

April 8, 2002

Richard Hatfield, Police Chief
City of Greenbrier
202 West College; P. O. Box 466
Greenbrier, TN 37073

Dear Richard:

You recently asked about recommended staffing levels for police departments. There is no absolute staffing recommendation for cities in general. The average staffing level of cities and towns across the country is 2.4 police officer per 1000 citizens. In southern states, the average is 2.7 officer per 100 citizens. These figures are merely *averages*, not recommendations. Densely populated cities and cities with large service populations, as opposed to resident populations, are likely to have a higher staffing level. Small cities that do not provide 24 hour per day, seven days per week police coverage will have lower staffing levels.

Many factors influence the need for police staffing. Major highway arteries, retail and other commercial development, and proximity to larger cities often increase the demand for police services. Officer safety and citizen expectations are the most important factors in determining an "ideal" staffing level.

I understand that Greenbrier has three schools, including a high school. School safety and traffic safety around the schools are important factors to consider. The highway running through Greenbrier, connecting Springfield to the interstate and Nashville, creates additional demands on the police department. The most current census numbers show Greenbrier to have a population of 4,940 people. Your current staffing level is eleven full-time officers and one part-time officer. As I understand the situation, the part-time officer was added to fill in for a full-time officer. Not counting the part-time officer, the current staffing level is 2.23 officers per 1000 citizens. Even if the part-time officer is counted, the staffing level is only 2.33 officers per 1000 citizens.

Given the current demands on police services, particularly the three schools, I would strongly urge the city not to reduce the staffing level of the police department. In fact, with the growth that the city has experienced in recent times, the city should begin planning to add additional officers.

If you have any further questions, or if I can ever be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Rex Barton
Police Management Consultant