

## **Gloucester Township (NJ) Police Department 2023 Comprehensive Officer Safety Summary**

The Township of Gloucester is a 24 square mile suburban community located in Camden County, New Jersey. The Township is located eight miles east of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and fifty miles from Atlantic City, New Jersey. State Highway 168 and the Atlantic City Expressway are main thoroughfares that are within the Township that allow direct access to Philadelphia and Atlantic City. The Gloucester Township Police Department serves a residential population of approximately 70,000 citizens, is the 19<sup>th</sup> most populous municipality in New Jersey. GTPD employs 134 sworn officers, 8 Class 2 armed special officers, 20 unarmed special officers, 17 communications dispatchers, 16 non-sworn staff and over 40 volunteers.

### **OFFICER SAFETY**

All full time and Class II officers are issued custom fitted level III soft body armor and required to wear them on duty and while at the range. The vests were paid for by the New Jersey Body Armor Replacement Fund federal grant and replaced every five years as recommended by the manufacturer, or sooner if they become damaged. Non-uniformed officers are required to have their vest with them when responding to incidents. Additionally, the 17 Special Response Team officers also have front and rear rifle plates in their vests. The department also issues level IV rifle plates and ballistic helmets with face shields to each of their officers and they are required to wear both in high-risk situations such as barricaded subjects, hostage incidents, sniper incidents, terrorist incidents, possible armed suicidal subjects and other dangerous calls.

All officers are issued Sig Sauer P365 9mm handguns with red dot sights. Upon issue, officers must attend a two-day familiarization course and qualify with the weapon. Handguns are also equipped with weapon-mounted lights and red dot sights. Every patrol vehicle is also outfitted with a shotgun. At this time, 48 patrol officers and 8 school resource officers are certified to carry Colt rifles. Both long guns are mounted in a rack inside the patrol vehicle.

The State of New Jersey requires peace officers to qualify bi-annually with their handguns, shotguns, rifles and back-up weapons. GTPD requires their officers to attend an additional tactical range training session each year and display proficiency with any weapon the officer is authorized to carry. The department also offers open range training dates that officers are encouraged to attend.

Officers also have access to two ballistic shields, which are carried in the supervisor's vehicle, and all officers are trained in their use. The special response team also has two ballistic shields that are carried in their response vehicle. Officers are all issued their own gas mask and fit-tested annually. Officers also receive periodic training on using the mask during firearms training.

For less-lethal force situations, the department purchased the pepperball system. Another less-lethal option for officers is the Taser 7 conducted energy device which officers carry on the non-firearm side of their duty belts to minimize the opportunity they will draw their firearm instead of the Taser.

GTPD has two patrol K-9s and two bloodhound tracking dogs. All dogs are equipped with ballistic vests. Vests were purchased with funds donated by private citizens and companies. The department K-9 teams also have two thermal imaging cameras to assist in locating subjects in the dark.

Officers have been wearing body worn cameras since 2017. Officers are required to wear their BWC while on duty and they are activated manually by the officer, when the patrol vehicle lights are activated and when the officer's handgun is removed from its holster. Cameras are required to be activated for all calls for service and all citizen contacts. In addition to after serious incidents, supervisors are required to review 3 recordings per month for each officer. During critical incidents, the BWC video is live streamed to the dispatch center. Supervisors can watch this in real time to assess what resources will be needed to respond to the situation. All patrol vehicles are also equipped with car cameras.

All marked patrol vehicles carry a medical trauma kit which contains oxygen, Narcan, trauma supplies and an extra tourniquet. All officers are trained in the use of all equipment. Each officer is also required to carry a tourniquet on their person. With respect to the department's use of Narcan, to date, officers have deployed Narcan on 246 occasions with 210 documented lives saved. There are always also 7 automated external defibrillators (AED) on the streets and all officers are trained to use them.

In 2013, the department purchased a Lenco BearCat armored vehicle. This vehicle allows officers to safely approach potentially deadly situations with the cover of an armored vehicle to rescue citizens and first responders to evacuate them in life-threatening situations such as barricaded subjects and active shooter situations. The BearCat also has a thermal imaging system and a ramming bar. Since the department started keeping data on its use, the BearCat has been used on 94 search/arrest warrant assignments and 13 critical incidents where the Special Response Team responded. In January of 2018, the BearCat responded to a barricaded subject with two hostages. During negotiations, the subject then began firing his rifle at officers. The subject shot the BearCat, striking the windshield and front end. The subject ended up committing suicide, but no officers or citizens were injured.

The department also conducts active shooting training at several schools and closed commercial buildings. During this training, officers include dispatchers and local fire departments and use Simmunition training weapons. Local college acting student volunteers are used as role players during scenarios. GTPD also has a specially trained crisis intervention team (CIT) to respond to scenes where persons in psychological crisis situations are believed to be involved. All officers are also required to carry crisis information cards as handouts to give information to where subjects can receive assistance.

