

The Klickitat County Sheriff's Posse – Who they Are, and What they Do?
Karen Elings, Chief Civil Clerk

The Klickitat County Sheriff's Posse was created at the direction of Sheriff Bob Songer in 2015 to increase the presence of law enforcement within Klickitat County's 1,904 square miles. These volunteer community members provide extra eyes for the nineteen (19) deputies that protect and serve the 22,055 citizens of Klickitat County. The Posse program is modeled after the urban neighborhood watch program which has been an effective crime deterrent for many years. Sheriff Songer has expanded this program to include the rural environment. Encouraging neighbors and businesses to watch out for each other while driving around, communicating with each other when out and about to deter theft, being aware of unknown people collecting mail and packages.

The Posse is comprised of 146 Posse volunteers dispersed into three divisions with 42 members in the West division, 87 members in the Central division, and 17 members in the East division. The members have diverse career backgrounds which include twelve (12) former law enforcement officers, ten (10) healthcare professionals, eleven (11) engineers, and twenty-eight (28) ranchers and farmers, and many with other skills. Klickitat County benefits from the diversity of our volunteers. The Klickitat County Sheriff's Office Posse is honored to have military veterans serving our county as volunteers. These devoted men and women span the five branches of the United States Military and call Klickitat County home. The twenty-five (25) veteran posse members have served in the following military branches: U.S. Air Force (6), U.S. Army (9), U.S. Marine Corp (4), U.S. Navy (5) and U.S. Coast Guard (1).

Persons interested in becoming a Posse member must complete an application, pass a background and meet with Sheriff Songer prior to approval to the Posse. Once the person is approved, and sworn in by Sheriff Songer, the new member received the Klickitat County Sheriff's Office Posse Policies and Procedures. This document includes signature page indicating receipt of the policies and procedures, as well as agreement to adhere to a Code of Ethics.

The Posse is the Klickitat County Sheriff's Office Community Policing Program which encompasses community engagement and rural neighborhood watch. Posse members are directed to observe and report. Posse members watch out for their neighbors, looking for people who are out of place, or abnormal situations for that area. A few years ago, Posse members began watching mailboxes in their own neighborhoods with the purpose of deterring mailbox and package thefts. The posse member was instructed to call dispatch if they observed a vehicle, not known to the neighborhood, opening more than one mailbox in the area; then moving to another bank of mailboxes. Posse members sitting in a visible location with their magnetic Posse car signs helped to decrease mailbox thefts in the area of concern. In this situation, Posse members were reminded that they are not to follow the vehicle in question, only to call Dispatch to report the observation.

Additionally, Posse members assist with vacation home checks. Citizens of the county will submit a request to the Chief Civil Clerk for a vacation check. This request is assigned to a specific Posse member, usually someone in the requestors' neighborhood; and a copy is sent to KCSO Deputies, and to Dispatch. KCSO holds this type of information as confidential and therefore it is not broadcasted to the entire posse, it is only assigned to one person in order to maintain secure property for the traveler.