POLICE OPERATIONS AND DATA REPORT

BLUFFTON POLICE DEPARTMENT, BLUFFTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

DRAFT

CPSM®

ICMA

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The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is a 109-year-old, non-profit professional association of local government administrators and managers, with approximately 13,000 members located in 32 countries.

Since its inception in 1914, ICMA has been dedicated to assisting local governments and their managers in providing services to their citizens in an efficient and effective manner. ICMA advances the knowledge of local government best practices with its website, www.icma.org, publications, research, professional development, and membership.

CENTER FOR PUBLIC SAFETY MANAGEMENT (CPSM)

The ICMA Center for Public Safety Management (ICMA/CPSM was launched by ICMA to provide support to local governments in the areas of police, fire, and Emergency Medical Services.

The Center also represents local governments at the federal level and has been involved in numerous projects with the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security. In 2014, as part of a restructuring at ICMA, the Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) spun out as a separate company and is now the exclusive provider of public safety technical assistance for ICMA. CPSM provides training and research for the Association's members and represents ICMA in its dealings with the federal government and other public safety professional associations such as CALEA, PERF, IACP, IFCA, IPMA-HR, DOJ, BJA, COPS, NFPA, etc.

The Center for Public Safety Management, LLC, maintains the same team of individuals performing the same level of service that it had for ICMA. CPSM's local government technical assistance experience includes workload and deployment analysis using our unique methodology and subject matter experts to examine department organizational structure and culture, identify workload and staffing needs, and identify industry best practices.

We have conducted more than 400 such studies in 46 states and provinces and more than 275 communities ranging in population size 3,300 (Lewes, DE) to 800,000 (Indianapolis, IN).

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SECTION 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Public Safety Management, LLC (CPSM) was commissioned to review the operations of the Town of Bluffton Police Department (BPD). While our analysis covered all aspects of the department's operations, particular areas of focus of this study included identifying appropriate staffing of the department given the workload, community demographics, and crime levels; the effectiveness of the organizational structure; and efficiency and effectiveness of division/unit processes. Special emphasis and attention was applied to the department's policy and operational practices.

We analyzed the department workload using operations research methodology and compared that workload to staffing and deployment levels. We reviewed other performance indicators that enabled us to understand the implications of the service demands on current staffing. Our study involved data collection, interviews with key operational and administrative personnel, focus groups with line-level department personnel, on-site observations of the job environment, data analysis, comparative analysis, the development of alternatives and recommendations, and engagement with key town stakeholders.

Based upon CPSM's detailed assessment of the Bluffton Police Department, we conclude that the department is doing an outstanding job—considering the challenges of policing in today's environment—with a staff dedicated to the department's mission of providing quality police service. Throughout this report, we will strive to allow the reader to look inside the department to understand its strengths and challenges. We sincerely hope that all parties constructively utilize the information and recommendations contained herein to improve the operations of the Bluffton Police Department to provide an even higher level of service to the community.

As part of this Executive Summary, we offer general observations identifying some of the department's more significant issues. We also list key recommendations for consideration; we believe these recommendations will enhance organizational effectiveness. Often, these types of recommendations require a substantial financial commitment. It is important to note that this report will examine specific sections of the department and offer a discussion of our observations and recommendations for each.

The list of recommendations is extensive. Should the Bluffton Police Department choose to implement any or all recommendations, it must be recognized that this process will not take just weeks or even months to complete but perhaps years. The recommendations are intended to form the basis of a long-term improvement plan for the town and department. Though lengthy, this list of recommendations is standard in our operational assessments of agencies nationwide and should not be interpreted as an indictment of the department. While all the recommendations are important, we suggest the police department leadership, in conjunction with the Town Manager and community members, decide which recommendations should take priority for implementation.

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Overall, the CPSM consultants were impressed with the Bluffton Police Department and its people. Although a number of recommendations for improvement are outlined in this report, the core of the organization and the capacity to manage policing challenges are in place. The following are some summarized highlights from the report:

- The Bluffton Police Department is a generally well-staffed police department and possesses the capacity to handle most of the day-to-day challenges that face the organization.

- The organization is having a difficult time maintaining full staffing. One reason for this is that the culture of policing in South Carolina appears to support a "free agent" style of policing wherein officers may move from agency to agency several times in their career. Although this is not unheard of in other places it appears to happen more in this region and contributes to some of the staffing challenges. It should be noted that the staffing shortages in BPD are impacting select specialized functions and not necessarily the core patrol and investigative functions.

- Overall, the department is efficiently deployed and is addressing most areas of policing that an agency of this size category handles.

- The men and women of the agency are professional and committed to the policing profession and the Bluffton community.

- The department should adjust its policy management practices; this is outlined later in this report. However, overall, the policies that were reviewed meet industry standards in most cases.

- BPD should adopt a data-driven approach to proactive policing practices as well as crime reduction strategies.

- The community appears committed to providing the department the necessary equipment to be successful in carrying out its duties.

- Bluffton is a very nice community that enjoys a very low crime rate but also has high expectations of the service provided by the police department.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Administrative

(See pp. 17-23)

1. CPSM recommends that BPD maintain an up-to-date operational chart and department assignment list.

2. CPSM recommends that BPD reorganize the department organizational chart so that functions are housed where there is a natural nexus to other department functions.

3. CPSM recommends that BPD eliminate at least one management position (captain or lieutenant) and reclassify it as an operational position (officer or corporal).

4. We recommend that BPD pursue and complete the development of a department succession plan.

5. We recommend that BPD engage its legal counsel for a review of all critical policies recently updated through the department's current review process.

6. We recommend that BPD involve legal counsel in all policy updates going forward.

7. We recommend that BPD consider purchasing a policy subscription service to replace its current policy manual and internal policy process.

Internal Affairs

(See pp. 23-31)

8. CPSM recommends consideration be given to creating a Professional Standards/Internal Affairs Unit that reports directly to the Chief of Police regarding I/A issues.

9. CPSM recommends that the person in the IA assignment be rotated every three years.

10. CPSM would recommend that every sergeant in the organization be sent to internal affairs training.

11. CPSM would recommend the department add both Transfer and Demotion to the ways an employee can be disciplined.

12. CPSM recommends that all policies, especially those involving citizen and personnel complaints, be reviewed annually.

13. When the department is faced with an employee's discipline that rises to anything that results in monetary loss, Education Based Discipline (EBD) should be considered.

Use of Force

(See pp. 31-34.)

14. The Use of Force policy should be reviewed annually for any changes in law or altering any way that force is used.

15. CPSM recommends adding additional language to the reporting requirements.

16. Policy should also be reviewed to ensure the threshold of reporting is appropriate based upon best practices.

Emergency Management

(See pp. 34-38)

17. Collateral duties such as FTO coordinator are incompatible with the Emergency Manager's present role, and should be transferred to a supervisor in the Patrol Division.

18. Review and revise *SOP 011, Natural Hazards*, to more appropriately align responsibilities for emergency preparedness with the department's current staffing model.

19. Consideration should be given to incorporating non-government organizations such as the Red Cross into the EOC Logistics working group to enable a timelier response in establishing food and shelter services at disasters.

20. Consideration should be given to ensuring that biennial dynamic practical exercise training, as called for in policy, be conducted for all EOC disciplines.

21. Consideration should be given to transitioning the Emergency Manager position from a commissioned officer to that of a career civilian position.

Patrol
(See pp. 39-67)

22. CPSM recommends that Bluffton PD management engage in strategic decision-making regarding patrol officer-initiated workload.

23. CPSM recommends periodic reviews of call load data to determine whether scheduling changes should be made. This review should be done twice per year, during summer and winter.

24. We recommend that BPD take steps to realign its patrol workforce to bring patrol staffing closer to 60 percent of its sworn workforce.

25. CPSM recommends that BPD take steps to ensure an accurate collection of data of all patrol officer and sergeant workload.

26. CPSM recommends that BPD management carefully track "directed patrol" activity to ensure it is meeting department and community objectives.

27. We recommend that BPD and Bluffton engage local Traffic Engineering departments (City/County/State) and establish a mechanism that would enable police concerns to be routed to Engineering for potential solutions when appropriate.

28. We recommend that BPD engage in a data-driven strategic approach to traffic enforcement.

29. We recommend that BPD work to ensure that all legitimate patrol officer work is accurately captured in CAD in order to improve future workload assessments.

Investigations Division
Criminal Investigations Unit
(See pp. 68-79)

30. A comprehensive review of *SOP 024, Criminal Investigations*, should be conducted to ensure that the policy meets current department practices and operating needs.

31. As part of a comprehensive review of the Criminal Investigations policy, *SOP 024. II. C.* should be amended to reflect after-hours call-out procedures to include the identification of the types of incidents that warrant call-outs.

32. Consideration should be given to developing a rotational schedule for the detective assignment and move away from its status as a permanent assignment, which is the case at present.

33. Consideration should be given to the development of a CID training matrix to identify both required and desirable training courses as a guide to ensure that CID personnel training opportunities are properly prioritized and met.

34. Consideration should be given to conducting a technology needs assessment and developing a priority list for acquisition as funding permits.

35. To ensure accuracy and consistency, responsibility for FBI UCR NIBRS reporting should be transferred to the Records Division. Training of personnel will be required. As well, if additional staff are required, a part-time hire may be necessary.

36. Department command should review crime and crime clearance rates on a quarterly or semi-annual basis to allow for an accurate assessment of the effectiveness of the department's investigative efforts and practices. The review should include both individual detective as well as cumulative department data.

Crime Scene Investigation
(See pp. 79-85)

37. A policy focused on crime scene investigation should be developed; it should include detailed responsibilities for patrol officers and detectives, as well as factors to be considered in seeking mutual aid for the processing of complex crime scenes.

38. Develop a training matrix specific to crime scene investigations.

39. Consideration should be given to acquiring a CSI-specific software program to include tracking of future CSI efforts and rates of success of such efforts.

Community Mental Health
(See pp. 86-88)

40. The Community Mental Health SOP should be amended to clarify the mandatory training schedule and eliminate the existing conflict in policy.

Special Operations Division

SROs
(See pp. 89-93)

41. Develop a training matrix that identifies SRO-related training specific to the functions of a BPD SRO, and utilize that listing to prioritize these courses over others of less importance as it relates to the specific function of this position.

42. A department policy delineating the purpose of the SRO program and the roles and responsibilities of the SROs should be developed to guide operations. Those roles and responsibilities outlined in the Town's contractual agreement with Beaufort County School District should serve as the framework for such a policy.

Police Explorer Program
(See pp. 94-96)

43. The department, without delay, should develop a SOP to guide the administration and operations of the Police Explorer Program.

44. Consideration should be given to utilizing Police Explorers as an alternative staffing source, in limited roles, at events such as 5k runs and parades. Compensation would be provided to the Explorer Post to support the post's activities.

Community Service Assistants
(See pp. 96-97)

45. CPSM strongly urges BPD management to examine the process by which CSAs issue parking citations to include the technology in use, the need for an address of the vehicle's registered owner information to be added to the citation, and court appearance requirements when citations have been paid by the violator.

Critical Incident Tactical Response

46. Develop an active shooter policy to provide direction for all personnel responding to such an incident.

Mutual Aid

47. Review the now 13-year-old mutual aid policy to ensure that it remains accurate in guiding current operations.

48. Examine whether additional mutual aid agreements are warranted for SLED and/or adjacent counties, cities, and towns.

Special Events

49. CPSM recommends the department consider creating a part-time civilian position that could handle the responsibilities connected to special events.

10-33 Program

50. CPSM recommends the department continue to return existing equipment if it is not meeting its needs and at some point have discussions regarding future participation.

PIO/Social Media

51. In addition to the scheduled training, CPSM recommends the PIO also attend some type of annual conference training.

52. CPSM recommends the department consider implementing a PIO team of approximately 2-3 officers who could assist with handling PIO responsibilities.

53. CPSM recommends the department policy be modified to allow the PIO to conduct media interviews without the prior authorization of the Chief of Police.

Support Services

Personnel and Recruitment

54. CPSM recommends the Town continue to move forward with plans to provide a hiring bonus for new and experienced recruits.

55. CPSM recommends that all hiring backgrounds for sworn personnel positions be outsourced to a private investigation company that specializes in background investigations.

56. The department should target its recruitment efforts towards woman and hire more females to fulfill the 30X30 initiative, thus making the department more representative of the population it serves.

Training

57. CPSM recommends the section of policy regarding the training advisory committee be removed or the department create such a committee to match policy.

58. CPSM recommends the department utilize the already existing module in its case management system for the tracking of training or purchase a training tracking software package.

59. CPSM recommends the department develop a training plan for each specialty position in the department.

60. CPSM recommends the department consider modifying its policy for qualification on firearms and rifles to twice a year.

FTO Program
(See pp. 112-116)

61. Since the FTO function is more Patrol-centric, CPSM recommends the FTO Program Manager responsibility be transferred to one of the Patrol Lieutenant positions. *At the time of this review, BPD had some dynamic management challenges that created the current structure.

62. CPSM recommends the department develop a standardized process for the selection of FTOs because of the impact an FTO can have on the department.

63. It is recommended that the department consider completing an annual performance evaluation on each FTO to ensure they are performing up to the program's standards.

64. CPSM recommends that a one-year cap be put on the FTO position after appointment; however, upon receiving a satisfactory review, the FTO can be extended for an additional year.

65. CPSM recommends that the department define the amount of experience required for the FTO position.

Records
(See pp. 116-121)

66. CPSM recommends the department ensure that the SOP and the procedure manual for Records are reviewed and updated annually.

67. Consideration should be given to implementing an online reporting option for select crimes.

68. Consideration should be given to implementing an online service that enables citizens to access traffic accident reports to free up employees' time for other duties.

69. Eliminate the acceptance of cash for department transactions at the public counter to remove an unnecessary risk to the Town, BPD, and its staff.

70. The department should consider placing a payment kiosk in the lobby of the station.

71. CPSM recommends that the department conduct an ergonomic study of the two employees' work stations.

FOIA
(See pp. 121-122)

72. If delays begin occurring due to an increasing number of FOIA requests, the department should add an additional FTE to the unit.

73. The department should purchase software that enables tracking of FOIA requests to be done more easily and efficiently than manually logging them.

74. CPSM recommends the Records Unit track the amount of time spent on fulfilling FOIA requests to determine in the future if additional personnel are needed.

Property and Evidence
(See pp. 122-128)

75. CPSM would recommend creating an SOP defining ONLY how the P&E room operates.

76. CPSM recommends the policy be reviewed annually for changes in law and procedure.

77. CPSM encourages the department to have the P&E technician attend classes provided by IAPE, and as well attend conferences and local training regarding P&E.

78. CPSM would encourage the department to continue to ensure the auditing of the P&E is completed as stated in the policy.

79. CPSM recommends that the technician develop a purging pattern and cycle to reduce the intake deficit.

80. CPSM recommends the department purchase a key locker that requires a key fob or key card entry to provide a record of who opens it to obtain the keys.

81. CPSM recommends the department put a computer and bar code machine in the processing area to expedite the process and avoid redundances.

82. It is imperative that the bar scanning device is repaired to allow the technician to be more efficient.

83. CPSM recommends the department consider creating two secure rooms within the storage area to store narcotics and weapons.

84. It is recommended that a new safe be purchased or the current safe be repaired.

85. CPSM recommends the department install an alert monitor on the refrigerator.

86. The department should ensure that a weapons destruction is conducted at least once a year, and that when that takes place, the technician is escorted by two armed officers.

87. CPSM recommends the department assign an armed officer to accompany the technician when transporting narcotics.

88. CPSM recommends the technician become IAPE-certified.

Quartermaster
(See pp. 128-130)

89. CPSM recommends that a key (fob/card) entry be installed on the door to the quartermaster's office.

90. For reliable accountability and tracking of the department's equipment and inventory, CPSM recommends the agency purchase asset tracking software.

91. CPSM recommends the agency take advantage of grant opportunities such as the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership offered by the Bureau of Justice.

Facility
(See pp. 130-132)

92. CPSM recommends the Town begin considering the options available to enlarge the department's workspace to better accommodate the needs of the department's expected growth.

93. CPSM recommends consideration be given to allowing the civilian employees who must drive their personnel vehicles to work be allowed to park in the rear parking lot.

Fleet
(See pp. 132-134)

94. It is recommended that the department purchase a fleet management system to effectively track maintenance and repairs for its police vehicles.

Communications / Dispatch
(See pp. 134-137)

95. CPSM would encourage the department to form an advisory board of those agencies contracting with Beaufort County Communications.

96. CPSM urges the department to review its CAD call priorities and limit Priority 1 calls to those involving life-safety or in-progress calls. (Recommendation No. 97.)

97. CPSM would recommend the department initiate a conversation with the county's communication manager about the reasons for the excessive time on P-1 calls.

IT / Technology
(See pp. 138-139)

98. CPSM recommends consideration be given to forming and implementing an IT Committee.

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SECTION 2. METHODOLOGY

Data Analysis

CPSM used numerous sources of data to support our conclusions and recommendations for the Bluffton Police Department. Information was obtained from the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, Part I offenses, along with numerous internal information sources. UCR Part I crimes are defined as murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, and larceny of a motor vehicle. Internal sources included data from the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system for information on calls for service (CFS).

All data, analysis, and recommendations, especially for patrol operations, are based upon CPSM's examination of 37,251 CAD events during the period of May 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024, which are those calls handled by the department's patrol officers. Of those 37,251 calls noted, 10,175 were community-initiated calls requiring service, and 13,167 were calls initiated by Bluffton police officers.

Interviews

This study relied extensively on intensive interviews with personnel. Remote (Zoom meetings), on-site, and in-person interviews were conducted with people throughout the organization and the town.

Focus Groups

A focus group is an unstructured group interview in which the moderator actively encourages discussion among participants. Group discussion permits greater exploration of topics. For the purposes of this study, focus groups were held with a representative cross-section of employees within the department.

Document Review

CPSM consultants were furnished with numerous reports and summary documents by the Bluffton Police Department. Information on planning, personnel staffing, deployment, monthly reports, annual reports, operations manuals, evaluations, training records, and performance statistics were all reviewed by project team staff. Follow-up emails and phone calls were used to clarify information as needed.

Operational/Administrative Observations

Numerous observations were conducted over the course of the evaluation period. These included observations of general patrol operations, investigations, and administrative services such as records, property and evidence, professional standards, and administrative functions. CPSM representatives engaged in all facets of department operations from a "participant observation" perspective.

Staffing Analysis

In virtually all CPSM studies, we are asked to identify appropriate staffing levels. That is the case in this study as well. This report will discuss workload, operational and safety conditions, and other factors to be considered in establishing appropriate staffing levels. Staffing recommendations are based on our comprehensive evaluation of all relevant factors.

SECTION 3. COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Town of Bluffton is located near the southern tip of South Carolina, near the border with Georgia. Located in the center of Beaufort County, Bluffton is affectionately known as the "Heart of the Lowcountry." The Town is part of the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton-Port Royal, South Carolina Metropolitan Statistical Area and is among the fastest-growing municipalities in the state.

Bluffton was incorporated in 1852 as a one-square-mile town located on a bluff above the May River. The Town has experienced significant growth since 1998 and today encompasses approximately 54 square miles. According to the U.S. Census, Bluffton's population was only 738 in 1990; by 2000, it had grown to just 1,275. At that point, exponential growth occurred. The 2010 census indicated the population had grown more than 800 percent to 12,530. By 2020, it was officially 27,716; in 2023, the population was estimated to be 35,243 people.

The original downtown area still exists and is a very charming southern community that attracts visitors and residents with its mix of business, retail, and restaurants.

It should be noted that the square mileage of the Town is considered to be accurate in terms of the patrol area that Bluffton PD is responsible for. However, the patrol area may be larger due to the fact that unincorporated Beaufort County has several areas in and around Bluffton. Those county "pockets" would make for an overall larger area for patrol purposes since BPD units frequently drive through them to other Bluffton patrol areas. The population numbers, on the other hand, may be lower as the census figures do not separate county areas that are called "Bluffton" from the Town. If the population of those county areas were deducted from the Town's population total, then the official "residents" of the Town of Bluffton would be lower than reported here. The department and the Town did not have a revised population number for the residents within Town boundaries.

We observed a community that is a mix of residential developments and commercial developments. However, it was difficult to always distinguish what was official Town area and what areas were considered Bluffton but were actually county areas.

Bluffton has a "council-manager" form of government. The Town Council has five members: a mayor, a mayor pro-tempore, and three council members.

Demographics

Select demographic data from the U.S. Census is noted in the following table. The table shows data from the Town of Bluffton compared to Beaufort County, the State of South Carolina, and the United States. As one can see, Bluffton's growth is significant and makes the community an outlier when compared to other communities. It is rare to see communities grow in both population as well as land area, as is the case in Bluffton.

It is worth noting that Bluffton is statistically better in many categories such as owner-occupied housing, income, education, and poverty levels versus the county-state-national averages. At the same time, Bluffton is a somewhat more expensive community to live in, with higher median housing and rent prices. The population density is also significantly higher than the state and national averages and will continue to increase as the population grows.

TABLE 3-1: U.S. Census Data (Town, County, State, and US)

	Bluffton, SC	Beaufort County	South Carolina	United States
Population 2020	27,718	187,106	5,118,422	331,464,948
Estimated Population 2023	35,243	198,979	5,373,555	334,914,895
White	77.10%	79.10%	68.90%	75.50%
Black / African American	8.60%	16.70%	26.30%	13.60%
Hispanic	13.10%	11.20%	6.60%	19.10%
Two or More Races	6.10%	2.10%	2.20%	3.00%
Asian	0.80%	1.50%	2.00%	6.30%
Owner-Occupied Housing	82.30%	75.50%	70.90%	64.80%
Median Housing Value	$390,290	$377,900	$216,200	$281,900
Median Gross Rent	$2,050	$1,435	$1,065	$1,268
High School Grad., age 25+	96.80%	93.60%	89.30%	89.10%
Bachelor's Degree	46.50%	43.40%	30.60%	34.30%
Median Household Income	$99,575	$81,260	$63,623	$75,149
Persons in Poverty	5.50%	10.00%	14.00%	11.50%
Land Area 2010	51.3 Sq. Mi	576 Sq Mi	30,064 Sq Mi	3,531,905 Sq Mi
Land Area 2020	51.97 Sq Mi	576 Sq Mi	30,064 Sq Mi	3,533,038 Sq Mi
2010 Population Sq. Mile	244.2	281.5	153.9	87.4
2020 Population Sq Mile	533.3	324.8	170.3	93.8

LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

The Town of Bluffton is served by the Bluffton Police Department (BPD). The BPD has primary jurisdictional responsibilities over all incorporated areas within the Town limits. There are unincorporated areas of Bluffton and neighboring jurisdictions, such as Hilton Head Island, and which are patrolled by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Department. There are also nearby and neighboring police departments that are within the general vicinity of the Town of Bluffton. Although these departments have their own geographic patrol responsibilities, they are all seen within the Town limits on a regular basis, and because these agencies share the same radio channel for primary dispatch operations, they often assist one another on calls.

BPD provides all necessary daily police operations to the community, including patrol, school resource officers, and investigations. Some services, such as dispatching, crime scene processing, and special operations (SWAT), are delivered on a regional model.

Bluffton PD Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Our Mission is to protect and serve the Town of Bluffton with Professionalism, Excellence, Integrity, Dignity, and Respect, with an emphasis on Community Policing and Enforcing the law to enhance the quality of life for all.

The Bluffton Police Department will strive to be innovative, progressive, and transparent. We are committed to serving our team and the community with integrity, courage, and professionalism.

Core Values
The Core Values of BDP make up the acronym S.H.I.E.L.D.:

Serving with Compassion

Honor

Integrity

Excellence

Leadership

Dedication

Uniform Crime Reports

While communities differ from one another in population, demographics, geographical landscape, and socio-economic characteristics, comparisons to other jurisdictions can be helpful in illustrating how crime rates in Bluffton measure up against those of other South Carolina communities as well as the nation overall.

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program assembles data on crime from police departments across the United States; the reports are utilized to measure the extent, fluctuation, and distribution of crime. For reporting purposes, criminal offenses are divided into two categories: Part 1 offenses and Part 2 offenses. For Part 1 offenses, representing the most serious crimes, the UCR index is split into two categories: violent crimes and property crimes. Violent crimes include murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes include burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. **Crime rates are expressed (indexed) as the number of incidents per 100,000 population to allow for comparison.**

The following tables and figures include the most recent information that is publicly available at the national level. This includes crime reports for 2013 through 2022 and clearance rates for 2021 and 2022.

In comparing Bluffton data with other South Carolina jurisdictions, one can see that BPD reports both violent crime property crime rates that are significantly lower than other comparable South Carolina communities and that are significantly lower than the U.S. average for all communities. These reported numbers would indicate that Bluffton is a very safe community.

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TABLE 3-2: Reported Crime Rates in 2021 and 2022, by Jurisdiction

| Municipality | State | 2021 | | | | 2022 | | | |
| | | Population | Crime Rates | | | Population | Crime Rates | | |
			Violent	Property	Total		Violent	Property	Total
Beaufort	SC	13,293	361	3,588	3,949	13,003	331	3,084	3,415
Goose Creek	SC	45,901	292	1,732	2,024	46,665	289	1,830	2,119
Hanahan	SC	29,582	260	1,312	1,572	22,320	403	1,470	1,873
Hardeeville	SC	9,332	536	2,004	2,540	9,995	240	2,651	2,891
Moncks Corner	SC	13,108	526	2,647	3,174	13,906	618	2,855	3,473
Mount Pleasant	SC	95,657	98	1,104	1,202	93,951	128	1,366	1,493
Orangeburg	SC	12,335	2,067	5,934	8,002	12,307	1,739	5,753	7,492
Port Royal	SC	14,970	307	1,283	1,590	13,430	261	1,266	1,526
Summerville	SC	54,438	244	1,977	2,221	51,423	369	2,738	3,108
Walterboro	SC	5,303	1,263	6,713	7,977	5,432	957	7,493	8,450
Bluffton	**SC**	30,519	85	737	822	36,064	69	613	682
South Carolina		**5,190,705**	**533**	**2,605**	**3,138**	**5,282,634**	**519**	**2,456**	**2,975**
National		***332,031,554**	**396**	**1,933**	**2,329**	**332,403,650**	**380**	**1,954**	**2,334**

Note: *We used national crime and clearance rates for 2021 as estimated in the FBI's report *The Transition to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS): A Comparison of 2020 and 2021 NIBRS Estimates.*

The following figure visually represents the violent and property crime rates for Bluffton from 2013 through 2022. Violent crime has declined slightly (albeit from a very low starting point), while property crime overall has declined considerably over that period of time.

FIGURE 3-1: Reported Bluffton Violent and Property Crime Rates, by Year
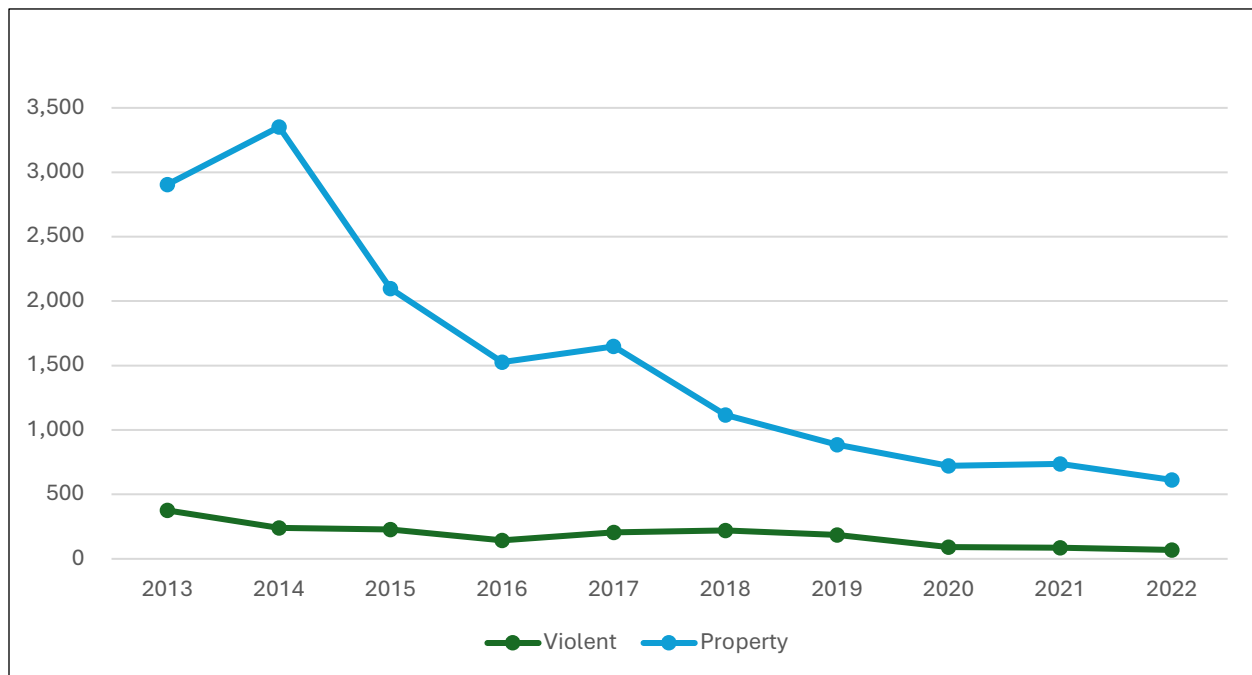
The following figure compares the 10-year trend in crime rate for Bluffton versus South Carolina. Again, Bluffton has a lower rate overall and has also seen a significantly steeper crime drop during the 2013 to 2022 period.

FIGURE 3-2: Reported Bluffton and South Carolina Crime Rates, by Year

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TABLE 3-3: Reported Bluffton, South Carolina, and National Crime Rates, by Year

Year	Bluffton				South Carolina				National			
	Population	Violent	Property	Total	Population	Violent	Property	Total	Population	Violent	Property	Total
2013	13,047	376	2,905	3,280	4,800,816	502	3,581	4,083	321,947,240	362	2,627	2,989
2014	13,755	240	3,352	3,591	4,856,207	489	3,415	3,904	324,699,246	357	2,464	2,821
2015	15,689	229	2,097	2,326	4,919,429	489	3,260	3,748	327,455,769	368	2,376	2,744
2016	17,498	143	1,526	1,669	4,984,808	501	3,220	3,721	329,308,297	383	2,353	2,736
2017	20,024	205	1,648	1,853	5,024,369	506	3,196	3,702	325,719,178	383	2,362	2,745
2018	22,578	221	1,116	1,337	5,084,127	488	3,018	3,506	327,167,434	369	2,200	2,568
2019	24,812	185	887	1,072	5,148,714	511	2,940	3,452	328,239,523	379	2,010	2,489
2020	27,549	91	722	813	5,118,425	556	2,842	3,398	331,449,281	399	1,958	2,357
2021	30,519	85	737	822	5,190,705	533	2,605	3,138	332,031,554	396	1,933	2,329
2022	36,064	69	613	682	5,282,634	519	2,456	2,975	332,403,650	380	1,954	2,334

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SECTION 4. ADMINISTRATION

Chief Joseph Babkiewicz is the current police chief in the Town of Bluffton. He reports directly to the Town Manager. The Town has experienced significant turnover in the police chief position; it was reported to us that six different police chiefs have served in this role in the last 10 years. With that level of turnover during a time of significant department growth, the structure of the organization has evolved and changed quickly. The following figure is the current organizational chart provided to CPSM.

FIGURE 4-1: Bluffton Police Department Organizational Chart (July 2024)
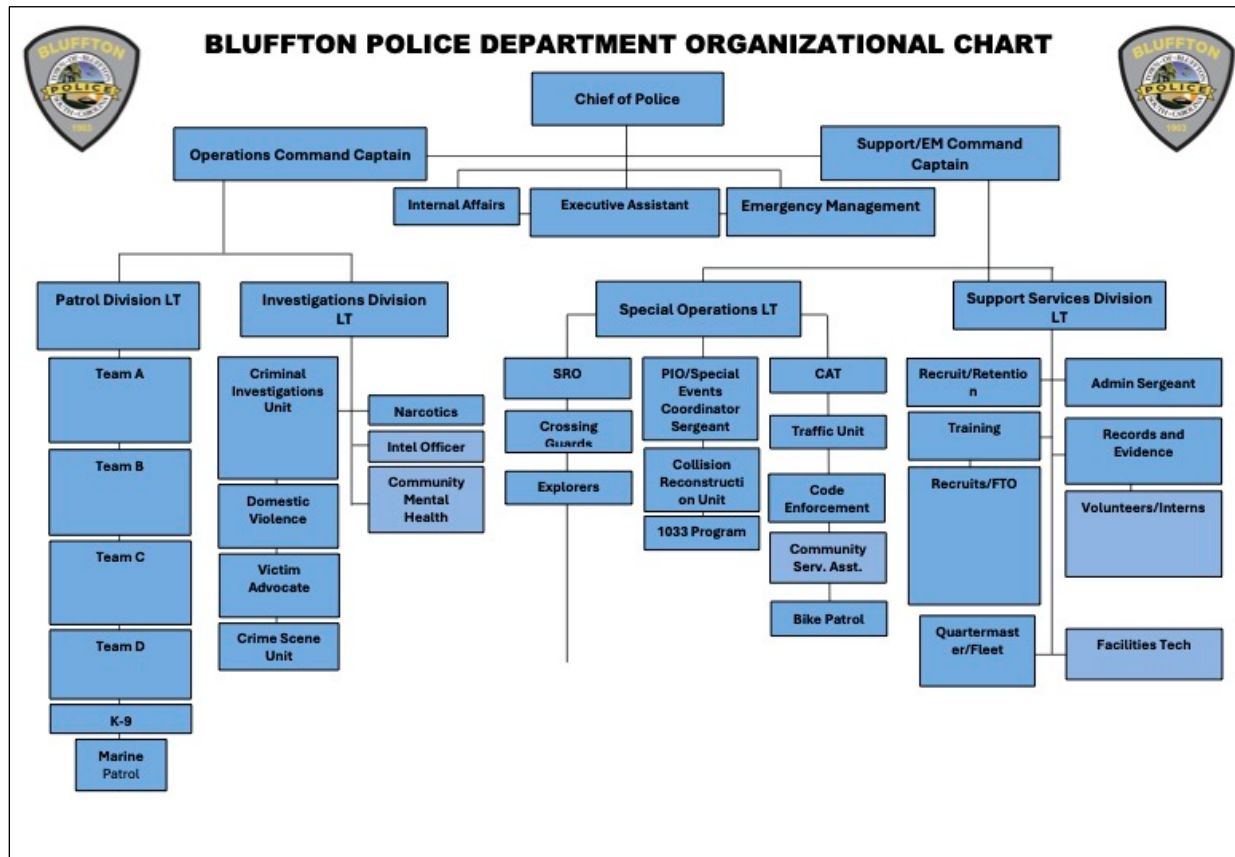
The police department is divided into two primary divisions, each led by a police captain. The Operations Division is comprised of Patrol and Investigations. The Support Division encompasses myriad responsibilities ranging from traditional civilian employee functions (such as Records) to Special Operations.

Each of these divisions and their responsibilities will be discussed in greater detail in this report. However, here we will offer some observations about the structure of this organizational chart.

- The department's internal affairs (IA) function is under the police chief. It is normal for the IA function to answer directly to the police chief, and we will make recommendations to support that. However, no separate IA function currently exists within the agency.

- The Patrol Division is staffed with two lieutenants, each managing two patrol teams. This chart reflects that all four teams report directly to one lieutenant.

- At present, the K9 function consists of one bloodhound. That K9 is not a patrol asset and is not part of the patrol function.

- The "Marine Patrol" is not a full-time function. It is seasonal and staffed by school resource officers (SROs) only occasionally when they are not working at the schools. Patrol reported to us that the function is not managed within the division.

- Under Investigations, the domestic violence and victim advocate function are staffed by one sworn officer.

- The "Crime Scene Unit" is actually a regional function that does not report to the BPD Investigations hierarchy. Some BPD officers do work on this regional team.

- "Narcotics" does not exist.

- The "Intel" function is an ancillary function of a lieutenant and not a unit in the department.

- "CAT," Traffic, and Bike Patrol do not currently exist in the department.

An organizational chart should accurately reflect a visual representation of the chain of command as well as an accurate representation of department's teams, functions, and capabilities. In defense of BPD, the department said some of these functions would exist if the department were fully staffed (Traffic and CAT), and it's not uncommon to list a function that is only staffed part-time so long as it actually falls under the correct manager/supervisor. Additionally, as staffing changes, these charts may change, and they are sometimes challenging to keep up to date unless it is a mandated expectation in the agency. It is also worth noting that the department did have another document that listed each assignment/team and the employees at each rank occupying those positions.

As changes occur, it is a good practice to constantly update assignment lists and organizational charts and date them to indicate when they are "effective." Maintaining those documents will allow the department always to look back to know who may have been responsible for a certain area of operations at a given time in history. Additionally, an up-to-date org chart allows department employees outside of management to know who may be responsible for department functions at any given time. We are confident that this occurs to some degree within the agency but clearly it is not kept current at all times.

Alignment of Responsibilities and Reporting
Another observation made in this area is the misalignment of responsibilities and the nexus to the job/title of individual managers. Examples include:

- The Emergency Manager is currently managing the field training program. That is a function that normally falls directly under patrol where the activity is taking place or under training for consistency in management.

- Community Mental Health: This position is a function that assists the Patrol Division yet is assigned to Investigations.

- Policy, Training, and Internal Affairs often have a nexus, and in many agencies the size of BPD those functions are often consolidated in one position.

In some respects, BPD appears to assign tasks and functions based on past job assignments that follow managers into new assignments or by personality. A key part of professional development within policing involves transferring managers from time to time into different positions to broaden an individual's experience and exposure to different areas of police operations. Attaching a function to an individual stagnates the professional development of the organization. If a transfer occurs, there should be cross-training and a handoff of the

responsibility from one person to another. The responsibility should not be moved to another area of the department because the employee has moved.

We believe that BPD should reset its organizational chart and align functions where they belong within the organization. All functions that have a nexus to Patrol should belong under Patrol. For instance, if fuller staffing allows the department to staff traffic units in the future, the department needs to determine if the units will be individual traffic officers assigned to patrol teams or if they will work as part of a larger stand-alone Traffic Unit. BPD's size would imply that they will be a single officer working with a patrol team and working under the on-duty team sergeant. As such, the function would likely belong under Patrol in the future. If the function grows into a dedicated unit of motorcycle enforcement officers, then separating them due to the additional complexity of the assignment, equipment, and training may justify moving them within the organizational chart to a specialized unit.

Management Staffing

We also believe that BPD is overstaffed in the management ranks. There are nine management positions in the organization. Although each of the positions has areas of responsibility, we believe that collectively the workload for managers is much lighter than we would normally see in a police organization. We have provided ideas for assignment restructuring to the Police Chief. There are different ways to restructure but we strongly believe at least one management position could be reclassified into an operational position to assist in staffing elsewhere in the organization. In an exit meeting with the Police Chief, we discussed some of the potential areas that could be restructured.

The Bluffton Police Department is authorized for 66 sworn positions and 18 civilian positions. The following table depicts the authorized and current state of the department's staffing.

TABLE 4-1: Department Staffing

Position	F/T Authorized 2024	F/T Actual (July 2024)	Part-Time
Sworn			
Police Chief	1	1	
Captain	2	2	
Lieutenant	6	6	
Sergeant	10	10	
Corporal	12	12	
Police Officer	29	23	
Class 3 Officer (SRO)	6	6	
Sworn Total	**66**	**60**	
Civilian			
Accreditation Manager	1	1	
Records - FOIA Administrator	1	1	
Records - Evidence Administrator	1	1	
Code Enforcement Officer	1	1	
Community Services Assistant	2	2	
Data Entry Clerk	1	1	1
Senior Crossing Guard			1
Crossing Guard			6
Mental Health Advocate	1	1	
Quartermaster	1	1	
Receptionist			1
Civilian Total	**9**	**9**	**9**
Grand Total	**75**	**69**	**9**

Note: These totals change frequently. They depict a filled position, but in some cases, the person occupying the position may not be actively working (i.e., long-term injury, administrative Reasons, etc.)

Accreditation

The Bluffton Police Department is accredited by the Commission on Law Enforcement Accreditation (CALEA). It was first certified as CALEA compliant on March 21, 2009. The agency was re-accredited on March 21, 2012; March 21, 2015; March 21, 2018; and most recently in 2022.

As part of this assessment, we reviewed the most recent CALEA inspection report dated October 11, 2022. Although the department meets standards in a vast majority of areas, there were areas of department operations and existing policy that were cited as being an issue.

Some of those same areas will be highlighted in this report, specifically in the area of data-driven enforcement work.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes/results, and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. It is a disciplined effort that produces fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, who it serves, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future.

Effective strategic planning articulates not only where an organization is headed, and the actions needed to make progress, but also how it will know if it is successful.

In all of our assessments we look to verify that the department is engaged in strategic planning. BPD provided to us a strategic planning document for the period of 2023 through 2026. The plan includes the following goals:

- Building Trust and Legitimacy.
- Policy and Oversight.
- Technology and Social Media.
- Community Policing and Crime Reduction.
- Training and Education.
- Officer Safety and Wellness.

Each of the six goals has a number of objectives, with corresponding action items ("activities"). The Strategic Plan calls for the Strategic Planning Committee to meet quarterly; the Committee is to update the plan once per year in order to document progress or make adjustments as necessary. We made inquiries with the department leadership and learned that the required quarterly meetings were occurring in accordance with the plan.

Succession Planning

For many smaller and mid-sized police departments such as the Bluffton PD, succession planning is difficult and often informal. Oftentimes, resources can be scarce, and it can be difficult to have key management personnel away for any length of time for professional development. Additionally, many smaller agencies find it difficult to outline specific and desired training and remain on task simply due to the dynamics of a smaller agency. In discussions with BPD we learned that no document currently exists that outlines all necessary and desired training for employees who reach certain milestones in their career. Additionally, the State of South Carolina does not mandate that certified officers of a certain rank must attend and complete certain courses for professional development.

BPD does list desired training for officers in select positions. For instance, for newly promoted supervisors there are courses on supervision hosted by FBI LEEDA; BPD has started sending supervisors to these courses. Similarly, for managers the desired training is the FBI Academy, SPSC (Northwestern School of Professional Studies), or SMIP (PERF).

Succession planning should not be confused with developing certain individuals for future leadership roles in the agency. Rather, it should be a process that develops all personnel within

the organization to be successful in their current role and prepare them for future leadership roles. The process should be inclusive of all employees. Many departments, either by policy or state mandate will ensure that supervisors will attend a specific police supervision course within one year of a promotion into that position. Similar mandates exists for officers in certain specialized positions, investigators as well as managers. BPD informed us that a draft document was being developed that would hopefully serve this purpose. The specific manager that had been assigned to this project recently separated from the agency, thereby creating uncertainty on the progress or timeline for completion.

Department Policy Manual

BPD maintains its policy manual on a platform called PowerDMS. This platform holds all policy documents, is readily available to all department personnel, and includes an attestation component so the department can verify that an officer has received the policy. In our experience, PowerDMS is a valuable platform and performs well for organizations that use it.

The individual policies in place at the Bluffton Police Department are a mix of internally generated polices as well as sample policies provided by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. While reviewing many of the policies within the platform we found a mix of current policies that we would deem as adhering to current best practices and older policies that need an update. Because individual policies in the BPD are signed by the police chief when implemented and because of the frequent changeover at that position we found many of the policies to contain the signature of past chiefs and not the current chief.

The department recently assembled a Policy Review Committee comprised of various members of the department. Their task is to review at least three policies per month, look for updated versions of the same policy in the industry (IACP or other departments), make updates to the specific BPD policy, and submit the revised policy for review and approval.

The Police Chief is the first step in the review/approval process. The policy is then forwarded to the department's citizens review committee, which often will offer suggestions. If suggestions are offered the policy is sent back to the department's policy review committee for consideration. If no additional suggestions are offered the Police Chief signs the policy and implements it departmentwide. BPD officers will be directed to the PowerDMS system to receive and read the new policy.

We inquired with department leadership if there were any legal reviews by the Town's legal counsel (or other legal entity with the department's interest in mind) and learned that no legal review takes place. We believe this is an important step in the policy review and implementation process for any police department. Any legal proceedings that involve the agency and the Town are likely to have a nexus to the department's documented policies. Oftentimes, the nuanced nature of the English language can have an impact on those legal proceedings. Having legal counsel review a policy from both a legal standpoint as well as a wording standpoint can offer valuable protections in the future.

Policy Subscription Service
There are several areas of this report in which we will explore select department policies. In some cases, we will recommend changes or updates to those policies. In addition to the policies we will identify for change along with the recommended legal review, we are also advising the use of a policy subscription service to close the gap in current policy shortfalls.

A policy subscription service provides an agency with a state-specific, legally reviewed policy manual tailored to the specific functions that exists within that agency. As changes take place

at the legislative level or within industry best practices, those policies are automatically updated for the agency. The subscription platform also provides the same capability as PowerDMS with a chain of distribution, read receipts, and attestation that individual employees received the "current" version of a policy. Furthermore, portions of these platforms have a training and testing component that regularly have officers review select policies and demonstrate knowledge, proficiency, and proper application on that policy through the use of testing and scenario-based questions. This is a permanent record of an officer receiving and "understanding" the current policy.

In our experience, the initial implementation process for a subscription platform can be time-consuming, since all policies are reviewed and certain updates need to be made. Additionally, there are certain policies that are agency specific (e.g., promotional process policy) and which need to be added into the subscription platform. With a current policy review committee already in place, and with what we observed as additional workload capacity for some department managers, we believe Bluffton PD is well positioned to absorb the work involved in transitioning to a policy subscription project. The future benefits are significant because all policy updates are more streamlined and attestation is included.

Administrative Recommendations:

- CPSM recommends that BPD maintain an up-to-date operational chart and department assignment list. (Recommendation No. 1.)

- CPSM recommends that BPD reorganize the department organization chart so that functions are placed where there is a natural nexus to other department functions. (Recommendation No. 2.)

- CPSM recommends that BPD eliminate at least one management position (captain or lieutenant) and reclassify it as an operational position (officer or corporal). (Recommendation No. 3.)

- We recommend that BPD pursue and complete the development of a department succession plan. (Recommendation No. 4.)

- We recommend that BPD engage its legal counsel for a review of all critical policies recently updated through the department's current review process. (Recommendation No. 5.)

- We recommend that BPD involve legal counsel in all policy updates going forward. (Recommendation No. 6.)

- We recommend that BPD consider purchasing a policy subscription service to replace its current policy manual and internal policy process. (Recommendation No. 7.)

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Ensuring the department has the public's trust is vital to the law enforcement mission, and this trust rests on departmental responsiveness to community needs and expectations. Because the effectiveness of any police agency is dependent upon its reputation for integrity within the community, an Internal Affairs Unit for investigating serious violations of the law and violations of department policy by police officers should be established by all police departments, and Bluffton PD has done so. An Internal Affairs unit should act with integrity, be responsive to complaints from both inside and outside the agency, and keep an accurate record of its activities. The unit should strive to preserve the public's trust and confidence by conducting thorough and impartial investigations of alleged employee misconduct, providing proactive

measures to prevent such misconduct, and by maintaining the highest standards of fairness and respect towards the citizens and employees. Citizens should not be discouraged from presenting complaints; every complaint should be recorded and the progress of any investigation monitored.

PSB Staffing

The department does not have a designated Professional Standards/Internal Affairs Unit. When a complaint is made, the complaint is assigned to one of several people in the department who have previously handled complaint investigations or who has attended internal affairs training. Usually, those complaints are assigned to a lieutenant within the organization,

As mentioned above, the responsibility for completing all investigations usually falls upon the shoulders of a lieutenant. In most agencies studied by CPSM, sergeants will also conduct complaint investigations. In the case of BPD, CPSM recommends the department begin assigning complaints involving minor policy violations, such as rudeness, to the Patrol sergeants if the involved officer works for them. Doing this will assist in the development of supervisors in conducting personnel investigations.

Due to the importance of an Internal Affairs Unit, the department should consider creating a Professional Standards/Internal Affairs Unit, staffed with either a lieutenant or sergeant who will act as the gatekeeper for all investigations to ensure they are completed in a timely manner, completed thoroughly, and that the information about the complaint and any investigations is maintained in the department's records. This lieutenant or sergeant should report directly to the Chief of Police regarding Professional Standards/Internal Affairs issues. If the department were to move forward with the unit, CPSM recommends that the person in the assignment be rotated every three years.

Since the department is fortunate and handles only a few complaint investigations each year, the position could also oversee the department's training, policy, and personnel. Each of those are intertwined with internal affairs.

Internal Affairs Training

Each member of the department who is assigned to investigate complaint investigations should attend an Internal Affairs school, which will provide that knowledge necessary to complete the investigations. Currently at BPD, there are only several of the lieutenants who have received that training. CPSM would recommend that every sergeant in the organization be sent to internal affairs training.

Policy

All policies pertaining to the complaint process are found in the Bluffton Police Department Standard Operating Procedures, Section #032. According to the SOP, the last review of this policy was effective in 2011. CPSM recommends that all policies, especially those involving citizen and personnel complaints, be reviewed annually.

Complaint Process

BPD will accept and address all complaints of misconduct in accordance with its policies and applicable federal, state and local law, municipal and county rules, and the requirements of any collective bargaining agreements. Any person who witnesses or has direct knowledge of police misconduct or unlawful behavior may file a complaint, including those persons wishing to

remain anonymous. Complaints may be filed by anyone in person, by written correspondence, via telephone, or anonymously. The complaint form can be obtained on the department's website and is a fillable form that can then be submitted via the website.

Complaints of a serious nature that are assigned to Internal Affairs (formal complaints) may include allegations of corruption, brutality, excessive use of force, breach of civil rights, criminal misconduct, or those assigned by the Chief of Police.

Complaints that are considered minor in nature may include alleged rudeness on the part of the member/employee, insubordination or tardiness, etc. and may be assigned by Internal Affairs to the member's/employee's division.

Oftentimes the complaints come to a supervisor or the watch commander who may suggest appropriate remedies to resolve minor incidents; however, citizens are not discouraged from filing a complaint. The supervisor/watch commander has the authority to handle the matter with discretion and make the appropriate resolution without a formal complaint. Many citizens only want to make their issue known to the department, be listened to, and know that their incident will be handled appropriately. Although this does come with some risk that supervisors may *"kiss off"* complaints, if the supervisors are appropriately trained there can be an effective and efficient resolution to an incident. BPD must ensure, through ongoing discussions of personnel performance, that supervisors are making these "informal" complaint decisions utilizing a full understanding of the department's mission. Allowing the informal resolution of complaints is a common and accepted practice in most law enforcement agencies. BPD should be commended for the trust it has in its supervisors in allowing them to resolve minor incidents without a formal complaint being filed.

Oftentimes when these minor incidents are handled informally, if they are not properly documented, then a pattern of employee misconduct can be missed. It is imperative that some type of documentation occurs when incidents are informally handled. All complaints, even those handled informally, should be documented in the Shield database.

The department attempts to complete investigations as quickly and carefully as possible, and for service-level complaints the department attempts to complete them within 45 calendar days. However, the Chief of Police may allow extensions in increments of no more than 45 calendar days.

Complex investigations are sometimes outsourced to other agencies if they involve members of senior staff, or if there is any possibility of it involving a crime. In fact, the department has used the Beaufort County Sheriff and SLED to conduct investigations.

Complaint Classifications
Upon intake of a complaint by the agency, the complaint can be classified or separated into four different categories:

- Information Report: Any allegation not resulting in a conclusion due to lack of information or evidence.

- Personnel Complaint: The Internal Affairs section may investigate cases where allegations do not involve moral or ethical issues or refer them to the division commander of the affected member/employee.

- Shooting Incident Complaint: Any incident where a member discharges an authorized firearm on or off duty, except for hunting or practice purposes. Internal Affairs will investigate these cases. Internal Affairs will notify SLED when appropriate.

- Internal Affairs Complaint: Internal Affairs will investigate all cases where allegations of a serious nature might result in written reprimand, suspension, demotion, or termination.

Dispositions

Once an investigation is completed, a disposition is assigned to it based upon what was determined to have occurred or not have occurred during the alleged incident that was investigated.

- UNFOUNDED: The allegation is false or not factual.

- EXONERATED: The incident complained of occurred but was lawful and proper.

- NOT SUSTAINED: Insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation.

- SUSTAINED: The allegation is supported by sufficient evidence.

- POLICY FAILURE: The allegation is true but the member/employee was acting in a manner consistent with agency policy, necessitating a review and revision of the policy as written; or no policy exists covering his/her action.

All investigations are conducted consistently; interviews conducted during the investigations are recorded, and remain a part of the investigation. BPD's method of conducting personnel investigations is consistent with best practices, and follows the way that most law enforcement organizations operate regarding personnel investigations.

Complaint Investigations

All complaint data in the following tables was provided by the department and reflect the total number of citizen/internal complaints for 2018 through 2022.

TABLE 4-2: Citizen Complaints, 2018–2022

Year	No. of Citizen Complaints Received	No. of Complaints Generated Internally
2018	8	0
2019	0	1
2020	1	3
2021	3	8
2022	2	3

Source: Bluffton Police Department

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TABLE 4-3: Citizen/Internal Complaint Investigation Adjudications, 2018–2022

Year	Total	Unfounded	Exonerated	Not Sustained	Sustained
2018	11	1	0	6	4
2019	2	0	0	0	2
2020	4	0	0	1	3
2021	11	0	1	3	7
2022	5	2	0	0	3

Source: Bluffton Police Department

TABLE 4-4: Complaints vs. Police Contacts, 2022

Year	Total Police Contacts	Citizen Complaints
2022	37,251	2

Source: Bluffton Police Department

The complaint statistics for 2022 show that there were just two citizen complaint investigations triggered from the 23,400 police contacts for that year. Thus, out of the 23,400 police contacts, only one complaint was filed for every 11,700 police officer contacts. For an agency the size of BPD and representing a community of 35,000 people, that low number of complaints regarding employee misconduct by BPD represents a well-trained department in which employees are held accountable to their department's policies and procedures.

Discipline

BPD discipline is covered in Standard Operating Procedure #043 which was reviewed and revised in 2024. Effective disciplinary processes serve a number of important functions in a law enforcement agency. They punish, change behavior, signal organizational expectations internally and externally, respond to citizen complaints, and serve as an early warning tool about potential problem behaviors and tensions in the community. BPD has two levels of discipline (1) Summary Discipline (discipline administered by first-line supervisor) and (2) Major Discipline (discipline administered by the Chief of Police that ranges from a suspension of a minimum of twenty-four hours to a maximum of thirty days, up to and including termination).

Discipline at BPD can be meted out in the following ways:

- Written reprimand.
- Suspension.
- Emergency suspension.
- Dismissal.

Although the discipline options at BPD are common within the law enforcement profession, CPSM would also recommend the department add both *Transfer* and *Demotion* to the ways an employee can be disciplined.

Education-Based Discipline

A method of discipline that is not discussed in the department's options, is Education-Based Discipline (EBD). EBD is unique to the law enforcement community and is an alternative to punitive discipline. EBD seeks to change the interaction of employees and management, and to

change the impact of the discipline process. The premise of EBD is that it offers an alternative to unpaid suspension days and is beneficial to both the department and employee. It provides an opportunity for employees to voluntarily participate in an individualized remedial plan that emphasizes education, training, and other creative interventions which promote a successful outcome. When the department is faced with an employee's discipline that rises to anything that results in monetary loss, EBD should be considered. Discipline should not debilitate the affected employee, and most times the employee is less bitter regarding their discipline after EBD is utilized.

It was learned that in many of its discipline cases the department has used some element of education and training as a part of the discipline along with other penalties. However, when EBD is used, it should not include the other discipline penalties. CPSM recommends the department continue to consider the use of EBD in some discipline cases where applicable.

Discipline Matrix
The department uses a discipline matrix for ensuring a fair and consistent implementation of discipline, and in addition to associated policies and resulting disciplinary decisions, the discipline should reflect contemporary industry standards for progressive discipline. BPD is to be commended for using a discipline matrix when disciplining its employees.

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TABLE 4-5: BPD Progressive Discipline Matrix

SAMPLE
DISCIPLINARY POLICY

VIOLATION	1ST OFFENSE	2ND OFFENSE	3RD OFFENSE
Unauthorized disclosure or receipt of SLED/CJIS-FBI/NCIC criminal justice information.	2 -5 days suspension to dismissal	5 -10 days suspension to dismissal	15 days suspension to dismissal
Release of drivers license or vehicle registration information to other than criminal justice employees.	2 -5 days suspension	5 – 10 days suspension	15 days suspension to dismissal
Release of information to private security or firefighters.	2 -5 days suspension	5 – 10 days suspension	15 days suspension to dismissal
Allowing the use of the system by personnel not certified by SLED, except for job training toward certification.	3 days suspension to dismissal	5 days suspension or dismissal	Dismissal
Failure to comply with policies and procedures establishes in the XXX PD and SLED/CJIS FBI/NCIC Operations and Procedures Manual	Written reprimand to 3 days suspension	3 -5 days suspension	5 days suspension or dismissal
Failure to log information supplied to the Coroner's office, the Solicitor's office, or any other criminal justice employee who does not have a user agreement with XXX PD.	Written To 3 days suspension	3-5 days suspension	5 days suspension or dismissal
Unauthorized modification or destruction of system data; loss of computer system processing capability	3 days suspension to dismissal	5 -10 days suspension or dismissal	15 days suspension to dismissal
Loss by theft of any computer system media including: chip ROM memory, optical or magnetic storage medium, hard copy printout, etc.	3 days suspension to dismissal	5 -10 days suspension or dismissal	15 days suspension to dismissal
Improper recordkeeping	Oral reprimand To 3 days to suspension	1 -3 days suspension	3 days suspension or dismissal

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Although BPD does use a discipline matrix, the following matrix is provided for review by the department.

