

KS Counties Ready For Eclipse

(MSC News)--Expected visitors in the thousands has left small Doniphan County communities working towards safety during Monday's solar eclipse.

"I'll have all my officers out during the day shift except for one and he'll work the night shift. Then if we still have a crowd, we'll carry over and help him out," Elwood Police Chief Larry Hunsaker said.

"We're going to bring in some extra officers. Our fire station will be manned. We'll have a cooling station at our community building for anyone that may need that," Wathena Police Chief Jason Pendleton said.

Extra planning and preparation are needed because of smaller staff sizes in the Doniphan County departments.

Most in the county have less than five officers on staff.

"Doniphan County we don't have a lot of law enforcement officers," Hunsaker said. "The total amount of law enforcement officers in the whole county is around 17 so we rely on everybody to help everybody out."

They say that team effort is key in getting people the help they need that day knowing of some major problems they may have to face.

"Hopefully nobody just stops in the middle of 36 Highway and decide to look. Try and find a safe place to pull off the road," Hunsaker said.

Plans in place to help the officers tackle the issues of possible crowded roadways.

"We've got some roads that will be shut down which will give use access to each other a lot faster then trying to fight the traffic," Pendleton said.

They don't know what Monday will bring, but they're ready to help when needed.

"We're going to do the best we can to get to the most critical scenes and or incidents that we can," Pendleton said. "If we can't get there, we will have somebody on the way so they just need to be patient and we'll get to them as soon as we can."

Officers and the Doniphan County Emergency Manager are urging drivers to stay on the major roads and off the country roads during the event. Some drivers may not know how to handle the terrain and you may get stuck for a while before

they can get to you.

Jefferson County is also working to prepare for throngs of travelers through that area.

It was during this week's County Commission meeting that Emergency Management Director Keith Jeffers updated the county leaders about the plans.

He told them that he's working with the Kansas Department of Transportation as part of the effort.

He will work with the state agency to place safety message boards on U.S. Highway 59, as well as K4 Highway, and will have them in place for motorists traveling through Jefferson County Monday.

Heavy traffic is also expected on Jefferson County roads during the eclipse.

Many Signals Communications