

## West Palm Beach (FL) Police Department Comprehensive Officer Safety

**This entire document represents a summary of West Palm Beach, Florida Police Department's submission for Comprehensive Officer Safety. Though the agency has submitted individually for consideration in the categories of Officer Wellness, Officer Safety and Officer Traffic Safety, this submission represents the totality of West Palm Beach PD's Comprehensive program and should be rated in its own category, while their submissions in the other three award categories should be rated separately and individually.**

WPB Police Department serves a population of 113,000 citizens over 58.1 square miles. The Chief of the department is Frank Adderley who oversees 290 sworn officers and 98 civilian employees. With Florida having the second most line of duty deaths in 2021 (52) they believe it is their "obligation" to provide necessary training and resources to ensure officer safety and wellness.

### **OFFICER WELLNESS**

The West Palm Beach Police Department realizes that studies have clearly shown that divorce, suicide and substance abuse issues are more prevalent in law enforcement jobs than almost any other career. **To reduce those occurrences and allow employees to better deal with on/off duty stressors they face, they created a peer-to-peer counseling program (Police Officer Support Team (POST)) that utilizes trained employees to provide counseling services to their fellow employees. Dispatch and Crime Scene Investigator personnel are also part of the POST team in order to be all inclusive.** Discussions occurring during the peer-to-peer counseling remain confidential unless suicidal or homicidal thoughts or illegal activity is discovered. POST Team members walk employees through the process and ensure they are receiving appropriate mental health care as soon as issues are discovered. EAP acts as a resource, providing professional, confidential help to employees and their families, through their own initiative or supervisor referral. **Although the program is in its relative infancy due to its implementation in April of 2020, the POST Team members have conducted over 124 one-on-one sessions.** EAP also provides referrals to community resources and services for childcare, pet care, and senior care, along with financial and legal assistance for financial services, identity theft and legal consulting. Members of the POST team are also trained in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). CISM debriefings are held after major or particularly sensitive incidents and all employees involved are required to attend.

**WPBPD has mental health clinicians they can call 24-7 that will respond to the location of critical incidents and assist any officer in a time of crisis if it goes beyond the POST team's training and education.** This resource has been utilized several times now, and in those cases the mental health clinicians were successful in helping employee(s) overcome their crisis.

**To help maintain physical fitness and reduce employee stress, a fully equipped fitness center is located at the Police station and is available to employees 24/7/365. To make it more user friendly, male and female locker rooms, complete with shower and restroom facilities, adjoin the fitness center. All employees are strongly encouraged to utilize this free facility before, after, and/or during working hours as well as on their off-duty time.** One of the WPBPD trainers provides workouts and instructions to officers on the correct use and form while using the equipment.

**The department also offers free weekly Jiu Jitsu training in the police station. Two of these trainers are Gracie certified and two officers are world champions, one being a two-time black belt gi world champion and the other being a one-time black belt gi world champion.**

**The department also features a wellness room which includes a massage chair, waterfall scenery and a sound machine. Officers can take off their shoes and duty belt in order to sit in the massage chair and pick from a variety of stress relieving massages.** The room can also be used for meditating if the officer chooses to do so. Employees can access this room 24/7/365 on or off-duty and most do during their lunch breaks. This room provides employees with a private relaxing space where they can seek respite after going through a tough call or from off the job issues.

**In order to provide confidential and easy access to all of their services for department staff, the WPBPD used grant money to pay for a wellness app. This wellness app puts immediate help and many other resources at the fingertips of our officers 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The department chose this app because it makes all resources available right on the officer's phones.** The app has our EAP number in it along with a crisis line called Cop line, which offers vetted and trained retired law enforcement officers to talk to when you are in a time of need. Also included is the national suicide prevention lifeline and a free confidential crisis text line, which gives access to professional crisis counselors. Officers can access any of these services with just a touch of their phone screen. The app includes an officer wellness tool kit that contains information and tips to better yourself in 60 topics like suicide prevention, anger management, resilience development, marriage, work-life balance, financial wellness, sleep optimization, burnout, mindfulness, PTSD, etc. This app also 12 assessments officers can take to see if they are struggling with a certain issue like PTSD, depression, compassion fatigue, sleep, etc. and will advise them if they need to seek help or not. Officers can also access peer support team members on the app along with our chaplain, with just a touch of the screen. The app has videos for yoga, physical therapy, and injury prevention. The app also offers workout programs, nutritional guides, guided meditations and sleep sounds. The book Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement by Kevin Gilmartin is partly on the app.

