

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Brian O'Connell
Chief of Police



The Mission of the Winnetka Police Department
is to protect life and property;
preserve a peaceful community;
prevent, detect, and investigate crimes;
justly enforce laws;
and protect the rights of all citizens.



Winnetka Police
Department

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A Message From the Chief

I am pleased to present you with the Winnetka Police Department's Annual Report for 2024 and share some of our current challenges and accomplishments.

Interest in law enforcement as a profession has been on the decline in recent years. Winnetka is just one of many Illinois police agencies directly impacted by this trend. When I began my career in this proud profession just under 25 years ago, police hiring processes were drastically different: I was just one of hundreds of applicants applying for only one or two vacancies within a police department. Currently, agencies are seeing only 20-30 applicants and a larger number of department vacancies. As you might imagine, finding the right candidates within a smaller pool of applicants can be a challenge.

Recognizing this growing trend, the Winnetka Police Department has proactively initiated a program specific to recruitment and retention. Our department developed a Recruitment Team consisting of patrol officers and sergeants, who are dedicated to attending area recruitment events at universities and career fairs. This program is focused on bringing attention to and highlighting the values of our department and establishing Winnetka as a great place to work. Although I believe the pendulum is beginning to swing back in a positive direction for interest in law enforcement careers, it will take a significant amount of time before agencies begin to experience relief from our current hiring challenges.

This year was dedicated to new programs, initiatives, and continuing partnerships. In January, the Village Council approved the police department's extension of dispatch services with the Glenview Public Safety Dispatch Center for the next ten years. The Glenview Public Safety Dispatch Center provides multiple resources to Winnetka and has the capacity to manage serious incidents and emergencies. We were also able to further develop our existing Drone Program this year with the ability to deploy multiple drones per community event, and we added additional licensed drone pilots within the department.

During 2023, the Police Department researched, developed, and introduced a Body Worn Camera pilot program. As the State of Illinois required that police departments comply with body worn camera requirements by January 1, 2025, our department dedicated 2024 to the pilot program, which helped ensure officers were efficient and comfortable with using the technology and solidified proper procedures for storage of digital evidence. The extra year of body worn camera use also allowed us the time to acclimate our residents to the adoption of this technology.

We continue our ongoing community relationships with a focus on safety and security for Winnetka schools. The police department remains dedicated to conducting annual emergency drills and planning, training, and familiarity with our officers for students and staff. The department partnered with District 36 administrators for "High Five Fridays," during which students and public safety personnel exchanged "high fives" while students arrived at school to begin their day. We appreciated the opportunity to share these experiences with younger community members to encourage them to view law enforcement as a positive, approachable element of their school environment.

Finally, I would like to take this moment to thank this community as a whole. Effective, successful policing is only possible when the relationship between the residents and the police department is one of trust and respect. Over this year, I have received countless comments of support and appreciation from our residents regarding our police team. I am extremely proud of the members of the police department and the dedicated service our personnel provide each and every day. The Winnetka Police Department remains motivated and committed to providing the highest level of service to our community.



Staffing & Organizational Structure



Department Overview



The Winnetka Police Department is comprised of 39 employees who serve in both full and part-time capacities. The department employs 31 sworn officers, including the Chief of Police, who are responsible for enforcing local and state laws throughout the community. In addition to the sworn officers, the police department includes eight civilian staff members who are responsible for all non-law enforcement duties, including administration, record keeping, parking enforcement, and social services. In 2024, the Winnetka Police Department responded to 21,129 calls for service. For detailed information regarding crimes, arrests, and citations, refer to the chart on page 15.



Patrol Division

The Patrol Division is the most publicly visible unit of the department. It is led by the Patrol Commander, who oversees six Sergeants and 16 uniformed Patrol Officers. Sergeants and Patrol Officers work 12-hour shifts and regularly rotate between day and night shifts. The Patrol Division is responsible for self-initiated field activity such as traffic enforcement and premises checks, as well as responding to emergency and non-emergency calls for service. This includes traffic crashes, in-progress crimes, and suspicious activity.



