



WILLOUGHBY HILLS POLICE DEPARTMENT

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Foreword

On behalf of the dedicated members of the Willoughby Hills Police Department, I am proud to present the 2025 Annual Report. This report provides key information and statistics that reflect our department's continued commitment to meeting the evolving challenges of delivering high-quality police services to our community. We remain focused on regularly reviewing our goals, objectives, and law enforcement programs to ensure they align with the needs and expectations of those we serve. This document brings together individual section reports to offer a comprehensive overview of department operations, as seen through the work of the personnel responsible for implementing these programs.

The Police Department continues to benefit from the strong support of the Mayor, city administration, fellow city departments, and the members of City Council. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to our community members for their ongoing trust and partnership. Your support and cooperation are essential to maintaining safe, vibrant neighborhoods. We are honored to serve such an engaged community and remain committed to working collaboratively to enhance the safety and well-being of our city. The foundation of our department remains our police officers, along with our administrative and support staff, whose professionalism and experience contribute to the successful adjudication of traffic and criminal cases, high compliance standards at our temporary housing jail facility, positive police-community relations, and strong partnerships with other city departments and law enforcement agencies. As outlined in this report, the men and women of the Willoughby Hills Police Department achieved numerous accomplishments in 2025 while serving the residents of this city.

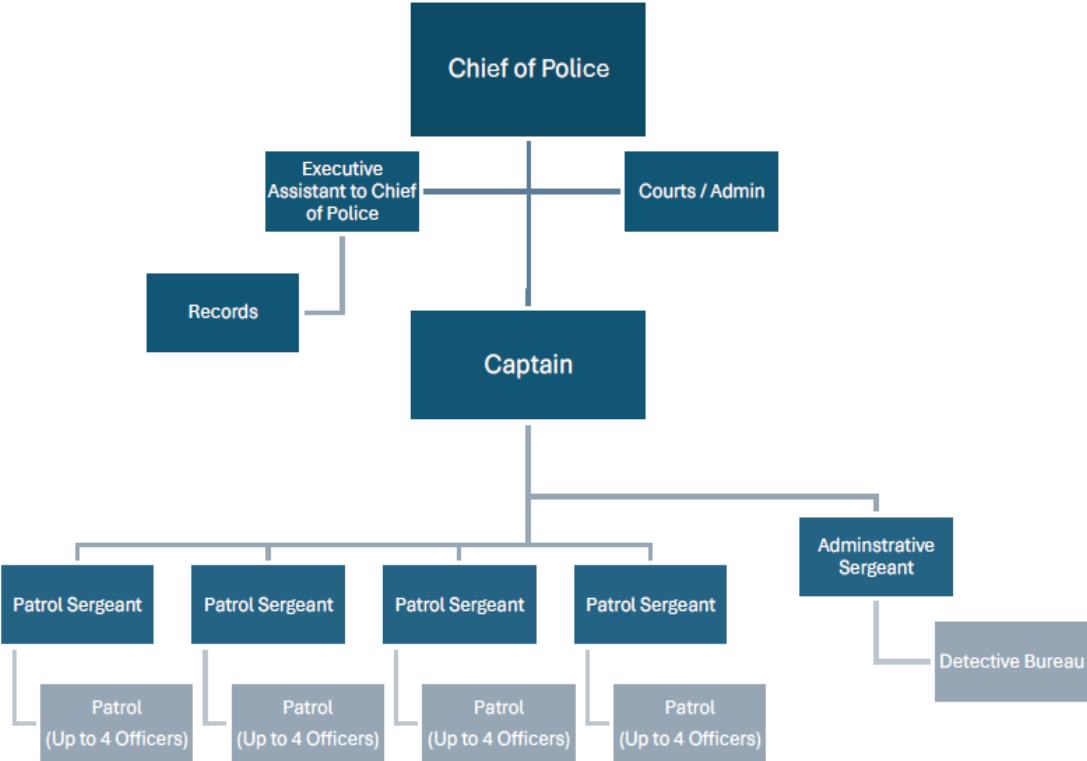
With a continued focus on collaboration and teamwork, I look forward to working alongside the Mayor and members of City Council as we continue our shared efforts to keep this city a safe and welcoming place for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew A. Naegele, Chief of Police



Organizational Chart



Mission Statement

“The Willoughby Hills Police Department is committed to ensuring the highest quality of life for all residents, visitors and members of the community. Although our relentless pursuit of criminals is unwavering, we will strive to treat every citizen encounter with professionalism and respect while maintaining a strong partnership within the community.”

