



# ***Park County Sheriff's Office***



## **2020 Annual Report**

**Scott A. Steward, Sheriff**

***"Service, Safety, Security"***





***A MESSAGE FROM  
SHERIFF SCOTT A. STEWARD***



To the citizens of Park County:

The men and women of the Park County Sheriff's Office continually face new and defining challenges as they strive to provide service, safety and security for our citizens; but nothing could prepare anyone for 2020. Along with an increase of functional activity from 2019, the staff faced the turmoil and uncertainty of COVID-19. Regardless of the chaos surrounding the world, our personnel continued to perform at an exceptionally high level with compassion, professionalism and commitment.

In 2020, our department saw a standard amount of personnel activity including the retirement of one Patrol Deputy, one transfer from detention to patrol to fill that vacancy, the transfer of a Communications Officer to jail Administrative Assistant and the hiring of a new Communications Officer to fill that vacancy. In addition, the Search and Rescue Coordinator and Public Affairs Officer retired, leaving a vacancy to be filled by a long time Search and Rescue Volunteer. And finally, the Park County Sheriff's Office bid farewell and good luck to the long time Undersheriff who retired this year.

Our Deputies responded to an average of 679 incidents each over the year; our Communications Officers answered an average of 2,925 calls each; and our Detention Deputies cared for an average of 29 detainees each day. And each day the civilian staff processed paperwork, handled billing, maintained supplies, cooked, provided medical care for the detainees, and ensured that all Deputies maintained a state of readiness, always. Last, and certainly not least, our Search and Rescue Volunteers who also performed at an exceptionally high level in 2020, represented the very definition of "giving to the community."

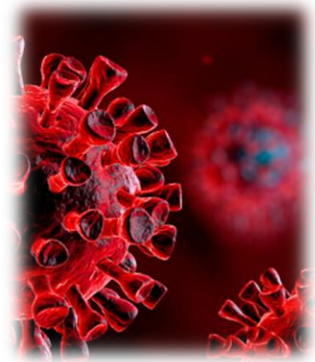
Despite the tumultuous and inconsistent year, our personnel remained committed to our mission to "promote public trust and provide service, safety and security to those we are sworn to serve." In 2021, we will continue our promise to keep you informed regarding criminal investigations, safety programs, community outreach and general information regarding Park County and the activities of your Sheriff's Office.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Steward  
Sheriff, Park County, Wyoming

# SHERIFF'S OFFICE

**MAJOR INCIDENTS** – The annual report for the Park County Sheriff's Office always starts out the same way, with mention of major incidents that affected the community as a whole. It would be “ignoring the elephant in the room,” so to speak, to not mention the one event that has affected the entire world and changed things as we know it. And as controversial, devastating, or political as it, and 2020 as a whole, may or may not be, they are one thing: unforgettable.



On March 11, 2020 a press release from the Wyoming Department of Health confirmed the first Wyoming resident had tested positive for COVID-19. The Park County Sheriff's Office wasted no time in putting precautions in place, not only to protect the staff and their families, but the health and safety of the inmates housed in the detention facility as well. Coordinating with the County Attorney's Office the Sheriff's Office was able to mitigate this by having fewer people taken into custody and those that did enter the facility were, and still are, required to complete an isolation period. Due to the close quarters the job of keeping the virus out was a huge undertaking for the staff, including deeper cleaning, mask usage, increased usage of video court, the suspension of some activities, and vigilance. To date the Park County Detention Center has had no cases of COVID-19 among the inmates.

With closing of local businesses, the school, and the struggle that our community was facing it was a long and difficult year for many.



On Saturday, February 8, 2020, rescue personnel safely evacuated a 42-year-old Billings ice climber from the Broken Heart ice flow after he fell some 30 feet from the top of the third pitch. The victim was climbing with a party of 10 when the accident happened. The Broken Heart ice flow is located 38 miles down the South Fork, southwest of Cody and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile north of the South Fork Highway.



The initial call came into the Park County Sheriff's 911 Communications Center at 11:35 a.m. Park County Search and Rescue (PCSAR) was immediately mobilized and deployed two ground teams to the ice flow with their Argo tracked snow vehicle. They were assisted by two members of the Cody Regional Wilderness Medical Team as well as five volunteers from the Big Horn County Search and

Rescue Unit who were summoned for additional manpower. However, the Argo was only able to traverse the rough terrain halfway from the highway to the flow. Rescuers had to hike in from there.

At approximately 2:30 p.m., a PCSAR volunteer and Wilderness Team member were able to ascend the ice to reach the subject. He was complaining of pelvic pain, possible broken ribs and a fractured left femur. After his injuries were stabilized, rescue personnel packaged him for the descent by rope down two ice flow pitches. He was then carried down the mountain to the Argo and then transported the rest of the way out to a waiting ambulance. At 8:00 p.m., he was transported to Cody Regional Hospital.



During the rescue, SAR personnel were also assisted by several recreational ice climbers who were in the area, the excellent cooperation by everyone is what resulted in a successful evacuation. Later on, after his recovery, the victim reached out to the Search and Rescue personnel to arrange meeting with his rescuers. Not only was he able to provide invaluable feedback to the volunteers involved in his rescue, but to all those that attended the meeting. It was an unprecedented learning opportunity for the entire team.

# PATROL

**PERSONNEL** – During 2020, the patrol division saw two retirements and one reassignment from the detention center. Patrol Deputies are primarily responsible for providing public safety by maintaining order, responding to emergencies, protecting people and property, enforcing motor vehicle and criminal laws, and promoting good community relations.

On Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Undersheriff Thomas C. Ehlers, JR. officially retired from law enforcement after over four decades of service. In 1978 Ehlers began his Law Enforcement journey by attending the University of Nebraska where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice. He also served in the Nebraska National Guard from 1979-1986, all but one of those years he served as Military Police. In 1981 he obtained his Law Enforcement certification and became a uniformed police officer for the City of Lincoln (NB) Police Department. In 1992 Ehlers relocated to Cody, Wyoming and was hired by the U.S. Forest Service for the summer.



After the end of this temporary position he was able to begin working for the State of Wyoming in the Probation and Parole Division, all the while maintaining contact with the Park County Sheriff's Office. Finally, in 1993, he began his career with the Park County Sheriff's Office. Starting as a Detention Deputy Ehlers has also served as Patrol Deputy and Patrol Sergeant. It was 2005 when Sheriff Scott Steward was named Sheriff leaving the position of Undersheriff in need of a candidate, the position was assigned to Undersheriff Ehlers, who held the rank until he retired.



On Saturday May 23, 2020 Deputy Andrew MaGill retired from the Park County Sheriff's Office. Deputy MaGill had a total of twenty years in Law Enforcement across multiple departments. He started in the Greybull Police Department in 2000, moving on to the Big Horn County Sheriff's Office in 2001. He began his career with the Park County Sheriff's Office in 2006. He holds a bachelor's degree in communications.

On May 26, 2020 Deputy Allen Cooper assumed patrol duties for the Powell District of the Park County Sheriff's Office. Deputy Cooper was assigned to replace Deputy MaGill upon his retirement. Deputy Cooper, originally from Mississippi, moved to Montana in 1992 where he became a Montana State Trooper from 1997 to 2001. From there he made the move to Wyoming and served as a State Trooper from 2001-2011. He joined the Park County Sheriff's Office in January of 2020.

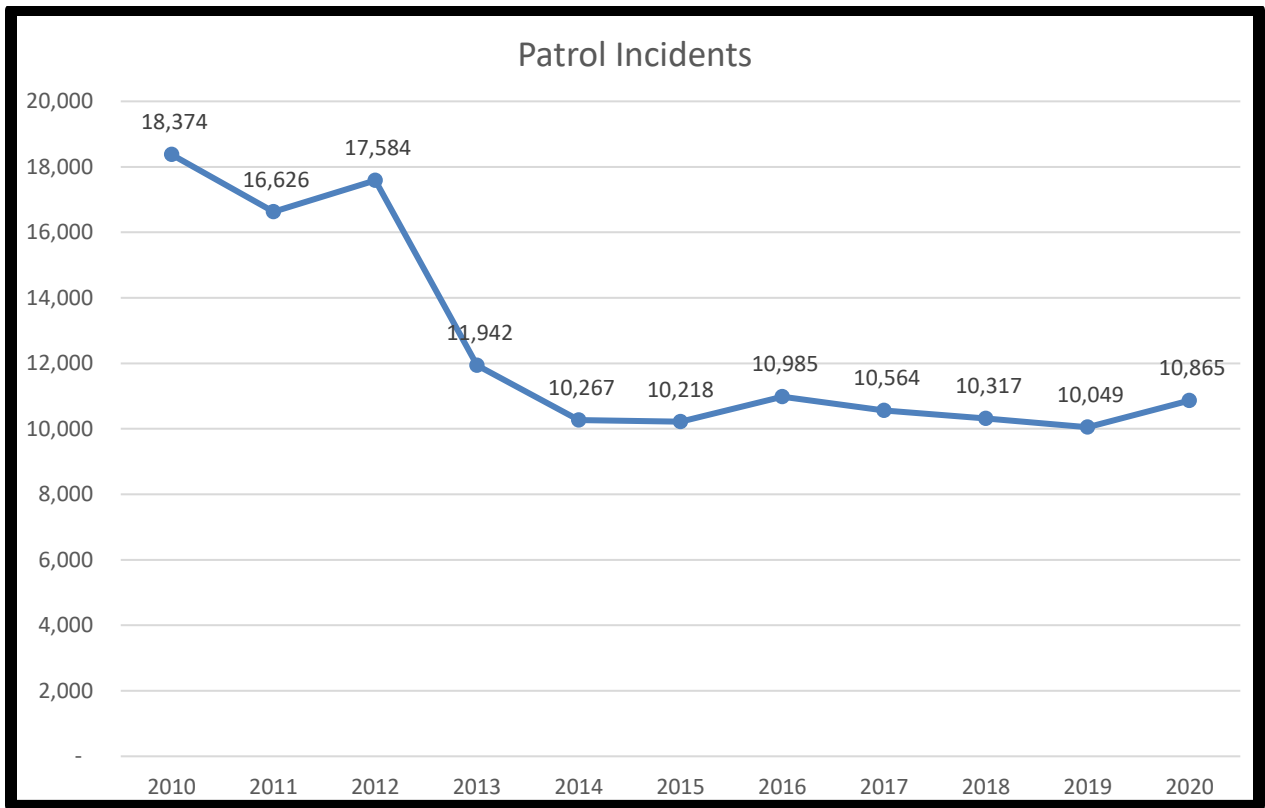


Along with his many years of Law Enforcement training and experience Deputy Cooper also holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology from Montana State University.

**PATROL ACTIVITY** – In 2020, Patrol Deputies continued to provide the citizens of Park County the service, safety, and security that they have come to expect from their law enforcement officials. Overall patrol activity did see a slight increase in 2020. Total incidents were up by 8%, total case investigations (including non-criminal investigations) up by 8% and total arrests down by 2%. In addition, the sheriff's office saw an 18% increase in traffic stops. In 2020, Deputies responded to



10,865 patrol incidents which included 1,413 traffic stops, 348 criminal investigations, 987 non-criminal investigations, 216 felony and misdemeanor arrests, 105 motor vehicle crash investigations, 175 warrant service attempts, 2,931 motor vehicle inspections, 370 animal calls, and 1,496 civil services. All of this activity was accomplished by 16 full-time patrol Deputies who are responsible for patrolling nearly 7,000 square miles of rural Park County. That equates to an average of 679 incidents per Deputy.