TABLE 4-6: Example of a Standardized Progressive Discipline Matrix

Class	First Offense	Second Offense	Third Offense	Fourth Offense
1	Min: Verbal counseling	Min: Documented counseling	Min: Documented written reprimand	Min: 1-day suspension
1	Max: Documented oral reprimand	Max: Documented written reprimand	Max: 3-day suspension	Max: 5-day suspension
2	Min: N/A	Min: Documented written reprimand	Min: 1-day suspension	Min: 5-day suspension
2	Max: Documented written reprimand	Max: 5-day suspension	Max: 5-day suspension	Max: 10-day suspension
3	Min: Documented written reprimand	Min: Documented written reprimand	Min: 1-day suspension	Min: 30-day suspension
3	Max: 1-day suspension	Max: 10-day suspension	Max: 15-day suspension	Max: Dismissal
4	Min: 1-day suspension	Min: 5-day suspension	Min: 10-day suspension	Min: Dismissal
4	Max: 10-day suspension	Max: 15-day suspension	Max: 30-day suspension	Max: Dismissal
5	Min: 5-day suspension	Min: 10-day suspension	Min: 30-day suspension	Min: Dismissal
5	Max: Dismissal	Max: Dismissal	Max: Dismissal	Max: Dismissal

Early Warning System (EWS)

An Early Warning System (EWS) is used as a resource by supervisory personnel to identify employees who may display symptoms of job stress or performance problems at early stages. The intent of an EIP is to proactively provide employees with the assistance and training necessary to perform their assigned duties in an effective and efficient manner. While individual incidents such as personnel complaints, traffic collisions, and uses of force are reviewed at the time of occurrence by a supervisor, the chain of command, and the civilian auditors, these incidents may appear acceptable in isolation, but a pattern of less-than-optimal job performance may be developing that is more difficult to identify. Tracking the indicators detailed in this program allows the department to examine the totality of an individual's actions and make a more accurate assessment of the employee's well-being. Performance indicators are set by department management and can be modified as desired.

In the BPD, the early warning system is covered in Bluffton Police Department Standard Operating Procedure 056vwhich was last revised in 2011. CPSM recommends that the EWS policy be reviewed annually.

It is important to note that the notification triggered by reaching a threshold in and of itself does not suggest a definitive problem with an employee, but rather, informs the department of a high rate of total incidents. Again, this number is determined by the department. For instance, officers working in high-crime areas are more commonly involved in arrests and uses of force, which has the potential to trigger a notification even though their actions are entirely appropriate. This applies to more proactive officers as well. Nonetheless, the department can look at the

employee's pattern of conduct and determine if there may be a problem. If so, it may address the problem through counselling, training, or as otherwise called for.

The following table is an example of a robust EWS to cover the highest liability issues, showing the number of events and the time involved for triggering action by the department. CPSM recommends BPD consider using this as the baseline for its EWS.

TABLE 4-7: EWS Matrix Example

Incident Type	Number of Officer Events	Number of Months Threshold
Bias Complaint	2	6
Citizen Complaint	2	12
Internal complaint	2	12
Use of Force	3	6
Vehicle Accident	3	12
Vehicle Pursuit	4	12

Internal Affairs Recommendations:

- CPSM recommends consideration be given to creating a Professional Standards/Internal Affairs Unit that reports directly to the Chief of Police regarding I/A issues. (Recommendation No. 8.)

- CPSM recommends that the person in the IA assignment be rotated every three years. (Recommendation No. 9.)

- CPSM would recommend that every sergeant in the organization be sent to internal affairs training. (Recommendation No. 10.)

- CPSM would recommend the department add both Transfer and Demotion to the ways an employee can be disciplined. (Recommendation No. 11.)

- CPSM recommends that all policies, especially those involving citizen and personnel complaints, be reviewed annually. (Recommendation No. 12.)

- When the department is faced with an employee's discipline that rises to anything that results in monetary loss, Education-Based Discipline (EBD) should be considered. (Recommendation No. 13.)

USE OF FORCE

The necessary and appropriate use of force in carrying out a police officer's duties, up to and including the taking of a human life, is among the most complex and critiqued actions of law enforcement. At no time in the past has the use of force been looked at, examined, and judged as it is today. It is essential and critical that the department have and follow a comprehensive policy on the use of force. Providing relevant training for the uses of force is vital for the department. The purpose of comprehensive training in the use of force is to ensure employees are using proper and reasonable applications of force in the performance of their duties. With respect to the use of deadly force, no other responsibility of the town or department has more importance. Police departments must engage in an in-depth review of uses of force by their officers. In President Obama's 21st Century Policing report, it was stated that departments must have in place a review process of uses of force by their officers.

Policy

The Bluffton Police Department's Use of Force policy is found in Standard Operating Procedure #007, which was reviewed and revised in February 2024. The Use of Force policy authorizes officers to use only the amount of force which is reasonably necessary to overcome the level of resistance to secure a subject, or to stop a direct threat of harm posed by a subject, which is clearly defined within the policy. Any use of force by a member of the department shall be documented promptly, completely, and accurately in an appropriate report, depending on the nature of the incident. The officer should articulate the factors perceived and why he/she believed the use of force was reasonable under the circumstances.

The Use of Force policy should be reviewed annually for any changes in law or altering any way that force is used. The policy clearly defines the use of force responses that can be used by members of the department:

- Level 1. Officer Presence.
- Level 2. Verbal Directions.
- Level 3. Empty Hand Controls/Use of Aerosol Deterrent Spray.
- Level 4. Intermediate Weapons.
- Level 5. Incapacitation/Use of Electronic Control Device/Use of Less Lethal Shotgun.
- Level 6. Deadly Force.

The department's investigative authority for the use of force incidents may be limited to the Chief of Police, Internal Affairs Division, or the Training Division. Any investigation that might be considered criminal in nature may be investigated by the Beaufort County Solicitor's Office, South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED), the South Carolina Attorney General's Office, or the FBI.

CPSM recommends the Use of Force policy be reviewed annually for any changes in law or altering any way that force is used. Policy should also be reviewed to ensure the threshold of reporting is appropriate based upon best practices.

Reporting Responses/Supervisor Responsibilities

Officers at BPD must notify their supervisor as soon as possible about a use of force that occurs in the following circumstances:

- An officer discharges a firearm in a duty-related capacity. This does not include firearms practice, training, qualification, or competition unless the discharge results in property damage or personal injury. A discharge of a Bluffton Police Department issued weapon, on or off duty, will be documented with an incident report.
- The officer takes any actions that results in, or is alleged to have resulted in, any injury or death of any officer or any other person.
- Weaponless physical force is used by the officer on an individual that produces an actual or alleged injury. A Use of Force report is not required for the use of physical force that has little or no chance of producing injuries and is being used to gain control of the suspect or restraining a non-combative individual, such as physical touching, gripping or holding, handcuffing, escorting, searching, etc.

CPSM recommends the department consider adding to its policy the following additional requirements for reporting uses of force:

- When the application of force would lead a reasonable officer to conclude that the individual may have experienced more than momentary discomfort.

- The individual subjected to the force complains of injury or continuing pain.

- The individual indicates intent to pursue litigation.

- Any application of a restraint device other than handcuffs, shackles, or belly chains.

- The individual subjected to the force was rendered unconscious.

- An individual was struck or kicked.

- An individual alleges unreasonable force was used or that any of the above has occurred.

The officer must document in their official police report a complete, accurate, and appropriate description of the use of force utilized during the incident. The supervisor then will respond to the scene to investigate any incident involving an armed person, an incident involving the use of force beyond empty hand control, or which results in injury, an assault upon the officer, and resistance to arrest.

The supervisor's review includes:

- Conducting a thorough investigation of the incident.

- Interviewing the subject officer and reviewing the report.

- Reviewing the report for any discrepancies or findings and signing it..

- Forwarding all reports to the Chief of Police through the chain of command.

The Use of force report and investigation is also forwarded to the Training Division for review for any training needs that might have been noticed in the review, and then finally to the Internal Affairs Division when the Internal Affairs Commander will annually review and analyze all uses of force.

Use of Force Review
Reviews begin at the supervisor's level when they respond to the scene of an incident and conduct an investigation. That investigation involves the supervisor talking to witnesses, the person the force was used upon, and a review of the officer's body-worn camera video. The uses of force are then reviewed by the patrol lieutenant, patrol captain, and Chief of Police.

Use of Force Tracking
All uses of force are maintained and tracked in the department's Shield system. Entries into the system are made by the patrol lieutenant.

Duty to Intercede and Report

In recent years, law enforcement agencies nationwide have begun to include duty to intercede and report provisions in their use of force policies. Duty to intercede requires an officer to intervene if they witness a department member using force that is clearly beyond that which is necessary, as determined by an objectively reasonable officer under the circumstances. A duty to report policy requires any officer who observes a law enforcement officer or an employee use force that potentially exceeds what the officer reasonably believes to be necessary to report such observation to a supervisor. BPD has such language in its policy (which follows).

BPD policy clearly states:

1. Any Officer present in a situation who reasonably believes that another Officer is using force in violation of law or Department policy has a duty to intervene to stop the unlawful or inappropriate use of force as long as it is safe and reasonable to do so.

2. Any Officer, on or off duty, who witnesses or is made aware of an instance of excessive, unlawful, or inappropriate use of force by another law enforcement officer of any agency has an obligation to report the situation to a supervisor or to the Internal Affairs Office as soon as practicable.

3. Any Officer has a duty to provide medical attention as long as it is safe and reasonable to do so.

De-escalation Provisions
De-escalation requirements are covered in the BPD policy as follows: "An officer must attempt to control all situations in which he/she is involved and must first attempt to control them by de-escalating the need for any type of physical response to resistance if the situation is such that their safety or safety of others is not in immediate danger."

TABLE 4-8: Uses of Force, 2021–2023

Year	# of Uses of Force	Within Policy	Out of Policy	Suspect Injured
2021	6	6	0	N/A
2022	8	8	0	4
2023	4	4	0	0

In the past three years, BPD has had no uses of force that were outside of its policy.

From January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, BSPD recorded 23,400 calls for service. With four reportable use of force incidents, BPD officers **used force in 0.17 percent of the calls**. This percentage is extremely low and represents a well-trained department.

Use of Force Recommendations:

- The Use of Force policy should be reviewed annually for any changes in law or altering any way that force is used. (Recommendation No. 14.)
- CPSM recommends adding additional language to the reporting requirements. (Recommendation No. 15.)
- Policy should also be reviewed to ensure the threshold of reporting is appropriate based upon best practices. (Recommendation No. 16.)

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The emergency management function for the Town of Bluffton, while a shared responsibility of all, is coordinated by the Bluffton Police Department. Coordination of emergency management responsibilities is assigned to the Emergency Manager, a police lieutenant. This is a full-time assignment, though as with most police management positions, there are collateral duties. Collateral duties include management of the Field Training Officer program, as an instructor for

various use of force methodologies, and captaining the police patrol boat (during non-business hours including weekends and holidays). Workload associated with these collateral duties is manageable and does not take away from the effectiveness of Emergency Manager duties. Nonetheless, some collateral duties including management of the department's FTO program are not compatible with the Emergency Manager's current role. The FTO coordinator is more appropriately a role for a Patrol Division supervisor.

The following is copied from the Town's description of its role in emergency management, and more specifically, that of the Emergency Manager in preparing for responses to disasters and/or emergencies, natural or man-made.

"Town of Bluffton Emergency Management is tasked with planning, integrating and implementing all emergency management-related activities for the Town of Bluffton. The role of Emergency Management is to coordinate the community's efforts to prepare for, respond to, and recover from large-scale emergencies and disasters. Emergency Management works to craft a harmonized community-wide effort through the joint collaboration of both public and private organizations responsible for providing services to the community.

"Emergency Management maintains and coordinates the activities of the Town of Bluffton Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during a large-scale emergency or disaster. When activated, the EOC is the central location where representatives of local government and private sector agencies assemble during disaster situations to make decisions, set priorities and allocate resources for response and recovery efforts. The EOC functions as the Command Center for all communications, directions, and plans during a natural or man-made emergency."

Phases of Emergency Management

- **Prevention** – Actions taken to avoid an incident or stopping an incident from occurring. Deterrence operations and surveillance.

- **Mitigation** – Refers to measures that prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening, or reduce the damaging effects of unavoidable emergencies. The mitigation phase differs from the other phases because it focuses on long-term measures for reducing or eliminating risk.

- **Preparedness** – Activities that increase a community's ability to respond when a disaster occurs. In the preparedness phase, plans of action are developed for when disasters strike.

- **Response** – Includes the mobilization of necessary emergency services and first responders in the disaster area. This would include a first wave of core emergency services, such as firefighters, police, and ambulance crews.

- **Recovery** – To restore the affected area to its previous state. Actions taken to return a community to normal or near-normal conditions, including the restoration of basic services and the repair of physical, social, and economic damages.

Policy / SOP

SOP 010, Incident Command System, addresses response to major incidents be they disasters, civil unrest, or any other incident requiring extraordinary resource allocations. It addresses both field and EOC command responsibilities. The policy, seven pages in length, was reviewed by CPSM and found to be comprehensive.

A complementary *SOP, Natural Hazards (011)*, speaks to disasters, and more specifically hurricanes. Last updated in July 2013, the nine-page policy assigns detailed descriptions of responsibilities in three major categories; Planning and Preparation, Response, and Recovery.

We note that SOP 011 was last updated in July 2013. That pre-dated the police department assuming the responsibility of Emergency Management Coordinator for the Town of Bluffton. When that responsibility was assumed by the police department, the department was granted an FTE police lieutenant position who assumed the responsibility of Emergency Manager, a full-time duty with limited collateral assignments.

As we reviewed SOP 011, we noted several areas where duties which appropriately belong to the Emergency Manager were assigned to other positions within the police department including Patrol and Special Operations. As one example, the following is listed as a responsibility of the Special Operations Division: "*Inventory available supplies and stored items (batteries, emergency lamps, water, fans, extension cords, etc.) quarterly. Emergency equipment is tested at least quarterly for operational readiness. Ensure that sufficient supplies are ordered and maintained in the event of a critical incident. [S.46.1.8].*"

These are tasks that would more appropriately be a responsibility of the Emergency Management Coordinator. We conclude that these responsibilities were established prior to the 2023 transfer of emergency management responsibilities to the police department, and the SOP was not updated at that time. Therefore, we recommend that a review of SOP 011 be conducted and revisions be made to more appropriately align responsibilities with the department's current staffing model.

EOC Locations, Staffing, and Working Groups

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is located in the Bluffton Police Department training room. In the event that the Town of Bluffton EOC becomes unavailable for any reason, the back-up EOC is located at the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office on Duke St. in Beaufort.

Staffing of the EOC during emergencies includes the follow positions / functions:

- Emergency Manager – Responsible for overall EOC operations.
- Mayor of Town of Bluffton – Responsible for policy decisions / declaration of emergency when appropriate.
- Bluffton Town Manager – Responsible for implementation of policies and overall EM operations.
- Bluffton Town Attorney – Responsible for legal advice / direction.

The following list reflects working groups that may include representatives from multiple departments:

- Planning.
- Operations.
- Logistics.
- Technology.
- Finance.

There are no representatives from non-government organizations (NGOs) such as the Red Cross or Salvation Army in the EOC staffing complement. Such agencies are often called upon to provide assistance with food and shelter needs at emergency evacuation sites. If the services provided by one or more of these or other NGOs would be considered helpful during any or all emergencies, the Town should consider incorporating their role in the Logistics working group.

We note here that while the Emergency Manager's role is to ensure that the EOC is equipped and staffed to meet the needs of the Town during an emergency, he/she may not be considered the emergency or disaster manager for all types of incidents for which the EOC may be activated. For example, the disaster manager for a fire incident would be the Fire Chief, or designee; for a storm incident involving flooding or wind damage, it may be the Public Works director, or designee; and in an incident involving civil unrest, the Chief of Police, or designee would be the disaster manager. This allows for the department most impacted to have control over EOC operations.

Staff reported that the EOC is well equipped and no additional equipment is required at this point.

In addition to ensuring that the EOC is appropriately staffed and equipped, the Emergency Manager is charged with establishing contracts for emergency provisions. These include ensuring availability of emergency housing, food, and water for both Town staff working during the emergency and civilians who find themselves in need of such services.

Training

The current Emergency Manager has been in this role for approximately one year. He is in the process of undergoing training to achieve the status of Certified Emergency Manager. This is an extensive, ongoing process involving completion of 25 courses, some available only off-site and some available online. The courses range in duration from four hours to several days.

CPSM inquired regarding training provided to EOC staff. We were advised that all EOC staff are trained in Incident Command System protocols.

We also inquired regarding practical exercise training for EOC operations and were advised that this has not occurred, at least in the last few years. Such training utilizes a simulated exercise with a dynamic format. A choreographed script is prepared well in advance of the exercise and is used to prompt facilitators to provide increasingly complex challenges to each of the working groups to test their readiness to address evolving issues. This type of exercise typically lasts throughout the day and includes a debriefing at the conclusion of the exercise. This training is addressed in *SOP #010, Incident Command System, Section V. C.*, which calls for it to be conducted biennially.

The South Carolina Emergency Management Association is made up of emergency managers and others involved in EOC operations. Membership provides for excellent training as well as networking opportunities. The Bluffton Emergency Manager is a member of this organization.

Personnel Consideration
The Emergency Manager position has been transitory over the past several years. It has been alternately assigned between the police department, fire district, and Town Hall. As well, both commissioned officers as well as civilians have served as the Emergency Manager.

It is commonplace in communities across the country that civilians serve in the role of Emergency Manager. They are often assigned to the fire department or police department.

Here, as the EOC is located at the police department, it is appropriate for the Emergency Manager to be a police department employee.

However, CPSM would urge the Town to consider civilianizing this position. It is a position that is commonly held by civilians across the country. There are a multitude of reasons for this. They include the fact that, especially in police departments, personnel are subject to both promotional opportunities and lateral movement between assignments. In fact, the current Emergency Manager intends to compete for promotion at the earliest available opportunity. If promoted, or transferred laterally within the organization, then the next, newly assigned Emergency Manager would need to undergo the rigorous process of becoming a Certified Emergency Manager as well as master the duties associated with managing the EOC in terms of systems, equipment, letting contracts, etc. Stabilizing this as a career position is in the best interests of the Town. In addition, civilian personnel are often a more cost-efficient staffing option.

This recommendation is not made lightly. We understand that Bluffton has had some difficulty employing a civilian in this role, and just prior to the current police employee assuming this responsibility, it was filled by a civilian who resigned from their position. However, for long-term stability, we feel that this role is best served by a career civilian manager.

Police departments across the country struggle to hire and retain commissioned officers. In fact, at present, BPD has a vacancy rate of more than ten (10) percent. As civilians can and do effectively serve in the role of Emergency Managers, there is no reason that a commissioned officer (at any rank) do so.

Emergency Management Recommendations:

- Collateral duties such as FTO coordinator are incompatible with the Emergency Manager's present role, and should be transferred to a supervisor in the Patrol Division. (Recommendation No. 17.)

- Review and revise *SOP 011, Natural Hazards*, to more appropriately align responsibilities for emergency preparedness with the department's current staffing model. (Recommendation No. 18.)

- Consideration should be given to incorporating non-government organizations such as the Red Cross into the EOC Logistics working group to allow for a more timely response in establishing food and shelter services at disasters. (Recommendation No. 19.)

- Consideration should be given to ensuring that biennial dynamic practical exercise training, as called for in policy, be conducted for all EOC disciplines. (Recommendation No. 20.)

- Consideration should be given to transitioning the Emergency Manager position from a commissioned officer to that of a career civilian position. (Recommendation No. 21.)

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SECTION 5. PATROL

PATROL OVERVIEW, STAFFING

Division Management

The Patrol Division is managed by the Operations Captain, who reports directly to the Chief of Police. Two patrol lieutenants supplement the captain, each assigned two patrol teams for administrative and managerial oversight. Each of the four patrol teams are led by a patrol sergeant who supervises the police corporals and police officers.

We discussed with the staff the operational direction of the patrol teams. We learned that in some cases there are directives that may come from the Chief or the Captain for patrol to address a specific issue, often in the form of "directed patrols" or extra patrols. Outside of that specific direction from the administration, we learned that the patrol teams have traditionally evolved into their own distinct operational personalities, often based on the expectations of the sergeants leading the team. Anecdotally, we were told that some teams might focus more on traffic enforcement when not on a citizen-initiated call for service, another team may focus more on community-focused activity when not on calls, and others may engage in very little officer-initiated activity. The specific managerial oversight from those holding higher ranks in the department is more focused on managing the shift staffing and general administrative responsibilities of managing people.

Almost all police departments express some concern that "communication" within their department can be improved. Bluffton PD is no exception. Although communication is a broad category and any measure of success is difficult, there are some areas that BPD may want to explore. We believe that better direction on patrol activity based on community priorities and data is important. Bluffton PD takes pride in the community it is policing. Yet, any and all unstructured officer time is left to the officers' discretion of what they believe is important, not necessarily what the community/town/department priorities are. Management should be more proactive in this area, involving open dialogue with patrol officers and an analysis of existing crime and calls for service data. Strategic decisions on deployment and what officers focus their attention on should be a priority.

Beat Structure

The Town of Bluffton is divided into three patrol zones for the purpose of deploying police personnel. The following figure depicts these patrol zone areas. Although it may be difficult to make sense of for someone not familiar with the Town's geography, the zones provide a basis for individual patrol officers to maintain a presence while on duty to best be positioned to calls that may occur within their zones. In a general sense, the area in the top right section of the map depicts the "A" zone, the area to the left of that zone is the "C" Zone, and the area at the bottom of the map is primarily the "B" zone. As the reader will notice, there are large sections within those zones that are not shaded; those are primarily unincorporated areas of Beaufort County, yet which are called Bluffton for population and census purposes.

The area at the bottom of the map (within the "B" zone) is a development called Palmetto Bluff. It is nearly the same size as the rest of Bluffton, has limited access points, and travel in and out of the area can be very time-consuming for patrol officers responding to the area. BPD leadership discussed with us the possible need to have an additional unit assigned to that area alone to

reduce response times. However, the workload within that area is light and does not justify an FTE patrol officer at this time.

FIGURE 5-1: Bluffton Patrol Zones
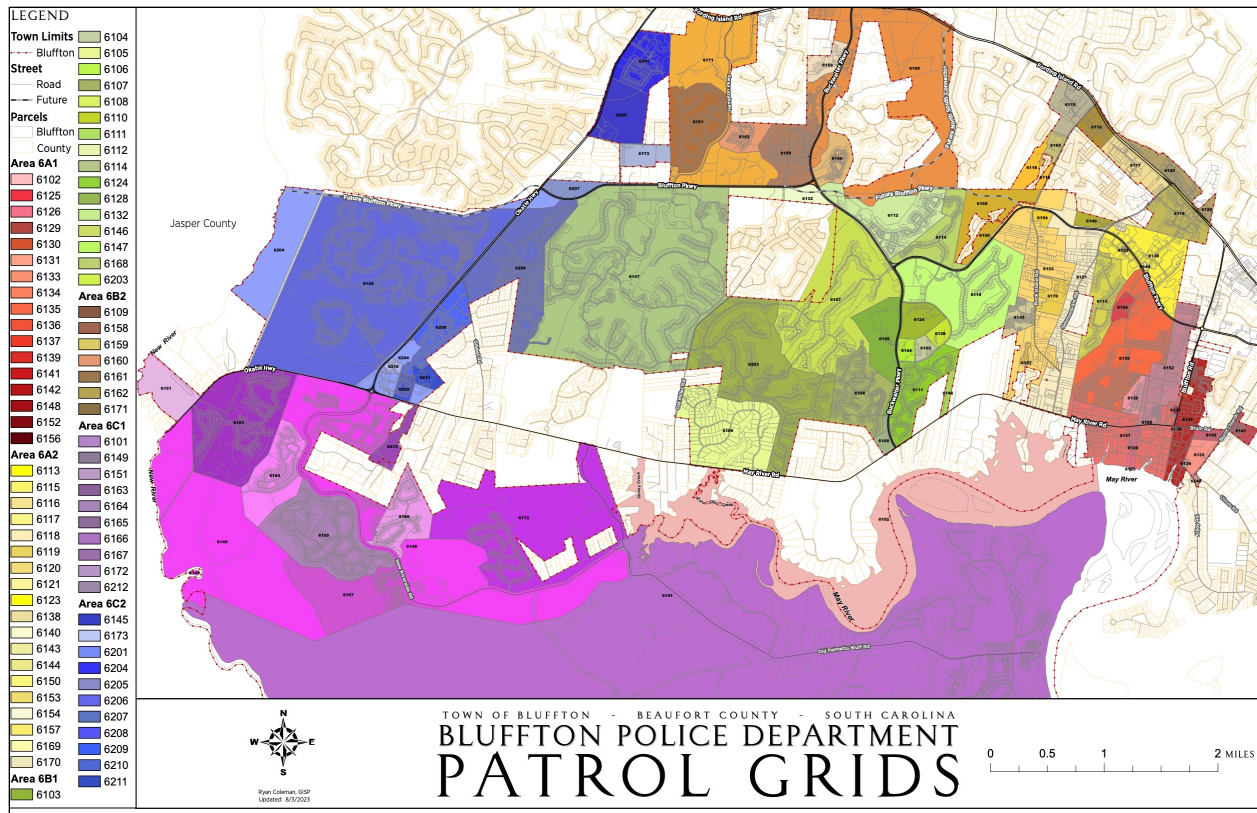
Staffing

Staffing within the Patrol Division is shown in the following table.

TABLE 5-1: BPD Patrol Division Staffing

	Authorized 2024	Actual (July 2024)	Vacancies
Captain	1	1	
Lieutenant	2	2	
Sergeant	4	4	
Corporal	4	4	
Police Officer	16	14	2
Total	**27**	**25**	**2**

Scheduling

All officers and supervisors working for BPD work a 12-hour schedule. Two teams work 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on opposing days while the other two teams work 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. on opposing days of one another. BPD does not use the "make-up" day model of a 12-hour shift deployment. Rather, it uses a unique rotating version of this schedule, with officers working a select number of

days, taking a select number off while the other team works, returning for a smaller number of days, and going back off for a smaller number of days off while the other team is working. This works out in a manner that allows all employees to work 14 days in a 28-day work cycle. It also allows for rotating days off so all employees get a weekend off at some point versus only the most senior officers who can bid for the better shifts. In addition to the 28-day cycle, the teams also switch days and nights every 56 days. The following table provides a snapshot of what a 28-day work cycle looks like:

TABLE 5-2: BPD 28-Day Patrol Work Cycle Example

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
x	x				x	x			x	x	x		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
x	x				x	x			x	x	x		

Note: "X" Denotes a work day – Empty boxes denote a day off

Law enforcement agencies around the country typically work 10- or 12-hour shift deployments. In some cases, 8-hour deployments are seen but they are becoming rarer. In our experience, 10-hour shifts require more officers but can provide the benefit of shift overlap times when workload is heavier or spikes at certain times. Agencies with a flatter workload profile, such as Bluffton (i.e. smaller workload spikes), benefit more from using a 12- or 8-hour model. This allows for more consistent staffing throughout the day to meet minimum staffing and workload demands in a simpler fashion.

We believe a patrol team concept is a best practice; this involves the same officers consistently working on the same team with a sergeant on most days. Bluffton PD uses this model. Additionally, we believe that BPD's choice of using a 12-hour hour deployment serves it well. However, we will offer some concerns with the model employed by the department.

The rotating days model does not allow for upstaffing a select shift if workload makes this necessary. If officers worked a set day-off schedule the department could ensure that the team consistently working the heavier workload period would be fully staffed while those teams consistently working the slower periods could absorb staffing shortages with less of an impact. Our data analysis does show that BPD is busier during the evenings on the weekends in the summer months. With BPD's current model a shift that is fully staffed might be on rotation working during the day on weekdays during the summer while a shift that is down one or two officers might be on the weekend cycle.

This system also does not allow for upstaffing select teams that would be working those times if additional staffing were added to the agency. If an additional person were added to a team, that team would cycle back to a less busy shift, and even if they were working the busier period, the days off rotate, thereby taking them away from a time they might be needed.

In our assessment, this scheduling works for BPD at the moment, as all shifts are set up to fill minimum staffing requirements (noted below) and have the same number of authorized positions. However, common sense would dictate that additional personnel added to the agency will not always come in blocks of 4 officers, and some teams will always have shortages, as it is the nature of the profession. Being constantly mindful of workload demands, including seasonal spikes in calls, is the responsibility of management; making necessary adjustments should be a job requirement. A scheduling system with set days on/off would provide greater flexibility and simplicity in making these occasional adjustments. As BPD continues to grow into the future, we believe it will need to consider a different scheduling system for deployment. As

such, regular reviews of call load data should be done to determine if a deployment change is needed.

Minimum Staffing

The patrol area of responsibility for the Town of Bluffton and the BPD is divided into three zones or beats. As such, the department has set minimum staffing numbers at three officers (one per beat) plus one supervisor per shift. As a general rule, a sergeant is expected to fill the supervisor role, but in some cases, the supervisor may be the assigned shift corporal.

Each team consists of one sergeant, one corporal, and three or four police officers. This results in very little overage to account for minimum staffing if one employee is off work. In some cases, there is a sergeant and four patrol officers (officer or corporal) on a shift. When this occurs, the department is able to take the fourth patrol resource and have that officer/corporal serve as a "rover" unit to assist in any and all beats.

The reasoning for the above minimum staffing numbers is not based on a data analysis of the actual workload within the Town and the individual beats. The staffing numbers are in place to ensure there is beat coverage on all shifts and at all times. We encourage agencies to establish minimum staffing based on workload. In the case of BPD, as outlined later in this report, the available data does not justify this level of staffing. However, due to various mitigating factors explained later, we do not recommend changing these established minimums at this time.

As the Town and the department continue to grow, decisions about staffing and beat configurations will be made. Assuming the data collection issue outlined later in the report is rectified, we strongly encourage the department to assess its needs and minimum staffing based on workload data.

PATROL DEPLOYMENT AND WORKLOAD

Uniformed patrol is considered the "backbone" of American policing. Bureau of Justice Statistics indicates that nearly all police departments in the U.S. in the same size category as the Bluffton Police Department provide uniformed patrol. Officers assigned to this important function are the most visible members of the department and command the largest share of resources committed by the department. Proper allocation of these resources is critical in order to have officers available to respond to calls for service and provide law enforcement services to the public.

Staffing decisions, particularly for patrol, must be based on actual workload. Once the actual workload is determined, the amount of discretionary time is determined, and then staffing decisions can be made consistent with the department's policing philosophy and the community's ability to fund it. The BPD is a police department whose philosophy is to address essentially all requests for service in a community policing style. With this in mind, it is necessary to look at workload to understand the impact of this style of policing in the context of community demand.

To understand the *actual workload* (the time required to complete certain activities) it is critical to review the total reported events within the context of how the events originated, such as through directed patrol, administrative tasks, officer-initiated activities, and citizen-initiated activities. In this section we will offer a number of charts and tables outlining this information.

Understanding the difference between the various types of police department events and the resulting staffing implications is critical when determining deployment needs. This portion of the study looks at the total deployed hours of the police department with a comparison to the current time spent to provide services.

In general, a "Rule of 60" can be applied to evaluate patrol staffing. This rule has two parts. The first part states that 60 percent of the sworn officers in a department should be dedicated to the patrol function (patrol staffing) and the second part states that no more than 60 percent of their time should be committed to calls for service, which includes all activities that occupy an officer's time, including calls from the public, self-initiated work, and administrative tasks. This commitment of 60 percent of their time is referred to as the *Patrol Saturation Index*.

The Rule of 60 is not a hard-and-fast rule, but rather a starting point for discussion on patrol deployment. Resource allocation decisions must be made from a policy and/or managerial perspective through which costs and benefits of competing demands are considered. The patrol saturation index indicates the percentage of time police officers dedicate to public demands for service and administrative duties related to their jobs. *Effective patrol deployment would exist at amounts where the saturation index is less than 60 percent*.

This Rule of 60 for patrol deployment does *not* mean the remaining 40 percent of time is downtime or break time. It is a reflection of the extent to which patrol officer time is saturated by calls for service. The time when police personnel are not responding to calls *should* be committed to management-directed operations. This is a more focused use of time and can include supervised allocation of patrol officer activities toward proactive enforcement, crime prevention, community policing, and citizen safety initiatives. It will also provide ready and available resources in the event of an emergency.

From an organizational standpoint, it is important to have uniformed patrol resources available to undertake activities such as proactive enforcement, community policing, and emergency response. Patrol is generally the most visible and available resource in policing, and the ability to harness this resource is critical for successful operations.

From an officer's standpoint, once a certain level of CFS activity is reached, the officer's focus shifts to a CFS-based reactionary mode. The patrol officer's mindset begins to shift from one that looks for ways to deal with crime and quality-of-life conditions in the community to one that continually prepares for the next call. After saturation is reached, officers cease proactive policing and engage in a reactionary style of policing. The outlook becomes "Why act proactively when my actions are only going to be interrupted by a call?" Any uncommitted time is spent waiting for the next call.

Rule of 60 – Part 1

According to the BPD's personnel data, patrol is authorized for 27 sworn officers (1 Captain, 2 Lieutenants, 4 sergeants, 4 corporals, and 16 police officers). These 27 of the 66 sworn officers represent **41 percent** of the sworn officers in the Bluffton Police Department. This is well below the recommended 60 percent allocation. BPD has a large number of school resource officers who are assigned to local schools and who are funded by those schools. In total there, 13 of the 66 sworn officers are assigned to the SRO function. Because they are separately funded it would be reasonable to remove those officers from the sworn total for the purpose of calculating this metric. That would leave 53 sworn officers and increase the patrol allocation to 51 percent. This is still below the recommended threshold, but certainly closer to it.

We will outline some other staffing adjustments that can be made by the department based on managerial oversight, span of control and workload. If the department elects to make those adjustments, there may be additional personnel to assign to the patrol function and would likely bring the department staffing into alignment with the Rule of 60 in this area.

This part of the "rule" is not hard-and-fast. Taken on its face, however, this part of the "rule" must be considered when examining the operational elements of the department when staffing recommendations are taken into consideration. The current staffing is well below the threshold established by this rule; even when adjusted the staffing is below this rule. We recommend that BPD take steps to realign its patrol workforce to bring patrol staffing closer to 60 percent of its sworn workforce.

Rule of 60 – Part 2

The second part of the "Rule of 60" examines workload and discretionary time and suggests that no more than 60 percent of the time should be committed to calls for service and officer-initiated activity. In other words, CPSM suggests that no more than 60 percent of available patrol officer time be spent responding to the community's service demands. The remaining 40 percent of the time is the "discretionary time" for officers to address community problems and be available for serious emergencies.

CPSM contends that patrol staffing is optimally deployed when the saturation index (SI) is just below the 60 percent range. An SI greater than 60 percent indicates that the patrol manpower is largely reactive, and thus overburdened with CFS and workload demands. An SI of slightly less than 60 percent indicates that patrol manpower is optimally staffed. However, SI levels much lower than 60 percent indicate underutilized patrol resources.

Departments must be cautious in interpreting the SI too narrowly. One should not conclude that SI can never exceed 60 percent at any time during the day, or that in any given hour no more than 60 percent of any officer's time be committed to CFS. The SI at 60 percent is intended to be a benchmark to evaluate overall service demands on patrol staffing. When SI levels exceed 60 percent for substantial periods of a given shift, or at specific times during the day, then decisions should be made to reallocate or realign personnel to reduce the SI to levels below 60 percent.

Resource allocation decisions must be made from a policy and/or managerial perspective through which costs and benefits of competing demands are considered. The patrol saturation index indicates the percentage of time police officers dedicate to public demands for service and administrative duties related to their jobs. Effective patrol deployment would exist at amounts where the saturation index was less than 60.

The CPSM data analysis in the second part of this report provides a rich overview of CFS and staffing demands experienced by the Bluffton Police Department. The analysis here looks specifically at patrol deployment and how to maximize the department's personnel resources to meet the demands of calls for service while also engaging in proactive policing to combat crime, disorder, and traffic issues in the community.

The following sets of figures depict staffing, workload, and the "saturation" of patrol resources in the Bluffton Police Department during the two periods (seasons) on which we focused our workload analysis. The figures represent the manpower, service demands, and workload saturation during weekdays and weekends during the periods of July 7 to August 31, 2023 (Summer) and January 4 to February 28, 2024 (Winter). Examination of these figures permits exploration of the second part of the Rule of 60.

FIGURE 5-2: Deployed Officers, Weekdays, Summer 2023
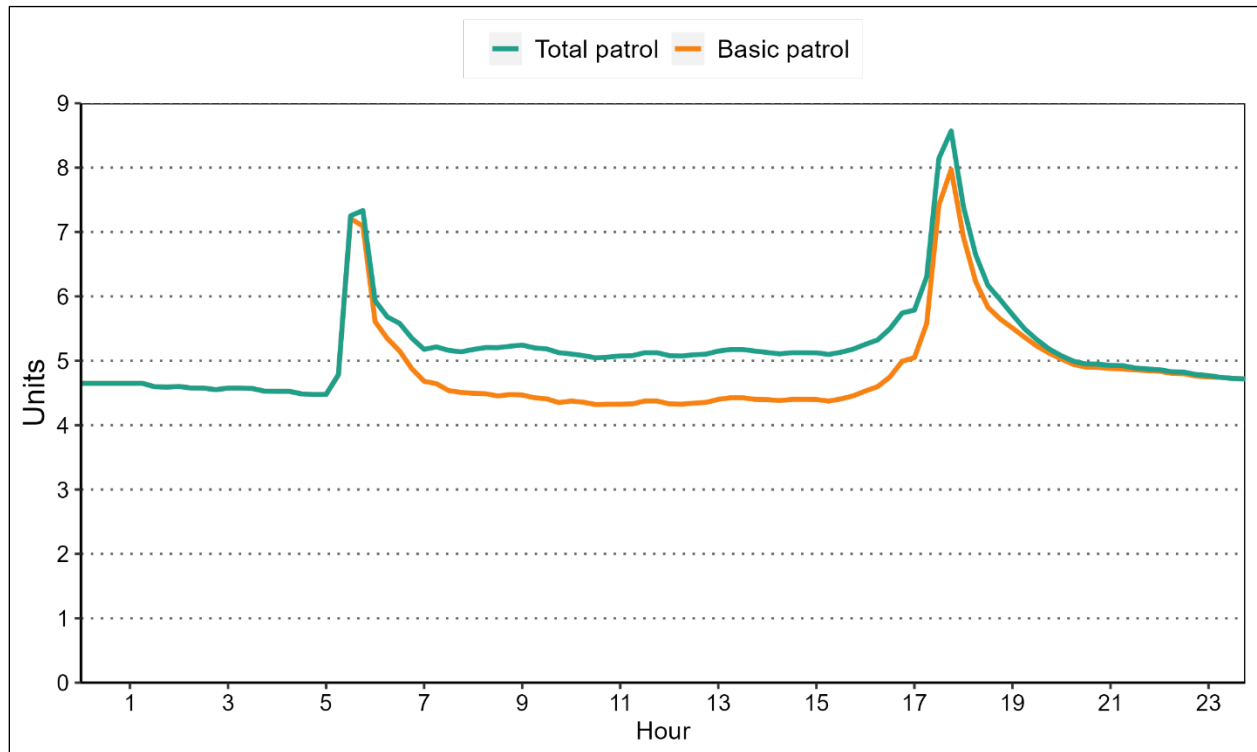
FIGURE 5-3: Deployment and All Workload, Weekdays, Summer 2023
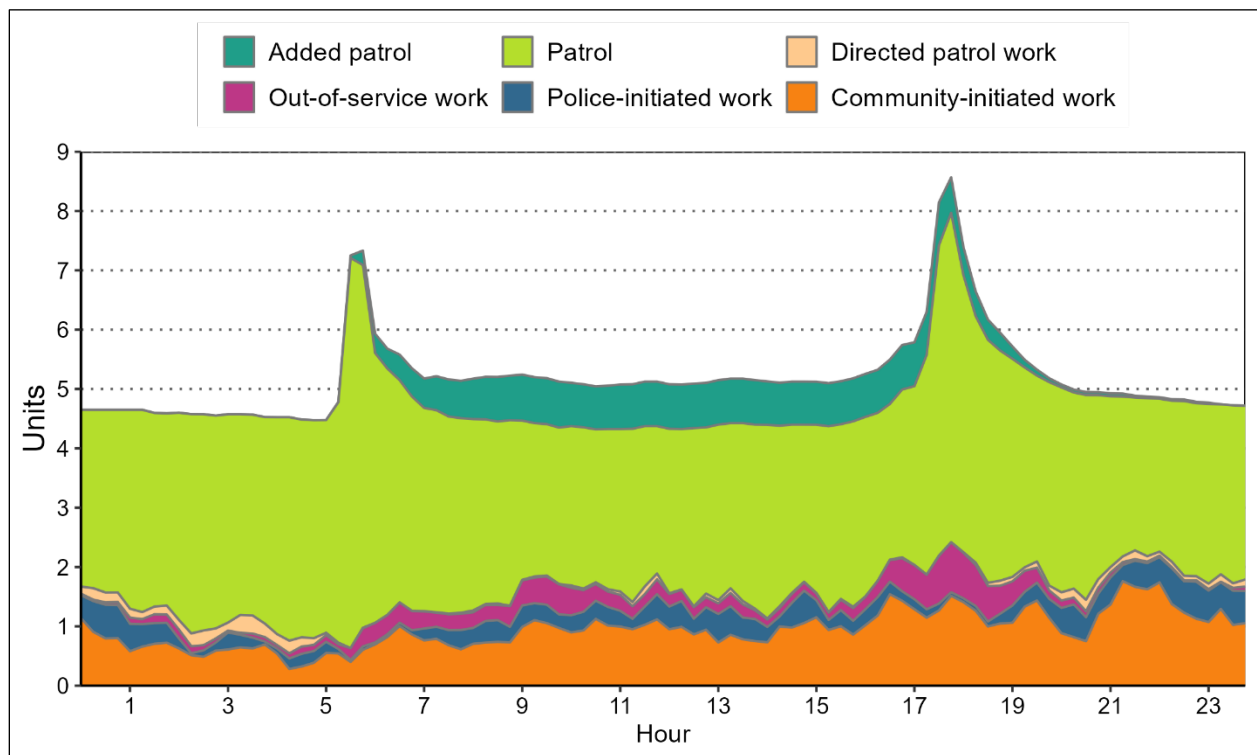
FIGURE 5-4: Percentage of Workload, Weekdays, Summer 2023

Legend: Total work — Community-initiated work

Workload v. Deployment – Weekdays, Summer 2023

Avg. Deployment   5.2 officers per hour
Avg. Workload: 1.5 officers per hour
Avg. % Deployed (SI): 29 percent
Peak SI: 47 percent
Peak SI Time: 9:15–9:45 p.m., 10:00–10:15 p.m.

The "Deployment and All Workload" figure shows the relationship of all on-duty police officers assigned to patrol that were factored into the workload analysis and what work is represented by those officers throughout the day. The first figure that denotes deployed officers is also the same top line as the one represented in the second figure, denoting workload. The average deployment throughout the day was 5.2 officers. The average workload of 1.5 indicates that, on average, 1.5 on-duty officers (of the 5.2 average) were occupied with work (calls for service, officer-initiated, or administrative work). The spikes observed just after 5:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. represent shift change times when there is the occasional overlap. Those spikes occurring at shift change indicate officers were assigned to the CAD system but likely in a briefing. The average saturation index (SI) is 29 percent, and the peak SI is 47 percent between 9:15 and 9:45 p.m. and again between 10:00 and 10:15 p.m. These figures would suggest that BPD had more officers deployed on the weekdays during the summer months in 2023 than what was necessary. However, there are mitigating factors to this situation that will be outlined later in this report.

The orange section at the bottom of the workload chart indicates the average number of officers that were occupied with community-initiated work, an average of 0.9 officers per hour. The color that denotes police-initiated work indicates the time officers were busy with work they observed and took some type of proactive policing approach (e.g., traffic stop). Out-of-service work will be explained in further detail later but is generally defined as being administrative in nature, while the largest green section of "patrol" indicates the number of officers that were

available for a call and potentially looking for proactive work during any given time of the day. Directed patrol is defined as officers who may have been on an assignment to extra patrol an area (for example, a park).

FIGURE 5-5: Deployed Officers, Weekends, Summer 2023

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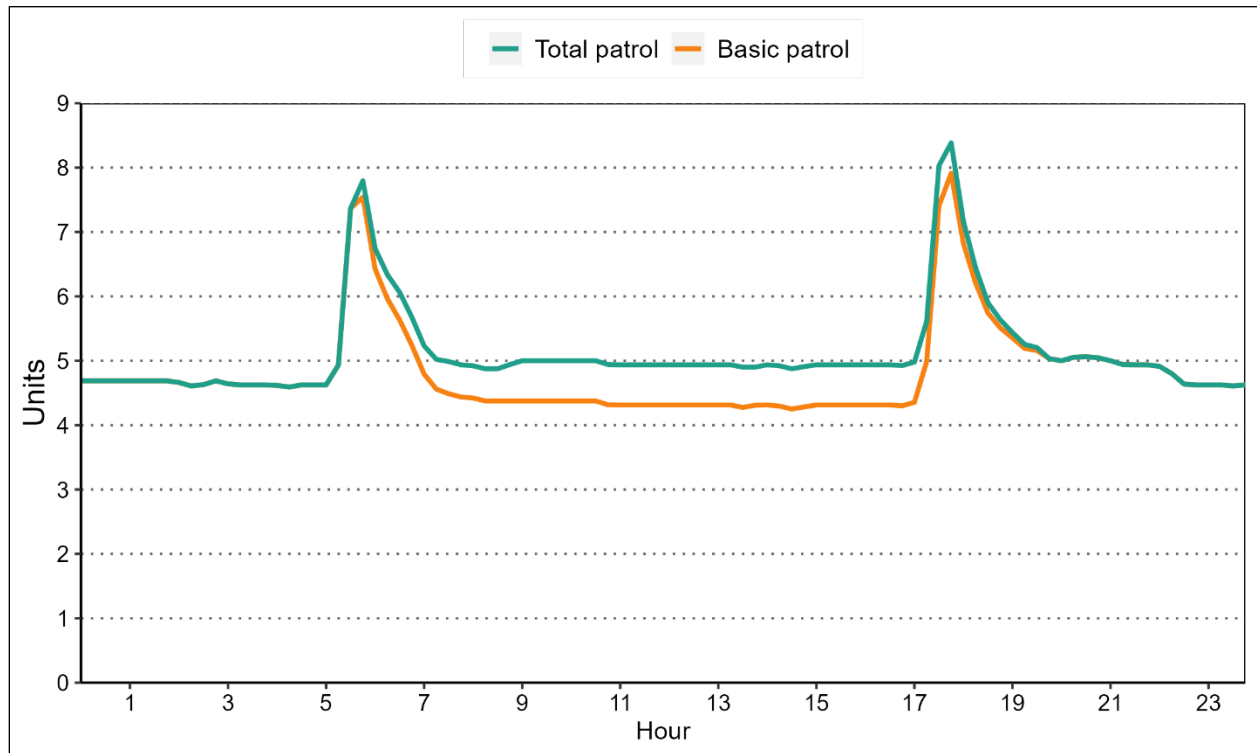
FIGURE 5-6: Deployment and All Workload, Weekends, Summer 2023
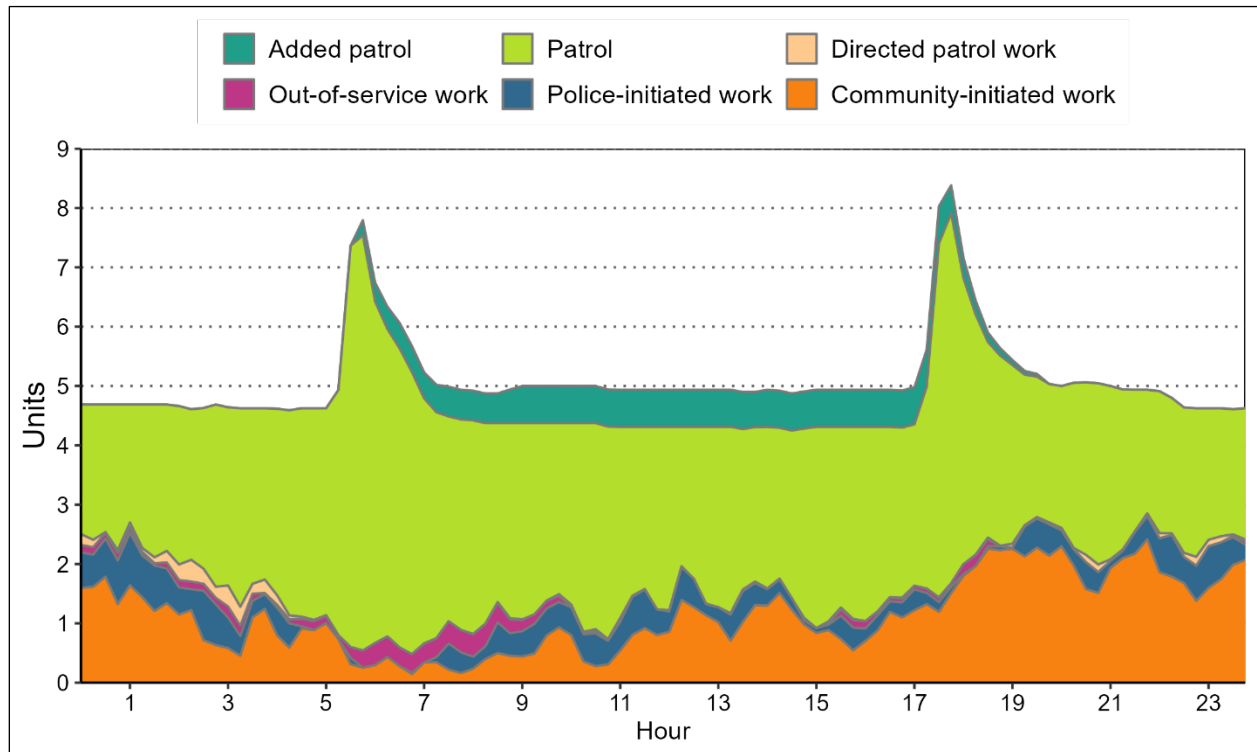
FIGURE 5-7: Percentage of Workload, Weekends, Summer 2023
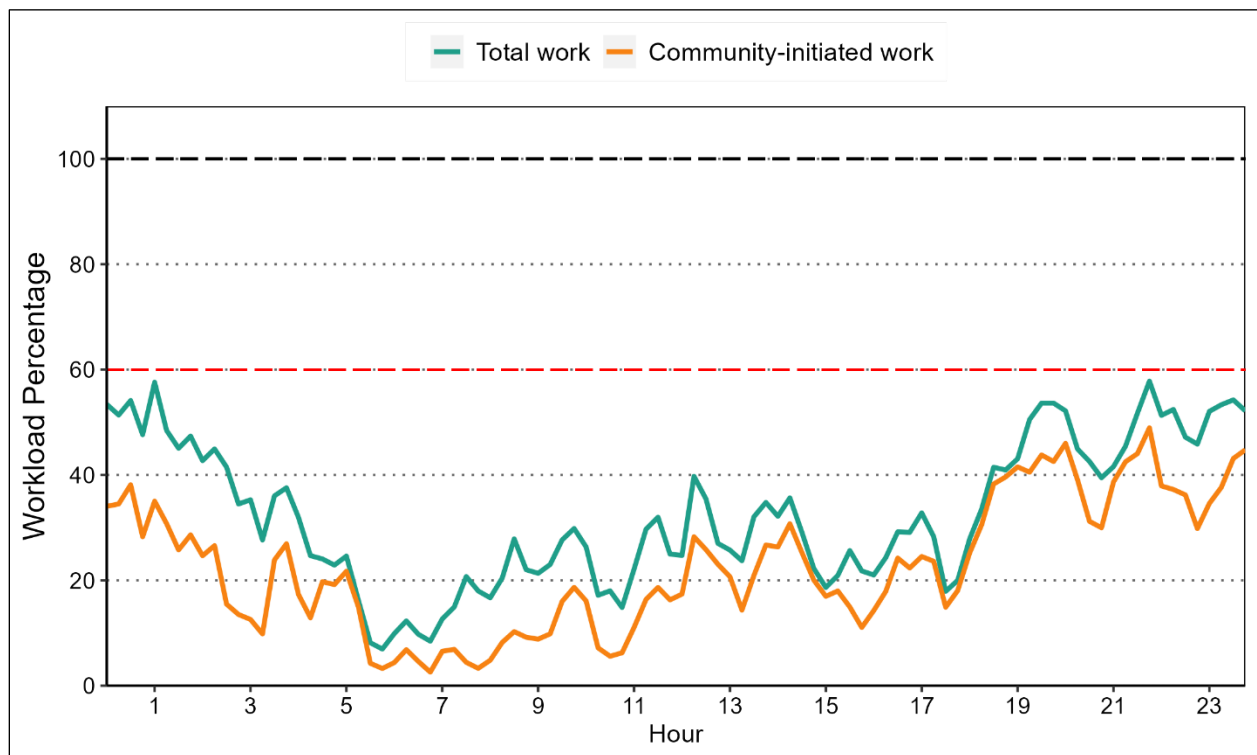
Avg. Deployment   5.1 officers per hour
Avg. Workload: 1.6 officers per hour
Avg. % Deployed (SI): 49 percent
Peak SI: 58 percent
Peak SI Time: 1:00-1:15 a.m. and 9:45-10:00 p.m.

These metrics from 2023 summer weekends would indicate a more balanced workload and appropriate staffing level than the weekdays during the same period.

FIGURE 5-8: Deployed Officers, Weekdays, Winter 2024

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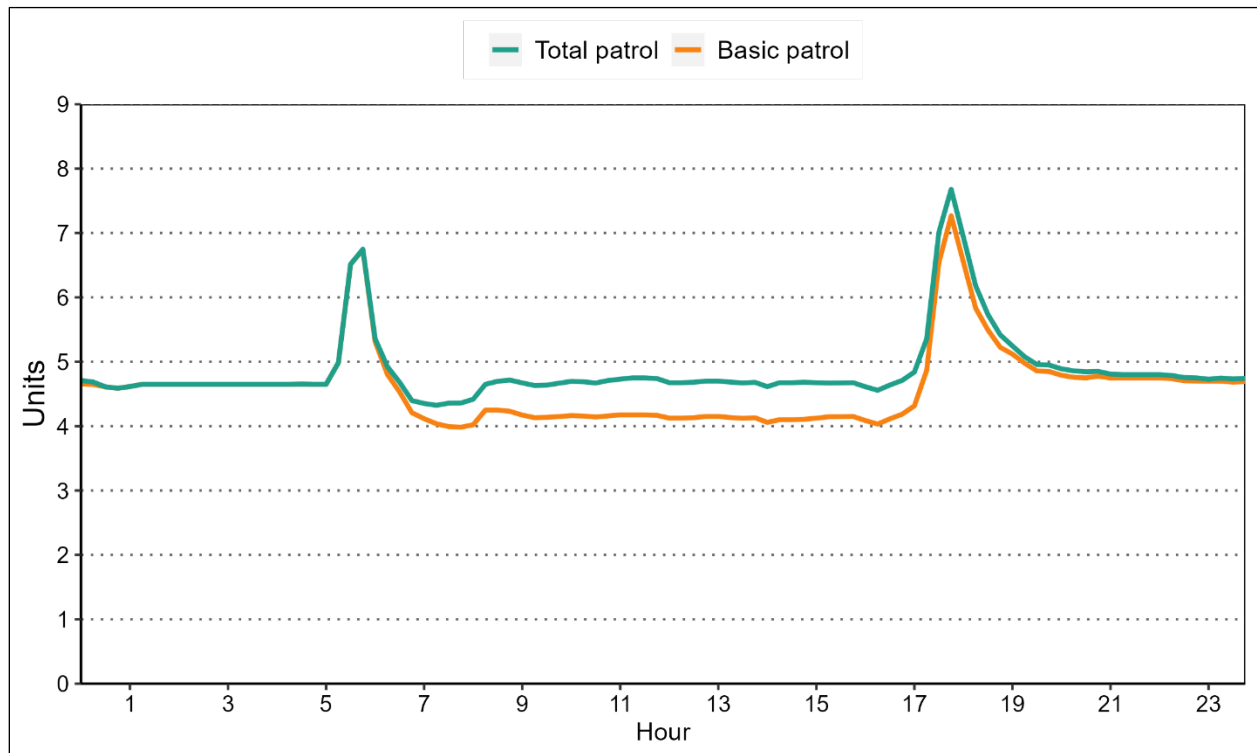
FIGURE 5-9: Deployment and All Workload, Weekdays, Winter 2024

Legend: Added patrol, Patrol, Directed patrol work, Out-of-service work, Police-initiated work, Community-initiated work
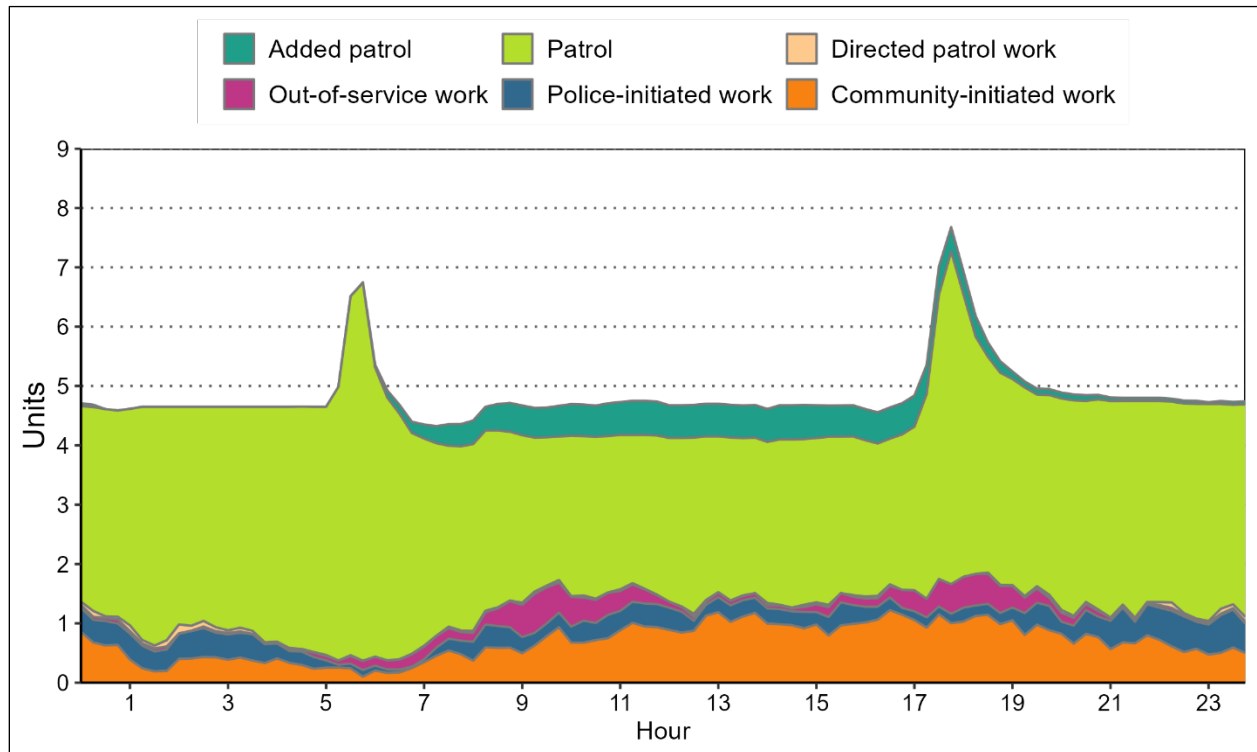
FIGURE 5-10: Percentage of Workload, Weekdays, Winter 2024

Legend: Total work, Community-initiated work
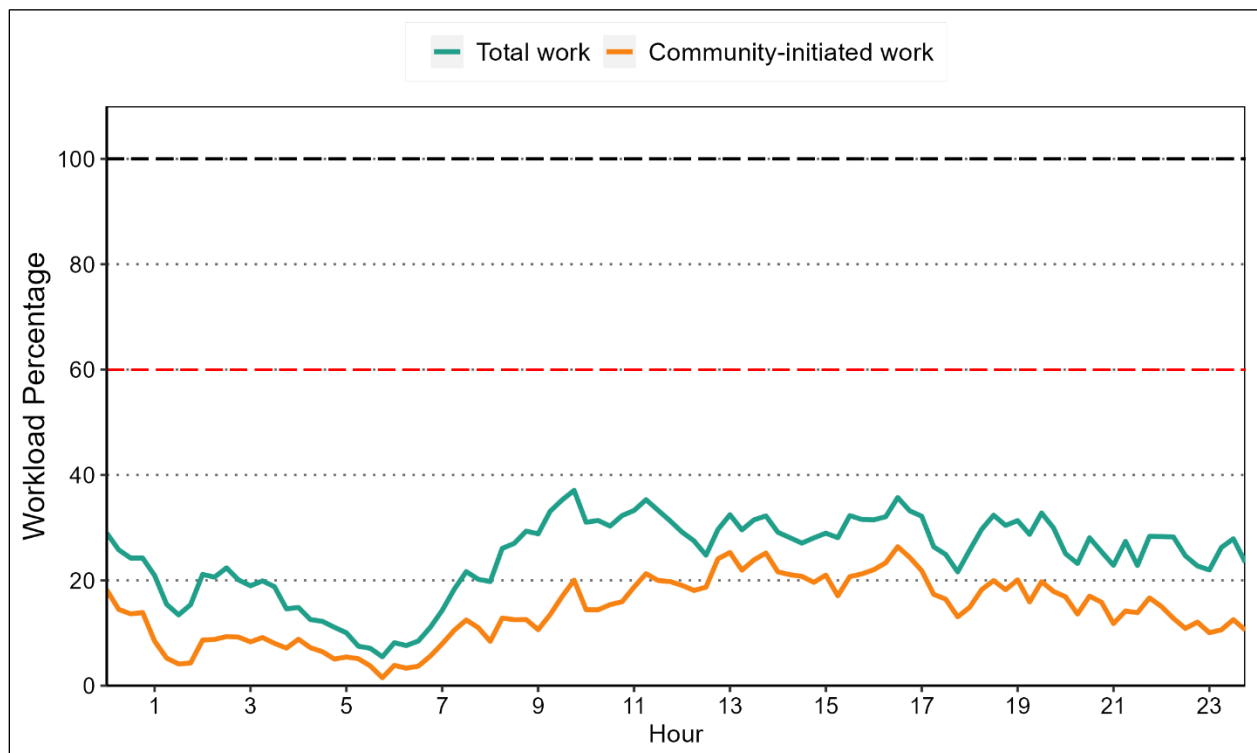
Avg. Deployment   4.9 officers per hour
Avg. Workload: 1.2 officers per hour
Avg. % Deployed (SI): 25 percent
Peak SI: 38 percent
Peak SI Time: 9:45 a.m.

