



David A. Clarke Jr.
Sheriff

Milwaukee County Office of the Sheriff

Fran McLaughlin
Public Information Officer
Cell: 414-254-9488
Phone: 414-278-5226
fran.mclaughlin@milwcnty.com

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 30, 2011

Sheriff Orders Deputy Detail to Prevent Continued Court House Complex Security Breaches

Milwaukee, WI – Milwaukee County Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr. today ordered Deputy sheriffs to monitor building security after repeated understaffing of the assignment by the Department of Public Works (DPW), including a main public entrance to the Safety Building that was unmanned from 7:30am to 9:05am Tuesday. Surveillance video showed people exiting the building and at least one person from the outside entering by catching the door before it closed and getting into the building unscreened.

A citizen came to the sheriff's administration office and informed staff that no one was at the entrance to screen people, and that he observed people coming through with no security in place. A sheriff's sergeant and lieutenant immediately responded and observed that no DPW security staff was in place and the doors were unsecured, allowing people to exit and allowing others to catch the open door before it closed to enter.

Several weeks ago, Sheriff Clarke observed a main entrance to the Safety Building staffed by only one officer who had to perform numerous required tasks for proper screening, including viewing items passing through an X-ray machine, watching people pass through a magnetometer used to detect weapons and observing the line of people. She was the lone security officer in place while a line of people waited to get in the building.

The sheriff, based on his experience in securing vital interests, has determined that the staffing is totally inadequate to prevent weapons and other contraband from being brought into the court house complex. He informed County Executive Chris Abele and the head of DPW, who reports to the county executive, by letter of such. The sheriff to date has not received a reply, causing him to take added measures.

The sheriff ordered that all checkpoints be monitored for proper securing of the building, and on at least 8 occasions in one week alone since the letter was sent, found entrances to be staffed by only one person. Overtime will be used for the added deputy security and a cross charge to the DPW will be sought for reimbursement.

-more-

Statement from Sheriff Clarke:

“When I informed County Executive Chris Abele of what I believe to be inadequate security for a venue such as a courthouse that has heavy public use in an urban setting, and one that has experienced weapons brought in and other acts of violence occurring in the past, I received no responsible reply, other than some junior staffer spinning in the media with some lousy excuse about someone coming to work late as the reason for the lax security, and worse yet, no substantial action or change. Simply saying that they take this seriously is not sufficient. I’m not buying it. They can save that BS for someone else. I want improvement NOW!

It’s obvious to me that DPW and the County Executive’s Office see this important function no differently than emptying building trash cans where if they miss one it’s no big deal. The margin for error in security of a government building is zero. I, the many court house employees and the public have a reasonable expectation of using these buildings and being secure while doing so. I challenge DPW and the County Executive’s Office to show me a model of building security that would say how they approach and inadequately staff this function is reasonable or effective in preventing disaster with today’s threats. These repeated lapses are serious and I won’t stand by until something serious occurs. I have a duty to continually monitor and assess vulnerabilities and weaknesses in security and to do something about it, which I have now done.”

###