

Ask the Chief.....

What is a Warrant?

Normally the Lake County Sheriff's office receives about 50 new warrants from courts each week to arrest persons charged with a crime, or bring persons to the court that have ignored a subpoena or not appeared as ordered for a court hearing.

Most commonly, Warrants are used by the court to direct law enforcement to arrest a suspect or to conduct the search of property for evidence of a crime. Additionally, warrants are issued by the court ordering law enforcement to bring persons to the court that have ignored a subpoena or not appeared as ordered for a court hearing. The court issues such documents in compliance with the 4th amendment of the United States Constitution it states that *"no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized."*

Arrest Warrants: issued by a judge, based on probably cause, which direct law enforcement to arrest a particular person who is charged with committing a crime.

Search Warrant: issued by a judge, based on probably cause, which direct law enforcement to search a specified person or premises for property such as weapons, drugs, instruments of a crime, fruits of a crime, computer data files, and other evidence of a crime.

Bench Warrants: issued by a judge, based on probably cause, which direct law enforcement to bring a specified person before the court. These normally result from a person's failure to appear before the court in response a subpoena, summons or citation, or for probation and/or parole violations.

While the Lake County Sheriff's Office works diligently to respond in a timely manner to locate persons who have warrants issued against them, our back-log of active warrants ranges between 800 and 1,000 on file. Approximately 25% are felony warrants (more serious crimes), and the remaining are misdemeanors warrants (less serious offenses such as traffic offenses). Some of these warrants are for people who have moved or live outside of Ohio, and due to the nature of their offense the court does not give authority for us to go outside of the State to arrest them. However, these are worked on a regular basis, and are time and staff intensive; verifying warrants, searching for accurate addresses, searching data basis for locations and other related issues.

What is important to remember is that having an active warrant can adversely affect you in terms of your credit, hiring, and other issues affecting your life. Very often by contacting the court regarding outstanding fines they can be handled by setting up payment plans and thus avoiding jail. A person who neglects handling such issues does run the possibility of being arrested and taken to jail until such time that they can be brought before the judge to respond to the issues regarding the arrest warrant.

Be proactive. If you have a warrant regarding a minor issue, contact the court and work out a resolution. If it is a serious warrant seek legal advice of counsel and begin to get the warrant handled ASAP.

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