

Officers gather for law enforcement seminar

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News Editor

Law enforcement officers representing departments from all over the region gathered on Friday morning at Maple Avenue Baptist Church to fine-tune proper procedures in scenarios ranging from search and seizures to hostage situations.

The seminar, hosted by District Attorneys Kirke Adams and Doug Valeska, featured speakers with field experience and others who closely monitor changes in laws and precedent.

Among the speakers at the fifth annual event was Bill Lisenby, of the Attorney General's office. Lisenby, whose parents are originally from Geneva County, discussed recent cases concerning search and seizure and what can be expected in the court system.

Adams said Lisenby always provides important insight into the proper procedures needed from prosecutors and law enforcement officers.

"We always appreciate Bill coming and sharing the newest case laws, especially for the officers on the street," he said.

Lisenby said search and

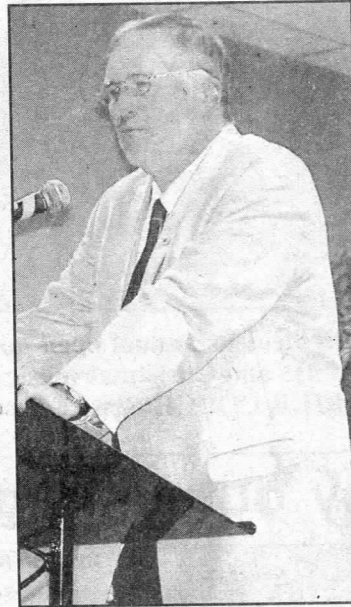


Kirke Adams

seizure situations can sometimes be a slippery slope because the opinions of Supreme Court Justices differ.

"Don't feel bad if you're standing out there by the side of the car wondering what you should do," he said. "Somewhere down the road, someone with the Supreme Court could also be wondering what should that officer have done."

Lisenby said it is important to use precedent to tell officers what to do, especially when probable cause is an issue. He also stressed the importance of keeping a



Bill Lisenby

close record on the scene and avoiding 100 percent reliance on electronics.

"Always make notes; keep good notes of what is going on," he said. "Many people rely on cameras, but always remember that cameras malfunction. Audio doesn't always work. You need to keep good notes, because the case isn't going to come up next week. It's going to come up a year from now."

The absence of a search warrant can create a tough situation for officers, Lisenby said. Without a warrant, the burden is on the officer to

convince the judge they had probable cause. The definition from courts is not always clear.

"It makes it difficult for police officers to know what to do next," he said. "It makes it difficult for prosecutors to know what to do next."

Lisenby also discussed who can and can't be detained at a crime scene.

Following Lisenby's presentation, officers were also educated on mental health and new gun laws by Barry Matson, of the Office of Prosecution Services.

The afternoon portion of the seminar focused on the events that took place in Midland City in January of 2013.

On Jan. 29, 65-year-old Jimmy Lee Dykes climbed aboard a school bus and fatally shot the driver; he then abducted at random a 5-year-old boy named Ethan, who was sitting at the closest seat. He took Ethan into an underground bunker, where he held him captive. About a week after the incident, FBI agents were able to storm the bunker, kill Dykes, and rescue Ethan.

SAC Stephen Richardson, representing the FBI, discussed the thought process and the procedures used during the standoff.