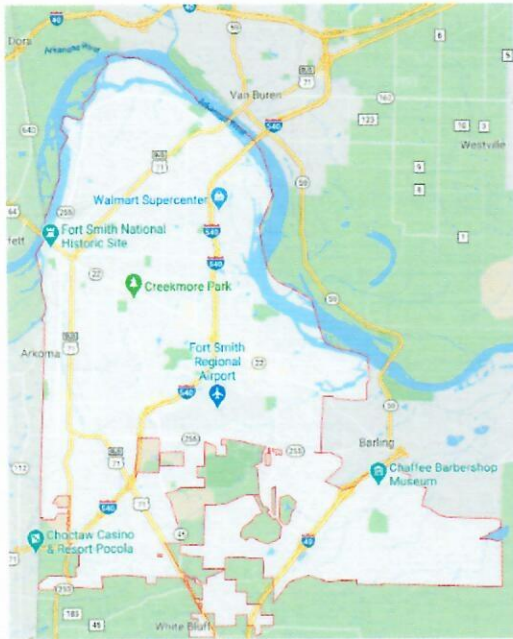




FORT SMITH POLICE DEPARTMENT

Destination Zero Comprehensive Safety Initiatives

Fort Smith, Arkansas, Police Department



Fort Smith is one of two county seats for Sebastian County and the second largest city in Arkansas. Sebastian County is part of the Fort Smith, AR-OK Metropolitan Statistical Area. Fort Smith's residential population is approximately 88,000 people and has an additional daily workforce population of 116,000 (US Bureau of Labor). Fort Smith is in the Northwest region of the state and is adjacent to the State of Oklahoma. The city has several major highways running through it including Interstate 540 and Interstate 40 to the north. We are a highly diverse community with many immigrants and first-generation families.

The Fort Smith Police Department has an authorized strength of 164 sworn fulltime officers who provide service to the citizens of Fort Smith twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Currently, the police department has 147 sworn officers due to attrition. Currently, we are conducting an application process to fill the openings that remain. Personnel are divided among three bureaus: Administration, Uniform, and Non-Uniformed. The latter two bureaus are further divided into four divisions: Patrol Field Operations, Patrol Special Operations, Support Services, and Criminal Investigations.



Fort Smith Police Headquarters



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In 2019, the Fort Smith Police Department responded to 79,380 calls for service. Furthermore, we participate in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident Based Reporting program. We are a dual "Gold Standard" Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) for both Law Enforcement Accreditation and Public Safety Communications Accreditation. We are also underway in obtaining a third CALEA Accreditation in Law Enforcement Training. The Fort Smith Police Department is committed to the safety of our officers and routinely explore ways in which to reduce the likelihood of officer injuries. Further we strive to reduce the effects of stress and mental trauma of officers by developing strategies designed to assist officers. Below we highlight the programs, initiatives, or equipment utilized to aid in the safety of our officers.

Officer Safety Initiatives

First Aid/Trauma Kits

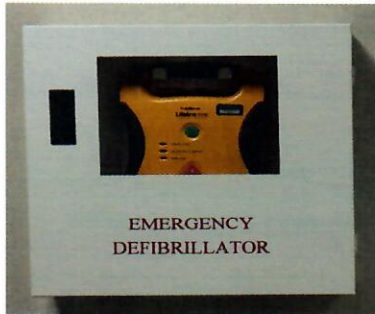
Officers have rapid accessibility to First Aid and Trauma kits through placement in every patrol vehicle. The kits include items intended for the instances prior to the arrival of medical teams or for officers injured. These kits consists of items designed for wound dressing as well as protection from blood borne pathogens. Items include a Tyvex protective suit, wound dressing, Sudecon wipes (for OC exposure), gloves, masks, CPR mouth cover, and quick clot.





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Automated External Defibrillator (AED)



The Fort Smith Police Department purchased three AED units to be placed in key locations in the building. These are maintained by the Emergency Management Office with the Administrative Bureau. The AEDs were purchased as an effort to maintain life-saving equipment readily available in an emergency.

Tourniquets

In 2016 the Fort Smith Police Department was donated several tourniquets for distribution to officers. All officers were trained on the use of tourniquets and issued one for use. Since that time, every officer is trained on the use of tourniquets and emergency aid for wounds during the basic academy. Private grant funding allowed for more tourniquets to be issued in 2019.



