



June 02, 2024

Off-Duty Status

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Reference Number: CTAS-1232

There is no statute or rule of law in this state that places a mandatory duty upon police officers to keep the peace when "off duty." "To the contrary, when officers are 'off duty,' our statutes generally treat the officer as an ordinary private citizen and not as an agent or employee of the municipal police department under a general duty to keep the peace." *White v. Revco Discount Drug Centers, Inc.*, 33 S.W.3d 713, 720-721 (Tenn. 2000). "Of course, to say that officers do not continuously function in an official capacity is not to say that off-duty officers are prevented from assuming a duty to remedy a breach of the peace, or that officers are incapable of being summoned to official duty by the municipality. Nevertheless, it is clear that officers are not under a general duty to enforce the law while 'off duty,' and a blanket rule declaring that police officers are under a never-ending duty to keep the peace is contrary to existing Tennessee law." *Id.* at 721.

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