These numbers are similar to the first workload data sets (weekdays-summer) and indicate a potential over-deployment of what would be necessary. However, as will we explain, we believe there are mitigating factors to this and we do *not* recommend a reduction of patrol personnel.

FIGURE 5-11: Deployed Officers, Weekends, Winter 2024

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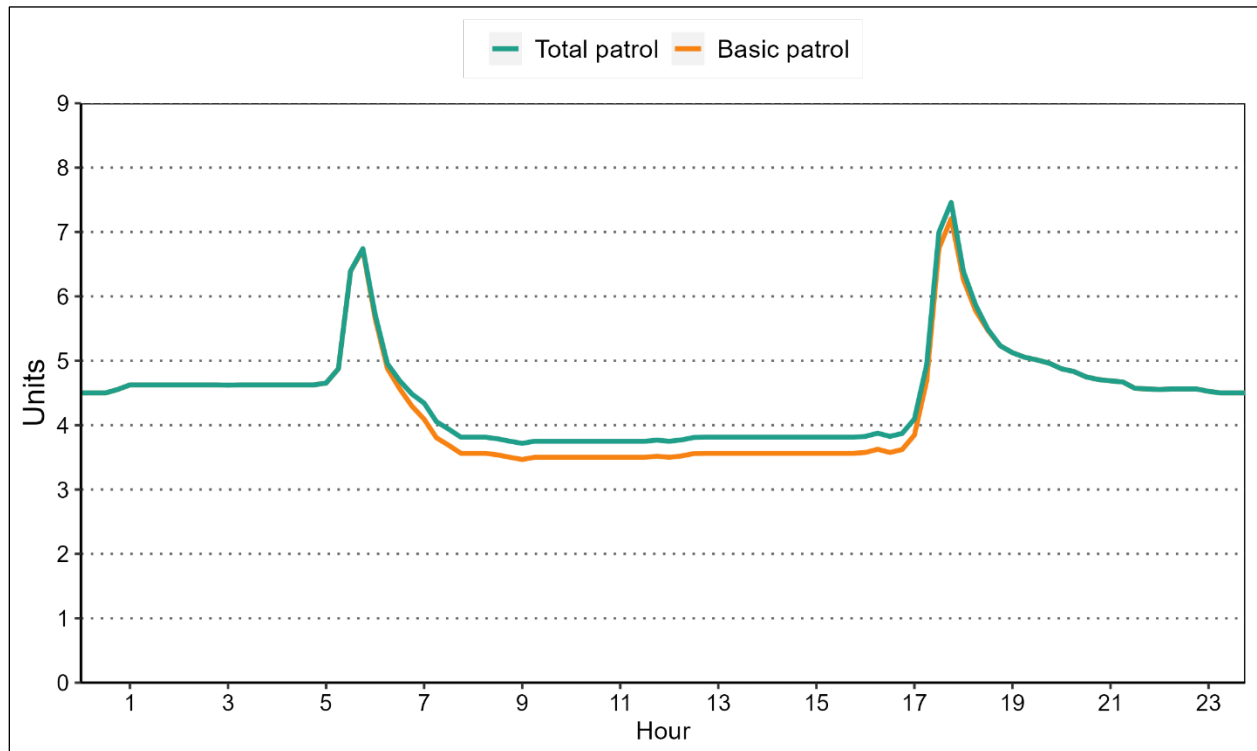
FIGURE 5-12: Deployment and All Workload, Weekends, Winter 2024
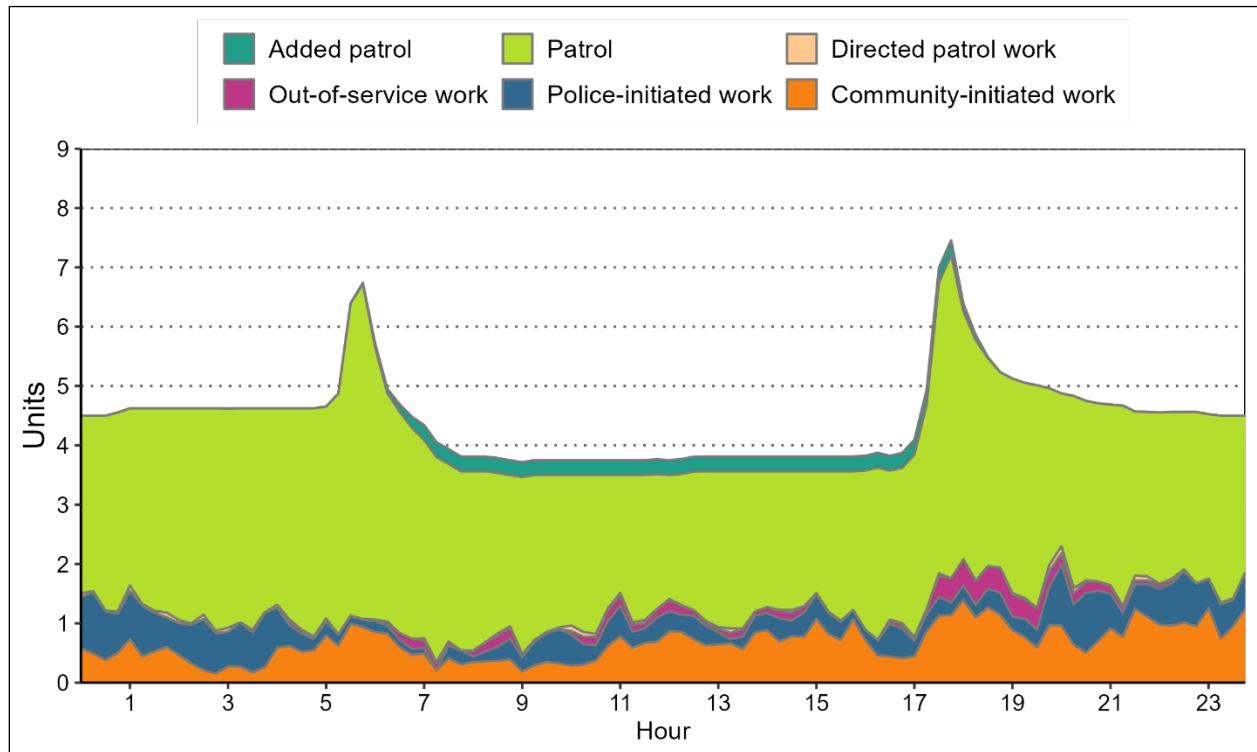
FIGURE 5-13: Percentage of Workload, Weekends, Winter 2024
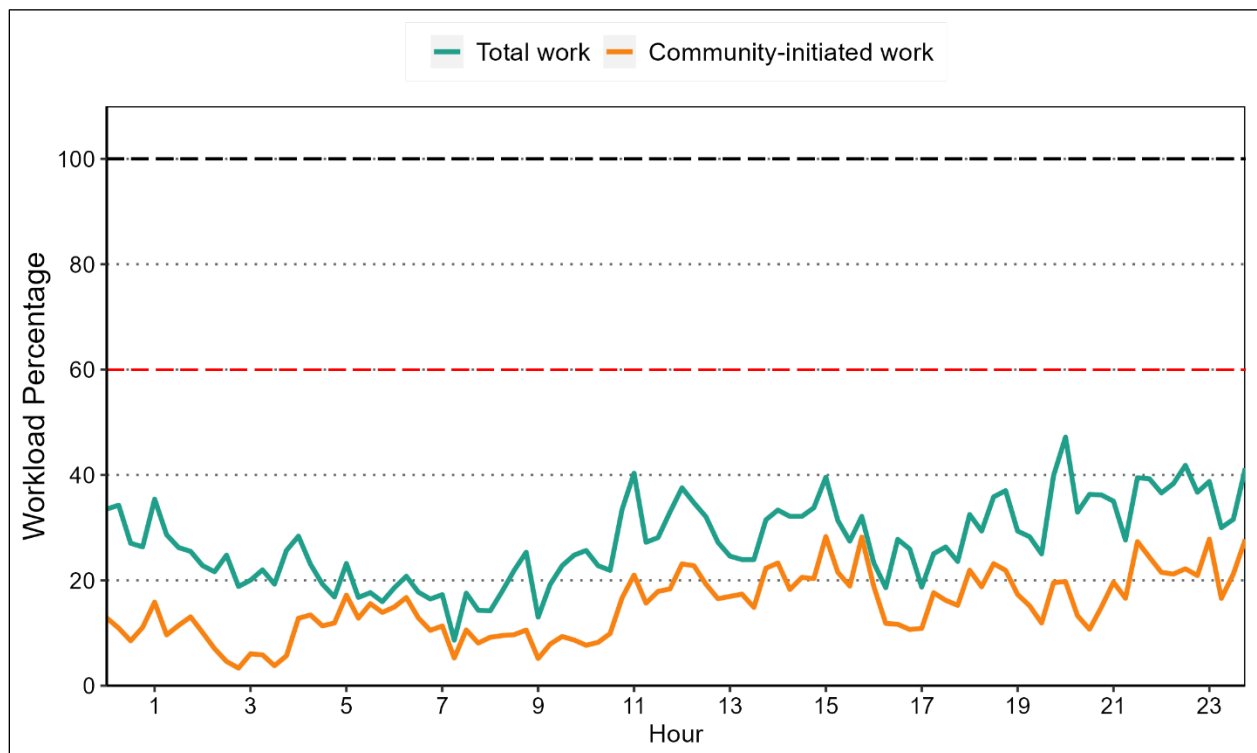
Avg. Deployment   4.5 officers per hour
Avg. Workload: 1.2 officers per hour
Avg. % Deployed (SI): 27 percent
Peak SI: 47 percent
Peak SI Time: 8:00 p.m.

As indicated earlier, the figures and data represented above are from two 8-week periods during the summer of 2023 and the winter of 2024; the data is broken down by weekdays and weekends. In evaluating the workload against the available staffing in the BPD Patrol Division, it "appears" that the division is generally overstaffed. However, there are two primary observations we made that might suggest this is not the case.

We know from conducting assessments involving departments throughout the country that these workload numbers do not represent all work being done in the department. Police culture, by its very nature, does not encourage 100 percent accounting of an officer's time. Beat integrity is a cultural element in all departments, and beat integrity encourages officers to be available to handle any service call or crime report in their area of responsibility. As a result, officers tend to remain "available" in the department's CAD system and not record all activities, such as report writing and other administrative tasks.

We observed this firsthand during our ride-along and interviews with patrol officers. Officers handled calls for service and completed some of the required paperwork (digital–computer entries) before 'clearing' the call and showing themselves available again. The actual report that still needed to be written was not completed until another time, and in most cases, those reports are completed while the officers are available for another call. This means they are doing an administrative task (report writing) when, in fact, they are coded in CAD as being on "patrol," (i.e. available for calls and addressing potential community concerns).

There are methods that departments have instituted that enable officers to accurately record what they are doing while simultaneously being available to handle priority needs in their beat or for their beat partners. A CAD code of "busy" (performing a necessary task such as report writing," but still available to respond to another call if necessary could be used to satisfy an officers need to capture this time yet maintain beat integrity.

Other examples of work performed that is often not captured in CAD include:

- Performing administrative tasks.

- Vehicle or equipment maintenance, including tasks as simple of being busy for 10 minutes while pumping fuel into the patrol car.

- Rest or meal breaks, These are necessary activities that take away from proactive patrol time.

- Driving across town to perform follow-up work on a previous case. The actual work once arrived may or may not be captured but the travel time often does not get logged.

Accurate representation of actual workload captured within the CAD system was one of the observations made that mitigate the appearance of being overstaffed based solely on data. The second observation concerns the Town's geography.

The Town of Bluffton and the individual beats are large for a small cadre of officers. The officers are spread out across that geography and with only a few main road arteries connecting those areas, traffic can often become a concern in the ability to quickly get somewhere when

needed. Additionally, the geography is intermixed with Beaufort County pockets of jurisdiction that often need to be traversed to get to other sections of the Town. We also observed other areas of Bluffton that are exclusive neighborhoods and somewhat remote from where officers spend most of their beat patrol time. Travel in and out of these areas can take a substantial amount of time.

It is these mitigating factors that lead us to believe that that the Patrol Division is not "overstaffed."

We do, however, recommend that BPD take steps to accurately capture all work being performed by patrol officers and supervisors. This includes an accurate representation of administrative work such as meetings, briefings, officer rest time, and report writing. We caution that this might be more difficult than expected to shift the officer culture. The entire staff of the department has been trained and ingrained in its current culture of performing work as they currently do it. Many officers we spoke with could not explain why they perform certain tasks other than to say "that's the way I was trained to do it." Making a change of this nature will require an explanation of why current practices need to change and will require constant monitoring and follow-up to ensure compliance and that the expectation is not being abused.

This recommendation can also provide additional benefits outside of capturing the real workload of the agency. Current practices and unstructured officer time allow officers tremendous autonomy throughout their shift. Unfortunately, many cases of officer misconduct seen around the country have stemmed from officers not being accountable for their time/activities and a lack of supervisory oversight. Enacting this type of practice into policy should increase accountability. It will likely require more oversight from supervisors and management to ensure that department expectations are being met, but shifting the culture now with a young workforce should yield operational benefits in the future.

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CALL AND EVENT ANALYSIS

In the following portion of the report, we will explore what types of calls occupy the time of BPD patrol officers and where those calls originate from.

FIGURE 5-14: Percentage Events per Day, by Initiator
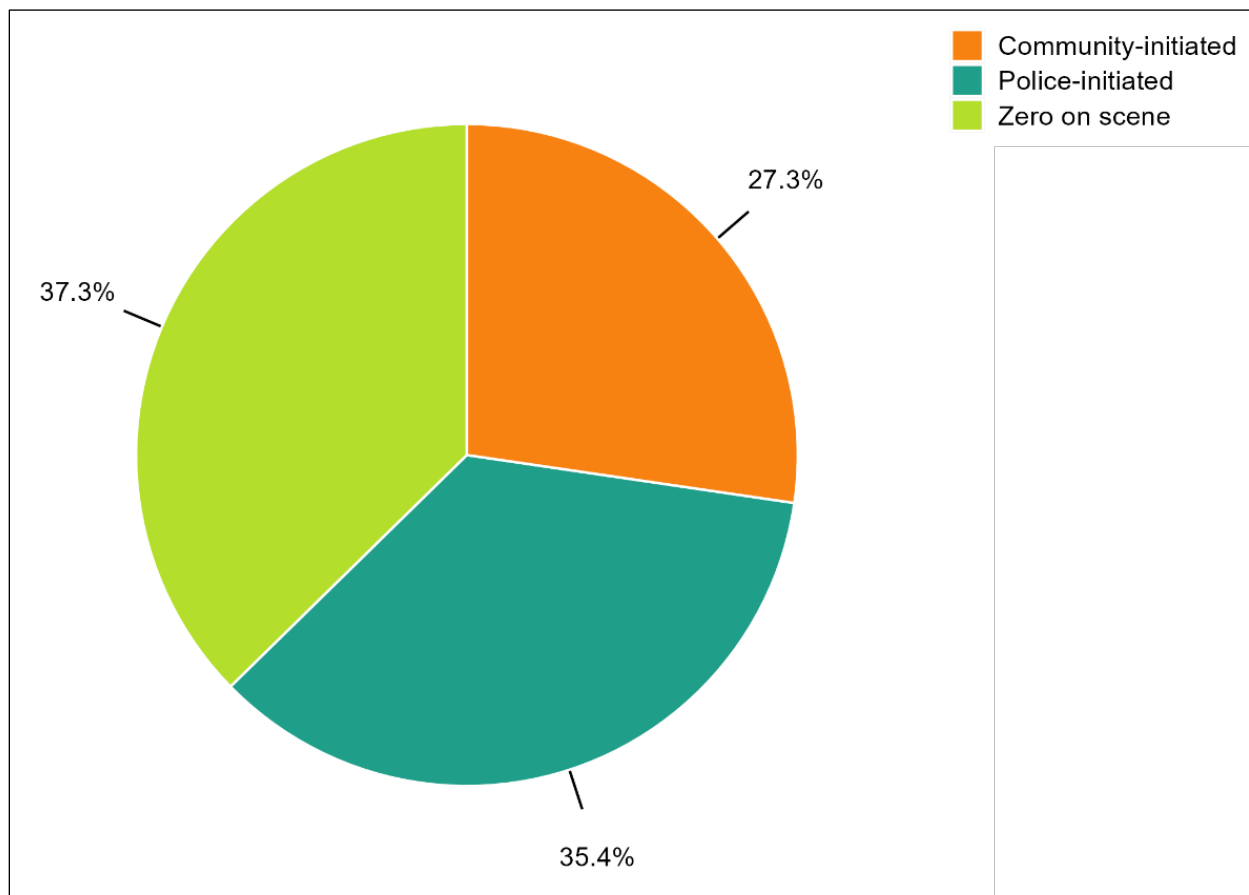
Note: Percentages are based on a total of 37,251 events.

TABLE 5-3: Events per Day, by Initiator

Initiator	No. of Events	Events per Day
Community-initiated	10,175	27.8
Police-initiated	13,169	36.0
Zero on scene	13,907	38.0
Total	**37,251**	**101.8**

From our analysis of the total events recorded in the department's CAD system in our one-year study period, we see that approximately 27 percent of those events originated from community requests for services, while 35 percent originated from police officer self-initiated or self-directed activity. We believe this is a healthy balance of community-initiated vs officer-initiated activity and it suggest that BPD is appropriately balanced in patrol. However, the zero on scene category is higher than what is normally observed in a department. For context, zero on scene time is a category of observed events or calls in the CAD system that did not have a long enough amount of officer time attached to the handling of the event to be effectively

captured for analysis. For example, if a citizen called 911 to report a reckless driver and an officer was in the area, the officer may have taken time to look for that reckless driver but never placed themselves on the call. After checking the area the officer may advise dispatch that they checked the area, were unable to locate the reckless driver, and will clear the call. The dispatcher would make entries that the officer was "on scene" and "cleared" within seconds for CAD purposes. Another example is officers performing a "directed patrol" only to clear the event quickly after initial entry.

The table and figure that follow below further break down the daily events experienced by BPD and show that directed patrols occupy the largest number of daily events handled by BPD officers. The second most common activity are traffic stops initiated by BPD officers.

TABLE 5-4: Events per Day, by Category

Category	No. of Events	Events per Day
Accident	1,519	4.2
Alarm	1,730	4.7
Animal call	154	0.4
Assist citizen	659	1.8
Assist EMS	213	0.6
Assist other agency	71	0.2
Check	328	0.9
Community activity	15	0.0
Crime against persons	206	0.6
Crime against property	1,089	3.0
Crime against society	123	0.3
Directed patrol	18,717	51.1
Disturbance	1,873	5.1
Follow-up	1,294	3.5
Investigation	1,511	4.1
Juvenile	27	0.1
Mental health	101	0.3
Miscellaneous	571	1.6
Suspicious incident	1,007	2.8
Traffic enforcement	1,003	2.7
Traffic hazard	283	0.8
Traffic stop	4,490	12.3
Violation	210	0.6
Warrant	57	0.2
Total	**37,251**	**101.8**

FIGURE 5-15: Percentage Events per Day, by Category
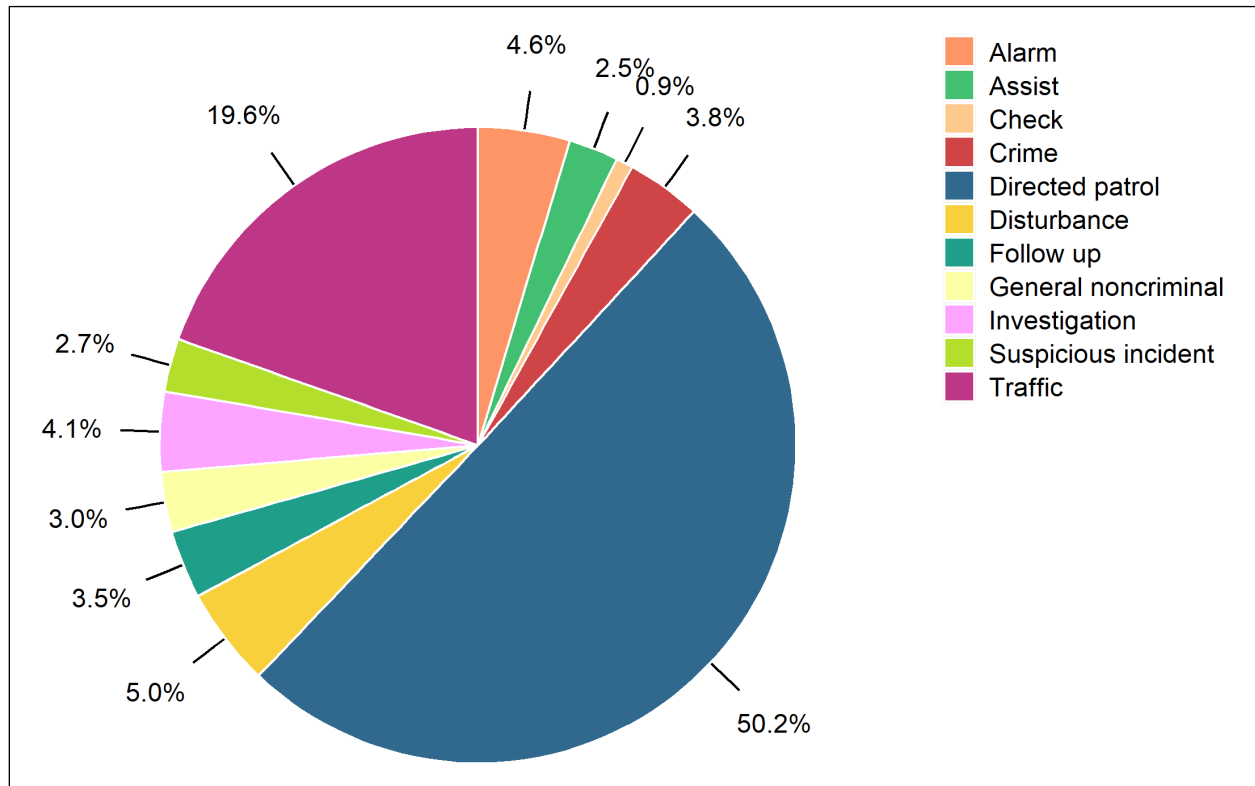
The following figure and table show the month-to-month relationship between officer-initiated activity and community-initiated calls for service. Bluffton officers' workload is slower from November to January, while the remainder of the year shows a slightly higher workload. It should be noted that the slowest month is January, with 38.2 calls per day, and the busiest is May, with 51.5 calls per day. As an average, only 12 additional calls per day would imply that the workload is reasonably balanced through the seasons. Based upon the number of officers deployed in a 24-hour period, this only results in each officer handling one to two additional calls per day during the busier months.

The following figure and supporting table provide insight into the average number of calls per day, per month. Although the graph may visually indicate a steeper drop in calls the reality is the drop-off is only about 12 calls per month. Also worthy of note is that officer-initiated activity drops more than the community-initiated calls for service during the months with the slightly lighter workload.

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FIGURE 5-16: Calls per Day, by Initiator and Month
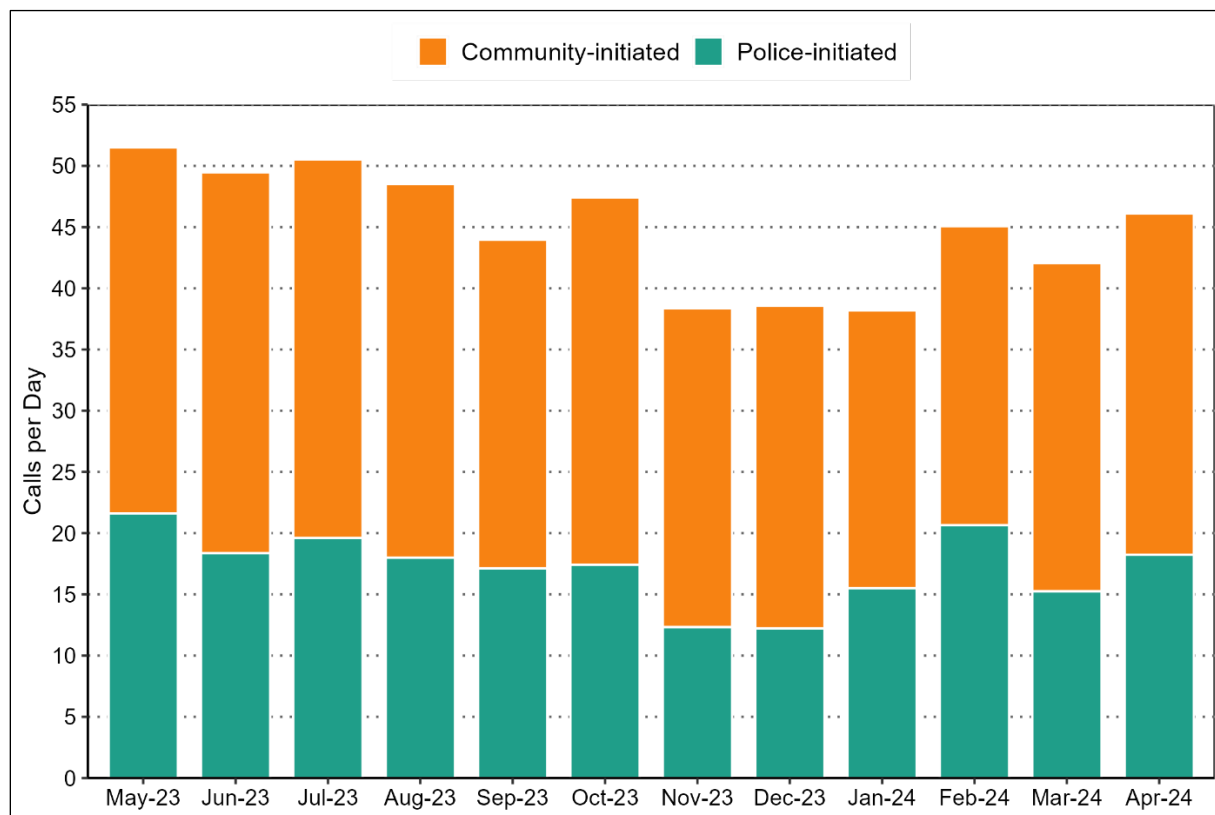
TABLE 5-5: Calls per Day, by Initiator and Month

Initiator	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Community	29.9	31.1	30.9	30.5	26.8	30.0	26.0	26.4	22.7	24.4	26.8	27.9
Police	21.6	18.4	19.6	18.0	17.1	17.4	12.3	12.2	15.5	20.7	15.3	18.2
Total	**51.5**	**49.5**	**50.5**	**48.5**	**44.0**	**47.4**	**38.4**	**38.6**	**38.2**	**45.1**	**42.1**	**46.1**

The following table shows the average amount of time that BPD officers take to handle each category of calls received by the department. The average time spent on all calls was 33 minutes for community-initiated calls and 26 minutes for calls initiated by BPD officers. The most time-consuming calls involved mental health-related service needs, taking an average of 49 minutes. The officer-initiated activity in this area took much longer, but that figure is likely an outlier, with only two recorded during the year. With the position of mental health advocate in the department, we would encourage BPD to carefully track this call category to both reduce officer time and reduce the number of calls. This type of data is valuable for BPD management to best understand the impact of certain call types on officer labor time. If there are sudden surges in the average time necessary to handle a call type, then management should be exploring the reasons why in order to implement potential remedies.

TABLE 5-6: Primary Unit's Average Occupied Times, by Category and Initiator

Category	Community-Initiated		Police-Initiated	
	Minutes	Calls	Minutes	Calls
Accident	41.0	1,337	43.4	115
Alarm	12.4	1,522	6.2	3
Animal call	21.0	129	27.0	6
Assist citizen	31.7	290	17.3	281
Assist EMS	37.6	187	31.4	6
Assist other agency	32.9	64	28.7	2
Check	24.4	287	15.8	2
Community activity	NA	0	35.2	13
Crime against persons	40.7	180	34.4	10
Crime against property	30.1	885	25.2	89
Crime against society	38.9	102	12.1	4
Disturbance	28.1	1,616	27.2	37
Follow up	17.6	711	17.1	393
Investigation	15.4	1,218	13.0	59
Juvenile	46.6	24	11.9	2
Mental health	48.7	91	183.2	2
Miscellaneous	21.9	285	55.2	161
Suspicious incident	26.5	519	14.1	354
Traffic enforcement	18.7	379	9.0	285
Traffic hazard	17.3	160	12.0	34
Traffic stop	NA	0	16.1	4,401
Violation	15.8	162	16.3	7
Warrant	51.8	27	71.5	24
Weighted Average/Total Calls	**25.1**	**10,175**	**17.8**	**6,290**

The next table explores the average number of patrol units that are needed to successfully manage a certain call type. It is not uncommon for police departments to dispatch two police officers for many types of calls where there is a degree of danger or unknown danger. For instance, it is standard practice to send two police officers to an alarm call just in case the alarm call is "good," and a potential suspect is still at the location. This is basic officer safety, even though a vast majority of alarm calls are false. This is also an area that management and supervision should be actively managing at all times to ensure that resources that are not needed on a call remain in service for other calls that may arise.

The reader may notice that the total number of calls noted above is greatly reduced from the number of events we noted earlier. As indicated, the zero-on-scene events are incidents that take less than one minute of CAD time to handle and are therefore excluded so as not to impact actual service time unfairly. It is generally believed that events of that nature do not have a significant impact on the workload being reported here. When we evaluated the data, we suspected that the high number of directed patrols (or extra patrols) contributed to that anomaly in the data. As demonstrated below, this assumption was correct as a majority of all directed patrols took about 14 seconds to resolve. This means that officers are entering a location on their in-car computer for a directed patrol and quickly clearing the call merely to demonstrate activity. This is also consistent with what BPD patrol officers reported to us.

Management should be carefully watching these metrics to ensure that there is value in the activity being performed and that it is both servicing the desire of the community and not creating an illusion of more work being performed than reality may suggest.

TABLE 5-7: Extra Patrol Call Types and Average Time

Call Type	Count	Average Occupied Time
Extra Patrol - Business	11,806	0.23
Extra Patrol - Residence	6,910	0.25
Foot Patrol	1	8.47
Total	**18,717**	**0.23**

Note: The Average Occupied Time is a metric or percentage of 100. 23 percent of 60 seconds is 13.8 seconds

TABLE 5-8: Average Number of Responding Units, by Initiator and Category

Category	Community-Initiated		Police-Initiated	
	No. of Units	Calls	No. of Units	Calls
Accident	2.0	1,337	1.8	115
Alarm	1.7	1,522	2.7	3
Animal call	1.6	129	2.0	6
Assist citizen	2.0	290	1.4	281
Assist EMS	2.3	187	3.0	6
Assist other agency	2.2	64	2.0	2
Check	1.9	287	2.0	2
Community activity	NA	0	1.2	13
Crime against persons	1.9	180	1.3	10
Crime against property	1.6	885	1.3	89
Crime against society	2.8	102	1.2	4
Disturbance	2.1	1,616	2.0	37
Follow-up	1.2	711	1.2	393
Investigation	1.6	1,218	1.2	59
Juvenile	2.1	24	2.0	2
Mental health	2.7	91	2.0	2
Miscellaneous	1.3	285	1.3	161
Suspicious incident	2.3	519	2.1	354
Traffic enforcement	1.5	379	1.1	285
Traffic hazard	1.5	160	1.2	34
Traffic stop	NA	0	1.7	4,401
Violation	1.2	162	1.0	7
Warrant	1.9	27	2.4	24
Weighted Average/Total Calls	**1.8**	**10,175**	**1.6**	**6,290**

As noted earlier, Bluffton is divided into three zones or beats for patrol operations. The following table shows the average number of calls in each zone per day and how many work hours are consumed on those calls. The "A" zone is the busiest, with a daily average of 16.2 calls, taking

approximately 10 hours of total labor from all responding units. Zone "B" has more calls per day than Zone "C," but the labor time is only slightly higher.

TABLE 5-9: Calls and Work Hours by Beat, per Day

Beat	Per Day	
	Calls	Work Hours
A1	6.2	4.0
A2	10.0	6.6
Subtotal A	**16.2**	**10.6**
B1	7.7	4.0
B2	6.6	3.8
Subtotal B	**14.3**	**7.8**
C1	4.5	3.1
C2	6.4	4.1
Subtotal C	**10.9**	**7.2**
HQ	1.0	0.5
Miscellaneous	2.1	1.5
Unknown	0.5	0.3
Subtotal Other	**3.5**	**2.3**
Total	**45.0**	**27.9**

Traffic Enforcement

Traffic enforcement is a common activity in almost all police departments across the country. Bluffton PD has a traffic unit designated on its organizational chart but at the time of this assessment there were no officers assigned to the task. However, as observed in the data charts above, traffic stops and enforcement activity is among the largest contributors to workload in the department. It is a common activity that is typically officer-initiated in nature that occurs within the BPD patrol function.

We discussed the philosophy behind the traffic enforcement efforts with BPD patrol staff. We learned that little direction is given on what to enforce, how to enforce, where to enforce, and when to enforce. There is a genuine interest on the part of officers to remain active throughout their shift and conducting traffic stops is viewed as an appreciated activity by the department.

In general, we agree that traffic enforcement is a valuable and necessary activity that police departments should engage in to make the roadways in a community safer. But we strongly believe that enforcement activity should be done with a specific purpose that includes desired outcomes. Additionally, traffic enforcement should be part of a larger strategy that includes a three-pronged approach to safety improvement. The "Three E's"—Education, Engineering, and Enforcement—is a decades-old concept that applies to a whole-community solution to traffic safety. Often, police departments assume the enforcement role with an assumption that the other concepts are handled elsewhere. While it is true that there are national programs focused on education (example, Click it or Ticket, Drive Sober, etc.) and of course new drivers are required to educate themselves before obtaining a license, there are strategies that individual communities can engage in to educate the public about traffic hazards and general safety. Traffic engineering is the focus of other departments and while there are engineering solutions to

traffic problems occurring all of the time, the police should have a mechanism to voice their concerns and observations within the process.

We asked BPD officers if there was a mechanism to forward traffic concerns that might have an engineering solution through the Town's communication channels. None of the officers we interacted with were familiar with any such process, let alone the concept that they might be a part of that solution. We recommend that BPD and Bluffton Traffic Engineering establish a mechanism that would enable police concerns to be routed to engineering for potential solutions when appropriate.

Modern police departments have easy access to data that can be used to analyze locations with a high number of crashes as well as what might be causing those collisions (primary collision factors). Armed with this information, departments can implement strategic decisions that direct resources toward a very specific problem in an attempt to reduce collisions and improve safety. Performing this analysis may also point to other solutions that may not require enforcement activity yet be positively impacted through an engineering and or education strategy.

We observed firsthand that BPD has access to this data, yet there is no evidence that it is being analyzed or even accessed for strategic decision-making. In short, management is aware of the technology but is not using it, patrol officers are not receiving the data or being given direction and are therefore left to perform randomized enforcement, and there is no feedback loop to measure the effectiveness of the existing enforcement activity occurring within the Town.

We recommend that BPD engage in a data-driven strategic approach to traffic enforcement. This approach should include a data analysis, a specific strategy to reduce collisions or dangerous driving, and a feedback loop to measure effectiveness.

This recommendation would suggest the department pull back from existing randomized enforcement. Although we encourage a shift in philosophy and believe that random enforcement should be more the exception than the rule, nothing here is intended to discourage police officers from taking appropriate action when significant violations are observed outside of a specific focus area. Afterall, police officers are a visible presence for a reason and the public expects them to act when serious offenses occur. But, to the extent possible we believe that if enforcement is backed up with data, and randomized enforcement encounters are reduced, the department will experience better results and better community relations.

Out-of-Service-Activities

Workload activity is divided into three distinct categories. Community-initiated work involves calls for service that officers are dispatched to handle. For instance, when someone calls 911 to report a crime and an officer is sent to investigate, that is classified as a community-initiated call. Self-initiated or self-directed work is also self-explanatory. When an officer makes a traffic stop and takes whatever appropriate action is deemed necessary, that is classified as self-initiated. Almost all other work recorded in a department CAD system gets classified as being administrative in nature or as this category implies, an "out-of-service" activity.

The following table is a breakdown of all out-of-service activity that CPSM extracted from BPD's CAD data.

TABLE 5-10: Activities and Occupied Times by Description

Description	Occupied Time	Count
At station	120.8	171
Busy	77.3	338
Court	88.4	100
Meeting	110.8	20
Miscellaneous	74.7	168
School	229.4	23
Training	76.3	169
Vehicle maintenance	66.7	17
Warrant	42.6	26
Weighted Average/Total Calls	**88.0**	**1,032**

In discussions with BPD officers, we found that there is activity occurring that may not be recorded in CAD. The primary example is report writing. Officers go on a call that results in having to write a report, and at some point later in the shift they will write the report while showing 'available' in CAD. This is normal activity that is observed in many departments and often stems from a cultural expectation that officers remain available as much as possible in case a call needs to be handled. However, what is intended to be a good work ethic does not serve the agency in capturing actual workload. In a perfect scenario, that report writing time will be attached to the original call for the purpose of capturing actual labor time on call types more accurately. However, it is also acceptable to capture it in an out-of-service category.

Aside from report writing, officers also provided additional examples of administrative work, rest stops, meal breaks, etc., all occurring while being "available" in CAD.

We recommend that BPD work to ensure that all legitimate patrol officer work is accurately captured in CAD in order to improve future workload assessments.

RESPONSE TIMES

We analyzed the response times to various types of calls, separating the duration into dispatch processing and travel time, to determine whether response times varied by call type. Response time is measured as the difference between when a call is received and when the first unit arrives on scene. This is further divided into dispatch processing and travel time. Dispatch processing is the time between when a call is received and when the first unit is dispatched. Travel time is the remaining time until the first unit arrives on scene.

We begin the discussion with statistics that include all calls combined. We started with 2,751 calls in summer and 2,332 calls in winter. We limited our analysis to community-initiated calls, which amounted to 1,703 calls in the summer and 1,320 calls in the winter. In addition, we removed the calls lacking a recorded arriving unit and calls outside Bluffton patrol beats. We were left with 1,188 calls in summer and 897 calls in winter for our analysis. For the entire year, we began with 16,465 calls and limited our analysis to 10,175 community-initiated calls. With similar exclusions, we were left with 6,921 calls.

The following table provides insight into BPD response times to the various call types in both the summer and the winter months. The overall average response time to calls in the summer was just under 12 minutes and in the winter was just over 12 minutes.

TABLE 5-11: Average Response Time Components, in Minutes, by Category

Category	Summer				Winter			
	Dispatch	Travel	Response	Count	Dispatch	Travel	Response	Count
Accident	3.1	7.6	10.7	171	3.3	8.3	11.6	135
Alarm	3.3	7.7	10.9	229	2.5	8.8	11.3	136
Animal call	6.0	6.1	12.1	10	3.8	12.3	16.1	9
Assist citizen	5.2	8.2	13.4	43	4.8	7.9	12.7	31
Assist EMS	3.6	6.1	9.7	34	3.1	5.4	8.5	24
Assist other agency	1.9	4.7	6.6	8	1.8	6.0	7.9	5
Check	4.2	10.5	14.8	30	5.2	9.6	14.8	38
Crime against persons	5.0	11.7	16.7	16	3.4	8.4	11.8	21
Crime against property	4.5	9.3	13.7	101	3.8	11.6	15.4	61
Crime against society	2.5	7.7	10.2	15	5.4	7.0	12.4	12
Disturbance	4.6	8.1	12.7	185	4.0	8.4	12.4	177
Follow up	6.4	7.8	14.2	23	5.2	8.5	13.7	25
Investigation	2.8	8.2	11.1	163	3.0	9.8	12.7	100
Mental health	3.9	7.2	11.1	19	2.5	5.1	7.6	10
Miscellaneous	5.8	9.2	15.0	20	4.4	9.8	14.1	20
Suspicious incident	3.7	8.6	12.4	62	3.9	7.5	11.4	46
Traffic enforcement	5.0	6.4	11.4	20	3.0	11.7	14.8	20
Traffic hazard	3.6	8.6	12.1	21	3.4	12.8	16.2	13
Violation	3.6	8.7	12.3	18	3.8	11.7	15.5	14
Total Average	**3.8**	**8.1**	**11.9**	**1,188**	**3.6**	**8.9**	**12.5**	**897**

Note: The total average is weighted according to the number of calls per category.

The following data sets show response times to all calls in the different zones of the Town. Note that the "C" zone takes the longest to arrive at call with officer travel time being about 90 seconds longer on average.

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FIGURE 5-17: Average Response Time Components, by Beat
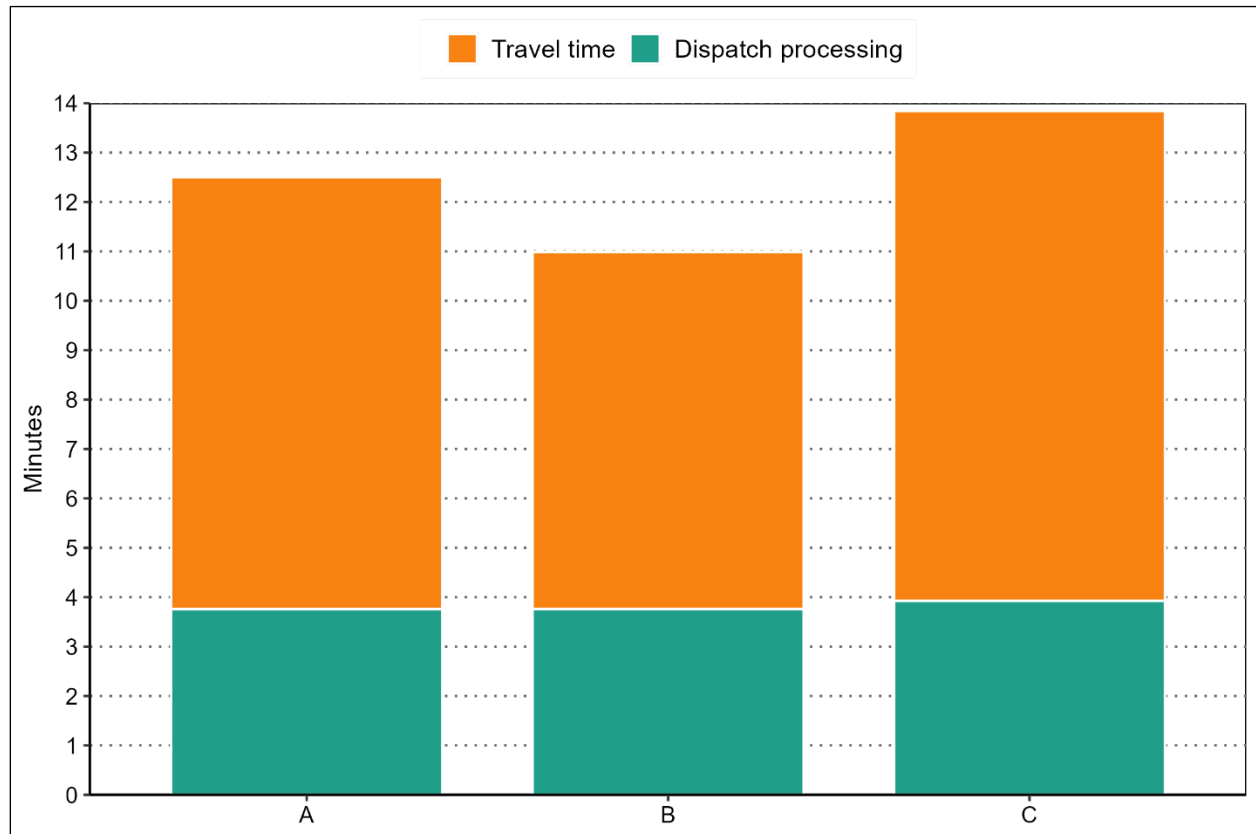
TABLE 5-12: Average Response Time Components, by Beat

Beat	Minutes			Calls
	Dispatch	Travel	Response	
A1	3.9	9.2	13.1	1,172
A2	3.7	8.5	12.2	2,003
Subtotal A	**3.8**	**8.7**	**12.5**	**3,175**
B1	4.0	7.8	11.8	985
B2	3.5	6.7	10.2	1,011
Subtotal B	**3.8**	**7.2**	**11.0**	**1,996**
C1	3.9	11.0	14.9	757
C2	4.0	9.1	13.0	993
Subtotal C	**3.9**	**9.9**	**13.8**	**1,750**
Total	**3.8**	**8.6**	**12.4**	**6,921**

Finally, we evaluate response times by priority. Most police departments have created a priority system for calls to ensure that critical calls are handled first and nonhazardous calls are handled as capacity allows. In Bluffton's case, since call holding is rare with the existing workload, the three call priorities listed have similar response times.

TABLE 5-13: Average and 90th Percentile Response Times, by Priority

Priority	Minutes			Calls	90th Percentile Response Time, Minutes
	Dispatch	Travel	Response		
1	3.3	8.2	11.5	3,670	20.4
3	4.1	9.1	13.2	2,036	23.2
5	4.8	9.1	13.9	1,215	26.4
Total	3.8	8.6	12.4	6,921	22.2
Injury accident	2.3	5.7	8.0	245	13.3

Note: The total average is weighted according to the number of calls within each priority level.

Many agencies classify too many call types into the highest category, thereby affecting the real response time data to true emergencies. However, injury accidents are a call type for which most agencies will have an expedited emergency response. The BPD response time for injury accidents is several minutes less than that for regular Priority 1 calls. This indicates that BPD is capable of responding to critical emergencies faster than the Priority 1 data would imply.

Police departments strive to meet a national benchmark of a total response time of 5 minutes for emergency calls. BPD is well above that number in injury accidents and regular Priority 1 response. Meeting these benchmarks is a collaborative effort managed by the department and involves dispatch and patrol availability. BPD does not have operational control over the dispatch center (managed by Beaufort County Sheriff), and the 2.3-minute processing time for injury accidents is close to the industry standard (under 2 minutes). BPD's challenge in meeting this benchmark is response time, and that is directly tied to the difficulty of getting through traffic and the spread-out nature of patrol work in Bluffton.

The only solution to the travel time and geography challenge is a greater concentration of officers around the Town (increased staffing). However, that is not practical or justified by the current workload experienced and captured by BPD.

Patrol Recommendations:

- CPSM recommends that Bluffton PD management engage in strategic decision-making regarding patrol officer-initiated workload. (Recommendation No. 22.)

- CPSM recommends periodic reviews of call load data to determine whether scheduling changes should be made. This review should be done twice per year, during summer and winter. (Recommendation No. 23.)

- We recommend that BPD take steps to realign its patrol workforce to bring patrol staffing closer to 60 percent of its sworn workforce. (Recommendation No. 24.)

- CPSM recommends that BPD take steps to ensure an accurate collection of data of all patrol officer and sergeant workload. (Recommendation No. 25.)

- CPSM recommends that BPD management carefully track "directed patrol" activity to ensure it is meeting department and community objectives. (Recommendation No. 26.)

- We recommend that BPD and Bluffton Traffic Engineering establish a mechanism that would enable police concerns to be routed to Engineering for potential solutions when appropriate. (Recommendation No. 27.)

- We recommend that BPD engage in a data-driven strategic approach to traffic enforcement. (Recommendation No. 28.)

- We recommend that BPD work to ensure that all legitimate patrol officer work is accurately captured in CAD in order to improve future workload assessments. (Recommendation No. 29.)

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SECTION 6. INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

Under the direction of the Operations Division Captain, the Investigations Division is made up of the following programs:

- Criminal Investigations Unit (CIU).
- Crime Scene Unit (Collateral duty to CIU).
- Domestic Violence / Victim Advocate.
- Community Mental Health.

As we examine operations of this division, we will report on each program individually.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT (CIU)

Under the direction of the Operations Division Captain, the CIU is responsible for the following functions:

- Criminal investigations, including crimes against persons, property crimes, financial crimes, and missing persons.
- Narcotic and vice crimes.
- Crime scene investigation.

Detectives serve as generalists, meaning that they can investigate any type of crime. This is commonplace in an agency of BPD's size. In larger agencies with greater staffing, detectives may specialize in the investigation of a particular type of crime such as homicide, sexual assault, or auto theft, to the exclusion of other types. In that way, they develop more specialized expertise, a luxury that is not available in the BPD.

Overall, BPD is a very young department in terms of tenure. And while BPD detectives are highly committed, each is relatively new in their present role. Where necessary, they may draw upon specialized expertise from larger departments such as the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED), and federal agencies such as the FBI, ATF, and DEA.

Policy / Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

CID is guided by *SOP 024, Criminal Investigations*. The policy, twelve pages in length, was reviewed by CPSM and found to be fairly comprehensive, though in our continued reporting we will address a couple of areas that may warrant modification. The policy provides step-by-step direction to staff regarding the following:

- Case assignment.
- Case management.
- Case file maintenance.
- Procedures to follow in various investigations.
- Procedures to follow when conducting interviews / interrogations, etc.

While *SOP 024* largely focusses on the role of CID, there are a number of other department policies that provide further direction such as Missing Persons and Juvenile. These are complementary policies that guide both CID and Patrol operations.

We did note that, as is the case with many policies we reviewed, this policy was dated. It was last amended/updated in 2017 under the signature block of a former Chief. Consideration should be given to reviewing the policy to ensure that it meets contemporary needs.

Staffing

Under the direction of the Operations Division Captain, the Criminal Investigations Division's authorized / actual staffing is shown in the following table.

TABLE 6-1: Criminal Investigations Division Authorized Staffing Levels at Present

Position	Authorized	Actual	Vacant
Sworn Personnel			
Lieutenant	1	1	
Sergeant	1	1	
Detective	3	3	
Domestic Violence Detective / Victim –Witness Advocate	1	1	
Total Sworn	6	6	-
Civilian Personnel			
Community Mental Health Advocate	1	1	
Civilian Total	1	1	-
Total Authorized Personnel	7	7	-

Detectives hold the rank of police officer, but are referred to as detective while assigned to the CID. Selection to this assignment is based upon the discretion of the department. Selection generally follows an informal interview process where the candidate's prior work / initiative, report writing skills, and training are considered. There is no special compensation attached to this assignment with the exception of on-call status, where the detective receives one hour of compensated time off for each full day on-call.

We make a couple of notes to provide some clarity to the above table. The three detectives are general crimes detectives who investigate a wide variety of offenses, with the general exception of domestic violence cases. They serve in the traditional role of criminal investigators.

The domestic violence detective specializes in family or special relationship crimes, but has the additional responsibility of serving as the department's victim / witness advocate. The community mental health advocate works with victims of incidents which may cause extraordinary trauma to victims or a victim's loved ones. This may include homicide victim families, sexual assault victims, and survivors in cases involving suicide. We will provide information on the work of these two positions later in this reporting.

We also note that in addition to the case management responsibilities, two of the CID detectives are assigned to the Beaufort County regional crime scene investigation team as a collateral duty. We will discuss the crime scene investigation function in detail later in our reporting as well.

Work Schedule

Detectives are assigned on a modified five-day work schedule, Monday through Thursday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. As necessary, hours may be flexed due to investigative needs and/or call-outs.

It is common practice in law enforcement agencies that detective personnel must be available for after-hours call-outs for serious cases. Agency policies generally define the process to be followed. In the case of BPD, *SOP 024 II. C.* addresses the issue of being on-call. However, it does not reflect the circumstances in which a detective may be called-out after-hours, and the notification/approval process for that action. This can lead to inconsistency in practices between patrol supervisors. Identifying, in policy, the thresholds needed to warrant a detective call-out will provide clarity to supervisors across all shifts and help to ensure consistency.

Rotation Schedule (Proposed)

At present, the detective assignment is a permanent, non-rotational assignment. Once assigned, detectives, including the sergeant and lieutenant, would only leave the assignment upon promotion, retirement, personal request, or an administrative action related to a performance or discipline issue. The advantage of this practice is that personnel become highly trained and experienced. There is no question that there is value to this argument. On the other hand, this practice presents limited opportunities to other employees seeking a detective assignment.

Many, if not most agencies of BPD's size find that they are better served by implementing a rotational schedule. CPSM suggests that a rotational schedule should be considered here. There are a number of reasons for such an action. The reasons include the following:

- Opportunities for other employees to gain valuable experience in such an assignment.

- The potential for stagnation to occur in both the detective assignment as well as that of patrol where, outside of the SRO program, few special assignments exist.

- New energy and ideas may be brought into the detective workforce.

- Officers rotating out of investigations assignments bring back to patrol the valuable experience that they can share, especially relative to newer, less experienced patrol officers.

- As personnel are promoted, they bring more diverse experience into their supervisory/leadership roles versus being largely singularly dimensional. This allows for them to be more informed decision-makers for the betterment of the entire department, not just focused on that section in which they spent the majority of their career.

- Assignment rotations help to prevent the "Silo Effect" in organizations. The "Silo Effect" occurs when the individual divisions become too focused on their own wants and needs and the broader interests of the department may be sacrificed. This transcends through the organization as employees move into management positions and make decisions that favor the "Silo" from which they came, or current or former members of it.

As previously noted, on the downside, there is a loss of experience associated with rotational schedules. To mitigate this, it is important that the assignment is of sufficient duration that expertise is developed, and that any rotation of personnel be staggered so as not to lose all experienced personnel simultaneously. For example, using the current BPD detective staffing, this would require an assignment duration of approximately six years, with rotation of one detective supervisor out of the division every three years, and one detective out of the division every two years.

It is not surprising that in agencies that do not have a rotational schedule, detectives vehemently oppose such a concept. Conversely, those seeking this often coveted special

assignment strongly support rotations. While we appreciate each perspective, CPSM believes that the value of a making detectives a rotational assignment significantly outweighs the downside.

If the department chooses to retain its permanent assignment status for CID personnel, CPSM would encourage the department to, at the very least, consider a rotational assignment opportunity. Some agencies develop a two-year rotation schedule for patrol officers interested in a detective assignment. To accomplish this, one of the current detective positions could be designated as a rotational position. The duration of assignment could be two years, This minimizes the staffing disruptions while still accomplishing some of the benefits of a full rotational policy.

We also note that given the limited tenure of the department as a whole, and the Investigations Division specifically, this is not an issue at present. Nonetheless, we offer this as a consideration for implementation should the department stabilize its personnel turnover.

Case Intake

As we begin discussion of the case intake process for the CIU, it will be helpful to the lay reader to have a basic understanding of how records are commonly generated in police agencies across the country. We strive to do this here.

Generally, the first contact with BPD regarding a service request is made through the Emergency 911 call center. For Bluffton, that function is conducted by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office (BCSO). If the BCSO call-taker determines that an officer must be dispatched, the information on the call is entered into the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. The CAD system for BCSO operates off of the Spillman platform, one of many CAD platforms in use by public safety agencies across the country.

