



# Fort Walton Beach Police Department

Year in Review 2020

*Robert Bage, Chief of Police*

Throughout 2020, the Fort Walton Beach Police Department continued its commitment to the success of the community. It was a unique year with a global pandemic, demands for police reform, and a hurricane. The department's professionalism and dedication to the community, combined with great teamwork, played an essential role in accomplishing the mission of making the community safer. Partnerships within the community and efficient use of resources were critical in making Fort Walton Beach a great place to live, work, and visit.

## **Core Responsibilities:**

- Ensure a highly visible police presence by utilizing innovative strategies, technology, equipment, and community involvement to create a safer community for residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Provide professional and courteous services to all members of the community.
- Reduce the fear of crime and improve the City of Fort Walton Beach's quality of life through proactive crime prevention and investigative initiatives.
- Utilize intelligence-based policing through timely statistical analysis and crime trends to customize crime reducing strategies based on specific problems and geographic locations.

## **2020 Major Accomplishments:**

- Many community events planned for 2020 were postponed because of COVID-19. Several events still took place thanks to creative planning by police staff and community partners:
  - Annual police memorial ceremony - held virtually.
  - End-of-summer ice cream drive-through - local first responders set up static displays for the public to drive through, allowing the public to greet first responders from a safe distance. Over 500 cars passed through the event.
  - Parades - coordinated and participated in numerous small parades for birthdays or other special occasions during the safer at home orders; coordinated holiday parades around an assisted living facility for the residents who could not have visitors for Mother's Day, Father's Day, and several other holidays; planned and executed a Grinch and Santa mobile event through the community.
  - Field Trips - coordinated a junior cadet week in which the campers were taught about public safety and policing.
  - Participated in several trunk-or-treat events with local community groups.
  - Participated in the National Faith and Blue Weekend in which police departments partnered with churches to conduct community outreach.
  - Conducted two toy drives, one for foster children in the area and the other for Toys for Tots; collected over 2,000 toys; hosted a winter wound land in front of the station.
- Helped the community during Covid-19 by coordinating and participating in several food and blood donation events. A sergeant designed and made needed items for health care workers and first responders with a 3D printer. The community assisted by donating supplies.
- Assisted with community and business education and encouragement to follow the executive orders that were passed to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Received a Department of Justice Grant to hire three additional community policing officers.
- Assisted community groups with peaceful protests regarding police brutality. Officers spoke at a few of the protests.
- Spoke at several local churches about the current and future state of policing and formed a Citizen Advisory Panel to further the discussions with monthly meetings. Also, organized and participated in a regional police forum.
- Over 2,250 Instagram followers and 14,000 Facebook followers.
- The overall crime rate remained flat from 2019 (remained below the three and five-year averages) and had the second-lowest reported crimes per year in 15 years. Many cities across the nation saw increases in crime during 2020, which was a departure from years of declining crime rates. The department's use of force numbers were slightly up in 2020, but were below the three and five-year averages. The clearance rate



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remained the same as in 2019 (had a 100% clearance rate for robbery cases). The clearance rate is the proportion of crimes reported to the police that are solved.

- Zero turnover for sworn personnel.
- Assisted with the response to Hurricane Sally and made several water rescues.
- Expanded drone training throughout the department to aid in exigent circumstances such as the recovery of a missing child, capturing fleeing felons in progress, and search and rescue operations.
- Renewed a multi-agency mutual aid agreement with all the municipalities in Okaloosa County.
- Trained all personnel in Integrated Communications and Tactic (ICAT), an interactive course in de-escalation that stresses the sanctity of life.
- Started an online crime mapping program with City Protect, which allows the public to see police and criminal activity in their local neighborhoods.

## **2021 Major Projects and Initiatives:**

- Continue partnering with local stakeholders, educating the public, and mentoring youth.
- Enhance the daily operations by providing state-of-the-art technology and practical training.
- Develop crime tracking and prevention initiatives to reduce crime and the fear of crime.
- Recruit, hire, train, mentor, and retain the most qualified workforce.
- Focus on professionalism and respect throughout daily activities within the community and department.
- Implement a License Plate Recognition (LPR) program to identify stolen or wanted vehicles and a Rapid ID Fingerprint program for quicker verification of identities.
- Complete the accreditation process.
- Identify and apply for grants from public and private sources to expand capacity and resources with minimal impact on fiscal resources.
- Staffing and deployment analysis for efficient and effective policing across the City with an emphasis on reducing the fear of crime, traffic enforcement, and improved response times.

Quantitative Performance Measures	2020	2019	2018
Part One Crimes (murder, manslaughter, sex offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson)	547	543	724
Use of Force Incidents	30	22	72
Officers Hired	8	10	6
Traffic Crashes	1,193	1,118	1,117
Traffic Tickets	1,566	1,313	1,727
Adult Arrests	513	677	657
Juvenile Arrests	79	55	78
DUI	79	89	71
Public Requests for Calls for Service	18,396	22,524	21,496
Officer Initiated Calls for Service	19,305	15,334	18,515
Total Calls for Service	37,701	37,858	40,011
Response Time to Priority Calls	:56	3:07	2:38
Clearance Rate for Part One Crimes	29%	29%	20%