Narcan/Naloxone

The potential for exposure to Fentanyl by officers led our agency to seek out ways to protect our officers as well as individuals we may come into contact with. In early 2020 the FSPD was given a generous grant by a local church to purchase almost \$19,000 of Narcan and related equipment. 192 doses of the life-saving drug were purchased and issued to every officer at the department. Training on the use of Narcan is ongoing for each officer.



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Ballistic Vests

Fort Smith Police policy makes it mandatory for officers to wear protective body armor as a matter of their daily work. The ballistic vests issued



to officers are custom fitted to the individual officer. The Fort Smith Police Department participates in the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership which provides 50% cost reimbursement for each vest purchased by the department. This allows the agency to consistently issue new ballistic vests to officers on a regular basis. In addition to the Level II vests issued to all officers, selected members

of the department such as SWAT and Narcotic Investigators are issued a Level III vest due to the increased degree of danger for those units.

Mobile Field Force

To address the possibility of civil disturbances in the form of protests, riots, or other crowd issues, the Fort Smith Police department formed a mobile field force. This team consists of highly trained officers led by 4 sergeants, 2 lieutenants, and a captain. The team is issued ballistic helmets, batons, gas masks, and ballistic suits to address the dangers that could exist during large gatherings. The team trains at least annually and many are sent for training at





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the FEMA Center for Domestic Preparedness in Alabama. Since inception, the team has only been activated one time during a protest held in late summer 2020.

Weaponry

All officers at Fort Smith PD are issued a Glock Model 17 handgun (9mm). Officers may also request to be issued Rock River M4 carbines upon completion of specialized training and qualification. Officers assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division as detectives and all supervisors are issued Glock Model 43, 9mm handguns as a secondary weapon. Officers may carry their personally owned handgun as a secondary weapon or off duty weapon, however they must meet the policy requirements, specifically reporting to the department the make and model of the weapon, how they intend to carry it, and the ammunition they will use. Further, officers must meet minimum qualification standards with the weapon they register to carry. All of our officers must qualify on all weapons a minimum of twice annually, although we give four opportunities to qualify at the range per year, twice in the spring and twice in the fall. Qualification consists of a course of fire certified by the Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training (CLEST) with a minimum score of 80% on handguns and a minimum of 90% if they are issued a rifle. Those assigned to SWAT must qualify with a minimum score of 90% on all weapons.

Less Lethal Options

Aside from firearms officers at Fort Smith PD are trained to utilize certain less than lethal weaponry. The SWAT team utilizes a bean bag shotgun and must qualify on its use annually. All officers are trained to use a collapsible baton during the basic police academy and attend refresher training regularly. During the basic academy, all Fort Smith PD officers are given OC spray exposure training before being allowed to carry on duty. Finally, officers are issued Taxer X2 conducted electrical weapons (CEW) for on duty carry after initial certification and continuing annual training. The Tasers are equipped with a Taser cam recording device for video evidence of Taser deployments.



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Body Cameras/Fleet Cameras

The Fort Smith Police Department was involved in early testing of body worn cameras in 2008 for the then-Taser Company who later became Axon. Our department was the first law enforcement agency in the nation to clear an officer involved shooting based primarily on body worn video evidence.



Nevertheless, funding was an obstacle to full BWC deployment for the next ten years. In 2018, funding was secured to purchase eighty (80) Axon Body 2 body worn cameras (BWC). Training, implementation, and deployment of the BWC began in March of 2019. Twenty (20) additional BWCs were ordered with a US Bureau of Justice Body-Worn

Camera Implementation grant and was deployed in early 2020. Concurrently, in 2018 funding was made available to move to Axon Fleet 2 in-car cameras, with an additional 15 ordered in 2019. The Axon Fleet cameras have been installed in thirty-five (35) of our patrol fleet vehicles, achieving our goal of 100% deployment in the near future. Additional cameras will be purchased in 2021 to further outfit each officer with a BWC. The Axon Fleet cameras along with the Axon BWCs provide an excellent and more reliable means of documenting police encounters, and provide greater transparency within the department. Since deployment, the instances of uses of force and citizen complaints have decreased significantly. Further, with the nationwide unrest following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis many protests were held in



Fort Smith PD Lieutenant wearing BWC during protest, June 2020



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Fort Smith. The BWC factored significantly in the manner in which our department handled the protest. So much so, our agency was invited to participate in a nationwide webinar sponsored by the Body-Worn Camera Training and Technical Assistance team and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. We presented our department's response to the protests and how our BWCs were utilized to enhance transparency.