A dispatcher in the 911 call center then dispatches that call to the BPD handling officer. Upon completion of the call, the officer clears/closes the call. The officer may indicate that a report will be generated, or provide "CAD notes" giving a brief summary of the disposition on the call and no additional report will be generated. This closes the CAD record.

Once the CAD entry closes, the call data/record is automatically transferred to a compatible Records Management System (RMS), commonly the same platform as the CAD system, as is the case at BPD (Spillman RMS). These robust RMS platforms generally have multiple compatible sub-platforms to include Detective Case Management and Property and Evidence modules, etc. This is designed to provide a seamless transfer of applicable information between these compatible platforms, including auto-populating of relevant data in these sub-platforms.

In the case of a criminal offense, once the initial report is completed and approved by a Patrol supervisor, the Occurrence Report is electronically transmitted to a que pending review by the Detective Lieutenant, or his designee. The lieutenant subsequently reviews the reports and determines whether the case will be assigned to a detective, returned to the patrol officer for completion of the investigation, or suspended/closed without further investigation.

Law enforcement agencies vary widely in case intake policies and practices relative to Detective Section functions. In some agencies, all cases are referred to detectives for review and follow-up investigation, where appropriate. In others, only felony cases are generally referred to detectives, while patrol officers are responsible for the investigation of most misdemeanor cases and some low-level felony cases. Decisions as to the case intake processes are often driven by workload demand and staffing levels in Detective Sections. At present, BPD

follows the model in which patrol handles many cases to completion, and only the most serious calls are assigned to a detective.

Most agencies have inadequate staffing to fully investigate all crimes, and in some cases where little investigative evidence exists, it is fruitless to assign a case for investigation. BPD recognizes this and it is addressed in *SOP 024 IV. B. 3*. Here, solvability factors are established to screen out cases where investigative efforts of detectives are not likely to result in the identification of a suspect and the successful prosecution of the crime. In the event that insufficient solvability factors are present to warrant additional follow-up, the case may be declared inactive and closed by a supervisor without having been assigned to a detective.

Below are examples of solvability factors to be considered:

- Suspect is known.
- Suspect has been seen and may be identified.
- Subject vehicle was seen and may be later identified.
- Specific modus operandi unique to a known or unknown suspect.
- Victim wishes to prosecute.
- Presence of physical evidence.
- Ability to recover stolen property that may provide further leads.
- The presence of any other evidence which would most likely develop further investigative leads.

While the descriptors vary slightly from agency to agency, these represent commonly acceptable solvability factors that help to ensure that limited investigative resources are optimally utilized. When the answer to all or most of these questions in NO, cases are generally closed without further investigation.

Next, we will examine the workload associated with criminal cases to include the number of cases assigned to a detective for follow-up investigation.

Workload Demand

To this point, we have discussed staffing, work schedules, and case intake procedures. Here, we will examine how CID is positioned to manage workload demand. As we previously noted, not all criminal investigations are assigned to a detective. Some are handled in their entirety by a patrol officer, an SRO, or closed without further investigation following review of solvability factors. Cases reflected in the following Table are limited to those that were assigned to a detective.

TABLE 6-2: Criminal Investigations Unit Case Assignment, 2021–2023

Cases Assigned	2021	2022	2023
Criminal Investigations			
Criminal Investigations Unit	185	218	284
Domestic Violence	-	10	39
Criminal Investigations Total	**185**	**228**	**323**
Support Functions			
Victim / Witness Advocate	38	58	133
Community Mental Health	1	136	128
Support Function Total	**39**	**194**	**261**
Total	**224**	**422**	**584**

Source: BPD

As case assignment practices vary widely from agency to agency, there are no absolute standards to determine an appropriate caseload for police investigators. One murder investigation could occupy the time of several detectives for months, and on the other hand, one detective could handle hundreds of theft cases in a similar period. Nonetheless, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has suggested that a detective caseload between 120 and 180 cases per year (10 to 15 per month) is manageable.

As we examine the data in the table above, we note that the caseload has steadily increased year over year. Still, considering the highest yearly caseload (2023) each of the three detectives would handle a caseload of approximately 95 cases per detective per year, a figure that is somewhat lower than the IACP range. Here, we excluded the domestic violence detective and their assigned caseload as their victim advocate role provides additional responsibilities outside of traditional case management. Had that data been included, the cases per detective per year would be lower.

Other sources suggest departments should staff one detective for every 300 UCR Part I Index Crimes recorded each year. Part 1 crimes generally represent the most serious offenses. Excluded are cases involving crimes such as simple assault, drug, alcohol, vandalism, etc.

In the table that follows, we show reported Part 1 Crimes occurring in Bluffton during the past three calendar years.

TABLE 6-3: FBI UCR Reported Part 1 Crimes in Bluffton, 2021–2023*

Crime	2021	2022	2023*	2024 YTD 7/31*
Murder	1	1	1	2
Rape	3	3	1	3
Robbery	4	4	4	5
Aggravated Assault	16	17	29	13
Burglary	37	30	50	14
Larceny	163	160	275	143
Vehicle Theft	23	21	45	16
Total	**247**	**236**	**405***	**196***

Note: *2023 and 2024 YTD data is not yet available from the FBI UCR and is provided by BPD.

As we look at the second benchmark, in dividing these total numbers by 300, one can see it would require between 0.82 (2021), 0.79 (2022), and 1.35 (2023) detectives to adequately meet workload demands. According to both benchmarks, it would appear that BPD CID has adequate resources to manage criminal investigations when considering the section's total caseload and staffing. However, other workload handled by BPD detectives must be factored in.

One duty which adds to detective workload is that of crime scene investigation (CSI). This applies both to Bluffton cases as well as outside jurisdiction cases where detectives may be called upon by the BCSO regional crime scene investigations team to work a major crime scene in a neighboring agency.

While this is something that detectives in many larger agencies are not responsible for, at BPD this is a duty that falls to detectives, and or in some simple or minor cases, to patrol officers. We offer that CSI work requires substantial training and experience to develop proficiency, and is very labor intensive. We will further address crime scene investigations shortly, but submit that the workload associated with crime scene investigations can substantially increase workload of detective personnel. Unfortunately, the department does not track CSI data, neither for patrol officers nor detectives. As such, we cannot quantify, nor report on the quality of such investigations, at least from a data standpoint. Again, we will report on CSI in more detail shortly.

Case Management

In previous reporting on case intake, we briefly discussed the Spillman RMS. That platform has a detective case management system module. As we noted, cases are generated in the system upon transferring the CAD call data to RMS once the CAD call has been closed. That report populates the RMS case management module. Once received, the CID Lieutenant makes a determination as to which cases will be assigned to a detective for investigation, which cases will be returned to the patrol officer for additional investigation, and which cases will be closed.

Detective case management modules are robust systems that include information such as:

- Date / time / location of occurrence.
- Case number.
- Nature / classification of offense.
- Assigned officer / detective.
- Status of investigation to include notifications to supervisors of investigative actions.
- Alerts that a status report is due.
- Case closure status (i.e., cleared by arrest, cleared by exceptional means, closed due to lack of leads, unfounded, etc.)

When properly and fully utilized, a case management system can provide a wealth of data on workload and the overall department's effectiveness in solving crime. This would apply to individual detectives as well. It may also lead to the identification of irregularities. For instance, in one agency studied by CPSM, one of their many detectives cleared the majority of their crimes by exceptional means, a highly irregular clearance classification. The rate substantially differed from other detectives and called into question this detective's work/reporting practices. We are not suggesting any irregularities have been discovered at BPD, but rather, pointing out the value of case management systems when fully utilized.

Such reports can and should be made available for review by the department's command on a quarterly basis, something that is not being done today. This would allow a more definitive and accurate assessment of the effectiveness of the detective function vs. simply anecdotal evidence that may be available in the absence of such comprehensive reports.

In some departments, detective managers utilize Excel spreadsheets to track assigned cases, though in the end, must update the compatible RMS portal to officially close the case. This is done as some managers find it easier to track cases utilizing an Excel spreadsheet. That is the case here at BPD. While this appears as a duplication of effort, the relatively light caseload allows for this to be a feasible approach.

We would point out that some agencies find it difficult to navigate these sometimes complex systems, especially when a primary responsibility is investigating crimes, not data system management. This is especially true where clerical support is not available, as is the case in BPD.

Training

CPSM requested information regarding detective personnel training. Staff indicated that detective personnel receive relevant and up-to-date courses as needed and that detectives are asked to submit a training request for courses that they wish to attend.

We inquired whether a training matrix exists for the detective function and were advised that none exists. Many agencies utilize a training matrix to ensure that all new detectives are scheduled for those courses that will aid in the development of their expertise. By tracking training provided to their subordinates, supervisors can then ensure that personnel under their command are scheduled for such training, and that this assignment-specific training is prioritized over other elective training courses that provide less value to the position.

CPSM recommends that the CID Lieutenant, in conjunction with the department's training coordinator, develop a CID training matrix to identify both required and desirable training courses for these positions. The training matrix should serve as a guide to ensure that CID personnel training assignments are prioritized by this matrix.

Technology

We inquired of detective personnel whether available technology for investigative purposes serves them well. A number of concerns were raised. Specifically and among others, was that their existing department-provided computers do not have the capacity to download the large files that are often associated with complex investigations. This commonly leads to "freezing" of the computer and prevents detectives from continuing their work until the situation is resolved. In some cases work is lost. They also indicated that while there are numerous video cameras positioned throughout the Town that could aid in investigations, as many as one-half are not functioning.

In this report, we will devote a section to Information Technology. There, we recommend the formation of an IT users group to review technology needs throughout the department. We recommend that a representative of the Investigations Division be assigned to that group, if so constituted.

FBI UCR/NIBRS Crime Reporting

Annually, the Federal Bureau of Investigation produces a Uniform Crime Report (UCR) / National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) that provides comprehensive crime and other law

enforcement data for agencies across the country. Data is supplied to the FBI by the states after each state collects and processes the data received from local agencies. BPD reports such data to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED). As we reported on crime rates throughout this report, the data reflects what is published by the FBI UCR/NIBRS.

We note here that the department crime and clearance rate records vary slightly from those published by the FBI. As well, the department indicates that its records vary slightly from those reported by SLED, which the department also indicates differ slightly from those reported by the FBI. While the variations are minor, as we examine the subject of crime and clearance rates here, we hope to identify possible reasons for such variations.

While reporting of crime and clearance rates seems simple and straightforward, this is a complex process that involves "Coding" of crimes and clearances. In other words, each crime must be analyzed to determine which "Code" is to be utilized in classifying the case. The "Codes" are defined by the FBI. This ensures that each agency's reporting is consistent, or uniform. The instruction manual is voluminous and complex. This applies to both reporting of crime and clearance rates. It is not a simple task, and is one with which agencies often struggle to accurately report data.

In many larger agencies, a lone records specialist may be trained for and assigned the responsibility for ensuring that report submissions are properly coded. Each crime report and case disposition is reviewed to allow for accurate reporting. This is often a full-time job in these larger agencies. It was reported that Beaufort County Sheriff's Office has two such positions.

At BPD, patrol officers and detectives are responsible for "Coding" of crimes and clearances. That is accomplished when they enter information into the department's records management system (Spillman). Supervisors ultimately approve such entries. None, however, are trained in the coding process. As such, the Spillman case management record sets the default code based upon the data entered. These records may or may not be fully accurate based upon FBI UCR/NIBRS guidelines.

Monthly, the department's executive assistant is charged with reporting crime data to SLED. That reporting is based upon the entries and process described above. If the executive assistant notices glaring errors, she works with the officer / detective to correct the information. However, the assistant has limited training in FBI UCR/NIBRS reporting, and reading all police reports to ensure accuracy of reporting is not a responsibility of this position, nor should it be.

If staffing permits, this duty should be transferred to the Records Division. If necessary, additional staffing should be allocated.

FBI UCR/NIBRS Clearance Rates

Clearance rates are an important measure of an individual detective's performance and excessively low rates can lead to the identification of training needs, additional supervisory oversight, and in some cases, the need for reassignment from the unit. In another department assessment, CPSM discovered policy language that we believe demonstrates the value of measuring clearance rates, which CPSM wholeheartedly agrees with. It stated:

"Case clearance is an indicator of individual performance and can assist in evaluating the individual detective."

CPSM maintains that while preventing a crime is of utmost importance to any law enforcement agency, solving crime should have parity. The solving of crimes which results in the prosecution of offenders not only prevents future crime, it provides much-needed closure to crime victims.

Clearance rates, as defined and measured by the FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR/NIBRS), are the benchmark for a department's effectiveness in solving crimes.

The following two tables provide Bluffton 2021 and 2022 UCR clearance rates compared to state and national rates. Data for 2023 will not be available until Autumn 2024. As we have noted, however, the processes in place do not appear to lend themselves to ensuring that FBI UCR/NIBRS reports are entirely accurate. Therefore, crime and clearance rates could be under- or over-represented. We would also note that we find similar issues with most agencies that do not have a single point for ensuring consistency with FBI reporting guidelines.

TABLE 6-4: Reported Bluffton, South Carolina, and National Crime Clearance Rates, 2021

Crime	Bluffton			South Carolina			National		
	Crimes	Clearances	Rate	Crimes	Clearances	Rate	Crimes	Clearances	Rate
Murder / Manslaughter	1	1	100%	533	377	71%	22,900	11,500	50%
Rape	3	0	0%	2,351	872	37%	144,300	16,500	11%
Robbery	4	2	50%	2,641	917	35%	202,200	48,800	24%
Aggravated Assault	16	10	63%	16,041	8,464	53%	943,800	297,500	32%
Burglary	37	2	5%	19,872	3,636	18%	899,700	107,200	12%
Larceny	163	8	5%	100,391	17,030	17%	4,627,000	508,900	11%
Vehicle Theft	23	3	13%	14,989	2,457	16%	890,200	68,500	8%

Note: Clearances were not reported for rape offenses in 2020. *We used national crime and clearance rates for 2021 as estimated in the FBI's report *The Transition to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS): A Comparison of 2020 and 2021 NIBRS Estimates*.

TABLE 6-5: Reported Bluffton, South Carolina, and National Crime Clearance Rates, 2022

Crime	Bluffton			South Carolina			National		
	Crimes	Clearances	Rate	Crimes	Clearances	Rate	Crimes	Clearances	Rate
Murder / Manslaughter	1	1	100%	497	284	57%	21,797	10,752	49%
Rape	3	1	33%	2,230	860	39%	132,997	27,856	21%
Robbery	4	0	0%	2,153	699	32%	215,760	51,930	24%
Aggravated Assault	17	9	53%	15,850	8,237	52%	756,601	334,405	44%
Burglary	30	4	13%	18,327	3,473	19%	916,970	125,838	14%
Larceny	160	14	9%	93,496	16,541	18%	4,947,709	633,098	13%
Vehicle Theft	21	4	19%	13,093	2,064	16%	953,827	87,140	9%

The FBI establishes strict, three-prong criteria for clearing of a case. For UCR reporting purposes, a crime is considered cleared when: (1) a law enforcement agency has arrested the offender; (2) the offender has been charged with the offense; AND (3) the offender is turned over to the court for prosecution (whether following arrest, court summons, or police notice). The arrest of one person may clear several crimes or the arrest of several persons may clear only one crime. Convictions or acquittals are not factored into clearance rates.

Here, it is important to note that nomenclature utilized in South Carolina may lead to some confusion and inaccuracies relative to reported clearance rates. In South Carolina, if an officer makes an arrest, the arrested individual is considered "charged." However, that does not necessarily mean that the individual will be prosecuted in court. Rather, the case is submitted to the Solicitor's office for consideration of further proceedings. The Solicitor may opt to proceed as follows:

- Seek an indictment before a grand jury based upon charges filed by the arresting officer.

- Seek an indictment before a grand jury after modifying charges filed by the arresting officer.

- Decline to seek an indictment based upon the lack of probable cause or unlikelihood of successfully prosecuting the case.

If the case is presented to a grand jury, and the grand jury returns an indictment, then and only then is the case prosecuted in a court of law. If the grand jury declines to indict the offender, no court prosecution occurs.

Therefore, confusion regarding reporting of clearance rates may lay in the use of the term "charged." Whereas in South Carolina, "charged" refers to a case in which an offender has been arrested (seemingly meeting prongs 1 and 2 of the clearance criteria), in other states, the term "charged" refers to the offenses for which the prosecuting agency determines that the arrested offender (prong 1) is to be prosecuted in a court of law, or charged with the offense for which they were arrested (prong 2). It is, of course, not unusual for arrested persons (prong 1) not to be prosecuted in a court of law. Thus, the clearance rate measure for South Carolina may result in above-average reporting of clearance rate numbers as compared to those of other states. That may be the cause of disparities in the clearance rates between South Carolina and the national average (see Table 6-5) where the South Carolina rates are substantially higher than the national average.

There are clearances via exceptional means as well. Examples include the death of an offender, the lack of an extradition treaty with a foreign government in a nation to which the offender has fled, or the victim's refusal to cooperate with prosecution after the suspect has been identified. Excerpt as it relates to domestic violence cases where it is not uncommon for victims to refuse to participate in prosecuting the offender, the exceptions are limited and result in numbers that are not statistically sufficient to warrant consideration.

BPD Criminal Investigations *SOP 024. IV. C. and D.* discuss case dispositions, including clearances. Specifically, Exceptional Clearances are defined. CPSM noted one inaccuracy here. In *D. 4* the policy indicates that a case may be exceptionally cleared if "Prosecution is refused by the Solicitor's Office." That is factually inaccurate. In this case, there would be no seeking of an indictment before a grand jury, and no court prosecution. As we noted above, in the third prong of the three prong test, "the offender is turned over to the court for prosecution" is a clearance criteria. If the prosecutor or grand jury declines to indict due to insufficient evidence presented to warrant prosecution, that does not permit the case to be cleared by exceptional means, and doing so skews clearance rate numbers.

The FBI UCR/NIBRS reporting model in place at BPD lends itself to minor inaccuracies in reporting. This is evident in reports from staff that internal crime/clearance rate numbers differ from those published by the FBI. As previously mentioned, the reporting criteria is complex. Without a single point of responsibility, someone who is trained in both coding of crimes and clearance rate criteria, accuracy is likely to continue to be an issue.

We have devoted considerable discussion to the issue of FBI UCR/NIBRS clearance rates as we believe that these serve as important measurements of the department's effectiveness in helping provide for a safe community. Staff indicated that there is no review of individual detective or cumulative clearance rate information as recorded in the Spillman RMS, or as reported to SLED and ultimately the FBI. CPSM submits that BPD command and supervision should take an active role in reviewing and evaluating clearance rates to assess unit and staff effectiveness. Such a review should be conducted on a quarterly or semi-annual basis.

CIU Recommendations:

- A comprehensive review of *SOP 024, Criminal Investigations*, should be conducted to ensure that the policy meets current department practices and operating needs. (Recommendation No. 30.)

- As part of a comprehensive review of the Criminal Investigations policy, *SOP 024. II. C.* should be amended to reflect after-hours call-out procedures to include the identification of the types of incidents that warrant call-outs. (Recommendation No. 31.)

- Consideration should be given to developing a rotational schedule for the detective assignment and move away from its status as a permanent assignment, which is the case at present. (Recommendation No. 32.)

- Consideration should be given to the development of a CID training matrix to identify both required and desirable training courses as a guide to ensure that CID personnel training opportunities are properly prioritized and met. (Recommendation No. 33.)

- Consideration should be given to conducting a technology needs assessment and developing a priority list for acquisition as funding permits. (Recommendation No. 34.)

- To ensure accuracy and consistency, responsibility for FBI UCR NIBRS reporting should be transferred to the Records Division. Training of personnel will be required. As well, if additional staff are required, a part-time hire may be necessary. (Recommendation No. 35.)

- Department command should review crime and crime clearance rates on a quarterly or semi-annual basis to allow for an accurate assessment of the effectiveness of the department's investigative efforts and practices. The review should include both individual detective as well as cumulative department data. (Recommendation No. 36.)

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATIONS / FORENSICS

In today's policing environment, forensic evidence, especially trace and biological evidence, is of critical importance in solving crime and successfully prosecuting offenders. Crime scene investigators must have a high degree of training, experience, skill, and commitment to master this art. Each is of vital importance to this effort.

As we begin our discussion of this subject, we point out that small agencies such as BPD have limited staffing, training, experience, and material resources to effectively manage complex crime scenes. As we continue our discussion, we will shed light on this fact. Nonetheless, it remains a critical element for law enforcement, regardless of the size of the agency.

The complexity of such work is best illustrated by a review of what is generally entailed in the collection of evidence at crime scenes. The nature/seriousness of the offense will dictate the degree to which these processes are required.

The following list of duties may be performed by BPD detectives or officers, as the case dictates:

- Identifies, collects, and preserves evidence at a crime scenes.

- Searches and processes crime scenes for latent fingerprints.

- Searches and processes crime scenes for biological and trace evidence such has hair and fibers.

- Collects and processes DNA evidence.

- Utilizes available technology and materials to identify and collect evidence not visible to the naked eye.

- Creates plaster casts of shoe and/or tire impressions, etc.

- Photographs and diagrams crime scenes.

- Photographs and fingerprints suspects, victims, witnesses as necessary.

- Prepares crime scene sketches suitable for court presentation from measurements and rough drafts taken and prepared at the scene.

- Assists in the reconstruction of crimes to include determining the course of events from physical evidence obtained, bullet trajectory, analysis of blood patterns, positions of victims and/or weapons, etc.

- Transports evidence to evidence locker and/or state/county crime lab.

- Establishes and maintains records to ensure proper chain of custody for court presentation and compliance with state statutes and department policies.

- Produces detailed written crime scene reports to support other investigative activities and support the identification and prosecution of offenders.

- Testifies in court as an expert witness regarding collection, processing, testing, and preservation of evidence collected.

These are laborious, time-consuming tasks that in major cases such as homicide investigations, kidnapping, sexual assaults, etc., can take many hours and in some cases days into weeks to complete. Dedicated forensic specialists, not generalists who have multiple other responsibilities (that is, patrol officers and detectives), are vital to this effort. And as mentioned, extensive training and experience is required to master each of these tasks.

Many small agencies find themselves burdened by crime scene investigations and lack the resources to be proficient in this field. We often find that detectives report that physical evidence collected at crime scenes is scarce, and that the investigation is hampered by the lack thereof.

To its credit, Bluffton PD recognizes that alone it is not capable of performing this work at complex crime scenes. And while patrol officers and/or detectives will process relatively simple crime scenes, the department has partnered with Beaufort County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) and other local agencies in the development of a regional crime scene investigation team, led by BCSO. This team comes together to assist partner agencies in processing moderately complex crime scenes. This agreement is captured in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BCSO and BPD signed in May 2023. The six-page MOU provides general terms and conditions that apply to the agreement.

When the capability of the department resources and/or the BCSO-led regional CSI team are not adequate to investigate the most complex of crime scenes, the department may call upon the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) forensics unit for assistance.

Bluffton is well served by this, in effect, triaging of crime scene investigations. It is a fairly novel approach to have a regional CSI partnership, and Bluffton PD and the other participating agencies deserve kudos for their willingness to come together to build this resource.

CSI Policy / SOP

BPD does not have a specific policy pertaining to crime scene investigations. Rather, there are references to crime scene investigations in a variety of policies including *SOP 014, Evidence and Property; SOP 022, Discharge of Firearm; SOP 024, Criminal Investigations; SOP 025, Public Information / Crime Prevention; SOP 027, Training; and SOP 046, Legal Process.*

The most detailed information regarding crime scene investigations can be found in *SOP 014, Evidence and Property*. There, in Section II, Evidence Gathering Procedures, detailed information is provided about roles and responsibilities of personnel at crime scenes. This includes the utilization of outside resources where necessary, such as SLED.

Many of the other SOPs identified above provide only limited reference to crime scene investigations. For instance, in *SOP 027, Training*, the only reference to crime scene investigation is as follows; "*In-service training will be designed to provide supervisory, management, or specialized training to participants, and/or items of general interest and concern. These will include refresher training for investigative and crime scene processing personnel in the areas of laboratory capabilities and new equipment and examination techniques.*"

CPSM would urge the department to develop a comprehensive policy specific to crime scene investigations. The information contained in *SOP 014, II, Evidence Gathering Procedures*, would serve as a good starting point to build such a policy. References in other noted policies could be incorporated into the CSI policy. Such a policy would provide a central reference point for these investigations rather than requiring staff to search a variety of policies to find relevant information.

CSI Training

Across the country, basic recruit academies provide elementary crime scene investigation training to attendees. Courses include collection of DNA evidence, basic photography, plaster casting, and the collection of fingerprint evidence, etc. While this is marginally valuable for relatively minor crime scene processing, it does not prepare personnel for processing of complex crime scenes.

As we noted in earlier reporting, agencies the size of Bluffton PD are not generally well prepared to process complex crime scenes. Commonly, CSI responsibilities are shared between detectives and patrol, and such a role is a collateral duty to their primary assignment. In larger agencies, dedicated full-time CSI teams are common. Some of those teams are staffed entirely by civilian specialists.

While we have previously discussed the complexity of this work, we will illustrate this in the following table. Here we include a training matrix for another agency that excels in this field. The actual training matrix has much more detailed information. We include here only the main headings relative to the types of training required/desired to reflect the volume of courses required to develop expertise in this field.

TABLE 6-6: Sample Training Matrix for Dedicated Crime Scene Investigators

Type	Class
Basic Crime Scene	Legal Issues of Crime Scene Searches
	Basic Crime Scene Photography
	Practical Crime Scene Processing/Investigation
	Evidence Collection and Processing
	Basic Crime Scene Investigations
	Crime Scene for Investigators
	Crime Scene Investigation
Adv. Crime Scene	Basic Crime Scene Academy
	Adv. Crime Scene Investigations
Latent Print Processing	Print Processing, Collection & Photography
Photography	Crime Scene and Evidence Photography
	Basic/Adv. Forensic Photography
	Forensic Fire Inv. Photography
	Low Light, Night, Inclement Wx Photography
Adv. Photography	Firearms for the Det. And CSI
	Death Investigation 101
Firearms	Death Investigations
Death Investigations	Child Death Investigations
	Child Death Investigation
Child Death Investigations	Child and Infant Death Investigations
	Photoshop, PowerPoint, Diagrams for CSI
	Forensic Science Courtroom Testimony
Testimony	Courtroom Testimony: Practical Approach
Reporting	Cellebrite Certified Operator
	Susteen – DataPilot
CCO	DEI
Digital Evidence	FARO - On-Scene
	Drone Observer
	IBIS – Collection
	Fingerprint Recognition & Comparison (AFIS)
	Basic Latent Print Examination
AFIS (Basic)	Intro to the Science of Fingerprint Class
	Basic/Intm. Fingerprint Comparison
	Fingerprint Comparison, ID, and AFIS Plotting
	Palm Print Techniques
	Adv. Latent Palm Print Comparison
AFIS (Palms)	Latent Palm Print Comparison
	Basic Latent Print Comparison
	Comprehensive Adv. Latent Print

Type	Class
AFIS (Adv.)	Shooting Incident Documentation
Shooting Incident Reconstruction	Basic Shooting Reconstruction
	Shooting Incident Reconstruction
	Forensic Firearm/Toolmark ID Shooting Recon
Adv. Shooting Recon	Adv. Shooting Reconstruction
Basic Bloodstain	Bloodstain Pattern Documentation
	Bloodstain Pattern Analysis Level I
	Documentation of Bloodstain Evidence
Adv. Bloodstain	Bloodstain Pattern Analysis Level II
	Adv. Bloodstain Pattern Analysis
	Recovery of Human Remains Workshop
	Buried Body and Surface Skeleton
Buried Body	Clandestine Grave Search & Recovery
	Crime Scene Reconstruction - Level I
	Crime Scene Reconstruction - Level II
Adv. Crime Scene Processing	Drone Operator
	DVR Examiner (VERA)
Part 107 - UAS License	DVR Assessment & Video Recovery
DVR/Video Processing	Fundamentals of Video Evidence
	Forensic Video Analysis
	Remote Online Training – ClearID
	Remote Online Training - Intro to Omnivore
	Remote Online Training - Ffmpeg Convert
	Remote Online Training - dTective Effects
	FARO - Zone Core
	FARO Zone Point Cloud Crime
FARO	FARO Zone Point Cloud Crash
	FARO Zone Adv. Diagramming
	FARO Zone 3D (Online)
	BCERT (Computers)
	MDE (Handheld Devices)
Computer Forensics	CCO/CCPA
Mobile Device Analysis	MADE
	CASA
Adv. Mobile Device Analysis	Mac Forensics Training
	BNIT
Adv. Digital Forensics	NITRO
	Memory Forensics & Malware Analysis
	Digital Currency Course

As can be clearly seen, both the training and duties associated with crime scene investigation are exhaustive. We are not suggesting that this serve as a training matrix for BPD. The agency does not have the capacity to perform the CSI function at this level. Rather, we utilize this illustration simply to allow the reader to better comprehend both the importance of CSI work and its complexity.

Staff indicated that there is no training matrix to guide the development of those responsible for CSI collection. The only reference to CSI training that we found was in *SOP 027, Training*, where it indicates that *"In-service training will be designed to provide supervisory, management, or specialized training to participants, and/or items of general interest and concern. These will include refresher training for investigative and crime scene processing personnel in the areas of laboratory capabilities and new equipment and examination techniques."*

As we recommended in reporting on the CIU, CPSM offers that the CID Lieutenant, in conjunction with the department's training coordinator, develop a CSI training matrix to identify both required and desirable training courses for this role. That training should focus on CSI duties that the department can effectively manage. Consistent with current practices, outside resources must be utilized when the complexity of the case exceeds the capacity of the department to management the demands.

In addition to CIU personnel, Patrol officers with an interest in CSI work should be included in consideration for advanced training opportunities.

CSI Case Management Data

BPD does not track statistical data regarding crime scene investigation efforts. It is unknown how many attempts are made to collect evidence at crime scenes, the rate at which it is collected, or the value of such evidence in identifying suspects. This is the case for both Patrol and Detective CSI efforts.

The absence of a dedicated case management software program specific to crime scene investigations is problematic. There is no reasonable way to determine the volume of workload associated with total cases processed. As well, important factors such as the number of cases with workable evidence, information on the number of fingerprints submitted through the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), the number of DNA samples submitted for match through the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), matching "hits" for both AFIS and CODIS records, and a variety of other data is not available. This is important information for managers to have as they assess the effectiveness of the department's efforts collectively, as well as those of individual investigators. This could be important information for managers in assessing the department's efforts in solving crimes as we previously discussed. The department should migrate toward the use of a comprehensive CSI-specific case management program.

CSI / Forensics Summary

As previously noted this work is often highly complex and requires extensive training and experience to develop requisite expertise. It is not work that can be mastered as a collateral duty to a primary assignment be that as a detective or patrol officer. For that reason, the department is to be commended for utilization of experienced crime scene investigators in major cases, be that BCSO or SLED.

A robust case management software program is needed to track the effectiveness of CSI efforts. At present some such information is contained only in individual crime reports and does

not allow for the reasonable evaluation of the effectiveness of the department's CSI efforts by command-level personnel. As well, a new CSI policy outlining duties and responsibilities for this function is needed.

The International Association for Identification is the largest professional crime scene investigators association and establishes standards for forensic excellence. Certification by IAI is considered the "Gold Standard." IAI could serve as a great source to assist the department in working toward improving its crime scene processing efforts.

Crime Scene Investigation Recommendations:

- A policy focused on crime scene investigation should be developed; it should include detailed responsibilities for patrol officers and detectives, as well as factors to be considered in seeking mutual aid for the processing of complex crime scenes. (Recommendation No. 37.)

- Develop a training matrix specific to crime scene investigations. (Recommendation No. 38.)

- Consideration should be given to acquiring a CSI-specific software program to include tracking of future CSI efforts and rates of success of such efforts. (Recommendation No. 39.)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DETECTIVE, VICTIM / WITNESS ADVOCATE

As we noted previously, BPD has a dedicated domestic violence detective with a collateral role as the department's Victim / Witness Coordinator. This was at one time a grant-funded position; however, at present, the position is funded through the general fund. The current detective began service with the department in 2023 as a civilian victim / witness advocate, and was sworn in as a commissioned police officer in January 2024. As was seen in Table 6-2, the workload has steadily increased over the past three years. That increase coincides with the changes in assigned staff from a part-time civilian advocate to a full-time sworn advocate who is also responsible for the criminal investigation of domestic violence cases.

Given workload reflected in Table 6-2, in reality, time spent managing victim / witness services dwarfs that spent on assigned domestic violence cases. The investigator indicated that only 25 percent of her time is spent on investigative case management, while 75 percent is spent on victim / witness services.

Policy 028, Victim / Witness Assistance Procedures, guides the work of the victim / witness advocate. The policy, six pages in length, is quite detailed, with an extensive list of duties and responsibilities attached. The policy is guided by South Carolina state law. The duties are categorized as follows:

- Victim / witness rights.

- Procedures to be followed by the department.

- Review of needs and services on a biennial basis.

- Department responsibilities.

Again, each of these areas have a sub-set of directives, in some cases dozens of such, that guide services.

The following is a listing of prosecutorial and community-based agencies with which the detective works in providing services to those in need:

- Solicitor's Office.

- Hopeful Horizons.

- Department of Social Services.

- Goodwill.

- Bluffton Self Help.

- Deep Well.

- Department of Crime Victim Compensation.

- South Carolina Victim Advocacy Network.

- South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

Staff reported that in instances where crime victims would benefit from services provided by the department's Mental Health Advocate (see next sub-section), referrals are made and where appropriate, the Victim Advocate and Mental Health Advocate collaborate to provide more comprehensive services.

In summary, the assignment of a commissioned police officer to serve as both a DV detective and a victim / witness advocate is somewhat unusual. While many agencies do not provide dedicated victim / witness service, those that do most often assign these duties to civilian personnel. However, the workload in Bluffton at this time lends itself to the model in use, and the department is to be commended for blending these functions in a way that serves both the community's and department's interests. As well, the current detective assigned to this role is passionate about it, and well serves both the department's and crime victims' interests.

Should future increases in crime rates dictate the need for additional detective support, the department may wish to consider returning the Victim / Witness Advocate role to its prior civilian status in order to remove the presently occupying 75 percent of the detective's time to allow them to assume a greater general crime caseload.

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

Increasingly, law enforcement agencies across the country find themselves engaging with those who are living without shelter and/or those suffering a mental health crisis. Many agencies find themselves ill-prepared to provide a meaningful response and resolution to those encounters. Generally, the response is limited to patrol officer(s) who have little formal training and few resources. This often results in a "kick the can down the road" outcome where the immediate call may be adequately handled, but subsequent calls are likely.

Over the past few decades, an increasing number of law enforcement agencies have created specialized units to work with this population. In some instances, those specialized units include teams of specially trained police officers or teams of both police officers and civilian mental health specialists. Generally, these are larger agencies with greater resources than those available in Bluffton.

In some cases, cities/counties fund community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide teams of civilian mental health specialists who provide direct services to this population through referral from the 911 call center. This may involve a co-response with law enforcement and/or fire department personnel, or the CBO may handle the incident without police/fire support.

At Bluffton PD, the department employs a Mental Health Intervention Specialist. That position was created in 2021. At the time of the CPSM site visit, that specialist had joined the department only one month before the previous specialist separated from it.

As CPSM assessed this position, we looked to the department's policy manual for information on its duties and responsibilities. That information is found in *SOP 029, Mental Health*. The policy was created in 2011 and last revised in March 2024.

The Community Mental Health Advocate is a "civilian member of the Bluffton Police Department authorized to assist, refer, and provide resources for persons with mental illness who have encounters with law enforcement." The advocate works a traditional day shift, Monday–Friday, and is available to respond during normal working hours to non-violent crisis situations involving a with a mental health issue. Additionally, the advocate will be available to department personnel by telephone on a 24/7 basis.

The policy describes their duties as follows:

- *Review all incident reports involving the person with mental illness and contact the family and/or the person with mental illness.*

- *If the initial situation is severe enough to warrant an in-person follow-up, the Community Mental Health Advocate will contact the person with mental illness and/or family to determine whether the appropriate services needed for the individual are being met. All reasonable attempts will be made to contact the person with mental illness by telephone as soon as possible after receiving the initial report. If telephone contact is unsuccessful, an in-person follow-up may be done accompanied by an officer.*

- *The Community Mental Health Advocate will act as the administrator and coordinator of the mental health and crisis intervention program.*

- *The Community Mental Health Advocate's duties will include coordinating the training, along with the Training Sergeant, of all individuals, sworn and non-sworn, who are likely to encounter persons with mental illness. Training for all personnel relevant personnel is to be provided every three years.*

- *The Community Mental Health Advocate will maintain updated records of available resources within the community and will provide this information to the Patrol Division.*

Also, per policy, the Investigations Division Commander is to perform the following duties:

- Complete a review of available services and assistance needs of persons with mental illness within the department's service area at least once every two years to include:

  □ The extent and major types of mental illness within the department's geographic area.

  □ An inventory of information and services available for persons with mental illness.

  □ Assistance for persons with mental illness and related community services available within the service area.

  □ Identification of all unfulfilled needs and the selection of those that are appropriate for the department to meet.

- Make recommendations to the Chief of Police to provide services to the public. Department-provided services best rendered by other agencies or organizations will be discontinued. Those services which are not provided will be originated, coordinated, and implemented, when possible.

CPSM inquired of staff and was advised that these duties have been completed as dictated by policy.

In summary, the Town of Bluffton and the Bluffton Police Department offer an excellent program, one that very few agencies of this size can offer.

As a minor issue, we noted one apparent conflict in policy regarding the frequency of training in *Section XI*. *Training of Personnel* indicates that entry-level personnel will receive basic mental health intervention training while in the academy and that annual refresher training will be provided to all department personnel. In apparent conflict, *Section XIII, Review of Needs and Services, subsection C.*, states that employees will be trained and updated on services and techniques every three years. It would appear that any differences in the content of such training would be minimal and that one such session would be adequate.

Community Mental Health Recommendation:

- The Community Mental Health SOP should be amended to clarify the mandatory training schedule and eliminate the existing conflict in policy. (Recommendation No. 40.)

§ § §

SECTION 7. SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Under the direction of the Support Division Captain, with direct oversight by a Lieutenant, the Special Operations Division is made up of the following programs:

- School Resource Officers (SROs).
- Crossing Guards.
- Community Services Assistants.
- Bike Patrol.
- Community Action Team (CAT).

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS (SRO)

SRO programs play an invaluable role in providing for a safe school environment, shaping young people's relationships with police, and in establishing and maintaining productive relationships with school officials. Recognizing the importance of such, the Bluffton Police Department in conjunction with the Beaufort County School District have long maintained an SRO program. In addition, BPD has a separate agreement with Cross Schools, a private institution providing classes from pre-school through the 12th grade.

Staffing

South Carolina law provides for two classifications of SROs. Class 1 SROs are typically full-time peace officers that have full police powers across the state, while Class 3 SROs have police powers only on school campuses to which they are assigned, and only during regular school hours. At BPD, Class 1 officers are full-time commissioned officers, while Class 3 officers work part-time during periods in which classes are in session.

Staffing consists of two full-time police sergeants and 11 SROs. Of the SROs, 5 are Class 1, and 6 are Class 3. All are employed by the Town of Bluffton / Bluffton Police Department.

SROs are assigned at the following schools:

- Bluffton High School (Class 1).
- May River High School Class 1).
- Bluffton Middle School (Class 1).
- H.E. McCracken Middle School (Class 1).
- River Ridge Academy (Class 1).
- Bluffton Elementary School (Class 3).
- Bluffton Early Childhood Center (Class 3).
- Pritchardville Elementary School (Class 3).
- Red Cedar Elementary School (Class 3).
- McRiley Early Childhood Center (Class 3).
- Cross Schools (Class 3).

Operating Agreements

As mentioned previously, there are two operating agreements that we will address here. The first is an annual agreement between the Beaufort County School District, the Town of Bluffton, and the Bluffton Police Department, 2023-74. This agreement pertains to both SROs and crossing guards. We will address the crossing guard program at the conclusion of our reporting on the SRO program.

This agreement covers one of the two police sergeants, and all five of the Class 1 SROs. The provisions of the agreement call for the SROs, under the direction of a dedicated police sergeant, to provide on-campus services each day that school is in session. When school is not in session, the officers are assigned regular police duties at the direction of the police department. The agreement calls for the school district to reimburse the Town of Bluffton at a rate of $373,888 per year, which is approximately 75 percent of the collective annual salary and benefits of the assigned sergeant and officers. Here, as in the second operating agreement, assignment of SROs to extra-curricular activities outside of normal school hours is paid by the schools at a fixed rate that covers costs.

The second operating agreement, pertaining to Cross Schools, largely mirrors that of the previously discussed agreement with the exception that this is a five-year agreement, with the contract amount being adjusted each year based upon salary changes. The 2023/24 school year was the first year of the current five-year agreement. This contract calls for one supervisor and one SRO. At present, the SRO assigned is a Class 3 SRO.

You may note that these contracts cover 6 of the 11 SROs. The remaining 5 SROs, each a Class 3 SRO, are funded through a state grant program that supports the hiring of SROs on public school campuses.

Though the formula for cost sharing of SRO program/personnel expenses varies from agency to agency, such decisions are economic policy decisions for the governing bodies. We submit that the spirit of these agreements are consistent with that of many other agencies across the country.

CPSM reviewed both operating agreements; they were found to be highly comprehensive and largely consistent. In addition to the administrative aspects of the agreements, both spelled out in considerable detail the roles and responsibilities of the schools and the police department. Included is detailed information pertaining to the duties of the SROs.

Policy / SOP

There is no stand-alone policy for the SRO program. Rather, the policy and procedures guiding the SRO program are found in *Policy 026, Juveniles*. Specifically, the SRO program/duties are addressed in Section X, and in total, cover approximately one-half page. CPSM reviewed the information contained therein and found that it did not reflect the current status of the program in terms of schools at which SROs provide services, and only provided general guidance pertaining to the duties of the SROs and the supervisor. We believe and that the policy is inadequate and fails to provide necessary direction to department personnel.

On the other hand, we found that information contained in the contractual agreements is far more detailed than that of this policy. Since contractual agreements between cities/towns and other entities are generally not readily available to line staff for policy guidance, CPSM recommends that a stand-alone SRO policy be developed. The existing contract agreements could serve as an excellent reference source to develop such a policy.

Training

Training in preparation for their duties as an SRO and continuing professional training is extensive. For a Class 1 SRO, it initially involves attendance at a two-week basic SRO course presented by either the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy (SCCJA), or the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). For Class 3 SROs, that course is shortened to one week. At present, BPD utilizes SCCJA for this training. Staff reports that all SROs are compliant with South Carolina regulations governing SRO basic training.

Continuing professional training opportunities include:

- NASRO Adolescent Mental Health Training.

- ALICE Instructor Certification (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate).

- DARE Instructor Certification.

- Child Sexual Abuse Training.

- Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative Conference.

- Center for the Prevention of Childhood Maltreatment Conference.

- Childhood Maltreatment Investigations: Minimal Facts and Beyond.

- Street Gang Awareness, Identification, and Investigation Seminar.

This is clearly an extensive list of training programs. It includes a number of investigative courses. These investigative courses are relevant here in Bluffton as the SRO conducts criminal investigations of crimes occurring on school campuses. We will discuss this further in reporting on SRO workload next.

At present, no training matrix for the SRO function exists. A training matrix identifies specific courses relevant to the duties of a BPD SRO such as those identified above. It can then be utilized as a management tool to ensure that these courses are prioritized over other discretionary training opportunities that offer less value to this specific positions needs. We recommend that the department develop such a matrix for this assignment.

Workload

As we begin our discussion on workload, it is important to point out that unlike Patrol, where the computer-aided dispatch system captures much of an officer's time on assigned activities, this is not the case for an SRO. SROs serve as mentors for students, resources for families and school staff, provide classroom instruction, and are responsible for law enforcement-related duties at the schools. Few of these activities lend themselves to being captured by CAD, and rarely result in the initiation of a documented case file.

Importantly, and as we mentioned previously, SROs are also responsible for investigations of crimes occurring on school campuses as well as cases involving children where, based upon their duties as an SRO, they are uniquely positioned to conduct a more thorough investigation. As well, the SRO may be called upon to assist CIU detectives and/or Patrol in investigations involving school-related incidents, or those not necessarily related to school, but involving a student, even where the SRO is not the primary case investigator. This is an excellent use of this resource as they are best positioned to seek cooperation from school staff as well as students involved in criminal activities, or witnesses thereto.

As is called for in contracts with both the Beaufort County School District and Cross Schools, each SRO maintains records of activities in which they engage at their assigned school. CPSM reviewed these reports and found them to be comprehensive in capturing activities, though limited to a statistical number vs. any detailing of the activity. The reports capture the following:

- Arrests.
- Student contacts.
- Parent contacts.
- Law-related education.
- Accidents.
- Drug charges.
- Assault and battery.
- K-9 searches.
- Weapons.
- School disturbances.

As would be expected, the overwhelming majority of incidents fall first to student contacts, then parent contacts. Even at the high schools, the annual numbers of arrests, drug charges, and school disturbances are nominal.

We did note that while the BCSD contract calls for weekly reporting from each school, the reports reviewed reflect monthly activity and annual totals. This rate of reporting is more appropriate and appears to serve both the department and schools' needs.

Annual or Semi-annual Review

Both contracts call for review of the status of the SRO program on either an annual basis (BCSD Section 6, Program Goals and Evaluation) or Semi-Annual Basis (Cross Schools Section 3.A.3.). CPSM requested the most recent copies of those documents for review and was advised that no such reports are generated, nor do the contracting agencies request such.

Rotation Schedule

The department's SRO program is a permanent assignment. Once assigned, SROs generally only leave the assignment based upon promotion, retirement, resignation, personal request, or an administrative action related to a performance or discipline issue. The advantage of this practice is that personnel become highly trained and experienced in this role and as well as develop relationships with school administrators, instructional staff, and students. There is no question that there is value to this argument.

We would point out, however, that the arguments for a rotation schedule that we put forth in our discussion of the Detective Section (Section 6) apply here as well. We need not restate that information here, but would refer the reader back to that prior discussion.

We do recognize that only select officers have an interest in an SRO assignment. In an agency of this size, the number of interested officers may be limited. We also recognize that given the number of Class 1 SROs, it is likely that openings will occur with greater frequency than at agencies with only one or two SROs. As such, the non-rotational status of this assignment may be appropriate in this instance. Still, a long-term SRO may lack important experience gained in

working other assignments should they choose to promote. Staff should consider this in situations where an employee may be a candidate for future supervisory and leadership responsibilities.

Summary

The SRO program at Bluffton Police Department must be considered among the most all-encompassing programs reviewed by CPSM to date. The commitment of resources is unparalleled. The program is well structured and well run.

SRO programs play an invaluable role in shaping young people's relationships with police and in establishing and maintaining productive relationships with school officials. The Town of Bluffton, the Bluffton Police Department, and the local schools are to be commended for their commitment to this program and the community's children.

SRO Recommendations:

- Develop a training matrix that identifies SRO-related training specific to the functions of a BPD SRO, and utilize that listing to prioritize these courses over others of less importance as it relates to the specific function of this position. (Recommendation No. 41.)

- A department policy delineating the purpose of the SRO program and the roles and responsibilities of the SROs should be developed to guide operations. Those roles and responsibilities outlined in the Town's contractual agreement with Beaufort County School District should serve as the framework for such a policy. (Recommendation No. 42.)

CROSSING GUARDS

The school crossing guard program operates under the direction of the SRO sergeants. The program is governed by *SOP 042*, last updated in 2022. The policy provides the following objective of the program; "*It is the policy of the Bluffton Police Department (BPD) to post crossing guards at selected intersections to facilitate the prevention of unsafe and unlawful acts by pedestrians and motorists.*"

As of May 2024, there are five crossing guards. Guards are temporary / part-time employees who serve in an exclusive role as school crossing guards. *SOP 042* indicates that there are four schools at which crossing guard services are provided. At two of those schools, services are provided at two intersections for a total of six program locations.

However, staff indicated that there are additional schools and locations that receive crossing guard services at present. They are as follows:

- HE McCracken Middle School, Bluffton Elementary School, Bluffton Early Childhood Center.

  - Buckwalter Pkwy./Old Bridge Dr.

  - Buckwalter Pkwy./Pine Ridge Dr.

  - HE McCracken Cir./Pine Ridge Dr.

- River Ridge Academy.

  - River Ridge Dr./Bluffton Pkwy.

- MC Riley Elementary School

  - Burnt Church Rd.

- Bluffton Middle School)
  - Mustang Dr./Simmonsville Rd.
  - Mustang Dr./Buck Island Rd.
- Pritchardville Elementary School
  - Evan Way/Stardust Ln.
- Red Cedar Elementary School
  - Red Cedar/Box Elder St.

As a side note, we would offer that listing locations serviced by crossing guards in an SOP is not necessary, as it would require modifications to the policy as sites change. The department may wish to reconsider including such in the SOPs.

In brief, the criteria for selection of school cross guard locations is outlined in *SOP 042 III C*. It states "the Special Operations Division Commander and/or his designee will conduct an annual survey to identify locations requiring SCGs. The survey will be forwarded to the Chief of Police for consideration and approval."

In reviewing this program, we did note one anomaly. The SRO contract between Beaufort County and Town of Bluffton calls for a payment of $70,212 for crossing guard services. Beyond that, the contract is silent on crossing guards. If there are issues regarding funding or locations of crossing guard services, consideration may be warranted in including service locations in future contracts.

In summary, the program appears well structured and managed. No recommendations are offered.

POLICE EXPLORERS

While not universal, many police agencies across the country offer law enforcement Explorer Programs for area youth. In some cases, police departments offer such programs in conjunction with a community-based program such as Scouting America or area Boys and Girls Clubs, etc. Such programs offer an excellent opportunity for police departments to build relationships with young people in the community. As well, these programs can serve as an employment gateway into the law enforcement profession, which benefits both the law enforcement agency and the involved youth.

The Bluffton Police Department, in conjunction with the Boys and Girls Club of Bluffton, has long offered such a program. The police Explorer Program is assigned under the direction of the Special Operations Division Lieutenant.

Staffing / Participants

The Police Explorer program is led by a police corporal who serves in this role as a collateral duty to his full-time assignment as an SRO. Two additional SROs assist with program activities.

Program participants include both males and females, and may range in age from 12 to 18. At this time there are 27 participants involved in the program. As a leadership development tool, and to assist with program management, an Explorer rank structure includes both a platoon commander and squad leaders.

Best practices suggest that female officers should be included in program supervision where such programs are co-ed. Here in Bluffton, while a male corporal serves as the departments lead for the program, both a current and retired female officer assist with program leadership.

Policy

An examination of the BPD SOPs revealed that there is no written policy connected to the Explorer Program. The only SOP reference to this program was found in *SOP 050, Department Organization and Command Protocol,* where it is listed under the Support Division among functions that may be assigned as an additional responsibility. There is no operational guidance provided.

The absence of a Police Explorer policy is problematic and should be addressed immediately. While Police Explorer posts can serve both the department and area youth well, there are significant liabilities associated with this or any similar program where officers interact with young people, both male and female. This is especially true where officers serve in a supervisory role over Explorers in a paramilitary structure.

There have been many examples of situations where officers and Explorers, often mid-teen females, have engaged in inappropriate and sometimes unlawful behavior. At times, the inappropriate conduct was initiated by the officer, and at others, by the Explorer. Regardless, responsibility lays with the agency. Such interactions have tarnished law enforcement agencies and the Explorer Program, ruined the careers of involved officers, and adversely impacted the mental health of both the officer and Explorer. In the most serious of instances, officers have been imprisoned, and/or litigation has been brought against the governing agency, the department's leadership, and the involved officers.

CPSM urges the department to immediately develop a policy guiding the administration and operations of this program.

Activities

There are two primary activities that the police department sponsors. Each Wednesday from January through May the department provides training to the Explorers in various department functions. For example, a detective may provide information about the detective function, or a traffic officer may discuss traffic enforcement and/or accident investigation. These sessions last about one hour and provide basic information.

Then, each summer, the department puts on a "Boot Camp." This two-week program complements the above, and participants are tasked to engage in practical exercises. These simulation exercises include crime scene reconstruction, accident investigation, criminal investigation, first aid training and application, etc.

Funding

When CPSM examines funding of Police Explorer programs, our focus is on that funding which is managed by the police department or police department staff members. There are instances where funding of such programs is managed by police department employees, and thus is handled outside of the normal town/department budget processes. As such, the handling of the funds may not receive the necessary scrutiny to safeguard funds and ensure that expenditures are appropriate.

Staff indicated that the Boys and Girls Club manages program funding, and neither the police department nor any employees are involved in this aspect of the program. CPSM did not examine this further as the Boys and Girls Club management of any funding is outside of our scope of work on this project.

We offer for consideration that for specific events, such as 5K races and parades, that Explorers may be an alternative staffing source to commissioned officers or civilian employees for specific event roles such as manning barricades at traffic posts. Some agencies effectively utilize Explorers in this role, and compensate the Explorer Post, not individual Explorers, thereby supporting the post's activities.

Police Explorer Recommendations:

- The department, without delay, should develop a SOP guiding the administration and operations of the Police Explorer Program. (Recommendation No. 43.)

- Consideration should be given to utilizing Police Explorers as an alternative staffing source, in limited roles, at events such as 5k runs and parades. Compensation would be provided to the Explorer Post to support the post's activities. (Recommendation No. 44.)

COMMUNITY SERVICE ASSISTANTS

Under the direction of the Special Operations Division Lieutenant, the Community Service Assistants are assigned to provide a Bluffton Police Department presence in the downtown area. The program, implemented in 2019, is staffed by two full-time civilian positions. Their schedule provides coverage between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., seven days per week. For identification purposes, they wear a Bluffton Police Department polo shirt embossed with *Bluffton CSA*, and are provided with a distinctively marked vehicle, police radio, and laptop computer.

Their primary function is to serve in a role similar to that of an ambassador or guide. They do not initiate or investigate criminal cases occurring in the district. Rather, if such a need arises, a patrol officer is summoned to handle that incident. The CSA enforcement responsibilities are limited to the issuance of parking violation citations. Other duties performed by the Community Service Assistants include:

- Setting traffic / parking cones for farmers market.

- Check parks throughout Town for safety and cleanliness issues.

- Traffic control support for special events such as 5k runs and parades and MLK march.

- Ensure AEDs placed throughout the town are serviceable (Parks, River Landing, Town Hall).

- Interface with code enforcement regarding observed violations.

Staff reported that there is no formal training provided to the CSAs. Rather, learning is limited to on-the-job training.

CPSM was advised of a significant issue impacting efficiency, resource deployment, and resulting in unnecessary costs to the Town of Bluffton. There are three primary issues that should be examined by department management.

- Staff indicated that the technology in use for issuing parking citations is not compatible with Municipal Court software programs, resulting in a redundancy of work effort.

- Staff is required to add a vehicle's registered ownership information to parking citations. To do so, they must contact the State Department of Transportation (vehicles registered in South Carolina) or the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office 911 Center (vehicles registered in another state) to access that information. This is a process that can take several minutes, significantly contributing to the time required to write a parking citation of up to 15 minutes.

- CSAs are subpoenaed to attend court for the parking citations issued and are called to testify. This applies even in cases where the violator paid the fine ahead of the court hearing. This action results in CSAs being removed from service to attend court hearings, and if on their day off, attending hearings on an overtime cost basis.

Clearly this is a multifaceted program that provides numerous benefits to the Town of Bluffton, the Bluffton Police Department, area merchants, residents, and Town visitors.

Community Service Assistant Recommendations

- CPSM strongly urges BPD management to examine the process by which CSAs issue parking citations to include the technology in use, the need for the address of the vehicle's registered owner information to be added to the citation, and court appearance requirements when citations have been paid by the violator. (Recommendation No. 45.)

CRITICAL INCIDENT TACTICAL RESPONSE

Though infrequent in agencies the size of BPD, critical incidents can and do occur. When such an incident occurs, it may call for specially trained and equipped officers, often referred to as Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team. To be both proficient and effective, SWAT teams require a substantial commitment of resources including personnel, training, and costly equipment. Agencies must assess whether the need for such a resource demands that they staff a SWAT team internally, or seek other options for obtaining these services.

BPD has opted to utilize the services of the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office SWAT team when such a need arises and sufficient time is afforded to request their assistance. As we will discuss shortly that service is covered in a Mutual Aid Agreement with BCSO. Staff indicated that, while no statistical records of the number of responses are kept, that the need for a SWAT response is infrequent, estimated at a couple of times per year. In the past year, only one response was required. That response involved an armed individual who threatened suicide.

However, incidents do arise and waiting for assistance from a SWAT team is not feasible. Such incidents may include an active shooter. We inquired regarding operational readiness for such an incident and were advised that all commissioned personnel attend active shooter training on an annual basis, and that three officers have recently been certified as trainers in this area.

We noted that the department has no active shooter policy. Staff indicated that such incidents would most closely be addressed in *SOP 010, Incident Command System*. As we reviewed that policy, we noted that the closest possible reference to response to a critical incident such as an active shooter would be found in Section IV, Procedures. It states as follows:

The Incident Commander will evaluate the situation based on three major incident priorities:

a. Life Safety: The Incident Commander's first priority is always the life safety of the emergency responders and the public.

b. Incident Stability: The Incident Commander is responsible for determining a strategy that will:

   1) Minimize the effect that the incident will have on the surrounding area, and

   2) Maximize the response effort while using resources efficiently.

c. Property Conservation: The Incident Commander is responsible for minimizing damage to property while achieving the incident objectives.

While this language provides general guidance in terms of priorities, it lacks specificity as to the roles of those who respond to such an incident. Situations such as that which occurred at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and many others across the country, demonstrate the need for specific policies on response to a critical incident. As such, the department should develop an active shooter policy to provide step-by-step guidance for each responding officer.

Critical Incident Tactical Response Recommendation:

- Develop an active shooter policy to provide direction for all personnel responding to such an incident. (Recommendation No. 46.)

MUTUAL AID

The sharing of federal, state, and local government and community-based organization resources during disasters, emergencies, and major events is consistent with best practices in governance. It is more common, however, that mutual aid simply involves a patrol officer(s) assisting an adjacent agency on a call for service or high-risk traffic stop. Such responses, though commonplace, involve few resources and last a relatively short period. In either case, agencies commonly develop mutual aid agreements to guide such operations.