Investigations Division

The Investigations Division is comprised of three Detectives and one School Resource Officer, which is led by the Special Services Commander. This division conducts complex criminal investigations that require more time and involvement than the calls for service handled by patrol. These cases include identity thefts, burglaries, death investigations, and more. Additional responsibilities include conducting inspections of liquor vendors, identifying emerging crime trends, and participating in task forces such as NORTAF Burglary and Major Crimes.



Records Division

The Records Division is staffed by two Records Specialists who are overseen by the Records Supervisor and the Administrative Commander. This division is the department's primary customer service hub. Records Specialists assist all police department visitors and non-emergency callers by answering questions or directing calls to proper staff. They are responsible for maintaining all police records, including cases, arrests, traffic crashes, and citations/warnings. They also process expungements, Freedom of Information requests, false alarm invoices, and administrative adjudication requests.

Department Overview



Community Service Officers

The Winnetka Police Department employs three full-time and one part-time Community Service Officers (CSOs). They primarily work during the day and are tasked with handling various non-criminal calls for service, including parking enforcement, animal control, and school crossings.



School Resource Officer

Since 1992, the police department has assigned a School Resource Officer (SRO) to New Trier High School. The SRO serves as a liaison between the school and police and primarily investigates crimes that occur on school grounds. The SRO also conducts educational presentations for students.



Police Social Worker

Since 2023, the department has employed a full-time social worker. The Police Social Worker provides community members in need with support services such as access to homeless shelters or domestic abuse support agencies. The Police Social Worker also provides department personnel with improved access to critical mental health resources. This includes overseeing the department's Wellness and Peer Support programs.



Specialty Assignments



In addition to their primary assignment, all personnel hold numerous additional “specialty assignments” which aid the community’s needs and the department’s mission. Here is a partial list of those assignments:

Evidence Technician Unit

The department currently has 13 members trained as evidence technicians (ETs). All members of the unit are required to complete the basic ET course prior to appointment. They continue with advanced specialized training, including photography, fingerprint development, and recovery.

In-House Training Cadre

The department maintains state-certified personnel responsible for training other personnel in mandated training topics. This includes training in the areas of active threat response, firearms, emergency medical, CPR, defensive tactics, and TASERS.

Recruitment Team

The department has designated personnel, including patrol officers and supervisors, who actively recruit police candidates. This includes visiting university job fairs and events such as the NIPSTA POWER test.

Drone Pilots

The department has six certified pilots capable of deploying Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (Drones). Drones provide the department the capability to conduct safety surveillance during large group events, and they can be deployed to assist with searching for subjects during emergencies such as water rescue operations.

Youth Investigations

Officers regularly interact with juveniles through juvenile-in-crisis complaints, child abuse allegations, or criminal investigations. Such cases require the expertise of officers trained in juvenile law. The department currently has 15 certified juvenile officers.

Business Liaison Team

To help serve the village’s vibrant local business community, the department has seven staff members currently designated as the Business Liaison Team. This team assists the business owners with security questions, parking concerns, and community events.



Regional Cooperatives & Partnerships

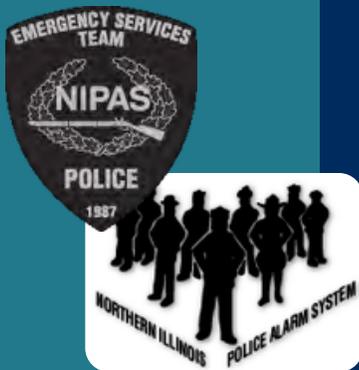


Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System (ILEAS)



ILEAS is a statewide law enforcement mutual aid system established after September 11th, 2001. ILEAS provides support through manpower and equipment when a law enforcement agency has exceeded its own capabilities.

Northern Illinois Police Alarm System (NIPAS)



NIPAS is a coalition of agencies who provide mutual aid to one another in the event of an emergency. NIPAS is divided into two teams: Emergency Services Team (EST) and Mobile Field Force (MFF). The Winnetka Police Department is an active member of NIPAS and provides an officer to serve on each team. The EST is comprised of personnel who are trained in special weapons and tactics for hostage and barricade incidents, high-risk warrant service, major crime scene searches, and other tactical incidents. The MFF provides crowd control for public demonstrations, civil disturbances, and other events involving large crowds. Both teams train on a regular basis throughout the year.