Active Shooter Training

The likelihood of responding to an active shooter threat has become more likely in recent years. School shootings, business shootings, and other active shooter events present unique tactical complications our officers must be able to address. Each officer has received training on deployment during an active shooter event. The training is current according to national recommendations for law enforcement response. Collaborative meetings were held with the Fort Smith School system to determine ways in which officers could enter the building. As a deterrent to active shooters, the schools remain locked throughout the day. Due to this, our patrol vehicles are equipped with tools to aid in breaching locked doors to facilitate rapid officer response to threats.

Specialized Vehicles

The Fort Smith Police Department recognizes there are many situations in which officers may encounter hazards that normal police vehicles may not be equipped to handle. The safety of officers responding to these unusual circumstances is a priority for our department, thus we have specialty vehicles to address specific situations our officers may respond.



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Five of our patrol vehicles (Chevrolet Tahoe) are equipped with Level III ballistic armor inside the doors of the vehicle. This adds extra protection against most rifle rounds and all handgun rounds. Normal patrol vehicles do not have this level of protection, necessitating officers to find cover behind an engine block or other location outside the vehicle. The five patrol vehicles also are equipped with FLIR devices mounted on the spotlight, with software installed on the mobile data computer in the vehicle. This gives officers the ability to pick up heat signatures in darkness to locate suspects that may be a threat or waiting to ambush an officer. These vehicles are designated with an "A" in front of the vehicle number to distinguish them from other vehicles. Officers may drive these vehicles as a matter of daily use, with the understanding they are to respond to calls with and increased threat level.



FSPD Patrol Tahoe with ballistic armor and FLIR system

To respond to instances in which there is an increased threat of firearm violence toward officers, the department purchased a surplus military Mine-resistant armored personnel vehicle or MRAP in 2015. This vehicle is primarily used by the department's SWAT team after completing certifications on driving



FSPD MRAP on scene, August 2016

and crisis response using the vehicle. The FSPD's MRAP was the only such vehicle in the region until the need for this vehicle became apparent in August 2016. A wanted suspect opened fire on Sebastian County deputies



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attempting to serve a warrant in a rural area 30 minutes south of Fort Smith. The shooter killed one deputy, injured an assisting municipal police chief, and pinned down three officers, a K9, and two civilians with continual gunfire. Our agency quickly deployed to the scene to assist and brought the MRAP. We were able to deploy the MRAP and rescue all the officers and civilians, removing

them from the scene without injury. Our SWAT officer then parked the MRAP in front of the door of the residence and the suspect quickly



Returning to command post after arrest of suspect, Sebastian County, Aug 2016

surrendered. The outcome of this critical incident came to a close much quicker due to the availability of this specialized vehicle. After this incident, some other agencies in the region purchased similar vehicles as the need for such response was illustrated that summer. The MRAP has also been used in other callouts involving armed barricaded suspects as well as rescue those stranded in the large 500-year Arkansas River flood of 2019 in Fort Smith. The MRAP has also been displayed at several community events.

A third of the City of Fort Smith's city limits are bounded by the



Arkansas River Training

Arkansas River. Until 2014 the Fort Smith PD had to rely on the services of the Fort Smith Fire Department if the need arose for a watercraft to respond to situations on and along the riverfront. On a few occasions, conflicts in tactics between the fire and police department led to problems



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responding to some situations. Utilizing grant funding from the US Department of Homeland Security, the department was able to purchase a boat in 2014 and assigned it to the SWAT team. Further, the United States Coast Guard completed an assessment and deemed the Arkansas River was an intercostal waterway necessitating the boat. The determination was primarily due to the significant infrastructure on and around the river, such as several bridges, ports, and the Arkansas Corps of Engineers' Lock and Dam 13. Officers who are certified to utilize the watercraft are annually trained in drown-proofing, which is a standard maintained by the FBI. The City of Fort Smith also has a popular music venue at the riverfront hosting many events. During these events, the boat has been used as a visual deterrent as well as for safety. In a joint training session with the US Coast Guard, the team trained numerous times on the boat which included boarding/disembarking other water craft and firearms training.

