



Staff Report

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TO: Mayor and City Council
THROUGH: Keith Stahley, City Manager
FROM: Trevor Womack, Chief of Police

SUBJECT:

A Salem Police Department mid-year update regarding several key department programs and reports: Body-worn Camera Program, Community Violence Reduction Initiative, Policy and Procedure Manual Update, and the 2023 Use of Force and Vehicular Pursuits Annual Reports.

Ward(s): All Wards
Councilor(s): All Councilors
Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods
Result Area(s): Safe and Healthy Community; Welcoming and Livable Community

SUMMARY:

The report outlines the Salem Police Department programs and initiatives which correspond with several department strategic plan objectives to increase community safety, livability, and transparency and key Council strategic priorities, such as creating community resilience and building great neighborhoods.

ISSUE:

Informational report only.

RECOMMENDATION:

Informational report only.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

Body-worn Camera Program

The department completed the implementation of its first body-worn camera system in early 2023. This update provides information on the value and effectiveness of the system after one full year of use. The program includes a body-worn camera (BWC) device worn by all Salem Police officers and an in-car video (ICV) system installed in vehicles deployed for field operations. The key benefits of the program include:

Incident Documentation Throughout 2023, the Salem Police Department utilized BWCs and ICV systems to document a total of 84,835 events, categorizing them into felonies, misdemeanors, violations, and non-criminal incidents. The detailed documentation provides critical and reliable evidence for investigations.

Complaint Resolution BWCs played a pivotal role in resolving 42% of the 122 community complaints received in 2023, including complaints of theft, sexual harassment, improper investigations, missing property, unethical behavior, rudeness, and use of force. These resolutions highlight the system's impact in addressing community concerns and maintaining accountability. In 2022, the department investigated 16 formal complaints. Of those complaints, 11 were internally generated from officers or staff within the department and five were externally generated from community members. With the use of BWC and ICV technology, in 2023 the department investigated only six formal complaints, all of which were internally generated.

Operational Efficiency Categorization of incidents facilitated effective resource allocation and prioritization of responses, thereby enhancing overall operational efficiency across different law enforcement activities. Officers are now able to confirm their video footage captured the entirety of an incident, and then write summary reports instead of an exhaustive written narrative. The technology gives the officer more time to dedicate to other investigative activities.

Community Engagement and Transparency BWCs have significantly enhanced transparency by documenting interactions between officers and the public, leading to improved communication and effective resolution of community complaints. This level of transparency fosters trust and accountability within the community.

Community Violence Reduction Initiative (CVRI)

The initiative encompasses two concurrent efforts: community engagement to develop a community-based prevention and intervention strategy; and the immediate steps criminal justice partners are taking to curb violence.

Community Engagement Efforts to engage the community have taken place through a series of community meetings. Consultant Ben McBride of Empower Initiative is helping to facilitate this process. These gatherings increase awareness, identify community stakeholders and resources, and solicit feedback from residents through breakout group discussions and input cards. Five meetings are scheduled and three have taken place to date:

- Kick-off Meeting - Wed., March 6, Northeast Salem Community Center
- Meeting 2 - Fri., April 19, Chemeketa Community College, Student Center
- Meeting 3 - Fri., July 19, Catholic Community Services
- Meeting 4 - Wed., July 31, Chemeketa Community College, Building 8, Room 201
- Meeting 5 - Thu., August 22, Salem Alliance Church, Cedar Hall

All meetings provide language translation with English as the primary language. However, the second meeting was presented entirely in Spanish at the request of Spanish-speaking residents living in areas most affected by the ongoing shooting violence.

Communication Residents are informed about the initiative through a bilingual webpage that posts CVRI info and reports, including future meeting dates. Community members also interested in keeping abreast of CVRI activities can subscribe to receive email updates. Approximately 175 people receive the e-announcements. Subscribers include those who have attended past meetings or have enrolled through the CVRI webpage.

Developing a Strategy for Salem Empower Initiative (EI) has also held one-on-one meetings with Salem residents, leaders, and community and faith-based organizations, resulting in the formation of a community working group to help guide the collaborative endeavors. The group comprises neighborhood leaders and representatives of the Boys & Girls Club of Marion and Polk Counties, Catholic Community Services, Church at the Park, ENLACE Cross-Cultural Development Project, Luz del Valle Church, Salem Keizer Public Schools, Salem Leadership Foundation, and the Salem Police Department.

A report from EI concerning the engagement efforts and development of a community-centric intervention strategy will be presented to the city council and county commissioners in a second combined work session, tentatively planned for November. The meeting is also an opportunity to review additional related crime data currently being compiled by the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

Summer Violence Prevention Mission Criminal justice system partners at the local, regional, and federal levels (Keizer Police, Marion County Sheriff and District Attorney's Offices and Juvenile Department, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation) are prioritizing violent crime reduction.

The efforts launched the first week of June focus on the combined law enforcement resources to prevent, intervene, and solve violent crime in the region. The cooperative campaign centers on reducing the risk of violence in northeast Salem during the summer months, specifically emphasizing youth safety during the summer break from school.

Policy and Procedure Manual Update

Over the past 18 months, the department has been conducting an extensive review of its policies and procedures with the company Lexipol to ensure they meet legal and accreditation standards, incorporate recognized best practices, and reflect the tenets of procedural justice. The review process involves the integration of industry standards for operations and nationwide policy language into our department's current policies. The project has been conducted in cooperation with the Salem Police Employees Union, command staff members, and subject matter experts within the department. Several policies have also been reviewed and discussed with community members through the Advisory Council to the Chief and Community Police Review Board. Going forward, soliciting community input for new or revised policies that impact police-community trust will be a standard part of the process.

