

Denver Sheriff's staff diversity hailed

By Lou Kilzer, Rocky Mountain News
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The Denver sheriff's department stands out in hiring women and minorities, Safety Manager Al LaCabe said Wednesday.

In contrast to the city's police and fire departments, minority sheriff's deputies actually are over-represented when compared with the city's population, according to a report LaCabe gave City Council members.

Nineteen percent of deputies are black, and nearly 28 percent are Hispanic. Denver residents are 11 percent black and 32 percent Hispanic, according to census data.

Whites make up 51 percent of the sheriff's force, although they comprise 65 percent of the city's population. (The census counts Hispanics in multiple categories, pushing the combined total for all races over 100 percent.)

In contrast, the police and fire departments are mostly white. The fire department is 6 percent black and 21 percent Hispanic. The police department is 10 percent black and 20 percent Hispanic.

Women in the safety departments do not come close to reaching levels equal to their percentage of the city's population (about 50 percent) - though, again, the sheriff's department stands out.

Females comprise 4 percent of the fire department and 11 percent of the police force. However, they make up 23 percent of the sheriff's staff.

LaCabe told council members that the city has aggressive goals to beef up minority representation among the city's safety staff.

The safety manager gave the fire department bad grades for diversity. In a presentation, LaCabe said the fire department's "African-American and female representation (is) sorely lacking."

No blacks were hired by the department between 2000 and 2005.

The department has assigned a full-time recruiter to target black job candidates. Changes in testing and the inclusion of "noncognitive tests" to measure judgment are being designed.

LaCabe said the judgment tests will not replace traditional math and reading tests.