



Spokane County
— Sheriff —
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News Release

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Detectives Offer Sex Offender Information

Recent angst regarding a suspected sex offender watching children at a Spokane Valley school has prompted the sheriff's Sex Crimes unit to offer information that might clarify how sex offenders are monitored in Spokane County and eliminate some common misconceptions.

There are about 1,400 registered sex offenders (RSO's) in Spokane County, a number that changes slightly day-to-day. Tracking these offenders is a joint effort by the Spokane County Sheriff's Office, the Spokane Police Department and the U.S. Marshal's Office. Each agency has personnel assigned to register, track and monitor each of these 1,400 RSO's.

The sheriff's office has three detectives, one deputy and a secretary dedicated full-time to this effort. SPD has two full-time detectives and the marshal's office has one full-time agent and several who work it part-time in addition to other duties.

When a suspect is convicted of a sex or kidnapping offense that mandates registration, and then is released from custody, he is required to go to the sheriff's office and register. The Department of Corrections (DOC) will have designated a "Level," I, II or III – one being considered the least likely to re-offend and three being the most likely. This "leveling" is based on a statewide standard. If an offender comes from another state or was not confined, sheriff's detectives assign him a level based on the same DOC standards.

All RSO's receive regular visits at their homes by a detective or deputy to verify they are living at the address they registered. Level I offenders are visited at least once a year, Level II at least twice and Level III at least four times. They are visited each and every time they change their address as well. If an offender has no home, he is registered as a transient and must report in-person weekly to the sheriff's office.

When an offender is sentenced, he can be released to be supervised by DOC until his sentence time as expired. While on DOC supervision, there may be restrictions set by the Community Corrections Officer restricting his or her freedom to live or work in certain places – schools or daycares, for instance. If an offender has completed his sentence and is no longer on supervision, he is free to live and work anywhere he wants – there are no legal restrictions.

In some rare instances, the court may note that an offender is a “Sexually Violent Predator” and will restrict where he can live – not within 880 feet of a school, for instance. Without this court designation, offenders are free to live anywhere they choose.

.If an offender fails to comply with his registration requirements, a detective will write a warrant request for him. Regardless of where the offender is found in the United States, he will be brought back to Spokane County for prosecution.

Members of the sex offender units go online daily to search for predators and users/makers of child pornography. These cases are aggressively investigated, and when possible, search warrants are written and executed for the perpetrators.

The sheriff’s office will notify schools when offenders tell us they will be attending or working there. Schools have the responsibility to notify certain members of their staff. However, this *only applies* when the offender attends or works in the school. Schools are *not required* to notify students, parents or neighbors if the offender merely lives nearby.

When a sex offender registers, his or her name is entered into a statewide law enforcement database with the Washington State Patrol. The name is also entered into a sex offender database called Offender Watch which is accessible to anyone with a computer. A person can look up his own address and the database will show all Level II and III offenders in the neighborhood. By state law, level one offenders are exempted.

The following limited public information about an RSO *may* be released by law enforcement –

For Level II and III offenders, a flyer is printed and distributed to SCOPE and COPS offices where volunteers distribute them in a two block radius of the neighborhood where the offender is living. Level III information is released to media as well.

For Level I offenders, information *may only* be released to the offender’s victims, witnesses and individual community members who live near the offender and who request it.

When people see known RSO’s in schools, daycares, libraries, parks and other places children might frequent, we ask that they remember that offenders have the same rights to be there as everyone else, and to be free from harassment. However, we also welcome calls if the RSO is in any way acting suspiciously. -- rdr