

THUNDERBOLT

POLICE DEPARTMENT



CHIEF'S REPORT

AUGUST 2026

Trust Earned Through Service



SERVICE • INTEGRITY • COMMUNITY

Gene Harley
Chief of Police
Town of Thunderbolt, Georgia

Welcome Officer Jared Penny

NEW OFFICER • EXPERIENCED PUBLIC-SAFETY PROFESSIONAL

CHIEF'S MONTHLY REPORT



OFFICER JARED PENNY

Official Start Date: September 18, 2026

Officer Penny joins TPD with more than a decade of experience in law enforcement, public safety, and emergency response.

EXPERIENCE & CREDENTIALS

- Georgia Forestry Commission Ranger and wildland firefighter
- Georgia State Patrol and Motor Carrier Compliance
- Certified Police Officer and Field Training Officer
- Patrol, investigations, emergency response, and interagency coordination

SERVICE BEYOND THE BADGE

An Eagle Scout since 2004, Jared remains active with the National Eagle Scout Association and volunteers with the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program.

Please join us in welcoming Officer Penny to the Thunderbolt Police Department.



New Officer Spotlight

Evan Parker

» Started the **GA POST Academy** on August 27, 2026

Originally from Virginia, Evan graduated from Radford University before moving south to build his career here in Savannah, Georgia. He has spent the majority of his professional life in education as a teacher and coach. Outside of work, he enjoys the outdoors, living an active lifestyle, and spending time with his wife, son, and dog. Thunderbolt has been his family's home for the last 10 years, and they love the town and community.



We are proud to welcome **Evan Parker** to the **Thunderbolt Police Department** and wish him success as he attends the GA POST Academy.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Captain Brandon Runyon Completes GACP Chief's School

The GACP Chief's School is a mandatory 60-hour executive training program for newly appointed law enforcement leaders in Georgia.

Arson Investigation Moves to Federal Prosecution

CHIEF'S MONTHLY REPORT

CHIRIYA'S THAI CUISINE • AUGUST 2026



Sergeant Jacob Thompson led the August investigation into the arson at Chiriya's Thai Cuisine.

INVESTIGATIVE OUTCOME

- Developed a lead through his established partnership with the Savannah Police Department
- Identified and located the previously unknown suspect
- Obtained a confession and completed the arrest without incident



CASE STATUS

The investigation is being adopted by ATF for federal prosecution by the United States.

Strong investigative work. Effective partnerships. Accountability pursued.

PEEPING TOM ARREST

Rapid Response • Neighborhood Safety • Repeat-Offender Awareness



During the early morning hours, officers responded to a report of a person looking into the windows of an occupied residence in the 300 block of Bonaventure Road.

Officers quickly canvassed the area and located the suspect on Victory Drive.

01

QUICK IDENTIFICATION & APPREHENSION

The suspect was located nearby on Victory Drive shortly after officers responded to the complaint.

02

CHARGES FILED

Gillis was charged with Peeping Tom and Criminal Trespass and transported to the Chatham County Detention Center.

03

PRIOR CONTACT / AREA AWARENESS

The suspect had recently been banned from the area following a previous incident. Officers were able to act on that local knowledge.

04

REPEAT-OFFENDER AWARENESS

Gillis has an extensive local booking history, with approximately 25 prior bookings in Chatham County.

COUNCIL TAKEAWAY

A fast response, familiarity with repeat offenders, and strong area awareness allowed officers to quickly locate the suspect and address a direct neighborhood safety concern.

HIT-AND-RUN INVESTIGATION

EMILY McCARTHY | INVESTIGATIVE FOLLOW-UP

- Officers investigated a hit-and-run involving a customer who struck a parked vehicle at Emily McCarthy and left the scene without making the required notifications.
- Through investigative follow-up, officers were able to identify the driver and establish her involvement in the incident.
- The driver was subsequently charged in connection with the crash.



