



Staff Report

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TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Kristin Retherford, Interim City Manager
FROM: Trevor Womack, Chief of Police

SUBJECT:

Salem Police Department - Service Level and Program Updates

Ward(s): All Wards
Councilor(s): All Councilors
Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods
Result Area(s): Safe Community

SUMMARY:

The Salem Police Department is adjusting its response to certain lower-level calls for service categories; a newly formed task force maximizes limited resources to address violent crime through federal level partnerships; community traffic safety and trust-building is the focus of a new department program.

ISSUE:

Informational update concerning patrol in-person response adjustments, a federal violent crimes task force partnership, and a new approach to improving traffic safety

RECOMMENDATION:

Information Only

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

Adjustments to Calls for Service Response

The Salem Police Department will no longer respond in person to certain calls for service regarding noise from barking dogs and loud or amplified sound; delayed crash reports; and civil disputes. Additionally, officers will no longer be dispatched to complaints of encampments on public property.

Safe Streets Task Force

The Safe Streets Task Force is a newly established partnership with the US Attorney General's Office, District of Oregon (AUSAO) and federal law enforcement partners to focus on violent crimes in our community. The task force connects through the Salem Police Criminal Investigations Section's Strategic Investigations Unit, currently a team of five detectives who handle significant investigations into major narcotics trafficking and violent crime, such as shootings, homicides, and illegal firearm manufacturing and trafficking.

Oregon Car Care Program

The program works to improve traffic safety and avoid issuance of citations by helping drivers correct minor equipment violations with a discount auto repair voucher provided by the Oregon Association Chiefs Of Police. These infractions include equipment that by law is required to function properly on a vehicle, such as lighting, rearview mirrors, windshield wipers, and fenders or mudguards. The vouchers are redeemable at various stores in the area. The program is set to begin in the coming weeks.

BACKGROUND:

Adjustments to Calls for Service Response

As identified in a recent [independent assessment](#) [<https://saalemcityofor.prod.govaccess.org/home/showpublisheddocument/14398/637877092540200000>](https://saalemcityofor.prod.govaccess.org/home/showpublisheddocument/14398/637877092540200000) and internal evaluation, staffing shortages require the department to make difficult decisions concerning how to best deploy its limited resources. Calls for various types of service were reviewed for possible response level adjustments and prioritization. Several needed adjustments to in-person call response were identified involving lower-level, non-emergency calls, including calls involving noise from barking dogs and loud or amplified sound; delayed crash reports; and civil disputes. Alternatives to in-person police response may include online reporting and referral to mediation services. Data will still be collected, allowing the department to identify any locations with multiple complaints or ongoing concerns and seek solutions.

Although patrol officers will not be dispatched to unmanaged encampments on public property, the public will be directed to use the City of Salem's online [Homeless Camping Complaint Form](#) [<https://form.cityofsalem.net/s3/Homeless-Camping-Complaint>](https://form.cityofsalem.net/s3/Homeless-Camping-Complaint). The department's newly formed Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST), comprising two officers, will provide appropriate follow-up as coordinated through the City of Salem's multi-department response team. Additionally, the HOST officers collaborate with local social service providers to connect individuals in need with appropriate services and resources. This directly supports the collaborative approach outlined in the [Salem Police Department 2022-2024 Strategic Plan](#) [<https://www.cityofsalem.net/home/showpublisheddocument/15716>](https://www.cityofsalem.net/home/showpublisheddocument/15716) which reads, "Support collaborative efforts to prevent or otherwise make homelessness a rare, brief, and nonrecurring experience, while ensuring the safety of all involved."

The safety of our community is paramount, and officers will continue to respond to any call type if other criminal activity is involved or there is an immediate danger or threat to the public.

Safe Streets Task Force

Salem Police recently formalized and enhanced our relationships with federal law enforcement partners through the formation of the Safe Streets task Force. The partnership provides increased focus and resources on stopping and investigating major narcotics trafficking and violent crime. Partners include the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, and the U.S. Marshals Service. Since the recent formalization of the partnership, the task force successfully handled a major gun-trafficking case, investigated several polydrug overdose deaths, seized thousands of fentanyl pills and more than 100 firearms. Moreover, these major investigations are elevated to the AUSAO for federal prosecution to bring accountability to violent offenders committing high-level crimes in our community.

The work of the task force clearly aligns with the [strategic plan's <https://www.cityofsaalem.net/home/showpublisheddocument/15716>](https://www.cityofsaalem.net/home/showpublisheddocument/15716) priority to improve upon our community's safety through formalized partnerships which help us identify and focus efforts where most needed, while maximizing limited resources.

Oregon Car Care Program

The department's [strategic plan <https://www.cityofsaalem.net/home/showpublisheddocument/15716>](https://www.cityofsaalem.net/home/showpublisheddocument/15716) includes an emphasis on traffic safety through a data-driven, comprehensive approach. One related objective reads, "Identify and strive to address any disparate outcomes. Leverage Statistical Transparency of Policing (STOP) data analysis to adjust policy and practice where needed and appropriate in pursuit of equity. Direct any needed enforcement efforts toward the serious moving violations which cause collisions and away from mere equipment violations. Create partnership-based programming which addresses equipment violations through education and cooperation."

The Oregon Car Care Program presents an opportunity to improve traffic safety by helping drivers address equipment violations through education and cooperation instead of a citation, improving community safety while building relationships and enhancing trust. By expanding the approach to interactions with the public, officers have a chance to offer some understanding and support to drivers who find themselves having to put off car upkeep, while also reminding drivers about the importance of traffic safety. Efforts to tailor our departmental training, policy, and practice in ways that improve relationships are also weaved into our strategic priorities.

Trevor Womack
Chief of Police

Attachments:
None