## INCIDENTS

Total Patrol Incidents	10,865
Calls for Service Incidents	5,433
Deputy Initiated Incidents	5,432
Traffic Stops	1,413
Other Incidents	4,019
Business/Building/Vehicle Checks	9
Vehicle/Pedestrian Check	1

## ARRESTS

Total Arrests	216
Misdemeanor Arrests	165
Felony Arrests	51

## WARRANTS

New Warrants Received	504
Warrants Closed	472



## CASE INVESTIGATIONS

Total Case Investigations	1,440
Vehicle Accident Investigations	105
Criminal Investigations	348
Non-Criminal Investigations	982
Unclassified Investigations	5

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## VIN INSPECTIONS

Total VIN Inspections	2,931
VIN Inspection Fees Collected *	\$29,310.00

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## CIVIL SUMMONS

Total Service Attempts	1,496
Total Served	618
Total Attempts with No Service	878
Civil Service Fees Collected *	\$18,300.00

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## CITATIONS

Total Citations Issued	313
Misdemeanor Criminal Citations	86
Traffic Citations	205
Unclassified	22

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\* Fees collected are returned to the county general fund / includes work release fees

## PATROL INCIDENTS BY TYPE

Description	Count	Description	Count
911 Hang-Up Call	43	Motor Vehicle Crash	115
Abandoned Vehicle	87	NCIC/WCJIN Warrant Entry	286
Administrative Duty	1	Notify City Departments	15
Air Medical Ambulance	1	Nuisance Complaint	11
Alarm-Intrusion/Holdup	72	Open Door/Window	6
Ambulance Call-Deputy Assigned	8	Other Accident	3

Animal Bite	18	Other Law Violations	22
Animal- Deceased	6	Parking Problem	21
Animal-Lost	91	Patrol-Extra	121
Animal-Noisy	4	Person-Lost	1
Animal Call - Other	122	Phone Related Complaint	2
Animals on Roadway	166	Prisoner Transport	6
Animal-Stray	129	Probation Violation	2
Assist other Agency	654	Property Damage	72
Assault	25	Property-Found	52
Attempt to Locate	45	Property-Lost	37
Auto Burglary	6	Protection Order	6
Bar Walk-Through	30	Prowler	3
Body Found	32	Reddi Report	37
Building Burglary	10	Road Closure	4
Child Welfare	39	Road Hazard/Blockage	69
Citizen/Buisness Contact	141	Runaway Juvenile	5
Civil Attempt	1496	Search & Rescue Call	33
Civil Dispute	78	Security Check	1
Civil Standby	43	Sexual Assault	11
Criminal Summons Attempt	1	Sexual Offender Record	1
Custody Dispute	13	SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION	86
Disturbance	60	SEX OFFENDER REPORTING	117
Domestic	48	Special Incident	11
Drug Related	15	Stolen Vehicle	4
Extra Patrol Request	26	Suicide Attempt/Threat	29
Fire Call-Deputy Assigned	9	Suspicious Activity	119
Fireworks Complaint	10	Search Warrant	2
Officer Flagged Down	44	Theft	76
Followup	137	Threats	37
Fraud Related	52	Traffic Complaint	89
Harassment	29	Traffic Stop	1413
Safety Hazard	1	Training Duty	28
Incorrigible Juvenile	13	Trespass Complaint	88
Informational	85	Unknown Call Type	1
Intoxicated Subject	11	USFS Patrol	133
Kidnapping	1	Vehicle Inspection	2931
Liquor Laws Violation	2	Warrant Service Attempt	175
Littering	4	Weapons Offense	16
Mental Problem	7	Welfare Check	119
Deliver Message	8		<b>10865</b>
Miscellaneous Assistance	524		

# DETENTION

**PERSONNEL** - In 2020 the detention facility hired three new Deputies. All hires were the result of resignations or reassignments. There was no increase in staffing levels.



On Tuesday May 26, 2020 Deputy Tanner Wichern joined the Park County Sheriff's Office as a Detention Deputy. He replaces a Deputy that was moved to the patrol division. Born and raised in Cody, Wyoming he spent seven years with the Army National Guard and spent time in overseas contracting. He is a University of Wyoming Graduate and holds a bachelor's degree in Communications. Born in raised in Park County Deputy Wichern is glad to be home and happy with the opportunity to serve his community, not just a Deputy but as a volunteer firefighter as well.

On July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Deputy Bronson Faughn began his time with the Park County Sheriff's Office. Deputy Faughn attended Meeteetse High School and later went on to graduate from Casper College with an associate degree in Forensic Science. He began his Law Enforcement career with the Big Horn County Sheriff's Office where he served three years in the detention center as a Deputy. He then took the opportunity to continue his law enforcement career closer to home.



And then on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 Deputy Andrew Tisdale became the latest Deputy to come aboard. Deputy Tisdale holds a degree in Criminal Justice from Hilbert College and spent four and half years serving in the United States Army. He then spent time as a private contractor in the security field. He enjoys providing service to his community and looks forward to working with the Park County Sheriff's Office.

The Administrative Assistant position for the detention center is crucial in the everyday function and operations. From arranging extraditions, in state transports, managing inmate finances, records management, and purchasing, the job of the administrator is vital. This year Joy Schmidtberger, who served as a Park County Sheriff Communications Officer from 2012 until 2020, took over the responsibility of managing the business side of the detention facility.