The Fort Smith Police Department is the largest law enforcement agency in our region and have been involved in multiple inter-agency incidents that required activation of the FEMA's National Incident management system. In 2010 our department purchased a used motorhome to be utilized as an Incident Response Vehicle (IRV). This allows for a mobile command post be placed on the scenes of any large scale incident. This vehicle also is equipped for the use of our Crisis Response Team which is part of the SWAT team. Negotiators utilize the conference room of the IRV to set up communications equipment and contact barricaded subjects. The IRV was utilized significantly in the summer of 2019 when the Arkansas River flooded to levels unseen in Fort Smith since 1945. The biggest impact of the flood was on the east side of the city and the IRV was placed at a location easily accessible to





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officers and the citizens affected or displaced by the flooding. This proved to be a valuable command post for department command staff and a welcome refuge for officers assigned to work the area during the incident.

Use of Force Simulator

De-escalation of critical incidents involving potential uses of force has become forefront in the development of officer training. The ability to communicate effectively and utilize all resources to de-escalate a situation, lowering the possibility of injury to the officer and the suspect, has become crucial in maintaining public trust and reduce potential accusations of excessive force. For this reason, the Fort Smith PD utilizes a use of force simulator from Texas Instruments. The simulator forces the officer to respond to different situation that may or may need to use force. The instructor can alter the scenario based on the actions of the officer. The variations are from control of the suspect up to deadly force. The officer is able to utilize voice commands, pepper spray, Taser, and firearms (handgun/rifle) using actual devices converted to laser use. The firearms include a conversion kit that cycles the slide of a Glock Model 17 or the bolt of a patrol rifle. The Taser/OC spray uses a laser conversion kit to signal use. The simulator instructor can replay the scenario and pin point the times in which the officer utilizes types of force and discuss why they did so. This simulator has greatly improved our officer's abilities to communicate their intentions and de-escalate encounters with resistant subjects.





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Small Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (sUAV)



Fort Smith Police sUAV conducting surveillance, 2020

In 2019 the department purchased two SkyDio2 sUAVs for the purpose of airborne surveillance of a number of situations. The drones are able to be deployed quickly and are piloted by FAA certified drone operators. The drones are able to aid in searching for a subject from a high vantage point. This reduces the likelihood of injury to officers placing themselves in unsafe locations to search for a suspect. The drones are specially outfitted for crash resilience, allowing the pilot to fly the drone in tight spaces including inside buildings. The drones are able to look into buildings for barricaded or hiding suspects eliminating the need for an officer to do so. The drones are also utilized in large events to give additional surveillance of crowds for criminal or dangerous activity. During the protests in the summer of 2020, the drones were able to provide covert video surveillance above the protest, alerting incident commanders to problems as they occurred and with a greater viewpoint.

Traffic Safety Initiatives

The Fort Smith Police department has taken many steps to ensure the safety of officers involved in vehicle operations and working with traffic incidents. These initiatives are designed to reduce the likelihood of officer injury during traffic related duties.

Seat Belt Use

The Fort Smith PD mandates that all employees operating a department vehicle shall wear a seat belt at all times. The requirement is outlined in policy and only allows one exception to the rule. The exception is when an officer is within a reasonable time of stopping their vehicle at a location that is likely to require rapid egress from the vehicle. Our policy goes on to give examples of such situations like: arrival at a disturbance call, initiating a traffic stop in



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which the officer has observed indications the driver may flee on foot, or driving slowly down an alley while looking for a suspect.

Emergency Vehicle Operation/Pursuit Driving

Our department sent two officers to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center to be trained and certified as Law Enforcement Driving Instructors in May 2018. This training and certification allows for quality training on emergency and non-emergency driving. Each officer is mandated to attend training on the emergency operation of vehicles during the basic police academy. The training is also used during instances in which remedial training of officers after the academy is needed. The training utilizes the AR Air National Guard base and the expansive airplane tarmac to help officers develop spatial skills and awareness of the vehicle during driving, parking and

reversing skills, and high speed driving.

The training emphasizes reducing emotions during pursuit driving and concentrating on



EVOC Training

vehicle operation. The training prevents possible injury from vehicle accidents involving officers improperly operating a vehicle in high-stress situations.

The department's pursuit policy has also been changed to specifically prohibit misdemeanor pursuits with exceptions. This policy is designed to lower the risk of injury to officers as well as the general public, emphasizing a pursuit is higher level of force with the same requirements as deadly force and should only be utilized when specific and articulable reasons exist. The policy is required to be reviewed annually to ensure officer compliance. Further, any pursuit is highly reviewed by supervision to determine violation of policy and identify training or policy issues that must be addressed and/or changed.