DRIVER IDENTIFIED • CHARGED



PROPERTY CRIME / TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT



EMILY McCARTHY



PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING

★ THE TARA INVESTIGATION ★

Ongoing Enforcement at the Former Tara Nursing Home



AUGUST ARREST AT FORMER TARA NURSING HOME

Former Tara Nursing Home • 3223 Falligant Avenue • Thunderbolt, Georgia



VACANT SINCE JUNE 2025

ARRESTED: AUGUST 27, 2026



CASE SUMMARY

Michael Cataldo was arrested after unlawfully being on the property and taking various items located on the outside of the building.



Unlawful presence on the property



Items taken from the exterior of the building



Site remains under proactive enforcement and investigation



CHARGES

Charged with
3 MISDEMEANORS

SUSPECT



MICHAEL CATALDO

ARRESTED: AUGUST 27, 2026



Continued proactive enforcement is helping protect the vacant property and support long-term problem-solving efforts.





THUNDERBOLT POLICE DEPARTMENT

TARA NURSING HOME INVESTIGATION – LINK ANALYSIS CHART

3223 FALLIGANT AVENUE, THUNDERBOLT, GEORGIA

AS OF: JULY 21, 2026

CASE STATUS:
ACTIVE INVESTIGATION

INVESTIGATIVE TIMELINE (JULY 2026)

- **Early July** TPD notified of possible entries; unlocked doors located; no contact; facility secured
- **Mid July** Extra patrols – doors unlocked again; window forced; copper and items stolen
- **July 15** Contact made with Catherine Helmken walking from property; arrested on outstanding contempt warrant
- **July 17** Surveillance images released to public; suspects identified as Houston Taner Schlernitzauer and "Chris Mills"
- **July 20** Schlernitzauer and Christian Leigh Shuman arrested at hotel in Richmond Hill; stolen items recovered; full confessions
- **July 21** Matthew Ryan Hankey arrested at residence in Richmond Hill; search conducted; full confession
- **Ongoing** Extra Patrols continue; working with GoJoe Patrol Security and Town on facility security and lawn maintenance plan



TARA NURSING HOME (Former)

3223 Falligant Avenue, Thunderbolt, GA
PERMANENTLY CLOSED – JUNE 2025

- Abandoned by previous owners; items left behind (beds, wheelchairs, electronics, meds, office equipment, clothing, etc.)
- Multiple unlawful entries during July 2026
- Copper stripped from walls, HVAC units; items stolen; property damage
- Doors and windows unsecured/forced
- Covert cameras installed; extra patrols ongoing

INVESTIGATIVE OUTCOMES TO DATE

- Three (3) primary suspects arrested
- Stolen property recovered from hotel room
- Confessions obtained
- Vehicles and Flock data documented
- Scrap metal sales at SA Recycling identified
- Investigation ongoing – possible additional offenses in Chatham, Effingham & Bryan Counties

CURRENT STATUS / PROPERTY SECURITY

- TPD continues Extra Patrols
- Recently established contact with facility's new security company – GoJoe Patrol Security
- Town of Thunderbolt developing plan to professionally secure facility and contract lawn maintenance
- Goal: deter further criminal activity and preserve property while vacant

PRIMARY SUSPECTS (ALL GAVE FULL CONFESSIONS)

HOUSTIN TANER SCHLERNITZAUER

DOB: 02/12/1995



- Priors: Burglary, Drugs
- Admits multiple entries to facility in July 2026
- Saw public release, shaved beard to conceal identity
- Arrested: 07/20/2026
- Held: CCDC

CHRISTIAN LEIGH SHUMAN

DOB: 02/25/1989



- Used Facebook name "Chris Mills"
- No prior hx in Phoenix
- Acted as lookout (bicycle)
- Admits multiple entries
- Arrested: 07/20/2026
- Held: Bryan Co. Detention (to be transferred to CCDC)

YAN HANKEY

2/11/1980



- Extensive history in Phoenix
- Admits involvement
- Dispute over who recruited whom
- Arrested: 07/21/2026
- Residence: 13822 GA Hwy 144, Richmond Hill, GA

