



Portage County Sheriff Online — Records & Safety Tools

Records & Safety Tools for Portage County Residents

— An Extended Guide · No. 1784 —

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit — billshometech.com/book

What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

The 60-Second Version	4
1. 911 Is for Emergencies	4
2. What the Sheriff's Office Does	5
3. What This Guide Covers	5
4. What You Need Before You Start	6
5. Getting to the Real Sheriff Page	7
6. Reading the Sheriff's Page Menu	7
7. Phone Numbers Worth Knowing	8
8. Office Location and Hours	9
9. Calling the Non-Emergency Line	10
10. What Public Record Means	10
11. Looking Up Someone in the Jail	11
12. Understanding What a Roster Shows	12
13. Third-Party Vendor Sites	12
14. Sheriff's Sales Explained	13
15. Finding the Sheriff's Sales List	14
16. Reading a Sheriff's Sale Notice	14
17. Cautions About Sale Offers	15
18. The Records Division	16
19. Making a Public Records Request	16
20. Crash and Incident Reports	17

21. Concealed Carry Licensing Basics	18
22. Appointments and Visits	18
23. Fingerprinting Services	19
24. The Ohio Sex Offender Registry	20
25. The Local Portage County Search	20
26. Email Alerts for Your Neighborhood	21
27. Using Registry Information Responsibly	22
28. The Sheriff's Beware of Scams Page	22
29. Fake Deputy and Warrant Calls	23
30. Civil Division and Warrants	24
31. Towing and Impoundments	24
32. Unwanted Prescription Drug Drop-off	25
33. Crime Victim Resources	26
Everyday Cheat Sheet	26
A Picture to Follow Along	27
A Second Look	28
A Note From Bill	28
Your Visit — and My Promise	29

SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Here is the whole guide in a nutshell. If anyone is in danger, call 911. The online tools are for public records only, never for emergencies. Start at the county's website, portagecounty-oh.gov, and type that address yourself. Open the Sheriff section from the Elected Officials menu. There you will find pages for records, sheriff's sales, concealed carry licensing, fingerprinting, and more, along with phone numbers for the non-emergency line, records, and the license window. The statewide sex offender registry is run by the Ohio Attorney General at ohioattorneygeneral.gov, and the Sheriff's page links to a local search too. Searching public information is free, and nobody real will ever ask you for gift cards, a password, or a one-time code. If you feel stuck, that is exactly when to call me, and we will sort it out together.

1. 911 Is for Emergencies

Read this first, before anything else.

Before we talk about a single website, I want to say one thing plainly. If someone is in danger, if a crime is happening, if there is a fire, a medical emergency, or a car crash with injuries, put this guide down and dial 911. Do not look anything up online. Do not send an email. Call.

Everything else in this guide is about looking up public records and using safety tools at your own pace. Those tools are for information. They are not a way to report an emergency, and nobody is watching a website form the way a 911 dispatcher answers a call.

- Danger, a crime in progress, or a suspicious person who frightens you: call 911.
- Fire, smoke, or a medical emergency: call 911.
- A crash with injuries or a road blocked by a hazard: call 911.
- Not sure whether it counts? Call 911 and let the dispatcher decide.

If you cannot speak safely, stay on the line when you can, and let the dispatcher guide you. It is always better to call and not need help than to wait.

WATCH OUT

The online tools in this guide are for public records only. A web page, email, or social media message to the Sheriff's Office is not an emergency line and may not be seen for a long time.

2. What the Sheriff's Office Does

One office, many jobs, based in Ravenna.

The Portage County Sheriff's Office is based at the Portage County Justice Center in Ravenna, Ohio. The sheriff is an elected official, chosen by voters in the county, and the office does a surprising variety of work.

Looking at the list of pages on the official county website gives you a good picture. The office runs a corrections division, which is the county jail. It has a records division, a detective bureau, a civil division that handles court papers and warrants, and a marine patrol for the county's waters. It also handles concealed carry licensing, fingerprinting, and sheriff's sales.

- Corrections, which means the jail.
- Records, where reports and public records requests go.
- Civil division, which delivers certain court papers.
- Detective bureau, which investigates crimes.
- Licensing and fingerprinting services for the public.

You do not need to understand all of it. Most neighbors only ever need one or two of these pages, and this guide takes them one at a time.

GOOD TO KNOW

City police departments and the Ohio State Highway Patrol are separate agencies from the Sheriff. If your question is about a city police matter, that department is the right place to start.

3. What This Guide Covers

Public records and safety tools, explained calmly.

I wrote this guide for neighbors who want to use the Sheriff's online tools but feel nervous about it. Maybe a grandchild mentioned a lookup page. Maybe you saw a notice about a property sale. Maybe you simply want to know who to call and what is safe to click.

