



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on February 10, 2010

Police Stories: A Non-“Emergency,” Helping a Hungry Family

Police Chief Paula May of King, North Carolina, has been taking a lot of heat this week as a result of a “state of emergency” declared by town officials Sunday. The police enforced a ban on alcohol sales and the bearing of firearms in the wake of a snowstorm over the past weekend.

The Winston-Salem NBC-TV affiliate’s [website](#) logged more than 600 comments about the declared “state of emergency,” many ridiculing the idea of a state of emergency as an excuse to limit freedoms, with posts like this typifying the sentiment:



This has to be the most ridiculous event of the century!!!! This is the ultimate denial of liberties for the most asinine reason...bad weather!!!

But May pled innocent to the charge circulated over the Internet that she had brought martial law to the little hamlet of 7,000, stating in a [television interview](#): “The state of emergency for King was declared by members of the City Council after Stokes County authorities [declared a state of emergency].” May claimed that “By law, [statute 14-288.7](#) automatically went into effect. And that law which goes into effect when there’s a state of emergency prohibits the transportation, purchase, sale, and possession of firearms other than on one’s own premises.”

A “state of emergency” is [defined in North Carolina law](#) as:

The condition that exists whenever, during times of public crisis, disaster, rioting, catastrophe, or similar public emergency, public safety authorities are unable to maintain public order or afford adequate protection for lives or property, or whenever the occurrence of any such condition is imminent.

The law goes on to [cite](#) the “protection of the public health and safety in times of riot or other grave civil disturbance or emergency.”

But this wasn’t a “grave civil disturbance” or “emergency,” as many have pointed out. It was a snowstorm ... in the middle of winter, no less. The declaration of “emergency” could easily have gone unenforced.

This excessive use of police power (brought on primarily by elected officials) can be contrasted with the discretion and humanity observed by Bozeman Police Officer Marek Ziegler, who caught a man stealing school supplies from a local grocery store two weeks ago and arrested him, cited him for the theft, and then released him. Ziegler also asked the man why he had been stealing, and the man responded that he resorted to stealing because he didn’t believe he would be able to provide food for his family.

Bozeman Daily Chronicle reporter Amanda Ricker [described](#) what happened next:

Ziegler already had the man’s address, but asked for the man’s phone number. “I told him, ‘Give



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me 15 minutes,' and I went and got him some food." Ziegler ran to Wal-Mart, picked up a few frozen pizzas and delivered them to the man's house.... And then Ziegler kept the story to himself.

"Obviously, as a police officer, I have a job to do, but we're still human, too," Ziegler [told](#) the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* after Ricker had researched the story using fragments from the police log available to reporters. "It's just what we do to take care of each other."



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