

DEDICATED TO SERVICE • COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

David J. Harkins
CHIEF OF POLICE
FBI NA #247

February 21, 2023

Destination Zero Program
Memorial Fund Administrative Offices
901 E. Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20004-2025

Re: Destination Zero-Traffic Safety Award Nomination

To Whom This May Concern:

Throughout my 28-year career in law enforcement, I have been a strong proponent for the safety and wellbeing of our officers. I have attended Street Survival courses throughout my career. I was a lead instructor at the Camden County College Police Academy for 7 years, where I taught patrol and survival tactics to police recruits. Since then, throughout the supervisory and command positions that I have held, I have tried to instill in our employees the importance of performing our job duties with safety and wellness as our primary goal.

When I was appointed as the Chief of Police in 2019, one of my primary objectives was to improve and emphasize overall wellness for our officers and employees. This included addressing physical, mental and spiritual wellness. We have revamped our Wellness Committee, purchased additional protective and safety equipment, and have implemented other initiatives to increase the resiliency and wellness of our officers, dispatchers and employees.

I am proud to submit my agency's nomination for the Destination Zero-Traffic Safety Award. The information that follows helps to support the claim that we are a worthy recipient for this recognition. Thank you for this opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,

David J. Harkins
Chief of Police
Gloucester Township Police Department

**DISPATCH: 856-228-4500 • WEB: www.gtpolice.com • EMAIL: police@gtpolice.com
1261 Chews Landing Road, Laurel Springs, New Jersey 08021**

DESTINATION ZERO AWARD SUBMISSION FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

Name of agency: **Gloucester Township Police Department**

Award Category (If submitting for more than one category, a separate submission form must accompany each submission.)

General Officer Safety

Comprehensive Safety

Officer Traffic Safety

Comprehensive Wellness

Officer Wellness

Agency contact name: **Captain Jason Gittens**

Contact Email: **jgittens@gtpolice.com**

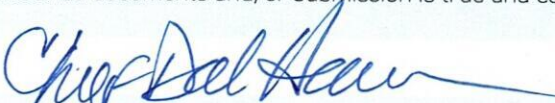
Contact phone number: **856-373-2239**

Please include the following items in your submission:

- Department Release Form
- Executive summary that provides a brief overview of the agency approach including innovative practices, programs, and established partnerships
- Narrative that details the elements and initiatives of the program. Examples of items to include:
 - Description of the agency characteristics
 - Description of the program and its implementation (including marketing material)
 - Before-and-after comparison of change(s) due to the program
 - Qualities that make this program unique compared to other initiatives
 - Challenges that were overcome to implement the program
 - Impact of the program on staff within the agency
 - Quantitative evidence of success
 - Steps other agencies can take to replicate the program
- Appropriate supporting documentation or attachments

AGENCY LEADERSHIP ENDORSEMENT

Signature of the agency representative on this form acknowledges that all information contained herein and in attached documents and/or submission is true and correct.


Signature of Agency Head

2/21/2023

Date

2023 NATIONAL OFFICER SAFETY AND WELLNESS AWARD SUBMISSION



The Destination Zero program maintains a database of all submitted programs and corresponding materials in an effort to benefit law enforcement by providing a robust resource center of proven officer safety programs and wellness programs. The National Law Enforcement Memorial Fund and Museum require acknowledgment by the submitting agency that any materials submitted including, but not limited to relevant promotional materials, training guides, curricula, photos, policies and procedures that relate to the submitted officer safety and wellness program will be shared into the public domain website or other means of transmission.

AGENCY RELEASE

Signature of the agency representative acknowledges and agrees to the release of all submitted materials into the public domain via website or other means of transmission.

Name of agency: **Gloucester Township Police Department**

David J Harkins Chief of Police

(Printed Name and Title)


(Signed Endorsement of Chief/Agency Head)

2/21/2023

(Date)



DESTINATION ZERO

COLLABORATING TO ADVANCE
OFFICER SAFETY AND WELLNESS

Gloucester Township Police Department

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 access the roadways provide is what has contributed to the growth we have experienced over the years with the Township ranked as the 19th most populous municipality in the state as of the 2010 census. We handle approximately 60,000 calls for service each year.