NORTAF Major Crimes Task Force



In 1997, thirteen North Shore suburbs formed the North Regional Major Crimes Task Force to assist member communities with significant criminal investigations that exceed a single agency's resources. The Major Crimes Task Force investigates homicides, kidnapping, and critical school violence incidents. Each member department supplies personnel, expertise, equipment, and support. In addition to responding to call-outs, this unit participates in training to enhance the skill level of all personnel. The task force consists of administrative and support personnel, investigative personnel, and forensic specialists. NORTAF Major Crimes Task Force had one activation during 2024.

Regional Cooperatives & Partnerships



NORTAF Major Crash Assistance Team



The NORTAF Major Crash Assistance Team (MCAT) was developed to assist member agencies with the investigation of fatal or near-fatal motor vehicle crashes. MCAT provides a rapid response and professional crash investigation for all major crashes in the NORTAF communities. Winnetka currently has one officer assigned to MCAT as a crash investigator. MCAT had 20 activations during 2024, 10 of which were fatal.

NORTAF Burglary Task Force



The Burglary Task Force is responsible for investigating burglary patterns throughout the member communities. They are activated when any member agency observes a residential or commercial burglary pattern occurring in their area. The Winnetka Police Department currently has one officer assigned to this task force. This task force had 15 activations in 2024.

Northeastern Illinois Public Safety Training Academy



The police department is a member of the Northeastern Illinois Public Safety Training Academy (NIPSTA) which provides a cooperative approach to emergency preparedness and response. Located in Glenview, NIPSTA has 33 member agencies that enjoy a year-round curriculum. For police members, NIPSTA provides training in tactical driving, forensics, and tactical scenarios.

Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory



The police department is a member of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory (NIRCL). NIRCL offers various services, including forensic biology (DNA), chemistry, fingerprint and footwear analysis, toxicology, and more. This partnership allows the police department to have crime scene evidence processed and analyzed in a timely manner.

Crime Prevention & Community Programs



The Winnetka Police Department is committed to assisting residents with crime prevention and safety. To assist in these efforts, the police department offers the following services to residents:

818

House Watch

When a resident is absent from a home, they can add their residence to the vacation watch list. Officers periodically walk the exterior of the home to ensure it appears secure.

Officers conducted 818 house watches in 2024.

380

C.O.R.E. Cards

C.O.R.E. stands for “Crime Opportunity Reduction Education.” These cards notify residents of criminal opportunities involving their property.

Officers can leave C.O.R.E. cards at residences, businesses, or on vehicles when they see vulnerable property. Officers issued 380 cards in 2024.

814

Burglar Alarms

The police department encourages residents to utilize their burglar alarms as residences are often burglarized when a functioning alarm has not been set.

Patrol officers respond to all alarms, even though most ultimately prove to be false. In 2024, officers responded to 814 burglar alarms.

6,098

Special Watches

Patrol officers utilize the special watch database to familiarize themselves with traffic concerns, special patrol needs, community events, and parking issues. Officers add information regarding recent crimes to ensure all department members are aware. Officers performed 6,098 special watches and checks throughout the year.

Employee Recognition



Promotions

The department was honored to make several promotions this year; Sergeant Marcin Beskur was promoted to Special Services Commander and Officer Matthew Hobbs was promoted to Patrol Sergeant in April 2024. Records Specialist Kim Hodge was promoted to Records Supervisor in September 2024. Additionally, Sergeant Jeffrey Tyson was promoted to Administrative Commander and Officers Logan Jernigan and Victoria Taylor were promoted to Patrol Sergeants in December 2024.



Officer of the Year

In April 2024, Detective Josue Perez was recognized as the Winnetka-Northfield-Glencoe Chamber of Commerce Public Safety Employee of the Year.



New Hires

The department welcomed three new police officers in 2024 - Alan Quinones, Martin Nieto, and Pablo Kinderman, as well as Records Specialist Meghan Marren. We look forward to many successful years ahead with each of them.

Officers' Mailbox

March 2024

Officer Sarabia,
Thank you so much for your help today with my dog. I can't believe you caught him - he is so fast.

I am forever grateful. Many thanks & many blessings to you and yours.