POSSIBLE / UNCONFIRMED ASSOCIATION

CATHERINE HELMKEN

DOB: 09/18/1989



- Contacted near property 07/15/2026
- No lawful reason to be on property
- Could not provide friend's name/address
- Arrested on outstanding Contempt of Court warrant
- Involvement in thefts UNCONFIRMED

VEHICLES / TRANSPORTATION

2004 CHEVROLET SILVERADO (White)

GA Tag: AAA8GY



- Primary vehicle used by Schlernitzauer & Shuman
- Regularly on Flock
- Items taken from facility observed in truck bed
- Bicycle observed in truck bed (lookout)

U-HAUL (RENTAL)

Arizona Tag: AH13401



- Rented by Schlernitzauer 07/10/26 – 07/11/26
- Flock does not show as POI in known incidents
- Further analysis requested

KIA SUV

GA Tag: SBK3669



- Registered to Hankey's wife
- Regularly operated by Hankey
- In Thunderbolt during timeline
- Recent citation (CCPD) while Hankey was operator

2016 DODGE RAM 1500

GA Tag: DEZ2234



- Primary vehicle previously used by Hankey
- Regular Flock hits
- Not used for ~30 days (Hankey states vehicle caught fire)

STOLEN PROPERTY / ITEMS TAKEN



- Copper from walls, HVAC units
- Electronics
- Medications
- Office equipment
- Wheelchairs, beds, clothing, etc.

SA RECYCLING

2820 Tremont Road, Savannah, GA



- Regularly used to sell copper and other items
- Hankey states he likes location (gets paid and uses gambling machines)
- Analyze transactions, dates, weights, amounts, IDs, vehicle info, surveillance

LOCATIONS OF INTEREST



RICHMOND HILL HOTEL
Near Hwy 17 & I-95
Arrest location: 07/20/2026
Stolen property recovered



HANKEY RESIDENCE
13822 GA Hwy 144
Richmond Hill, GA
Search 07/20/2026



BICYCLE (LOOKOUT)
Used by Shuman while acting as lookout during entries

LEGEND

- Known Association
- - - Possible / Unconfirmed Association
- Vehicle / Transportation
- Disposition / Flow of Stolen Property
- - - Related To / Supports

POI = Person of Interest
CCDC = Chatham County Detention Center

PROACTIVE ENFORCEMENT | SUSPECTED DRUG TRANSACTION

Observed by Town Administrator • August 12, 2026

SAFE
STRONG
CONNECTED

SEIZED NARCOTICS



Approximately 26.5 grams of crystal methamphetamine

DIGITAL SCALE (EVIDENCE)



Digital scale with suspected drug residue

INCIDENT SUMMARY

- On August 12, 2026, Town Administrator Matthew Walker observed what he believed to be a hand-to-hand drug transaction.
- Mr. Walker immediately provided details and contacted Chief Gene Harley following the observation.
- Contact was made with one of the involved individuals, who was found in possession of approximately 26.5 grams of crystal methamphetamine.
- A digital scale containing suspected drug residue was also recovered.
- The quantity was just under a trafficking amount.



Recovered: ~26.5 grams crystal methamphetamine



Evidence: digital scale with suspected drug residue



KEY TAKEAWAY

Quick communication, strong situational awareness, and immediate follow-up resulted in the seizure of suspected methamphetamine and the arrest of a non-resident offender.

ARRESTED



DAULTON WILLIAMS, 31

- Williams was reportedly visiting a relative in Thunderbolt.
- Released on bond.
- Bond condition: banned from Thunderbolt.

REPORTING WITNESS



**Town Administrator
Matthew Walker**

Rocket Found His Furever Home!

K9 FOR A DAY • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS

CHIEF'S MONTHLY REPORT



Rocket's adopter saw TPD's social-media post—showing the direct impact of this community partnership.



WEDNESDAY

Rocket rode with TPD

THURSDAY

Featured on social media

FRIDAY

Adopted after his person saw the post



★ COMMUNITY CONTACTS ★

Monthly Patrol Contacts Outside Calls for Service

Examples of community engagement, assistance, and relationship-building by patrol officers during the month.