The guide walks through the kinds of things the county's Sheriff pages commonly offer. I describe what you are likely to see on the screen, and I keep specifics general where a page might change. When the page and this guide disagree, trust the page.

- Finding the real Sheriff's pages and phone numbers.

- Looking up public jail information.
- Understanding sheriff's sales of property.
- Asking for reports and public records.
- Concealed carry and fingerprinting information.
- The Ohio sex offender registry, run by the Attorney General.
- Spotting scams that pretend to be the Sheriff.

None of this requires special skills. If you can read a web page and type an address, you can do it.

TIP

Keep a pencil and a notepad beside you. Writing down a phone number or a record number as you go is much easier than trying to find it again later.

4. What You Need Before You Start

A short list of things to have handy.

You do not need much to look up public information. Most of the Sheriff's pages open without any account, password, or payment. That is one of the nice things about public records: they are meant to be available to ordinary people.

Having a few items nearby makes the visit smoother, especially if you are searching for a specific person or a specific date.

- A computer, tablet, or phone with a web browser.
- A pencil and paper for notes and phone numbers.
- The full name of the person or the address of the property you are researching.
- An email address, only if you plan to send a records request.
- A quiet few minutes, with no rush.

Spelling matters. A search for a name that is spelled a little differently than the record will often show nothing at all. Try a shorter version of a name, or a different spelling, before deciding the record does not exist.

If a page asks you to create an account or enter payment details just to look something up, stop and read the next chapters about the real site.

TIP

Make the text bigger before you begin. On most computers, hold Ctrl or Command and press the plus key. Reading comfortably prevents mistakes.

5. Getting to the Real Sheriff Page

Type the address yourself.

The county's official website is portagecounty-oh.gov. The Sheriff's Office pages live on that site, and they are reached from the Elected Officials menu, where Sheriff is listed. You can also type the address, then use the search box on the home page and look for Sheriff.

Type the address into the bar at the very top of your browser yourself. Avoid clicking a link in an email or text message that claims to take you to the Sheriff. Look for the county name in the address and a real ending, then look at the page itself. Does it show Portage County, Ohio, and the Sheriff's Office?

- 1 Open your web browser.
- 2 Click in the address bar at the top.
- 3 Type portagecounty-oh.gov and press Enter.
- 4 Find the Elected Officials menu and choose Sheriff.
- 5 Look for the list of Sheriff's Office pages on the side.

Once you find the page, bookmark it. A bookmark is a saved shortcut, so next time it takes one click.

WATCH OUT

Search engines sometimes show paid advertisements above the real result. Look past anything labeled Ad. The real county site is the one that matches the address you typed.

6. Reading the Sheriff's Page Menu

What the list of links tells you.

When you open the Sheriff's section, you will see a long list of links down the side of the page. It can look like a lot at first glance. Take a breath and read it slowly, like a menu at a restaurant.

The names are plain English. They describe what each page is for, so you can skip the ones that do not apply to you. Here are some of the page names that the county site has listed.

- Records Division
- Sheriff's Sales
- C.C.W. Licensing

- Fingerprinting Services
- Corrections Division
- Civil Division/Warrants
- Sex Offender, Violent Offenders, and Arson Offenders
- Towing and Impoundments
- Crime Victim Resources
- Beware of Scams
- Unwanted Prescription Drug Drop-off
- Useful Links

Names and layouts can change, so your screen may differ a little. The Useful Links page is a handy hub, because it gathers many of these pages together in one place along with the office's contact information.

Do not feel you must read every link. Pick the one that matches your question, open it, and read to the end before moving on. You can always come back to the list later.

TIP

If you cannot find a page, use the search box at the top of the county site and type one or two plain words, such as records or sales.

7. Phone Numbers Worth Knowing

Write these on a card by your phone.

Websites are helpful, but sometimes a person on the phone is faster. The county's Sheriff pages list several numbers, and each goes to a different job. Calling the right one saves you from being transferred around.

These are the numbers the county page showed when I checked. Confirm them on the official page, because phone numbers can change.

- Emergency: 911.
- Non-emergency: (330) 296-5100, then option 9.
- Administration: (330) 296-5100.
- Records: (330) 297-3892.
- Concealed carry and fingerprinting: (330) 298-4486.

Notice that the main number and the non-emergency line are the same number, reached by choosing an option. When a recording asks you to press a number, listen to the whole list before choosing.

Write the numbers on an index card and tape it near the phone. In a stressful moment, you will be glad you do not have to search. If you reach a recording, stay calm and listen to the options. If you leave a message, say your name, your phone number, and your question slowly, and repeat the number at the end.

GOOD TO KNOW

Calling from a cell phone? Save the non-emergency number in your contacts under a clear name, like Sheriff Non-Emergency, so you never confuse it with 911.