BPD *SOP 038, Mutual Aid Agreement and Liaison with other Agencies* addresses this issue. The policy, six pages in length was reviewed and found to be comprehensive. It appears to be compliant with South Carolina State Statute 23-1-215 governing such agreements. As with other policies, it has been several years since the last review in 2011. Staff should review and update the policy to ensure that department practices remain compliant with the policy, and/or modifications are made to the policy as necessary. The policy does not indicate the agencies with which mutual aid agreements exist, but rather, has a listing of suggested agencies.

CPSM requested copies of all mutual aid agreements in place be uploaded to a secure file sharing program for our review. These included seven agreements, each with the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office. The following agreements were submitted for our review:

- School Resource Officer.
- Bomb Squad.
- Canine (K-9).
- Crime Scene Unit.
- Marine Patrol.
- Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT).
- Violent Crime Task Force.

The department should examine this listing and determine whether agreements should be sought with other agencies such as SLED and/or adjacent counties, cities, and towns.

Mutual Aid Recommendations:

- Review the now 13-year-old mutual aid policy to ensure that it remains accurate in guiding current operations. (Recommendation No. 47.)

- Examine whether additional mutual aid agreements are warranted for SLED and/or adjacent counties, cities, and towns. (Recommendation No. 48.)

SPECIAL EVENTS

Most law enforcement agencies experience special events in the jurisdictions they serve. The variety and frequency of special events where a police presence is assumed represents a challenge to police planning and a drain on police resources that is often unnoticed by the public. Some events are pre-planned while others are in reaction to emergency situations. Development of special event deployment plans for dealing with traffic conditions, crowd control, staffing needs, use of equipment, and related crime issues requires the exercise of reasonable initiative and independent judgment.

At Bluffton PD, the special events are handled by the Special Operations Lieutenant; however, at times another command staff member may handle the responsibility.

Special Events and Personnel

The Town of Bluffton has four large special events that occur each year:

- May Festival.
- Arts and Sea Food Festival.
- Fourth of July.
- Christmas Parade.

The Christmas Parade event is the only event where the department requires a mandatory deployment (every sworn employee works).

According to the lieutenant, the same operational plans and orders are used each year with only minor revisions, essentially, the operational plans are *"plug and play."* Any revisions to the operational plans are handled by the lieutenant in consultation with other staff.

In addition to the four main special events, there are also additional events where officers are requested, for example, many of the churches in Bluffton request officers for their Sunday morning services, and sometimes during the week for other events. Five of the churches in Bluffton have signed annual contracts for the officers each Sunday, and several others are considering doing so. The lieutenant coordinates the contracts with the churches and then posts the overtime.

The town also receives requests several times a year by promoters to put on a 5k run through the downtown area. The lieutenant works with the promoter to coordinate the route and the number of officers required to ensure the event is safe and orderly.

Officer Overtime

Once the lieutenant receives the dates and number of officers desired for events, he will post it in the department's Intime system which allows officers to log in and sign up for the overtime. Over the last several years, due to staffing shortages, the department has had difficulty filling the overtime positions, When an overtime position cannot be filled, the lieutenant advises the requester that they should seek private security to meet their needs.

Workload

The Special Operations Lieutenant states that he believes that he spends about 40 percent of his daily shifts working on special event coordination. CPSM does not believe that the best use of the Special Operations Lieutenant's time should be spent on work that could possibly be completed by a civilian employee. CPSM recommends the department consider creating a part-time civilian position that could handle the responsibilities of the special events.

Special Event Recommendations:

- CPSM recommends the department consider creating a part-time civilian position that could handle the responsibilities of the special events. (Recommendation No. 49.)

1033 PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Excess Property 1033 Program has assisted law enforcement agencies for nearly 25 years. It is best known for its role in providing law enforcement agencies with critical but previously unavailable equipment for little to no cost. The program is normally the responsibility of the department's Fleet Manager/Quartermaster; however, since that position is currently vacant, it is at present the responsibility of the Administrative Lieutenant.

Equipment Management

Data related to the 1033 program is maintained internally within the department on an Excel spreadsheet: however, it is also maintained on the Defense Logistics Agency's website. Each participating agency has the ability to certify their property, initiate a transfer request to move inventory to a different agency, and to initiate a turn-in request once that the controlled property has neared the end of its useful life expectancy.

Over the years, the department has obtained three vehicles, two HUMVEES and one MRAP. Also obtained in the past were night vision optics that have already been returned to the program, and 16 reflex rifle optics that are currently in service.

Decisions to obtain items from the program were the decisions of prior members of the command staff, and none of those who opted to accept the items are still with the agency. The current command staff was not involved in those decisions.

Continued Participation

Many incidents such as the George Floyd incident in Minneapolis have caused many law enforcement agencies to rethink how they police their communities and are moving away from the "Warrior Cop" narrative. That narrative was a response to police agencies becoming more and more militaristic with equipment that many times was provided through the 1033 program.

Much of the equipment obtained through the program extended past the traditional functions of law enforcement, such as investigating and preventing crimes, and the response to calls for service. Obviously, there is much negativity regarding equipment obtained through the program. The department is currently in the process of returning equipment obtained through the 1033 Program. At this point in time, CPSM believes the Town is wise to return equipment already received if that property does not meet its needs.

10-33 Program Recommendation:

- CPSM recommends the department continue to return existing equipment if it is not meeting its needs and at some point have discussions regarding future participation. (Recommendation No. 50.)

PIO/SOCIAL MEDIA

Nearly every law enforcement agency has a Public Information Officer (PIO) to ensure there is public transparency by providing to its citizens accurate and timely information about police activities and incidents. PIOs can also assist with building public trust and legitimacy. PIOs are often part of a team that also handles an agency's social media accounts, which can be used to issue warnings, share real time information that protects the public in emergencies, solicit public support in criminal investigations, and provide educational information about the department.

In the BPD the PIO responsibilities are handled by a sergeant who reports directly to the Support Services Lieutenant. The PIO position is an ancillary job in addition to the sergeant's primary assignment. The position is appointed by the Chief of Police and there is no set term for the assignment. Since the sergeant is the department's only PIO, he is on-call 24/7 for issues related to the media.

PIO Responsibilities

- The community affairs, public information, and media relations function.
- Preparing and distributing BPD media releases.
- Creating a working relationship with the media by providing formal and informal direct lines of communication.
- Establishing an assigned area for the media at scenes of on-going major incidents.
- Arranging for, and assisting at, media conferences involving BPD personnel and all media.
- Assisting in the release of media information at scenes of major crimes.
- Disseminated information will be restricted only when it could compromise an on-going investigation or when required by law.
- Media conferences, when deemed appropriate, will be arranged through the Chief of Police and the Public Information Officer.
- Coordinating the release of information regarding victims, witnesses, suspects, and confidential investigations and operations after receiving appropriate authorization.
- Preparing media releases as necessitated by specific occurrences within the jurisdiction of the BPD, at the discretion of the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
- Updating all department social media sites regularly to promote transparency.

Training

The only training the PIO has received was a one-day "Working with the Media" class in 2022 put on by FEMA. However, it was learned that the sergeant is scheduled to attend the one-week FBI LEEDA class, "Media and Public Relations," in mid-2024. In addition to the scheduled training, CPSM recommends the PIO also attend some type of annual conference training.

PIO Team

Many law enforcement agencies have assembled and implemented media teams made up of officer-level personnel. After receiving training they function as a department's PIO team and can be responsible for the department's press releases and interactions with the press during incidents. The addition of several personnel who are trained in PIO duties could relieve the sergeant from the 24/7 responsibility, and if those personnel are working at the time of the incident, could produce faster, more effective information. CPSM recommends the department consider implementing a PIO team of approximately two to three officers who could assist with handling PIO responsibilities.

Policy

Policy regarding the PIO position is found in the department's Standard Operating Procedures #25.

The PIO policy states, *"The Chief of Police or his/her designee must give approval prior to members/employees being interviewed by the media when the interview relates to the Bluffton Police Department or when the member will be identified as an employee of the BPD. No part of the BPD uniform is to be worn for any publication without authorization."* CPSM recommends the policy be modified to allow the PIO to conduct media interviews without the prior authorization of the Chief of Police.

Social Media Presence

The department is actively engaged in using Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Nextdoor, and You Tube. The PIO sergeant has the primary responsibility for the postings to the department's social media sites; however, the Support Services Lieutenant and the Chief of Police can post as necessary.

The department regularly posts about issues occurring in the community on its social media sites. Its Facebook site currently has more than 27,000 followers; a review of the site revealed that the department posts information approximately two to three times per week.

PIO / Social Media Recommendations:

- In addition to the scheduled training, CPSM recommends the PIO also attend some type of annual conference training. (Recommendation No. 51.)

- CPSM recommends the department consider implementing a PIO team of approximately two to three officers who could assist with handling PIO responsibilities. (Recommendation No. 52.)

- CPSM recommends the department policy be modified to allow the PIO to conduct media interviews without the prior authorization of the Chief of Police. (Recommendation No. 53.)

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SECTION 8. SUPPORT SERVICES

The Support Services section of the department is headed by a police captain.

PERSONNEL / RECRUITMENT / RETENTION

The law enforcement profession always faces the challenge of renewing its ranks. For nearly every agency, this is an ongoing effort. However, for some time and especially more recently, finding qualified applicants who have the desire and ability to meet the requirements of the selection process and academy training has become a more challenging proposition, adding to a growing shortage of law enforcement officers nationwide. In addition, a problem plaguing police departments is being able to retain employees once they are hired and trained.

Personnel and recruitment are handled by the department's Administrative Sergeant who reports to the Support Services Division Lieutenant. BPD has no designated personnel or recruitment unit except for the sergeant; however, he often solicits officers to accompany him to recruitment events.

Hiring Process

When a vacancy occurs, the department notifies the Town's Human resources Department, which will post an opening for the position. The HR department then receives and reviews the applications, and then forwards them to the PD. The HR department will also sit in on the command staff interviews of the applicants.

The following are the steps that must be completed to become an entry level Bluffton Police Officer:

- Online application.
- Agility test.
- Written exam (The National Police Officer Selection Test by Standards Associates). A cumulative score of 70 percent must be achieved to move on in the process.
- Oral panel interview.
- Background investigation.
- Polygraph.
- HR file review.

Once the applicant passes all phases of the process, they are placed on an eligibility list until an opening occurs. It was learned that testing is open as long as the department continues to have vacancies.

For lateral entry officers, the process is the same as an entry level. Many departments studied by CPSM have begun relaxing their testing process for experienced officers by waiving the written exam portion of the testing process. In today's world, all law enforcement agencies are competing for the same applicants, and if one agency has a testing process that is less onerous and time-consuming it may have the ability to complete the entire process and give a conditional job offer of employment sooner than the competition. CPSM would recommend the

department consider waiving the written portion of the testing process for experienced lateral officers.

When hired at Bluffton PD, the entry level candidate is sent to the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy in Columbia, S.C., to attend the Basic Law Enforcement Academy. The Basic Law Enforcement Academy is 12 weeks in length, and upon successful completion, the candidate will be certified as a Class 1 Law Enforcement Officer.

Pre-Employment Background investigations

The pre-employment background investigation is one of the most important investigations a law enforcement agency will ever conduct. The investigations must be very comprehensive if they are to lead to informed hiring decisions. They must ensure compliance with all applicable minimum standards for appointment and screen out candidates who are found unsuitable for the position, based on relevant information and their past history. Background investigations are also among the most challenging investigations to conduct. The manner in which background investigations are conducted, from areas investigated to the evaluation of resulting information, must be treated consistently across all candidates.

The department conducts background investigations of police recruits and police lateral officers. The background investigations are usually conducted by the Investigation Lieutenant and the Investigation Sergeant. Each department member conducting hiring background investigations has attended "Police Applicant Background Investigations."

The department strives to complete an applicant's hiring background investigation within one month. Again, as with the testing process, the quicker the investigation can be completed, the better chance the department has of hiring that individual. A one-month completion is average for departments studied by CPSM. All hiring background investigations meet South Carolina Standards.

Many police agencies studied by CPSM are now outsourcing background investigations to retired law enforcement personnel who have obtained their private investigator licenses. Some of the reasons for outsourcing of pre-employment background investigations are: personnel currently doing background investigations can be assigned to other needs in the department, the investigation can be completed in a timelier manner, extensive investigator experience, reduced costs, and sometimes even a better, more thorough investigation. CPSM recommends that consideration be given to outsourcing all background investigations to a private investigation company that specializes in conducting hiring background investigations.

TABLE 8-1: Background Investigations, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

2021	33
2022	22
2023	40
2024 (thru May)	14

TABLE 8-2: Sworn Personnel Employment Activity, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023

Year	Hired	Retired	Terminated	Resigned	Left within four years after attending academy
2020	8	1	1	6	3
2021	13	0	1	14	11
2022	15	3	3	5	5
2023	16	0	3	7	8
Total	**52**	**4**	**8**	**32**	**27 (includes terminations)**

Note: ***BPD currently has seven vacant positions in the police department. Those seven positions are police officer positions, not civilian positions.

Retention

Law enforcement executives must examine the use of benefits and incentives in recruitment and retention for sworn positions. In addition to attracting new recruits, benefits and incentives play a key role in retaining existing employees; may dissuade them from seeking employment elsewhere; and can demonstrate the agency's commitment to employees' health, happiness, and overall well-being. Experts agree that agencies must re-think signing bonuses, pension plans, and additional incentives for retention.

As can be seen from the table above, over the last four years the department saw 32 officers resign their employment from Bluffton PD to seek employment elsewhere or leave the profession entirely. The department then had to hire replacements for those 32 officers. Studies have shown that the cost of hiring an applicant from the start and paying them until they become a solo police officer can sometimes be in excess of $100,000. In BPD's case, with 32 people leaving, and BPD having to hire and train 32 new officers, the investment in the 32 new officers is staggering.

It was learned from BPD staff that exit interviews were conducted with each officer who resigned from the department in the time period examined by CPSM. Many of those who resigned did so for increased training opportunities, family reasons (moved back home, spouse had a new professional opportunity0, communication issues, and to make more money at other law enforcement agencies.

The National League of Cities recently published an article that examined factors that can help retain law enforcement employees. As one can see, several of those factors mentioned in the article are similar to the reasons officers have left the BPD:

- Enhanced training.
- Improvement of pay, benefits, and incentives.
- Prioritization of officer wellness.
- Shaping organizational culture.
- Support educational partnerships.

Never before has the retention of police personnel been as critical or as challenging for police organizations as it is today. To address these challenges successfully, law enforcement leaders must examine the process in an entirely different manner. This process will require a constant review of the labor market, compensation systems, leadership, recruiting techniques, supervision

of recruiters, employer brands, leadership and operational management systems, and retention systems. Quite simply, when recruiting and retaining personnel, every detail is important and deserves attention.

The Town just modified the pay steps for police officers to assist with retention. The following are those modifications:

- New-hire educational incentives (aggregate cannot exceed two steps):

  □ Associate degree / qualified prior non-lateral policing experience: Add one step.

  □ Bachelor / Master degree: Add two steps.

- Existing employee educational incentive: Associate / Bachelor degree: Add one step.

- Time of service at BPD, adjustment as follows:

  □ One grade for 3 years.

  □ One grade for 5 years.

  □ One grade for 10 years.

  □ One grade for 15 years.

  □ One grade for 20 years.

- Lateral police officer: Grade and pay step placement based upon experience and education.

  □ One grade for 3 years of experience.

  □ One grade for 5 years of experience.

  □ One grade for 10 years of experience.

- Military experience: Must have honorable discharge: One grade.

- Minimum promotional increase with non-exempt ranks/grades is to the step that is at or above current step.

Hiring Bonuses

In recent years, many police departments across the United States have faced challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified officers. With increasing demands for public safety, coupled with external factors such as negative public perceptions, economic downturns, or high levels of job-related stress, the policing profession has encountered difficulties attracting new talent. As a solution, numerous departments have started offering signing bonuses as an incentive for new recruits. Traditionally, police departments relied on competitive salaries, strong pension plans, and the inherent appeal of serving and protecting communities to attract candidates. However, with shifting societal views, advancements in technology offering alternative career paths, and increased scrutiny on policing practices, the allure of a career in law enforcement has waned for some. In response, signing bonuses have been introduced as an additional enticement, aiming to compete with the private sector and other public service professions.

BPD does not offer a hiring bonus to either entry level police officer candidates or lateral level police officer candidates. One California city is paying an entry level police officer candidate, $75,000 to hire and remain with the agency for a certain number of years. Now, obviously this isn't practical at BPD, but when one accounts for the money the department is currently

spending to recruit, hire, and train police officers who then leave after a short time, some type of hiring bonus would appear to be a good idea. At least one police chief has said that having a substantial hiring bonus has allowed his department to hire from the top five percent of candidates available.

BPD does not currently offer a hiring bonus; however, when speaking with the chief, we found he is seeking to move forward with a hiring bonus of $4,000 for new recruits and $6,000 for officers with prior experience. In order for the hiring bonus to be effective, however, it must be comparable to other agencies in the area. CPSM recommends the Town continue to move forward with providing a hiring bonus for new and experienced recruits.

Recruiting

Recruiting messages are spread through the Town's Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram pages. It has been shown that the new job-seeking generation uses the Internet almost exclusively for job searches. The department's recruitment effort should focus more on websites such as Indeed, ZipRecruiter, CareerBuilder, and other sites that will reach the desired demographic targets. The department will periodically publish information in magazines; however, CPSM has learned after conducting many of these assessments that publishing in periodicals is not the best way to reach the demographic groups that are likely to apply for a law enforcement position.

Members of BPD attend recruitment fairs based on availability. Usually, it is the department's Administrative Sergeant who will attend. Recently, the department partnered with neighboring agencies and hosted a "Women in Law Enforcement Event" to attract female applicants.

TABLE 8-3: Town of Bluffton and BPD Demographics, 2024

	Male	Female	White	Other	African American	Hispanic
BPD Sworn	80.0%	20.0%	72.7%	5.4%	10.9%	10.9%
BPD Civilian	26.6%	73.3%	93.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.6%
Town of Bluffton	49.62%	50.38%	73.5%	4.1%	8.50%	13.01%

Note: Sworn includes recruits in the academy, recruits waiting to attend the academy, and Class 3 SRO.

Public safety agencies are facing ever-increasing pressure to make sure the racial and ethnic diversity of their employees matches or exceeds the racial and ethnic diversity found in their communities. Police agencies that are rich in diversity are simply more likely to garner individual trust among all groups of citizens because the agency is reflective of the community and is inclusive of officers of many backgrounds and experiences.

As one can see in the above table the Bluffton Police Department's demographic closely mirrors the Town of Bluffton except in the area of female sworn officers. In almost all studies conducted by CPSM, it is usual for a department to have a much larger percentage of sworn male officers than female officers. To counteract this situation there is an ongoing nationwide initiative (30X30) designed to advance the number of women in policing. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to increase the representation of women in policing to 30 percent of a sworn force by 2030 and to ensure policies and culture support the success of qualified women officers throughout their careers. CPSM learned that the department has participated in several multi-agency hiring fairs specifically to focus its recruitment on women. CPSM recommends the department continue to focus recruitment efforts on hiring women to meet the goals of the 30X30 initiative.

Personnel and Recruitment Recommendations:

- CPSM recommends the Town continue to move forward with the plan to provide a hiring bonus for both new and experienced recruits. (Recommendation No. 54.)

- CPSM recommends that all hiring backgrounds for sworn personnel positions be outsourced to a private investigation company that specializes in background investigations. (Recommendation No. 55)

- The department should target its recruitment efforts towards women and seek to hire more females to fulfill the 30X30 initiative, thus making the department more representative of the population it serves. (Recommendation No. 56.)

TRAINING

Training is one of the most important functions in a law enforcement agency. Effective training is critical to providing essential skills to officers and minimizing risk and liability. The outcome of effective training can be assessed in part by such measures as a high level of proactive policing and low level of citizen complaints, low numbers of claims or lawsuits, high citizen satisfaction with the police, well-written and investigated reports, safe driving records, and appropriate implementation and documentation of use-of-force incidents.

Under management of the Support Services Division Lieutenant, the Training Section Sergeant has primary responsibility for developing and coordinating department in-service training as well field training for new officers.

The South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy (SCCJA), under the leadership of the South Carolina Training Council, is the state regulatory agency that establishes and maintains the laws, regulations, and acts as the governing authority for the behavior, hiring, certification, and training for law enforcement personnel in the state. The SCCJA is dedicated to South Carolina's peace officers, supporting the need for training to ensure that the State of South Carolina provides for a capable and skilled workforce.

Training Policy

BPD's training policy can be found in the department's Standard Operating Procedure #027 *(Revision #5)*, which was effective in June 2022. The SOP defines the entire training process and establishes criteria for the pre-service and in-service training of members and employees of the department.

The policy states that it is the department's goal to meet or exceed state standards for entry-level and in-service training for the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for them to perform their jobs.

The training policy states that the department has a Training Advisory Committee (Section III, Training Advisory Committee) that is used to assist in assessing training needs for the department by reviewing existing programs and recommending the development of programs to answer identified needs, However, CPSM learned that the department does not have such a committee. CPSM recommends that either this section of the policy be removed or the department create a committee to match the policy.

Entry Level Training

All new, entry level officers hired by BPD must successfully complete the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy's Basic Law Enforcement training program as mandated by South Carolina law. The purpose of the program is to provide the officer candidate with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the duties of a certified law enforcement officer in the State of South Carolina. The Basic Law Enforcement training program is currently 12 weeks in duration and encompasses 462 hours of training. A recruit must complete this program within the first 12 months of employment.

The department's training section maintains a liaison with SCCJA and is kept apprised of the candidate's progress in the academy. Upon completion of academy training the candidate holds the status of a certified Class 1 Law Enforcement Officer. Once new officers graduate from the academy, they enter the department's Field Training Officer (FTO) Program and must successfully complete that training. The Field Training Program is intended to facilitate an officer's transition from the academic setting (academy) to the performance of general patrol duties. (See the *Field Training Officer Program* section for additional detail.)

Over the last three years (2022–2024), 20 BPD recruits began training at the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy and 19 graduated; this is a 95 percent success rate.

TABLE 8-4: South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy Attendance and Completion, 2012 through 2024

Year	Recruits	Graduated	Did Not Complete
2022	9	8	1
2023	9	9	0
2024*	2	2	0
Total	**20**	**19**	**1**

Source: BPD
Note: *Jan-May

Training Records

Maintaining the training records of department personnel to ensure officers are up to date with the training required to keep their certification current is an extremely important task. The training sergeant is tasked with this responsibility. Although there is a module in the case management system to track the department's training, most of the training records are maintained on an Excel spreadsheet. CPSM recommends the department utilize the already existing module in its case management system for tracking training records or purchase a training tracking software package.

Weapons Qualifications

Sworn members of the department qualify with their firearm, tasers, and less than lethal weapons once a year. They qualify with their firearms in one of three locations, the Beaufort County Sheriff's Department range, OPFOB, or the Warrior Tactical Indoor Range. For taser and less than lethal weapons, the department uses an outdoor facility at the police department. As long as citizens are victims of violent crimes and officers are confronted with deadly force in performing their duties, it remains necessary that departments ensure their officers are properly trained in the use of all authorized firearms. The typical standard and accepted practice in law enforcement for conducting firearms qualifications is **once per year such as in BPD; however,**

many agencies are now recognizing that the use of firearms is a perishable skill and have begun to mandate firearms qualifications two to four times a year, depending on the weapon system. CPSM recommends the department consider modifying its policy for qualification on firearms and rifles to twice a year.

Training Calendar

BPD formulates a one-year training calendar. The BPD Training Sergeant initiates the development of the training plan to ensure compliance with department needs/trends. A well-designed training plan ensures that a high level of training and development is provided to department members, both sworn and civilian. Such a plan is key to making sure employees have the information, skills, and competencies to work effectively.

The advantage to a master training plan is that as training priorities shift based upon any number of factors, such as community expectations and legal mandates, it provides a guideline so vital training is not forgotten. This plan is blended with a master training calendar, which provides a planning tool that ensures the goals of the training plan are accomplished. The training unit has monthly and sometimes weekly meetings to discuss any changes in training needs and will modify curriculum and schedules as needed.

Department Training

SCCJA establishes in-service training requirements for peace officers under SC Chapter 37-010 (B). Recertification for officers possessing a current Class 1-LE Certification requires completion of 40 CLEE hours in a three-year period. The 40 CLEE hours must include at least one legal update course and one domestic violence course presented or approved by the academy each year of the three-year period. The remaining required CLEE hours in the three-year period may come from any source approved by the SCCJA.

Most police agencies provide more training each year to officers than what the state requires. BPD is no exception. As can be seen in the following figure, the department provides many more hours of ongoing professional training to personnel than what is mandated by the state. BPD it to be commended for its focus on training to ensure it has a well-trained, professional organization.

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FIGURE 8-1: BPD Training Hours by Month, 2023

2023 Training Hours by MONTH

■ In-House ■ Outside

Month	In-House	Outside
Jan-23	204.5	34.5
Feb-23	102	28
Mar-23	434	403
Apr-23	399	112
May-23	898	45
Jun-23	1225	315
Jul-23	1418	107
Aug-23	837.5	400
Sep-23	742.5	320
Oct-23	907.25	521
Nov-23	459	1185
Dec-23	245	685
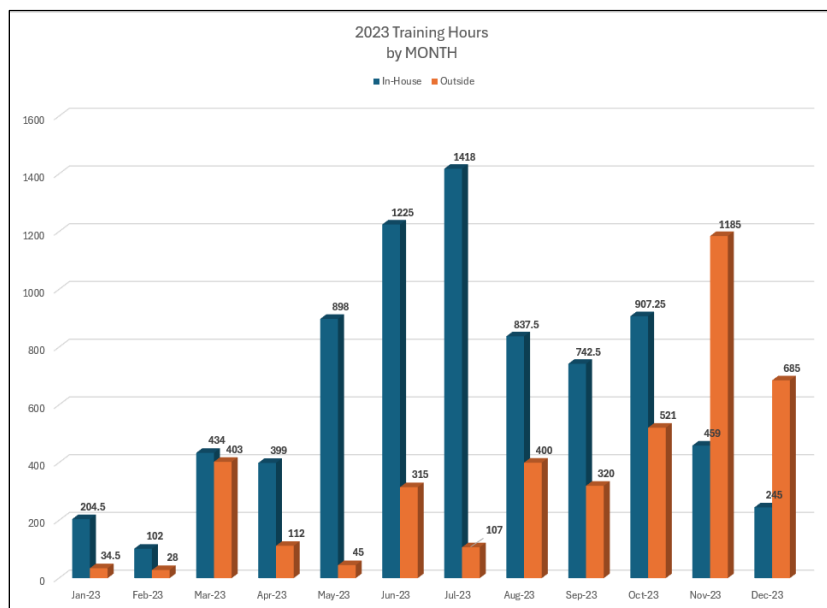
Briefing Training

The daily briefing period provides an opportunity to disseminate and discuss information on current operational and administrative topics. Briefing is also a time that can be used for both mandatory and optional training. Department policies, procedures, and other relevant topics can be presented in an environment amenable to open discussion among various levels of experience and rank. Such formal training can be documented to satisfy SCCJA and/or BPD requirements. Briefing training should be designed to keep personnel up to date with new laws, technological improvements, and revisions to BPD policies, procedures, and regulations.

Briefing training can be tracked by using sign-in sheets, but it depends on the type of training and the duration of the training.

BPD should, by policy, require sergeants to develop quarterly briefing training sessions compatible with the environment. A requirement for management follow-up to ensure compliance should be included in such a policy. The relatively short, but significant interaction during briefing between supervisors and officers enables each to voice their opinions and provides an important opportunity for sergeants to display leadership.

Career Development Training

The department has done a very good job of identifying specific training and training courses for the different ranks within the department (Officer, Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant). However, what it has not identified is specific training for each of the department's specialty positions. For example, if a department member becomes a detective, there should be specific identified training courses that the member must complete, such as a basic investigation course, advanced investigation course, interview and interrogation course, search warrant course, and surveillance course. CPSM recommends the department develop a training plan for each specialty position in the department. This recommendation aligns with our recommendation concerning succession planning noted earlier in the report.

New Sergeant Training

Promotion to first-level supervisor is an important step in law enforcement. The newly promoted sergeant should be indoctrinated to the position through a training program involving tenured sergeants in the department, similar to what a new officer would complete. Many departments have some type of training program that consists of the new supervisor working under the tutelage of an experienced supervisor for several weeks. This training includes operational, supervisory, and administrative benchmarks to be documented, similar to an FTO program. BPD has such a program in place where a tenured sergeant will train with the newly promoted sergeant and review the LEFTA, Spillman approval process, report beam, and Intime.

Newly promoted BPD supervisors attend a mid-level management course through an accredited agency, the 22.5-hour Principles of Supervision course offered by the SCCJA. The course is designed for the law enforcement officer recently selected for a supervisory position for the first time. Topics include the role of a supervisor, leadership, problem solving and decision making, communication skills, managing conflict, coaching, generational differences, and other related topics. Sergeants will also attend FBI-LEEA courses as well.

Professional Training for Executives

Managing a police organization is a complex process for those tasked with ensuring the department operates at the most effective and efficient level. Those whose job it is to manage the organization must be as well-trained as officers in the field.

BPD encourages professional training for executives of the department on a voluntary basis. Lieutenants and above have the opportunity to attend the FBI National Academy. So far, the chief and the two captains have attended the FBI National Academy, and one of the lieutenants is scheduled to attend in 2024. BPD is to be commended for ensuring its executive team is obtaining executive-level training.

Training Recommendations:

- CPSM recommends the section of policy regarding the training advisory committee be removed or the department create a committee to match the policy. (Recommendation No. 57)

- CPSM recommends the department utilize the already existing module in its case management system for the tracking of training or purchase a training tracking software package. (Recommendation No. 58.)

- CPSM recommends the department develop a training plan for each specialty position in the department. (Recommendation No. 59.)

- CPSM recommends the department consider modifying its policy for qualification on firearms and rifles to twice a year. (Recommendation No. 60.)

FIELD TRAINING OFFICER PROGRAM (FTO)

Once new officers graduate from the basic recruit academy, they enter the department's Field Training Program (FTO). Although an officer graduating from the academy has received a thorough introduction to basic law enforcement subjects, that officer cannot be expected to immediately assume the full responsibilities of an experienced officer. The field training program

is intended to facilitate an officer's transition from the academic setting (academy) to the performance of general patrol duties.

Newly assigned officers must receive this additional in-service training where they can learn from officers who have a great deal of practical patrol experience. Unlike the statewide basic recruit academy, the FTO program introduces a newly assigned officer to the personnel, procedures, practices, policies, and mission specific to the Bluffton Police Department.

FIGURE 8-2: FTO Program Chain of Command
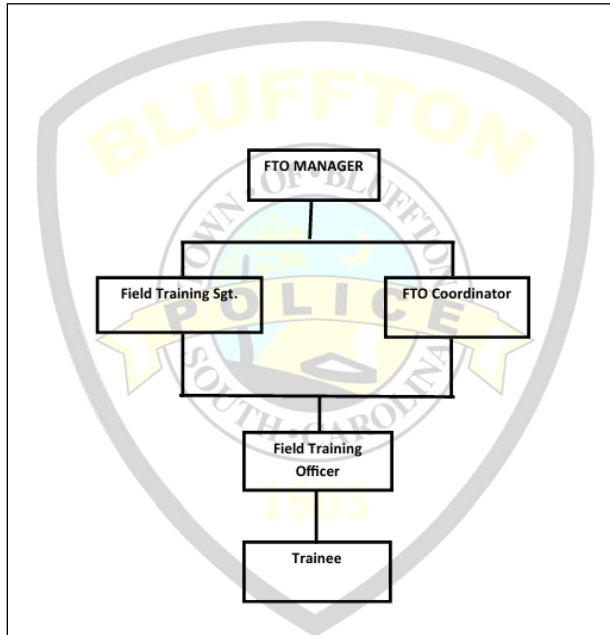
FTO Manager: The program manager is a Captain or Lieutenant assigned to the Patrol Division. Their function is to coordinate the training, oversee all program personnel, maintain files, and act as a liaison between the program and the administration of the department.

FTO Coordinator: The program coordinator establishes scheduling, assigns training officers to their trainees, and reviews any additional training needs that may arise.

FTO Sergeant: Each Patrol Sergeant is an FTO Training Sergeant. Their function is to observe the recruit in training, review Daily Observation Reports, and complete a Supervisor's Weekly Report each week. He/she is also responsible for the identification of training needs and direct supervision of the trainee and his/her FTO.

Field Training Officer: The FTO is primarily responsible for the proper training and evaluation of the probationary officer.

The FTO Program Manager is the Emergency Management Lieutenant and the Training Sergeant is the FTO Coordinator. Since the FTO function is more Patrol-centric, CPSM recommends the FTO Program Manager responsibility be transferred to one of the Patrol Lieutenants.

The BPD FTO program requires new officers to complete a fourteen-week, four-phase training program; however, the program can be extended by the department administrators if additional time is needed prior to releasing the trainee from the program.

Each trainee is assigned a different FTO for each phase of the training program, returning to the original FTO in the fourth phase. The trainees also rotate between day and night shifts. This rotation process allows the trainee to experience differing training techniques, activity levels, and environmental situations during the training period.

Field Training Manual

The Field Training Program is governed by the department's Field Training Manual. The manual is a comprehensive guide regarding the trainee's training and explains every facet of the trainee's training.

Field Training Coordinator / Duties

The FTO Coordinator's duties include, but are not limited to:

- Maintaining the department's field training module and ensuring that it remains current and up to date to reflect any/all relevant changes.
- Supervising FTOs in matters dealing with the program.
- Scheduling FTO assignments.
- Review of Daily Observation Reports.
- Assessing trainer effectiveness.
- Monitoring each trainee's performance during the program.
- Notifying the Chief and/or chain of command of ongoing progress throughout the Field Training Program.
- Conducting FTO meetings.
- Maintaining, updating, and issuing department training materials to each FTO and trainee.
- Developing ongoing training for FTOs.
- Mentoring and supervising individual FTO performance.
- Monitoring the overall performance of field training.
- Keeping the shift supervisor informed through monthly evaluation reports about the trainees' progress.
- Maintaining a liaison with FTO coordinators from other law enforcement agencies.
- Maintaining a liaison with police academy staff on recruit officer performance during academy attendance.

Field Training Officer Selection

Field Training Officers play a vital role in shaping the next generation of police officers and leaders, and their guidance can help new officers develop the skills they need to work alone in the field. At BPD, FTOs are selected based upon their law enforcement experience, qualifications, and their discipline history with the department. Although one of the criteria for selection is experience, there is no defined amount of experience that is required. CPSM recommends that the department define the amount of experience required for the position. There is no formal process for the selection of officers. If an officer is interested in being an FTO, they must submit an interest memo. CPSM recommends the department consider developing a

standardized process for the selection of FTOs to include the memorandum, experience review, and interview.

Once appointed as an FTO, the FTO receives a 12 percent pay compensation for each shift spent training a recruit. There is also no time limit an officer may remain an FTO, and there is also no evaluation completed on the FTO by the FTO Coordinator or the FTO Manager. It is recommended that the department consider completing an annual performance evaluation on each FTO to ensure they are performing up to the program's standards. It is also recommended that a one-year cap be put on the FTO position after appointment; however, upon receiving a satisfactory review, the FTO can be extended for an additional year. This should not necessitate an extensive review of every FTO and their performance, simply a general review and assurance that the employee wants to continue in his/her role assuming there are noit significant performance concerns.

BPD officers selected to become an FTO attend a 24-hour Field Training Officer class at SCCJA.

At present, the department has 19 certified Field Training Officers; however, only seven active FTOs are currently involved in training trainees. Most all of the agency's FTOs are at the officer level, but some of the corporals are also used for training.

Field Training Officer's Duties

- Issuing his/her assigned trainee field training materials in accordance with the Training Policy.

- Ensure that the trainee has the opportunity to become knowledgeable of the subject matter and proficient with the skills as set forth in the training materials.

- Sign off on all completed topics contained in the training materials, noting the methods of learning and evaluating the performance of his/her assigned trainee.

- Completing and reviewing daily performance evaluations with the trainee.

- Completing and submitting a written evaluation on the performance of his/her assigned trainee to the shift supervisor on a daily basis.

- Completing a detailed weekly performance evaluation of his/her trainee at the end of each work week.

- Completing a monthly evaluation report of his/her assigned trainee at the end of each month.

- Providing the shift supervisor with a verbal synopsis of the trainee's activities at the end of each day or during any unusual occurrence needing guidance or clarification.

As is evident, the duties of both the FTO Coordinator and the FTOs are both vitally important, yet cumbersome. And importantly, these duties are performed in addition to their normal patrol duties, either as a supervisor or as a patrol officer handling normal patrol calls for service demands. We note, however, that there are periods when FTOs are not assigned a trainee.

FTO Records

All records and training information regarding each trainee is documented and stored in the LEFTA (Law Enforcement Field Training Application) database. The information is inputted by the program manager and can also be accessed by the FTO Coordinator.

FTO Program Outcomes

In the following table, we examine the number of trainees processed through the Field Training Program for 2022 through 2024.

TABLE 8-5: FTO Program Outcomes, 2022–2024

	2022	**2023**	**2024**
Trainees	8	9	2
Trainees Failing FTO Program	1	2	Pending
Trainees Who Passed FTO	7	7	Pending

Source: Bluffton Police Department.

As can be seen by the table above, the department has a high pass rate with trainees who have successfully passed through the FTO program. The department is to be commended for having the high success rate of trainees who have successfully passed the program.

FTO Program Recommendations:

- Since the FTO function is more Patrol-centric, CPSM recommends the FTO Program Manager responsibility be transferred to one of the Patrol Lieutenant positions. (Recommendation No. 61.)

- CPSM recommends the department develop a standardized process for the selection of FTOs because of the impact an FTO can have on the department. (Recommendation No. 62.)

- It is recommended that the department consider completing an annual performance evaluation on each FTO to ensure they are performing up to the program's standards. (Recommendation No. 63.)

- CPSM recommends that a one-year cap be put on the FTO position after appointment; however, upon receiving a satisfactory review, the FTO can be extended for an additional year. (Recommendation No. 64.)

- CPSM recommends that the department define the amount of experience required for the FTO position. (Recommendation No. 65.)

RECORDS

A department's Records Unit is responsible for maintaining internal document control over all original reports including all crime, arrest, traffic accident, and traffic citation records that are generated by the department. In addition, there are a host of related duties regarding preparation of federal and state mandated reports as well as internal and external customer service demands related to records held by the department.

Records Staffing and Work Schedule

The unit is staffed by one Records Supervisor, one (full-time) Records Specialist, and one part-time Records Specialist. The Records Supervisor reports directly to the Support Services Division Lieutenant; the Property & Evidence Unit is also the responsibility of the Records Supervisor.

The Records Supervisor directs, manages, supervises, and coordinates the activities and operations of the Records Unit and the P&E Unit. As is common in small agencies, the Record Supervisor is a "working supervisor" who processes the records workload along with the assigned Records and Evidence Technician. The Records Supervisor is also the Custodian of Records for the department.

Records staff work Monday through Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and on Friday their hours are 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The unit's front counter is open to the public Monday through Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and from 8:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Friday.

The Records Unit is not open to the public after normal business hours and on weekends.

Records Policies

The Records Unit is guided by SOP #012, *Records and Data Management*. The SOP is 11 pages in length; it provides general guidelines as to the function and responsibilities of the unit. Its effective date was 6/9/22 and it is to be reviewed annually; however, as of the time of the site visit, the policy had not been reviewed since 2022. The policy, in specific applicable areas, references South Carolina state statutes that govern police department records functions and demonstrate policy compliance with those statutes.

CPSM reviewed the policy and found it to be compliant with applicable laws and consistent with best practices, with a couple of important exceptions.

As noted, the duties associated with a police department records function are numerous and complicated. Many, such as maintaining confidentiality of records and responding to Freedom of Information or Public Records Act requests, are strictly regulated by both federal and state law governing both the legality of release of information and the timeliness of the department's compliance. Nonetheless, it is difficult to convey here the complexity of ensuring that all Records staff are fully aware of and prepared to manage the department's records efficiently and in compliance with the law.

In addition to the SOP, the Records Unit has a separate manual on procedures in the unit. The procedure manual acts as a resource to assist staff in completing the numerous and complex tasks as called for in department policy.

CPSM recommends the department ensure that the SOPs and the procedure manual are reviewed and updated annually.

Workload Demand

Contrary to the common perception that functions performed in law enforcement records functions are simple tasks such as filing reports and providing copies as needed, there is an exhaustive list of duties performed as we have previously alluded to. Many of these duties are closely regulated by federal and state laws to protect the privacy of individuals and to ensure compliance with mandated functions and reporting. The following is a list of many of the general duties performed by Records staff, most of which are daily tasks:

- Complete Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests.
- Complete all subpoenas for the department.
- Balance the Records Unit cash box.

- Conduct all background checks for new employees and ensure they receive training to use the databases.
- Assist the public at the front counter and over the phone.
- Assist the volunteers and part-time employees with questions.
- Enter all arrest warrants and trespass notices.
- Scan all police report attachments.
- Complete all insurance requests.
- Complete the Daily Public Information Log.
- Enter handwritten traffic citations.
- Fingerprinting.
- Complete monthly South Carolina Law Enforcement Department (SLED) validation.

The Records Unit reports no backlog on data entry, but it usually takes 7 to 10 business days for a report to be approved by the supervisor once the officer completes the report. Attachments are usually received several days after the incident and are then immediately scanned into the incident report.

TABLE 8-5: Processed Reports, 2020 through 2024 YTD

Year	Reports Processed (Incident and Collision)
2020	1,936
2021	2,031
2022	2,212
2023	2,841
2024 thru April	844 (estimated 2,500 by end of year

As can be seen by the table above, the number of reports processed each year by the unit has increased incrementally each year since 2020. There is nothing that would indicate those numbers will decrease in the coming years as the Town's population increases and calls for service increase. This is a pivotal area for the department to continue to monitor because as the number of reports increase additional personnel may be needed to ensure the reports are processed in a timely manner.

Training

The level of knowledge and attention to detail required for the list of tasks noted above is significant. Newly hired Records staff are trained by the Records Supervisor, and all employees receive professional training on FOIA requirements and SLED-NCIC training.

Online Access to Police Reports, Online Reporting

Previously, we addressed days/hours of public access to the Records Section. There are a host of reasons the public may visit BPD Records. These include obtaining copies of police reports, mandated offender registrations, vehicle release authorizations, subpoena service (police-

related), etc. While desired police reports may stem from a variety of police-involved actions, frequently they involve traffic collisions, especially as it relates to insurance adjusters who routinely obtain such reports as a result of a claim.

BPD has no online access for citizens to obtain traffic accident reports. There are platforms available, such as CrashDocs, which provide this service. Online access would serves as both a convenience to the public and would lessen the workload at the Records counter. For example, from January 1, 2023, through May 14, 2024, the unit released 801 traffic accident reports. Each report takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes to download, redact information, and print the report. Thus, 801 traffic reports multiplied by 15 minutes it equals 12,015 minutes or **200 hours of employee time.** Consideration should be given to implementing an online service that enables citizens to access traffic accident reports to free up employees' time for other duties.

BPD does not offer online crime reporting capability to the public. Online reporting enables residents / businesses to file a police report electronically via a police department web site. Reports are generally limited to misdemeanor crimes where no suspect information is available. In such cases, a responding officer's duties are generally clerical in nature with no investigative leads to follow.

The two primary benefits of using online reporting are a reduction in calls for service where an officer must travel to the crime scene to conduct the investigation, and the convenience afforded to the victim who can report the crime at a time convenient to them and not be required to wait for the arrival of a police officer.

CPSM recommends this on-line reporting option be explored for its benefit to the public and the department. COPLOGIC by Lexis Nexis is one such system widely utilized in the industry, though CPSM makes no endorsement of any product.

Records Management System

As we begin discussion of the department's records management system (RMS), it will be helpful to the lay reader to have a basic understanding of how records are commonly generated in police agencies across the country. We strive to do that here.

Generally, the first contact with BPD regarding a service request is made through the Emergency 911 call center. For BPD, that function is contracted out to Beaufort County Dispatch Center. If the call taker determines that an officer must be dispatched, the information on the call is entered into the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. The CAD system for BPD operates off of the Spillman platform, one of many CAD platforms in use by public safety agencies across the country.

A dispatcher in the 911 call center then dispatches that call to the BPD handling officer. Upon completion of the call, the officer clears/closes the call. The officer may indicate that a report will be generated or provide "CAD notes" giving a brief summary of the disposition on the call. This closes the CAD record.

Generally, once the CAD entry closes, the call data/record is automatically transferred to a compatible records management system (RMS), generally on the same platform as the CAD system. These robust RMS platforms generally have multiple compatible sub-platforms to include Detective Case Management and Property and Evidence modules. This functionality provides a seamless transfer of applicable information between these compatible platforms, including auto-populating of relevant data in the sub-platforms.

While nearly all agencies utilize this integrated CAD-to-RMS transfer process, some agencies and/or personnel find the platforms to be complex and burdensome. For example, when evidence must be submitted to the Solicitor's office, it requires a manual download and upload.

Payment Options

One concern noted in Records operations is staff handling of cash at the BPD public counter/window. Depending upon the service sought, whether for the collection of fees, purchase of report copies, etc., the public may pay with cash or check. When cash is accepted, it is kept in a cash box which is locked in a safe in the Records Unit. The cash is then balanced twice a month and then deposited. The amount of cash taken in each month varies based upon the number of reports that are processed for citizens.

CPSM maintains that cash transactions present an unnecessary risk to the Town and the department. As an example, several years ago, a records manager at a municipal police department in suburban Los Angeles pled guilty to grand theft after stealing cash she collected in the course of her duties over many years. Though she agreed to reimburse the city $140,000, department estimates placed the loss at more than $340,000. These were cash transactions for those of the same nature that take place in Bluffton, though at a larger agency that collected additional fees not applicable to BPD. This consultant is also aware of such an incident on a much smaller scale at an agency more similar in size to Bluffton PD.

In order to make it more convenient for citizens, and for ease of personnel, the department should consider placing a payment kiosk in the lobby of the station.

CPSM is not suggesting suspicious activity has occurred at BPD, however, CPSM maintains that the present system presents an unnecessary risk to the Town, the police department, and its staff. Payment processing should be revised to eliminate the acceptance of cash.

Records Unit Area

Since there are usually only two employees in the unit, they have adequate space to work and each has their own desk. It was learned that an ergonomic study of their work stations has never been conducted. CPSM recommends that the department conduct an ergonomic study of the two employees' work stations.

Records Retention

The Town of Bluffton follows the guidelines set forth by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History for its records retention. (See https://scdah.sc.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/Records%20Management%20(RM)/Schedules/genskedmun.pdf

The purpose of the retention schedules established for municipalities is to:

- Give municipal governments uniform guidelines for the retention and disposition of common records.

- Make sure municipalities retain for as long as necessary the records they will need for administrative, legal, fiscal, and other uses.

- Make sure municipalities retain records for as long as state and federal laws, regulations, policies, and procedures require.

- Promote the cost-effective management of records.

- Give municipalities the legal authorization they need to dispose regularly of their obsolete records.

Records Recommendations:

- CPSM recommends the department ensure that the SOP and the procedures manual for Records are reviewed and updated annually. (Recommendation No. 66.)

- Consideration should be given to implementing an online reporting option for select crimes. (Recommendation No. 67.)

- Consideration should be given to implementing an online service that enables citizens to access traffic accident reports to free up employees' time for other duties. (Recommendation No. 68.)

- Eliminate the acceptance of cash for department transactions at the public counter to remove an unnecessary risk to the Town, BPD, and its staff. (Recommendation No. 69.)

- The department should consider placing a payment kiosk in the lobby of the station. (Recommendation No. 70.)

- CPSM recommends that the department conduct an ergonomic study of the two employees' work stations. (Recommendation No. 71.)

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA)

Since 1967, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has provided the public the right to request access to records from any federal, state, or local agency. It is often described as the law that keeps citizens in the know about their government. Agencies are required to disclose any information requested under the FOIA unless it falls under one of nine exemptions which protect interests such as personal privacy, national security, and law enforcement. Any request for a report is considered an FOIA request.

All FOIA requests made to the BPD are handled by the Records Supervisor and the Records Specialist. The time frame to complete a FOIA varies depending on what the person is requesting. If the request is only for an incident report, the process can take about 30 mins to 1 hour to redact a short report. If the report is lengthy, it can take from 1 hour to 3 hours to redact the report, supplements, and attachments. If the request is for the incident report and in-car video the process can take 2 to 3 hours. If the in-car video is on archived CDs the process can take anywhere from 2 to 4 hours to locate the video because the videos are not organized on the archived CDs. Sometimes the same incident will be located on multiple archived CDs. At times an FOIA request can take days or even up to over a week to complete. As is obvious, the handling of FOIA requests can be an onerous and time-intensive process.

All requests to the unit must be received in writing; they can be submitted through USPS mail, e-mail, in person, and fax. The request is logged for tracking purposes on an Excel spreadsheet shared by the other departments in Bluffton. The department will send responses back to the requester by USPS mail, e-mail, in-person, and fax.

The following table shows the number of FOIA requests handled for 2022 through 2024 YTD.

TABLE 8-6: FOIA Requests, 2022–2024YTD

Year	Requests Completed
2022	131
2023	119
2024 (January thru April)	39 (Projected 120)

The data provided by BPD shows that the number of FOIA requests in 2023 was lower than 2022 but will incrementally increase in 2024. CPSM learned that depending on the number of requests received, and the time it takes to process those requests, determines whether there is a backlog of fulfilling the requests in a timely manner.

Currently, when the staff is fulfilling a FOIA request, they do not track the amount of time spent on each request. Obviously, some requests can be done in a short amount of time, but others require days to complete. CPSM recommends the staff track the amount of time spent on fulfilling FOIA requests to determine in the future if additional personnel are needed for this activity.

TABLE 8-7: FOIA Fee Schedule

Police Reports, Photocopies, and Records	Basis	Fee
Police Report Copy Fee (No fee for victim)	Per report, up to 3 pages plus per page	$5 plus $0.25 per page above 3
Accident Report	Per report, up to 3 pages plus per page	$10 plus $0.25 per page above 3
Police Photographs, Audio or Video Recordings	Per fee plus actual costs CD/DVD	$20 $5
For media too large for CD/DVD	USB thumb drive	$50

FOIA Recommendations:

■ If delays begin occurring due to an increasing number of FOIA requests, the department should add an additional FTE to the unit. (Recommendation No. 72.)

■ The department should purchase software that enables the tracking of FOIA requests to be done more easily and efficiently than manually logging them. (Recommendation No. 73.)

■ CPSM recommends the Records Unit track the amount of time spent on fulfilling FOIA requests to determine in the future if additional personnel are needed. (Recommendation No. 74.)

PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE

The property and evidence (P&E) function is charged with the intake, processing, storage, and disposal of evidence and property introduced to the department as evidence, for safekeeping, or as found property. In addition, P&E staff are responsible for the preservation of the items for possible future analysis, and the lawful release or disposition of property as appropriate.

The intake, storage, and disposition of weapons, narcotics, currency, and valuable jewelry make this function one of the highest-risk operations in any police department. In some cases, audits

that revealed unaccounted-for property and evidence led to the termination of police executives, even though they were not suspected of being implicated in the theft/loss of the evidence. Controlling access to the property and evidence areas, inventory control, regular audits, and security features such as electronic access recorders and security cameras are all critical to the effective management of the property and evidence function.

Policy

Policy governing P&E is found in Bluffton Police Department Standard Operating Procedure #014. CPSM reviewed the twenty-three page policy, which is dated 7/6/2016, and found it to be thorough and consistent with best practices describing how the officers are to handle property and evidence they come into contact with. Although in some parts of the policy it does explain what occurs when the property reaches the P&E facility, those parts are interspersed with the description for the officers. CPSM would recommend having a SOP defining ONLY how the P&E room operates. The policy states that it is the fourth revision but doesn't state when the last revision occurred. CPSM recommends the policy be reviewed annually for changes in law and procedure.

Facilities / Security

The property and evidence facility is located at the Bluffton Law Enforcement Center at 101 Progressive St. The department utilizes three types of security for the unit, (1) keys, (2) key fobs, and (3) security cameras. The keys to the storage area are kept in a locked key locker inside the P&E office. The key locker is secured by a three-number combination lock and the only people who have access are the P&E technician and the Records Supervisor. CPSM recommends the department purchase a key locker that requires a key fob or key card entry to provide a record of who opens it to obtain the keys.

There is an initial processing area that is accessible to all police department employees right outside the entrance to the P&E area. It is here that officers package evidence and property for storage in the secured property room. Once the officer processes the evidence, it is then placed into secured lockers that can be accessed by the tech inside the secure storage area.

The entry area to the P&E area has security cameras, as does the interior storage areas. However, the technician did not know how to view the cameras and there was no way to determine if the cameras were providing adequate coverage. It was also learned that the P&E supervisor also did not know how to operate the system to view the cameras. CPSM recommends that both the P&E supervisor and technician be trained on how to view the cameras.

The department just recently converted the crime lab into an additional storage area for property and evidence. At the time of the visit, the department had not yet installed a key fob entry into that new area. The technician stated that the key fob entry was going to be installed soon. The department should follow through with the addition of the key fob entry to the additional storage room door.

Visitors entering into the secure property and evidence storage areas are required to sign in on a sheet outside the entrance of the area.

Weapons/Narcotics Storage
There is some concern regarding the locations and security of both the narcotics and weapons in the storage area. Both weapons and narcotics are stored in cabinets in various locations within the area, and those cabinets vary in degrees of security. CPSM recommends the

department consider creating two secure rooms within the storage area to store narcotics and weapons. Each room should have key fob entry along with a security camera focused on the entry door.

Refrigerated Evidence Items

Evidence items requiring refrigeration are stored in a new refrigerator in the new storage area. Although it is a new refrigerator, there is no alert monitor on it in the event the refrigerator fails or there is a power failure. CPSM recommends the department install an alert monitor on the refrigerator.

Safe

Although the department has a safe in the storage area for cash and jewelry, it is inoperative, and the items have to be maintained in a less secure area. It is recommended that a new safe be purchased or the current safe be repaired.

Processing

As mentioned above, the officers package their evidence in the processing area, and then complete a paper form noting all the pertinent information regarding the piece of evidence. Although the department has the ability to use bar scanning on the evidence, there is no computer terminal or bar scan machine in the processing area. If those items were added to the processing area, it would alleviate the need for the officer to complete the paper document by inputting the information into the computer, and then be able to print out a bar code for the piece of evidence. CPSM recommends the department put a computer and bar code machine in the processing area to expedite the process and avoid redundances.

Once the item is placed into the secure pass-through lockers, the technician can remove it from the locker inside the secure property room. The technician then logs the evidence into a book, and then enters the same information into the computer system and a bar code is attached to the evidence item. It was learned that the bar code scanning device is not operating correctly and is being looked at by the IT analyst. It is imperative that the bar code scanning device is repaired to allow the technician to be more efficient. The technician then selects a location for the evidence and places it there.

Evidence Destruction

Weapons Destruction

The current P&E technician has been employed for approximately 18 months and in that time there has been no weapons destruction conducted. The department should ensure that a weapons destruction is conducted at least once a year, and that when that takes place, the technician is escorted by two armed officers. The last weapon destruction occurred in April 2021.

Narcotics Destruction

The department currently does not have a narcotics destruction schedule; the technician takes narcotics every few months. It was learned that when the technician transports the narcotics for destruction, she does so by herself. CPSM recommends the department assign an armed officer to accompany her when transporting narcotics.

All narcotics for destruction are submitted to SLED. The last destruction of narcotics occurred on February 12, 2024.

Staffing /Work Schedule

Under the direction of the Support Services Division Lieutenant, day-to-day operation of the property and evidence (P&E) function is the responsibility of the Property and Evidence Technician. The technician reports directly to the Records and Evidence Manager. There is only one FTE assigned to P&E.

The technician works from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Friday. The hours when the P&E facility is open to the public to pick up property is 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Friday. The public is encouraged to schedule an appointment for release of property, but it is not required.

CPSM notes that in many agencies of similar size and organizational alignment, there is some cross-training to assist P&E when the technician is on vacation or away. In BPD, both the Records Manager and Records Technician are trained in P&E and can handle the P&E responsibilities if need be. This allows for a seamless operation of the P&E function in the case of increased workload or during absences of the sole staff member due to leave such as vacation, training, illness, etc.

Training

While there are no state-mandated training requirements for property technicians, training is essential to be able to manage the various duties associated with this function. The technician has been assigned to this position since July 2022. In addition to on-site/in-house training, she has attended limited P&E training.

The International Association for Property and Evidence, (IAPE) is considered a gold standard in providing training and support to law enforcement agencies across the country. It also serves as a source for sample policies and procedures. We would encourage the department to become a member of IAPE, and to take advantage of IAPE's advanced training opportunities for this position, specifically, a 16-hour online course, "Managing Property and Evidence in Law Enforcement." We also encourage in-person IAPE conferences or local training offerings which would enable the technician to network with other agency staff to share ideas regarding best practices. CPSM recommends the technician become IAPE-certified.

Property and Evidence Management System

The Spillman Evidence Management System is utilized for inventory control of all property and evidence seized or received by BPD. It is a robust system that tracks evidence and property by case number, date of receipt, description of the item, location of storage within the P&E facilities, actions taken with the property such as forensic analysis and/or out to court, and other relevant information.

Each workday the technician accesses items placed in the temporary lockers by officers through the two-way lockers' access point in the P&E room. This also applies to the temporary refrigerator used to store biological evidence. The items are examined to ensure that they are properly packaged, and accurate identifying information is affixed. The item is entered into the system, a label is produced, an evidence bag is completed, and then the item is stored in its proper location. After the evidence items are logged for each case, the submittal form is filled out, scanned, and attached to the incident report as well as into the Spillman platform.

Storage, Inventory Control

The main P&E room includes the P&E technician's work area, shelving containing stored evidence, and rear access to the temporary lockers where officers initially secure their items to be booked into P&E. Access to the main storage area is granted by an electronic key card reader. Only the Lieutenant, Records Supervisor, and the Property and Evidence Technician have access for the keys to the storage area.

The main storage area in the P&E room is organized and clean. Storage containers and shelving are clearly identified. Staff indicate significant storage space is available.

While nearly all agencies examined by CPSM have virtually no available space in their main property rooms, sometimes requiring off-site storage, at this time there is ample space at the BPD facility to meet storage demands.

Inventory Control

In our studies of agencies across the country, we find that property and evidence facilities are often neglected, leading to a build-up of items year over year. Oftentimes, these items are held long after criminal proceedings have been completed and the items are no longer of evidentiary value. This creates an inventory control problem leading to jammed facilities and potentially compromising the integrity of the entire function.

