Anyone entering the Perkins County courtroom will be ushered through a new metal detector that has the same high sensitivity as those used in airports

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

Tightened security at the Perkins County Courthouse is keeping up with the nationwide trend of protecting citizens.

In use outside the courtroom on the third floor is a moveable metal detector to screen everyone who enters county court or district court.

The metal detector ordered from a law enforcement equipment provider out of Kansas is set at the same sensitivity level as those used at Denver International Airport.

The detector was installed the end of May and has been used during times court was in session during the month of June.

Perkins County Sheriff Jim Brueggeman began the process of acquiring the detector two years ago in talking to county commissioners about the need for beefed up security in the courtroom.

Sheriff Brueggeman feels a sense of relief knowing the system is now in place.

“It will bring a new level of security to the courtroom—for the safety of the judge, the prosecutors and the people,” he said.

Although the courthouse already has surveillance cameras monitoring the perimeter, along with the inside and outside of the offices, which also have panic buttons in place, the escalating courtroom use deems it necessary to safeguard all those who enter.

Brueggeman said it’s important to check the general public, especially those coming to court in support of a defendant.

“We don’t want prisoners who have already been put through security to get any contraband,” he said.

A noise alert sounds on the airport-grade metal detector and lights are activated along its perimeter if a metal object is detected. Brueggeman said it has been activitated several times since its installation and he or a deputy monitoring the system has asked people to completely empty their pockets or take off a belt.

“It’s very sensitive—that’s what it’s for,” said Brueggeman. He said the unit can be set in various modes of sensitivity and can recognize certain objects such as keys or other metal objects that aren’t dangerous.

The detector has the ability to perform a 3-D screening.

If the alert sounds, law enforcement can use a hand wand to target a specific area of the body.