

St. James Parish Sheriff's Office



Annual Report

2 0 0 9



Dear Fellow Citizens,

Welcome to the St. James Parish Sheriff's Office Annual Report.

When I travel outside Louisiana, I'm often asked to describe the place I'm from. Like you, I take pride in relating the uniqueness of St. James Parish. The discussion of course always turns to our great food and the absolute joy people in our part of the world get from just being alive.

The most common way I speak of our parish to those unfortunate people who have never had the opportunity to visit or live here is that we are one big family where 'Everybody knows everybody.' And if we don't know someone, it usually doesn't take long to become a friend.

Then, once we get past how hot vastly different 93 degrees of 'dry' heat is from 93 degrees of our 'wet' heat, I'm always amazed by how people can be so different and yet so much the same.

We all feel a sense of community. We all share a love for wherever and whatever we call home. Perhaps most important, we all try in different ways to help loved ones, neighbors and friends. That's our job - to assist you in any way we can while continuing to work to keep our parish safe.

Speaking of helping out, in this issue you'll find articles on railroad crossing safety, Tasers, a new approach to enhancing courtroom security and our "OffenderWatch," program which allows crime victims to keep track of perpetrators.

Let's continue to act like the 'one big family' I described earlier by looking out for one another. One of the most important things you can do to help us is to immediately report suspicious activity. If something "just doesn't look right," pick up your phone and call us. We will investigate.

Please let me know if I or this office can ever be of service to you. In any emergency, do not hesitate to dial 911.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Willy J. Martin, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

WILLY J. MARTIN, JR.
Sheriff, St. James Parish



Driving and Texting Don't Mix

Louisiana is among more than a dozen states that forbids the sending of text messages while driving. Many other states are considering banning this potentially deadly practice.

"Text messaging is a convenient way to communicate, but distracted drivers cause accidents and it has absolutely no place behind the wheel," Sheriff Martin said.

A national study* found that:

- Commercial drivers who texted had collision risks up to 23 times greater than non-texters
- Other drivers are similarly affected
- Half of 16 to 24 year old drivers in the study had texted while driving while 22 percent of drivers 35 to 44 had done so
- The average texting driver takes their eyes off the road for five seconds, long enough at highway speeds to travel about the length of a football field.

"By the time you look up, it's too late," Sheriff Martin said. "You cannot drive and text at the same time. Not only is it against the law, it's extremely dangerous."

In 2008, an average mobile phone subscriber placed or received 204 calls each month while sending or receiving 357 text messages - a 450 percent increase over 2006. Teenagers sent and received four times that many.

The study shows texting and driving easily surpasses the dangers of other driving distractions. Dialing a cell phone and using or reaching for an electronic device increased the collision risk six fold.

**Research sponsored by The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and conducted by The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, one of the world's largest vehicle-safety research organizations. To read the report, click on the "Dangers of Text Messaging While Driving" tab at stjamessheriff.com*



St. James Parish Detention Center Assistant Warden Edward Scott (left) and Warden Faron Scioneaux stand watch over a defendant wearing the Band-it Prisoner Transport and Courtroom Control System.

Courtroom Safety

When a defendant appears before a judge, emotions run very high. Adding to the tension, the victim's family may be in the courtroom. In addition to our regular duties, the SJPSO also provides security for court proceedings.

For certain court proceedings involving violent criminals, a defendant cannot be shackled or wear prison clothing as these images may influence a jury. To ensure the safety of judges, court personnel and observers, the SJPSO is now using the Band-it Prisoner Transport and Courtroom Control System.

The device, attached to an inmate's leg can deliver an incapacitating, eight second electric shock – much like a Taser. A deputy monitoring the proceedings can first send a 'warning beep' to the Band-It from a hand-held remote with a 150 foot range. If the prisoner makes a threatening move, the Band-It is triggered and the temporarily immobilized prisoner can be safely removed from the courtroom.

The Band-It has been approved by the U.S. Department of Justice and adopted by the U.S. Marshals Service, the Federal Bureau of Prisons and many state and local agencies to prevent violence during the transportation and court appearances of potentially dangerous defendants.





Railroad Crossing Safety

With the sixth highest rate of railroad crossing accidents in the nation, Louisiana motorists should use extra caution when approaching railroads. According to the Federal Railroad Administration, there are 34 public crossings in the parish and some 150 private ones, mostly on farmland.

