



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Smith Chief Deputy

Gaining Compliance is Law Enforcements Ultimate Goal

The Dodge County Sheriff's Office recently began an operation of conducting compliance checks to ensure that alcoholic beverages are not being sold to minors. What you may not know is that the sheriff's office has been conducting compliance checks for a number of years but due to unforeseen circumstances, we were forced to take some time off in conducting these checks.

What is the goal of compliance checks? Simply gaining compliance. It is never the sheriff's office's goal to issue citations but rather to gain compliance with the laws that have been put into place by our legislature for the safety and security of our citizens. In an effort to gain that compliance, the sheriff's office has gone above and beyond by sending a letter to all businesses prior to being checked. That letter advised them of their responsibility under the law, as well as notifying them that the compliance checks would be coming. This gave businesses the chance to train their employees on the law and proper policies and procedures of their organization.

Day one of the first round of compliance checks took place this past week. Agents of the sheriff's office between the age of 18 and 20 and under the direction and supervision of deputy sheriffs as allowed by law, went into establishments and attempted to purchase alcohol. The agents were instructed ahead of time to provide their actual information to the clerk if asked for it and to be completely cooperative. If the agent was able to purchase the alcohol, the deputy immediately took the alcohol from them and made contact with the clerk who sold it asking for an explanation. Unfortunately, we have some work to do as 26% of the establishments checked sold alcohol to our underage agents. We will be finishing up the rest of this round of checks in the next couple weeks.

Since it has been a while since the sheriff's office has conducted the compliance checks and the first time since I took office as Sheriff, I made the decision to work with the businesses to further educate them in lieu of a citation, in hopes of gaining compliance with the law. That education came in the form of a final warning.

If liquor license holders still do not comply with the law, even after these steps to gain voluntary compliance have been taken, we must take action. As a result, all future compliance checks that result in the sale of alcohol to minors will result in a citation to the clerk who sells the alcohol. If follow up visits result in continued violations, a citation to the business will then be considered. These steps have been taken in an effort to be fair to the liquor license holders while making improvements toward reaching our goal of 100% compliance.

Some may feel that this is a soft approach, however, this approach is not one that we just came up with out of the blue. It is a proven method that has worked in Dodge County previously and is also based on successes of other law enforcement agencies who have been conducting the same type of operations. Again, our goal is not to issue citations but rather to work with businesses to gain compliance with the law, protect them against civil liability and protect our youth.

Your sheriff's office takes the safety of our citizens and compliance with the law seriously. After all, peace and public order are an integral part of keeping Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.