Completion of the project is expected by the end of 2024 at which time more than 200 policies will have been comprehensively reviewed, updated, and logically reorganized.

The complete manual will be published online for the first time as part of the Salem Police Department Transparency Portal.

Use of Force Annual Report

The Salem Police Department's 2023 Use of Force Report highlights efforts in transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in policing practices. The data-driven approach helps in identifying trends, refining training protocols, and ensuring community trust through rigorous review processes and adherence to standards. The department's commitment to procedural justice and de-escalation techniques underscores its approach to minimizing use of force incidents while maintaining public safety.

The key areas of the report are:

Statistics and Analysis Overall use of force is rare and trending downward. There were 666 documented use of force incidents in 2023, a decrease of 9.1% from the three-year average. Force

incidents occurred in only about 0.6% of all police calls for service and during just 10.2% of all arrests.

Demographics Tracking force incidents by various identity groups allows the department to identify, understand, and address potential disparities. The report breaks down incidents by race, ethnicity, gender, and age to identify patterns in force application. White individuals had the highest number of incidents, followed by Hispanics and Black/African Americans. Males were involved at a much higher rate than females, and the most prevalent age group was 25-44.

Complaints and Reviews No formal use of force complaints were received in 2023. All use of force is proactively reviewed internally, with more detailed reviews required for specific circumstances like multiple Taser cycles or police canine bites.

Behavioral and Situational Analysis The department tracks behaviors and circumstances that led up to each use of force incident. Agitated behavior was most common, followed by resisting arrest. Most incidents involved subjects refusing to follow orders. Hands or fists were the most common weapons used by subjects against officers.

Vehicular Pursuits Annual Report

The Salem Police Department's 2023 Vehicular Pursuit Report highlights a deliberate approach to managing and lowering the risk associated with pursuits while balancing public safety and law enforcement interests.

The key areas of the report are:

A Decrease in the Number of Pursuits Vehicular pursuits dropped significantly in 2023, marking the lowest count in the last decade. This is attributable to recent policy changes intended to minimize risk while still maintaining public safety.

Timing and Location Patterns Pursuits predominantly occurred during late evening and overnight hours, between 10 p.m. and 3 a.m., with business districts being the most common location.

Short Duration and Limited Distance Most pursuits were short in duration and distance, lasting less than five minutes and traveling one mile or less. This indicates effective policy, training, and oversight mechanisms exist.

Driver Characteristics and Status Male drivers aged 22-30 were most frequently involved in pursuits, often having a suspended driver's license.

Initiating Events and Pursuit Speeds The most common initiating event was a personal felony

(violent crime), and pursuit speeds typically ranged between 31-70 miles per hour. These findings highlight the serious nature of the incidents prompting pursuits.

BACKGROUND:

Body-worn Camera Program

The adoption of the BWC and ICV program in February 2023 reflects a proactive approach to modernizing law enforcement practices, enhancing public safety, and fostering positive community relations through transparency and accountability.

Community Violence Reduction Initiative

The City of Salem launched the CVRI in the fall of 2023, subsequent to a gun violence problem analysis indicating a doubling of fatal and non-fatal injury shootings and long-term data showing a 40% increase in all violent crime.

Engaging the Community Improved community safety requires a whole-of-community approach. To date, the community conversations have been held in the areas of the city most affected by gun violence, primarily in northeast Salem. Meetings in other areas of the city are being considered given the shooting incidents have also occurred downtown and in southeast and west Salem.

Curbing the Violence Proactively The community is seeing increased law enforcement presence in areas at high risk for violence, police engagement at community events in the most affected neighborhoods, and collaboration with public safety partners on focused deterrence.

Purposeful examples thus far include proactive patrols by Salem Police Community Action Unit officers and Marion County Juvenile Parole & Probation staff who are working together to stay in contact with at-risk youth and young adults known to the criminal justice system; participation in existing community activities at northeast Salem parks; and in-person opportunities for concerned residents to speak with officers through bilingual Coffee with a Cop events.

Fueled by community engagement and a strong law enforcement partnership approach, the initiative is advancing our efforts to deter violence and increase safety and accountability.

Policy and Procedure Manual Update

The project to assess department policies and procedures began in 2022. By using Lexipol to assist with the police review and update, the department examined changes in laws, best practices, and emerging risks, allowing the police department to stay compliant and reduce physical, financial, and other risks to officers and other staff.

Keeping police policies up to date also contributes to maintaining the agency's professional accreditation standards which also demand evidence-based operational procedures and training recommendations consistent with state standards.

Moreover, revamping and making the policies and procedures manual publicly available further

advances the Salem Police Department's efforts to increase the level of community trust and convey transparency. By openly sharing data, policies, reports, and other information that directly impacts the public, we strive to engage residents in knowledge-sharing, while demonstrating openness and accountability.

Use of Force Annual Report

There was an overall decrease in force incidents when compared to previous years. There will be continued emphasis on de-escalation tactics and procedural justice training. The report encapsulates the main points and findings from the 2023 Use of Force Report by the Salem Police Department, highlighting key statistics, demographics, behaviors, actions, and policy implications.

Vehicular Pursuits Annual Report

The 2023 Salem Police Department Vehicular Pursuit Report underscores the department's commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in pursuit practices, aiming to balance public safety with effective law enforcement strategies.

Trevor Womack
Chief of Police

Attachments:

1. 2023 Salem Police Use of Force Report
2. 2023 Salem Police Vehicular Pursuits Report
3. Salem Police Community Violence Reduction Initiative Webpage