8. Office Location and Hours

Where it is and when it is open.

The Sheriff's Office is at the Portage County Justice Center, 8240 Infirmary Road, Ravenna, Ohio 44266. If you plan to visit in person, put that address in your phone's map or ask a family member to drive with you the first time.

The county page listed weekday hours for the administrative offices and separate, different hours for the concealed carry and fingerprinting window. It also noted closures around holidays and special events. Because hours are the kind of detail that changes, always check the page or call before you make the trip.

- Address: 8240 Infirmary Road, Ravenna, Ohio 44266.
- Administrative offices: weekdays, daytime hours, as posted.
- Concealed carry and fingerprinting: weekdays, with their own hours.
- Holidays and special events can mean closures.

A quick phone call before you go can save a wasted drive, especially in winter weather.

If you are bringing a family member who uses a walker or wheelchair, ask when you call about the best entrance. It is a courtesy question, and staff are glad to answer it.

TIP

Bring a photo ID and a pen whenever you visit a government office. If you need paperwork, ask the staff to write down what to bring next time.

9. Calling the Non-Emergency Line

For questions that are not urgent.

Not every problem is an emergency, and the Sheriff's Office knows that. The county lists a non-emergency number for situations where you need to speak with someone, but nobody is in immediate danger.

Examples might include reporting something suspicious that has already ended, asking whether an officer can look into a concern, or finding out how to get a report. The dispatcher will ask a few questions, so have your address and a clear description ready.

- 1 Take a breath and gather the facts: what, where, and when.
- 2 Dial (330) 296-5100 and choose option 9 when prompted.
- 3 Give your name, address, and call-back number.
- 4 Describe what happened in short, clear sentences.
- 5 Write down any report or reference number you are given.

If at any point the situation becomes dangerous, hang up and dial 911. You will not be in trouble for switching.

Keep your call short and factual. The dispatcher is trying to decide who should help you, and clear answers let them do that quickly. There is no need to apologize for calling.

GOOD TO KNOW

The county also lists a way to submit tips to the officer who handles the sex offender registry. For anything about a registered offender, use that listed contact rather than guessing.

10. What Public Record Means

Information the public is allowed to see.

You will hear the words public record often in this guide. In plain terms, it means information the government keeps that ordinary people have a right to look at. Ohio has a public records law, and the Sheriff's Office keeps many records that fall under it.

Public does not mean everything. Some information is kept private to protect victims, children, active investigations, and personal details like Social Security numbers. A record may be shared with parts blacked out. That is normal and is not a sign that anyone is hiding something from you.

- You generally do not have to give a reason for asking.

- Some details may be hidden for privacy or safety.
- Staff may take a little time to gather the records.
- You can ask politely what is available and how to request it.

The point of the online tools is convenience. They let you see certain public information from your kitchen table instead of driving to Ravenna.

TIP

If a search shows nothing, that does not always mean there is no record. It may mean the information is not posted online. Ask the Records Division by phone.

11. Looking Up Someone in the Jail

What a jail lookup tool is for.

Many sheriffs offer an online page where you can search for a person who is being held in the county jail. These are often called an inmate search or a jail roster. If the Portage County Sheriff's pages offer one, you will find it by following the Corrections Division link or the links from the Sheriff's main page.

People use these lookups for ordinary reasons. A family member may be worried about a relative who has not called. A neighbor may want to confirm a rumor. A person may need to know who is responsible for a bail or visiting question. The tool simply reports what is publicly posted.

- 1 Go to the Sheriff's section of the county website.
- 2 Open the Corrections Division page.
- 3 Look for a link about inmate search, roster, or bookings.
- 4 Type a last name and, if asked, a first name.
- 5 Read the results slowly and compare the details.

Some counties send you to a separate vendor's website for this. Do not worry if that happens, as long as you arrived from the official county page.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you cannot find an online lookup or it does not work for you, the Corrections Division can tell you how to check by phone.

12. Understanding What a Roster Shows

Reading the results without alarm.

When a jail lookup works, it usually lists a name, perhaps a booking date, and information about why the person is being held. The exact fields depend on the system, so I will not promise any particular column.

Seeing a name here is not the same as a finding of guilt. Many people are held only briefly, while a court decides what comes next. A charge is an accusation. A court makes the decision later.

- Check that the name, age, and details match the person you mean.
- Common names can match many people, so do not jump to conclusions.
- A listed charge is not a verdict.
- Information can change quickly as cases move forward.

If you are looking for a loved one, take a breath and call the Corrections Division rather than guessing from a screen. Staff can explain visiting rules, how to leave money or messages, and what happens next, if those services are available.

Please be kind in what you do with the information. Sharing a neighbor's booking on social media can hurt people who have done nothing wrong.