Core Values

Pride: This value represents the sense of honor, integrity, and responsibility that comes with being a member of the Willoughby Hills Police Department. It involves taking pride in the work done, the community served, and upholding the values of law enforcement with professionalism and respect. Officers should feel a deep commitment to their role in ensuring justice and safety, with a strong focus on doing what is right.

Courage: This value reflects the bravery and fortitude officers display when faced with dangerous or difficult situations. It’s not just about physical bravery but also moral courage—the willingness to make tough decisions, stand up for what’s right, and act with integrity, even when it may be challenging or unpopular. Courage is about facing risks head-on while remaining true to the agency’s values.

Service: This value emphasizes the duty of our officers to serve and protect the community. It reflects a commitment to the well-being and safety of all individuals, regardless of their background. Service goes beyond just enforcing the law; it involves building trust, showing empathy, and working collaboratively with community members to improve the quality of life for everyone.

Distinguished Awards

Throughout the year, The Willoughby Hills Police Department recognizes and acknowledges exceptional individual or group achievements, performance, proficiency, heroism and service of its members through commendations and awards recognized both internally and in cooperation with the Lake County Association of Chiefs of Police (LCACP) awards program. Awards range from a citation bar worn on the officer's uniform, an awards plaque in a specific category of performance, or a letter of commendation issued to the officer and placed into their personnel file.

Officer Rick Muir – Officer of the Year Award / Arrests and Investigations Award
LCACP Lifesaving Award

Officer Vincent Deusanio – Traffic Enforcement Award

Officer Jordan Warren – OVI Enforcement Award

Officer Thomas McNamara – LCACP Lifesaving Award / Letter of Commendation

Officer Michael Jones – LCACP Lifesaving Award / Letter of Commendation

Command Staff

Chief Matthew A. Naegele is responsible for developing, coordinating, and administering all law enforcement programs and activities of the Willoughby Hills Police Department. Chief Naegele works directly under the administrative direction of the Mayor / Safety Director, and along with the other City department heads, is intimately involved in the operation of the City of Willoughby Hills. The Chief is at the head of the organizational chart and has one Captain and five Sergeants that report to him.

Under administrative direction of the Chief of Police, Captain Leonbruno is responsible for the direct supervision of the Department's mid-level supervisors and detectives. He assists the Chief of Police in planning, organizing and administering law enforcement programs and activities of the Willoughby Hills Police Department. In the absence of the Chief of Police, the Captain may oversee all divisions of the Department.

Sergeants' Henry Boepple, Shannon Vachet, Ron Parmertor, Paul Cocanower, and Richard Harmon are responsible for the supervision of Police Officers and other personnel assigned to their duty shift. The Sergeants attentively oversee and direct all patrol and activities, criminal investigations, traffic enforcement, jail operations, and crime prevention duties performed by Police Officers during their shift.