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In-Car Cameras-Speed Monitoring

As mentioned in previous sections, our department utilizes Axon Fleet 2 cameras in our patrol vehicle fleet. The video system allows for the monitoring of vehicle speeds and GPS locations of vehicles during officer response. The system is set to automatically initiate recording if the vehicle reaches a speed in excess of 70mph, which is highly discouraged when driving on city streets. Officers are held accountable during random monitoring of vehicle videos by supervision. Officers who are found to have been violating safe and prudent speeds while responding to calls have been given remedial training, verbal discipline, and formal disciplinary action.

High Visibility Vests

Every officer is issued a high visibility traffic safety vest to be used while conducting business in or around traffic calls for service. Our policy mandates that an officer shall wear the vest at all times when directing traffic. The officer is also instructed in policy to wear a vest while investigating traffic collisions involving property damage, injury, or fatality while working in traffic lanes.

Driving Simulator

In July 2019 the department purchased a FAAC driving simulator. Training Center staff received training on operating the system. In 2020, refresher, remedial, and initial driving training began. This system allows realistic, valuable training in emergency and non-emergency driving, at all levels of skill and experience, without the risk of vehicle or property damage. The simulated driving training combined with the classroom and hands on training from the instructors ensures a safer driving department. Prior to the implementation of this simulator, in the fall of 2017 all sworn personnel, and





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non-sworn personnel who drive city vehicles, completed a defensive driving course.

FARO Crime and Accident Scene Scanner

Prior to 2020 the department collision investigation unit utilized outdated technology for the measurement and documentation of serious injury and fatality collisions. Similarly, the department's crime scene identification unit utilized equipment even more outdated than the collision unit. In early 2020 the department purchased a FARO Laser Scanner for the use by both



Computer image of FSPD collision scene using FARO

units. The system is able to accurately scan and document the crime scene using thousands of measuring points recreated in a software program. The hyper-accurate diagrams created by this system can be used as evidence in criminal cases and illustrate

aspects of the crime scene in 3D, supplemented with scene photography. Further the system can utilize physics and geometrical equations to calculate vehicle speeds and reconstruct collision scenes for criminal and civil court cases. The system is easily transported and can be used by one officer. This allows for quicker investigation of crime/collision scene which in turn allows for officers to remove themselves from potentially dangerous work within traffic lanes.

Traffic Incident Management course

In 2020 the Fort Smith PD elected to send officers to be certified in the National Traffic Incident Management System. This training is able to help reduce driver stress and frustrations when approaching a traffic incident



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scene. This decision was made with the safety of the members of our community, those visiting, or just traveling through, in mind. As described in the National Highway Institute's course description, the National Traffic Incident Management Responder Training was created by responders for responders. The course provides first responders a shared understanding of the requirements for safe, quick clearance of traffic incident scenes; prompt, reliable and open communication; and motorist and responder safeguards. First responders learn how to operate more efficiently and collectively.

According to the National Highway Institute, three injury crashes occur every minute in the United States. This puts nearly 39,000 incident responders potentially in harm's way every day. Congestion from these incidents often generates secondary crashes, further increasing traveler delay and frustration. The longer incident responders remain at the scene the greater the risk they, and the traveling public, face. A cadre of well-trained responders helps improve traffic incident response. Better incident response improves the safety of responders and drivers, reduces crashes that occur because of incident-related congestion, decreases traffic delays caused by incidents and can cut incident response time.

The Traffic Incident Management Training Program provides responders with a common set of practices and advance standards across all disciplines. Responders gain a common set of core competencies and the program assists them in achieving the TIM National Unified Goal of strengthening TIM programs in the area of: Responder safety; Safe, quick clearance; and Prompt, reliable, and interoperable communications. We've all been stuck in that traffic jam on Rogers Ave, or directed around an incident scene in the roadway adding unnecessary time to our trip. Although it's not always possible, with TIMS training, officers will be able to more efficiently and effectively respond to and clear an incident on the roadway with the safety and convenience of the public in mind. This training not only helps to better safeguard the members of our community during these responses and investigation, but also keeps all of those involved in the incident safe.



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Thirteen Fort Smith PD officers have successfully been certified in TIMS with the goal of providing the training for all police officers, including this class as curriculum in the basic policy academy or FSPD post-academy.