WATCH OUT

Never pay a stranger who says they can get someone released faster for a fee. Ask the jail or the court directly.

13. Third-Party Vendor Sites

When the county sends you to another website.

Counties often hire outside companies to run certain online tools, such as inmate searches, sex offender maps, or payment pages. The county page I looked at linked to a separate website for its local sex offender search, for example. This is common and usually fine.

The key is how you got there. If you started at portagecounty-oh.gov and clicked a link on the Sheriff's page, you can generally trust the destination. If you found it through a search engine, an ad, or a message, you cannot be sure.

- Start at the county site and follow its link.
- Check that the page mentions Portage County.

- Never pay to look up public information.
- Do not type your Social Security number or bank details to search a roster.
- Leave the page if anything feels off.

A vendor page may look different from the county's pages, with other colors and a different layout. That alone is not a warning sign. Asking for money, passwords, or personal numbers just to search would be.

TIP

If you are unsure whether a vendor page is real, call the Sheriff's non-emergency number and ask whether the county uses that website.

14. Sheriff's Sales Explained

Court-ordered property auctions in plain words.

A sheriff's sale is an auction of property, most often a house or land, ordered by a court. It usually happens when a debt, such as a mortgage, has not been paid and a judge has ordered the property sold to satisfy it. The sheriff's office carries out the sale.

You may see a sheriff's sale for a few reasons. You might be a neighbor curious about a house on your street. You might be a buyer looking for property. You might be a homeowner worried about your own situation. In every case the same rule applies: understand what you are looking at before you act.

- The sale is ordered by a court, not chosen by the sheriff.
- The Sheriff's Office runs the process.
- Notices and lists are public.
- Sales can be postponed or canceled before they happen.

The Sheriff's section of the county website has a page called Sheriff's Sales. That is the place to start.

WATCH OUT

Buying at a sheriff's sale is a serious legal and financial step. Talk with a lawyer or other trusted advisor before you bid on anything.

15. Finding the Sheriff's Sales List

Where the notices are posted.

The county's Sheriff page includes a link titled Sheriff's Sales. The county has also posted lists as documents, which you open and read on screen like a printed sheet. A list may appear as a PDF, which is just a picture of a page you can read, zoom, and print.

- 1 Go to portagecounty-oh.gov and open the Sheriff section.
- 2 Choose the Sheriff's Sales link from the page list.
- 3 Look for the latest list or notice, matching the dates shown.
- 4 Click it to open the document.
- 5 Zoom in until the print is easy to read.

Lists generally name the property address, the case, and the date of the sale. I cannot tell you exactly what each list will include, because formats differ and change. Read the column headings first.

If the page seems out of date or you cannot find what you need, call the Sheriff's Office. They can tell you where the latest information is.

Take your time with the first list you open. Look at the date at the top, then the headings, then the rows. Reading in that order keeps you from getting lost in the small print.

TIP

Print the list and use a highlighter to mark the address you care about. Paper is easier on the eyes than scrolling a long file.

16. Reading a Sheriff's Sale Notice

Take it one line at a time.

A sale notice can look like legal writing, and it is. It is written for lawyers and courts first, and for neighbors second. You do not need to understand every word. Look for the handful of pieces that matter.

- The property address or legal description.
- The case information tied to a court.
- The date, time, and place of the sale.
- Who is selling and who the parties are.
- Any terms or instructions that are listed.

If the notice says the sale is scheduled, that does not mean it will happen. Sales can be delayed or removed if the debt is resolved, if the homeowner reaches an agreement, or if

the court changes course.

If the property is yours, or a relative's, please do not panic and do not ignore it. Help exists, and it starts with talking to someone, such as the court, a lawyer, or the lender.

Keep notes beside you as you read. Writing down the date and the address in your own handwriting helps you remember the key facts when you make a phone call.

GOOD TO KNOW

Legal aid organizations, housing counselors, and your own attorney can explain options for a homeowner facing a sale. The Sheriff's staff can answer procedure questions but cannot give legal advice.

17. Cautions About Sale Offers

Scammers love foreclosure news.

Where there is a property in trouble, there are people hoping to profit from the fear.

Foreclosure and sheriff's sale notices are public, so scammers read them and then contact homeowners directly.

Be especially careful with anyone who contacts you out of the blue and says they can stop a sale, save a home, or get you a special deal on a sale property, if you only pay them first.

- Never pay an upfront fee to someone who promises to stop a sale.
- Never sign over your deed to a stranger.
- Never wire money or buy gift cards.
- Be wary of pressure to decide today.
- Check any offer with a lawyer or housing counselor first.

The Sheriff's Office and the court will not call to demand payment in gift cards, and they will not threaten you by phone to buy a property. Real sales happen through the process described on the official pages.

It is perfectly polite to say no, hang up, and check with someone you trust. A real helper will not mind waiting while you do.

