

TOWN OF OKARCHE
SHOOTING INCIDENT
OCTOBER 8, 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing this letter to inform you of catastrophic failures at the hands of the Town Manager and Police Chief during the Pursuit, Shooting, and Investigative Phase on the above referenced date. These sequences of events are critical when it comes to saving the lives of local residents and cannot be downplayed at any time.

Let me start by laying out the entry of the suspect vehicle into the Town Limits of Okarche. As everyone is well aware, the suspect was driving a stolen vehicle northbound from El Reno towards Okarche. As an Administrator/Officer the ultimate goal is the safety of the citizens of your local jurisdiction. To ensure that safety, you preferably try to stop the pursuit south of Okarche before it reaches the Town Proper. The best location would have been at the Hwy 3/81 interchange where it is 1 lane and stop sticks could have been used. However, this wasn't enforced. It is believed the suspect turned east and immediately turned around back west bound. Secondly, you have approximately 2 miles to perform a TVI (tactical vehicle intervention) to stop the vehicle prior to entering the town. Again, this wasn't performed. Third, you stop traffic at the stoplight and clear all traffic from the intersection. The chief was at the intersection, but failed to clear vehicles from it. He chose to stay in his unit with his emergency lights on instead.

Officers were informed that the suspect was potentially armed with a 9mm handgun. With this information, schools should have been placed on lockdown as well as the Center of Family Love. At the time of the pursuit Okarche Public Schools had students walking towards Main Street for lunch and Holy Trinity School had students on the playground. This could have been a deadly situation by either hitting a child, or if the suspect had opened fire by hitting a child with a bullet.

On the northern end of the Town Proper, Canadian County Deputies performed a TVI and was able to stop the vehicle. The suspect, armed with a weapon, got out of the vehicle and was struck by gunfire from the deputies. The suspect was unable to fire his weapon. Okarche PD chose to drive around the scene and come back in from the north shutting down traffic on the highway. The next step in law enforcement as taught to all officers is to render first aid. Failure to do so can result in a lawsuit to your department. Neither the Okarche Chief nor officer on scene approached the suspect or offered first aid. The chief remained at his vehicle preferring to text on his phone instead.

Eventually Chief Smith transmitted via radio to dispatch saying he needed them to reroute traffic around the scene. Chief Smith doesn't have the authority to shut down a US Highway. That falls under the discretion of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol or the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

Chief Smith began re-routing traffic both east and west down county roads at the sewer lagoon mile line. AS you may recall, we received several inches of rain prior to this incident and more rain a few hours after

it as well. This led to vehicles not only destroying the county roads, but vehicles sliding off into the ditches and requiring wrecker services to pull them out. This includes tractor trailers.

Due to this being a holiday, I was on a skeleton crew. I was in the office reviewing reports when Undersheriff Ward of Canadian County contacted me to request OSBI to work the investigation. As you can see from the details so far in this report, this should have been Chief Smith's request. However, he had failed to take control of the scene and chose to be a bystander. I called in a Reserve Deputy to take calls for the county who eventually arrived at the scene. While at the scene, Chief Smith and Officer Holguin left the north end leaving a message of "Hey Boda (Deputy Kyle Svoboda) let us know if they need us bro we are heading out." This occurred at approximately 2:30 pm. Shortly after 3:00 pm Chief Smith was asked to send a unit back to the north end so that a deputy could be freed up to handle taking calls. He refused saying they were tending to other town matters.

At this time I contacted Town Manager Richard Raupe about the situation. Mr. Raupe responded that Both Smith and Cruz are working traffic as well as two public work employees trying to keep people away from the south. I was aware of Chief Smith being at the intersection of 81 and Memorial Rd as I saw him sitting in his patrol vehicle behind Grant Kuehn. Mr. Kuehn was actually standing in the rain directing traffic while Chief Smith sat dry in his vehicle. From my vantage point, I did not see any other vehicles from Okarche. They may have been farther north, but I am unaware. Mr. Raupe suggested we contact Sheriff West with Canadian County and have him provide the traffic control since this was his scene. However, the scene is in Kingfisher County, Okarche limits. Sheriff West and his staff were busy doing an internal investigation on the shooting itself to ensure their policy and procedures were followed. The control of the scene and all traffic diversion falls squarely on the shoulders of Okarche. Regardless, they refused to accept responsibility for their actions or the problem at hand.

Fast Forward another 3 hours and Chief Smith was again contacted by my night shift deputies. They asked him to send an officer to the north end so that I could have one free to handle calls as well as handle their day to day activities. He responded by saying he didn't have anyone available. They asked him to call someone out and he replied no. At the time of this request several hours have passed with little to no administrative action taking place to handle the scene and make accommodations for both the public and emergency personnel as well. Later, I will discuss what those actions can/might be.

Shortly after 9 pm, and long after many curse words were shouted at my staff, I had deputies take control of the scene and contact OHP and ODOT to start the re-routing of traffic through the proper channels. Approximately 30-45 minutes later we had signage and the route set up to use from the Okarche stoplight west to Krittenbrink Blacktop, then north to Park Community Road, then east back to Highway 81. This allowed for all paved roads and the shortest detour possible without the worry of getting vehicles stuck.

Under the National Incident Management System (NIMS) we train for critical incidents down to the common parade route. This system allows us to learn how to manage from the Incident Command down to the resources needed to manage the incident. It allows for every function of the incident and properly handling of every aspect of it. It also allows for the reimbursement of funds should the incident be Declared as a State of Emergency as well as a National Emergency.

When using this incident and NIMS the following would come into place:

1. Either the Town Manager or the Police Chief would be considered the Incident Manager
2. Securing the Scene would be paramount
3. Re-routing of traffic from the scene needs to be done as soon as possible. As noted already, this needs to be done with the assistance of OHP and ODOT

4. Use your local resources to their fullest potential. Volunteer fireman and their work vehicles make for great traffic control, as well as the ability to block off scene visibility. Town barricades should be brought out to block off side streets access to the area. Use caution tape with the barricades to ensure no one is going between or around them.
5. A location for media coverage needs to be designated. Media already knows they cannot leave the designated area or they are subject to arrest.
6. Establish who will be doing press releases. Only one person should handle the media. This controls the outflow of information. (When I was contacted, I informed them to contact Sheriff West or the OSBI that Kingfisher County would not be doing press releases)
7. Contact emergency management. Emergency management is an essential tool in asking food establishments for meals for all emergency personnel that are on scene. In this case the scene lasted for approximately 14 hours. Food and Drink are essential. Emergency Management also has the ability to provide a Port-a-Potty to be delivered to the scene if necessary.
8. Begin a log of who is working and where they are located at. From this standpoint you can determine who needs a break and when it should be established. It also allows for shiftwork replacement.
9. Be available. Every scene has specific requests that cannot be pre-determined. It is up to the command center to try and provide for those resources.

If this were a school shooting, explosion at Temtrol or the grain elevator, train derailment with toxic chemicals, or some other major catastrophe that endangered the lives of many Okarche citizens, I fear that you would be faced with mass casualties due to the lack of organization and action. This incident tested Okarche's effectiveness to handle stressful situations. I would ask each of you to grade for yourselves how you think it was performed.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Dennis Banther