“St. James recorded five train/automobile accidents in 2008 and fortunately, none were fatal,” Sheriff Martin said. “A train traveling at about 50 miles per hour can take a mile to stop. It’s a driver’s responsibility to make sure tracks are clear before going through a crossing.”

Statewide in 2008, 292 railroad accidents resulted in 22 fatalities.

“When you look down the tracks, trains appear to be moving slower than they actually are. A train hitting a car is like a car hitting a tin can,” Sheriff Martin said. “Pay attention at crossings and teach children to stay away from railroads. When you race a train, you lose.”

Motorists or pedestrians who cross train tracks when gates, lights or warning bells are operating can be fined \$200 for a first offense and \$500 the second time.



Sheriff Martin and Deputy Dwayne White examine one of the new Tasers officers are carrying. The devices are used worldwide to subdue fleeing, belligerent, or potentially dangerous subjects, often when a more lethal weapon would have been used.



SJPSO patrol officers are now carrying Tasers - the non-lethal weapon that uses a four second electrical current to disrupt a suspect’s muscle control.

“We hope to never have to use it,” Sheriff Martin said. “It is extremely effective in controlling situations where there is a substantial threat to an officer or citizen.”

Before lieutenants and sergeants are issued the device, they must complete an extensive classroom and online certification program. Two SJPSO personnel have taken the extra steps necessary to be certified as Taser instructors.

“If one of our deputies uses a Taser, we know exactly what, when, where, why and how it was discharged,” Sheriff Martin said. “Tiny strips of confetti with the serial number of the cartridge are emitted when it is fired and a video camera inside the Taser records the entire incident.”

More SJPSO deputies will be issued Tasers in coming months.

Keep St. James Parish Beautiful!

Louisiana spends more than \$14 million a year to clean up our highways.

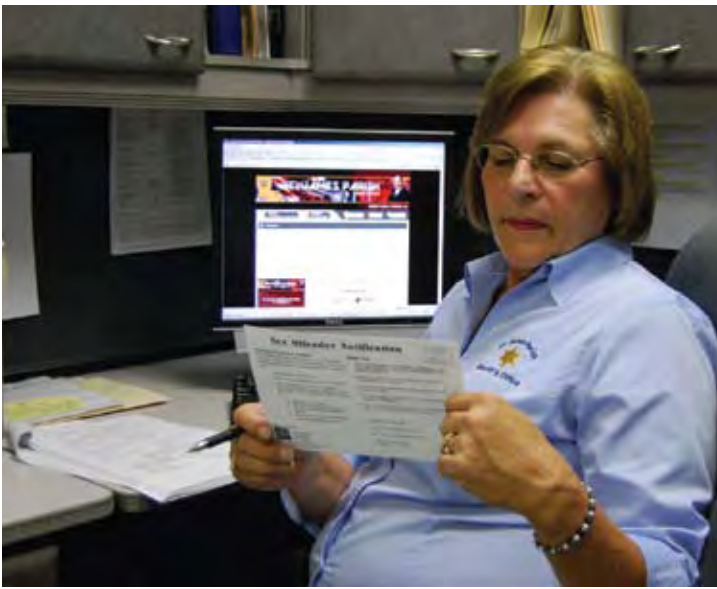
The SJPSO enforces litter and environmental laws – not only for people who intentionally throw trash from a vehicle’s window, but for debris blown from the bed of a pickup truck and illegal dumping.

Recently, the operator of a Vacherie waste treatment plant was arrested and booked with 78

counts of illegal dumping of untreated wastewater while the owner of the facility was charged with 89 violations.

Litter fines range from \$50 to \$5,000 and dumping convictions carry a jail term up to 30 days, 100 hours of community service and suspension of a driver’s license for up to one year.

“St. James Parish is too beautiful to be defaced with trash and harmed environmentally by reckless dumping,” Sheriff Martin said. “If caught littering, you will be cited!”



Deputy Karen Tramonte administers the SJPSO sex offender community awareness program, including OffenderWatch.

OffenderWatch

Monitoring the location, conduct and compliance status of registered sex offenders in St. James Parish just got easier with "OffenderWatch," a free service of the SJPSO. OffenderWatch also allows users to search for offenders using a database from local and state authorities.



