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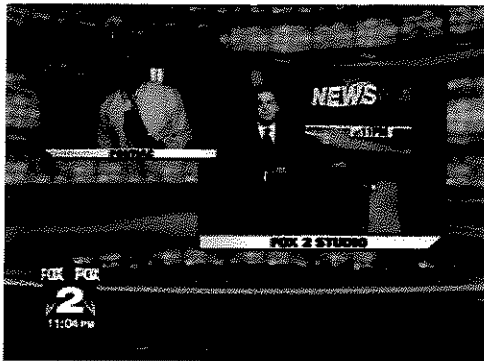
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Oakland County Sheriff Patrolling Pontiac

Updated: Monday, 01 Aug 2011, 11:32 PM EDT
Published: Monday, 01 Aug 2011, 11:24 PM EDT

By SIMON SHAYKHET
WJBK | myFOXDetroit.com

PONTIAC, Mich. (WJBK) - With a new look and familiar smile, Pontiac cops turned deputies such as Damon Dorkins are back on the street keeping Pontiac safe. It wasn't long ago they were on the chopping block, now rehired with Oakland County and not a moment too soon.

"The combination of Pontiac experience and their professionalism with us, we're ready to tackle any problem," said Oakland County Sheriff **Mike Bouchard**.

More than 60 of Pontiac's finest plus other deputies make up the units. In the first 24 hours since the sheriff took over the reigns, deputies responded to 250 service calls and among them a break-in and drive-by shooting that produced a sawed off shotgun.

Every call was answered within several minutes.

"Makes me feel good to be able to not only respond to calls, but to be able to get out here and do police work ... to make sure everybody's safe," said Dorkins.

"With these guys here, I feel a lot safer," said one resident.

"They (were) out all day," another said. "They (were) everywhere, and I was like thank you Jesus."

The move to bring in the deputies saves the City of Pontiac \$2.2-million each year, but more importantly there's the ability to save lives. Consider this. Layoffs forced the old Pontiac Police Department to dwindle to just about 50 cops and, until this changeover, calls were just going unanswered.

"In any community, safety's first," Bouchard said. "We want people to feel safe in the neighborhoods. We want the downtown to have a new vibrancy because that will help bring the city back."

In addition to helping out with the police, Oakland County Dispatch is now going to be handling calls for the Pontiac Fire Department.

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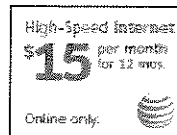
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