GTPD also trains their officers monthly in de-escalation of force. They use the department's computer-controlled MILO range system and officers must interact with the scenario being shown on the screen to try to de-escalate the situation. Scenarios also include shoot/don't shoot situations depending on the officer's actions to attempt to diffuse.

Since 2015 the department has purchased 3 tactical robots for clearing buildings and other tactical functions.

The GTPD has an unmanned aircraft (UAV). The UAV program is overseen by a sergeant and seven officers, all of whom are certified by the FAA as remote pilots. In addition to being used in tactical situations and searches for subjects, the UAV is used to document motor vehicle crashes and crime scenes to minimize the time officers may be on the roadway.

Last year this agency submitted to the award categories of Comprehensive Safety, Officer Wellness, Officer Safety and Officer Traffic Safety. The agency was a finalist in Comprehensive Safety, Officer Safety and Officer Traffic Safety. The agency has made some improvements to all of their programs and is submitting them in each category again this year.

#### **OFFICER TRAFFIC SAFETY**

From 2012 to 2018, GTPD had 4 serious crashes involving officers responding to a call. Fortunately, even though the vehicles were totaled or required extensive repairs, the officers only received minor injuries in those crashes. In 2018, the training cadre became certified in instructing the below 100 program and began teaching all sworn officers and class 1 and 2 officers. Officers received initial training in 2018 and each new class 1 and 2 SLEO also receives below 100 training during their department instruction phase. All officers receive Below 100 refresher training each year. Since the implementation of Below 100, the agency has only experienced 2 crashes.

GTPD policy mandates that all employees and passengers wear seatbelts when operating a Township vehicle. The new State statute also requires that all drivers and passengers wear seatbelts when a vehicle is operated

on roadways. Officers are also issued and required to wear high-visibility vests when out of the patrol vehicle for extended periods.

To increase safety during traffic stops, officers have been trained during their FTO phase and through department training to utilize passenger side approaches when feasible. This approach keeps the officer away from the travel lane where the chance of being struck by a passing vehicle is increased.

Potential safety issues are reviewed as part of the supervisor review of body camera and car camera video. If an officer is observed conducting a driver side approach, the supervisor reviews the stop with the officer to determine why it was done and what safety practices could be improved upon.

To minimize the chance of officers being struck by a vehicle, all supervisors and traffic officers were trained in Traffic Incident Management (TIMs) for first responders during traffic crash investigations. The training consisted of scene safety for first responders, a safe and quick clearance of the scene and communication for all involved. Supervisors are responsible for once arriving on scene, to evaluate the traffic control and assets needed to investigate and clear the roadway as quickly as possible to reduce the safety risk to officers and motorist.

Additionally, the department collaborated with their joint insurance fund (JIF) carrier to create a work-zone safety training video. A Sergeant who is assigned to the traffic safety unit and is also a state certified trainer, created the 4-hour work-zone safety training video for the JIF. The video is then assigned to all officers and SLEO's are required to the refresher class each year. The course is assigned in the spring before the majority of road construction overtime assignments begin to increase. To date, no officers have been struck by a vehicle while on a crash scene or construction area work zone.

In 2017, the department purchased the AXON2 Body Worn Camera (BWC) system. They have since upgraded to the AXON 3 and currently have BWCs for all 134 officers. During critical incidents, supervisors and dispatchers have access to live stream video through the officer's BWC to see what resources are needed and to assess tactical situations. Supervisors are also required to review a sample of each officer's BWC footage each month to confirm compliance with policy/law.

In 2010, the department upgraded to the L3 in car cameras for all marked patrol vehicles. In 2019, they upgraded to AXON fleet cameras for all marked and unmarked patrol vehicles. The AXON FLEET system works in conjunction with the BWC program for recording. Supervisors are required per policy to conduct a random review of 3 videos per officer, per month.

Officer speed is monitored through GPS units installed in marked and unmarked patrol vehicles. An automatic speed alert email is sent to the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) Commander and the Administration Commander when a vehicle exceeds 90 mph. Upon receiving the alert email, the Admin and PSU commanders conduct an initial review of the alert and then assign the officer's supervisor to review the incident and reason for the excessive speed. If the speed was determined to be unwarranted or excessive for the type of incident, the officer's immediate supervisor corrects it through training.

The department pursuit policy reflects state guidelines. All pursuits are approved and monitored by a supervisor per policy. Each pursuit is required to have a command level review completed afterwards. This review includes watching of in car camera and body worn camera video, listening to dispatch audio recordings and report review. The review is conducted to ensure that the pursuit was conducted in accordance with policy procedure and for any officer safety issues that may need to be addressed. Any issues found are corrected through training or progressive discipline if warranted.

Pursuit classroom training is conducted biannually at their training facility. Additionally, officers receive roll call training on reviews of current pursuit incidents that occur nationwide.