1



OFC Tabor

Assisted Ms. LaPreard after CRN 260824002 by removing a window A/C unit and ensuring her window was secured.

2



Cpl. Foran

Helped a deaf man at Marathon by purchasing a phone charger so he could charge his phone and pay for gas.

3



OFC Tabor

Conducted a follow-up welfare check at 3214 Gilreath; the resident shared medical challenges and appreciated the visit.

4



Sgt. Jones

Spoke with John Moore of Chirya's Thai Cuisine, who expressed appreciation after the quick arrest in the arson case.

5



Ofc. Boutarath

Spoke with Victory Adcock near TARA, who thanked the department for its efforts addressing recent burglaries.

6



Officer Renz

Spoke with Miguel on Rowland Ave, a GSU business remagement student walking from Parker's to work at Target.

7



Officer Renz

Advised Bryson at Enmarket about safely replacing side mirrors while his vehicle parts were being painted.

8



OFC Tabor

Made friendly contact with late-evening fishers while closing Honey Park; the group packed up and left cooperatively.

9



Sgt. Thompson

Advised Piero of Piero's Auto Repair regarding options for removing vehicles left on his property.



These contacts reflect proactive service, visibility, and community trust-building.



CHATHAM COUNTY MARINE PATROL PARTNERSHIP

Professional Development • Regional Cooperation • Community Readiness



A LOCAL PARTNERSHIP WITH A REGIONAL IMPACT



Marine Patrol is based here in Thunderbolt, making this a natural partnership for a waterfront community.

The partnership gives our officers meaningful exposure to marine law enforcement while strengthening our working relationship with CCPD.

01

OFFICER DEVELOPMENT

Hands-on exposure to vessel operations, marine enforcement, waterborne response, and a different side of law enforcement.

02

RETENTION WITHOUT RECRUITING RISK

Officers gain new experiences while remaining with TPD. Marine Patrol openings are filled internally by CCPD, so this does not create a direct recruiting pathway away from Thunderbolt.

03

INTERAGENCY READINESS

Builds relationships, communication, and familiarity before a real waterfront emergency, search, rescue, or enforcement operation occurs.

04

LOW-RISK, HIGH-VALUE OPPORTUNITY

Participation is limited, controlled, and scheduled around TPD needs—giving officers a professional-development opportunity without compromising our daily operations.

COUNCIL TAKEAWAY

A locally based partnership that develops our officers, strengthens regional cooperation, and adds capability to Thunderbolt without creating a staffing threat.



OFFICER WELLNESS PROGRAM

FITNESS & PROFESSIONAL STRETCHING INITIATIVE



ON-DUTY FITNESS



PROFESSIONAL STRETCHING



THUNDERBOLT TEAM

1 ON-DUTY FITNESS

- ✓ Encourages officer health, readiness, and resilience
- ✓ Supports regular physical fitness and overall wellness
- ✓ Provides officers an opportunity to work out as part of the wellness initiative

2 PROFESSIONAL STRETCHING PROGRAM

- ✓ Partnering with Tiffany Taylor, PsychFit of Georgia
- ✓ Bi-weekly block appointments for participating personnel
- ✓ 90-day trial period to evaluate program effectiveness
- ✓ Focus on mobility, recovery, injury prevention, and physical readiness



GOAL: IMPROVE OFFICER WELLNESS, REDUCE INJURIES, AND SUPPORT LONG-TERM PERFORMANCE.

THUNDERBOLT POLICE DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN PROGRAM

Introducing our department chaplains



Pastor Steven Saxton
Islands Christian Church



Pastor Sam Martin
Gateway Church



Our Chaplains. Our Community.

The Thunderbolt Police Department Chaplain Program provides spiritual and emotional support to those who serve and protect our community.