**Newly recruited officers are provided mental health training and are given a presentation of the entire officer wellness program before starting the FTO program. Officers are provided a letter to give to their spouse or significant other which provides what services are available as well as contact information and a book for their spouse or significant other to read.** Officers receive "Shield of Resilience" training biannually. This course helps law enforcement officers learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal thoughts and actions. The city of West Palm Beach started City fit wellness which started a program called Wellness Wednesdays for all employees which cover physical, mental, and financial wellness.

**On each Wednesday employees have a wellness activity, wellness give away,** or they get wellness information along with wellness seminars. The wellness seminars cover a multitude of topics that include stress relief, caring for the caregiver, sleep apnea, virtual yoga, budgeting and saving money management, saving early in your career/young investors, estate planning, retirement readiness, obesity, healthy life tips for men and women, estate planning, beating burnout, mental health topics, etc. **As part of this program, employees must complete a quarterly challenge and attend three activities/classes per quarter to be eligible for a \$25 gift card and if the employee complete this each quarter of the year, the employee will be entered into a raffle for a \$500 gift card during each quarter.** To be eligible, employees must complete a biometric screening and do a health risk assessment. City fit also offers yoga classes for all employees. Employees are advised and reminded of what city fit

offers weekly via email. Also, we partnered with Empower retirement, which offers three free financial seminars a month and covers topics such as budgeting, getting to know your Roth options, investment basics, etc.

The city of West Palm Beach funds an account that is used to help offset medical and pharmacy costs for employees and/or dependents. Additional funds can be earned yearly by employees and/or spouse or domestic partners, upon completion of a blood draw at the city health center and completing a physical or health assessment. To give an example, for those employees that are under the employee only coverage, \$1,000 will be placed in that account plus another \$400 if the employees use the city health center. All of this is voluntary, and many employees go to the city health center to complete their health risk assessment to earn these funds. As part of their yearly physicals, the City Health Center just started offering free ultrasound quick scans of employee's internal organs in order to early detect problems/diseases and implement an early and successful intervention for employees. Flu, hepatitis and other vaccines are also offered to employees free of charge.

**In response to the COVID outbreak, the department implemented a COVID mitigation plan to keep all employees safe.** Measures implemented included outside and remote briefings utilizing Microsoft Teams, issued N-95 masks, extra gloves and extra hand sanitizer to all personnel, and mandated officers to wear masks when interacting with the public. The department also purchased an aerosol battery operated disinfectant machine to sanitize all areas in the station, all offices and vehicles. Through the city emergency management, **free COVID vaccinations were offered to all employees and the city offered monetary incentives to those who received the vaccination.**

**From the beginning of 2020 throughout the end of 2021, the use of officer sick time for occupational injuries and self-medical issues dropped over 900 hours from 3,472 hours in 2020 to 2,568 hours in 2021. The department also expects to see a drop in paid out worker's comp claims from 1.2 million dollars in 2020 to a projected 1 to 1.1 million dollars in 2021.**

## **GENERAL OFFICER SAFETY**

**WPBPD issues custom-fit soft body armor and requires officers to wear them. SWAT officers are issued threat level IV vests with front and rear trauma plates. Officers are also issued ballistic helmets and gas masks.** Ballistic shields are available in several patrol cars on each shift as well as in the sergeant's vehicle.

In addition to providing each officer with a handgun, officers can choose to carry a patrol rifle and/or shotgun and required to be certified in their use. The department also authorizes officers to carry a back up/secondary weapon and requires officers to qualify with the weapon. **The state of Florida requires that all peace officers qualify with their duty handgun once every two years. WPBPD requires their officers to qualify with their handguns, rifle, shotguns and back up weapons annually, in addition to low-light and tactical courses. Officers are further encouraged to attend open range dates** at their facility. The department also operates a "shoot house" in the department basement, where simmunitions weapons are used in scenario-based training.