July 2024

Dear Officer Rodriguez,
Thank you so much for getting my bike and tracking me down.
My bike is very important to me. Thanks for keeping Winnetka safe.

October 2024:

I wanted to take a moment to thank you for the fantastic community members you oversee at the police and fire departments. This past Friday evening, we had our annual block party on Elder Lane. Members of both of your teams came, allowed the kids to ask a million questions and tour the vehicles, and broke bread with us - well, tacos. :) They were true professionals, kind and funny, and we all really enjoyed having them with us.

Especially in a small community like ours, it's so meaningful - to kids and adults alike - to be able to see our first responders as trusted neighbors and friends, and I wanted to thank you for your leadership of these awesome teams!



May 2024

I'm writing today to express my gratitude, and to commend Officer Laabs for some recent help that he gave me.

I was involved in a traffic accident in which I was rear-ended earlier today, and he was the responding officer. Officer Laabs' calm demeanor, efficient service, and clear explanations were exactly what I needed in a moment of distress. He is a wonderful example of the kind of officer and public servant that we have here in Winnetka, and is a credit to our Village.

Thank you for your service and for your leadership of the Winnetka Police Department.

The Year in Photos



WINNETKA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Crimes, Arrests, Citations and Activities, 2022 - 2024

GROUP A OFFENSES	REPORTED			ARRESTS & CITATIONS	2024	2023	2022
	2024	2023	2022				
Crimes Against Persons				TOTAL Custodial Arrests	153	187	148
Murder	0	0	0	TOTAL Ordinance Citations	181	228	153
Negligent Manslaughter	0	0	0	OFFENSE TYPES			
Justifiable Homicide	0	0	0	Animal Violations	7	7	13
Non-Consensual Sex Offenses	6	2	3	Battery	3	11	2
Aggravated Assault	4	0	5	Burglary	0	2	6
Simple Assault	17	11	25	Cannabis Violations	12	45	45
Intimidation	1	3	3	Criminal Damage to Property	9	5	1
Kidnapping / Abduction	0	0	0	Disorderly Conduct / Harassment	10	4	16
Consensual Sex Offenses	0	0	0	Domestic Battery / Violation O.P.	9	3	6
Human Trafficking	0	0	0	DUI	14	24	28
TOTAL Crimes Against Persons	28	16	36	Excessive Speed	52	90	44
Crimes Against Property				Hit and Run	1	0	2
Robbery	1	0	0	Liquor Offenses	1	5	3
Burglary / Breaking & Entering	21	21	8	No Valid D.L. / Suspended D.L.	60	38	33
Larceny / Theft Offenses	53	51	70	Other Agency Warrant Arrests	4	7	5
Motor Vehicle Theft	11	4	17	Other Drug Violations	0	3	0
Arson	0	1	0	Public Nuisance	116	104	32
Destruction of Property	31	43	43	Theft	10	6	5
Counterfeiting / Forgery	3	3	2	Trespass	15	23	27
Fraud Offenses	87	139	88	Other Arrests & Citations	11	38	33
Other Crimes Against Property	1	0	0				
TOTAL Crimes Against Property	208	262	228	PARKING	2024	2023	2022
Crimes Against Society				Total Parking Citations	2,163	2,668	2,747
Drug / Narcotic Violations	2	3	32				
Drug Equipment Violations	0	0	12	TRAFFIC	2024	2023	2022
Other Crimes Against Society	3	0	3	Traffic Citations	634	950	652
TOTAL Crimes Against Society	5	3	47	Traffic Warnings	1,388	1,642	1,124
				Injury Traffic Crashes	38	35	22
				Non-Injury Traffic Crashes	270	244	265
COMMON CALLS FOR SERVICE	2024	2023	2022	OTHER DEPARTMENT SERVICES	2024	2023	2022
Total Calls for Service	21,129	21,401	18,736	House Watch	818	966	643
Burglar Alarms	814	698	709	Directed Traffic Assignments	2,484	2,488	2,138
Fire Department Assist	428	454	356	Special Watches and Checks	6,098	6,277	5,992
Noise / Other Disturbance	244	272	286	Crime Prevention Cards	380	425	590
Parking Complaint	644	510	421				
Suspicious Incident	640	591	587				

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