WATCH OUT

Anyone who tells you to keep a deal secret from your family is not helping you. Tell someone you trust before you sign or pay anything.

18. The Records Division

The office that keeps reports and files.

Every sheriff's office keeps records, such as incident reports and other paperwork. The Portage County Sheriff has a Records Division, and its page is one of the links on the Sheriff's menu. It also has its own phone line, listed on the county page.

You might contact Records to ask for a copy of a report that involves you, to ask how to request public records, or to learn what is available online and what must be requested another way.

- 1 Open the Records Division page on the Sheriff's section.
- 2 Read the instructions for requesting a record.
- 3 Gather the details you know: names, date, and place.
- 4 Call the Records line or send the email listed on the page.
- 5 Write down who you spoke with and when.

Staff may ask for identifying details so they can find the right file. That is not suspicious. It simply helps them find the right one.

Records staff handle many requests, so a little patience helps. If you are told that something is not available, ask what the next step would be and who can help.

TIP

Be polite and specific. A clear request with a date and a location is much easier for staff to fill than a vague one.

19. Making a Public Records Request

Asking by email, step by step.

The county page lists an email address for public records requests, and it appears on the Sheriff's contact information. You can send a request in writing, which gives you a record of what you asked.

Writing a good request is not difficult. Say who you are, exactly what you want, and how you would like to receive it. Keep it short and polite.

- 1 Open your email and start a new message to the address listed on the county's Sheriff page.
- 2 Write a clear subject, such as Public Records Request.
- 3 Describe the record: the type, the date, the place, and the names involved.

- 4 Say how you prefer to receive it, by email or by mail.
- 5 Include your name and phone number, then send.
- 6 Keep a copy of what you sent.

Expect staff to reply when they can. Some requests need to be reviewed before records are released, and some details may be removed.

WATCH OUT

Copy the email address from the official county page, not from a message someone sent you. Never put a Social Security number or bank details in a records request.

20. Crash and Incident Reports

Getting a copy of a report.

After a car crash or an incident, you may need a copy of the report for insurance or your own records. Reports taken by the Sheriff's Office are handled through its Records Division. The county page is the place to learn how copies are obtained.

Other agencies keep their own reports. If a city police department or the State Highway Patrol handled your crash, the report is with them instead. Check the paperwork you were given at the scene, which usually names the agency.

- Look at the card or slip you received to see which agency responded.
- Have the date, location, and names of those involved.
- Ask whether the report is ready yet; reports take time to finish.
- Ask what form of copy you can receive.
- Ask whether a fee applies, and what it is, before you agree.

Your insurance company can often tell you what it needs and sometimes helps get the report.

If the report involves another driver, you may be able to share the report number with your insurance agent, who can often explain what happens next.

GOOD TO KNOW

A report may not be available the same day. Calling the Records line to ask when to check back is perfectly reasonable.

21. Concealed Carry Licensing Basics

Information, not legal advice.

The Sheriff's Office handles concealed handgun licensing, and the county site has a C.C.W. Licensing page and a page about gun carry law. Whether you ever apply or not, it is helpful to know where the information is.

I am not a lawyer, and I will not tell you what the law requires. Laws on this subject can change, so use the official pages and the office's staff for the details. What I can tell you is how to find them.

- 1 Open the Sheriff section of the county website.
- 2 Choose C.C.W. Licensing from the page list.
- 3 Read the instructions slowly, including anything about what to bring.
- 4 Check whether an appointment is needed.
- 5 Call the CCW line if anything is unclear.

The CCW and fingerprinting line is listed on the county page. It has its own phone number, separate from the main number, and its own hours.

Take your time with the process. Nobody is grading you, and the staff would rather answer a question at the start than fix a mistake later.

TIP

Print the page and underline the items you need to bring. Showing up with the right paperwork makes the visit quick.

22. Appointments and Visits

Getting the timing right.

Some Sheriff's services work by walk-in, and others work by appointment. The county's pages are where to confirm which applies. I will not promise a rule that might have changed.

When in doubt, call the number on the page for the service you want. Ask three simple questions: Do I need an appointment? What should I bring? How long does it usually take?

- Confirm hours for that specific service.
- Ask about parking and where to enter the Justice Center.
- Bring photo identification.
- Bring any forms you have already filled out.

- Allow extra time in case of a line.

The CCW and fingerprinting window listed its own weekday hours, which were different from the administrative offices, so do not assume that one set of hours covers everything.

If walking is hard for you, ask whether someone can help at the entrance. People at the counter are used to such questions. It also helps to arrive a little early. Finding the entrance and parking without rushing keeps you calm, and calm people make fewer paperwork mistakes.

GOOD TO KNOW

Holiday closures and special events can change the schedule. A quick call the day before is the best insurance against a wasted trip.