"Sex offenders tend to move frequently and about fifty percent of them will re-offend," Sheriff Martin said. "Seventy five percent of victims know their attackers, so being aware of the location of registered offenders is an important tool in protecting yourself and your children."

Citizens may visit our web site, stjamessheriff.com and sign up to receive E-mail alerts if a registered sex offender moves within a mile of any address you enter. Users may enter as many locations as they want in the totally confidential system.

For an online explanation of the program, visit our web site and click on the "OffenderWatch," icon in the middle of the home page. For additional information or to schedule a presentation for your school or group, contact Captain Sid Berthelot, 225.562.2507.

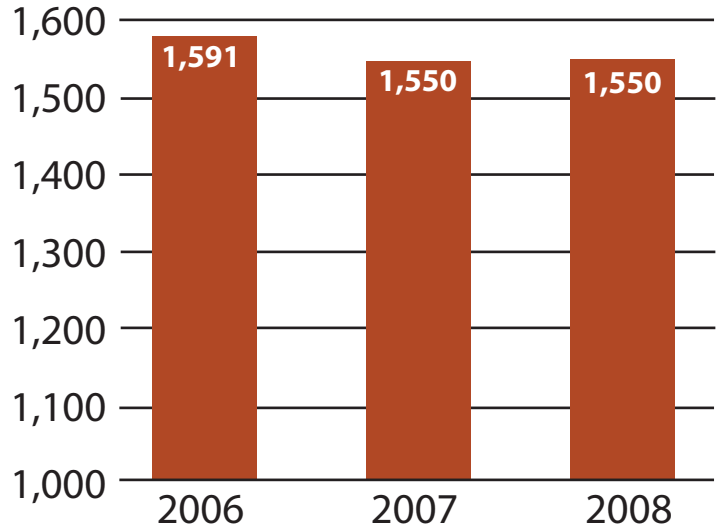
stjamessheriff.com

Visit our home on the Internet; stjamessheriff.com for updated information on the many ways we work to serve and protect you.

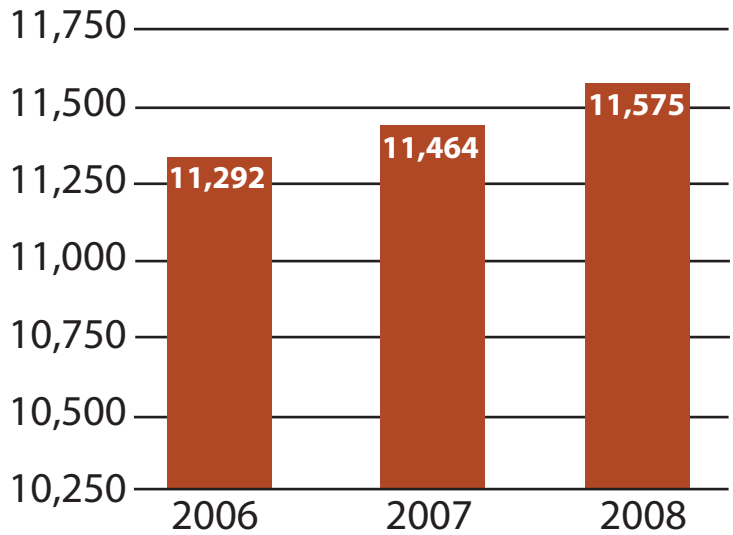
Useful links, contact information for personnel and even a history of law enforcement in St. James Parish are available with just a few mouse clicks.

We welcome your input on how we can continue to make our web site even better.

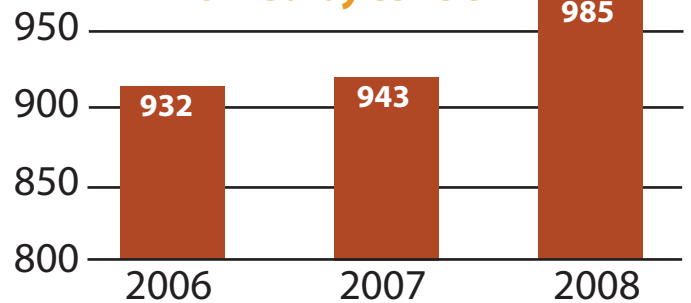
Bookings Into Parish Jail



Calls for Assistance



Automobile Accidents Worked by SJPSO



Drug Arrests DWI Arrests