Patrol Operations

Officers assigned to Patrol Operations work 12-hour shifts and are deployed daily throughout various areas of the city. Patrol Operations is the most visible and active unit within the Police Department and is widely regarded as its backbone. The primary responsibilities of Patrol Operations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Crime prevention:** Patrol officers serve as the first line of defense against criminal activity. Their presence throughout the city acts as a deterrent to crime and promotes a sense of safety and security within the community.
- **Response to calls for police service:** Patrol officers respond to a wide range of calls for service, from traffic crashes to violent crimes. Their responsibilities include assessing situations, providing immediate assistance, and determining whether additional action or resources are required.
- **Proactive traffic management:** Officers enforce traffic laws, investigate motor vehicle accidents, and work to ensure roadway safety. This includes OVI enforcement, speed enforcement, and addressing other traffic-related violations.
- **Criminal patrol:** Officers proactively patrol designated areas and conduct surveillance with the goal of detecting and preventing criminal activity. Efforts are often focused on higher-crime areas or locations where criminal behavior is more likely to occur. This proactive approach allows officers to identify suspicious activity, intervene early, and prevent crimes from occurring or escalating.
- **Criminal investigations:** While detectives handle in-depth investigations, patrol officers play a critical role in gathering initial evidence, documenting incidents, and completing arrests in accordance with federal, state, and local laws. Patrol officers also conduct preliminary interviews and prepare reports that may lead to further investigation.
- **Community engagement:** Building and maintaining positive relationships within Willoughby Hills remains a priority. Patrol officers regularly interact with residents, attend community events and meetings, and work to strengthen public trust in law enforcement.

Patrol Operations' top priority continues to be addressing crimes that impact the safety, welfare, and overall quality of life in the community. To meet this goal, the department remains progressive in its policing strategies, training initiatives, and the evaluation of new equipment and technology. FLOCK license plate reader cameras, strategically placed throughout the city, continue to assist in locating suspects and wanted individuals. Additionally, body-worn cameras remain a valuable tool in documenting police-community interactions, supporting criminal prosecutions, and enhancing transparency and accountability for the department.

Calls for Service 2025 – 16,781

The numbers and statistics presented are illustrative only and are not intended to reflect actual outcomes for certain categories.

911 Calls	623
Assaults	21
Alarms	321
Animal Complaints	176
Burglaries	25
Breaking & Entering	24
Civil Matters / Escorts	338
Community Policing	311
Disabled Vehicles	627
Disorderly Conduct	15
Disputes and Arguments	85
Disturbance General	184
Domestic Dispute	130
Driving Under Suspension	583
Fraud	107
Gun Seizures	42
Harassment	58
Hazardous Conditions	193
Homicide	0
Investigations	1,774
Juvenile Complaints	34
Motor Vehicle Accidents	415
Motor Vehicle Theft	15
Noise / Neighbor Complaints	203
Operating Vehicle Under the Influence	44
Parking Violations	155
Possession of Drugs	31
Property Damage	104
Public Assists	619
Pursuits	32
Repossessed Vehicles	94
Robbery	1
Sex Offenses	18
Suspicious Circumstances	143
Suspicious Persons	185
Suspicious Vehicles	197
Theft	132
Traffic Complaints	500
Traffic Stops	5377
Vehicle Lockout Assist	171
Warrant Arrests	243
Welfare Checks	242

Traffic Services & Enforcement

The Police Department takes a proactive approach to the enforcement of our traffic laws. Our officers are expected to focus on enforcement of those traffic laws in order to minimize vehicle accidents, property damage and injuries. Every officer in the Department is trained to carry out these responsibilities, with specialized officers certified in criminal patrol and interdiction, accident reconstruction and enforcement of tractor-trailer regulations. Some of our traffic officers are part of the regional Lake County Crash Reconstruction Unit - a group of specialized crash investigators who work as a team on the most serious crashes. The Department's ultimate goal is public safety, which is attained through promoting good driving habits, lowering the number of accidents that occur in our City, and crime prevention through visibility.

In 2025, Officers were called for response to **500 traffic complaints**, the vast majority of which were speed related. Officers conducted **5,377 traffic stops** which resulted in the issuance of **3,186 traffic citations and 1,603 written warnings**.

Photo Enforcement Program

Improving traffic safety for residents and visitors remains a strategic goal for the Willoughby Hills Police Department. In support of this objective, the Department implemented a photo enforcement system in 2024. This state-of-the-art system is designed to encourage safer driving behaviors and ultimately save lives. While police officers cannot be everywhere at all times, the enforcement system allows traffic laws to be enforced in a consistent and safer manner for both officers and motorists. ODOT data tracking has shown a significant decrease in overall vehicle speeds when compared to data collected prior to the program's implementation, a reduction we attribute in part to the effectiveness of this enforcement initiative.