23. Fingerprinting Services

A page of its own.

The county's Sheriff section includes a Fingerprinting Services page. People get fingerprinted for many ordinary reasons, such as certain jobs, volunteer roles, or paperwork that asks for a background check.

The details of who needs it and what forms to bring depend on why you are being fingerprinted. The requesting employer or agency usually tells you. The Sheriff's page and the CCW and fingerprinting phone line explain how the office handles it.

- 1 Ask the employer or agency exactly what they need.
- 2 Open the Fingerprinting Services page on the Sheriff section.
- 3 Read what to bring and whether an appointment is needed.
- 4 Call the listed number with questions.
- 5 Go during the posted hours with identification.

If any fee applies, the page or the staff will tell you what it is. I do not quote prices, because they can change; ask before you go.

Ask in advance how long it takes and how you receive any results. Knowing the plan ahead of time makes the visit far less stressful.

TIP

Keep any form the agency gave you in a folder with your ID so it does not get lost between the kitchen counter and the car.

24. The Ohio Sex Offender Registry

The statewide search is run by the Attorney General.

Ohio keeps a statewide sex offender registry, and the Ohio Attorney General's office runs the official online search. County sheriffs supply the information. That makes the Attorney General's website the official source for the statewide search, and it is the one I want you to use first.

The Attorney General's website is ohioattorneygeneral.gov, a dot gov address. As far as I could confirm, the search lets you look by name or by location, and it can show a map of registered offenders near an address. Features can change, so read what the page offers when you arrive.

- 1 Type ohioattorneygeneral.gov into your browser yourself.
- 2 Use the site's search box and type sex offender registry.
- 3 Choose the result that names the official registry search.
- 4 Read the instructions on the first screen.
- 5 Search by name or by address, as the page allows.

The Attorney General's office has said that registered juvenile offenders are not included in the online database, so a missing name is not always proof of anything.

WATCH OUT

Many commercial websites copy registry data and charge for it. The official search from the Attorney General is free to use. Do not pay anyone to search it.

25. The Local Portage County Search

The Sheriff's own page for registrants.

The Portage County Sheriff's website has a page titled Sex Offender, Violent Offenders, and Arson Offenders. It describes the local S.O.R.N. division, which stands for sex offender registration and notification. The page names an officer who handles it and lists a phone number and an email for tips.

It also offers two links: one to search the local registry, and one to receive email alerts. When I checked, those links went to a separate website run for the Sheriff, which is common. I reached it by starting at the county page, which is the safe way.

- 1 Go to portagecounty-oh.gov and open the Sheriff section.
- 2 Choose the Sex Offender page from the list.

- 3 Read the page, including the contact information.
- 4 Click the link to search the local registry.
- 5 Enter a name or address as the search asks.

Because two different searches exist, the local one and the statewide one, you may see the same person in both. That is normal.

WATCH OUT

If a name does not appear in one search, try the other. Do not assume the first search is the whole picture.

26. Email Alerts for Your Neighborhood

Let the information come to you.

The Sheriff's registry page offers a way to sign up for email alerts. Alerts can tell you when registry information changes in an area you choose. Some neighbors find this reassuring, because it replaces checking again and again. Signing up usually means giving an email address and an address or area to watch. Read what the form asks before you type. A trustworthy sign-up asks for an email and a location, not your Social Security number or any banking information.

- 1 Start at the Sheriff's Sex Offender page on the county website.
- 2 Choose the link to receive email alerts.
- 3 Read the screen and the privacy wording.
- 4 Enter your email and the area you want to watch.
- 5 Check your inbox for a confirmation and follow it.

You can stop the alerts later. Look for an unsubscribe link at the bottom of any alert message.

- Use an email address you actually check.
- Look for the confirmation message in spam, too.
- Keep the first message so you know how to unsubscribe.

If you ever stop wanting alerts, there is no harm in unsubscribing. You can also sign up again later, because nothing about it is permanent.

GOOD TO KNOW

An alert is information, not an emergency notice. For danger, call 911.

27. Using Registry Information Responsibly

Safety without taking matters into your own hands.

The registry exists so that communities have information. It does not exist to encourage anyone to harass or threaten another person. Using it wisely protects both your family and you.

If you search and find that someone lives nearby, what should you do? Mostly, stay calm and stay practical. Talk with children and grandchildren about general safety rules that apply to everyone, such as never going off with a stranger and always telling a trusted adult about anything that bothers them.

- Use the information to talk about safety with your family.
- Do not confront or threaten anyone. That can put you in legal trouble.
- Report real concerns, such as a registrant who seems to be breaking the rules, to the Sheriff using the contact on the page.
- Remember that a name match is not always the same person.
- Call 911 if anyone is in danger.

