



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Mittelstadt Chief Deputy

June Sheriff's Column - Anonymous Tips to Law Enforcement

Every day, law enforcement officers rely on citizen observers in serving and protecting our community while also responding to the needs of the public. We receive communications from citizens through 911 calls, non-emergency calls, personal contact and even submittals through electronic means such as email, our website and most recently our Dodge County Sheriff's Office App available on Android or Apple.

Regardless of how you report an incident, you can always remain "anonymous". However, remaining anonymous is not always beneficial. Simply remaining anonymous, can reduce the credibility of the complaint in the court's eyes. It also makes it very difficult for us to follow up with you should we need additional information to act on your concern or if we have information we need to share with you. For example, this last week I received an anonymous complaint electronically in which the complainant indicated a person was driving around the Lowell/Reeseville area without a valid driver's license. I did a quick search and found that the person's license was, in fact, valid. Unfortunately, because there was no contact information left, I have been unable to relay that to the anonymous complainant.

There is a better way to remain "anonymous" and still provides credibility to the complaint while also providing law enforcement with an opportunity to follow up to obtain additional information. When you decide you want to report an incident, please leave your name, phone number and contact information. Also, make sure that you tell the deputy/officer/dispatcher that you want to remain anonymous or confidential. We are then required by law to protect your identity in any report or information that may be released as basically a "confidential informant". That means we would be responsible for redacting your name and contact information out of any report that may be done or anything that may be released to the public. The only way that your information would ever be able to be released at that point would be as a result of a court order (which could still be limited) or your consent at a later time.

Law enforcement appreciates all reports regardless of them being anonymous or not and we will of course always accept complaints, even if you choose to not leave your information. Please remember, however, that your contact information could be invaluable in resolving the issue you are bringing to our attention. I assure you that we will honor your wishes for confidentiality, but with a little information, we can provide an even better service to you. I hope that this helps everyone understand anonymous reports a bit more and with that understanding, we can work together better to keep Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt