Department News—

This past week our department received training from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) on a new item of technology designed to increase efficiencies with processing criminal complaints and DWIs. The application called eCharging allows our department to work with the Steele County Attorney’s Office and the District Court electronically when filing criminal complaints rather than transporting them by hand between the three branches of government. With the use of fingerprint reading technology, our officers are able to receive pending criminal complaints from the County Attorney’s Office, review and sign the complaint and then electronically forward and file the complaint with the District Court. A second benefit of this application occurs when our officers are processing a DWI arrest. In the past, the officer was required to fill out several items of paperwork with each DWI arrest which were then manually mailed to the MN Department of Driver & Vehicle Services (DVS)—often causing a delay in the State taking action against an individual’s driver’s license. Now, paperwork associated with the DWI can be completed digitally and immediately electronically filed with DVS and enable the process to progress with the State more efficiently and quickly.

Aggressive Driving or Road Rage—

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING is a traffic offense or a combination of offenses such as speeding, running a red light or stop sign, failure to yield the right of way, and reckless driving. It may also be tailgating, abrupt lane changes, failure to signal, and other norms of negligent and indiscriminate driving.

ROAD RAGE occurs when a traffic incident escalates into a far more serious situation. Road rage is an incident in which an angry or impatient motorist or passenger intentionally injures or kills another motorist, passenger, or pedestrian, or attempts or threatens to injure or kill another motorist, passenger, or pedestrian.

How to avoid ROAD RAGE—

- Avoid cutting other drivers off in traffic
- Don’t tailgate (allow 3 seconds space between lanes)
- Signal several hundred feet before changing lanes or making a turn
- Avoid making any gestures or eye contact with the other driver
- Be courteous in the use of high-beam headlights
- Don’t flash your lights or blow your horn as a signal to pass another vehicle
- Obey the speed limit
- Drive in the right or middle lane, pass on the left
- Stop at stop signs and red lights, don’t run yellow lights
- Don’t block intersections when you are stopped at a red light

Mail Theft & Check Forgeries Continue—

On Monday, an Owatonna officer met with two victims who wanted to report the theft and forgery of two of their checks. The victims reported putting two payment checks in their mailbox on February 4th. Later that week, the victims were going through their banking statement and observed two checks had been written out to an unknown male and female—one of the checks being one that was a payment check mailed on February 4th. The victims obtained the names of the two subject to whom the checks were made out to and called the police. Officers were able to use video surveillance to identify a male suspect passing one of the stolen checks at United Prairie Bank. Later that day, the department received a telephone call from United Prairie Bank to advise that the male suspect that passed the stolen check was back at the bank trying to pass another forged check—officers responded, placed the suspect under arrest and brought him the Steele County Jail. Joshua R. Drabek, age 23, was formally charged in District Court with Check Forgery—Offering/Possessing with the Intent to Defraud—a Felony. This case is another example of the hazards of leaving mail that contains checks or other personal, private information in an unsecured mailbox. The check in this case is another that is believed to have been washed of the payee information and forged with new payee and payee amounts.

Welcome to the OPD—

Officer Brady Fox has been appointed as our new canine officer to succeed current Canine Officer Brandon Fandel. Today, Officer Fox’s appointment became closer to reality as he received his new partner “Kash”, a 13-month old German Shepherd that came to us from the Country of Slovakia. Beginning on March 4th, Brady will begin a comprehensive 12-week training program at the St. Paul Police Department that will train him as a handler and Kash as a dual purpose police canine—meaning he will be trained in patrol functions (criminal suspect search/apprehensions, evidence searches, open area searches, tracking and handler protection) and drug detection. We anticipate Brady and Kash graduating from the program in the middle of May.