Details on the registry can be out of date or incomplete. If you think something is wrong, the Sheriff's S.O.R.N. contact is the right person to ask.

WATCH OUT

A name or photo that looks similar is not proof. Never post accusations online based on a quick search.

28. The Sheriff's Beware of Scams Page

The office warns about fraud itself.

The Sheriff's section includes a page called Beware of Scams. It is worth a few quiet minutes of your time. The page is the office's own guidance, written for the people of Portage County.

I cannot promise what it will say when you visit, but the topics on pages like this tend to be familiar: phone calls from people claiming to be officials, requests for odd forms of payment, and pressure to act quickly. You will learn the shape of the tricks so they feel less scary.

- 1 Open the Sheriff section of the county website.
- 2 Choose Beware of Scams from the list.

- 3 Read it slowly, one section at a time.
- 4 Print it or save the page for later.
- 5 Share it with a friend or relative.

Talking about scams openly is one of the best defenses. People who have heard the story are far less likely to be fooled by it.

If you have already given money or information to a caller, do not be embarrassed. Calling quickly is the best thing you can do, and the Sheriff's non-emergency line is a fine place to start.

TIP

Keep the printed page by the phone. When a strange call arrives, you can check it against the page while the caller waits, or better, just hang up.

29. Fake Deputy and Warrant Calls

The call that threatens arrest.

One of the most common scams across the country is a call from someone claiming to be a deputy, a court officer, or a government employee. The caller says you missed jury duty, owe a fine, or have a warrant, and that you must pay immediately to avoid arrest.

This is a scam. It is meant to frighten you into acting before you think. Real law enforcement does not demand payment by phone in gift cards, prepaid cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency, and does not ask for your password or a one-time code.

- Hang up. You are allowed to hang up on anyone.
- Do not call back a number the caller gave you.
- Look up the real number on the county's official page and call that instead.
- Never read a code you received by text to a caller.
- Tell a family member what happened.

Callers can make a call appear to come from a real office. The number on your screen proves nothing.

WATCH OUT

The real Sheriff's Office will never ask for gift cards or ask you for a password or one-time code by phone. If you already paid, call your bank right away and then the Sheriff's non-emergency line.

30. Civil Division and Warrants

Court papers and what they mean.

The Sheriff's section has a page titled Civil Division and Warrants. The civil side of a sheriff's office usually handles delivering certain court papers and carrying out some court orders. This is separate from the patrol and detective work you see in the news.

If you receive papers delivered by a deputy, do not ignore them. They may be a summons or notice that has a deadline. Read them right away, and if you do not understand them, talk to a lawyer, a legal aid office, or the court that issued them.

- Read every page of anything you are handed.
- Note any dates or deadlines in big writing.
- Call the court named on the papers if you have questions.
- Ask a lawyer or legal aid group for help if needed.
- Keep the papers in a safe folder.

The Sheriff's staff can explain how the service of papers works, but cannot give legal advice about your case.

GOOD TO KNOW

Real court papers are handed to you or left in person, and they name a court and a case. A phone call or text that only demands payment is not the same thing.

31. Towing and Impoundments

If your vehicle was towed.

The Sheriff's section includes a Towing and Impoundments page. If a vehicle you own was towed or held, that page is where to look for how to find it and what the process involves.

Finding a towed vehicle is stressful, especially when it comes after an unexpected event. Take it one step at a time. Start with the Sheriff's non-emergency line if you do not know where your vehicle went, and ask which company or lot has it.

- 1 Stay calm and write down where the vehicle was last parked.
- 2 Read the Towing and Impoundments page on the Sheriff's section.
- 3 Call the non-emergency line if you cannot tell who towed it.
- 4 Ask what papers or identification you need to bring.
- 5 Ask about fees and payment methods before you go.

Bring your driver's license, proof of ownership, and proof of insurance if you have them. A family member can often drive you to the lot.

If the vehicle belongs to a relative who cannot go, ask what permission or paperwork you would need to act for them. Policies differ, so ask before you drive over.

TIP

Ask for receipts for anything you pay, and photograph your vehicle when you pick it up so you can see its condition.

32. Unwanted Prescription Drug Drop-off

A safe way to dispose of old medicine.

The Sheriff's section lists a page about unwanted prescription drug drop-off. Old medicine in the cabinet is a real concern in many homes. It can be taken by mistake, misused, or stolen.

Throwing pills in the trash or flushing them is not always the best choice. A drop-off program gives you a safe place to bring them. The details, such as where the box is and when it is available, are on the county page, so check there or call before you go.

- Gather expired or unwanted medicine in one bag.
- Keep it away from children and pets until you go.
- Check the county page for the drop-off location and hours.
- Ask what kinds of items are accepted.
- Remove your name from bottles or cross it out if you wish.

