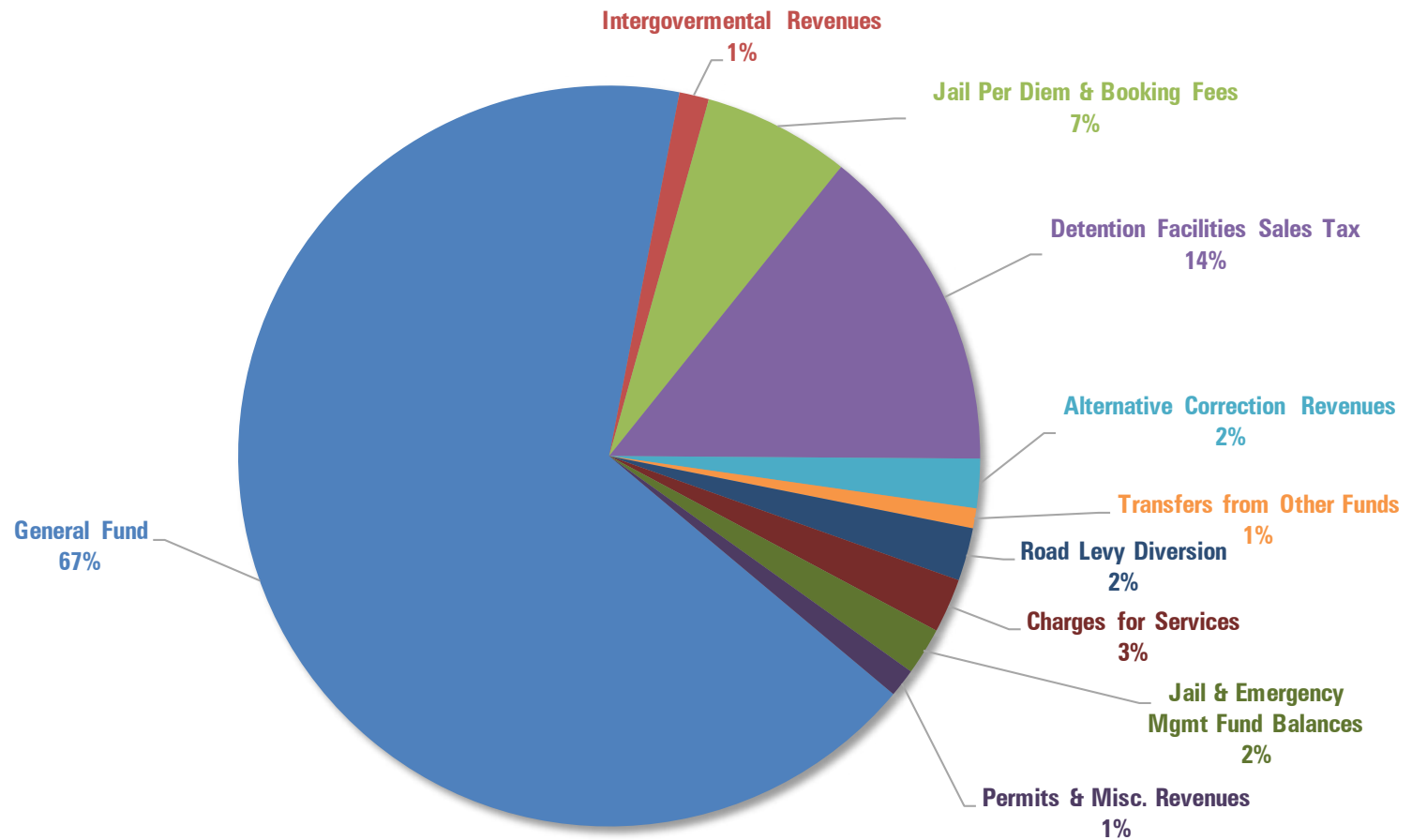
Total Sheriff's Operations (including jail and emergency management) is 16.44% of the County's total budget. The WCSO also receives limited State and Federal funding to support programs such as sex offender registration/tracking, boating, international border, forest area and DUI patrols. Total law and justice expenditures (criminal and civil courts, probation, prosecution, public defense and similar programs, and WCSO) represent 57% of the County's general fund budget.

2019-2020 SHERIFF'S OFFICE BUDGET BY PROGRAM*



2019-2020 BUDGET

2019-2020 SHERIFF'S OFFICE FUNDING SOURCES*



*Whatcom County Executive's 2019-2020 Budget Volume 2