We inquired as to how many articles of property and evidence were received and purged over the past two calendar years. Purged items include articles that were released to the courts, released to the owner, destroyed (i.e.. drugs), auctioned, etc. The following table reflects that activity.

TABLE 8-8: Property and Evidence Items Processed, 2021–2023

Category	2021	2022	2023
Total Intake	1,540	1,547	2,474
Destroyed/Purged	285	25	386
Released to Owner/Suspect/Officer (training)	114	28	153
Annual Change in Item Count	1,116	1,486	2,474

Note: Released to Owner/Suspect/Officer (training)/Donated to Charity are all categorized together (notes are added to reason if property is going to be used for training or donated)

An important component of having a well-managed P&E unit is maintaining a robust purge and destruction process. Without it, P&E facilities can become messy, unorganized, and chaotic. The BPD currently has an extensive amount of property that can be purged but has not been.

It is clearly evident by the number of property items logged in to the P&E unit during 2021, 2022, 2023, and the number of items the unit purged during that same time, that the department is bringing in far more evidence than it is purging. If purging is not consistently completed by the technician, space be at a premium and the unit will at some point run out of storage space.

It was learned that there were several reasons why purging of evidence was not being conducted over the last several years. First, there was a change in personnel and the technician was having to spend half of her time working in the Records Unit, and second, there was a steep learning curve for the technician. Now, she reports that she is working full-time in the P&E unit, and has a good grasp of how it operates, she should be able to begin a regular purging cycle

to reduce the growing inventory. CPSM recommends that the technician develop a purging pattern and cycle to reduce the inventory. This should be done weekly.

Key reasons that often delay items from being purged are (1) a delay in receiving property adjudication notices from the detectives and officers, and (2) a delay in getting adjudication notices from the court.

SLED handles the destruction of all firearms submitted by law enforcement departments. No more than 25 firearms can be submitted at any given time, and they must have cleared all legal proceedings, firearm traces, and NCIC checks. Members of the department accompany the weapons transported for destruction.

Audits

One of the most overlooked areas of managing law enforcement-held property and evidence is the audit and inventory responsibilities. The purpose of a police department property and evidence room audit is to review how well the department receives, inventories, and establishes chain of custody with regards to property and evidence. It also reports how well a department maintains property and evidence while it is in its custody.

The last audit conducted and completed by BPD occurred on April 30, 2024, which was a 10 percent audit only

BPD *Standard Operating Procedure #014* regulates the audit function and assigns the Chief as the responsible party to ensure compliance. The policy states an audit should be conducted to ensure conformance as noted:

A. Physical Inventories/Audits/Inspections:

1. Unannounced inspections of the Evidence Room shall be conducted annually by the Chief of Police and/or his designee. This inspection is to determine adherence to procedures used for control of property. Results will be documented and forwarded to the Chief of Police for review and comments. Any corrective / remedial action that is needed will be determined by the Chief of Police. [S.84.1.6,d]

2. An annual audit of property shall be conducted by the Chief of Police and/or his designee not routinely or directly connected with control of property and evidence as assigned by the Chief of Police. Results will be documented and forwarded to the Chief of Police for review and comments. Any corrective / remedial action that is needed will be determined by the Chief of Police. [S.84.1.6,c]

3. An inventory of property occurs whenever the person responsible for the property and evidence control function is assigned to and/or transferred from the position and is conducted jointly by the newly designated property custodian and the Chief of Police and/or his designee to ensure that records are correct and properly annotated. [S.84.1.6,b]

4. If an item cannot be accounted for, the Chief of Police will be notified in writing, via chain of command, of the discrepancy. A police report shall be written to document any missing property.

B. The Chief of Police and/or his designee shall semi-annually inspect the Evidence Room operations and facility to determine adherence to procedures. Results will be documented and forwarded to the Chief of Police for review and comments. Any corrective / remedial action that is needed will be determined by the Chief of Police. [S.84.1.6,a]

CPSM would encourage the department to continue to ensure the auditing of the P&E is completed as stated in the policy.

Property and Evidence Recommendations:

- CPSM would recommend creating a SOP defining ONLY how the P&E room operates. (Recommendation No. 75.)

- CPSM recommends the policy be reviewed annually for changes in law and procedure. (Recommendation No. 76.)

- CPSM encourages that the department to have the P&E technician attend classes provided by IAPE, and as well attend conferences and local training regarding P&E. (Recommendation No. 77.)

- CPSM would encourage the department to continue to ensure the auditing of the P&E is completed as stated in the policy. (Recommendation No. 78.)

- CPSM recommends that the technician develop a purging pattern and cycle to reduce the intake deficit. (Recommendation No. 79.)

- CPSM recommends the department purchase a key locker that requires a key fob or key card entry to provide a record of who opens it to obtain the keys. (Recommendation No. 80.)

- CPSM recommends the department put a computer and bar code machine in the processing area to expedite the process and avoid redundances. (Recommendation No. 81.)

- It is imperative that the bar scanning device is repaired to allow the technician to be more efficient. (Recommendation No. 82.)

- CPSM recommends the department consider creating two secure rooms within the storage area to store narcotics and weapons. (Recommendation No. 83.)

- It is recommended that a new safe be purchased or the current safe be repaired. (Recommendation No. 84.)

- CPSM recommends the department install an alert monitor on the refrigerator. (Recommendation No. 85.)

- The department should ensure that a weapon destruction is conducted at least once a year, and that when that takes place, the technician is escorted by two armed officers. (Recommendation No. 86.)

- CPSM recommends the department assign an armed officer to accompany the technician when transporting narcotics. (Recommendation No. 87.)

- CPSM recommends the technician become IAPE-certified. (Recommendation No. 88.)

QUARTERMASTER

The Quartermaster for the Bluffton Police Department also has the responsibility of being the Fleet Manager; this is a civilian position. The Quartermaster reports directly to the Support Services Lieutenant. The Quartermaster's duties include the following:

- Purchases, maintains the inventory, and issues supplies, equipment, and uniforms for the police department.

- Maintains records, logs, and documentation of purchases, costs, deliveries, quality control and/or performance issues, and current inventory of equipment and supplies.
- Maintains records, logs, and a database of equipment, supplies, uniforms, and related items issued to individual department members and to vehicles.
- Maintains database of department body armor and schedules replacement within expiration dates.
- Researches, applies for, and monitors grant funding for equipment.

The Quartermaster works 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Fridays.

Equipment Storage and Tracking

The department attempts to keep an inventory of approximately 10 percent of its total needed equipment on hand at any given time to replace equipment in need of repair or replacement. The extra equipment includes uniforms, leather gear, ballistic vests, batteries, radios, and weapons. The extra equipment is maintained in several locations within the department to include PD lockers, the sallyport, a secure cage, the armory, and the closet in the training room. Sergeants and above have access to the Quartermaster's office in the event they need to replace equipment when the Quartermaster is not working. Although those personnel have access to the Quartermaster's office, there is no system in place to know if, in fact, they have entered when the Quartermaster is not working. CPSM recommends that a key (fob/card) entry be installed on the door to the Quartermaster's office.

Tracking of all the department's inventory of equipment and the issuance of that equipment is maintained on Excel spreadsheets kept up to date by the Quartermaster. For reliable accountability and tracking of the department's equipment and inventory, CPSM recommends the agency purchase asset tracking software.

In the event an officer's equipment is damaged and requires replacement during a shift when the Quartermaster is not available, the shift supervisor will replace the damaged item and then send an e-mail to the Quartermaster with the information.

Grant Funding

The department does not seek grants for department equipment such as vests, etc. Although the department did recently receive a grant that with which it was able to purchase new tasers for the agency. Most law enforcement agencies in today's environment are seeking grants for personnel and equipment whenever available. CPSM recommends the agency take advantage of grant opportunities such as the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership offered by the Bureau of Justice.

Equipment Issuance

The process for an officer to get equipment begins with a requisition that must be completed and approved; the quartermaster makes the purchase and the officer then signs for the equipment at the time it is issued. Each officer when hired receives several full uniforms, a ballistic vest (either inside the uniform shirt, or an exterior vest, depending on the officer's preference), leather equipment, weapons, and footwear (boots). The equipment is replaced when it becomes damaged or worn out. Some minor repairs can be made by the Quartermaster.

Quartermaster Recommendations:

- CPSM recommends that a key (fob/card) entry be installed on the door to the Quartermaster's office. (Recommendation No. 89.)

- For reliable accountability and tracking of the department's equipment and inventory, CPSM recommends the agency purchase asset tracking software. (Recommendation No. 90.)

- CPSM recommends the agency take advantage of grant opportunities such as the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership offered by the Bureau of Justice. (Recommendation No. 91.)

FACILITY

The Bluffton Police Department's Law Enforcement Center is located at 101 Progressive St. The center sits on 3.3 acres, of which two acres are developed to address parking, detainee embarkation, emergency vehicle access, and stormwater management. The building encompasses 23,000 square feet; it was built in 2011.

FIGURE 8-3: Bluffton Law Enforcement Center

The department also has a police sub-station at Mayriver Rd. in Old Town Bluffton (see following figure). Several of the department's Community Service Assistants use the sub-station as their base of operation. Within the sub-station are computers that can be used by officers to complete crime reports. During events that occur in the downtown area, the sub-station is used as the command center of operations for the event.

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FIGURE 8-4: BPD Sub-Station

The Administrative Lieutenant has the responsibility for overseeing the two police facilities; however, maintenance, repairs, and cleaning are handled by town crews.

CPSM toured the Law Enforcement Center facility during the site visit and found it to be extremely clean, well equipped, and with nice photos and memorabilia on the walls.

Facility Overview

An issue with all police facilities when they are built is that although police managers attempt to determine how much growth will occur with the department and Town, and there is an attempt to design the building accordingly, sometimes a department can outgrow the facility more quickly than expected. This could be the case with BPD. Bluffton has experienced exponential growth over the past decade, and this growth is expected to increase continuously over the next decade. Although the police facility is well-positioned to meet the current operational needs for space, in the next few years options should be explored on how to increase the size and layout of the building to match expected growth.

Police Station Lobby

The lobby and front desk areas of most police departments is one of the most important areas of the department. It is where citizens come to conduct business and where they may be met by officers to conduct that business. In today's climate, as unfortunate as it may be, those areas must offer safety and security for those employees who must interact with the public. The business windows of the lobby where the Records Clerk works and greets the public are bullet resistant and the area underneath the windows is made of cinder block, so this provides excellent protection for the clerk.

Parking

A major concern voiced by employees of most police departments studied by CPSM is the lack of a secure parking lot for the police vehicles, and most importantly, a secure parking lot for their personal vehicles. Although the rear parking lot of the department is fenced and secure, civilian employees must park on the streets surrounding the PD or in a lot across from the facility. CPSM recommends consideration be given to allowing the civilian employees who must drive their personnel vehicles to work be allowed to park in the rear parking lot.

Workout Facility

Studies have shown that officers who are physically fit are more confident about their ability to handle the job, make better decisions about which level of force is appropriate to a situation, and helps them relax and suffer less stress. The majority of departments assessed by CPSM have seen the importance of providing some type of workout area for their employees. Bluffton PD is no different. The department provides a well-equipped and well-maintained workout area for department employees.

Facility Security

Unfortunately, in today's environment, police facilities are suffering from regular threats, and some have suffered fatal consequences without proper security measures in place. It is important to examine the threat characteristics and vulnerabilities to negate threat effectiveness and harden any vulnerabilities.

The main police facility is equipped with card readers to gain entry, and has security cameras inside and outside the facility which are all maintained by Town personnel. Visitors much check in at the lobby's front counter and must show valid ID to enter the building.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

Bluffton's Emergency Operations Center is located in the police department's patrol briefing room and can easily be stood up if need be.

Facility Recommendations:

- CPSM recommends the Town begin considering the options available to enlarge the department's workspace to better accommodate the needs of the department's expected growth. (Recommendation No. 92.)

- CPSM recommends consideration be given to allowing the civilian employees who must drive their personnel vehicles to work be allowed to park in the rear parking lot. (Recommendation No. 93.)

FLEET

The fleet for the Bluffton Police Department is the responsibility of the Fleet Manager (Quartermaster), who oversees the scheduling of the maintenance, and repairs of the fleet. The Fleet Manager reports directly to the Support Services Lieutenant.

All maintenance and repairs of the department's fleet are handled by the mechanics at the Bluffton Fire Department maintenance facility. However, any major repairs, body work, or warranty work is sent out to the respective dealership, depending on the make of the vehicle.

The department recently received approval to add additional patrol vehicles to its fleet. During the 2025 budget year it will add 18 new vehicles. When all 18 vehicles are in possession of the PD, the department will have a police vehicle for every authorized officer position, as well as six spare vehicles in the event an officer's unit requires extended maintenance or repair. Once those new vehicles are incorporated into the department's fleet, the department will be sufficiently positioned to meet its needs.

Spare keys for all the fleet vehicles are maintained in two locations: (1) a locked key box in the sallyport, and (2) the Quartermaster's office. Each Patrol sergeant has access to the spare keys kept in the locked box in the sallyport.

Take-Home Vehicles

The department has a take-home vehicle program for every sworn member of the department to include patrol officers, detectives, and command-level personnel. The take-home vehicle program means that each sworn member of the department drives the same vehicle during their shift, and then the officer takes that same vehicle home with them. Many agencies studied by CPSM are moving towards implementing officer vehicle take-home programs. Studies have shown that if an officer is the only person assigned to a vehicle, it will remain cleaner, require less maintenance, and, if the officer lives in the town, allows more law enforcement visibility when the officer is driving their patrol vehicle to and from work.

Most agencies studied by CPSM which have a vehicle take-home program have a restriction on the distance the vehicles can be driven home. BPD, on the other hand, has a driving time restriction in place. In order for a vehicle to be eligible to be driven home, the employee must live within a one-hour drive time of the police department. It was learned that the policy was changed to its current state several years ago to assist with recruitment and retention of employees who might live a distance away from the Town of Bluffton. Bluffton PD is to be commended for having the take-home vehicle program.

Leasing of Vehicles

BPD began leasing its fleet of vehicles (patrol, detective, command) in 2019. There are both pros and cons regarding the leasing of municipal vehicles and there are many reasons that lend credence to support both options. Several of the reasons why a department would consider leasing its vehicles include: (1) leasing allows the police agency to better manage its budget and cash flow with a predictable monthly payment, (2) a lease agreement might allow an agency to add more vehicles for the same total outlay for buying fewer vehicles, (3) leasing can enable agencies to acquire newer vehicles with the latest engineering changes and technology, and (4) the agency can take advantage of multiple resale channels for higher returns. It was learned that BPD did an extensive review of the pros and cons of both options and decided that leasing its vehicles was the best option to meet its needs.

Vehicle Maintenance

Routine maintenance and minor repairs are handled by the Bluffton Fire Department's maintenance department. All warranty repairs and service are handled by taking the vehicles to the respective dealership. The department reported it is not experiencing any issues with the fire department doing the minor repairs and routing maintenance.

All tracking of maintenance and repairs of the department's vehicles is handled by the department's Quartermaster and the town's fire department maintenance department. All vehicle maintenance records are stored on an Excel spreadsheet by the quartermaster and it is up to the officer to ensure that their routine maintenance is completed on their vehicle. Many agencies have begun using a fleet management software program to manage their fleet. When this was discussed with BPD, they were unaware if a fleet software program was available on their Spillman system. CPSM would recommend the department consider either purchasing a fleet management program through their its RMS or seek other vendors that supply such a product.

Retention Schedule

The lease agreement for the department's vehicles allows vehicles to be replaced every five years or 100,000 miles. This is the normal retention schedule for law enforcement vehicles in most departments studied by CPSM.

Cleaning of Vehicles

A clean patrol car makes for a more pleasant environment for the officers and helps the police department maintain a positive image within the community. But keeping the vehicles clean also protects the officers, their colleagues, and their loved ones from dangers that spread from person to person: viruses, bacteria, mites, bed bugs, and other visible and less visible threats. The department contracts with a car wash business and there is no limit on the number of times an officer may visit the car wash during a month. Each officer has the responsibility to ensure their vehicle is clean, in fact, the quartermaster conducts a visual inspection of the vehicles each month to ensure the officer is meeting the department's standards regarding the cleanliness of their vehicles.

Fleet Recommendation:

- It is recommended that the department purchase a fleet management system to effectively track maintenance and repairs for its police vehicles. (Recommendation No. 94.)

COMMUNICATIONS / DISPATCH

Communications responsibilities for the Bluffton Police Department are handled by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office. The department has been contracting with the BCSO for as long as anyone at BPD can remember.

This section regarding communications will only be focusing on the response times and will not be an in-depth review of the 911/dispatch center.

Although BPD has been contracting with the Sheriff's Office for decades, it was learned that the BPD has little to no say about the county's dispatching. When asked if there was an advisory board involving the contracting agencies, the answer was no. CPSM would encourage the department to lead the formation of an advisory board of those agencies contracting with Beaufort County Communications.

The duties and responsibilities of those who serve our communities by accepting and processing emergency calls from the public have grown exponentially over recent years. Communications is a vital component of an effective law enforcement agency. Often the first point of contact for a citizen seeking assistance, 911 operators play a significant role in setting the tone for the community's attitude toward the agency. The efficiency with which they collect information from callers and relay that information to responding personnel significantly impacts the safety of citizens, deputies, and fire personnel alike.

The dispatch/communications function is a vital component of an effective law enforcement agency and fire department. Dispatch operators serve in two primary roles: (1) Answering 911 and non-emergency telephone calls, and (2) radio dispatching calls for service. The BCSO Dispatch Center serves as the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for all of Beaufort County sheriff/fire calls for service.

The Beaufort County Sheriff's Communications Center is staffed with civilian personnel working together as 911 call takers and, law enforcement/fire dispatchers.

Response Times

Response time is measured as the difference between when a call is received and when the first unit arrives on scene. This is further divided into dispatch processing and travel time. Dispatch processing is the time between when a call is received and when the first unit is dispatched. Travel time is the remaining time until the first unit arrives on scene.

High-Priority Calls

All police departments prioritize calls for service based upon the seriousness of the call. The highest priority calls are referred to as Priority 1 (sometimes Priority P) calls. While department definitions of a Priority 1 call may vary from agency to agency, such calls should include those involving life safety and in progress crimes. For such calls, citizens expect and demand that their police department be adequately staffed and prepared to respond in a timely fashion. While the accompanying data report contains considerable information concerning response times to all priorities of calls for service and should be reviewed in its entirety, here we will focus on the highest priority of calls for service.

Response Time to High-Priority Calls for Service

As noted, the department assigns priorities to all calls, with Priority 1 as the highest priority. The following table shows average response times by priority, in minutes. Here again, we will be focusing on Priority 1 calls, but we provide information on all priority levels for reference. As well, we isolated injury accidents based upon call type "Accident (Sig 1).".

As you review the following table, for clarification, remember the *Dispatch Processing Period* is that time from receipt of a call until a unit is assigned and dispatched. The *Travel Time* is that period from the time that the officer is dispatched to the call until the time at which they arrive at the scene, and *Response Time* combines these numbers. *Calls* represent the total number of such calls.

TABLE 8-9: Average Response Times, by Priority

Priority	Dispatch	Travel	Response	Calls
1	2.9	6.4	9.4	2,699
2	3.4	7.3	10.8	1,247
3	4.9	7.7	12.5	1,354
4	6.1	6.3	12.4	125
Average	**3.6**	**6.9**	**10.6**	**5,425**
Injury accident	2.2	2.6	4.8	37

Note: The total average is weighted according to the number of calls within each priority level.

Each of the time components for Priority 1 calls raises concern, as all elapsed times appear to be excessive. The *Dispatch Processing Period* for a Priority 1 call (2.9 minutes) exceeds the accepted standard of between 1 and 1.5 minutes. The *Travel Time* (6.4 minutes) should be approximately 4 minutes, and the *Total Response Time* (9.4 minutes) should be closer to 5 minutes. As well, *Total Priority 1 Calls* (2,699) is an extraordinarily high number of calls for the size and activity level of the BPD. Virtually all Priority 1 calls are community-initiated calls, and with a total of approximately 6,554 such calls over a year, The Priority 1 number of 2,699 represents

about 41 percent of all community-initiated calls. In most studies conducted by CPSM, Priority 1 calls represent closer to 10 to 15 percent of community-initiated calls.

For that reason, CPSM examined the 237 call types recorded in the CAD system, of which 60 were classified as Priority 1 calls. As we mentioned previously, Priority 1 calls should be limited to life-safety and in-progress crimes. Here, we found Priority 1 calls to include *Vandalism, Found Property, Noise Complaint, and Harassment,* to name a few. These did not appear to rise to the level of life-safety or in-progress crime. These call types, and others, accounted for a substantial number of Priority 1 calls. For instance, the classification of *Noise Complaint* accounted for 175 Priority 1 responses.

CPSM believes that 911 dispatchers intuitively know that such calls are not emergency calls and therefore, even though listed as a Priority 1 call in CAD, they may hold the calls and dispatch them as a non-emergency call. This results in a skewing of the response time numbers. This conclusion appears to be supported by looking at the total response time to injury collisions, where the overall response time to a life-safety call is 4.8 minutes.

CPSM would urge the department to review its CAD call priorities and limit Priority 1 calls to those involving life-safety or in-progress crimes. CAD can be easily modified to accomplish this. If that action is taken, we believe that the Priority 1 response times will fall into appropriate levels going forward.

Dispatch Times

As seen by the table above, the dispatch time for Priority 1 calls is 2.9 minutes. In most studies conducted by CPSM that time is between 1.5 minutes and 2 minutes. The 2.9 minutes seems excessive. While we addressed possible reasons for that above, CPSM would recommend the department initiate a conversation with the county's communication manager about the reasons for the excessive time on P-1 calls.

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FIGURE 8-5: Average Response and Dispatch Processing Times for High-priority Calls, by Hour
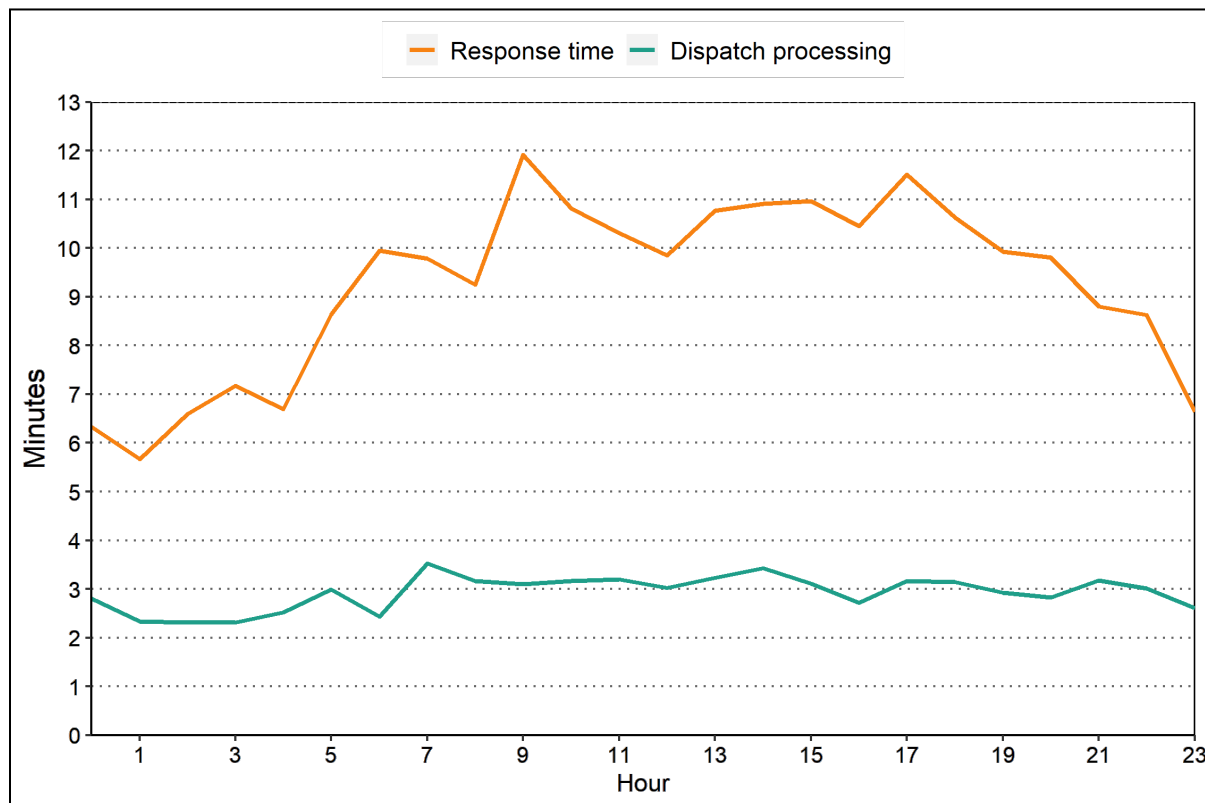
Observations:

- High-priority calls had an average response time of 9.4 minutes, lower than the overall average of 10.6 minutes for all calls.

- Average dispatch processing was 2.9 minutes for high-priority calls, compared to 3.6 minutes overall.

- For high-priority calls, the longest response times were between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., with an average of 11.9 minutes.

- For high-priority calls, the shortest response times were between 1:00 a.m. and 2:00 a.m., with an average of 5.7 minutes.

Dispatch Recommendations:

- CPSM would encourage the department to form an advisory board of those agencies contracting with Beaufort County Communications. (Recommendation No. 95.)

- CPSM urges the department to review its CAD call priorities and limit Priority 1 calls to those involving life-safety or in-progress calls. (Recommendation No. 96.)

- CPSM recommends the department initiate a conversation with the county's communication manager about the reasons for the excessive time on P-1 calls. (Recommendation No. 97.)

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Technology and policing have been interconnected for decades, dating back to the advent of the telephone, the automobile, and the two-way radio. Today, technology seems to be advancing at an ever-accelerating pace, as seen through the propagation of mobile and wireless technology, high-powered computing, visual and audio technology, advanced analytics, and other technological advancements. Many departments are implementing these and other technologies to increase efficiency and to improve outcomes, especially in times of diminished resources and enhanced public attention to and scrutiny of law enforcement tactics and outcomes. Technology use is expected to continue to increase by law enforcement not only among the largest agencies but across most U.S. LEAs.

Bluffton PD has one full-time civilian Law Enforcement Systems Analyst responsible for the department's technology; however, assistance can be requested from the Town's IT Department. Although the analyst is a Town of Bluffton employee, they are assigned to the police department. The analyst is responsible for anything and everything that is IT-related in the PD from infrastructure to the phone system.

The technician works Monday through Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Friday 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. If issues related to the computers arise during hours when they are not working, they can be called 24/7 if needed.

RMS

The department's CAD and RMS is hosted by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office (BCSO), but the analyst is responsible for the client software, connectivity, portions of the training and reporting, and the SQL/API to other systems. The county uses the Motorola Flex (Spillman) system, which was last updated in May 2024. It was learned that the department does not currently have significant any issues with the operation of the existing system.

The only issues with the system are:(1) the lack of knowledge and capabilities of the system by users, (2) training for new users and ongoing training for existing users, (3) having to coordinate with BCSO regarding any issues.

Technology Replacement

The department has a replacement plan in place for its computers (desktop, laptop) and the in-vehicle MDCs. The desktops and laptops are on a three-year replacement cycle, while the MDCs are on a five-year replacement cycle. Computers are replaced on a 36-month rotation (one-third annually) and the MDCs are replaced in two tiers on a 36/60 month rotation.

IT Committee

Technology is decided upon by the department's command staff, but the analyst has input in the process regarding implementation and training.

Anecdotal evidence from our interviews with staff at all levels of the organization suggest that the department is well supported by its technologies and technology support, though some indicated that many employees underutilize the technology available to them. This is not uncommon in law enforcement, or other fields for that matter, as employees have differing levels of comfort or knowledge in utilizing technology. As well, technology may not be user friendly. To address this range of issues, we would offer a recommendation that the department create an Information Technology Committee.

The committee should be chaired by someone such as a captain who has the authority to move recommendations forward. It should be made up of end users from throughout the department as well as the department's IT analyst. It is important that the participants are diverse in their skill levels regarding technology. Committees of this type have a tendency to attract only those who have high levels of skill and comfort with technology, thus, the technologies that they recommend/acquire are sometimes not user friendly for those with more general knowledge or less comfort. That results in the acquisition of technology that some end users shy away from, and the technology is then underutilized and ineffective.

If formed, the committee should meet not more than two to three times per year. The objective is not to meet for the sake of meeting. For the committee to be productive, the meetings, at a minimum, must serve to identify underutilized technologies and the reason for the underutilization (e.g., training) as well as to examine available technology enhancements that will both improve efficiencies and enhance service delivery. Finally, action items identified must establish responsibilities for completion, mechanisms, timelines, and a reporting guidelines that ensure that action items are moved forward. CPSM recommends consideration be given to forming and implementing an IT Committee.

Associated Technology

The IT analyst handles the technology aspects of the department's technology such as body worn cameras, card access, cameras, etc.; however, the Quartermaster issues the technology and handles only level 1 support.

Training

The department does a good job of providing ongoing professional training for the IT analyst. The department subscribes to an IT training program which is diverse and also provides manufacturer- and vendor-led training. The analyst also attends the IACP Technology Conference, Spillman regional training, and courses through SLED/ISAC/CJI as they become available regarding relevant issues.

IT Recommendation:

- CPSM recommends consideration be given to forming and implementing an IT Committee. (Recommendation No. 97.)

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SECTION 9. SUMMARY

The Town of Bluffton, South Carolina, engaged the Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) to perform an organizational assessment of the Bluffton Police Department. These studies are intended to look into the organization to ensure the organization is operating efficiently and in accordance with national best practices in the policing profession. Additionally, an extensive look into current workload dynamics is undertaken to determine if the organization is optimally staffed.

The first phase of the study included engagement between CPSM's data analytics team and the Beaufort County Communications Division, as well as BPD, to gain access into the department's computer-aided dispatch (CAD) data to assess patrol workload. From those efforts a Data Analysis Report was produced (see attached at the end of this report). Additionally, there was engagement from of a group of CPSM subject matter experts in the policing profession who worked with the staff at BPD to gain insight into the department's practices, policies, culture, and workload. The result of that engagement is memorialized in the body of this report.

This report contains numerous observations and recommendations. In fact, to the average reader the number of recommendations may appear extensive and give the appearance that there is significant improvement needed within the agency. That is not the case; in fact, our consultants were impressed by the overall professionalism of the department, the commitment of its people, and their dedication to the community and the profession. We were also very impressed with the community as a whole. Reports like this are intended to get into the details of an organization and make recommendations for overall improvement. BPD is experiencing many of the challenges that exists in the policing profession nationwide and has some of the same capacity issues that many agencies within its size category experience.

Although this report makes some minor personnel recommendations, in general we believe the department is well staffed and possesses the capacity to provide an appropriate level of service to the Bluffton community. The patrol force is limited and would struggle with managing a large-scale emergency, but they appear reasonably well staffed to handle the day-to-day workload associated with crime and calls for service. The Priority 1 emergency response times in Bluffton are higher than the desired national benchmarks of five minutes or less, but that is a byproduct of geographic challenges and traffic versus not having enough officers available to respond. Although more officers appropriately dispersed around the community would have a positive impact on response times, the crime and calls for service workload do not justify additional personnel at this time. We also noted the partnerships that BPD has with its neighboring law enforcement agencies at the local, county, and state level. It is normal in larger incidents that those resources would come to the assistance of BPD through mutual aid agreements and the commitments of those agencies to overall community safety. At the end of the day, we recommend staffing a police department for what does occur versus what might occur in rare instances. Using that standard, Bluffton is appropriately staffed.

This report does make some recommendations regarding the management of the organization. In short we believe there is additional capacity within the management ranks to do more; as well, in general there are too many managers for a department this size. Management should be more involved in the day-to-day strategic deployment of its officers. Data-driven efforts and managerial oversight, especially in the area of traffic enforcement, is recommended. However, that data-driven approach should not just be limited to traffic enforcement, it should reach into all aspects of the organization as the community and the agency grow.

BPD is struggling to keep its policy manual current. This is a common problem in agencies that attempt to maintain all aspects of their policy manuals. If BPD elects to continue with its current practice, we believe that a legal review should take place on all policies. A better solution and recommended in this report is the purchase of a policy subscription service, which will take most of the workload off the shoulders of the department and also provide the needed legal review.

The Bluffton community has experienced growth in recent years that is not often seen. The fact that the community has grown its public safety footprint to keep pace with that growth is impressive. Additionally, the fact that BPD has managed to professionalize the agency with so many younger officers is also noteworthy and equally impressive. It is our hope that this report will serve as a roadmap for future growth and continued improvement within the department.

We would like to extend our appreciation to Chief Babkiewicz and the staff at BPD for their willingness to engage in this process.

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SECTION 10. DATA ANALYSIS

This data analysis report on police patrol operations for the Bluffton Police Department focuses on three main areas: workload, deployment, and response times. These three areas are related almost exclusively to patrol operations, which constitute a significant portion of the police department's personnel and financial commitment.

All information in this analysis was developed using data from the department's computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system.

CPSM collected data for one year from May 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024. The majority of the first section of the report, concluding with Table 10-9, uses call data for one year. For the detailed workload analysis, we used two eight-week sample periods. The first period is from July 7 through August 31, 2023, or summer, and the second period is from January 4 through February 28, 2024, or winter.

WORKLOAD ANALYSIS

When CPSM analyzes a set of dispatch records, we go through a series of steps:

- We first process the data to improve accuracy. For example, we remove duplicate patrol units recorded on a single event as well as records that do not indicate an actual activity. We also remove incomplete data, as found in situations where there is not enough time information to evaluate the record.

- At this point, we have a series of records that we call "events." We identify these events in three ways:

  - We distinguish between patrol and nonpatrol units.

  - We assign a category to each event based on its description.

  - We indicate whether the call is "zero time on scene" (i.e., patrol units spent less than 30 seconds on scene), "police-initiated," or "community-initiated."

- We then remove all records that do not involve a patrol unit to arrive at the total number of patrol-related events.

- At important points during our analysis, we focus on a smaller group of events designed to represent actual calls for service. This excludes events with no officer time spent on scene and directed patrol activities.

In this way, we first identify a total number of records, then limit ourselves to patrol events, and finally focus on calls for service.

As with similar cases around the country, we encountered several issues when analyzing Bluffton's dispatch data. We made assumptions and decisions to address these issues.

- 13,907 events (about 37 percent) involved patrol units spending zero time on scene.

- The computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system used approximately 113 different event descriptions, which we condensed into 24 categories for our tables and 11 categories for our figures (shown in Chart 10-1). Table 10-20 in the appendix shows how each call description was categorized.

Between May 1, 2023, and April 30, 2024, the communications center recorded approximately 37,251 events that were assigned call numbers, and which included an adequate record of a responding patrol unit as either the primary or secondary unit. When measured daily, the department reported an average of 101.8 patrol-related events per day, approximately 37 percent of which (38.0 per day) had fewer than 30 seconds spent on the call.

In the following pages, we show two types of data: activity and workload. The activity levels are measured by the average number of calls per day, broken down by the type and origin of the calls, and categorized by the nature of the calls (crime, traffic, etc.). Workloads are measured in average work hours per day.

CHART 10-1: Event Descriptions for Tables and Figures

Table Category	Figure Category
Alarm	Alarm
Assist citizen	Assist
Assist EMS	
Assist other agency	
Check	Check
Crime against persons	Crime
Crime against property	
Crime against society	
Directed patrol	Directed patrol
Disturbance	Disturbance
Follow-up	Follow up
Animal call	General noncriminal
Community activity	
Juvenile	
Mental health	
Miscellaneous	
Violation	
Warrant	
Investigation	Investigation
Suspicious incident	Suspicious incident
Accident	Traffic
Traffic enforcement	
Traffic hazard	
Traffic stop	

FIGURE 10-1: Percentage Events per Day, by Initiator
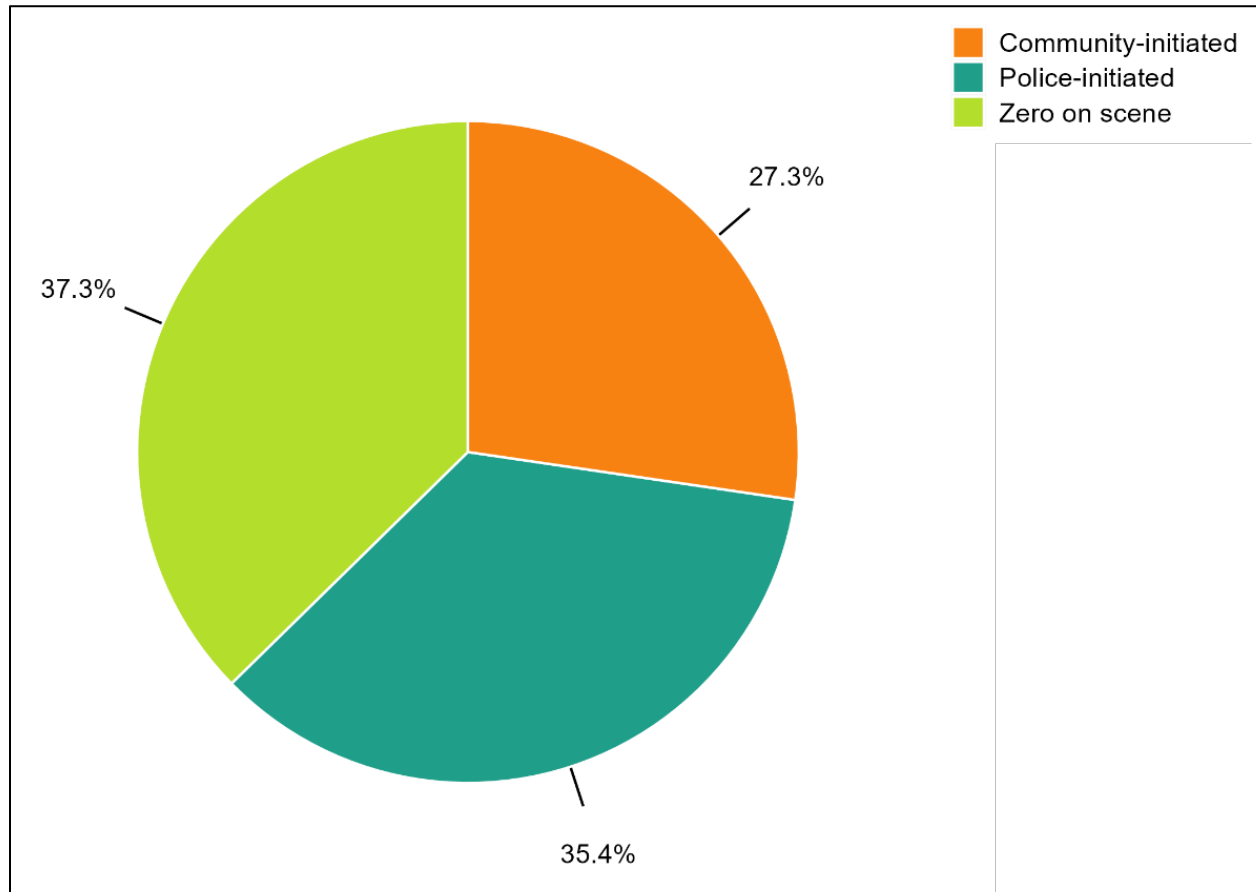
Note: Percentages are based on a total of 37,251 events.

TABLE 10-1: Events per Day, by Initiator

Initiator	No. of Events	Events per Day
Community-initiated	10,175	27.8
Police-initiated	13,169	36.0
Zero on scene	13,907	38.0
Total	**37,251**	**101.8**

Observations:

- 37 percent of the events had zero time on scene.
  - Approximately 85 percent of these events were directed patrol activities, including descriptions such as "extra patrol business" and "extra patrol residence."
  - Total workload averaged 1.0 hours per day, meaning that on average 0.04 units per hour were busy on these events.
- 35 percent of all events were police-initiated.
- 27 percent of all events were community-initiated.
- There was an average of 102 events per day, or 4.2 per hour.

FIGURE 10-2: Percentage Events per Day, by Category
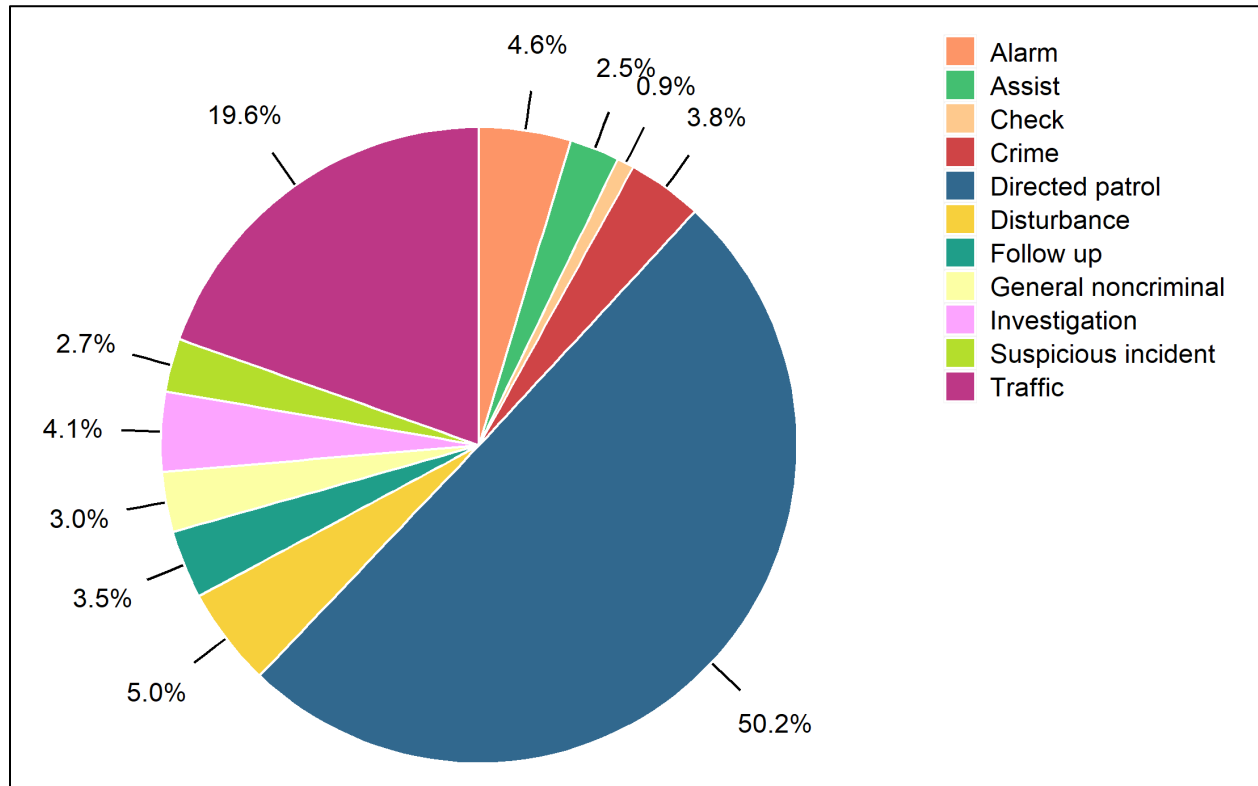
Note: The figure combines categories in the following table according to the description in Chart 10-1.

TABLE 10-2: Events per Day, by Category

Category	No. of Events	Events per Day
Accident	1,519	4.2
Alarm	1,730	4.7
Animal call	154	0.4
Assist citizen	659	1.8
Assist EMS	213	0.6
Assist other agency	71	0.2
Check	328	0.9
Community activity	15	0.0
Crime against persons	206	0.6
Crime against property	1,089	3.0
Crime against society	123	0.3
Directed patrol	18,717	51.1
Disturbance	1,873	5.1
Follow-up	1,294	3.5
Investigation	1,511	4.1
Juvenile	27	0.1
Mental health	101	0.3
Miscellaneous	571	1.6
Suspicious incident	1,007	2.8
Traffic enforcement	1,003	2.7
Traffic hazard	283	0.8
Traffic stop	4,490	12.3
Violation	210	0.6
Warrant	57	0.2
Total	**37,251**	**101.8**

Note: Observations below refer to events shown within the figure rather than the table.

Observations:

- The top four categories accounted for 80 percent of events:
  - 50 percent of events were directed patrol activities.
  - 20 percent of events were traffic-related.
  - 5 percent of events were disturbances.
  - 5 percent of events were alarms.
- 4 percent of events were crimes.

FIGURE 10-3: Percentage Calls per Day, by Category

Note: The figure combines categories in the following table according to the description in Chart 10-1.

TABLE 10-3: Calls per Day, by Category

Category	No. of Calls	Calls per Day
Accident	1,452	4.0
Alarm	1,525	4.2
Animal call	135	0.4
Assist citizen	571	1.6
Assist EMS	193	0.5
Assist other agency	66	0.2
Check	289	0.8
Community activity	13	0.0
Crime against persons	190	0.5
Crime against property	974	2.7
Crime against society	106	0.3
Disturbance	1,653	4.5
Follow up	1,104	3.0
Investigation	1,277	3.5
Juvenile	26	0.1
Mental health	93	0.3
Miscellaneous	446	1.2
Suspicious incident	873	2.4
Traffic enforcement	664	1.8
Traffic hazard	194	0.5
Traffic stop	4,401	12.0
Violation	169	0.5
Warrant	51	0.1
Total	**16,465**	**45.0**

Note: The focus here is on recorded calls rather than recorded events. We removed 13,907 events with zero time on scene and 6,879 additional directed patrol activities.

Observations:

- On average, there were 45.0 calls per day, or 1.9 per hour.

- The top three categories accounted for 60 percent of calls:

  - 41 percent of calls were traffic-related.

  - 10 percent of calls were disturbances.

  - 9 percent of calls were alarms.

- 8 percent of calls were crimes.

FIGURE 10-4: Calls per Day, by Initiator and Month

TABLE 10-4: Calls per Day, by Initiator and Months

Initiator	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Community	29.9	31.1	30.9	30.5	26.8	30.0	26.0	26.4	22.7	24.4	26.8	27.9
Police	21.6	18.4	19.6	18.0	17.1	17.4	12.3	12.2	15.5	20.7	15.3	18.2
Total	**51.5**	**49.5**	**50.5**	**48.5**	**44.0**	**47.4**	**38.4**	**38.6**	**38.2**	**45.1**	**42.1**	**46.1**

Observations:

■ The number of calls per day was lowest in November and January.

■ The number of calls per day was highest in May.

■ The months with the most calls had 35 percent more calls than the months with the fewest calls.

■ May had the most police-initiated calls, with 77 percent more than November and December, which had the fewest.

■ June and July had the most community-initiated calls, with 37 percent more than January, which had the fewest.

FIGURE 10-5: Calls per Day, by Category and Month
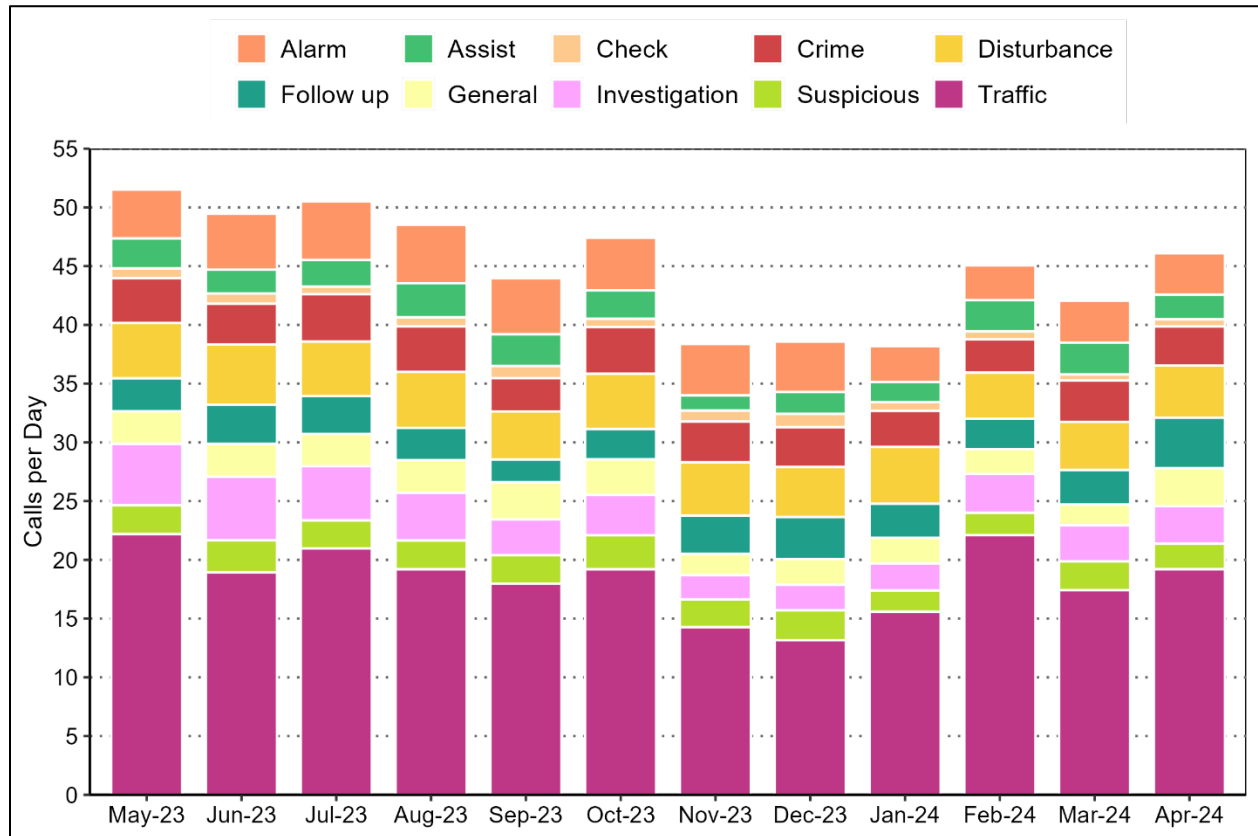
Note: The figure combines categories in the following table according to the description in Chart 10-1.
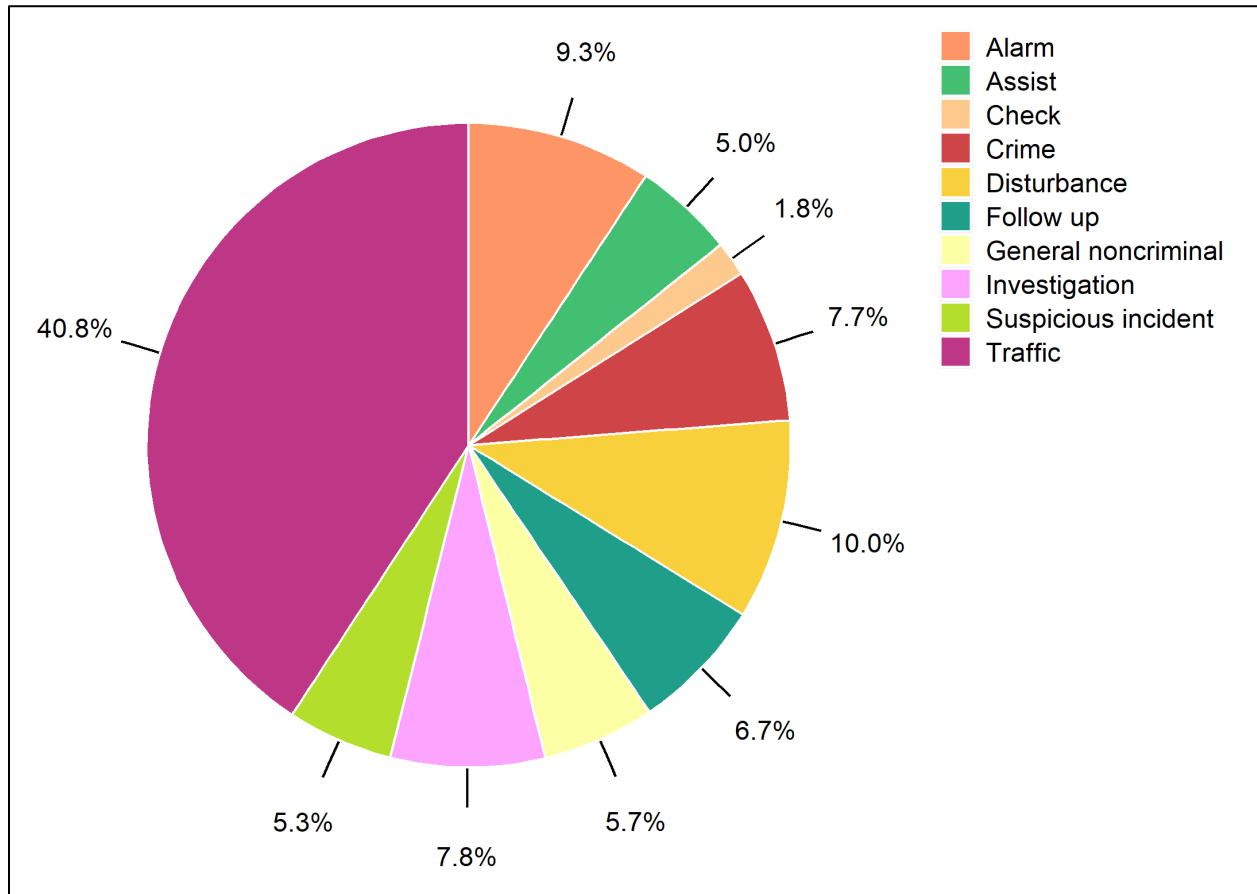
TABLE 10-5: Calls per Day, by Category and Month

Category	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Accident	4.5	3.5	3.9	4.0	4.0	5.5	4.3	3.5	2.8	3.4	4.3	3.9
Alarm	4.2	4.8	5.0	5.0	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.3	3.1	3.0	3.6	3.5
Animal call	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.6
Assist citizen	1.8	1.2	1.5	2.1	2.1	1.7	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.4
Assist EMS	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.5
Assist other agency	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.2
Check	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.9	1.1	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.6
Community activity	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Crime against persons	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.6
Crime against property	3.0	2.5	3.1	3.1	2.2	3.3	2.7	2.6	2.1	2.0	2.6	2.5
Crime against society	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.2
Disturbance	4.7	5.1	4.6	4.8	4.1	4.7	4.5	4.3	4.8	3.9	4.1	4.4
Follow-up	2.8	3.3	3.2	2.7	1.9	2.6	3.3	3.6	2.9	2.6	2.9	4.3
Investigation	5.2	5.4	4.6	4.1	3.0	3.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	3.3	3.1	3.2
Juvenile	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Mental health	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2
Miscellaneous	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.1	0.6	1.7
Suspicious incident	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.9	2.4	2.5	1.8	1.9	2.5	2.2
Traffic enforcement	4.4	1.8	4.0	1.9	1.8	1.2	1.3	1.3	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.1
Traffic hazard	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.9	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5
Traffic stop	12.7	12.9	12.5	12.4	11.7	12.0	8.2	8.1	11.7	17.1	11.6	13.6
Violation	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4
Warrant	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.3
Total	**51.5**	**49.5**	**50.5**	**48.5**	**44.0**	**47.4**	**38.4**	**38.6**	**38.2**	**45.1**	**42.1**	**46.1**

Note: Calculations were limited to calls rather than events.

Observations:

- The top three categories averaged between 56 and 64 percent of calls throughout the year.
    - Traffic calls averaged between 13.2 and 22.2 calls per day throughout the year.
    - Disturbance calls averaged between 3.9 and 5.1 calls per day throughout the year.
    - Alarm calls averaged between 3.0 and 5.0 calls per day throughout the year.
- Crime calls averaged between 2.8 and 4.0 calls per day and accounted for 6 to 9 percent of total calls throughout the year.

FIGURE 10-6: Primary Unit's Average Occupied Times, by Category and Initiator
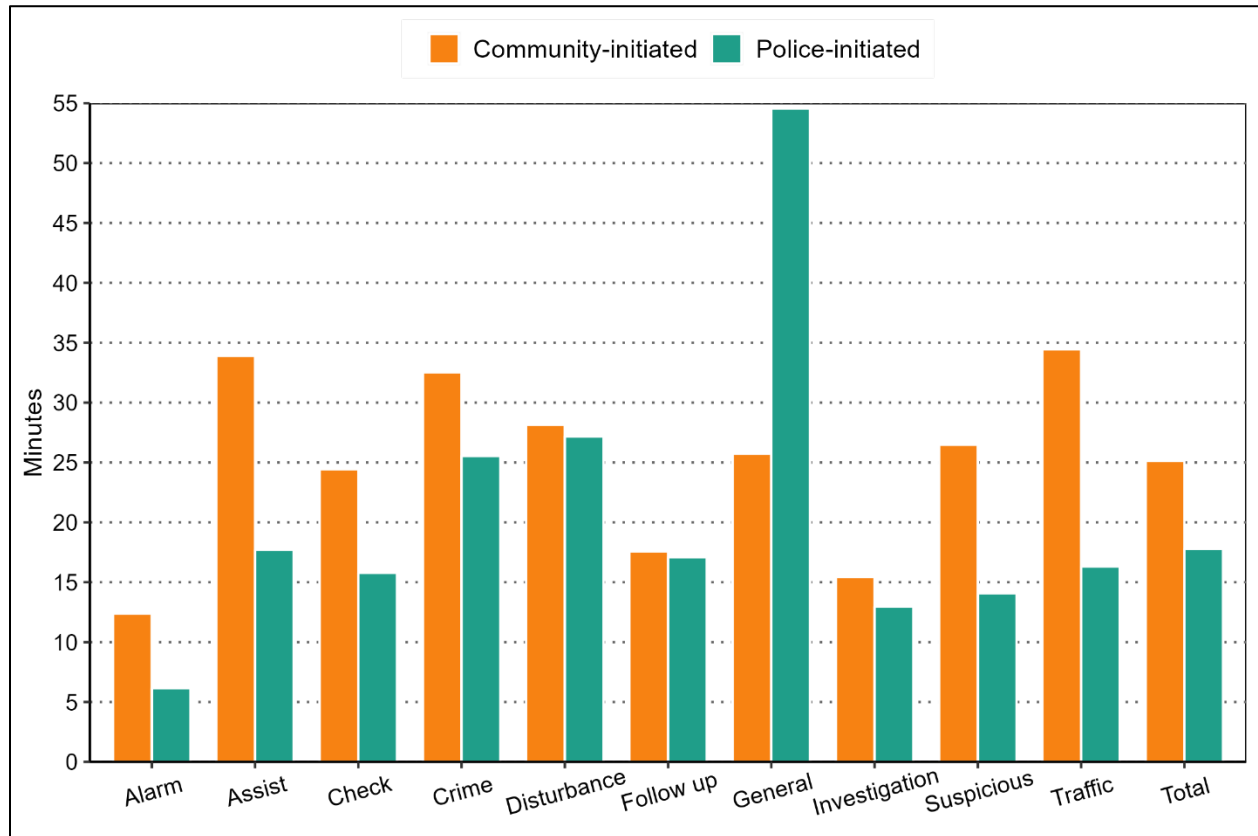
Note: The figure combines categories using weighted averages from the following table according to the description in Chart 10-1.