- ✓ Provides confidential support to officers and staff
- ✓ Assists with death notifications, critical incidents, and other department needs
- ✓ Strengthens officer wellness, compassion, and community connection
- ✓ Supports the internal and external growth of the department

OFFICER SUPPORT • COMMUNITY CARE • WELLNESS • OUTREACH



IMPLEMENTATION UNDERWAY

Electronic warrant workflow

MODERNIZING OUR WARRANT PROCESS

CloudGavel eWarrants

Moving from an in-person warrant process to a secure, web-based electronic workflow.

CURRENT PROCESS

**In-person completion
with the judge**



NEW PROCESS

**Electronic submission
& judicial approval**

WHAT CLOUDGAVEL ADDS



CREATE + SUBMIT

Warrants can be created and routed electronically.



DIGITAL APPROVAL

Judges can digitally approve warrants within the system.



TRACK + RECORD

Real-time process tracking and electronic recordkeeping.



SHARE + MANAGE

Document sharing and user management in one workflow.

OUTCOME: A more efficient, trackable warrant process that aligns Thunderbolt with modern regional law-enforcement practices.



COMMUNITY INFORMATION | FLOCK TRANSPARENCY PORTAL



Maintaining the **trust** of our community requires both effective public-safety tools and **transparency** regarding how those tools are used.



The Thunderbolt Police Department has added a **Flock Transparency Portal** to the Police Department page on the Town's website.



The portal gives residents **direct access** to clear, factual information about the technology and how it is used by our agency.



Residents with questions are encouraged to review the portal by selecting "**Flock Transparency Portal**" under "**Related Links**."



Making this information readily available reflects our continued commitment to **responsible policing, accountability, and community trust.**

The screenshot shows the Thunderbolt Police Department website. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, Government, Departments, Community, and How To, along with a 'Pay Here' button and a search bar. The main content area features a 'RELATED LINKS' section on the left with a list: Officers, Records, Flock Transparency Portal (highlighted with a yellow box and a mouse cursor), and Chatham County Animal Control. The central section is titled 'Thunderbolt Police Department' and displays the department's logo and name. Below this is a mission statement: "THE MISSION OF THE THUNDERBOLT POLICE DEPARTMENT IS TO STRENGTHEN AND MAINTAIN THE SOCIAL ORDER OF THE COMMUNITY BY PROVIDING EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES." On the right side, there is a section for 'THUNDERBOLT POLICE DEPARTMENT' with the department's logo, hours of operation (Monday - Friday 8:00 A.M. To 5:00 P.M.), phone number (912)-354-3818, and an email link.



TRANSPARENCY • ACCOUNTABILITY • COMMUNITY TRUST



[Home](#)[Government](#)[Departments](#)[Community](#)[How To](#)[Pay Here](#)

CHIEF'S REPORT | WEBSITE UPDATES



1



Updated Department Webpage

Refreshed and more informative page with easier public access to key information.

2



Flock Transparency Portal

Residents can directly access the Flock Transparency Portal through the Police Department page.

3



Online Fillable Police Application

Applicants can now complete a fillable police application online.

4



Dedicated Department Email

A dedicated department email improves communication with citizens, and the department has already begun receiving emails through it.

