

Calls to police dept. decrease by 21 percent from '07 to '08

By Beth Church

2008 saw a significant drop in the number of calls to the Rossford Police Department.

According to the year-end police report, there were only 8,913 calls for service in 2008—compared to 11,336 in 2007.

With 2,423 fewer calls last year, the total was a 21 percent decrease from 2007.

A comparison of four categories shows decreases:

- Criminal reports: 1,366 in 2007, 921 in 2008.

- Criminal arrests: 568 in 2007, 340 in 2008.

- Drug-related arrests: 137 in 2007, 79 in 2008.

- Traffic and criminal citations issued: 1,965 in 2007, 1,073 in 2008.

“The statistics detailed in this report show that our community continues to be a safe place to live,” Police Chief Bo Vespi stated in the introduction of the report. “This was made possible through the strong contributions of all members of the police department.”

The police chief said the reduced number of calls could mean less crime is taking place, but also that fewer crimes are being reported.

Chief Vespi believes the report also reflects “less self-initiated activity” by police officers.

“When you do more, you uncover more,” he said. “We did a good job. We can always do better.”

For instance, in the category of traffic and criminal citations issued, he said that number could be increased with more neighborhood and business checks, traffic and parking enforcement and zoning enforcement by officers.

Chief Vespi noted that the local decrease reflects a national downturn in crime during 2008, but the economic recession likely will mean an increase in crime during 2009.

“Hopefully our officers can become more proactive rather than reactive,” he said.

Index of Crimes

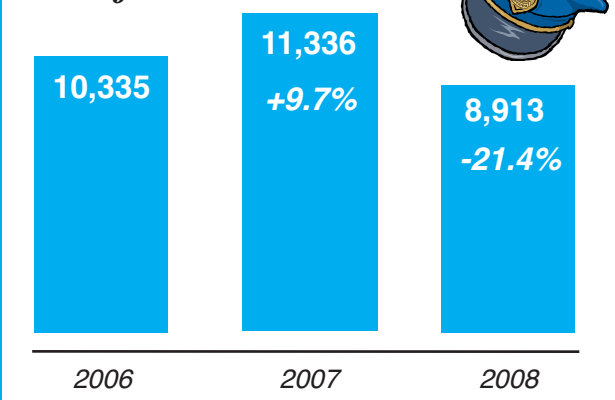
The statistics were compiled by the police department and submitted to the Ohio Attorney General’s office, which then sends the data to the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report, the chief explained.

The crimes are classified into categories established by the state, he said.

The following were the most frequent crimes reported, showing the number of offenses for 2008 and 2007, respectively:

- Simple assault, 59, 48;
- Intimidation, 51, 61;
- Burglary/breaking and entering, 45, 38;
- Shoplifting, 23, 50;
- Theft from building, 30, 37;
- Theft from motor vehicle, 41, 42;
- Other larcenies, 77, 108;
- Motor vehicle theft, 5, 10;
- Counterfeit/forgery, 4, 8;
- Impersonation, 5, 11;
- Vandalism, 97, 118;
- Drug violations, 40, 77;
- Drug equipment violations, 32, 60;
- Bad checks, 8, 8;

Rossford Police Calls for Service



- Disorderly conduct, 27, 69;

- DUI, 76, 126;

- Liquor law violations, 22, 41;

- Trespassing, 17, 45;

- Other offenses, 127, 194.

Traffic Crashes

According to the annual report, the number of traffic crashes handled by officers were: 298 in 2006, 311 in 2007, and 308 in 2008.

The report also details the top seven locations for crashes in the city:

- I-75 near Buck Road, 18;

- I-75 near State Route 795, 15;

- Buck Road at Glenwood Road, 12;

- I-75 at Glenwood Road overpass, 9;

- Crossroads Parkway at U.S. Route 20, 9;

- Crossroads Parkway at SR 795, 8;

- Lime City Road at Buck Road, 5, and

- Dixie Highway at Lime City Road, 2.

Special Response Team

Sergeant Mark Marek and Officer Greg Linkous completed more than 240 hours of training, warrant pick-up service and calls as part of the Wood County Sheriff’s Special Response Team (SRT).

About four years ago, Sheriff Mark Wasylyshyn expanded the SRT to incorporate local jurisdictions.

The team now consists of officers from Rossford, Lake Township, Perrysburg Township, Perrysburg, Northwood, Bowling Green and the county.

There are 24 members on call each day.

The team trains about 12 hours each month in tactics such as building searches, barricade and hostage situations, high-risk search warrants, school shooting scenarios and firearms training.

They also have trained with SRTs from CSX, Oregon and Toledo.

In 2008, Chief Vespi said the team trained several times at facilities in Rossford, including the schools, Pilkington, Hampton Inn and union halls.

Last year, the team executed three search warrants for drugs and weapons and one call for a possible suicidal armed suspect barricaded in one of the hotels.

“The most advantageous part of Rossford’s participation in this team is the fact that when a situation occurs where we need highly trained officers, we have two officers on the team that know our area and our needs,” Chief Vespi stated.

Other Accomplishments

In the report, Chief Vespi credited Sergeant Todd Kitzler for his work as interim police chief for seven months.

Chief Vespi was overseas for much of 2008 serving with Operation Iraqi Freedom as part of the U.S. Coast Guard Reserves.

“Sergeant Kitzler rose to the occasion and worked tirelessly to keep the department running smoothly,” the chief stated. “Without Sgt. Kitzler taking the initiative and perseverance to lead the department in my absence, the department may have faced several issues.”

The chief also thanked the other officers in the department who “came together to face this challenge and dedicated themselves to doing whatever it took to keep our city safe and help those in need.”

Among the accomplishments Chief Vespi highlighted for 2008 were:

- Officers attended more than 930 hours of training on firearms, crisis negotiations, tactical batons, narcotics, fraud and crime victims.

- Officer Jodi Johnson coordinated the D.A.R.E. program for another year, providing a drug and alcohol prevention program for students. She also was responsible for programs such as kindergarten fingerprinting and Safety Town.

- NORIS/LEADS software system was installed for each police car.

- The department received an Ohio Justice Administration grant to purchase three laptop computers for use on patrol.

- The on-line police auction has sold more than \$3,000 of old city property or release evidence.

- Officer Johnson started a Neighborhood Watch program to assist with education and reduction of neighborhood concerns.

- Officer Randy Baker was recognized for his assistance during a major fraud investigation by the U.S. Secret Service.

- Sergeant Marek and Officers Linkous, Johnson, Mark Skala, Rich Cartwright and Scott Williams were all recipients of a Lifesaving Award from the Rossford Fire Department.

- Officer Cartwright was presented the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) award for making 37 DUI arrests in 2008.

- Officer Linkous received the department’s “Officer of the Year” award.