

# Evansville police seeking accreditation for department

By GINA DUWE

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EVANSVILLE ô Police Chief Scott McElroy has wanted to get his department accredited for years, but the money was never available.

Now he has the support from the city council, and the department has started the process to seek accreditation from the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Accreditation Group.

WILEAG is a non-profit, independent accrediting organization.

"I think it's important because we want to make sure our policies and procedures are among the best that is out there in the field of law enforcement," McElroy said.

The Evansville Police Department has joined WILEAG and the Wisconsin Police Accreditation Coalition, a "support group" for departments working toward accreditation.

To become accredited, a department must be compliant with WILEAG standards that cover all aspects of law enforcement administration and operations.

Twenty departments in the state are accredited, with about 15 others in the process, said Tim Kriz, program manager for WILEAG and owner of his own consulting business, Custom Service Information in Wisconsin Rapids.

With nine police officers, Evansville is the second-smallest department seeking accreditation, he said, though accreditation seems to be catching on across the state.

McElroy hopes to complete the process sometime in 2010.

It will make for several busy months. Most of the staff will be help in the accreditation process while the department prepares to move this summer to the old fire department downtown.

Accreditation will include reorganizing the department's manual and reviewing every policy, McElroy said.

He doesn't anticipate making many changes.

"Overall, we think we have a real good policy manual," he said. "A lot will remain."

The process also will include a public hearing, likely sometime next year.

Once a department completes its application, a team of three assessors from WILEAG will conduct a site review including interviews, riding with officers and inspections of records and files, Kriz said. The team files its reports to the board for approval.

After a department is accredited, it must be reevaluated every three years and pay annual fees, he said.

The city council allocated about \$1,250 for the process this year and will do about the same next year, McElroy said.

"To me, it's a thousand dollars well spent," he said. "I've wanted this ever since I've been chief."

He anticipates the whole process will cost \$2,000 to \$3,000. The city also hired Kriz to assist in the process.

"It's a commitment of staff time, it is a commitment of dollars," McElroy said. "But when you have a final manual that you can say is amongst the best in the field, I think you've done all you can do to make sure your policies and procedures are as good as they (can be), and that's what I want."

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