

Gloucester Township (NJ) Police Department

2023 Officer Traffic 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 19th 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.

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 receive below 100 training during their department instruction phase. All officers receive Below 100 refresher training each year. Since 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. 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 motorists.

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.

Last year 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 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.**