

Frequently Asked Questions about the Sheriff's Operations Center



What are the advantages of the Sheriff's Operations Center?

The new facility provides desperately needed space. At the Sheriff's Office in Fergus Falls, there were several employees sharing desks, as well as staff working out of the antiquated Sheriff's residence. The Sheriff's Operations Center is centrally located and provides an opportunity for citizens to utilize the services of the Sheriff's Office without traveling to Fergus Falls. The two buildings are connected via phone and data which allows citizens to obtain services at either location. The new location also provides much needed garage space, including room to store special response equipment.

What is the cost of the project?

The project was bid at 4.5 million dollars and was built within budget. Compared to the cost of rebuilding the Sheriff's Office at the Fergus Falls location, it was found to be cost effective to build on a new site. Property acquisition in Ottertail was far less expensive than building in Fergus Falls. This site is ten acres, which will allow for future expansion.

Why wasn't the office built in Fergus Falls?

The Otter Tail County Sheriff's Office was outgrowing the Courthouse building, but there was no room for expansion. For practical purposes, the main Sheriff's Office needs to remain in close proximity to the Detention Facility and the Courts. Building an annex was a preferable alternative to moving the entire facility, including the jail and courts, which would have been more expensive and left the existing building unused. In addition to the projected new growth in Ottertail, there are more miles of roads, houses and businesses, and 30% more calls for service within a 20 mile radius of Ottertail City.

What functions were moved to Ottertail City?

The Patrol division and related equipment, Water Patrol, and the Investigation division, including Narcotics Investigations, are now located at the Sheriff's Operations Center. Additionally, a training center, intoxilyzer, holding area, interview rooms and evidence processing were included in the new building. One of the new interview rooms is specifically designed for interviews with child victims. The new evidence processing area enables our staff to use the latest techniques and equipment in a workable area. This was necessary because the evidence processing and storage room areas of the Courthouse site were inadequate. The Ottertail site also has an evidence garage that is used for processing vehicles involved in criminal activity and accident investigations. Adequate working space for State Patrol, DNR, Probation Officers is also available in the new location.

What functions remain in Fergus Falls?

The Sheriff's Office Administration, Records, Dispatch, Court Security, Civil Process and Detention remain at the main office in Fergus Falls. In addition, there are two detectives that are assigned to the Fergus Falls location.

Why was a training center added to the building?

Law enforcement is mandated by statute to train in specific areas. Law enforcement training is an important element in having qualified staff. Examples of specific areas of training include crime scene investigation, accident investigation, interviewing of child victims, firearms, the use of force, first aid, death investigations, DWI arrests, traffic stops, narcotics, arson investigations, SWAT, officer survival, school shootings, pandemic outbreaks, search and rescue operations and civil process. Detention and Courts require training as well. In the past, officers were sent to training facilities in the Twin Cities at great expense. Now, by combining our resources with those of surrounding counties and cities, we are able to bring top notch training opportunities to Otter Tail County.

Why was it built as a "green building"?

The County Board considered the importance of responsible long-range planning and cost reduction when they made the decision to build a Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certified structure. This facility is the first LEED facility in Otter Tail County! In making such a decision, the site as well as the construction of the building, are environmentally earth friendly. Evidence of this can be found throughout the site, e.g. geothermal heat, use of recycled materials in construction, air quality controls, white membrane roof to reflect sunlight, use of concrete instead of asphalt in parking lot to reduce heat islands, harvesting of daylight, automatic light dimming, very limited lawn mowing (native grasses), transportation parking stalls designated as pool/van parking to encourage future carpooling and rideshare opportunities, etc.

What is an E.O.C.?

An Emergency Operations Center is an area specifically designed to be used to manage resources during emergency situations such as tornados. It is also used during major crime investigations such as a missing or abducted person, in which case it would be necessary to provide working space for additional resources. The training room in the Sheriff's Operations Center was designed to convert to an E.O.C. in these situations. This area also contains a backup dispatch room in the event of a fire or other event disabling the main dispatch center. This area was built to withstand tornados and has emergency backup power source. It also includes a computer room that can back up the data of the entire county.