TABLE 10-6: Primary Unit's Average Occupied Times, by Category and Initiator

Category	Community-Initiated		Police-Initiated	
	Minutes	Calls	Minutes	Calls
Accident	41.0	1,337	43.4	115
Alarm	12.4	1,522	6.2	3
Animal call	21.0	129	27.0	6
Assist citizen	31.7	290	17.3	281
Assist EMS	37.6	187	31.4	6
Assist other agency	32.9	64	28.7	2
Check	24.4	287	15.8	2
Community activity	NA	0	35.2	13
Crime against persons	40.7	180	34.4	10
Crime against property	30.1	885	25.2	89
Crime against society	38.9	102	12.1	4
Disturbance	28.1	1,616	27.2	37
Follow-up	17.6	711	17.1	393
Investigation	15.4	1,218	13.0	59
Juvenile	46.6	24	11.9	2
Mental health	48.7	91	183.2	2
Miscellaneous	21.9	285	55.2	161
Suspicious incident	26.5	519	14.1	354
Traffic enforcement	18.7	379	9.0	285
Traffic hazard	17.3	160	12.0	34
Traffic stop	NA	0	16.1	4,401
Violation	15.8	162	16.3	7
Warrant	51.8	27	71.5	24
Weighted Average/Total Calls	**25.1**	**10,175**	**17.8**	**6,290**

Note: The information in Figure 10-6 and Table 10-6 is limited to calls and excludes all events that show zero time on scene. A unit's occupied time is measured as the time from when the unit was dispatched until the unit becomes available again. The times shown are the average occupied minutes per call for the primary unit, rather than the total occupied minutes for all units assigned to a call. Observations below refer to times shown within the figure rather than the table.

Observations:

- A unit's average time spent on a call ranged from 6 to 55 minutes overall.

- The longest average times were for police-initiated general noncriminal calls.

- The average time spent on crime calls was 33 minutes for community-initiated calls and 26 minutes for police-initiated calls.

FIGURE 10-7: Number of Responding Units, by Initiator and Category
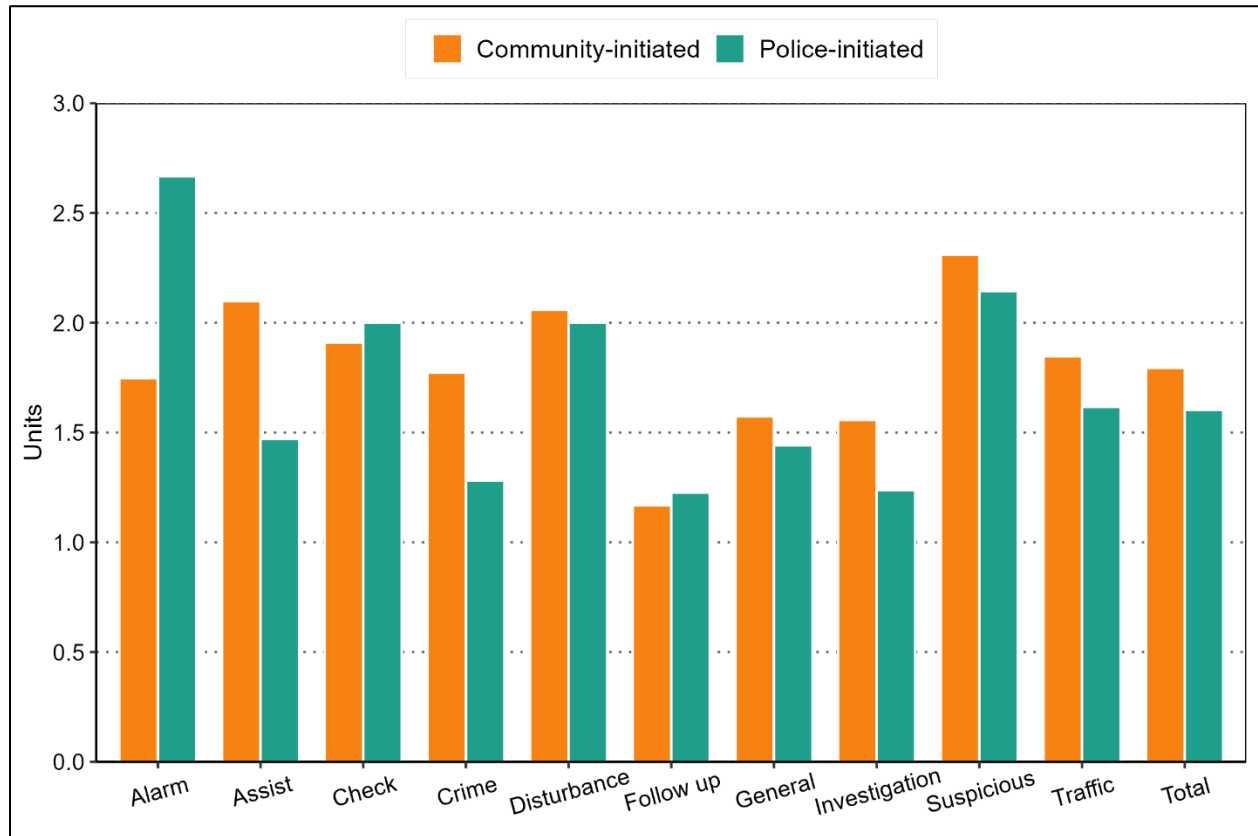
Note: The figure combines categories using weighted averages from the following table according to the description in Chart 10-1.

TABLE 10-7: Average Number of Responding Units, by Initiator and Category

Category	Community-Initiated		Police-Initiated	
	No. of Units	Calls	No. of Units	Calls
Accident	2.0	1,337	1.8	115
Alarm	1.7	1,522	2.7	3
Animal call	1.6	129	2.0	6
Assist citizen	2.0	290	1.4	281
Assist EMS	2.3	187	3.0	6
Assist other agency	2.2	64	2.0	2
Check	1.9	287	2.0	2
Community activity	NA	0	1.2	13
Crime against persons	1.9	180	1.3	10
Crime against property	1.6	885	1.3	89
Crime against society	2.8	102	1.2	4
Disturbance	2.1	1,616	2.0	37
Follow-up	1.2	711	1.2	393
Investigation	1.6	1,218	1.2	59
Juvenile	2.1	24	2.0	2
Mental health	2.7	91	2.0	2
Miscellaneous	1.3	285	1.3	161
Suspicious incident	2.3	519	2.1	354
Traffic enforcement	1.5	379	1.1	285
Traffic hazard	1.5	160	1.2	34
Traffic stop	NA	0	1.7	4,401
Violation	1.2	162	1.0	7
Warrant	1.9	27	2.4	24
Weighted Average/Total Calls	**1.8**	**10,175**	**1.6**	**6,290**

Note: The information in Figure 10-7 and Table 10-7 is limited to calls and excludes all events that show zero time on scene. Observations refer to the number of responding units shown within the figure rather than the table.

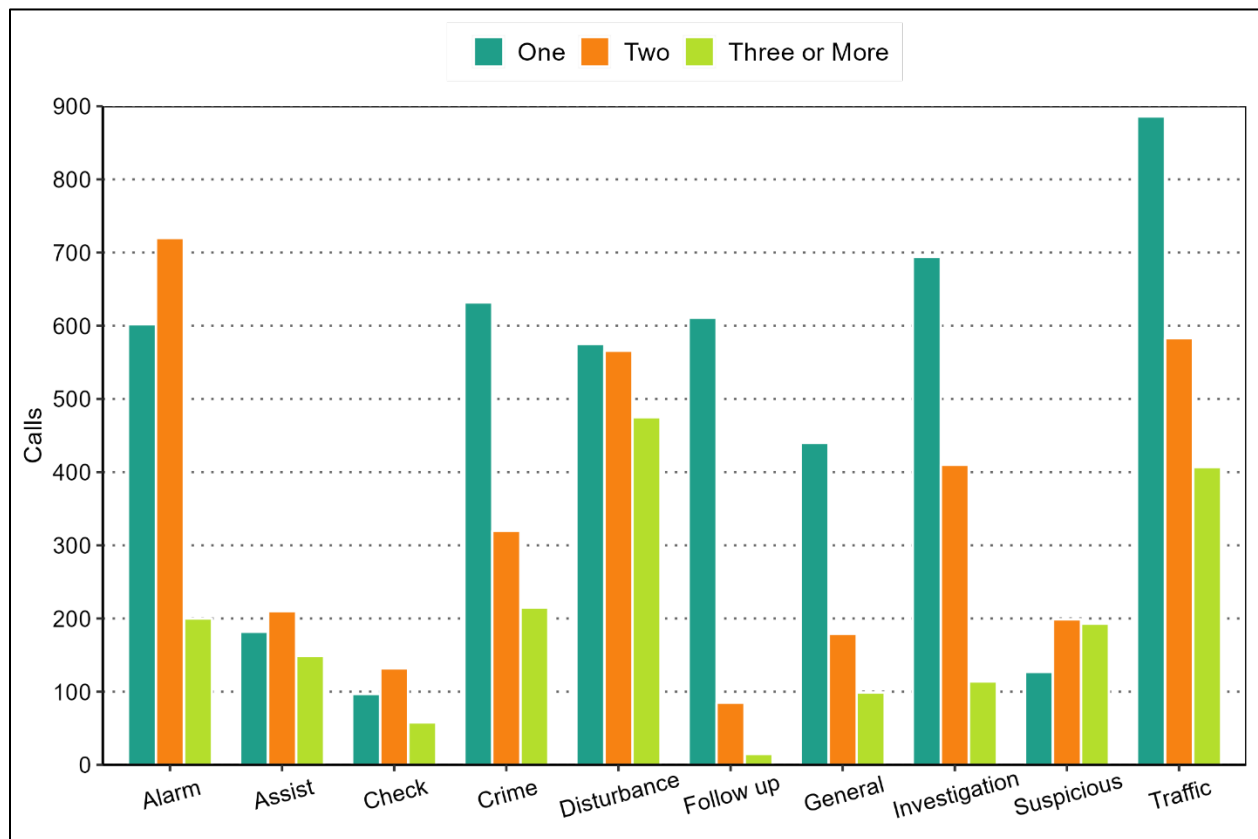**FIGURE 10-8: Number of Responding Units, by Category, Community-initiated Calls**

Note: The figure combines categories using weighted averages from the following table according to the description in Chart 10-1.

TABLE 10-8: Number of Responding Units, by Category, Community-initiated Calls

Category	Responding Units		
	One	Two	Three or More
Accident	538	449	350
Alarm	602	720	200
Animal call	66	52	11
Assist citizen	119	107	64
Assist EMS	45	73	69
Assist other agency	18	30	16
Check	97	132	58
Crime against persons	89	53	38
Crime against property	523	239	123
Crime against society	20	28	54
Disturbance	575	566	475
Follow-up	611	85	15
Investigation	694	410	114
Juvenile	8	10	6
Mental health	13	24	54
Miscellaneous	213	54	18
Suspicious incident	127	199	193
Traffic enforcement	249	87	43
Traffic hazard	99	47	14
Violation	127	31	4
Warrant	13	8	6
Total	**4,846**	**3,404**	**1,925**

Observations:

- The average number of responding units was 1.6 for police-initiated calls and 1.8 for community-initiated calls.

- The average number of responding units was as high as 2.7 for alarm calls that were police-initiated.

- 48 percent of community-initiated calls involved one responding unit.

- 33 percent of community-initiated calls involved two responding units.

- 19 percent of community-initiated calls involved three or more responding units.

- The largest group of calls with three or more responding units involved disturbances.

FIGURE 10-9: Percentage Calls and Work Hours, by Beat
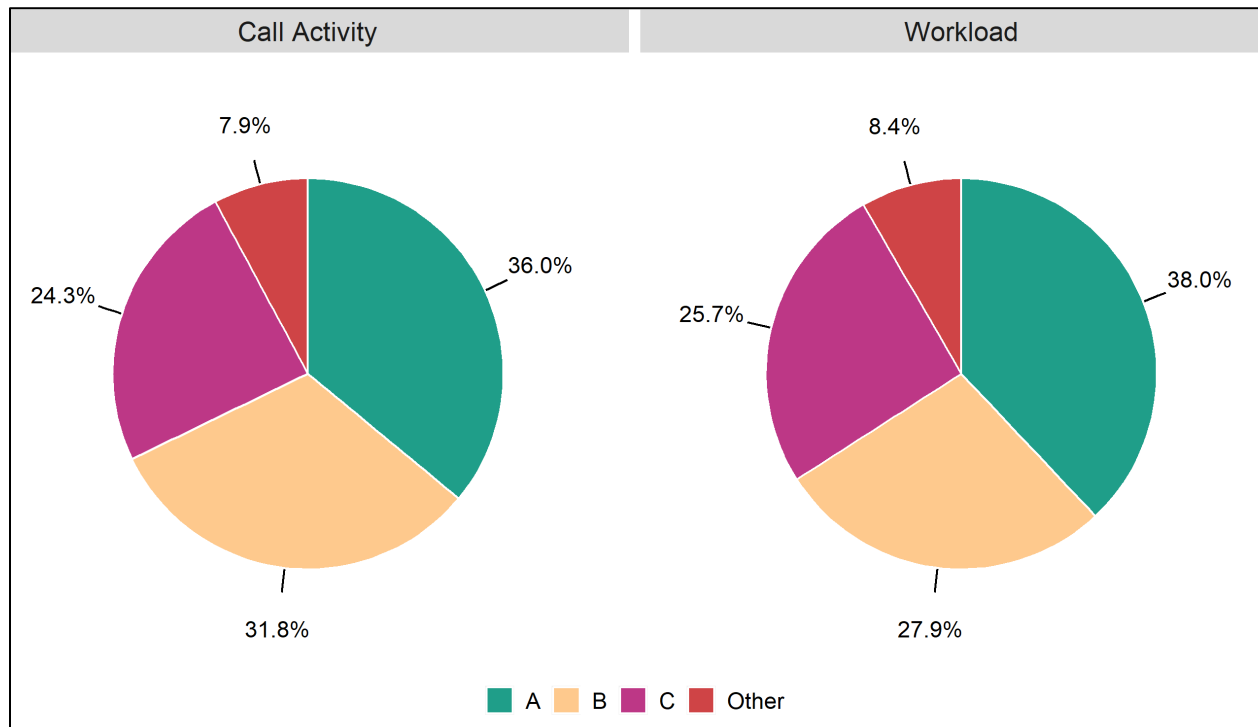
Note: The "other" category includes calls at headquarters, in miscellaneous beats, and calls missing beat information. Miscellaneous beats include calls within Bluffton, in political districts 4A, 4B, and 5B, as well as neighboring communities, such as Okotie, Pritchardville, and the City of Beaufort.

TABLE 10-9: Calls and Work Hours by Beat, per Day

Beat	Per Day	
	Calls	Work Hours
A1	6.2	4.0
A2	10.0	6.6
Subtotal A	**16.2**	**10.6**
B1	7.7	4.0
B2	6.6	3.8
Subtotal B	**14.3**	**7.8**
C1	4.5	3.1
C2	6.4	4.1
Subtotal C	**10.9**	**7.2**
HQ	1.0	0.5
Miscellaneous	2.1	1.5
Unknown	0.5	0.3
Subtotal Other	**3.5**	**2.3**
Total	**45.0**	**27.9**

Observations:

- Beat A had the largest number of calls and workload, accounting for 36 percent of total calls and approximately 38 percent of the total workload.

- Excluding calls in other beats, an even distribution would allot 13.8 calls and 8.5 work hours per beat.

FIGURE 10-10: Percentage Calls and Work Hours, by Category, Summer 2023

Call Activity	Workload

Call Activity

- 10.2%
- 5.5%
- 1.3%
- 8.3%
- 40.6%
- 9.2%
- 6.0%
- 5.5%
- 8.3%
- 5.1%

Workload

- 5.6%
- 9.4%
- 1.4%
- 37.1%
- 12.1%
- 15.2%
- 2.6%
- 6.5%
- 5.2%
- 5.0%

Legend:
- Alarm
- Assist
- Check
- Crime
- Disturbance
- Follow up
- General
- Investigation
- Suspicious
- Traffic
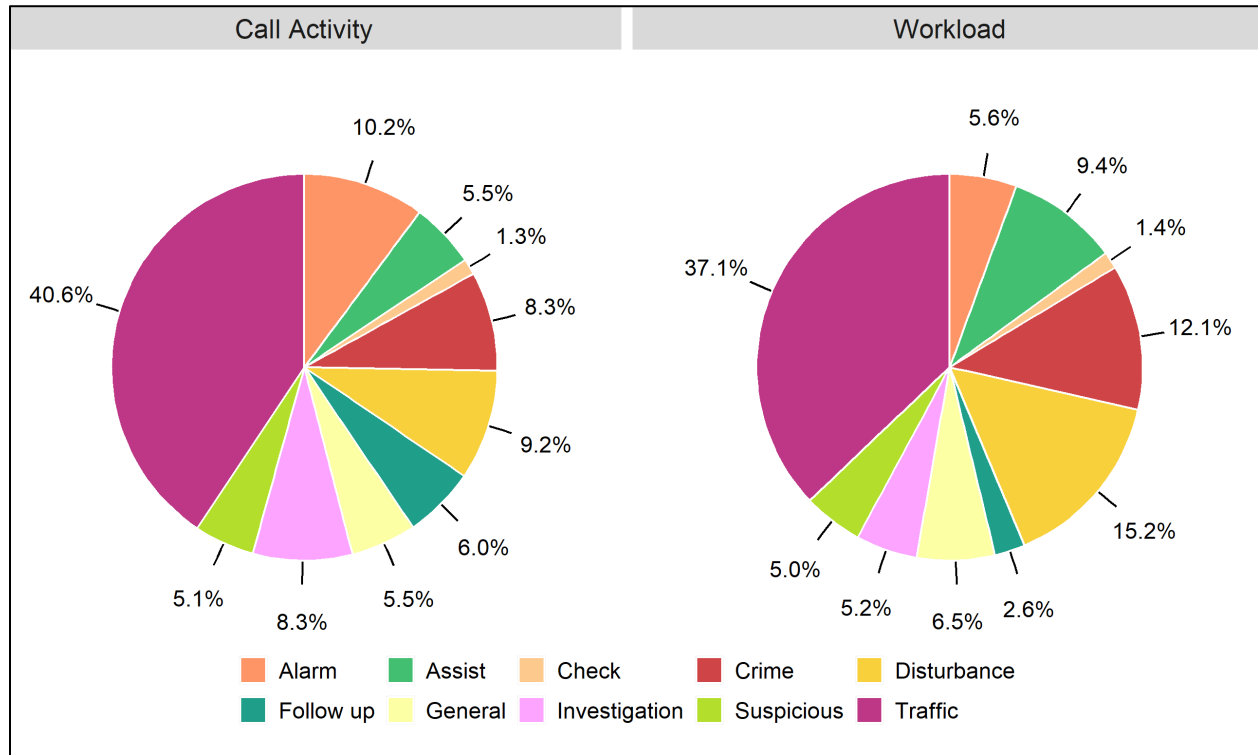
TABLE 10-10: Calls and Work Hours per Day, by Category, Summer 2023

Category	Per Day	
	Calls	Work Hours
Accident	4.0	5.5
Alarm	5.0	1.8
Animal call	0.3	0.1
Assist citizen	1.8	2.0
Assist EMS	0.7	0.8
Assist other agency	0.1	0.1
Check	0.7	0.4
Community activity	NA	NA
Crime against persons	0.5	0.6
Crime against property	3.3	2.9
Crime against society	0.3	0.3
Disturbance	4.5	4.7
Follow-up	2.9	0.8
Investigation	4.1	1.6
Juvenile	0.0	0.0
Mental health	0.4	0.8
Miscellaneous	1.4	0.7
Suspicious incident	2.5	1.6
Traffic enforcement	3.1	0.9
Traffic hazard	0.8	0.3
Traffic stop	12.1	4.9
Violation	0.4	0.1
Warrant	0.2	0.3
Total	**49.1**	**31.3**

Note: Workload calculations focused on calls rather than events.

Observations, Summer:

- The average number of calls per day and the average daily workload were higher in summer than in winter.

- Total calls averaged 49 per day, or 2.0 per hour.

- Total workload averaged 31 hours per day, meaning that on average 1.3 units per hour were busy responding to calls.

- Traffic calls constituted 41 percent of calls and 37 percent of the workload.

- Disturbance calls constituted 9 percent of calls and 15 percent of the workload.

- Alarm calls constituted 10 percent of calls and 6 percent of the workload.

- These top three categories constituted 60 percent of calls and 58 percent of the workload.

- Crime calls constituted 8 percent of calls and 12 percent of the workload.

FIGURE 10-11: Percentage Calls and Work Hours, by Category, Winter 2024

Call Activity	Workload

Call Activity

7.4%
5.2%
1.8%
7.2%
45.6%
10.5%
6.3%
4.2%
6.7%
5.1%

Workload

3.9%
6.8%
2.6%
11.7%
37.7%
14.3%
3.8%
5.5%
5.4%
8.2%

Legend:
- Alarm
- Assist
- Check
- Crime
- Disturbance
- Follow up
- General
- Investigation
- Suspicious
- Traffic
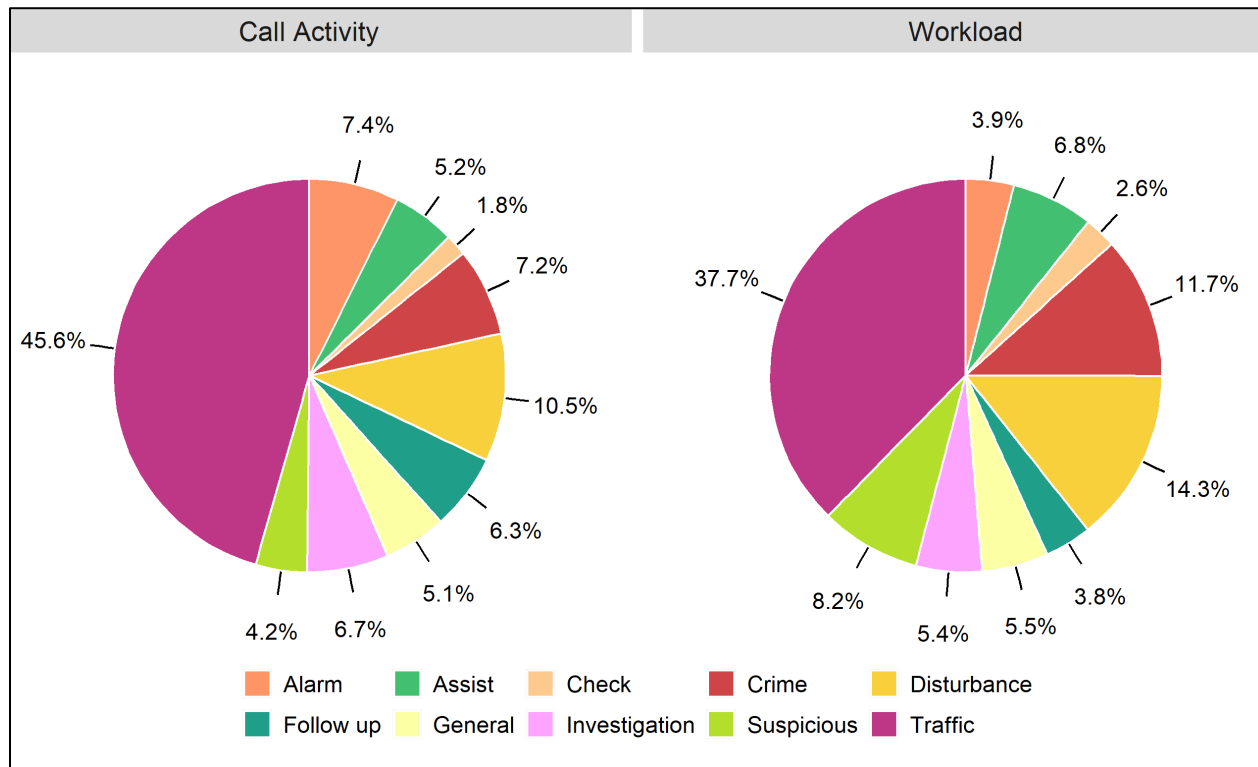
TABLE 10-11: Calls and Work Hours per Day, by Category, Winter 2024

Category	Per Day	
	Calls	Work Hours
Accident	3.2	2.8
Alarm	3.1	1.0
Animal call	0.3	0.1
Assist citizen	1.5	1.0
Assist EMS	0.5	0.5
Assist other agency	0.2	0.2
Check	0.7	0.6
Community activity	NA	NA
Crime against persons	0.7	0.9
Crime against property	2.1	1.4
Crime against society	0.2	0.6
Disturbance	4.4	3.5
Follow-up	2.6	0.9
Investigation	2.8	1.3
Juvenile	0.1	0.2
Mental health	0.2	0.3
Miscellaneous	1.1	0.5
Suspicious incident	1.8	2.0
Traffic enforcement	0.9	0.5
Traffic hazard	0.3	0.1
Traffic stop	14.6	5.8
Violation	0.4	0.1
Warrant	0.1	0.1
Total	**41.6**	**24.6**

Note: Workload calculations focused on calls rather than events.

Observations, Winter:

- Total calls averaged 42 per day, or 1.7 per hour.

- Total workload averaged 25 hours per day, meaning that on average 1.0 units per hour were busy responding to calls.

- Traffic calls constituted 46 percent of calls and 38 percent of the workload.

- Disturbance calls constituted 11 percent of calls and 14 percent of the workload.

- Alarm calls constituted 7 percent of calls and 4 percent of the workload.

- These top three categories constituted 63 percent of calls and 56 percent of the workload.

- Crime calls constituted 7 percent of calls and 12 percent of the workload.

OUT-OF-SERVICE ACTIVITIES

In the period from May 1, 2023, through April 30, 2024, the dispatch center also recorded out-of-service activities that lacked incident numbers. We focused on those activities that involved a patrol unit. We also limited our analysis to out-of-service activities that occurred during shifts where the same patrol unit was also responding to calls for service. There were a few problems with the data provided and we made assumptions and decisions to address these issues:

- We excluded activities that lasted fewer than 30 seconds. These are irrelevant and contribute little to the overall workload.

- After these exclusions, 1,032 activities remained. These activities had an average duration of 88.0 minutes.

In this section, we report out-of-service activities and workload by description. In the next section, we include these activities in the overall workload when comparing the total workload against available personnel in winter and summer.

TABLE 10-12: Activities and Occupied Times by Description

Description	Occupied Time	Count
At station	120.8	171
Busy	77.3	338
Court	88.4	100
Meeting	110.8	20
Miscellaneous	74.7	168
School	229.4	23
Training	76.3	169
Vehicle maintenance	66.7	17
Warrant	42.6	26
Weighted Average/Total Calls	**88.0**	**1,032**

Observations:

- The most common out-of-service activity was described as "busy."

- The activities with the longest average times were for school-related activities.

FIGURE 10-12: Activities per Day, by Month
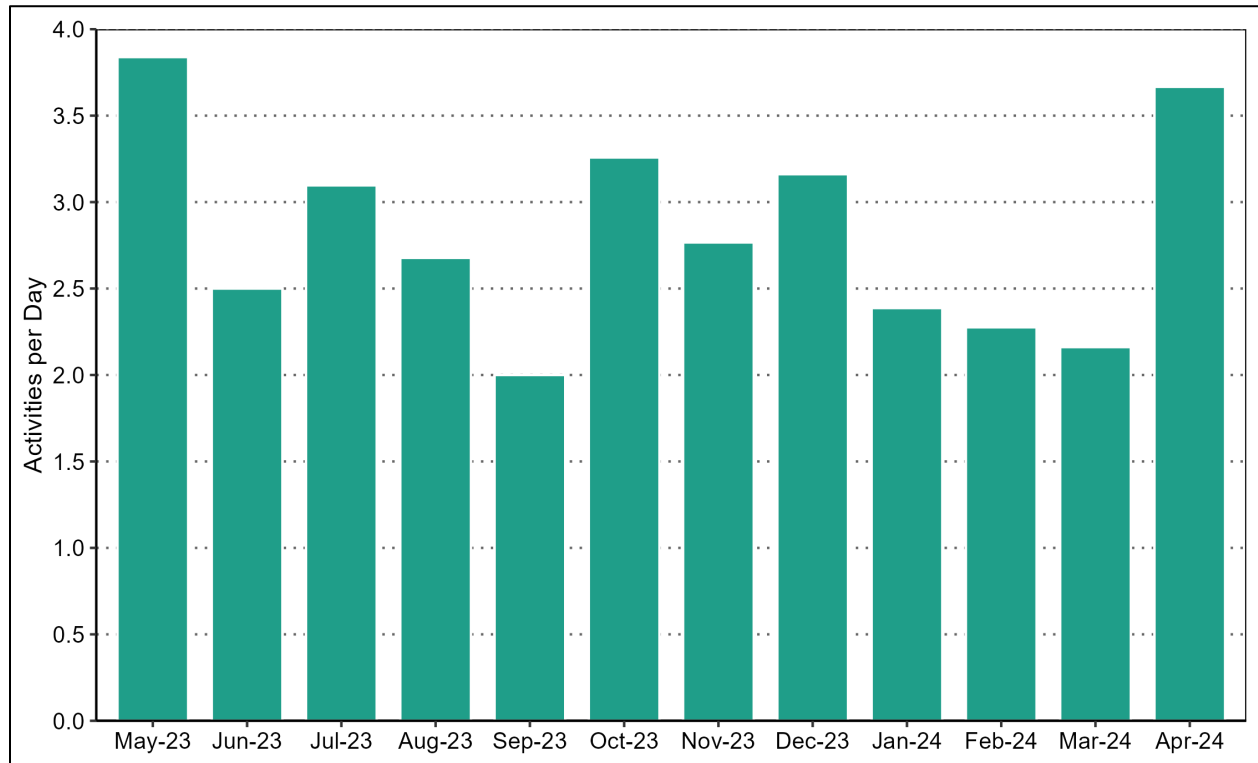
TABLE 10-13: Activities and Workload per Day, by Month

Month	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Activities	3.8	2.5	3.1	2.7	2.0	3.3	2.8	3.2	2.4	2.3	2.2	3.7
Work Hours	4.0	2.8	4.5	4.3	3.5	5.8	4.9	4.3	3.8	3.1	3.5	5.0

Observations:

- The number of activities per day was the lowest in September.

- The number of activities per day was highest in May.

FIGURE 10-13: Activities per Day, by Day of Week
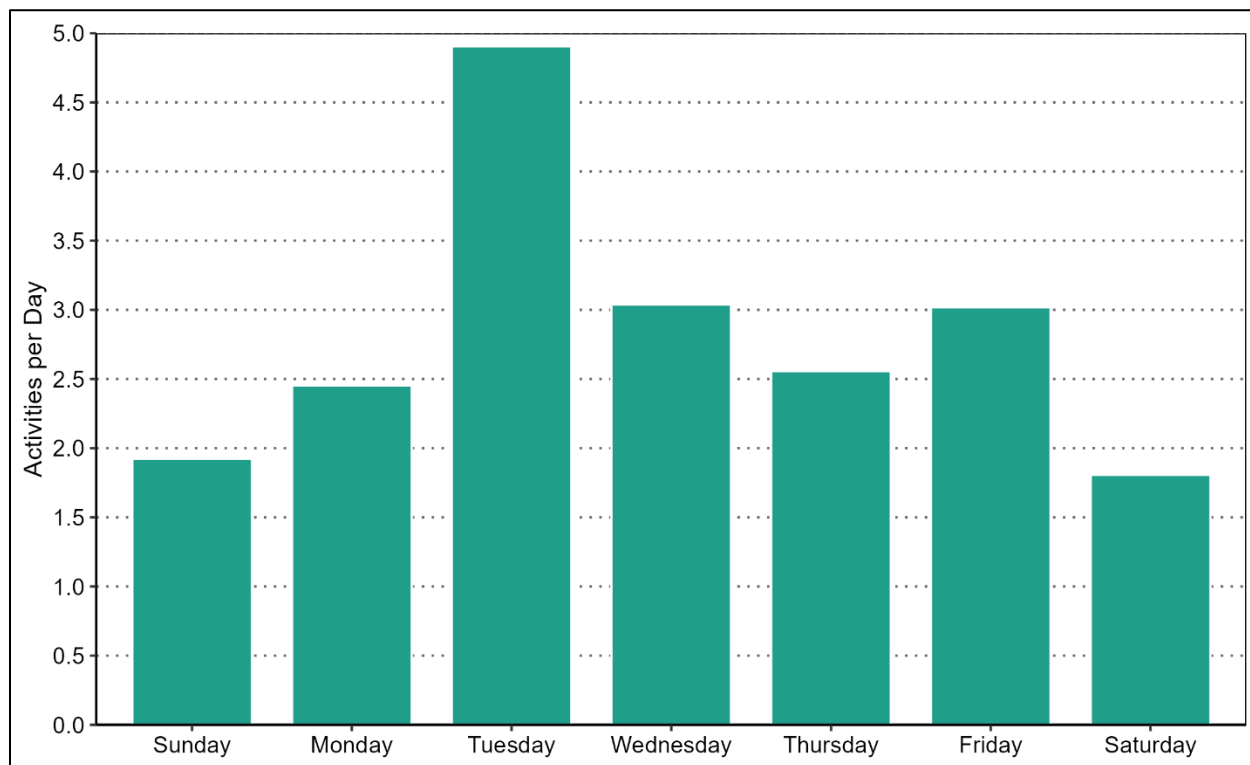
TABLE 10-14: Activities per Day, by Day of Week

Day of Week	Activities	Work Hours
Sunday	1.9	2.8
Monday	2.5	3.6
Tuesday	4.9	7.5
Wednesday	3.0	4.3
Thursday	2.6	3.9
Friday	3.0	4.6
Saturday	1.8	2.1
Weekly Average	**2.8**	**4.1**

Observations:

- The number of out-of-service activities per day was lowest on weekends.
- The number of out-of-service activities per day was highest on Tuesdays.

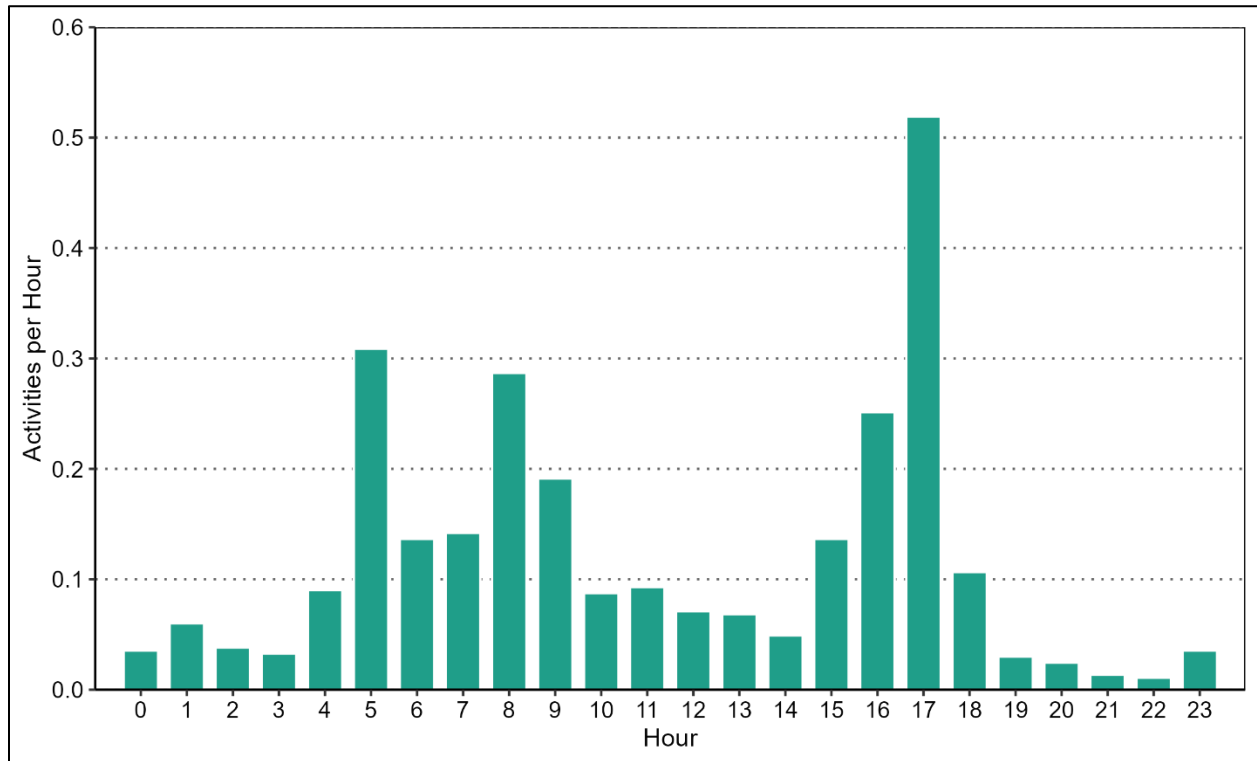**FIGURE 10-14: Activities per Day, by Hour of Day**

TABLE 10-15: Activities per Hour, by Hour of Day

Hour	Activities	Work Hours
0	0.04	0.03
1	0.06	0.06
2	0.04	0.03
3	0.03	0.04
4	0.09	0.08
5	0.31	0.60
6	0.14	0.14
7	0.14	0.39
8	0.29	0.54
9	0.19	0.22
10	0.09	0.08
11	0.09	0.15
12	0.07	0.12
13	0.07	0.09
14	0.05	0.07
15	0.14	0.20
16	0.25	0.40
17	0.52	0.67
18	0.11	0.13
19	0.03	0.01
20	0.02	0.02
21	0.01	0.01
22	0.01	0.01
23	0.04	0.04
Hourly Average	**0.12**	**0.17**

Observations:

- The number of activities per hour was lowest between 10:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

- The number of activities per hour was highest between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

DEPLOYMENT

For this study, we examined deployment information for eight weeks in summer (July 7 through August 31, 2023) and eight weeks in winter (January 4 through February 28, 2024). The department's main patrol force consists of patrol officers and patrol sergeants, operating on 12-hour shifts starting at 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. The police department's main patrol force deployed an average of 4.8 officers per hour during the 24-hour day in summer 2023 and an average of 4.5 officers per hour in winter 2024. When additional traffic units are included, the department averaged 5.2 units per hour during the 24-hour day in summer 2023 and 4.7 units per hour during the 24-hour day in winter 2024.

In this section, we describe the deployment and workload in distinct steps, distinguishing between summer and winter and between weekdays (Monday through Friday) and weekends (Saturday and Sunday):

- First, we focus on patrol deployment alone.

- Next, we compare "all" workload, which includes community-initiated calls, police-initiated calls, directed patrol activities, and out-of-service activities.

- Finally, we compare the workload against deployment by percentage.

Comments follow each set of four figures, with separate discussions for summer and winter.

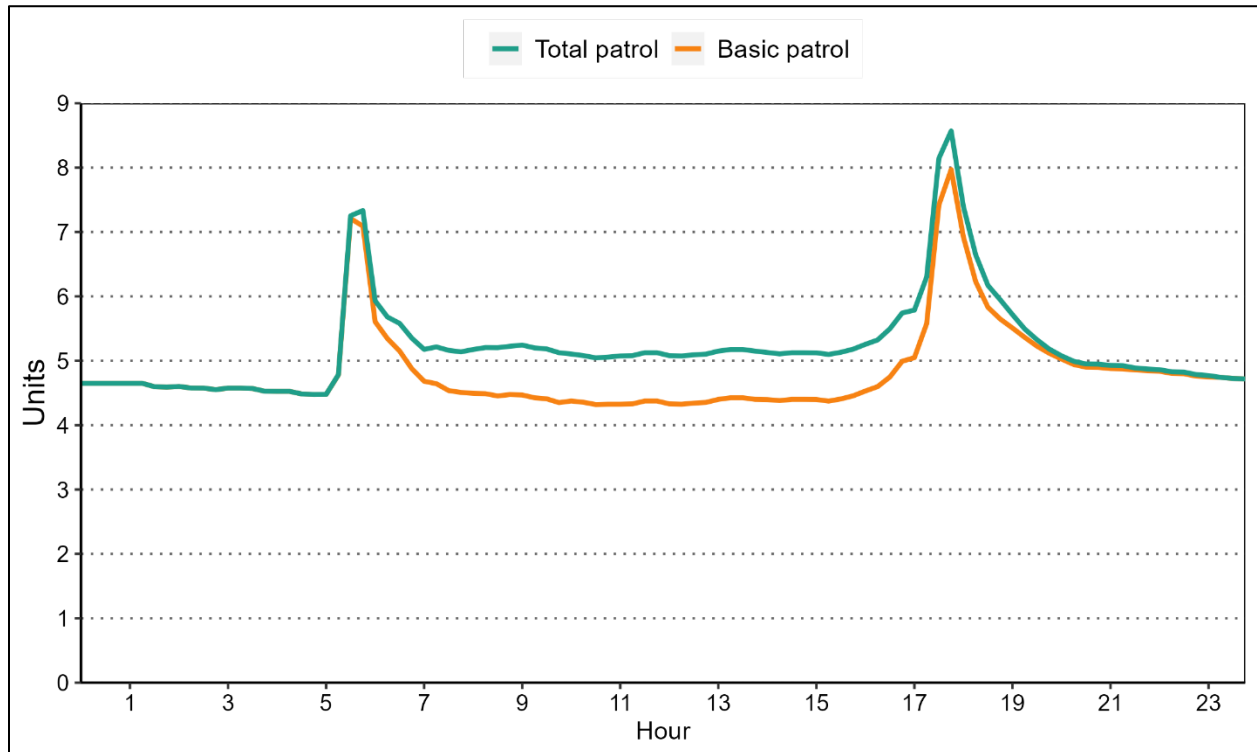## FIGURE 10-15: Deployed Officers, Weekdays, Summer 2023

FIGURE 10-16: Deployed Officers, Weekends, Summer 2023
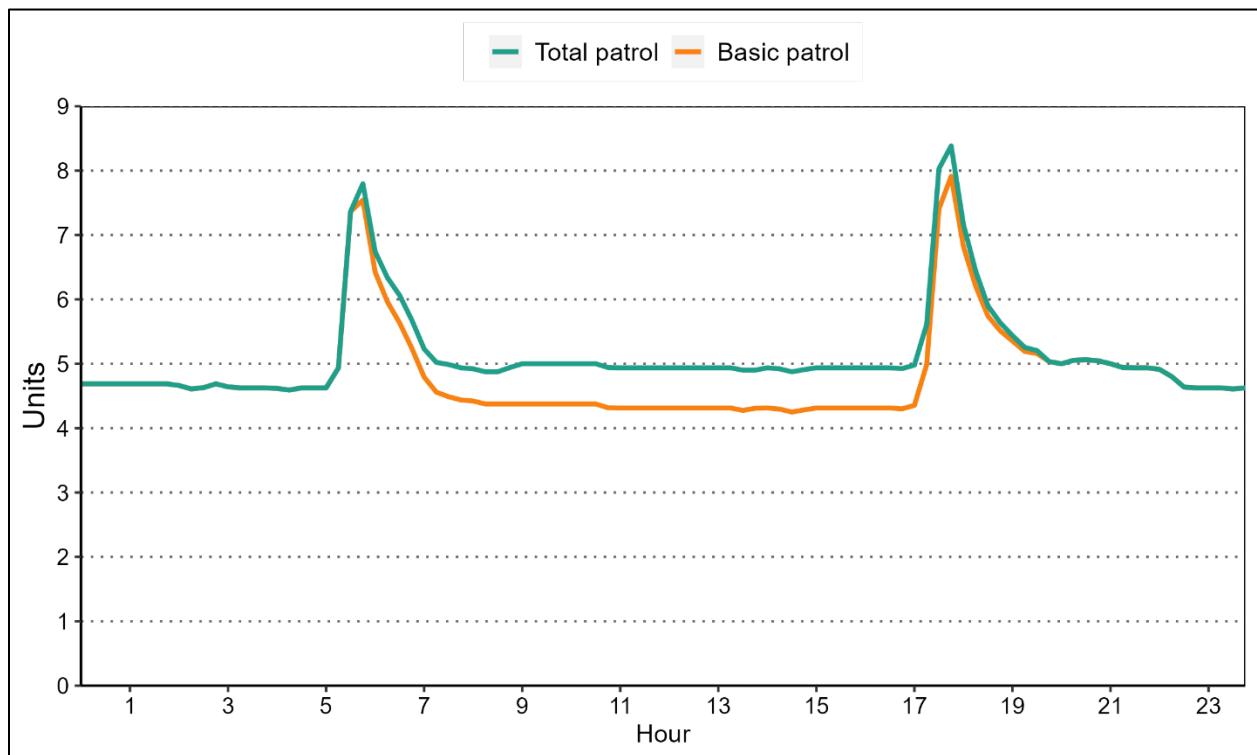
FIGURE 10-17: Deployed Officers, Weekdays, Winter 2024
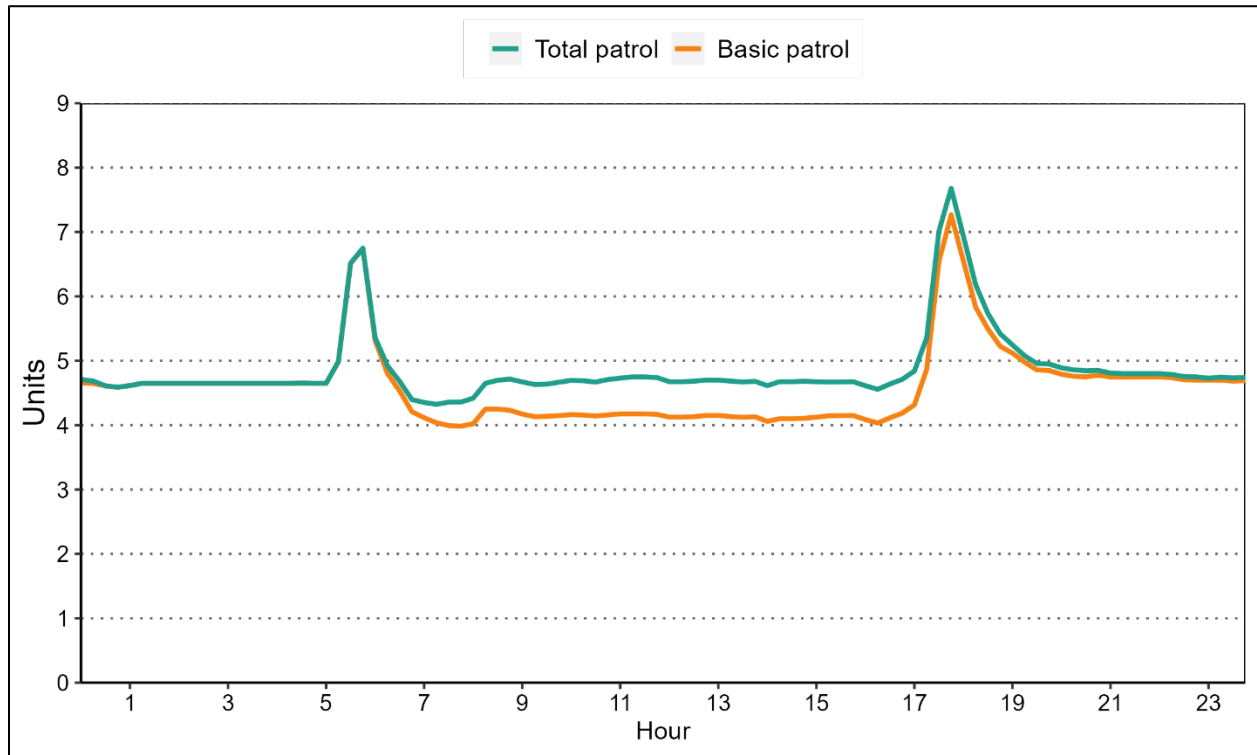
FIGURE 10-18: Deployed Officers, Weekends, Winter 2024
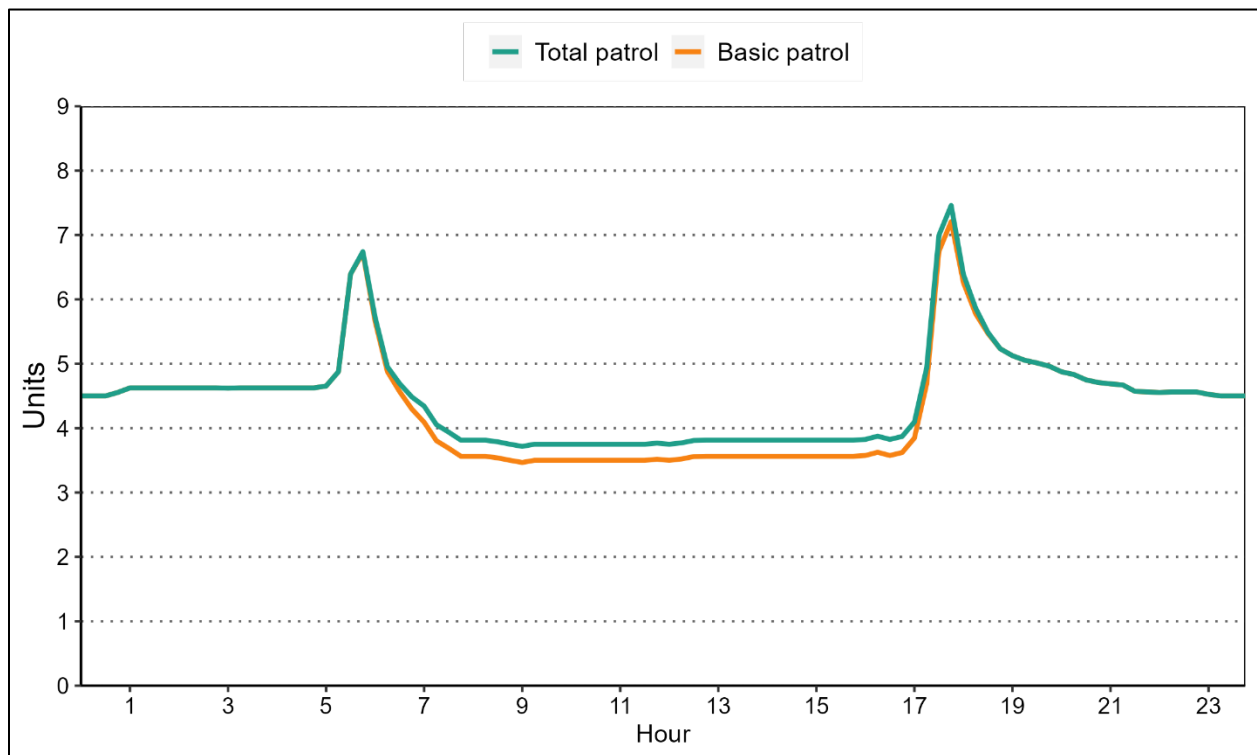
Observations:

- For Summer (July 7 through August 31, 2023):

  - The average deployment was 5.2 units per hour during the week and 5.1 units per hour on the weekend.

  - Average deployment varied from 4.5 to 8.6 units per hour on weekdays and 4.6 to 8.4 units per hour on weekends.

- For Winter (January 4 through February 28, 2024):

  - The average deployment was 4.9 units per hour during the week and 4.5 units per hour on the weekend.

  - Average deployment varied from 4.3 to 7.7 units per hour on weekdays and 3.7 to 7.5 units per hour on weekends.

FIGURE 10-19: Deployment and All Workload, Weekdays, Summer 2023

FIGURE 10-20: Deployment and All Workload, Weekends, Summer 2023
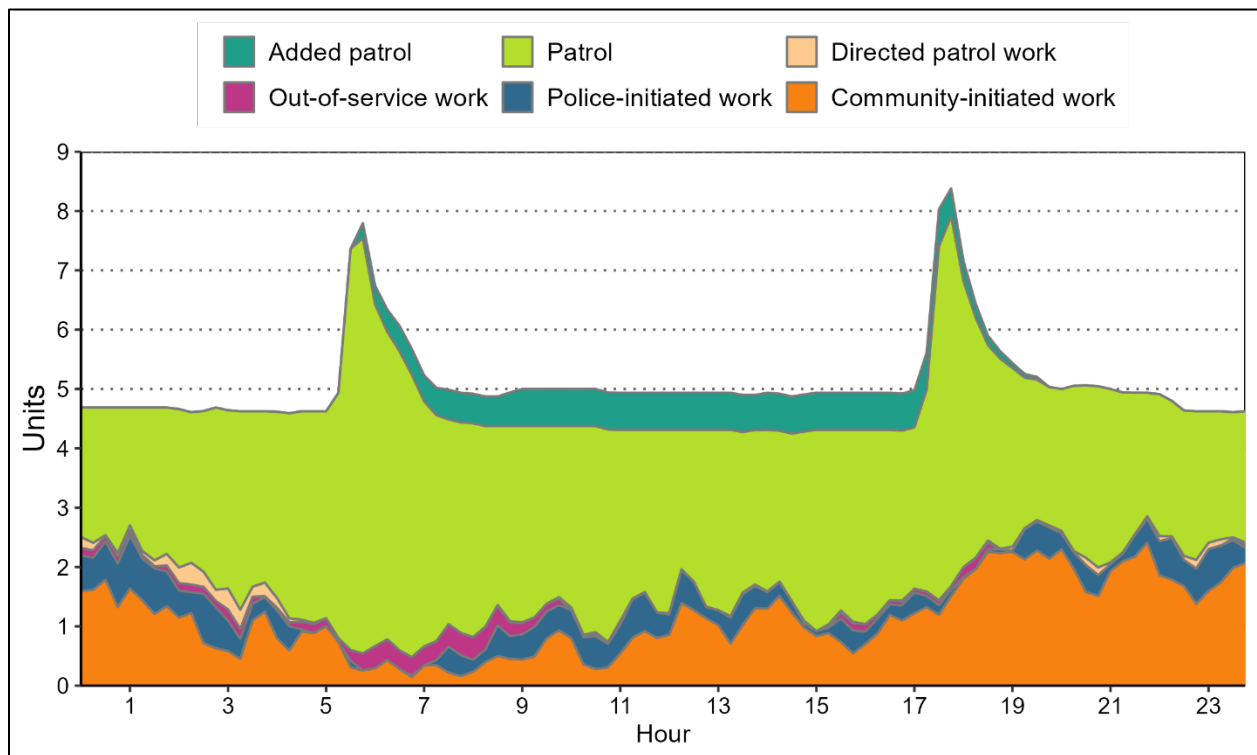
FIGURE 10-21: Deployment and All Workload, Weekdays, Winter 2024
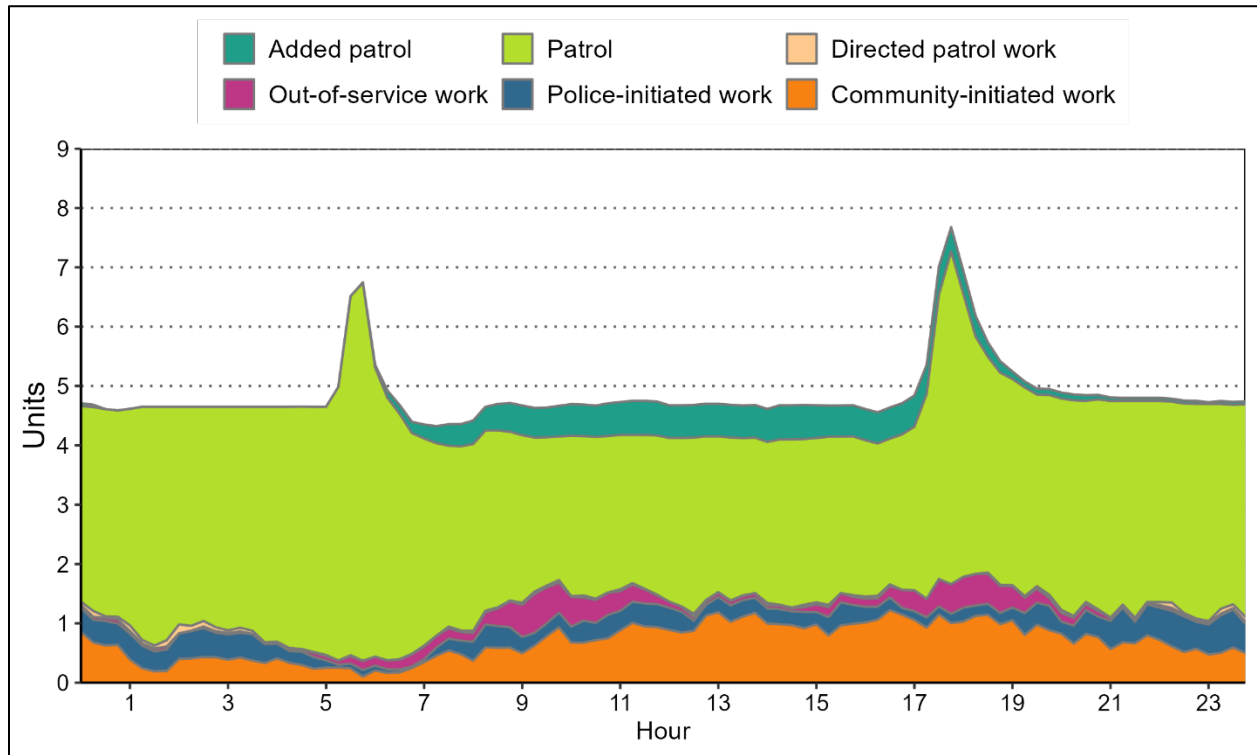
FIGURE 10-22: Deployment and All Workload, Weekends, Winter 2024
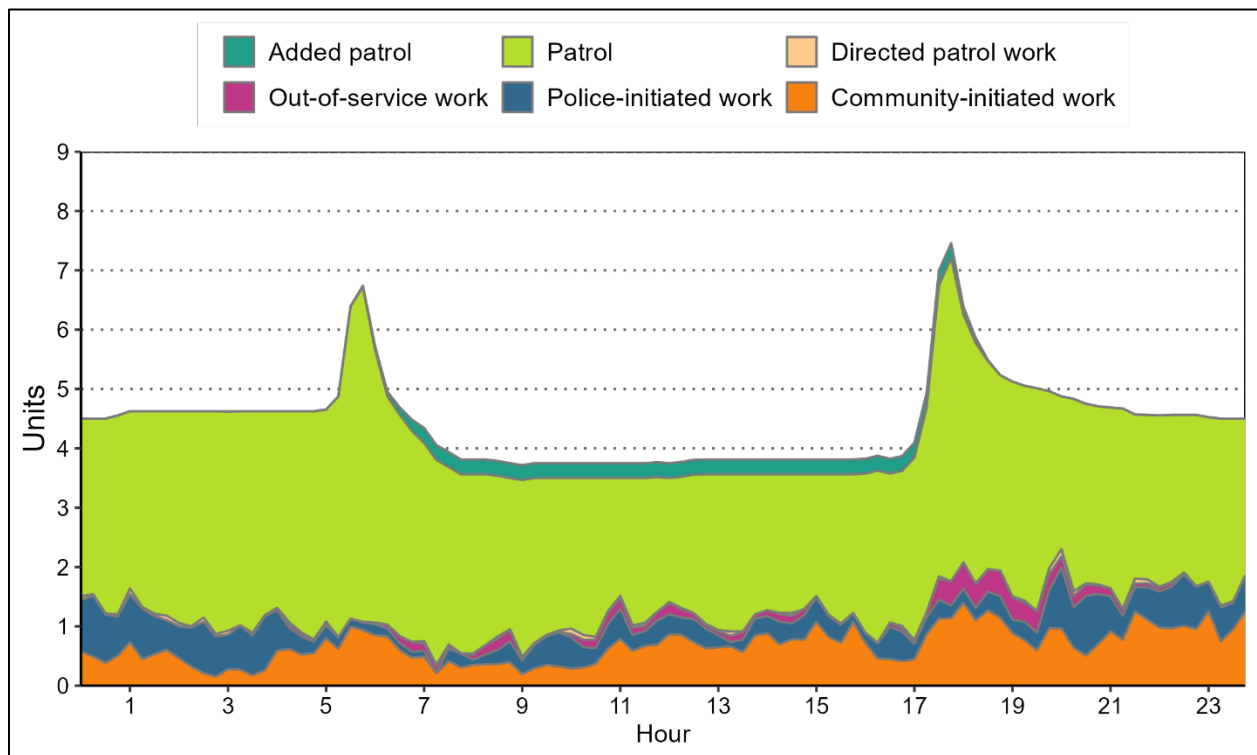
Note: Figures 10-19 to 10-22 show deployment along with all workloads from community-initiated calls and police-initiated calls, directed patrol work, and out-of-service work.

