



Purpose

This paper informs the Commission of imminent safety and security concerns within the Giles County Courthouse and presents a proposal to install a remote door lockdown and officer alerting system. The proposed system would address current vulnerabilities, enhance officer and staff safety, preserve the historic integrity of courthouse offices, and align with the county's core responsibility to ensure public safety.

Background / Existing Conditions

The historic Giles County Courthouse currently has no office security, as all doors are unlocked and publicly accessible during office hours. Interior doors to office spaces — including the Trustee, Clerk & Master, Circuit Court Clerk, Register of Deeds, and Judge's Office — have no electronic access control, remote lockdown capability, or integrated panic alerting.

Current gaps include:

1. **No remote lockdown capability:** In an emergency, deputies cannot secure specific offices or the entire building from a distance. Similarly, office staff have no means to remotely secure their space during a threat.
2. **Limited response coordination:** Current systems do not integrate with camera feeds or officer communications, reducing situational awareness.
3. **Panic alert absence:** Staff currently have one “panic” alarm per office; this should be enhanced to provide every workstation the means to summon deputies during threats.

These vulnerabilities exist amid rising concerns from the **Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)** to enhance courthouse security. Court proceedings are often tense, particularly in criminal, civil, and family cases, increasing the likelihood of confrontations or security events. Courthouse employees have numerous examples of volatile situations that would have benefited from an enhanced security system. Nationally and locally, courthouse security incidents are trending upward.

Proposed Solution

The proposed system provides a **performance-based remote lockdown and alerting solution** that includes:

- Fail-secure electric strikes with manual key override.



- Individual office, partial, and full-building lockdowns.
- Multi-location control for deputies, including central workstations and wall-mounted controls.
- Desk-mounted or workstation panic alarms that silently notify officers and trigger camera recording.
- Integration with existing camera, alarm, and communications infrastructure.
- Minimal physical alteration to historic doors, preserving courthouse integrity.

This system ensures deputies and staff can rapidly isolate threats, maintain situational awareness, and respond efficiently while maintaining operational continuity.

Risk Management Considerations

Some may question the need for increased security, citing cost or perceived low frequency of incidents. Risk management principles indicate otherwise:

1. **High potential impact of incidents:** Even a single violent event can result in injury, death, or legal liability.
2. **State and regulatory expectations:** AOC guidance increasingly emphasizes proactive security measures for courts.
3. **Government responsibility:** Securing public spaces and safeguarding citizens is the preeminent obligation of local government. Protecting the health and welfare of staff, judges, and visitors is non-negotiable.
4. **Operational resilience:** The system ensures staff can act safely during emergencies, avoiding uncoordinated lockdowns or delayed responses.

The consequence of inaction will leave staff, court officials, and citizens exposed to preventable risks.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Commission Law Enforcement Committee review procurement of a courthouse office remote lockdown and alerting system in accordance with the enclosed performance-based specification. Implementation will:

- Close existing security gaps
- Provide deputies and staff with modern emergency tools
- Preserve the historic character of courthouse offices
- Meet state AOC expectations and trending security standards
- Fulfill the government's primary duty to protect public health and welfare

Courthouse Office Security — 03 Dec 2025



This investment ensures the safety of courthouse personnel and the public, strengthens operational readiness, and demonstrates the county's commitment to its core public safety responsibility.

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A blue ink signature of "G. S. Stowe".

G. S. Stowe
County Executive