Joy has lived in Park County for a combined twenty-seven years attending both Cody High School and Northwest College. Before starting with the Park County Sheriff's Office in 2012 she worked at the Sierra Call Center, Y-TEX and the Cody Middle School.

**COVID-19 REPOSE** – The Park County Detention center is tasked with the safe and secure confinement and management of inmates. The 106-bed facility is a twenty-four-hour, seven day a week operation. 2020 brought unique challenges to the Park County Detention Center that the staff was not only prepared for but mitigated with professionalism and exceptional care. One of the steps in combatting COVID-19 is the extra sanitization efforts that have been employed in the facility. That coupled with an increase in video court (which the detention center was already prepared for with the equipment in place) provided safety for staff and inmate alike. With the lower average daily population of inmates, staff was allowed time to reevaluate policy, making updates and modifications as needed. The time-consuming process was completed and implemented for an increase in staff performance.

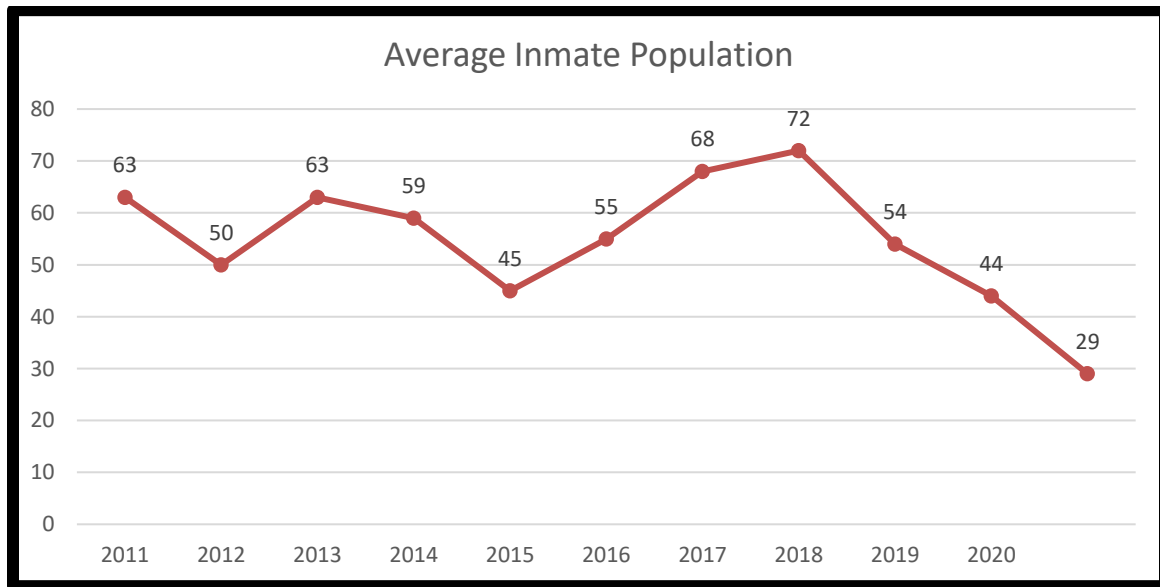
**DETENTION ACTIVITY** - In 2020, the Park County Sheriff's Office Detention Division booked a total of 716 prisoners into the holding facility. This number represents a decrease of 206 in total bookings from 2019. The average inmate population also decreased from 44 in 2019 to 29 in 2020; a 34% decrease. Due mostly impart to the new standards and precautions taken in and for the safety of the detention facility in the face of COVID-19. To date there have been no documented cases of COVID-19 among the inmates of the Park County Detention Center. Inmate population has been on a steady decline since 2017 when the average hit a 10-year high of 72.

**TOTAL DETENTION BOOKINGS BY YEAR**  
(Including the percent change from previous year)

Agency	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Park County Sheriff	244 (-8%)	257 (+5%)	219 (-15%)	212 (-3%)	158 (-25%)	135 (-15%)
Cody Police Dept.	400 (-16%)	472 (+18%)	469 (-1%)	553 (+18%)	509 (-8%)	305 (-40%)
Powell Police Dept.	264 (-20%)	336 (+27%)	296 (-12%)	377 (+27%)	183 (-51%)	118 (-36%)
Wyoming Highway Patrol	43 (-2%)	38 (-12%)	29 (-24%)	42 (+44%)	52 (+24%)	27 (-48%)
Other Agencies *	3 (-50%)	6 (+100%)	5 (-17%)	4 (-20%)	20 (+400%)	5 (-75%)
New Bookings / New Charges **	784 (-15%)	918 (+17%)	1,014 (+5%)	1,027 (+1%)	794 (-23%)	590 (-26%)
Total Bookings	962 (-15%)	1,112 (+16%)	1,182 (+6%)	1,192 (+1%)	922 (-23%)	716 (-22%)

\* Division of Criminal Investigation, Bureau of Land Management, & Probation and Parole

\*\* Includes “weekender” where someone comes to serve time on weekends only.



