

# **WALKER COUNTY COURTHOUSE SECURITY POLICY**

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The Walker County Courthouse Security Committee has implemented the following procedures to be instituted at the Walker County Courthouse as of May 22, 2024:

- One public entrance will be located at the east side of the Courthouse.
- One private entrance will be located at the west side of the Courthouse for designated personnel.
- All members of the public and all items carried on or about their person are subject to search and/or security screening. All items carried on or about their person will be placed in a tray for X-Ray security viewing by Courthouse Security personnel.
- All members of the public entering the Walker County Courthouse will walk through a metal detector for security screening and/or be screened by other security device.
- Signs will be posted regarding the carrying of prohibited items such as guns and knives even if the individual possesses a concealed handgun permit.
- Signs will be posted in English and Spanish to inform the public of the above information as well as other security instructions and information.
- Please direct any questions regarding these procedures to the Walker County Courthouse Security at 936-436-4790.

Ensuring the safety and security of all people who utilize the Walker County Courthouse is a top priority of the Walker County Courthouse Security Committee and the Walker County Sheriff's Department.

## Prohibited Items

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The Walker County Courthouse Buildings have security systems consisting of metal detectors, cameras, and x-ray machines. Anything considered to be a weapon or that is deemed unacceptable by the security officers will be confiscated and/or dealt with appropriately. All visitors and employees are encouraged to report suspicious activity/suspicious persons to the Walker County Sheriff's Office and/or Bailiffs.

### **WARNING!!!**

**Attempting to bring these items into this building may result in your arrest, a citation being issued, or other criminal charges being filed against you.**

The following items are prohibited in the Walker County Courthouse Buildings:

- Alcoholic Beverages;
- Ammunition;
- Box Cutters;
- Brass Knuckles and Glass Knuckles;
- Drug Paraphernalia;
- Explosive Materials or Objects;
- Guns and Replicas of Guns (includes toys);
- Handcuff Keys and Handcuffs (unless they are being carried by a law enforcement officer);
- Illegal Drugs;
- Knives or Swords - of any kind;
- Scissors and Knitting Needles;
- Tools of Any Kind, such as hammers, screwdrivers, drills, etc. (unless they are being carried by someone who the County hired to work on equipment or the building);
- Pepper / OC Sprays;
- Weapon-like Objects, such as bats, clubs, tasers, batons, and the like (unless they are being carried by a law enforcement officer);
- Animals (other than service animals); and
- Any other items that would fall under Penal Code Section 1.07(17):

"Deadly weapon" means:

- (A) a firearm or anything manifestly designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of inflicting death or serious bodily injury; or
- (B) anything that in the manner of its use or intended use is capable of causing death or serious bodily injury.

## **Courthouse Security Screening Procedures**

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The public will enter and exit the building through the public front entrance doors of the Walker County Courthouse located on the second floor.

All members of the public entering the courthouse through the front door of the Walker County Courthouse will go through the security screening process.

Items such as illegal narcotics, firearms, knives, scissors, carpet or box cutters, letter openers or other edged weapons are considered contraband.

When individuals are found with contraband, which constitutes a criminal violation, the items shall be seized and the person taken into custody or issued a criminal citation, depending on the circumstances.

Individuals found with items that would otherwise be legal to carry, such as pocketknives or pepper spray, will be advised that they must take these items back to their vehicles. The security officers will not store items for the individuals nor accept them as discarded property.

1. Individuals entering the Walker County Courthouse will be screened by use of walk-through magnetometers and/or hand-held magnetometers.
2. Individuals who bring items into the Walker County Courthouse for court purposes must check in at the screening station where the items will be checked and screened by security personnel.
3. The X-ray machine will scan items as listed in procedures.
4. Individuals shall place all items on the X-ray conveyor belt and empty all pockets into a tray before entering the walk-through magnetometer.
  - A positive indication by the magnetometer will require a second walk-through by the individual.
  - A second positive indication by the walk-through magnetometer will require a search using the hand magnetometer to locate the source of the positive indication.
  - The security officer may take the person to the side and pat down the individual if it is determined that some suspected object is causing the positive indication that the individual has an object that poses a security risk. A person may not enter the building until the source of the positive indication is identified.
5. Suspicious images observed in packages or handbags shall be closely examined by having the owner open the package for inspection.
6. Attorney ID Badge Privileges have been withdrawn. There will no longer be an Attorney ID Badge. All persons will be expected to go through the required security screening process. The only exceptions made are described in this policy.

Ensuring the safety and security of all people who utilize the Walker County Courthouse is a top priority of the Walker County Sheriff's Office.

## **Employee Identification Badge Access to the Walker County Courthouse**

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All County employees should have their Employee Identification Badge to gain entrance into the Walker County Courthouse through the main entrance on the second floor. The secured entrance on the first floor into the Walker County Courthouse will be accessible only by using their Employee Identification Badge to swipe the electronic pad to gain entrance. Any employee without their Employee Identification Badge must enter through security at the public entrance.

Walker County is committed to providing a safe and secure workplace for all employees. As employees, you share the responsibility for the safety and security of yourselves, fellow employees, the public and guests.

Employees can help ensure a safe work environment by doing the following:

- Do not allow visitors access to secure areas if uncomfortable about the stated purpose of their visit.
- Do not allow someone visiting your office access to other secure offices or areas.
- Notify security personnel of strange objects, packages or briefcases.
- Do not admit unexpected visitors, such as repair people or couriers, without verification from your supervisor regarding the purpose of their visit.
- Ask strangers in your work area for identification.
- Keep security doors locked at all times and confidential information in locked cabinets when not in use.
- Keep all valuables in locked drawers or cabinets.
- Each employee is responsible for safeguarding his or her Employee Identification Badge. Report any damaged, lost, stolen or misplaced badge immediately to your supervisor and the IT Department.
- Do not lend your Employee Identification Badge to anyone.
- Ensure that all external access points are properly secured.
- Do not leave your badge unattended.

Remember, all employees are required to appropriately display their Employee Identification Badge upon request at all time at the Walker County Courthouse.

## **Walker County Sheriff's Office**

### **Courthouse Security Policy and Procedures for Law Enforcement**

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Certified Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs), not currently on suspension, may retain their weapons while in the Walker County Courthouse. The following procedures were established for LEOs who wish to retain their weapons while in the secured areas of the Walker County Courthouse:

- All LEOs, both in uniform and not in uniform, not known to security staff must display their departmental photo ID or a standard picture ID card issued by their agency to Courthouse Security upon entry to the building while armed.
- All LEOs must advise Courthouse security of their destination in the building and provide a cell phone number so they can be reached in case of emergency. LEOs should check-in with the Bailiff upon entering the courtroom.
- Any LEOs, not known to security staff, not in possession of a valid departmental photo ID will not be allowed to bring a weapon into the Walker County Courthouse, and must comply with the security screening to enter the building through a designated door at the public entrance of the Walker County Courthouse.
- **LEOs appearing as a victim, witness, or party in any court proceeding (civil, family, probate, or criminal) in which they are personally involved and which IS NOT related to work shall not bring a weapon including a firearm, knife, ammunition, impact weapon, electronic restraint, chemical agent or explosive device. This includes court proceedings involving relatives.**
- Officers must adhere to departmental policy referring to all use of force and other aspects relating to carrying a firearm while on and off duty per departmental policy.
- Honorably retired LEOs may also retain their weapons pursuant to this policy.