Observations:

Summer:

- Community-initiated work:

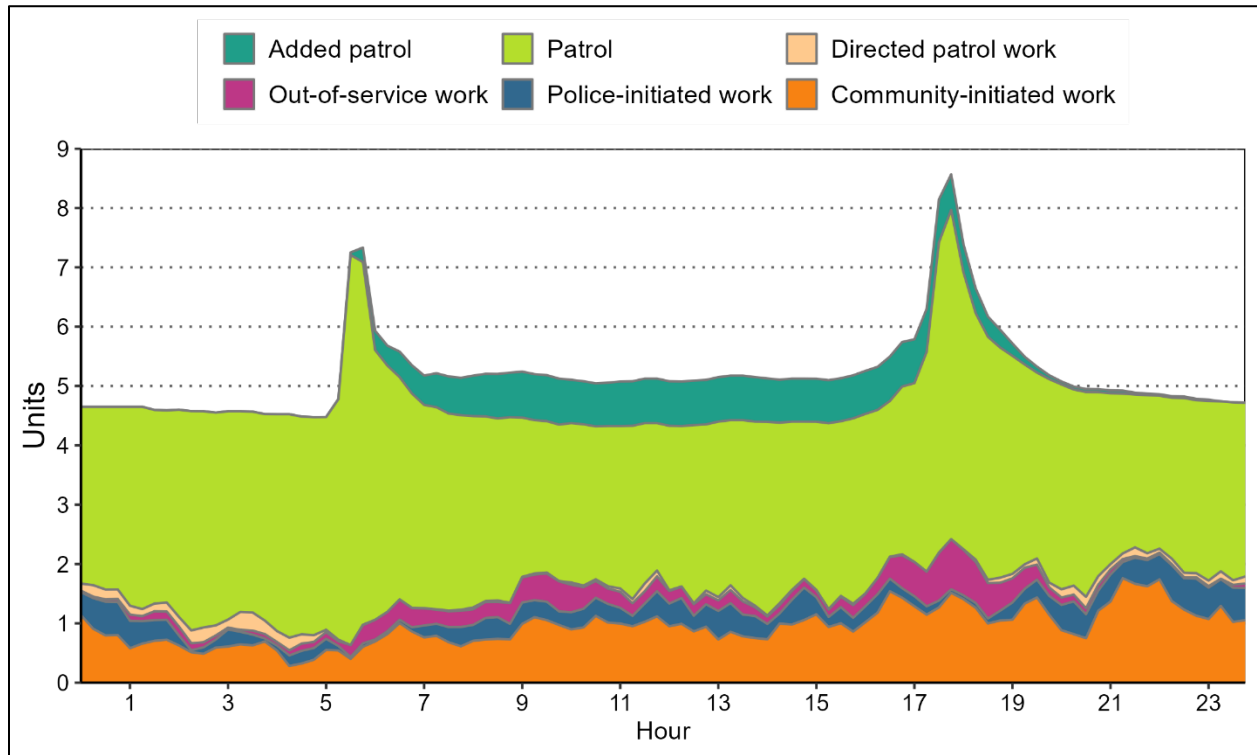 □ Average community-initiated workload was 0.9 units per hour during the week and 1.1 units per hour on weekends.

  □ This was approximately 18 percent of hourly deployment during the week and 22 percent of hourly deployment on weekends.

- All work:

  □ Average workload was 1.5 units per hour during the week and 1.6 units per hour on weekends.

  □ This was approximately 29 percent of hourly deployment during the week and 32 percent of hourly deployment on weekends.

Winter:

- Community-initiated work:

  □ Average community-initiated workload was 0.7 units per hour during the week and 0.7 units per hour on weekends.

  □ This was approximately 14 percent of hourly deployment during the week and 15 percent of hourly deployment on weekends.

- All work:

  □ Average workload was 1.2 units per hour during the week and 1.2 units per hour on weekends.

  □ This was approximately 25 percent of hourly deployment during the week and 27 percent of hourly deployment on weekends.

FIGURE 10-23: Percentage of Workload, Weekdays, Summer 2023
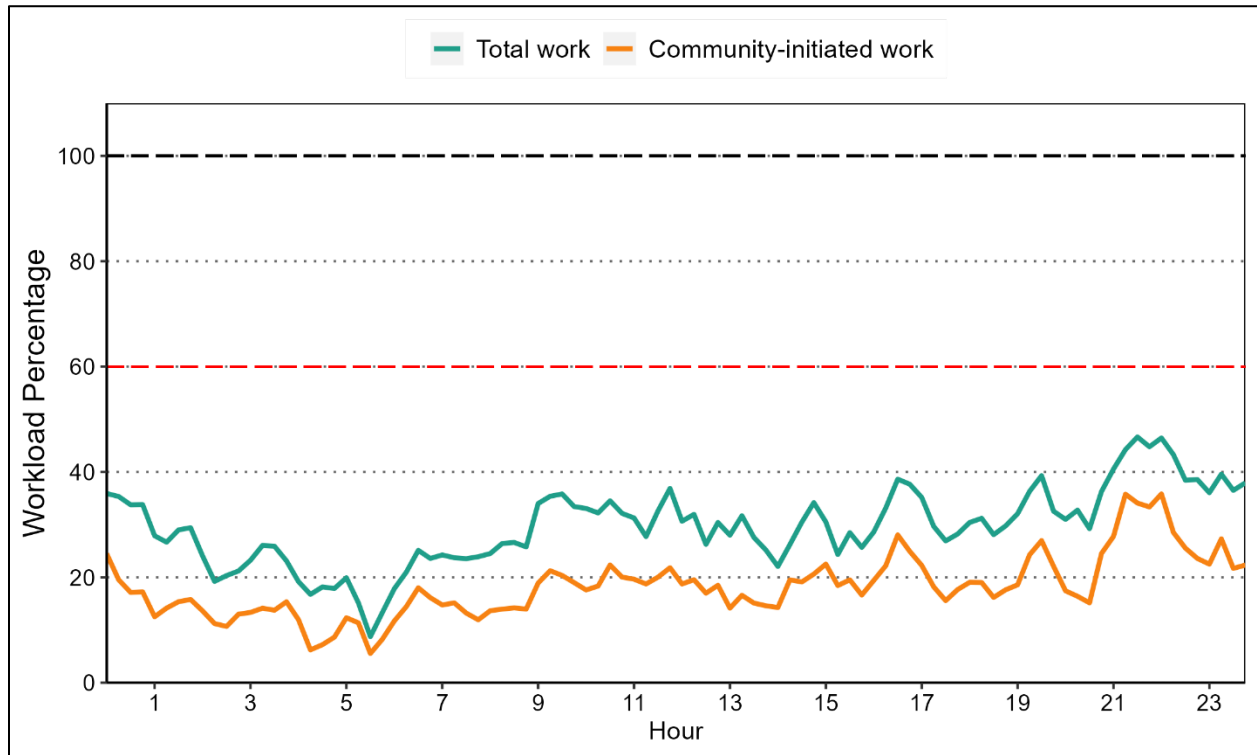
FIGURE 10-24: Percentage of Workload, Weekends, Summer 2023
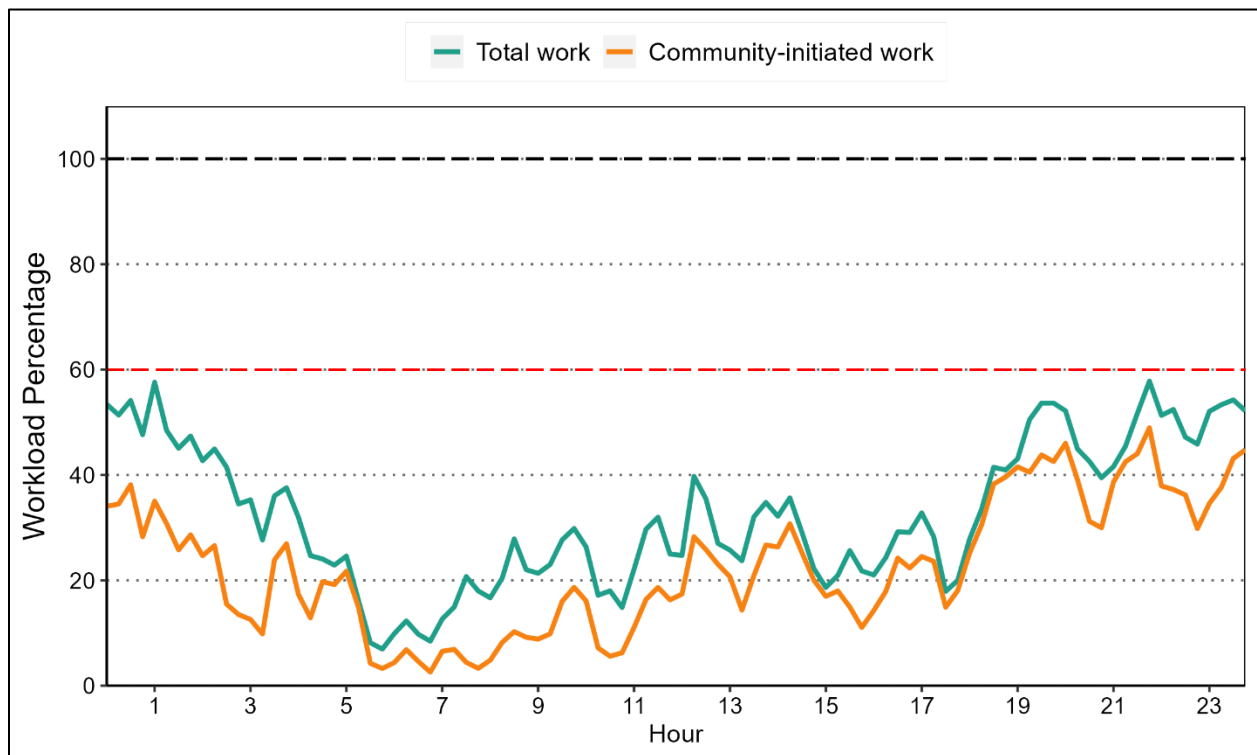
FIGURE 10-25: Percentage of Workload, Weekdays, Winter 2024
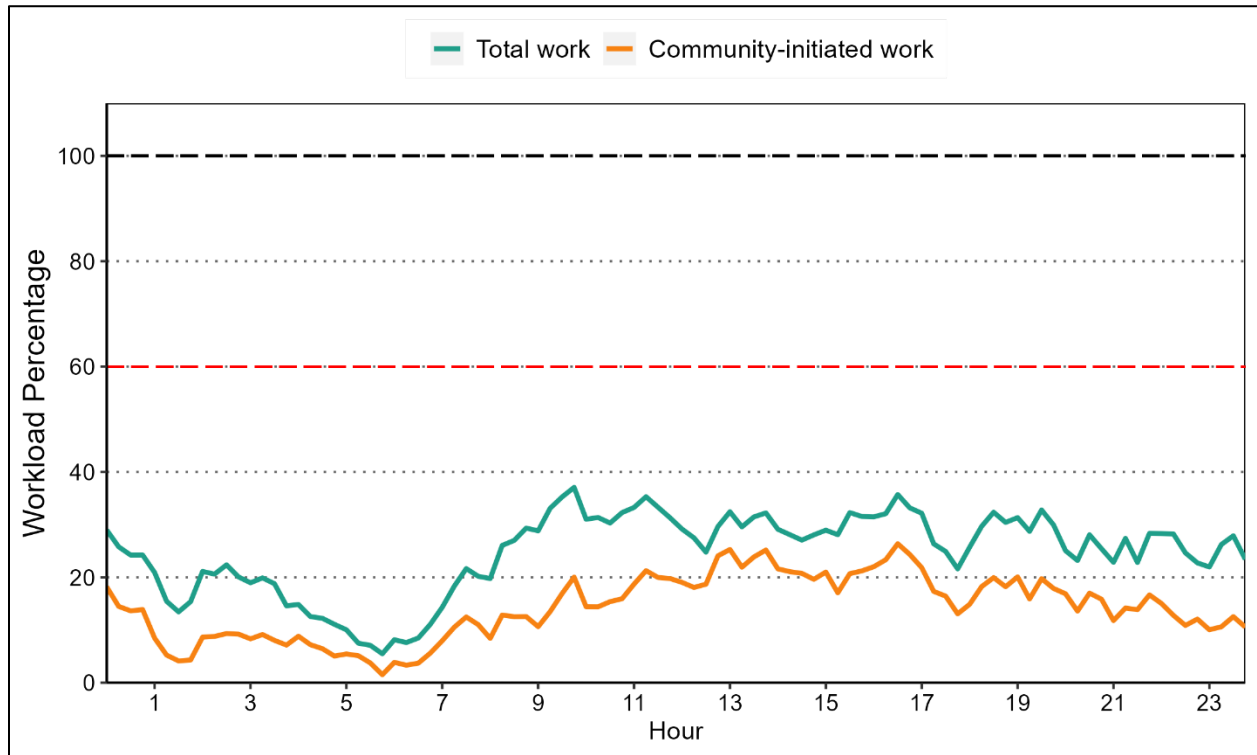
FIGURE 10-26: Percentage of Workload, Weekends, Winter 2024
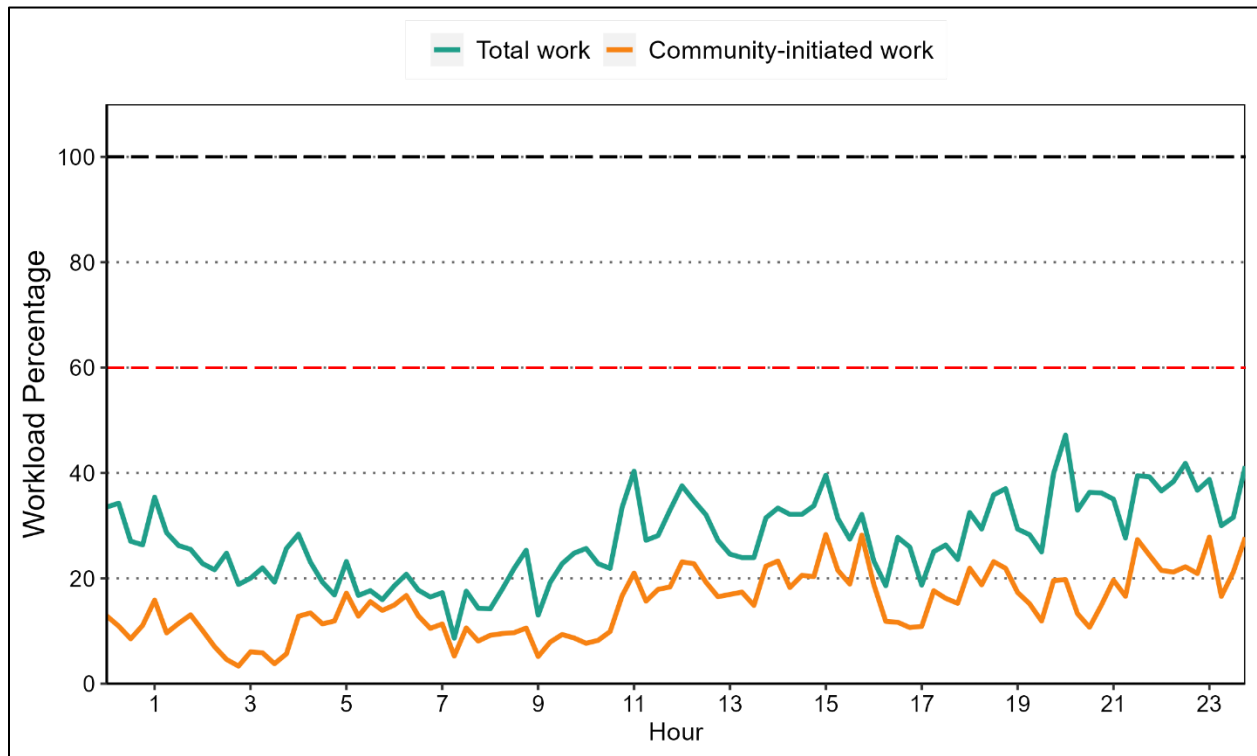
Observations:

Summer:

- Community-initiated work:

  - During the week, the workload reached a maximum of 36 percent of deployment between 9:15 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. and between 10:00 p.m. and 10:15 p.m.

  - On weekends, the workload reached a maximum of 49 percent of deployment between 9:45 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

- All work:

  - During the week, the workload reached a maximum of 47 percent of deployment between 9:30 p.m. and 9:45 p.m. and between 10:00 p.m. and 10:15 p.m.

  - On weekends, the workload reached a maximum of 58 percent of deployment between 1:00 a.m. and 1:15 a.m. and between 9:45 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Winter:

- Community-initiated work:

  - During the week, the workload reached a maximum of 26 percent of deployment between 4:30 p.m. and 4:45 p.m.

  - On weekends, the workload reached a maximum of 28 percent of deployment between 3:00 p.m. and 3:15 p.m., between 3:45 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., between 11:00 p.m. and 11:15 p.m., and between 11:45 p.m. and 12:00 a.m.

- All work:

  - During the week, the workload reached a maximum of 37 percent of deployment between 9:45 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

  - On weekends, the workload reached a maximum of 47 percent of deployment between 8:00 p.m. and 8:15 p.m.

RESPONSE TIMES

We analyzed the response times to various types of calls, separating the duration into dispatch processing and travel time, to determine whether response times varied by call type. Response time is measured as the difference between when a call is received and when the first unit arrives on scene. This is further divided into dispatch processing and travel time. Dispatch processing is the time between when a call is received and when the first unit is dispatched. Travel time is the remaining time until the first unit arrives on scene.

We begin the discussion with statistics that include all calls combined. We started with 2,751 calls in summer and 2,332 calls in winter. We limited our analysis to community-initiated calls, which amounted to 1,703 calls in the summer and 1,320 calls in the winter. In addition, we removed the calls lacking a recorded arriving unit and calls outside Bluffton patrol beats. We were left with 1,188 calls in summer and 897 calls in winter for our analysis. For the entire year, we began with 16,465 calls and limited our analysis to 10,175 community-initiated calls. With similar exclusions, we were left with 6,921 calls.

Our initial analysis does not distinguish calls based on priority; instead, it examines the difference in response to all calls by time of day and compares winter and summer periods. We then present a brief analysis of response time for high-priority calls alone.

All Calls

This section looks at all calls without considering their priorities. In addition to examining the differences in response times by both time of day and season (summer vs. winter), we show differences in response times by category.

FIGURE 10-27: Average Response Time and Dispatch Processing, by Hour of Day, Summer 2023 and Winter 2024
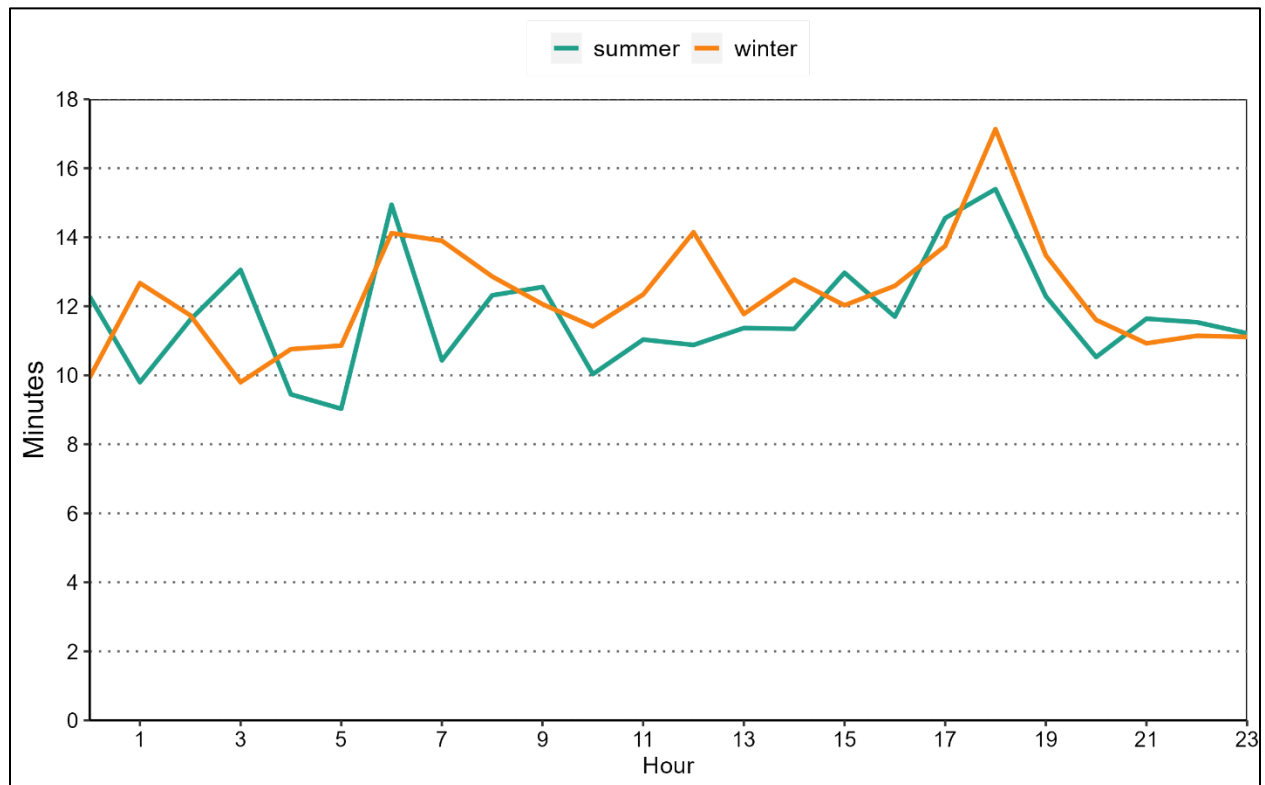
Observations:

- Average response times varied significantly by the hour of the day.

- In summer, the longest response times were between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., with an average of 15.4 minutes.

- In summer, the shortest response times were between 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., with an average of 9.0 minutes.

- In winter, the longest response times were between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., with an average of 17.1 minutes.

- In winter, the shortest response times were between 3:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m., with an average of 9.8 minutes.

FIGURE 10-28: Average Response Time by Category, Summer 2023
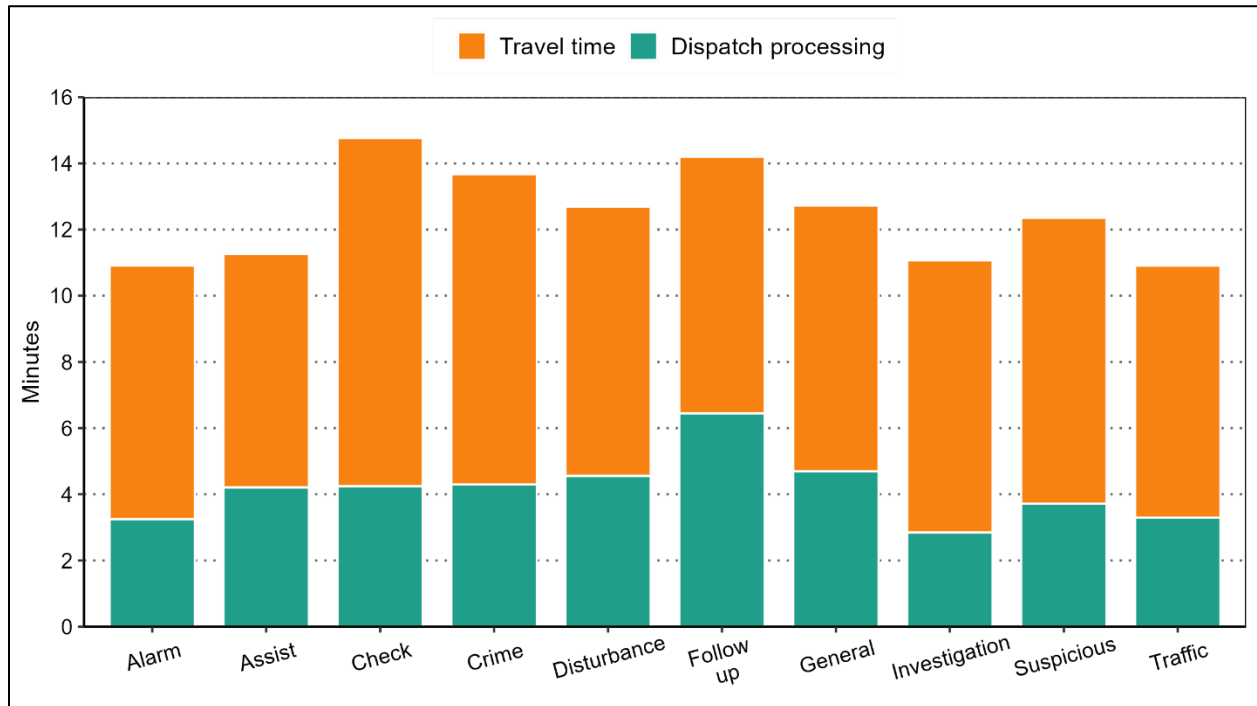
FIGURE 10-29: Average Response Time by Category, Winter 2024
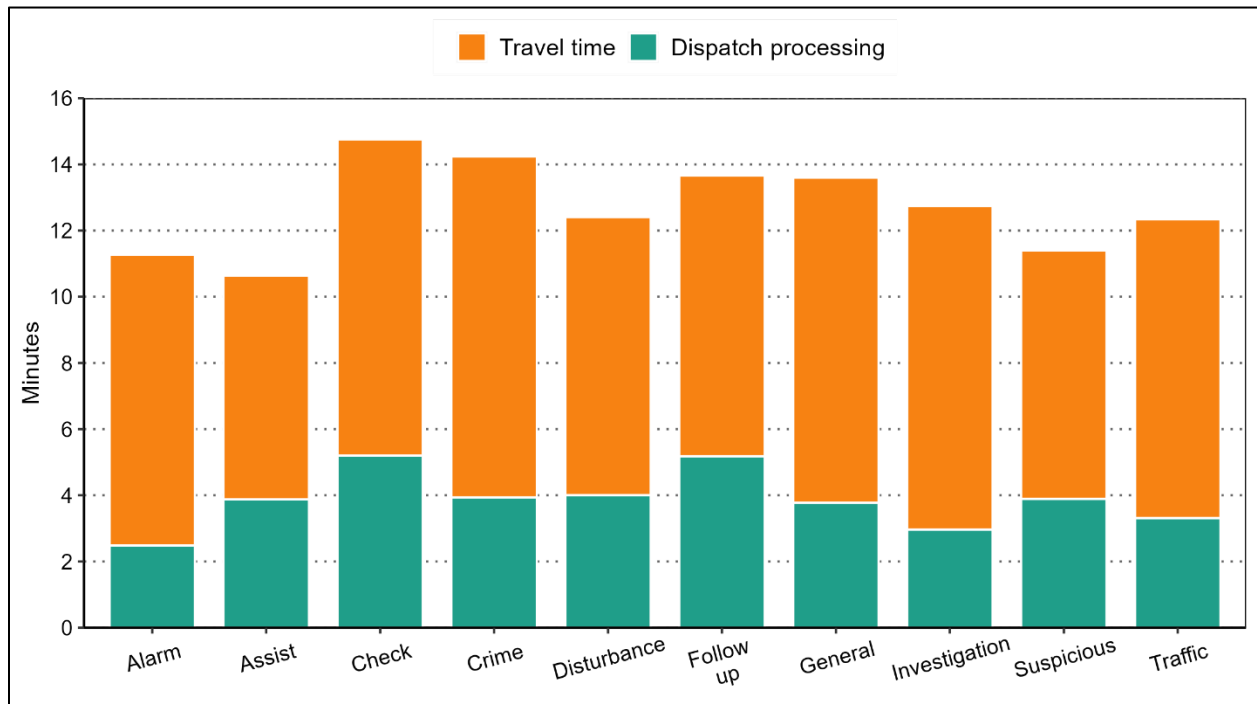
TABLE 10-16: Average Response Time Components, by Category

Category	Summer Minutes			Count	Winter Minutes			Count
	Dispatch	Travel	Response		Dispatch	Travel	Response	
Accident	3.1	7.6	10.7	171	3.3	8.3	11.6	135
Alarm	3.3	7.7	10.9	229	2.5	8.8	11.3	136
Animal call	6.0	6.1	12.1	10	3.8	12.3	16.1	9
Assist citizen	5.2	8.2	13.4	43	4.8	7.9	12.7	31
Assist EMS	3.6	6.1	9.7	34	3.1	5.4	8.5	24
Assist other agency	1.9	4.7	6.6	8	1.8	6.0	7.9	5
Check	4.2	10.5	14.8	30	5.2	9.6	14.8	38
Crime against persons	5.0	11.7	16.7	16	3.4	8.4	11.8	21
Crime against property	4.5	9.3	13.7	101	3.8	11.6	15.4	61
Crime against society	2.5	7.7	10.2	15	5.4	7.0	12.4	12
Disturbance	4.6	8.1	12.7	185	4.0	8.4	12.4	177
Follow-up	6.4	7.8	14.2	23	5.2	8.5	13.7	25
Investigation	2.8	8.2	11.1	163	3.0	9.8	12.7	100
Mental health	3.9	7.2	11.1	19	2.5	5.1	7.6	10
Miscellaneous	5.8	9.2	15.0	20	4.4	9.8	14.1	20
Suspicious incident	3.7	8.6	12.4	62	3.9	7.5	11.4	46
Traffic enforcement	5.0	6.4	11.4	20	3.0	11.7	14.8	20
Traffic hazard	3.6	8.6	12.1	21	3.4	12.8	16.2	13
Violation	3.6	8.7	12.3	18	3.8	11.7	15.5	14
Total Average	**3.8**	**8.1**	**11.9**	**1,188**	**3.6**	**8.9**	**12.5**	**897**

Note: The total average is weighted according to the number of calls per category.

Observations:

■ In summer, the average response time was as short as 11 minutes (for alarms and traffic calls) and as long as 15 minutes (for checks).

■ In winter, the average response time was as short as 11 minutes (for assists) and as long as 15 minutes (for checks).

■ The average response time for crimes was 14 minutes in summer and winter.

TABLE 10-17: 90th Percentiles for Response Time Components, by Category

Category	Minutes in Summer			Minutes in Winter		
	Dispatch	Travel	Response	Dispatch	Travel	Response
Accident	4.7	13.6	17.6	6.1	14.4	18.7
Alarm	4.6	15.0	18.6	3.7	18.4	21.7
Animal call	10.8	8.8	18.7	5.6	21.7	28.4
Assist citizen	10.2	14.3	26.8	7.4	13.0	21.2
Assist EMS	6.6	10.0	17.7	4.4	7.9	11.9
Assist other agency	2.8	9.7	12.0	2.6	8.5	11.0
Check	7.5	20.9	27.3	7.8	18.6	27.0
Crime against persons	12.0	24.5	32.6	5.2	13.6	17.8
Crime against property	7.0	18.6	23.1	6.5	20.8	26.0
Crime against society	3.8	12.2	15.6	11.0	11.3	22.4
Disturbance	6.9	14.6	22.0	6.4	16.1	21.3
Follow-up	15.1	29.7	39.4	7.9	20.0	40.2
Investigation	4.3	14.7	18.7	4.8	20.7	22.8
Mental health	6.2	13.7	18.6	3.7	9.4	11.9
Miscellaneous	11.3	16.3	30.2	9.6	18.7	23.0
Suspicious incident	5.0	14.2	20.3	5.0	14.4	17.6
Traffic enforcement	8.2	12.8	21.7	4.6	32.5	33.4
Traffic hazard	5.6	14.4	16.2	5.4	26.2	29.8
Violation	5.5	14.8	17.7	5.4	16.8	21.6
Total Average	**5.9**	**15.2**	**21.0**	**6.2**	**17.1**	**22.7**

Note: A 90th percentile value of 21.0 minutes means that 90 percent of all calls are responded to in fewer than 21.0 minutes. For this reason, the columns for dispatch processing and travel time may not be equal to the total response time.

Observations:

- In summer, the 90th percentile value for response time was as short as 19 minutes (for alarms) and as long as 39 minutes (for follow-up calls).

- In winter, the 90th percentile value for response time was as short as 16 minutes (for assists) and as long as 40 minutes (for follow-up calls).

FIGURE 10-30: Average Response Time Components, by Beat
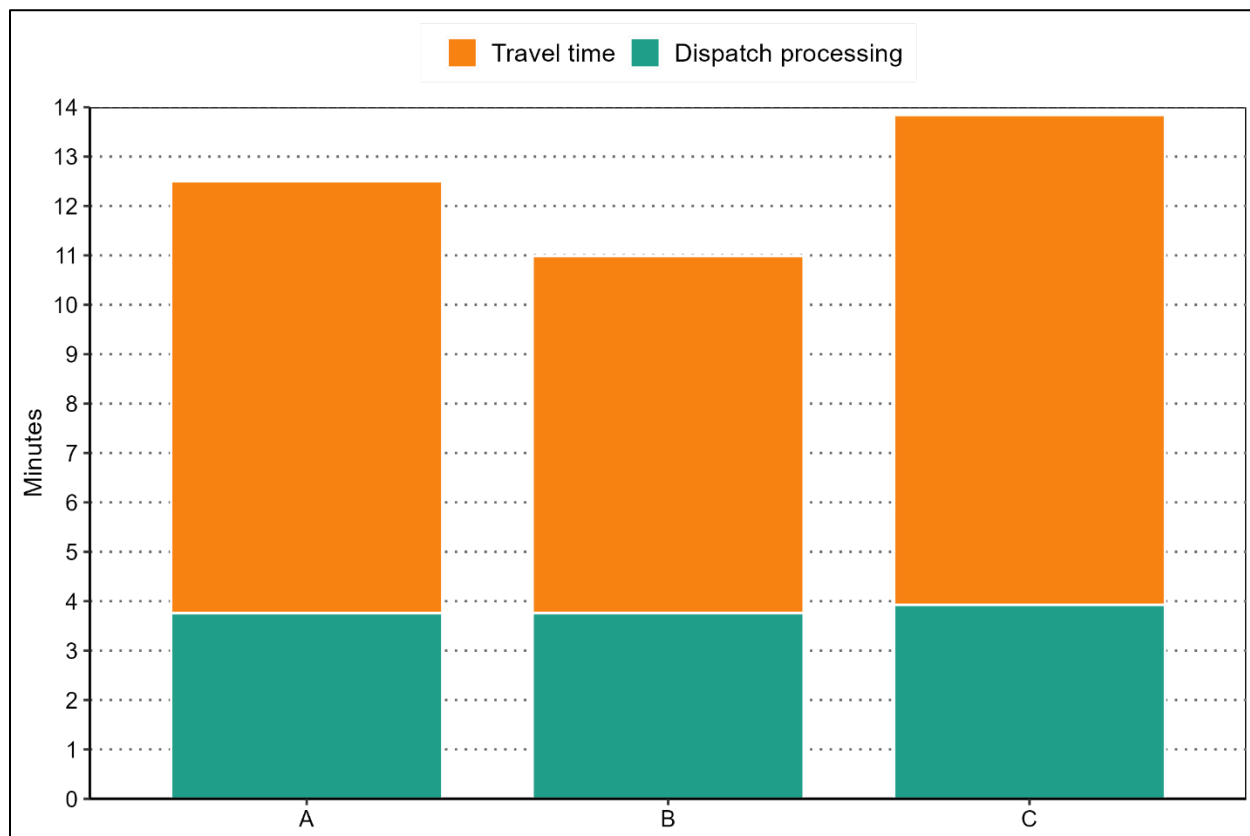
TABLE 10-18: Average Response Time Components, by Beat

Beat	Minutes			Calls
	Dispatch	Travel	Response	
A1	3.9	9.2	13.1	1,172
A2	3.7	8.5	12.2	2,003
Subtotal A	**3.8**	**8.7**	**12.5**	**3,175**
B1	4.0	7.8	11.8	985
B2	3.5	6.7	10.2	1,011
Subtotal B	**3.8**	**7.2**	**11.0**	**1,996**
C1	3.9	11.0	14.9	757
C2	4.0	9.1	13.0	993
Subtotal C	**3.9**	**9.9**	**13.8**	**1,750**
Total	**3.8**	**8.6**	**12.4**	**6,921**

Observations:

- All three beats have a similar dispatch processing time of approximately 4.0 minutes.

- Beat B had the shortest average response time of 11.0 minutes.

- Beat C had the longest average response time of 13.8 minutes.

High-Priority Calls

The department assigned priorities to calls with Priority 1 as the highest priority. The following table shows average response times by priority. In addition, we identified injury accidents based on the call descriptions, "ACCIDENT W/INJU" and "HIT & RUN W/INJ," to see if these provided an alternate measure for emergency calls.

TABLE 10-19: Average and 90th Percentile Response Times, by Priority

Priority	Minutes			Calls	90th Percentile Response Time, Minutes
	Dispatch	Travel	Response		
1	3.3	8.2	11.5	3,670	20.4
3	4.1	9.1	13.2	2,036	23.2
5	4.8	9.1	13.9	1,215	26.4
Total	**3.8**	**8.6**	**12.4**	**6,921**	**22.2**
Injury accident	2.3	5.7	8.0	245	13.3

Note: The total average is weighted according to the number of calls within each priority level.

FIGURE 10-31: Average Response Times and Dispatch Processing for High-priority Calls, by Hour
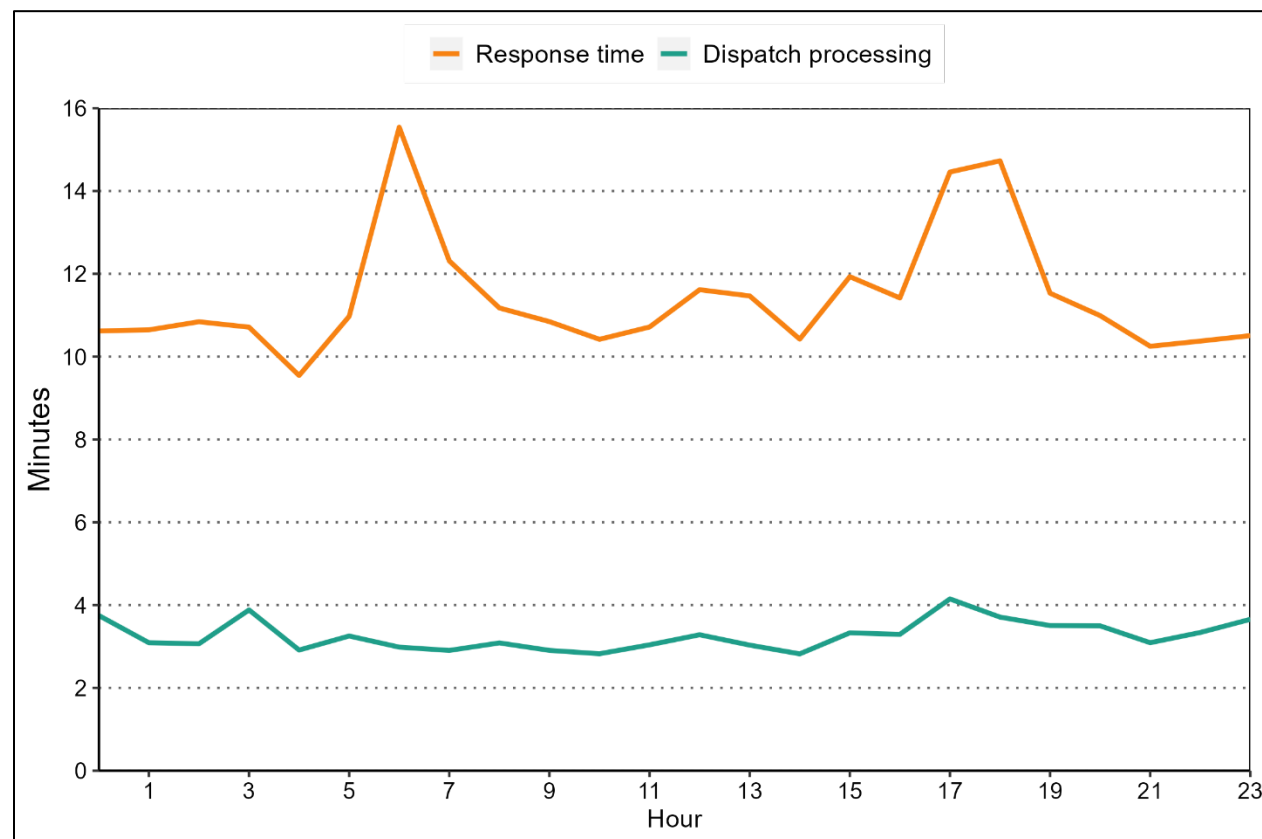
Observations:

- High-priority calls had an average response time of 11.5 minutes, lower than the overall average of 12.4 minutes for all calls.

- Average dispatch processing was 3.3 minutes for high-priority calls, compared to 3.8 minutes overall.

- For high-priority calls, the longest response times were between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m., with an average of 15.5 minutes.

- For high-priority calls, the shortest response times were between 4:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m., with an average of 9.5 minutes.

- Average response time for injury accidents was 8.0 minutes, with a dispatch processing of 2.3 minutes.

APPENDIX A: CALL TYPE CLASSIFICATION

Call descriptions for the department's calls for service from May 1, 2023, to April 30, 2024, were classified into the following categories.

TABLE 10-20: Call Type, by Category

Call Type Description	Table Category	Figure Category
ACTIVATED ALARM	Alarm	Alarm
ALARM BUSINESS		
ASSIST MOTORIST	Assist citizen	Assist
ASSIST OTHER		
FUNERAL ESCORT		
EMS ALTERED MEN	Assist EMS	
EMS CARDIAC ARR		
EMS DROWNING		
EMS GENERAL MED		
EMS OVERDOSE		
EMS SNAKE ANIMA		
MAN DOWN		
PERSONAL INJURY		
FIRE ELECTRICAL	Assist other agency	
FIRE STRUCTURE		
FIRE VEHICLE		
MUTUAL AID		
PATIENT WATCH		
WATER EMERGENCY		
WATER NON EMERG		
HEALTH WELFARE	Check	Check
ARMED ROBBERY	Crime against persons	Crime
ASSAULT/BATTERY		
CHILD ABUSE/NEG		
ELDER ABUSE		
GUNSHOT WD		
HARAS PHON CALL		
HARASSMENT		
KIDNAPPING		
SEXUAL ASSAULT		
STALKING		
STRONG ARM ROBB		
B & E	Crime against property	
BREACH OF TRUST		
BURGLARY		
DEFRAUD INKEEP		
DUMPING UNLAWFU		

Call Type Description	Table Category	Figure Category
FORGERY		
FRAUD/SCAM		
PROP DAMAGE		
PROWLER		
SHOPLIFTING		
STOLEN PROPERTY		
STOLEN VEHICLE		
TRESPASSING		
VANDALISM		
CRUELTY/ANIMALS	Crime against society	
FIGHT		
INDECENT EXPOSU		
NARCOTIC		
SCHOOL THREATS		
WEAPON		
EXTRA PAT BUSIN	Directed patrol	Directed patrol
EXTRA PAT RESID		
FOOT PATROL		
DISTURBANCE	Disturbance	Disturbance
DOMESTIC		
DOMESTIC ESCORT		
FIREWORKS		
INTOX PERSON		
NOISE COMPLAINT		
CASE FOLLOW UP	Follow up	Follow-up
ANIMAL INCIDENT	Animal call	General noncriminal
SCHOOL VISIT	Community activity	
RUNAWAY	Juvenile	
MENTAL SUB TRAN	Mental health	
SUICIDE		
SUICIDE ATTEMPT		
SUICIDE THREATS		
CALL TRANSFER	Miscellaneous	
CIVIL PROCESS		
CIVL DISPUTE		
COMMUNITY RELAT		
COMPLAINTS		
DISPOSAL W/AMMO		
ESCORT		
INFORMATION		
MISC CALL		
PHONE CALL		

Call Type Description	Table Category	Figure Category
SPECIAL EVENT		
STORM CALL		
CODES VIOLATION	Violation	
PARKING VIOLATI		
SERVICE/WARRANT	Warrant	
911 H/U NO RES	Investigation	Investigation
911 HANG-UP		
ABANDONED BOAT		
ABANDONED TRAIL		
ABANDONED VEHIC		
FOUND NARCOTIC		
FOUND PROPERTY		
LOST PROPERTY		
MISS PERSON		
SHOTS FIRED	Suspicious incident	Suspicious incident
SUSP ACTIVITY		
SUSP PACKAGE		
SUSP PERSON		
SUSP VEHICLE		
ACCIDENT	Accident	Traffic
ACCIDENT NO INJ		
ACCIDENT V/ANIM		
ACCIDENT W/HAZ		
ACCIDENT W/INJU		
HIT & RUN		
HIT & RUN W/INJ		
DIRECT TRAFFIC	Traffic enforcement	
INTOX DRIVER		
RECKLESS DRVING		
SCHOOL CROSSING		
TRAFFIC		
TRAFFIC ENFORCE		
TRAFFIC HAZARD	Traffic hazard	
TRAFFIC STOP	Traffic stop	

APPENDIX B: UNIFORM CRIME REPORT INFORMATION

This section presents information obtained from Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division. The tables and figures include the most recent information that is publicly available at the national level. This includes crime reports for 2013 through 2022, along with clearance rates for 2021 and 2022. Crime rates are expressed as incidents per 100,000 population.

TABLE 10-21: Reported Crime Rates in 2021 and 2022, by City

| Municipality | State | 2021 | | | | 2022 | | | |
| | | Population | Crime Rates | | | Population | Crime Rates | | |
			Violent	Property	Total		Violent	Property	Total
Beaufort	SC	13,293	361	3,588	3,949	13,003	331	3,084	3,415
Goose Creek	SC	45,901	292	1,732	2,024	46,665	289	1,830	2,119
Hanahan	SC	29,582	260	1,312	1,572	22,320	403	1,470	1,873
Hardeeville	SC	9,332	536	2,004	2,540	9,995	240	2,651	2,891
Moncks Corner	SC	13,108	526	2,647	3,174	13,906	618	2,855	3,473
Mount Pleasant	SC	95,657	98	1,104	1,202	93,951	128	1,366	1,493
Orangeburg	SC	12,335	2,067	5,934	8,002	12,307	1,739	5,753	7,492
Port Royal	SC	14,970	307	1,283	1,590	13,430	261	1,266	1,526
Summerville	SC	54,438	244	1,977	2,221	51,423	369	2,738	3,108
Walterboro	SC	5,303	1,263	6,713	7,977	5,432	957	7,493	8,450
Bluffton	SC	30,519	85	737	822	36,064	69	613	682
South Carolina		**5,190,705**	**533**	**2,605**	**3,138**	**5,282,634**	**519**	**2,456**	**2,975**
National		***332,031,554**	**396**	**1,933**	**2,329**	**332,403,650**	**380**	**1,954**	**2,334**

Note: *We used national crime and clearance rates for 2021 as estimated in the FBI's report *The Transition to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS): A Comparison of 2020 and 2021 NIBRS Estimates.*

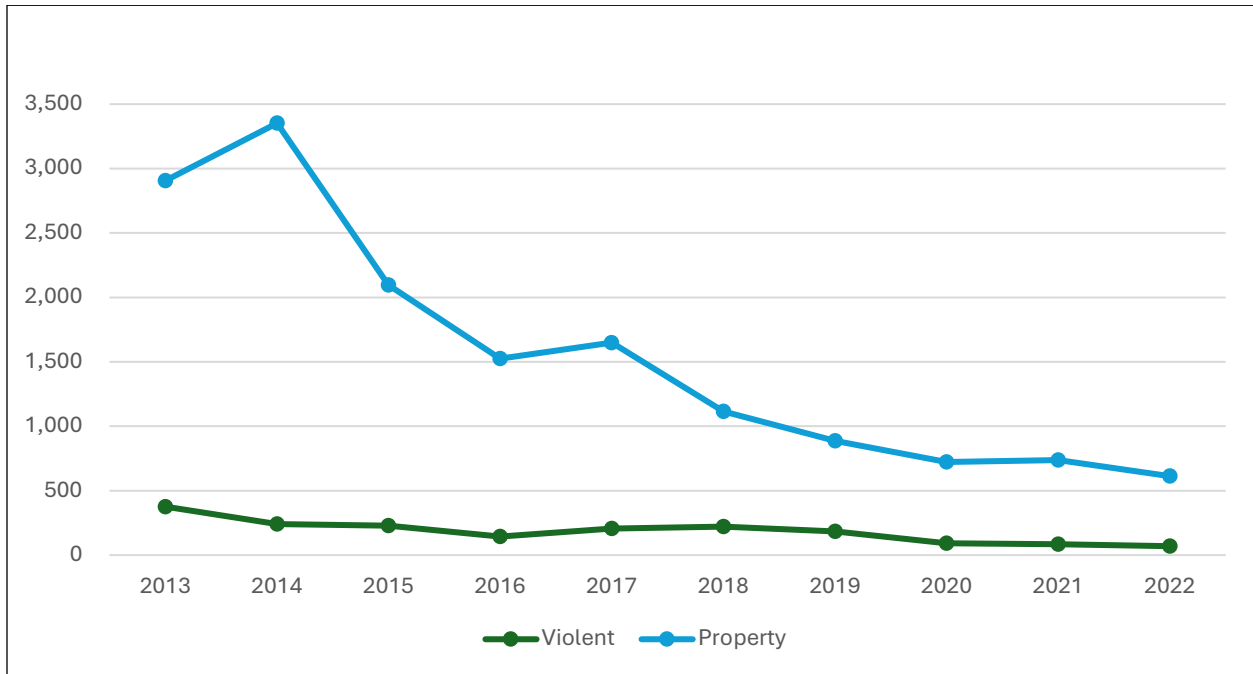**FIGURE 10-32: Reported Bluffton Violent and Property Crime Rates, by Year**

FIGURE 10-33: Reported Bluffton and South Carolina Crime Rates, by Year
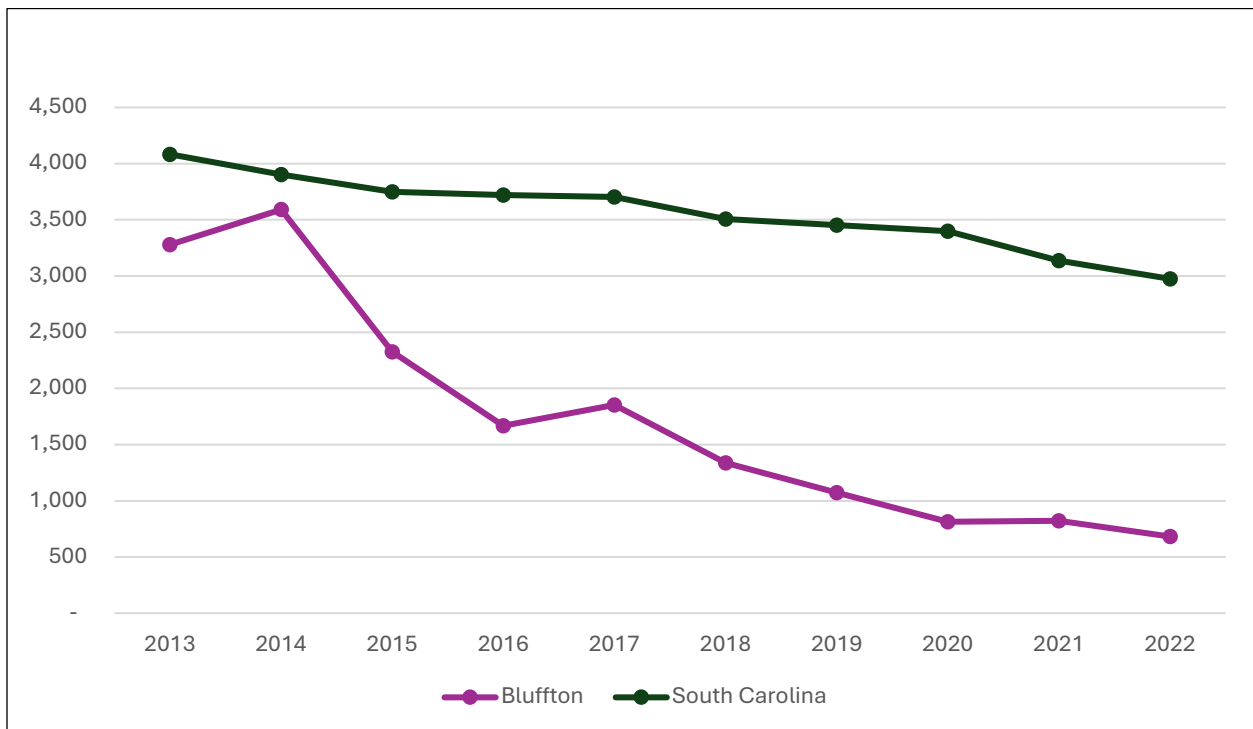
TABLE 10-22: Reported Bluffton, South Carolina, and National Crime Rates, by Year

Year	Bluffton				South Carolina				National			
	Population	Violent	Property	Total	Population	Violent	Property	Total	Population	Violent	Property	Total
2013	13,047	376	2,905	3,280	4,800,816	502	3,581	4,083	321,947,240	362	2,627	2,989
2014	13,755	240	3,352	3,591	4,856,207	489	3,415	3,904	324,699,246	357	2,464	2,821
2015	15,689	229	2,097	2,326	4,919,429	489	3,260	3,748	327,455,769	368	2,376	2,744
2016	17,498	143	1,526	1,669	4,984,808	501	3,220	3,721	329,308,297	383	2,353	2,736
2017	20,024	205	1,648	1,853	5,024,369	506	3,196	3,702	325,719,178	383	2,362	2,745
2018	22,578	221	1,116	1,337	5,084,127	488	3,018	3,506	327,167,434	369	2,200	2,568
2019	24,812	185	887	1,072	5,148,714	511	2,940	3,452	328,239,523	379	2,010	2,489
2020	27,549	91	722	813	5,118,425	556	2,842	3,398	331,449,281	399	1,958	2,357
2021	30,519	85	737	822	5,190,705	533	2,605	3,138	332,031,554	396	1,933	2,329
2022	36,064	69	613	682	5,282,634	519	2,456	2,975	332,403,650	380	1,954	2,334

TABLE 10-23: Reported Bluffton, South Carolina, and National Crime Clearance Rates, 2021

Crime	Bluffton			South Carolina			National		
	Crimes	Clearances	Rate	Crimes	Clearances	Rate	Crimes	Clearances	Rate
Murder Manslaughter	1	1	100%	533	377	71%	22,900	11,500	50%
Rape	3	0	0%	2,351	872	37%	144,300	16,500	11%
Robbery	4	2	50%	2,641	917	35%	202,200	48,800	24%
Aggravated Assault	16	10	63%	16,041	8,464	53%	943,800	297,500	32%
Burglary	37	2	5%	19,872	3,636	18%	899,700	107,200	12%
Larceny	163	8	5%	100,391	17,030	17%	4,627,000	508,900	11%
Vehicle Theft	23	3	13%	14,989	2,457	16%	890,200	68,500	8%

Note: Clearances were not reported for rape offenses in 2020. *We used national crime and clearance rates for 2021 as estimated in the FBI's report *The Transition to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS): A Comparison of 2020 and 2021 NIBRS Estimates.*

TABLE 10-24: Reported Bluffton and South Carolina Crime Clearance Rates, 2022

Crime	Bluffton			South Carolina			National		
	Crimes	Clearances	Rate	Crimes	Clearances	Rate	Crimes	Clearances	Rate
Murder Manslaughter	1	1	100%	497	284	57%	21,797	10,752	49%
Rape	3	1	33%	2,230	860	39%	132,997	27,856	21%
Robbery	4	0	0%	2,153	699	32%	215,760	51,930	24%
Aggravated Assault	17	9	53%	15,850	8,237	52%	756,601	334,405	44%
Burglary	30	4	13%	18,327	3,473	19%	916,970	125,838	14%
Larceny	160	14	9%	93,496	16,541	18%	4,947,709	633,098	13%
Vehicle Theft	21	4	19%	13,093	2,064	16%	953,827	87,140	9%

END