**USE OF FORCE** - The Park County Detention Center also tracks the use of force incidents against inmates within our care and protection. These incidents are created whenever a detention Deputy must utilize force against a non-compliant inmate. This can be in the form of compliance holds such as a wristlock up to and including the use of non-lethal weapons such as a Taser or pepper spray. We continually strive to keep these incidents to a minimum by providing the best possible training to our Deputies in methods to mitigate situations prior to resorting to physical force. As with use of force incidents, we continually strive to minimize inmate assaults

through training. All inmates who assault officers or other inmates are prosecuted under state law.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Use of Force Incidents *	21	19	6	14	8	11	13	9
Inmate Assaults	7	2	5	8	15	3	4	4

\* Force is used to gain compliance only

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**REVENUE GENERATED BY THE PARK COUNTY DETENTION DIVISION \***

Jail Housing/Local Municipalities	\$ 510.00
Miscellaneous **	\$ 11,641.32
Inmate Phone system	\$ 16,519.61
Medical Reimbursement	\$ 3,766.60
Court Restitution	<u>\$ 5,791.38</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 38,228.91</b>

\* All revenues are returned to the Park County General Fund

\*\* Fingerprint/Notary/Record fees/CCW fees/SOR Registration Fees

# COMMUNICATIONS

**PERSONNEL** - In 2020, the Park County Sheriff's Office maintained its staffing levels until the transfer of Joy Schmidtberger to the Detention Center Administrative Assistant position in November. On December 14, 2021 Dan Scott filled the position of the eighth Communications Officer for the Park County Communications Division. Prior to dispatching Scott spent eleven years with the United States Army and worked for a year for Alpine Service LLC, in Cody. He holds an associate of Applied Science Degree in accounting from Tacoma Community College. Scott lives in Cody with his wife and two sons. His oldest son is in the process of joining the military and his youngest is a Cody High Junior who is also on the football team. Scott also volunteers for both Park County Search and Rescue and the Cody Fire Department.



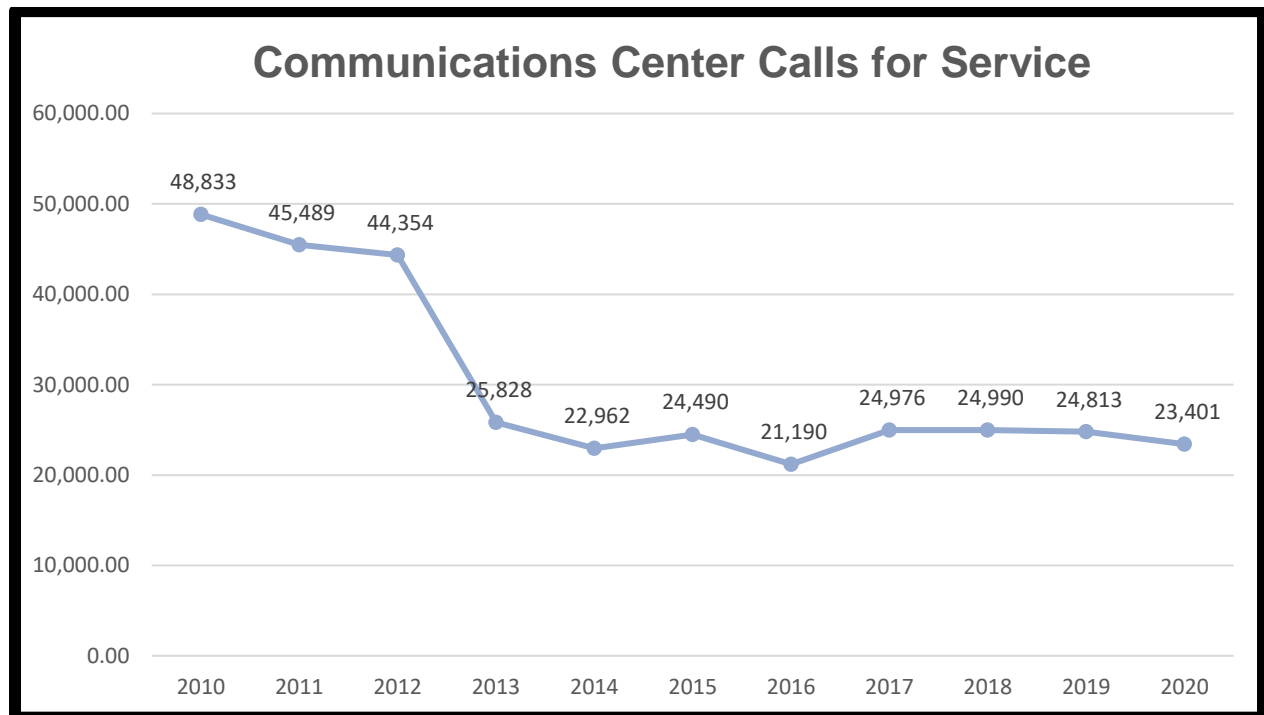
**DISPATCH ACTIVITY** - The Park County Sheriff's Office Communications Division handles calls for the Park County Sheriff's Office, Cody Police Department, Park County Search and Rescue, Cody Regional Health Ambulance, and the Cody, Powell, Meeteetse and Clark Fire Districts. In 2020, eight total Communications Officers handled 23,401 calls for service, including 5,563 calls received via the 9-1-1 emergency phone system. This equates to over 2,925 calls per Communications Officer. Park County 911 Communications Officers play many roles: therapist, doctor, teacher, weatherman, guidance counselor, psychologist, priest, secretary, supervisor, politician, travel agent, and reporter. And few people must jump through the emotional hoops on the trip through the routine of one caller's request for a phone number, to the fear of another caller's burglary in progress, to the anger of a neighbor blocked in their drive, to the sorrow of a caller who lost their pet, to the stress of an officer's request for help, and back to the phone number request all in a five-minute time frame. But Park County Communications Officers accept these responsibilities with expertise and confidence.

## COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION CALLS FOR SERVICE (% Change from 2019)

Park County Sheriff's Office	10,865	(8.12%)
Cody Police Department	9,548	(-18.5%)
Cody Fire Department	312	(-6.02%)
Clark Fire Department	51	(4.08%)
Powell Fire Department	205	(-13.14%)
Meeteetse Fire Department	37	(23.33%)
Cody Regional Health Ambulance	2,383	(-0.75%)
Park County Search and Rescue	36	(125%)
<b>Total Calls for Service</b>	<b>23,401</b>	<b>(-5.69%)</b>

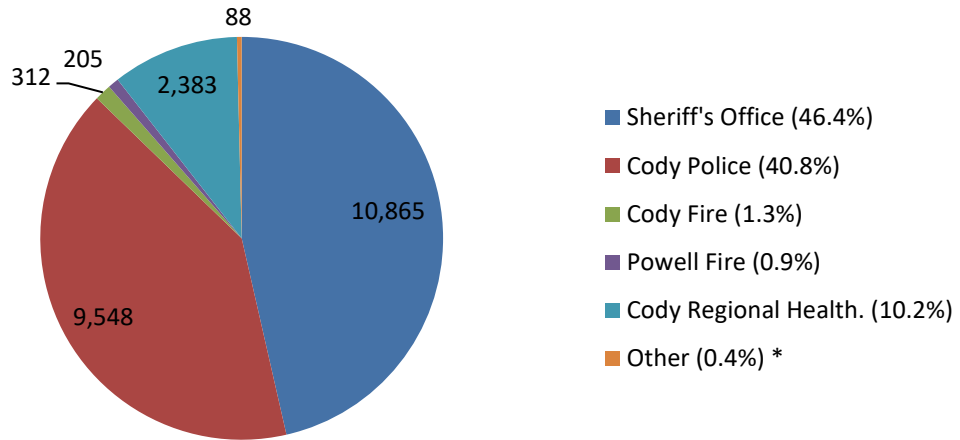
## CONTROLLED BURN PERMITS

Total Permits Issued	3,628
Cody/Meeteetse Area	1,544
Powell/Garland/Ralston/Clark Area	2,084





## Calls for Service by Agency



# HOMELAND SECURITY



This past year has been one of great change and growth for Park County Homeland Security. Along with the challenge of the monthly duties, Homeland Security had an integral role to play in the county's response to COVID-19.

The Director of Park County Homeland Security, Jack Tatum, typically spends his time performing monthly maintenance on the portable generators, radios, and other equipment, building and maintaining county trauma kits, CodeRED tests, and record keeping. He also conducts quarterly live and monthly silent, emergency siren testing. Conducts trainings such as Incident Command System (ICS) for private companies and First Aid/CPR for county employees. He conducts site security and risk assessments, monitors river flows for ice jams or high water, and participated in Safety/Emergency response team for Powell Valley Health care and Park County School District #1.

Like everything else in the year 2020 nothing stayed the same and there were quickly no more routines. Tatum was charged with activating and staffing the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as Chief for COVID-19 response. He also staffed the Park County COVID-19 Incident Management Team as Unified Commander and Liaison Officer. This was not a simple task. He conducted and attended COVID-19 IMT and Stakeholder Meetings, served as focal point for receipt, inventory and distribution of COVID-19 PPE, equipment and supplies for local hospitals and other affected facilities, and served as repository for Tier 2 HazMat information for Park County. Tatum coordinated food pantry distributions in Cody and Powell. Tatum also served as the grant administrator for FEMA Public Assistance Grant (~ \$12,000 for COVID-19 related expenses), Emergency Management Performance Grant (\$55,000) and State Homeland Security Grant (~\$68,000).

While COVID-19 changed much about life, it could not stop the world from turning. On Saturday June 13th, 2020 at 12:46 P.M. the Park County Sheriff's Office received a report of a



fire on the North Fork Highway. The Lost Creek Fire initially caused the North Fork Highway to be closed, to both directions of travel, to all but emergency traffic. The Bill Cody Ranch was evacuated, and others were placed on standby with the use of reverse 911 and “Ready, Set, Go, “ education. Tatum assisted both the firefighters and Search and Rescue in this event. Even after that, Tatum still had work to do. He coordinated COVID-19 testing for returning Forest Service firefighters.



Tatum also continued to breathe life into the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) that he had begun rebuilding in March of 2020. CERT educates individuals about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact our area. Volunteers are trained in basic disaster response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Participants have the opportunity to be a part of disaster recovery in their local community and see the positive impacts of their assistance. On top of the technical skills, CERT is an excellent way for members of the community to meet and build a network of relationships before disaster strikes. The initial training was 20 hours with monthly follow up meetings in order to develop, hone, and practice the newly learned skills. While the initial training did have to be postponed it was continued in the summer of 2020.

Tatum also kept up on his own training in order to serve Park County. He attended training in Basic Emergency Management, Bombing Prevention, Cybersecurity Awareness, HazMat Operations, and Information Liaison Officer training.

# SEARCH AND RESCUE



**PERSONNEL** – On Saturday August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 the Park County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue (PCSAR) paused to say thank you to the community that supports and provides for them. Be it in the form of monetary gifts, volunteers, or multitudes of supportive comments on Facebook, PCSAR has a lot to be thankful for.

The day was kicked off with tours of the building food, and cake. At 1:00 P.M. the building was officially dedicated and named the *Kirk Waggoner Search and Rescue Building* in honor of founder Kirk Waggoner. Appointed by Sheriff Harley Kinkade in 1970 Waggoner formally organized the original five “ragtag” members.



Sheriff Scott Steward gave a dedication speech thanking not only Kirk Waggoner, but the entire community and so many local businesses for their constant and unwavering support. Noting that PCSAR could not exist without them.

The day continued with Park County citizens seeing search dogs, one of the original Jeeps that was used by a member of PCSAR and meeting original members of the team. Over the years PCSAR has evolved into a specialized and expert team of rescuers. Coordinator Bill Brown is extremely proud of his crew, “I want you all to know how proud I am of this team, and how happy I am to be a part of it.”