MEET OUR TEAM



THUNDERBOLT POLICE DEPARTMENT

THUNDERBOLT, GEORGIA



Committed to Service, Protection, and Community



OPERATIONAL DASHBOARD

★ AUGUST 2026 ★

KEY ACTIVITY SUMMARY



15

INCIDENT REPORTS



5

MISCELLANEOUS
REPORTS



1

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
REPORTS



1

BURGLARIES



9

ARRESTS

• 2 FELONY
• 7 MISDEMEANOR



3

AGENCY ASSISTS



8

VEHICLE ACCIDENTS
WORKED



96

TRAFFIC TICKETS



39

WRITTEN WARNINGS



COURT REVENUE

\$11,942.00

Total revenue collected
through court for
August 2026

ACTIVITY COMPARISON



TRAFFIC TICKETS



WRITTEN WARNINGS



INCIDENT REPORTS



ARRESTS



VEHICLE ACCIDENTS WORKED



MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS



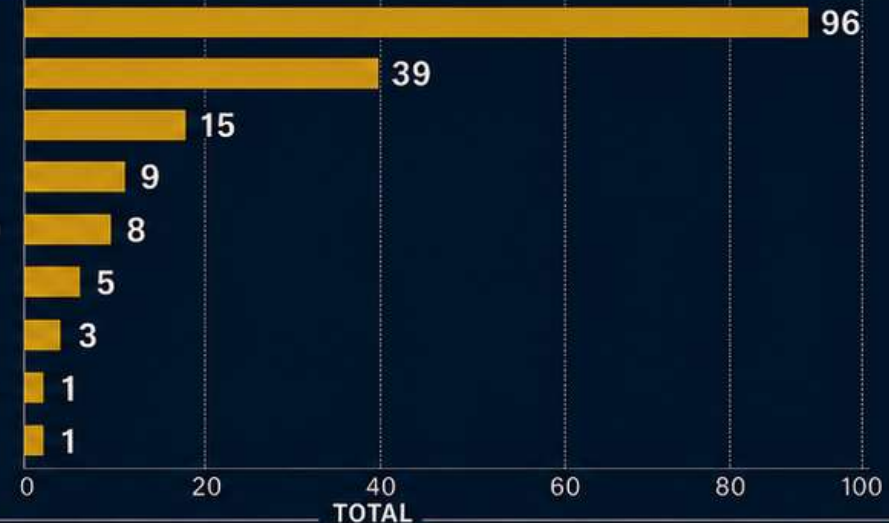
AGENCY ASSISTS



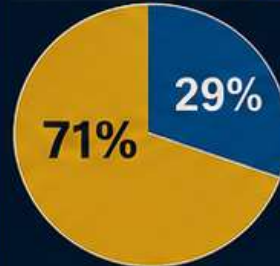
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REPORTS



BURGLARIES



TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT BREAKDOWN



71%
TRAFFIC TICKETS
(96)

29%
WRITTEN WARNINGS
(39)

135

TOTAL TRAFFIC
CITATIONS WRITTEN



WHAT THIS MEANS

Thunderbolt officers maintained proactive enforcement and steady response activity throughout August. A total of 135 traffic citations were issued, while officers also handled 15 incident reports, 9 arrests, 8 vehicle accidents, and 3 agency assists.



EVERY STATISTIC REPRESENTS A PERSON, A CALL FOR SERVICE,
OR AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD PUBLIC TRUST.

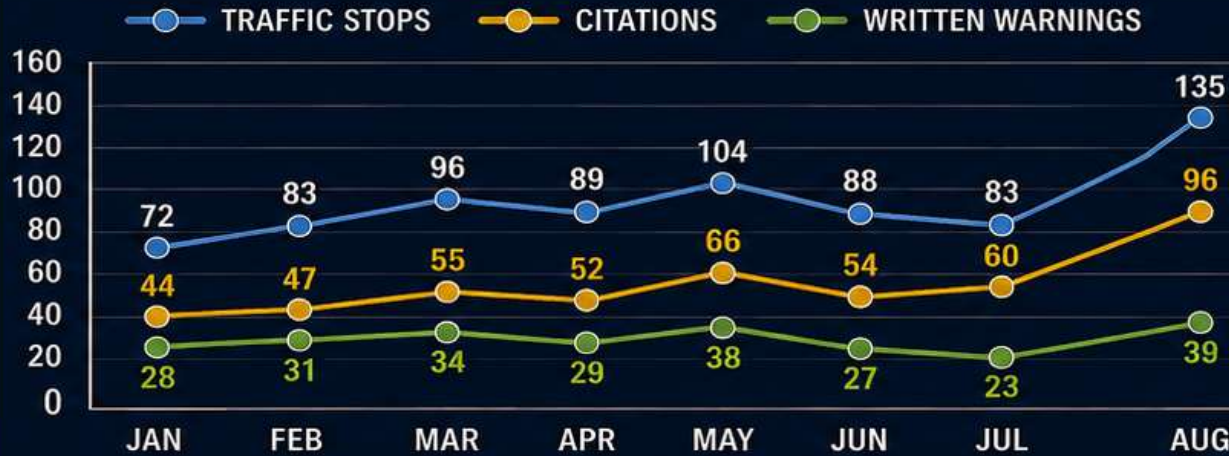


YEAR-TO-DATE TRENDS

★ JANUARY – AUGUST 2026 ★

BUILDING A SAFER
THUNDERBOLT
TOGETHER

TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY



YEAR-TO-DATE TOTALS (JAN–AUG)