Vehicle Collision Reporting

The department recognizes that vehicular accidents involving employees and city vehicles not only cost the city money, but also pose a danger to our employees. The Uniform Bureau continues to stress the importance of driving safely, remaining alert to surroundings, driving defensively and avoiding distractions to our employees. A monthly collision summary is distributed to all FSPD personnel detailing any departmental accidents/incidents, and lists collision prevention tips. All newly acquired patrol vehicles (Chevrolet Tahoe) are equipped with standard safety equipment to include back up cameras. This is done in concert with the collision report to make officer more cognizant of their driving abilities and take extra precautions to avoid collisions that may cause officer injury and injury to the public.

Officer Wellness Initiatives

Crisis Intervention Training

The department realizes that a large segment of the population suffers from various mental health issues. Often times these issues contribute to circumstances that require a police response. Further, officers coming into contact with person experiencing mental health crises are more likely to result in injury to the person or the officer if proper protocols are not followed. The department then elected to improve ways in which officers could augment their response to the persons to de-escalate the situation, reducing injury, and determining a course of action alternative to incarceration to assist these individuals. The department has worked closely with the Sebastian County Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee to examine options to reduce jail overcrowding and to divert and provide treatment options for those suffering from a mental health crisis. The department has also made a concerted effort to train officers in crisis intervention techniques in order to better help citizens



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experiencing mental health issues, receive needed and available assistance. The department currently has fifty-five officers who have completed the forty (40) hour block of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training. Officers are being sent when classes are available to achieve our goal to have all officers receive this CIT training.

The Sebastian County Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) opened in 2018, and the department utilizes their services whenever feasible. In 2019, Field Operations referred 137 persons to the CSU. The CSU is an asset used to provide help to those experiencing mental crisis and in many cases diverting them for treatment rather than increasing the jail population. The department has held frequent meetings with the staff of the CSU and participated in a pilot program to test the effectiveness of video assessments in the field. The CSU initially provided a tablet solution at no cost to the department for this pilot program. However, due to some technical difficulties, the CSU has transitioned into conducting these field assessments through a website called “Doxy.me” that officers can access through any mobile device or computer. Moving forward the department will continue to evaluate ways to help reduce the jail population and to help those in need. We will continue to train officers in crisis intervention.

Finally, in the spring of 2020, the department established a Crisis Intervention/Mental Health Unit. This unit is comprised of two (2) officers (with an additional two officers added in the future) who will focus on outreach to individuals exhibiting mental illness and/or substance abuse in the homeless community as well as the general population. By doing so, we hope to reduce the number of police-related calls for service and arrests associated with individuals in mental health crisis situations. The mission of the unit is to provide improved public safety and service through the utilization of mental health and substance use disorder services within the community.

Critical Incident Debriefing

One of the most valuable initiatives we offer is the ability to recognize and conduct critical incident debriefings after high-stress or traumatic



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incidents involving our officers. Policy dictates all supervisors receive training triennially on recognizing signs of traumatic stress or behaviors indicative of officers suffering from stress that is affecting their job performance. Further our policy mandates that all officers involved in traumatic, high-stress incidents attend a critical incident debriefing with counselor(s) to aid in the mental stress officers inevitably encounter.

Wellness Program

While not exclusive to the Fort Smith PD, the City of Fort Smith strongly recommends all employees participate in a wellness program. Doing so greatly reduces costs of medical insurance paid by the employee. The program requires employees to submit a yearly health assessment, perform blood labs, and participate in a wellness exam with their doctor. The program has significant cost increases should the employee be a smoker, creating monetary incentive to quit smoking.

Department Gym

The police department maintains a gym for all employees of the agency. The gym has multiple types of exercise equipment accessible at no cost to every officer. Though not required by policy, some officers have developed a fitness plan and encourages officer to participate throughout the year.

Decompression Room

The Fort Smith PD encountered some very stressful incidents in 2019 that affected all officers and dispatchers in the department. In early 2020 we realized there was no quiet space for employees to escape from the stresses of the job for a moment of quiet meditation and reflection. An empty office was set aside and transformed into a decompression room for employees. The room was outfitted with calming lighting rather than harsh UV lighting typical of an office building, comfortable chairs, peaceful pictures, aromatherapy, and other stress reducing measures. Employees are able to close the door and escape the



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pressures of the job for a few minutes to relax their mind. The room has been a welcome addition to the department and is utilized often.