The system consists of two automated enforcement locations within designated school zones: Cornerstone Christian Academy / SOM Center Road and the School of Innovation / Chardon Road. When operational, school zone cameras function on school days only during the hours of 0700–0900 and 1400–1600, with an enforcement threshold of 11 mph or greater over the posted 20 mph speed limit. Due to program updates and a change in service vendors, the school zone enforcement portion of the program was paused for the current school year.

The Department also utilizes a handheld photo enforcement system operated by a certified police officer using a LIDAR unit equipped with a high-resolution camera. This system functions only through the direct and manual operation of the officer and is programmed for enforcement at a threshold of 15 mph or greater over the posted speed limit. Handheld photo enforcement is conducted exclusively within the designated traffic safety corridors of Interstate 271 and Interstate 90.

Handheld Total Events Captured – 83,477

Handheld Approved Violations – 53,153

Western Lake County Emergency Response Team (ERT)



WHPD Team Members

- Sergeant Shannon Vachet / Team Commander
- Captain Greg Leonbruno / Team Leader
- Officer Cory Planisek / Assistant Team Leader
- Officer Seth Baldwin / Team Member
- Officer Dylan Weidrick / Team Member

This report provides a summary and analysis of the Western Lake County Emergency Response Team's (ERT) operational activations and training events conducted during calendar year 2025.

Executive Summary

During 2025, the Western Lake County Emergency Response Team conducted eight operational activations and completed fourteen full training days. Training included Norse sustainment blocks, live-fire weapons progressions, breaching operations, vehicle interdiction, force-on-force scenarios, and advanced structure-clearance development. All operational missions were completed without injury to team members. One civilian casualty occurred as a result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Throughout the year, the team demonstrated measurable growth in structure management, communication discipline, threat-angle mitigation, and operator decision-making.

Operational Activations Overview

High-Risk Incidents

The team responded to three high-risk incidents during the year.

On January 20, ERT was deployed to Eastlake for an armed suicidal subject barricaded inside a business. Crisis Negotiation Team personnel successfully negotiated the subject's surrender. The business was cleared, and the subject was transported for a mental health evaluation.

On September 4, ERT responded to a reported homicide/suicide at a Willoughby apartment complex. Several units were contacted or cleared across all nine buildings. The incident was later determined to be a swatting event.

On November 24, ERT responded to a barricaded armed suicidal female in Willoughby. The subject was located inside a bedroom closet. The incident concluded with a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Search Warrant Operations

ERT conducted five search warrant operations in support of partner agencies.

On February 12, ERT assisted with a child pornography and drug possession investigation in Eastlake. The subject was present at the time of entry.

On March 6, ERT supported a pandering involving a minor investigation. The subject was not present during the execution of the warrant.

On April 23, ERT assisted Army CID with a residential search warrant in Willowick.

On September 9, ERT assisted with an arrest and search warrant related to a swatting suspect. The primary suspect was arrested off-site, and ERT located a second party involved during the operation.

On September 17, ERT assisted in an investigation involving a weapon supplier to a juvenile homicide suspect. The subject was stopped by patrol units while leaving the residence, and the residence was unoccupied during warrant execution.

Training and Capability Development

Structure Clearance

Training emphasized progressive structure-clearance skills, including multi-level clearances, dead-space management, and high-side deliveries. Operators reinforced cover-call discipline, non-verbal communication techniques, hallway clearance procedures, and deconfliction protocols. Low-light and no-light operations were a significant focus, with continued development of team structure management.

Breaching Operations

Breaching training included the use of rams, sledges, and picks, as well as channelized entry techniques. Knock-and-announce procedures were integrated with breaching operations, including force-on-force scenarios.

