RAVENNA POLICE DEPARTMENT
2024 YEAR-END REPORT

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Ravenna Police Department

Courage, Wisdom, Justice, and Discipline

Patrol

The Patrol Division is the largest unit in the police department, consisting of 18 full-time sworn peace officers and one (1) part-time sworn peace officer. Its primary responsibilities are responding to calls for service from the community, keeping our roadways safe, and locating and arresting violators of the law. Each year, officers respond to various calls ranging from vehicle lockouts to violent felonies. In addition, officers of the Patrol Division are expected to provide proactive services such as traffic enforcement, business and property checks, and initiating contacts within our community to further enhance the department's interaction and partnership with the community. These uniformed officers are dedicated to patrolling duties and are *first responders* to all emergencies and calls for service from the community.

Patrol is divided into three duty shifts:

The day shift operates from 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM and is responsible for interacting with schools, courts, local businesses, and banks.

The afternoon shift runs from 3:00 PM to 11:00 PM and is typically the busiest of the three shifts, handling the evening rush hour.

The night shift runs from 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM, traditionally leading the division in OVI (drunk driving) and alcohol-related incidents and arrests.

The total number of police calls for service in 2024 was 17,287. The top calls for service were thefts (312 total), traffic accidents (244 total), and domestic-related calls (265 total). 857 traffic citations were issued, and 1,299 arrests were made (279 felony arrests and 682 misdemeanor arrests).

Drug abuse and overdoses remain a significant concern in Portage County. In Ravenna, there were four (4) drug toxicity-related deaths in 2024, a reduction from eight (8) in 2023. Countywide, the Portage County Coroner's Office reported 30 confirmed drug toxicity-related fatalities in 2024, down from 43 in 2023.

Communications

The Ravenna Communications Center is staffed by ten (10) full-time dispatchers, one (1) part-time dispatcher, and one (1) full-time dispatch coordinator. Each member is certified by Powerphone. All 9-1-1 emergency calls, all non-emergency calls, and most administrative calls are received through the Communications Center.

The Ravenna Police Department Dispatch Center provides public safety dispatches for nine (9) communities in Portage County. The Center handles an average annual call volume of 23,000, equating to approximately 63 calls per day.

In 2024, the Ravenna Dispatch Center handled 24,288 calls for service, reflecting a slight increase from the 22,675 calls recorded in 2023.

In 2024, we were proud to welcome the Marlboro Township Fire Department and Police Department as new clients of the Ravenna Communications Center. Their decision to trust us with their dispatching needs is a testament to the exceptional service, reliability, and professionalism we provide to our partner agencies.

The Ravenna Communications Center provides dispatch services for two police departments. The call volume breakdown is as follows:

Ravenna Police Department: 17,287 calls
Marlboro Township Police Department: 140 calls (since November 1, 2024)

The Ravenna Communications Center dispatches for nine (9) other local Fire/EMS customers. The breakdown of calls by all fire departments is as follows:

Charlestown: 289 calls
Deerfield: 395 calls
Edinburg: 326 calls
Marlboro Township: 430 calls
Palmyra: 410 calls
Paris: 217 calls
Ravenna City: 3126 calls
Rootstown: 1089 calls
Windham: 697 calls

Our 9-1-1 dispatchers are responsible for receiving incoming emergency calls, prioritizing calls based on their nature, providing instructions on life-saving emergency medical interventions, and dispatching the proper emergency personnel. In addition, dispatchers encourage callers to remain calm during the phone call to provide the information first responders need to understand the full scope of a situation. Our Dispatch Center is now fully compliant with the Ohio 911 Compliance Agency.

Detective Bureau

Detectives primarily work during daytime hours but remain on call 24/7. Uniformed patrol officers thoroughly investigate reported offenses when practical. However, detectives will conduct secondary investigations when additional time or expertise is required. Based on case screening and solvability factors (that indicate the offense may be solved with a reasonable amount of investigative effort), the detective supervisor determines which case will be assigned for additional follow-up. The Detectives are then assigned those cases and investigate them until completion.

The Detective Bureau comprises one supervisor, two (2) full-time detectives, and one (1) part-time detective. They are trained in advanced interview and interrogation techniques and have access to investigative tools that provide comprehensive data critical to case development. Each detective is responsible for and oversees an average of 30 cases at any given time.

In 2024, the Detective Bureau handled 80 criminal investigations, executed 20 search warrants, and investigated 26 sex-related crimes. Several significant cases remain under investigation or await prosecutorial review.

Key Information:

- The 2017 Javon Thomas triple shooting and double murder case was successfully retried, bringing justice to the victims and their families.
- The Madison Street shooting remains under investigation, with one arrest tied to at least 13 other shootings in Northeast Ohio, identified through the FLOCK camera system.
- Investigations into illegal activities at massage parlors led to multiple arrests and the closure of two establishments.
- A robbery and drug investigation from 2023 resulted in a successful prosecution and the forfeiture of over $29,000 to the City of Ravenna.
- Provided critical support to a multi-agency investigation into a 1994 cold case, contributing to renewed efforts to resolve it.
- Investigated three aggravated arsons, a notable increase from zero in 2023. Of these cases, one resulted in a plea, another is awaiting trial, and the third is pending indictment.

