

# Peace officers get update on new laws

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's office and the District Attorney's office conducted its sixth bi-annual peace officers update on law enforcement on Sept. 10 and 193 officers from almost every law enforcement agency in the county attended the training.

"Every two years, the legislature makes some changes and additions to our laws. Prosecutors and police officers must keep abreast of these changes. This is one of several courses that area law enforcement officers may attend in order that they comply with licensing requirements," Fort Bend County District Attorney John Healey said.

"This year, their written materials came from the Texas District and County Attorneys Association. Their instruction was provided by experienced prosecutors from my office," Healey said.

Some of the changes in the

law which were highlighted in the day long session included the following:

An increased penalty from a class A misdemeanor to a third degree felony where a perpetrator of family violence intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly suffocates or strangles his or her victim;

An increased penalty from a third degree felony to a second degree felony where an employee of a state supported living center intentionally or knowingly causes bodily injury to a disabled individual who is in his care;

An increased penalty to a one step higher category if a forgery is committed against an elderly individual; an expansion of the circumstances where a peace officer can require that a person arrested for driving while intoxicated must submit to the taking of a blood sample, without the need

to get a search warrant.

Now, once a peace officer arrests an individual for DWI, if an accident has occurred where an individual other than the suspect has suffered bodily injury and was transported to a hospital or for medical treatment, or the person arrested was transporting a child younger than 15, or where the officer receives reliable information that the person arrested had twice previously been convicted of driving while intoxicated, the officer can transport the arrested individual to a hospital and, without the intervention of a magistrate, can have the suspect's blood drawn under reasonable medical conditions.

The training was in jeopardy due to a 75 percent increase in the numbers who had registered to attend.

On late Tuesday before Thursday's Update, final numbers were

received from all the agencies which planned to attend the training.

"Our instruction site, The Grand Hall at the Sheriff's office, holds about 125 people maximum. I called Allison Wen of Safari Texas, and within ten minutes of my call, he graciously agreed to provide the Lodge Room facility at no charge," Healey said.