Never leave medicine in a car overnight. Heat can damage it, and a car is easy to break into.

Staff at the drop-off are there to help, so if you feel unsure about an item, ask them. They would rather answer a question than see something thrown out unsafely.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you are not sure what to do with a certain item, such as needles or liquid medicine, call the non-emergency line and ask.

33. Crime Victim Resources

Help for people who have been hurt.

The Sheriff's section has a page titled Crime Victim Resources. If you or someone you love has been the victim of a crime, you deserve support, and you do not have to figure out the next steps alone.

If you are in danger, call 911. If the danger has passed and you are looking for information, the page can point you toward people who help victims through the process. I cannot list the services for you, because they change, so read the page itself or call the Sheriff's non-emergency line to ask.

- Ask whether a victim advocate is available to you.
- Ask how to learn about the status of a case.
- Keep copies of any paperwork and report numbers.
- Write down names and phone numbers of the people helping you.
- Lean on a trusted friend or relative.

Being a victim of fraud counts, too. Many seniors feel ashamed after a scam, and there is nothing to be ashamed of. These criminals are professionals.

TIP

Tell someone you trust the same day. Talking early often limits the damage, especially when money is involved.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

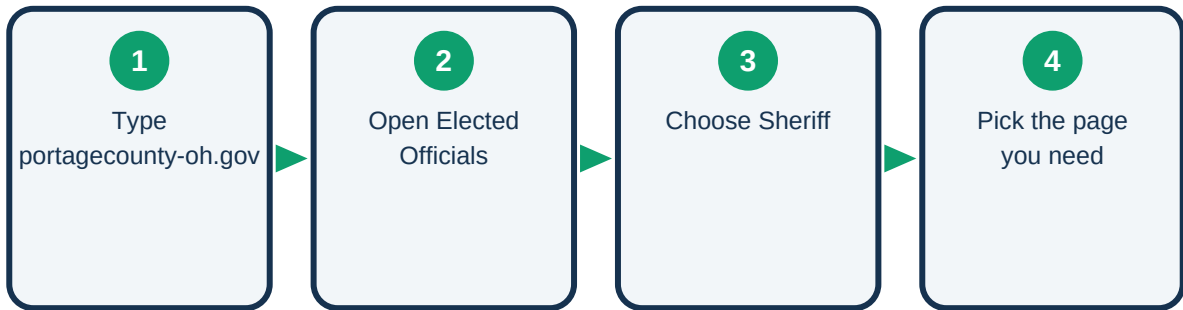
Keep this by the computer. I want to... Find the real site: type portagecounty-oh.gov yourself. Reach the Sheriff: open Elected Officials, then Sheriff. Report an emergency: call 911. Ask a non-emergency question: call (330) 296-5100, option 9. Ask for a record: call Records at (330) 297-3892 or use the email on the Sheriff page. Check the sex offender registry: use ohioattorneygeneral.gov or the link on the Sheriff's page. Find a towed vehicle: read the Towing and Impoundments page. Spot a scam: hang up on anyone demanding gift cards. Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Finding the Sheriff's Pages

Four calm steps from your keyboard.



Always start at the county's own address.

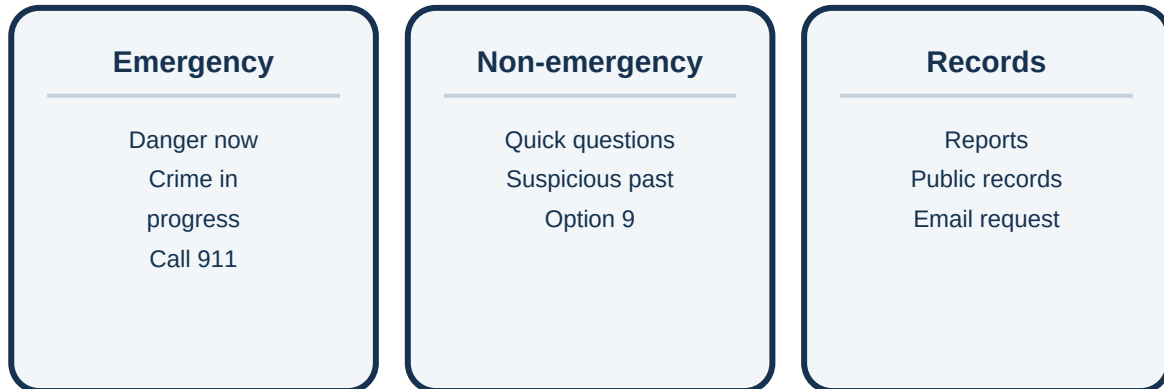
Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Who to Contact for What

Match the need to the right door.



911 is for emergencies; the website is for records.

Illustration - details vary by device, plan, and provider. Always check your own setup.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.