



**OELWEIN POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY OF OELWEIN, IOWA
MEMORANDUM**

FROM: Jeremy P. Logan, Chief of Police

DATE: December 4, 2025

TO: City Administrator Dylan Mulfinger

SUBJECT: Residency Restrictions Consideration - Public Safety Personnel

The purpose of this correspondence is to respectfully request reconsideration and updating of the City of Oelwein's residency requirement for police officers as outlined in Section 7.5 of current policy. The competitive landscape of law enforcement recruitment and retention has shifted significantly in recent years, prompting many agencies to revise their residency expectations in order to remain competitive and adequately staffed.

Current Recruitment Environment

Like many communities across the state and nation, the City of Oelwein is competing in an exceptionally challenging hiring market for qualified police officers. Law enforcement agencies are experiencing:

Decreased applicant pools, with fewer candidates entering the profession.

Increased competition among cities, with agencies offering hiring bonuses, lateral transfer incentives, and more flexible working conditions.

Greater mobility among officers, who now have numerous employment options and are often unwilling to consider positions with restrictive residency mandates.

Due to these conditions, communities that maintain rigid residency regulations frequently find themselves at a disadvantage. In contrast, agencies adopting broader residency zones or offering administrative flexibility have experienced improved recruitment reach and better retention outcomes.

Industry Standards & Evolving Practices

Modern law enforcement operations focus on balancing reasonable response times with realistic expectations for employees and their families. To that end, many departments across Iowa and the Midwest have updated their residency policies to:

Allow 30-minute to 45-minute commute radius;

Base residency on municipal boundaries rather than a specific address-to-station distance;

Grant administrative discretion to the chief of police to address reasonable exceptions;

Maintain internal controls to ensure effective emergency response and adequate workforce availability.



**OELWEIN POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY OF OELWEIN, IOWA
MEMORANDUM**

These adjustments reflect the evolving standard in the profession and acknowledge that expanding the allowable residency area increases the number of qualified candidates willing to apply without materially affecting public safety or emergency response capability.

Recommended Policy Update

To align with current industry norms and strengthen Oelwein's competitiveness in hiring, the following revised language is recommended to replace the existing Section 7.5 Residence policy:

Current Policy – 7.5 Residence

(A) Emergency services personnel shall reside within a 15-minute radius of their primary place of work. Failure to maintain this residency within the limit shall result in termination of employment.

Proposed Policy – 7.5 Residence

(A) Emergency services personnel shall reside within a 30-minute radius of the corporate city limits. The chief of police, at his/her discretion, may extend the distance for extenuating circumstances. Additionally, the chief of police may limit the number of officers not residing within the city limits to maintain an effective response time and workforce. Failure to maintain this residency within the limit shall result in termination of employment.

Rationale for Proposed Change

Expanded Candidate Pool: Increasing the radius to 30 minutes and basing it on city limits significantly broadens geographic eligibility, attracting more applicants without sacrificing operational readiness.

Operational Flexibility: Granting the chief of police discretionary authority provides needed adaptability for unique situations while retaining oversight.

Balanced Workforce Distribution: Allowing the chief to limit the number of officers residing outside city limits ensures Oelwein can maintain an effective emergency response posture.

Consistency with Regional Practices: The updated language reflects what has become standard practice across similar agencies and communities.

Updating the residency policy is a practical and necessary step for the City of Oelwein to remain competitive in today's law enforcement hiring market. The proposed changes strike an appropriate balance between operational needs and workforce realities, ultimately supporting improved recruitment, retention, and service continuity.

I respectfully request consideration and adoption of the revised policy language.