TRAFFIC STOPS

750



CITATIONS

474



WRITTEN
WARNINGS

CITATION vs. WARNING (YTD)

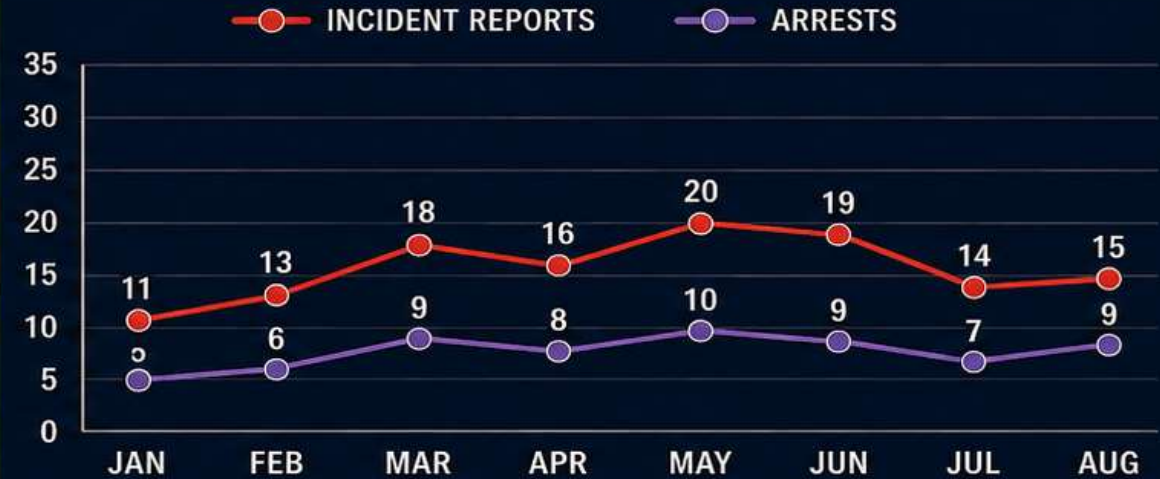
66%
CITATIONS
(474)



34%
WARNINGS
(249)

Focused on **education** and
enforcement throughout the year.

INCIDENT ACTIVITY



YEAR-TO-DATE TOTALS (JAN–AUG)



INCIDENT REPORTS

126



ARRESTS

63

● 33 FELONY
● 30 MISDEMEANOR

AUGUST SNAPSHOT

MISCELLANEOUS
REPORTS



5

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
REPORTS



1

BURGLARIES



1

VEHICLE ACCIDENTS
WORKED



8

AGENCY ASSISTS



3

TOTAL TRAFFIC
CITATIONS WRITTEN



135



CONSISTENT ACTIVITY. MEASURABLE RESULTS. STRONGER COMMUNITY.



THANK YOU



*Serving Thunderbolt with
Professionalism, Integrity,
and Constitutional Policing.*



BUILDING A STRONGER THUNDERBOLT TOGETHER



HIRING &
DEVELOPING
PEOPLE



ACTIVELY
SOLVING
PROBLEMS



PURSUING
MEANINGFUL
CASES



BUILDING
COMMUNITY
RELATIONSHIPS



PARTNERING
WITH OTHER
AGENCIES



INVESTING IN
EMPLOYEE
WELLNESS



MODERNIZING
OPERATIONS



INCREASING
TRANSPARENCY



PRODUCING
MEASURABLE
ACTIVITY

★ *“Trust is earned every day through service.”* ★

— QUESTIONS? —