Firearms Development

Pistol training progressed from basic to advanced shooting techniques, including shooting on the move and shooting during entries. Rifle training covered basic to advanced marksmanship, barricade work, weapon retention, shooting on the move, anatomy-based targeting, mechanical offset, vertical threat angles, structure entries, shoot/no-shoot decision-making, and firing while wearing gas masks.

Tactical Applications

Additional tactical training included vehicle interdiction, subject call-backs, officer-down drills, force-on-force scenarios, structure approaches and clearances, people-handling techniques, and use-of-force considerations.

Operator Development

Operator development focused on leadership mentoring, decision-making exercises, and communication refinement. Team members completed instruction and written testing on chemical agents, less-lethal options, and distraction devices.

Personnel Notes

Team tryouts were conducted on September 30 for an open Wickliffe Police Department billet. Candidates included Officer Dodds, Officer Sieminski, Officer Peacock, and Officer Bischof. Officer Ryan Bischof was selected as the new team member.

Detective Christopher Olup of the Willowick Police Department retired from the team after fourteen years of service.

Readiness Assessment

The team demonstrated several key strengths throughout the year, including strong structure management and decision-making cycles, improved no-light operational capability, increased operator autonomy, and enhanced communication discipline.

Areas identified for continued development in 2026 include further communication refinement, expanded breaching rotations, additional vehicle-interdiction scenarios progressing to force-on-force, increased structure-clearance training in full darkness with emphasis on deconfliction, establishment of a permanent training facility, and improved deployment vehicle and equipment storage capabilities.

Command Summary

Throughout 2025, the Western Lake County Emergency Response Team maintained a high level of operational readiness. All missions were completed safely while continuing to strengthen tactical proficiency and team capability. The team is well positioned to meet operational demands in 2026.

K-9 Unit

The Department announced the passing of K9 Mya, a six-year veteran of the Department and a loyal partner to her handler, Sergeant Paul Cocanower. Mya suffered an unexpected medical emergency and, despite immediate care, succumbed to her sudden illness. K9 Mya served the Willoughby Hills community with exceptional dedication. Throughout her distinguished career, she played a vital role in locating missing persons, detecting illegal contraband, and assisting in the apprehension of criminal offenders. Her skills, professionalism, and unwavering loyalty made her an invaluable member of the Department and a trusted protector of the community. K9 Mya's service and devotion to this community will not be forgotten.

During the reporting year, the department's K9 program successfully moved from planning to implementation with the acquisition of K9 Rip, a Belgian Malinois Shepherd mix, who is now in training to become an active working dog. This milestone was made possible through a generous \$10,000 donation from a local individual who respectfully requested anonymity. The department is sincerely grateful for this contribution, as K9 programs require significant investment beyond the initial purchase of a dog, including specialized training, certification, equipment, and ongoing care. Community support of this nature is essential to maintaining a strong and effective K9

program. K9 Rip was acquired through an industry-respected vendor specializing in police working dogs and has met all selection, training, and certification standards. The dog is now deployed with Sergeant Cocanower and is actively contributing to the safety, effectiveness, and service mission of the department.

The Canine Unit will continue forward as an essential asset to our Department. The team is utilized for search and tracking operations, finding missing persons, drug detection, building searches and, occasionally, the control of aggressive or unruly persons or parties. Due to its highly specialized capability, this unit is occasionally called upon to provide support and assistance to other local jurisdictions as well. Additionally, our Canine Team trains throughout the year, to include scheduled in-service monthly training with other area teams. Sergeant Paul Cocanower deployed Mya approximately forty (40) times over the course of 2025. The tracked usages consist of: **10 arrests, 1 apprehension with a bite recorded, 29 narcotics sniffs, and 1 community policing events.**

Drone Team

Our Drone Team has welcomed the addition of veteran drone operator, Officer Jonathan O'Leary. Both Officer O'Leary and Officer Tom McNamara are assigned to the Lake County Drone Team and provide airborne support to police operations in a safe, responsible, and transparent manner to preserve the peace, reduce response times, and increase the quality of life in our community and throughout Lake County. Small, remotely operated Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), also commonly referred to as drones, are an efficient and effective way of providing law enforcement critical information to respond to calls for service and emergency situations, or to conduct criminal investigations. Some examples include; providing an overhead view of an area or incident for ground personnel, safely clearing the interior of buildings, providing detailed documentation of crime and accident scenes, and searching for lost or missing persons.