Gloucester Township was founded in 1685 and consists of eight communities; Glendora, Chews Landing, Hilltop, Blenheim, Blackwood, Lambs Terrace, Erial and parts of Sicklerville. The last census from 2010 determined the population of the Township to be 64,634 but with increased housing developments since then, our population is estimated to be around 70,000 now.

The Gloucester Township Police Department was established by ordinance in 1927 with three officers; a Chief, Captain and one officer. Today, the Gloucester Township Police Department is a full service agency with 186 total employees with 134 sworn full time police officers. The department is supplemented by 8 class II (armed) special law enforcement officers and 20 class I (unarmed) special law enforcement offices. Additionally, we have 12 full time and 5-part time Telecommunicators staffing our communications center, 16 civilian professional staff for administrative functions, 6 school crossing guards, 2 agents and 9 volunteer Police Chaplains. The department also has a police community volunteer program with 18 volunteers that assist with critical incidents and special events by with any non-officer tasks that may be needed.

Chief David J. Harkins took command of the agency in 2019 and under his leadership, we have strived to improve officer safety and wellness initiatives for all agency employees.



Officer Traffic Safety

Below 100

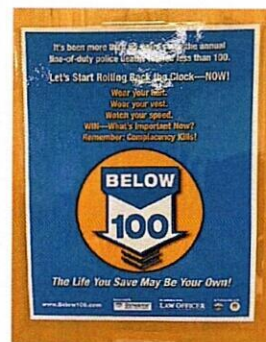
In 2018, the training cadre became certified in instructing the below 100 program and began teaching all sworn officers and class 1 and 2 officers. From 2012 to 2018, we had 4 serious crashes involving officers responding to a call. Fortunately, even though the vehicles were totaled or required extensive repairs, the officers only received minor injuries in those crashes.

The goal of the Below 100 program is to reduce line-of-duty deaths through common-sense training designed to focus on areas under an officers control. 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.

Officers are continually reminded to wear their seatbelts, wear their body armor, watch their speeds, understand the WIN (What's Important Now?) principle, and remember that complacency kills. Below 100 training continues to occur during roll call and



Below 100 posters are displayed throughout the staff areas of the department. Since 2018, we have had 2 serious crashes where the vehicle was totaled but the officers walked away with no injuries or minor injuries because they were wearing their seatbelt.



Mandatory Wearing of Seatbelts

Department 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. To increase officer safety when preparing a prisoner for transport from a scene, the department installed Setina easy access seat belt systems in all patrol units. The system allows officers to seat belt in prisoners for transport without having to lean across the person to properly secure them. For instances where an unruly prisoner is unable to be seat belted in the rear of a patrol unit, the officer must obtain supervisor approval to not seatbelt the prisoner prior to beginning a transport.

Traffic Stops

Traffic stops are one of the most common but can be one of the most dangerous tasks our officers perform each day. To increase safety, 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. A passenger side approach also creates a better opportunity for the officer to see inside the passenger compartment and identify potential threats.

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.



Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Training/ Work Zone Safety

According to data compiled by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, 2021 saw a nationwide 100% increase in officers struck by vehicles when out of their patrol car.

To minimize the chance of our officers being struck by a vehicle, the department explored ways to increase training and safety for when officers are working on a roadway. 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.

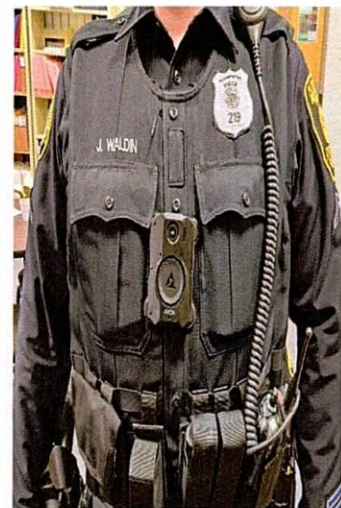
Supervisors are responsible for once arriving on scene, to evaluate the traffic control and assets needed to investigate and clear the roadway as quickly as possible to reduce the safety risk to officers and motorists. Supervisors and traffic officers also check each work zone every day to ensure that the contractor has set up the zone per the approved traffic control plan. If any issues are found, work is halted until the issue is rectified.

Additionally, we collaborated with our 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 our road construction overtime assignments begin to increase.

To date, none of our officers have been struck by a vehicle while on a crash scene or construction area work zone.

Body Worn Cameras (BWC) and Car cameras

In 2017, the department purchased AXON2 Body Worn Camera system. At the time, the purchase was completed using Township funds. At the time, the New Jersey Attorney General issued a directive on the use of body worn cameras by agencies. They were no requirements to have or use BWC's, but that has now changed as of 2021 when a new directive was issued. The AXON body worn cameras were selected as they met the requirements that the Attorney General set forth for the devices. The cameras can be manually activated by the officer or automatically when the vehicles emergency lights are activated. Cameras are required to be activated for all calls for service and for any citizen contacts.



The department made the determination to purchase BWC's as they are a valuable asset intended to assist officers in solving crimes and successfully prosecuting offenders by augmenting an officer's testimony with a video/audio record of the incident. BWC recordings preserve accurate visual depictions of physical evidence and also document how physical evidence was found, thereby helping to establish the facts that must be presented in Fourth Amendment suppression hearings. BWCs also record the physical appearance of suspects and crime victims, preserving evidence of any apparent injuries. The audio portion of BWC recordings document witness and suspect statements. This preserves not only the substantive



content of those statements, but may also show whether officers have legal requirements.

Additionally, this equipment enabled department administrators to conduct periodic reviews of officer-citizen contacts for quality control purposes and aid in the investigation of citizen complaints. BWC's promote police accountability and transparency. A BWC recording of a police-involved shooting or other use of force incident can often provide objective evidence of what occurred. The practical utility of BWCs discourages officers and civilians from engaging in inappropriate conduct. These devices also discourage both law enforcement and civilian witnesses from providing false

information about the circumstances of the encounter; a BWC recording not only can vindicate an officer who is falsely accused of misconduct, but also discourage a person from making false allegations against the officer in the first place.

Cameras were purchased for each officer, 134 total. At the initial implementation, a work group was created that consisted of representatives of administration, patrol, detectives and our police union. This was done to address and alleviate any concerns that officers would have with program as BWC's were new to the department. Because of the work groups input, we were able to implement the program with full officer buy in and minimal issues during the first year. We have since upgraded to the AXON 3 body worn cameras.

Supervisors are required per policy to conduct a random review of 3 videos per officer, per month. Upon review, supervisors are required, if necessary, make any recommendations for training, discipline, or positive performance recognition resulting from the observations. The appropriate Division Commander shall review such findings to determine if any individual or group is in need of further training. Additionally, all use of force and pursuits are required to be reviewed for compliance or training issues.

The department has also added the AXON Respond livestream program that can be viewed in our police dispatch center or in a supervisor's vehicle. This program allows a supervisor to access live video from an officer's BWC. This function is limited to only being used in a critical incident when there may be a need to view live video of the incident occurring. Supervisors can use it to assess the need for additional assets that can assist the officer in need.

In 2010, the department purchased L3 in car cameras for all marked patrol vehicles. In 2019, we 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. Videos are activated manually, with the vehicles emergency lights.



Vehicle Pursuit Policy and Review

The New Jersey Attorney General set forth guidelines on pursuits of vehicles. The department policy reflects the guidelines issued. 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 our training facility as a component of use of force and below 100 training. Officers additionally receive roll call training on reviews current pursuit incidents that occur nationwide.

Supervisor Response Vehicle

In 2019, we created a workgroup to explore ways to better prepare officers at the scene of a critical incident. The group was tasked to review vehicles and equipment that could be beneficial to an officer at the scene so that they would have immediate access to the equipment needed to resolve an incident or assist in life saving actions.