Departmental Award Programs/Policy

One way our department seeks to improve morale among our officers is to recognize exemplary performance as much as possible. We implemented ways in which to do so on a monthly, annual, and per incident basis. Each recognition is announced department wide and to local media outlets. Annually, the department takes nominations for Officer of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Distinguished Service Award, Civilian of the Year, and Dispatcher of the Year. Nominations are reviewed by a selection committee and the winner announced during the annual awards banquet held in early spring. On a monthly basis, the Chief's Advisory Board accepts nominations for an employee of the month. Each winner is awarded a certificate, name on plaque displayed at the department, and a preferred parking space. Other awards given as the need arises includes a Certificate of Appreciation, Retirement Recognition Award, Chief's Special Award, Letter of Commendation, Official Commendation Award, Lifesaving Award, Valor Award, and Purple Heart Award. Each award is presented by command staff, announced on social media, and announced to local media outlets

Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Training

All officers are trained on the importance of maintaining mental health through the reduction of stress. The training is conducted during the basic police academy and highlights behaviors and organizational factors that contribute to stress in law enforcement officers. The training also focuses on step the officer can take to reduce the stress and cautions against destructive means of dealing with the stress. The training concludes with an explanation of how stress and hopelessness and lead to suicide in law enforcement officers. Instructors discuss warning signs and behaviors that an officer may be considering suicide. Finally, the officers are given techniques and suggestions to assist a fellow officer who is suicidal, stressing the importance of listening to the suicidal coworker and ensuring they receive the proper assistance.



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Employee Assistance Program

The City of Fort Smith offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to every city employee, including police officers. The program is designed to be a voluntary way to address mental health counseling needs, financial assistance needs, or other situations that cause significant stress on employees. The program is funded by the City and offered by an outside company. Supervisors are trained to recognize behaviors indicative of stress and can mandate an officer attend EAP sessions. The information gained during the EAP is confidential, unless the circumstance requires reporting to the City of Fort Smith Human Resources or Police Command Staff.

Officers and dispatchers assigned to high stress jobs within the department are also mandated to attend counseling sessions to aid with the officer's mental health. The goal of the program, called SHIFT Wellness (Supporting Heroes In Mental Health Fitness Training), is to achieve positive impact on the well-being of officers. The officers assigned to the program include those who deal with extraordinarily stressful matter daily. This can include prolonged exposure to sexually-explicit materials, graphic reports of sexual and physical abuse to small children and juveniles, and even deaths of infants. The Fort Smith Police Department recognizes the need to allow employees to mitigate the stress these types of investigations can cause. Therefore, the Department will participate in SHIFT wellness plan. The plan includes supervisors and personnel assigned to the mandated units be required to contact EAP under the shift wellness plan at least 3 times a year. Supervisors of the involved units (Computer Forensics, Special Investigations Unit, and Communications/911 Center) debriefs employees following unusually traumatic incidents to determine if additional sessions are needed. Finally, any employee who reports they are affected by an unusually traumatic work related occurrence is encouraged to notify a supervisor to request additional SHIFT Wellness referral. The program has been very beneficial to



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officers involved in the program and have not experienced lingering effects from the traumatic situation.

Hepatitis/Flu/COVID-19 Vaccinations

Immediately upon officers being hired they are given the opportunity to receive a Hepatitis vaccine at no cost. The program is conducted by the Sebastian County Health Department and strongly encourages the officer be vaccinated, however it is completely voluntary. In the fall of 2020 the department began offering free flu shots to officers and employees given at the department. This was a service provided by Mercy Occupational Medicine in an effort to ensure all employees were able to receive the seasonal flu vaccination. Plans are also being made to have a similar clinic in early 2021 for employees to receive COVID-19 vaccinations at no cost.

Closing

The Command Staff of the Fort Smith Police Department have worked diligently to meet the expectations set forth by Chief Danny Baker in our Department's Vision Statement that includes our commitment to "strive to improve the lives of everyone we encounter". This vision statement guides all members of the department in all of our actions and decisions, both with the community and each other. The safety and well-being of our officers directly relates to the safety and well-being of our community. As you can see in this nomination, our agency has developed and implemented several safety and wellness programs for both our officers and dispatchers. I would like to submit this nomination because I believe our agency is worthy of the Destination Zero Comprehensive Safety award.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason W. Thompson".

Jason W. Thompson
Deputy Chief
Fort Smith Police Department