All officers and SLEO's are issued a department Hi-visibility reflective traffic safety vests and are required to wear their traffic safety vest at all traffic control assignments, crash scene investigations, fire scenes or any incident or event where the on-scene commander determines that officer safety would be increased by wearing the vest.

The Traffic Services Bureau Commander conducts a review of all officer involved motor vehicle crashes to determine the cause. Potential training to minimize future crashes is then reviewed with the training cadre and EVOC instructors. The training is then implemented through quarterly professional development or roll call training.

#### **OFFICER WELLNESS**

To aid in creating and maintaining a culture of resiliency, the department enacted a formal policy regarding employee and family wellness. The policy provides guidance on the department's employee assistance program, resiliency protection officer program, multi-agency peer support program and critical incident stress management program.

Our Multi-agency peer support program (MAPPS) consists of officers who support their peers. When problems are acute or require professional assistance, team members will provide information on professional referral resources to the employee. It is the duty of the MAPPS member to recognize when a peer support contact needs assistance beyond the training, comfort ability, or duties of the peer support person and to make a referral to advanced services.

GTPD currently has 10 officers who were selected after interviews by the program coordinator and psychologist. They received 40 hours of initial training and follow-up quarterly training on peer support. Officers may speak to a MAPPS officer from any of the 3 participating agencies. The program coordinator also assigns MAPPS officers to any critical incident stress debrief that may be held after an incident.

In 2019 the state mandated that each department designate and train at least 1 officer as the Resilience Protection Officer {RPO}. The department originally designated 3 officers as RPO but has since expanded to 10. The RPO is specially trained in helping officers handle the daily stress of police work. Assigned RPO's are responsible for providing resilience training for all officers in their agency, and for also serving as a confidential resource for any officer who wishes to discuss professional or personal challenges. A master list of trained RPO's is available to all officers and they may contact any RPO in the county or state if they choose to.

During any period where it is reasonable to believe that involved personnel may experience physical, cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral reactions to a critical incident, a CISM debriefing is scheduled. Any supervisor can initiate a CISM after an incident. The Critical Incident Stress Debriefing is required whenever an employee is involved in a use of force incident involving the discharge of a firearm or use of force that involves significant injury to any person. In certain situations, the employee's immediate family members may also attend a CISM debrief in order to aid and deal with the emotional suffering of the employee.

The department is contracted with Cooper Health for an Employee Assistance Program. EAP is provided to assist with counseling for circumstances that affect or could affect an employee's or their family's health, personal life or job performance. Use of EAP for employees and their families is free for the first 5 visits. Use of EAP is also confidential. If the employee is ordered to attend EAP by the department, the department only receives notice that the employee is attending. Nothing discussed is forwarded to the department unless the behavior divulged by an employee would constitute a clear and present danger to the safety of the employer or any employee.

In 2021, the department implemented mandatory mental health meetings with a designated psychologist. Every officer from the Chief to the newest officer will be required to attend a 45-minute one-on-one meeting annually. Officers will be scheduled to attend during their designated work hours and may change into street

clothes to attend if they so choose. What is discussed is confidential and the department is only notified if the behavior divulged by an employee would constitute a danger to the safety of the employer or others.

One of the ideas from the department's wellness committee was the creation of a monthly wellness bulletin that is issued the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month via our policy management system. The bulletins began in 2021. Topics are selected from wellness committee members and from officer input on what they would like information on. These topics include eating and nutrition, recommended health screenings, sleep practices, mindfulness techniques, healthy habits and more.

To assist employees and their families in using the many wellness programs the department has a guide that was created to encompass all of the information in one place. Also, in addition to department information, there is also information that was supplied by IACP on nutrition, preventing injuries, improving sleep and financial wellness. The guide is given to every new employee and is updated as changes occur, or new information is added.

GTPD has partnered with Crisis Response Canines for department K9 visits. One or more of the sixteen Crisis Response Canine teams regularly visit with officers as part of their training and also to provide a short comfort break to interact with canines during stressful days that many officers encounter. A Crisis Response Canine team member also is assigned to any critical incident debrief that occurs. The department has found this to be comforting to officers that interact with one or more of the canines during the debrief.

In 2019, the department implemented a Critical Incident Personal Packet. The form is designed to be an information packet that would be beneficial to an officer's family in the event of an officer's critical injury where they cannot speak or untimely death. Completed forms are placed in sealed envelope, then secured in a locked cabinet in the Chiefs office, and only authorized to be opened upon an officer's critical injury or death.

In 2022, this agency submitted in the award categories of Comprehensive Safety, Officer Wellness, Officer Safety and Officer Traffic Safety. The agency was a finalist in Comprehensive Safety, Officer Safety and Officer Traffic Safety. The agency has made some improvements to all of their programs and is submitting them in each category again this year.

***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.***