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Saturday, September 29, 2007

# City, county police crews to take on added duties

## State Police would cut ranks by 90% and close work sites and posts, impacting public safety.

George Hunter / The Detroit News

Without a state budget deal, the Michigan State Police on Monday will reduce its ranks by 90 percent, which will have a tremendous impact on public safety, experts and officials say.

The State Police will keep 222 uniformed troopers, 15 sergeants, three lieutenants and 27 emergency dispatchers statewide. But all State Police work sites will be closed, including all posts.

"A lot of smaller communities rely on the State Police," University of Detroit Mercy criminal justice Professor Daniel Kennedy said. "In a lot of rural towns, if they have a barricaded gunman, or an emergency situation like that, the State Police will be called in. Now, they'll probably have to rely on the local sheriff's departments."

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In Detroit, state police troopers have jurisdiction on the city's freeways. During a shutdown, the Wayne County Sheriff's Office would handle those patrols.

The services that will cease during a state shutdown include:

- Forensic science laboratory services.
- Commercial vehicle enforcement, including weigh stations.
- Criminal investigation and drug enforcement operations.
- Apprehension of fugitives and parole absconders.
- Tactical, canine, bomb squad, diving and aviation services

"The big loss is the forensic crime labs," Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said. "They're already backed up as it is. Is it an emergency? No, but our investigations will be impacted by this, because we won't be able to have DNA analysis done."

Kennedy agreed the crime laboratory shutdown poses the potential for the most severe problems.

"If you have a criminal whose DNA is on file, and he commits another crime, police won't be able to match his DNA while this shutdown is happening," Kennedy said. "There's the potential for a violent criminal to be allowed to remain in circulation."

Kennedy said another impact will be auto accident investigations.

"The State Police often takes care of reconstructing crashes, and without that service, it could affect the case," he said.

The Michigan State Police Command Officers' Association, which represents officers holding the rank of lieutenant or higher, said its membership voted to remain on the job without pay if Gov. Jennifer Granholm allowed it. Diane Garrison, the union's director, was unsure Friday whether the governor would OK the plan.

The biggest impact, Kennedy said, could be public perception.

"There may be a general feeling of unease if people think the police cannot respond to emergencies," Kennedy said.

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