Acting on the recommendations, we purchased using Township funds, two Ford F250 pickup trucks for a Sergeant to operate with one truck assigned per shift so that a vehicle was always on the street and available. Each vehicle was outfitted identically with a storage cap and slide outs installed for easier access to equipment.

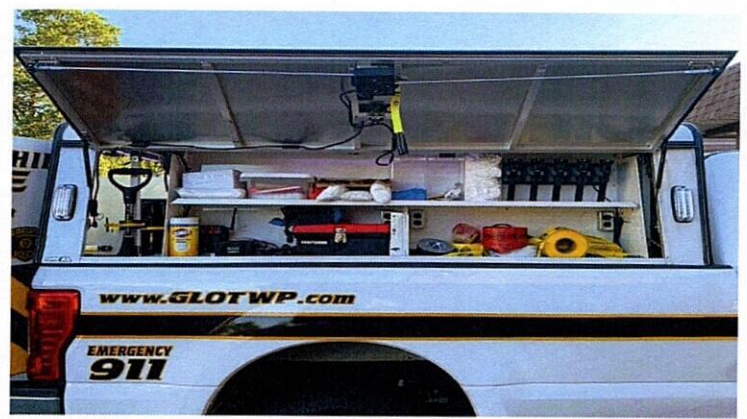
The equipment placed in each vehicles includes level III tactical shield, entry tool kit, HURST Law Enforcement strongArm battery operated hydraulic entry tool, 14 foot collapsible ladder, extra

rifle plate carriers, extra ballistic helmets, extra cases of handgun and rifle ammunition, a water rescue device, portable lighting systems, a less lethal pepperball launching system, case of road flares, extra flashlights, dog snare pole, extra traffic safety vest, pink incident management incident/detour signs, a portable shelter, crime scene barrier set, a pole camera, a night vision camera, crime scene tape, shovel, pike pole, oil dry container and a reeves stretcher.

Additionally, each vehicle can serve as a command post with rear area radio and MDT installed so that the supervisor can manage an incident on scene until additional support vehicles arrive. A green flashing light was also installed atop each vehicle to assist in identifying it as the command post when activated.

Since 2019 when the vehicles were placed in service, they have been of great assistance on several critical incidents where there was no delay in deploying the equipment needed to resolve the incident as safely and quickly as possible.





Traffic Safety Vests

All officers and SLEO's are issued a department Hi-viz reflective traffic safety vest. These vest increase the visibility of the officer in low light situations. Per policy, officers 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.



Officer Crash Analysis

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 Speed Monitoring

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 officers 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 through training corrects it.

Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) Training

The only New Jersey mandate for EVOC training is when an officer is initially trained in the police academy. We currently have 2 certified EVOC instructors that assist with academy training. Our early warning system for monitoring poor employee performance where additional training may be needed has an at fault motor vehicle crash as one of the indicators. Should an officer undergo an early warning system review for an at fault crash, an EVOC instructor is assigned to review driver training with the officer.

Closing

Since becoming Chief of Police in 2019 and in the 9 years prior as Deputy Chief, Chief Harkins has made it a priority to ensure that the department is always striving to have the safest working environment through policy and procedures, equipment, training and employee wellness programs.

As a prior SWAT team commander, Chief Harkins knows the dangers of officer complacency and poor safety and tactics. He has empowered the command staff and first line supervisors with identifying safety issues and correcting them. If correcting an issue involved obtaining new or upgraded equipment, he has always worked with our Township Administrator and Finance Officer to identify funding sources so that we can proceed with purchasing. One of most recent purchases that came from an identified issue are the supervisor response vehicles.

Many of our programs can easily be replicated in similar or smaller agencies and we readily assist an agency when the request information on our programs.

It is for all of these reasons that I believe that our agency is worthy of the National Law Enforcement Memorial and Museum, Destination Zero Officer Traffic Safety Award.

Professionally,



Jason Gittens
Captain of Police