**Each officer is issued a tourniquet to wear on their duty belt, and also issued a trauma bag which consists of tourniquets, quick clotting agent, sucking chest wound patches and bandages and every officer is trained in tactical first aid for self-aid, officer down and civilian medical emergencies. In 2020, one officer alone saved four victims of gunshot wounds, on three different calls, by utilizing this equipment and training.** Each officer also personal protective equipment in their trauma bags to include; CPR masks, ambu bags and bloodborne pathogen equipment including gear for full body protection.

**The department also requires the use of seat belts while members are driving department vehicles.** Officers violating this policy will face progressive discipline. Featured throughout the department are safety posters regarding vehicle operation and seat belt usage. WPBPD also provides annual hands-on vehicle operations and pursuit training at driving pad at a local college police academy. This training also includes no-evasive vehicle operations, felony stops, pursuit termination devices and force on force scenario training. The department also conducts training on their pursuit policy annually. Every pursuit is reviewed by the pursuit review board and it is determined at this review meeting whether the officer should be commended, disciplined or retrained regarding pursuits.

All officer safety instructors come from within the department and each is certified by the state of Florida. Examples include defensive tactics, firearms, ASP baton, emergency vehicle operations and CPR.

**All officers receive 40 hours of Crisis Intervention Training to learn how to de-escalate situations.** Additionally, the department owns a use of force simulator and trains their officers in shoot/don't shoot decision-making. Some scenarios are designed for the officer to choose to use their electronic control devices, pepper spray or no force at all.

**For high-risk situations, WPBPD also has a SWAT team. Within the SWAT team is a Lenco Bearcat armored vehicle that can sustain rounds from a 50 caliber round.** This vehicle is used in situations of armed, barricaded subjects, tactical situations, and rescues. The Bearcat has been used successfully in a number of situations including the deployment of teargas into a hotel room where a barricaded subject was. After the teargas deployment, the subject surrendered without further incident.

**WPBPD also has an Emergency Field Force unit** which is trained in civil unrest and riot situations, primarily through the use of non-lethal weapons. The department also has a K-9 unit and the dogs are trained in handler protection, tracking and narcotics detection.

**The department also has a dive team** for water rescues and a "Catchment team" which features ATVs and two airboats for responses to calls on their 23 square miles of wetlands preserves (called The Catchment), which provides drinking water for all of West Palm Beach. .

**WPBPD also has an Unmanned Aircraft System team which consists of four drones** and officers specially trained and certified by the FAA. The drones serve many purposes including conducting search and rescue operations, locating missing persons and attempting to locate fleeing suspects and escaped prisoners.

**Per the Florida Administrative Code, all sworn officers must receive 40 hours of continuing education training every four years. Over the past four years, each WPBPD officer has received a minimum of 158 hours of documented training.**

## **OFFICER TRAFFIC SAFETY**

**The WPBPD Department's policy requires all persons riding in a city owned vehicle to wear their seat belts/restraining devices** unless specifically exempted. Child restraint device usage is mandatory while transporting a child in a city owned vehicle. When the driver's seat belt becomes inoperable the vehicle will be taken out of service until fixed. If the front passenger seatbelt is inoperable, no one will be transported occupying that seat. **Violators will face progressive discipline if they are found to have violated this seatbelt policy.** There are several posters located around the station that reinforce wearing your seat belt and watching your speed.

In order to help reduce traffic related officer injuries and deaths, **all officers who are issued patrol cars are issued traffic safety vests** and they are required to wear them anytime that they are out of their patrol vehicles performing traffic control/direction duties. This applies to both on-duty and extra-duty work shifts. Supervisors are required to ensure officers are always in compliance.

**In addition to all patrol vehicles being equipped with standard road flares, WPBPD issues night shift patrol sergeants electronic power flares that are battery-powered LED emergency flares for safer awareness and traffic direction/control at night. They are magnetic and can be either mounted on the side of a patrol vehicle or placed on the ground.** They are crush-resistant and can withstand the weight of a 20,000lb. vehicle. They can be set in flash mode to get motorists' attention and can be set in steady mode to direct traffic around traffic and crime scenes.

