



Warren C. Evans
Sheriff

News Release

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Five years after Blackout, Evans praises Sheriff's Office readiness for critical incidents

◆ *Sheriff points to laundry list of upgrades since Aug. 2003 outage*

Five years after 50 million residents in the northeastern United States lost power during the nation's largest ever blackout, Wayne County Sheriff Warren C. Evans today released a detailed list of the homeland security related upgrades his Office has made since the August 14, 2003 power outage.

Evans, who had been in office just over seven months at the time of the blackout, said he was astounded at the number of fundamental shortcomings that were exposed in preparedness among local agencies, including his own.

"Our jails had no backup power and we couldn't even communicate with other key law enforcement partners because the county was using an antiquated radio system," Evans said. "That was unacceptable. I believe we have substantially addressed the concerns I had following our internal audit after the blackout."

Since the blackout, Evans said he has made homeland security upgrades a high priority and today pointed to a laundry list of improvements his Office has made over the past five years, including a new state-of-the-art communications system, new high-tech water and land base vehicles, improved officer training and more.

"Five years ago law enforcement and other government agencies received a very important wake up call and the Wayne County Sheriff's Office chose to answer that call," Evans said. "Today, the citizens of Wayne County residents are much better prepared as a result."

Below are the key improvements Evans said his Office has made thus far:

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- **New Regional Dispatch Center**
 - Puts Sheriff's Office dispatch under command of the Sheriff, as opposed to Wayne County Central Communications at Metro Airport, which has a separate command structure. The switch to a dispatch center run by the Sheriff's Office also saved taxpayers approximately \$1 million per year.
- **New \$2 million Digital Communications System**
 - One of the most glaring problems five years ago was the inability of the Sheriff's Office to communicate with DPD and State Police and numerous other agencies on the same radio system. The Sheriff's Office had been using an outmoded analog radio system. Sheriff Evans made it a priority to upgrade the Sheriff's Office radio system to an 800 MHz digital system.
- **Generators to keep jails and dispatch powered up.**
 - Five years ago, the Sheriff's Office had to borrow massive generators to power up the jails and administration building so jail inmates could still receive vital services. The Sheriff's Office now has its own in-house generators, which also will keep its Dispatch Office operational.
- **Multi-Agency collaboration**
 - The Sheriff's Office has spearheaded numerous multi-agency initiatives that bring together law enforcement agencies at the local, county, state and federal level, not just in Wayne County, but across the tri-county area. Sheriff Evans considers these operations "Dress Rehearsals" for the inter-agency cooperation that would be necessary during any unplanned critical incidents.
- **SRT Mobile Command Post - Cost: \$218,000**
 - Unit has a generator for power and scene lighting for night operations. The unit is equipped with a 42 foot Pneumatic mast with a High resolution Day/Night camera with build-in back light compensation. The vehicle also has 4 (four) flat screen monitors to display what the camera is viewing and the ability to monitor local news broadcasts. Front section is set up for command operation while the rear section is for officer seating and deployment.
- **Marine Unit Dive Truck/Command Post - Cost: \$263,000**
 - Self contained unit with Rest room and shower for decontamination. The rear section is set up for 10 (ten) divers and all their equipment, allowing for a much more rapid deployment of officers into the water. Unit has a generator for power and scene lighting for night operations.

- **New Marine Unit Vessels and equipment**
 - Using \$2.5 million in grants from the Detroit Wayne County Port Authority, the Sheriff's Office has purchased three new high-tech vessels, including sonar and night vision technology and an array of other equipment to help the Sheriff's Office protect the strategic assets that are located along the county's 32- miles of international waterway.

- **Marine Unit/SRT cross training**
 - Because the Sheriff's Office helps to protect 32-miles of international waterway, Sheriff Evan has begun having is Marine Unit and Special Response Team conduct joint training exercises so SRT officers can be experienced in water based scenarios.

- **Expanded Mounted Unit capabilities**
 - Sheriff Evans has quadrupled the number of certified mounted trained officers in his Office and more than doubled its number of horses at no expense to taxpayers. Since a mounted patrol can be invaluable for crowd control, having this tool in the Sheriff's "toolbox" is also a great enhancement for public safety during a critical incident.

- **Improved security at Criminal Courts**
 - Placement of deputies as primary entry screening/security, as well as their traditional role inside courtrooms, provides and increased law enforcement presence and unified command structure.

- **Training of all command officers in national incident command structure**
 - Aside from the infrastructure improvements being made at the Sheriff's Office, investment also has been made in training the individuals at the command level and ground level who will deal with major incidents

- **Increased number of certified officers among WCSO ranks**
 - The certifying of more than 200 police officers in the Sheriff's Office means more trained officers would be available to respond to a critical incident.

- **New & Improved patrol vehicle and prisoner transportation fleet**
 - Improves functionality and reliability on a daily basis, but most importantly during a critical incident.