A large rock with a brass plaque now sits in front of the main entrance to the new hall. “Working Together, So Others May Live,” is the last line on the plaque. The Park County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue says thank you to ALL that work together with them, so

they may protect the community and the people they love.

February 03, 2020 William (Bill) Brown began his appointment as Park County Sheriff’s Office, Division of Search and Rescue Coordinator. Appointed by Sheriff Scott Steward,

Bill Brown has been an active and dedicated member of Park County Search and Rescue for 10 years. He comes from a management background and has a skill set that includes personnel management, organization, and business operations, along with equipment and mission experience.



Having had the privilege of being born and raised in Cody, Wyoming, Bill Brown cares deeply for this community and its people. He grew up in Cody with his father, former Park County Sheriff’s Sergeant Robert (Bob) Brown, who also volunteered for more than 10 years with Park County Search and Rescue, his mother Nancy Brown, and his sister. He currently resides in Cody with his wife and daughter.



January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 marked the retirement of Public Information Officer/Search and Rescue Coordinator Lance Mathess.

Mathess joined the Park County Sheriff’s Office in January of 2011 as a Communications Officer in the 9-1-1 Dispatch Center. Prior to joining the department, he served over 30 years with the Ohio State Highway Patrol retiring in 2009 after attaining the rank of Staff Lieutenant. During the latter part of his career with the Patrol, he served in upper management at their General Headquarters facility in the Strategic Services Section. His experience includes working closely with

the Public Affairs/Media Relations Unit while performing a wide variety of administrative and managerial duties. He has a bachelor's degree in Law Enforcement Administration and a master's degree in Public Administration both from Kent State University.



**SAR ACTIVITY** - The Park County Search and Rescue Unit (SAR) is comprised of 30 to 35 volunteers, from all walks of life who are ready at a moment's notice to selflessly sacrifice their time and put themselves in harm's way to serve the citizens of Park County. They are trained in various skills including but not limited to first aid and CPR, wilderness search, aircraft search, urban

rescue, swift water and ice rescue, mountain rescue, canine search, avalanche search, land navigation and critical incident stress management. In 2020, SAR participated in 29 calls for service, 13 calls more than 2019. While not the busiest year the Park County Search and Rescue has seen, it was an eventful one.

**NOTEABLE MISSIONS** – On Wednesday, February 12, 2020, the Park County Sheriff's Office was advised of a 69-year-old male who was involved in a snowmobile accident in the Beartooth Mountains just west of Beartooth Lake. The subject was snowmobiling with a group of eight people when he reportedly struck a rock with his snowmobile resulting in a reported compound fracture of his left arm above the elbow.



Search and Rescue (SAR) was mobilized as was the Wilderness Medical Team (WMT) from Cody Regional Hospital. Also activated were four members of the SAR volunteer Snow Team. The Snow Team are a group of local snowmobilers from the Cody Snowmobile Association who have stepped up to add their snowmobiling expertise to SAR in case they are needed. In most cases, they are closer to the emergency as they often snowmobile in the Beartooth Mountains.

At 2:15 p.m., members of the Snow Team were able to reach him. They stabilized, packaged, and transported him via an ambulance sled to SAR and the WMT who met them halfway out at 3:35 p.m. They then continued to the staging area near the intersection of Highways 296 and 212. From there the subject was transported by ambulance to Cody Regional Hospital at 4:12 p.m.



On Wednesday August 12th, 2020 at 3:20 P.M. the Park County Sheriff's Office Communications center was notified of an ATV accident on the Morrison Jeep Trail. A 72-year-old male had been involved in the crash and his ATV had rolled on top of him. Park County Search and Rescue, along with a Guardian Medical helicopter, Clark Fire and First Responders, Cody Regional Health Wilderness Response Team, and a Powell Valley Hospital Ambulance (Powell Police Department Communications Center) were all activated to respond to the scene. At 4:06 P.M. the Guardian Medical helicopter reached the victim and relayed his exact location to the responding ground units. At 5:10 P.M. the victim was evacuated to St Vincent Hospital in Billings. The Search and Rescue ground teams continued into the crash site to evacuate the other persons in the ATV party. While Park County Search and Rescue does not typically evacuate anything other than people, the decision was made to remove the crashed ATV, by experienced Search and Rescue personnel, to prevent a potential future threat to safety and life. The other persons and the ATV were evacuated to the bottom of the Morrison Jeep Trail.

On Thursday September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 at 3:31 P.M. the Park County Sheriff's Office Communications Center (dispatch) was notified of a disabled boat on the Buffalo Bill Reservoir. This would be the first of several calls that Park County Search and Rescue handled from September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

A 64-year-old male was boating on his red and white Lund boat when the motor died. The wind began pushing him north/north east into the center of the lake. Park County Search and Rescue(PCSAR), Water Rescue Team, was quickly activated and deployed to the scene. Utilizing the Ribcraft, an inflatable, fast moving, rescue boat, PSCAR was able to access the disabled boater by 4:16 P.M, and tow him safely back to the South Fork boat ramp.



On Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 8:37 A.M. dispatch was notified of an overdue hiker in the area of Beartooth Lake. A local business owner reported that a female employee, 28 years of age, had gone hiking the previous day and had not returned. One ground team and the Search and Rescue Aviat Husky Aircraft, Air1, were deployed to the area once her car was located at the Beartooth Lake Trailhead. The subject was located by Air1. At 3:44 P.M. the ground team was able to make contact with her, confirming her identity, she was uninjured and hiked out with the ground team.