Officer O'Leary and McNamara logged an approximate combined **100 hours of flight time** throughout the year. **Approximately 30 of the hours were mission connected and the remainder were training related.** WHPD Pilots have undergone additional training and certifications in unmanned response pilot training, tactical drones and operations, public safety training, as well as certifications through the U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Aviation Administration for remote pilot licensing.

Training / In-Service and Range

Executive Summary

During the 2025 training cycle, the Willoughby Hills Police Department (WHPD) delivered a structured in-service training program emphasizing officer safety, tactical proficiency, casualty care, and firearms performance. Training topics included defensive tactics, building searches and movement, medical response (S.M.A.R.C.H.), vehicle extractions, high-risk traffic stops, and two dedicated live-fire range blocks.

Instruction combined classroom/whiteboard presentations with scenario-based, hands-on drills conducted at WHPD facilities, the WHPD mat room, the Lake County Sheriff's Range, and additional off-site locations. Throughout the year, training emphasized realism, safety compliance, and operational integration of tactics, medical care, and firearms.

Training Objectives

- Enhance officer safety and performance in close-quarters environments, including room and hallway operations.
 - Reinforce defensive tactics for single- and two-officer encounters, including wall and vehicle-based engagements.
 - Integrate S.M.A.R.C.H. casualty care principles into tactical responses.
 - Improve handgun and rifle proficiency under qualification standards and stress-based conditions, including vehicle-related live-fire scenarios.
 - Standardize training safety protocols, PPE usage, and equipment requirements.
-

Training Overview

February–March 2025:

- Defensive tactics (single- and two-officer control techniques).
- Classroom instruction on structure containment and clearance.
- Progressive building search training at 27 Woodland Rd, advancing from room entries to hallway clearance and apartment-based scenarios.

April 2025:

- Defensive tactics focused on engagements against walls and vehicles.
- Five hours of S.M.A.R.C.H. medical training covering hemorrhage control, airway and respiratory management, circulation, head injuries, and environmental considerations.

May 2025:

- Vehicle extractions and high-risk traffic stop procedures.
- Problem-solving approaches for traffic stop encounters.

Range Training:

- **Range Day 1 (May 2025):** Fundamentals review, pistol and rifle zero confirmation, movement, barricade drills, transitions, and physical stress-based shooting.
 - **Range Day 2 (September 2025):** Firearms qualifications, live-fire vehicle operations, shooting through glass, vehicle evacuations, high-risk stop scenarios, ambush response drills, and two-officer live-fire vehicle takedowns.
-

Safety & Risk Management

- Zero-tolerance policy for live ammunition in training buildings, enforced across all in-service sessions.
 - Mandatory PPE requirements consistently communicated and enforced.
 - Range training conducted in all weather conditions with advance notice to personnel regarding hydration, nutrition, and equipment needs.
 - Additional safety controls implemented for simulated blood exposure during medical training and flying glass hazards during vehicle live-fire exercises.
-

Key Outcomes & Strengths

- **Integrated training model** linking tactics, medical response, and firearms for improved operational effectiveness.
- **Progressive skill development** from foundational techniques to complex, high-stress scenarios.
- **High realism** through vehicle-based training, live-fire applications, and stress inoculation drills.
- **Enhanced lifesaving capability** through dedicated S.M.A.R.C.H. instruction applicable to patrol and tactical incidents.

Field Training Program (FTO)

Our field training program is a structured and hands-on training process designed to transition new police recruits from the classroom to real-world law enforcement work. During this program, recruits work under the supervision of an experienced field training officer (FTO) who mentors them, guides them, and evaluates their performance on the job. Sergeant Harmon is responsible for program management with administrative and operational oversight provided by the Captain and Chief of Police.