When working an accident or outdoor crime scene in a very poorly lit area, WPBPD provides officers with access to scene lighting in order to enhance officer safety while working those scenes. **The department has provided our officers with the PELICAN 9440 RALS battery-powered scene lighting systems.**

**To enhance officer safety on traffic accident scenes at night, traffic investigators utilize the Guardian Angel Police Officer Safety Light. The Guardian Angel Light is an LED lighting system that weighs three ounces and is designed to be mounted on the shoulder lapel of an officer.** This system provides 360-degree illumination, multiple lighting options, over five plus miles of visibility, and a rechargeable all day battery runtime. WPBPD is currently in the process of purchasing more of these lapel lights for all officers.

**The department uses the FARO® 3D laser crime and accident scene scanner to expedite documentation of the scene and minimizes officer time spent in the roadway.**

**For Emergency Vehicle Operations Training (EVOT), the department uses a local college police academy driving pad for annual in-service driving training. The training includes pursuit and non-pursuit driver training. All department driving instructors are certified by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.** The Department has a comprehensive pursuit policy and officers are initially trained on it during field training and retrained on it annually. Officers document all traffic stops where the offender flees but the pursuit does not meet department requirements. These stops are documented under failure to yield (FTY). All pursuits go before the department's pursuit review board. When the review board meets, any commendations for exceptional performance or corrective action, including formal discipline is recommended. The purpose of the review board is to reward good behavior and change risky behavior.

Anytime an officer's assigned vehicle is damaged or involved in a collision, an officer from the Traffic Division will respond and handle the accident. A Patrol Division Lieutenant will also respond to the scene and conduct a formal review and determination is made as to whether employee error contributed to the accident. A summary report is then sent through the chain of command to the Chief. If the employee is found to be at fault, progressive discipline will be applied. If an officer has demonstrated deficient driving, it is mandated that the officer receive remedial driving training in order to increase officer safety and confidence, and to identify and change risky behavior.

**For increased officer and public safety, all officers are instructed to utilize their two-way radios and inform the Communications Center of their location, the vehicle license plate, the vehicle description, and the number of occupants before exiting their patrol vehicles.** Officers use a passenger-side approach on all high traffic and/or high-speed roadways to lessen their exposure to the hazards presented by other drivers. Officers are taught to minimize their exposure to vehicle strikes while out of the vehicle by staying away from the traveled portion and away from standing between vehicles while interacting with motorists outside of their vehicles.

**New patrol vehicles have been up fitted with the latest in emergency lighting and warning technology.** The LED emergency lighting system integrates to the vehicle's computer allowing officers to be hands free. **The LED emergency lighting system automatically [and temporarily] shuts off all lights on the driver's and/or passenger side of the vehicle when the doors are opened, so as not to obscure the officer's vision, increasing officer safety.** Vehicles are also equipped with an intersection clearing mode which is activated with the push of the horn. When engaged, the emergency lights will accelerate the pattern and change the siren tone for eight seconds in order to be more visible when going through intersections. Once the eight seconds expires, the system automatically reverts to the previous mode.

**All patrol vehicles are also equipped with an automated vehicle locator system or (AVL). In the event, an officer is not responding to their radio and the communications center does not have them out at a specific location, dispatch personnel can pull up their location via the AVL and immediately dispatch personnel to ensure officer safety.** Command staff may conduct a real time AVL inquiry on the crime spike locations in the city in order to better deploy officers in those locations. The AVL system is also set up to send out speeding threshold (90MPH) alerts via email to Lieutenants and command staff. The Lieutenant of the officer operating said vehicle in the alert, will ascertain why that officer was driving 90 MPH, and either validate the reason(s) why they were driving at least 90 MPH, or they will correct the speeding with counseling and progressive discipline if warranted. **In 2020 WPBPD officers were involved in 118 accidents and in 2021 our officers were involved in 99 accidents, which is a decline of 19 accidents.**

**\*\* This summary is only a brief overview of many of the agency's programs. In the actual submission you will see that the agency has other programs and incentives to benefit its members. Please review their entire submission and its associated documents to gain a complete understanding of their program.**