On the same day at 3:03 P.M. dispatch received an InReach activation from the International Emergency Response Center. Two male subjects were involved in a horseback riding accident near the Venus Creek Drainage area. Both had sustained injuries. Guardian Medical Helicopter was launched and arrived on scene at 3:37 P.M. Both victims were successfully transported to Cody Regional Health.

Finally, on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 11:31 A.M. Carbon County Search and Rescue requested assistance in locating two missing hikers in the area of the Island Lake Trailhead. A Park County Search and Rescue ground team responded. The temperature was predicted to fall rapidly that evening with a high probability of precipitation and cold wind. At 2:05 P.M. the PCSAR ground team arrived at Island Lake at the same time Carbon County Search and Rescue relayed the information that the hikers had been located safely.





On Friday October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 3:41 P.M. the Park County Sheriff's Office Communications Division received an InReach SOS activation from International Emergency Response. A 38-



year-old-male had broken his lower leg. He was located in the South Fork of the Shoshone River Drainage on the Shoshone Plateau. He had slid down a ravine and, in the process, broken his leg and was unable to climb out. Park County Search and Rescue (PCSAR) personnel, assisted by Guardian Medical Helicopter and Sublette County's Tip-Top helicopter, were able to reach the injured hunter. A team of six PCSAR members were able to stabilize his injury and stay with the injured hunter overnight. The following morning Tip-Top "short hauled" the victim out of the area and to a waiting Cody Regional Health Ambulance that was staged at the Majo Ranch. The victim was transported to Cody Regional Health.

A "short haul" rescue is a rope affixed to the underside of a helicopter with an attendant. The rope and attendant are lowered to extract the victim, either in a litter or in this case what is referred to as a "screamer suit," which is a full body harness. The victim is then transported, attached to the rope, to a more suitable landing zone.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH



The Community Outreach Program ensures that the Park County Sheriff's Office is active in programs designed to serve the needs of county residents while promoting a positive image for department personnel. The Sheriff's Office has always taken pride in the services provided to this community.

However, the challenges of 2020 prevented many of the beloved activities the Sheriff's Office has historically participated in.



While those activities were missed the ones that did continue, with or without modifications, were successful and dear to the hearts of the Deputies and civilians that participated.

## STAMPEDE PARADE – The Park County Sheriff's Office



participated in both the Stampede Parade and the Stampede Kiddie Parade. The Sheriff's Office was joined by Park County Search and Rescue for the Stampede parade. The



honor of participating, this year especially, was not lost on the participants. There were staff, volunteers, and their families on hand to celebrate independence with Park County.

**BACK THE BLUE GOLF TOURNAMENT** - On Saturday September 19th, 2020, the Back the Blue Golf Tournament took place at the Powell Golf Course in Powell, Wyoming. The event had thirty-four three-man teams participating, with all the proceeds equally divided among multiple local Law Enforcement agencies. On Tuesday September 22nd, the sponsor and host of the event, Allen Simonson of the Cody Paw Spa, stopped by to deliver a check for \$2000.00 to Sergeant

Andy Varian for the Park County Sheriff's Office. Simonson plans to make this an annual event and was pleased with the turnout.



Sheriff Scott Steward sent the money to SHIELD 616, an organization dedicated to providing law enforcement with necessary physical protection equipment. SHIELD 616 is currently working to supply the Park County Sheriff's Office with rifle rated bullet resistant vests and bullet resistant helmets. The money was utilized directly in that purchase

**MEETEETSE SCHOOLS STUDENT HEALTH FAIR** - On Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Deputies Lisa Cooke and Rob Cooke participated in the annual Meeteetse School Health Fair. The Health Fair consisted of multiple medical and health experts to allow for the children to interact with a wide range of beneficial professionals. Amongst many other things, the students were able to have a screening from an optometrist and dentist, they were able to learn exercise from a yoga instructor, met with a nutritionist, and they learned about and discussed the effects and consequences of alcohol with the Park County Sheriff's Office.

Deputies Lisa Cooke and Rob Cooke discussed with the children the effects of alcohol and the potential consequences of driving while under the influence. They were able to offer education and an open dialogue for the students to ask questions and learn about the responsibility of making the right choices. The Deputies were also able to interact with the younger students by talking about being a Deputy and what their job entails as far as being there to help, serve, and protect.



**SHOP WITH A COP** - On December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 local Law Enforcement agencies wrapped up their leg of this year's "Shop with a Cop" program. Hosted by the Highway Patrol Association and Wyoming Highway Patrol, the event has participants from agencies statewide. The program is intended to foster a positive relationship between law enforcement and the kids involved. Historically "Shop with a Cop" has consisted of kids



actually going to shop with their cop and then enjoying a pizza party while wrapping gifts, but this year there had to be modifications to keep the program going. The Park County Sheriff's Office was given a list of children and a bag full of gifts. The Deputies then played Santa Claus, delivering to different families, gifts and baskets of food from the First Ladies' Hunger Initiative program.



While this is a statewide effort it

would not have been possible without the local donations and the cooperation of local businesses. This is a huge endeavor and in all honesty the part played by the Park County Sheriff's Office was small, but one that will be remembered by the Deputies for a very long time.

**BLUE CHRISTMAS** - On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 members of both the Park County Sheriff's Office and the Cody Police Department stopped by Yellowstone Sports Medicine to see the Law Enforcement themed Christmas Tree crafted by Rachael Biles. In honor of her son Trey, who is a police officer for the Parker Police Department in Colorado, the tree was designed as a recognition of the hard work, dedication, and sacrifices that are made by Law Enforcement



Officers daily. Her son has served for seven years and Biles said the recognition is needed "now more than ever." Biles also pointed out, "even though my son is there I feel like we are all part of the same family and wanted to honor the local Law Enforcement Officers here as well."