The program typically involves several phases, starting with observation and shadowing, where the recruit learns the basics of police work, such as conducting traffic stops, responding to calls, interacting with the public, and using law enforcement equipment. As the recruit progresses, they take on more responsibility, performing tasks independently while being monitored by their FTO. The training focuses not only on tactical skills but also on decision-making, communication, and handling high-stress situations.

At the end of the program, the recruit is usually evaluated on their ability to apply learned skills in real-life situations, demonstrating their readiness to work as a fully qualified officer. The program may last anywhere from a few weeks to several months, depending on the department and its training requirements.

Field Training Team consists of:

- Officer Cory Planisek
- Officer Rick Muir
- Officer Seth Baldwin
- Officer Dylan Weidrick
- Officer Jonathan O'Leary

Community Policing

In the routine course of duty and regular engagement with the public, each member of the Department fulfills the important role of community policing. Our community policing outreach and education program remains steadfast in fostering a favorable perception of our Department, accomplishing this through educational programming and ongoing engagement with the community. WHPD is part of a county-wide Safe Communities Coalition, collaborating with officers from various police and fire departments in Lake County. The coalition, which includes representatives ranging from the Lake County General Health District, Ohio Traffic Safety Office, ODOT, the Council on Aging, the ADAMHS board, Crossroads, and MADD, meets regularly to plan events and enhance overall safety in Lake County. The Department actively participated in several events throughout 2025 to include Touch-a-Truck, National Night Out, Holiday Food Drive, Coffee-with-a-Cop, and the Miracle League Local Heroes Baseball Tournament. Officers also provided educational outreach at neighborhood request and during sponsored events.

Investigative Operations

The Detective Bureau is staffed with two full-time detectives and is the criminal investigations division of the Department conducting in-depth investigations of crimes and crime scenes to determine the components of the crime, including the fundamental questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how. They are specially trained in the collection and processing of evidence at crime scenes, including crime scene photography, collection of trace evidence, fingerprints, and footwear impressions for comparison and identification. In addition to these duties, the Detective Bureau is tasked with reviewing reports and conducting follow up investigations, preparing cases for court, working with the Lake County Prosecutors Office, testimony in court proceedings, intelligence gathering, witness and suspect interviews, preparing and gaining investigatory subpoenas and search warrants, and community outreach.

Throughout 2025, in addition to assisting the patrol division in obtaining search warrants or aiding in their investigations, the Detective Bureau handled investigations including, but not limited to: Shootings, Felonious Assaults, Arsons, Drug Trafficking, Child Exploitation, Runaway and Missing Juveniles, Thefts, Burglaries, Overdoses, Sexual Assaults, Frauds, Identity Thefts, and Weapons offenses.

Outside of the Willoughby Hills cases, the Detective Bureau has assisted other area agencies in their investigations, including information sharing, joint investigations, analysis of electronic records and cellular data, as well as assisting with other elements of cybercrime investigations.

Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force

The ICAC (Internet Crimes Against Children) program is a national initiative in the United States that aims to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Established by the U.S. Department of Justice in 1998, the program is a network of 61 coordinated task forces across the country, consisting of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. These task forces investigate and prosecute crimes involving child exploitation, such as child pornography, online enticement, sextortion, and other forms of online abuse.

Beyond enforcement, the ICAC program also focuses on prevention and public education. It works to raise awareness about the dangers of online predators and educate parents, teachers, and children about safe internet practices. The program includes outreach campaigns, workshops, and community engagement efforts to help families recognize and avoid potential online threats. By combining law enforcement with proactive education, the ICAC program plays a crucial role in both safeguarding children from online harm and ensuring that offenders are held accountable for their crimes.

In 2025, WHPD, as part of the Ohio ICAC Taskforce, handled 2 Cyber-tips reporting CSAM (Child Sex Abuse Material) through the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and received three additional reports from the community regarding CSAM and child exploitation. WHPD also assisted area agencies with several of their ICAC related investigations.

