

Herndon (VA) Police Department 2023 General Officer Safety Summary

The Town of Herndon is the third largest incorporated town in Virginia, comprised of 4.25 square miles. It is situated in western Fairfax County, just minutes from Dulles International Airport and approximately 25 miles from Washington, DC. The town has 11 parks. HPD is nationally accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. Under the leadership of Chief Maggie Deboard are 54 police officers and 18 civilian personnel.

All 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 DOJ Bulletproof Vest Partnership and replaced every five years as recommended by the manufacturer. The department also offers officers the option of wearing their vests inside an outer carrier, which is part of the uniform. Sewn onto the outer vest carrier is a hidden flap under which a handle is located so the officer can be pulled to safety. Officers also have access to lighted ballistic shields and helmets which are carried in the supervisor's vehicle.

Officers are issued Glock 9mm handguns with mounted tactical lights. Officers are also provided with patrol rifles and must qualify with them quarterly. The department used to allow officers to carry their personal rifles but discontinued this practice and standardized all rifles so any officer picking up a rifle would be familiar with its operation and capabilities. Officers are also encouraged to carry back-up handguns and must qualify with them. Officers are also issued Tasers, pepper spray and collapsible batons. Officers participate in the department's handcuffing and use of force training. In 2022, there were four use of force incidents involving weapons and 13 incidents of weaponless physical force and all incidents were within department policy.

The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services mandates that all peace officers qualify with their firearms once per year and must receive a passing score of 70% or higher. Herndon PD requires their officers to complete two range trainings per year and requires its officer to achieve a score of 75% or higher. In addition to weapons qualifications, officers are trained in live fire tactical shooting training which includes low light shooting, shooting while moving, shooting from behind cover/concealment, shooting from behind a shield, shooting with another officer and use of force decision making.

Two years ago, the department removed less-lethal shotguns from service, to eliminate the opportunity to mistakenly load them with live rounds, and replaced them with 40mm less lethal launchers capable of discharging foam baton rounds. After more discussion and analysis, the shotguns were returned to service with less lethal bean bag rounds and replaced all the outer stocks with orange stocks to identify them as LL. All patrol officers now carry these in their vehicles. In 2021 the 40mm LL launcher was used to successfully to subdue a subject in emotional crisis who was armed with a knife.

HPD has been using body worn and in-car cameras for four and a half years and was one of the first agencies in Northern Virginia to have body worn cameras (BWCs). The officer's BWC has a built in GPS so the officer can be located even when out of dash cam view. Video footage in use of force incidents are reviewed by the commander. When/if appropriate, the video footage of both cameras are played in briefings and trainings, not to criticize the officer using the camera, but to educate other officers of what went right. The department had an officer involved shooting in 2019 and again in 2022. Video and audio of these incidents were put into a PowerPoint training debriefing and presented it to all department members.

All officers are also issued high-visibility vests and they are required to wear them when out of their patrol cars for longer periods of time to reduce the opportunities for their officers being struck by other vehicles.

In 2022, the department purchased and trained all officers in the use of spit masks to prevent subjects in custody from transferring bodily fluids to its officers.

60% of HPD's officers have been trained in Crisis Intervention Training and continues to send officers to training as it becomes available.

The department also has two thermal imaging cameras to search for subjects hidden by darkness. This provides a greater level of safety than officers searching for dangerous subjects in the dark. HPD also recently purchased FLIR thermal imaging monocular devices.

All officers are issued tactical trauma kits referred to as "Go bags". Inside these kits are tourniquets, Quick Clot, sucking chest wound patches, bandages, Narcan and an airway tube. All officers, including executive staff, are trained by the fire department in the use of every item in the trauma kit. These bags also include additional pistol and rifle magazines. Each patrol car also contains a smaller first aid kit inside the vehicle attached to the headrest for immediate deployment. The kits that were issued prior to this upgrade were given to officers for their personal vehicles.

HPD conducts biennial active shooter training independently and with local police agencies and fire departments. During this training, officers must also utilize their trauma bags to provide aid to simulated shooting victims as well as themselves. These exercises have been conducted at the community center and town staff have been trained to react and retreat during an active shooter situation. Officers also have key card access for entry into any town building at any time, as well as high resolution maps of these buildings pre-loaded into the officers' mobile computers as well as printed maps being available in the sergeant's command vehicle.

HPD has 25 specially trained crisis intervention team (CIT) officers who are available to respond to crisis situations involving mental illness or developmental disability. Officers also receive de-escalation training. As a result of the department's efforts, use of force incidents have been reduced from 21 in 2018 to 12 in 2020 and all but four incidents in 2021 involved hands on use of force only.

Officers are also issued Narcan, which was obtained through a grant. The department has two officers trained as Narcan instructors. In 2022, HPD was responsible for saving two lives via the use of Narcan.

Last year this agency submitted in the award categories of Comprehensive Safety, Officer Wellness, Officer Safety and Officer Traffic Safety and was a finalist in Comprehensive, Wellness 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.**