U.S. Marshal Service - Northern Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force

As a result of a recent transition in our investigative team the Detective Bureau was unable to maintain our assignment to the USMS task force for several months of 2025. However, as the Department continues to assess staffing, there are tentative plans for an additional assignment in 2026. The Willoughby Hills Detective (e.g. task force officer) assigned to the task force assists with tracking down violent felons who are wanted from Willoughby Hills, other neighboring Lake County municipalities, as well as the surrounding counties. The WHPD task force officer and members of the team assisted in the apprehension of 240 wanted individuals throughout the year in categories to include but not limited to: arson, assault, burglary, fraud, homicide, kidnapping, narcotics, robbery, sex offenses, vehicle theft, and weapons offenses. The task force accounted for additional supplemental training to enhance capabilities in high-risk fugitive operations.

Support Services

The Support Services Section of the Police Department is comprised of the Records Section and Property and Evidence Unit. Both of these units are vital to the successful operation of our Department. With the everchanging legal mandates related to these disciplines, continuing professional training allows members responsible for their oversight to meet or exceed strict state and federal guidelines, and “best-practices” related to their responsibilities.

Records Section

The Records Section of this Department is managed in part by the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police, Lindsey Bushman. In concert with the Records Clerk(s), she is responsible for managing, organizing, and maintaining various types of documents and records generated by the Department. This includes police reports, arrest records, incident reports, traffic citations, case files, warrants, and other legal documents. Some of the main duties of the records unit include:

1. **Record Maintenance:** Ensuring all police documents are properly stored, filed, and easily accessible for authorized personnel. This could involve physical files or digital record-keeping.
2. **Public Requests:** Handling public records requests, in accordance with the Ohio Public Records Act, and releasing information to the public when appropriate.

3. **Data Entry and Accuracy:** Inputting information into databases and ensuring that all records are complete, accurate, and up-to-date.
4. **Confidentiality and Security:** Ensuring that sensitive or confidential information, such as personal details or ongoing investigations, is protected and only accessible to authorized individuals.
5. **Supporting Investigations:** Assisting detectives or officers by providing access to historical case files, reports, and other pertinent documentation that could aid in investigations.
6. **Compliance:** Ensuring that the department follows legal and regulatory requirements concerning record-keeping and data retention.

Lindsey Bushman plays a crucial role in ensuring that all police documents are properly maintained, accessible, and secure. It's also vital for supporting law enforcement activities, legal processes, and public transparency. Throughout 2024, the records staff provided numerous reports to various requestors to include but not limited to: media, businesses, citizens, prosecutors and defense attorneys based upon specific requests. Our staff receive up-to-date advanced public records training to remain compliant with current law.

Property & Evidence Unit

The Property & Evidence Unit falls under the Support Services Section of the Police Department. Under the administrative direction of the Chief of Police, this unit is closely supervised and monitored by Captain Greg Leonbruno. He is assisted in the management of property and evidence by Sergeant Ron Parmertor and Sergeant Shannon Vachet (Evidence Custodians). The primary function of the Property & Evidence Unit is to provide a safe and secure location for all evidence and other items turned in to the Department, following a strict chain of custody for each item. These members have several duties and responsibilities, some of which include maintaining security of the Evidence Room, receipt of evidence, maintenance of computerized logs, guidance and training for members, evidence inventories, and dispositions in accordance with court orders.

This unit is tasked with ensuring that evidence is ready for court, or in cases of found property, it is held until the rightful owner can be found to claim it. We strive to provide quick and efficient service to the Police Department, courts, and the public at large.

In 2025, the Department **logged 540** items into Evidence & Property, **destroyed 142** in accordance with court orders, **returned 50** items of property to their owner, and **forfeited 71** items through court order or disposition.

In accordance with best practice standards and departmental policy, an audit of the Property and Evidence Room was conducted for the 2025 reporting period. The audit was completed successfully, with findings indicating compliance with established procedures and controls.