The Detective Bureau manages nearly 1,200 pieces of new evidence annually and maintains the storage and disposition of over 10,000 pieces at any given time. In 2024 the department processed 895 new evidence tags, a decrease from the 1,274 handled in 2023. A total of 409 pieces of evidence were submitted to the lab for analysis, significantly increasing from 239 in the previous year. Additionally, 210 articles of evidence were processed for destruction, ensuring proper management and accountability of stored items.

In 2024, over 28 cell phone extractions were forensically examined with Cellebrite Software, which translates to 855 billion bytes of information. The Detective Bureau can forensically investigate cell phone data with the Cellebrite software. These extractions solved countless crimes after using the data provided.

Lexipol

We utilize Lexipol, a nationally recognized policy and procedure management system endorsed by the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies), and the Ohio Collaborative. Lexipol delivers legally sound, continuously updated policies that align with best practices, ensuring our officers operate with clarity and confidence in every situation. This system enhances accountability, standardizes procedures, and supports compliance with evolving legal and professional standards. More than 160 police departments across Ohio rely on Lexipol to meet the State of Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board requirements.

The Ravenna Police Department policy manual is based on the most current Federal, State, and best practices, and we are certified through the Ohio Collaborative. This collaborative helps ensure police departments throughout Ohio are compliant and follow the current Federal, State, and best practices in areas such as:

- Vehicular Pursuits
- Investigation of Employee Misconduct
- Bias-Free Policing
- Law Enforcement Telecommunicator Training
- Body Worn Cameras
- Use of Force
- Use of Deadly Force
- Agency Employee Recruitment and Hiring
- Community Engagement

Portage County Drug Task Force (PCDTF)

In 2024, Kent, Streetsboro, and Ravenna finalized a settlement with Portage County over property retained by the Sheriff's Office following its 2021 withdrawal from the joint drug task force. Each city received $51,912, totaling $155,736, with payments from the Sheriff's Office and county commissioners. In return, the cities withdrew their legal actions, completing the agreement in December.

Metro SWAT

There are 25 participating departments in Summit and Portage Counties. Metro SWAT also maintains mutual aid agreements with five other local SWAT teams if an operation is prolonged or highly involved and relief or operational assistance is needed.

The organization maintains six (6) specialized vehicles: a van, an equipment vehicle (squad), two (2) Lenco Bearcats (armored vehicle), a command post vehicle, and a negotiator vehicle. Since its inception, Metro SWAT has been activated to assist participating agencies in their time of need. Metro SWAT not only trains and performs high-risk operations such as warrant services,

barricaded subjects, and hostage rescue, but the team is also capable of performing area searches for lost people or evidence, disaster security, crowd control, and riot response.

In 2024, the team acquired a new Lenco Bearcat, funded through a fair-share contribution model from all participating agencies. The new vehicle will replace the original Bearcat, which has faced increasing maintenance issues, though the team will continue to use the original as long as it remains operational. This collaborative effort ensures equitable investment in a critical resource, enhancing safety and operational capabilities for the jurisdictions of the participating agencies. The Bearcat remains vital in high-risk situations, underscoring the team's commitment to protecting our communities.

Metro SWAT was activated 28 times in 2024. The organization has specialized units: negotiators, precision rifles, explosive entry, and medical. Each tactical member trains 22 days per year, set in advance. To date, there are 54 team members.

Patrolmen Duane Kaley, Brock Wise, and Cruz Montes are assigned to this unit from our agency. All three (3) officers maintain a high fitness and shooting proficiency level. Patrolman Wise received the shooting and fitness awards, and Patrolman Montes received the fitness award.

In 2024, those officers completed 208 hours of training with Metro SWAT. The training covered criminal barricades, hostage rescues, high-risk warrant services, dignitary security details, and land navigation searches for criminals or missing persons.

K-9 Unit

The Ravenna Police Department currently has three (3) K-9s and three (3) handlers. K-9s are a valuable resource and asset to the department and community. Two (2) Ravenna PD K-9s are full-service dogs for drug detection, tracking, and suspect apprehension. One (1) is a fully certified therapy dog available to the department's staff and the public in times of crisis.

Our full-service K-9s are certified by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission and the National Association of Professional Canine Handlers.

K-9 Drago and his handler, Patrolman Josh Erb, were used 58 times in 2024, with some of those calls being 35 uses for narcotics detection, 21 felony finds, two (2) tracks, two (2) assist with other agencies, which included tracks and drug sniffs, two (2) building searches, 12 public relation events, and four (4) calls in which K-9 Drago was used for K-9 presence.

K-9 Drago and Patrolman Erb had 588 training hours for the year with their K-9 group, which meets monthly for training sessions and classes/seminars that include legal updates or K-9 first aid.

K-9 IX and his handler, Patrolman Dominic Nicolino, were used 41 times in 2024, with some of those calls being 28 uses for narcotics detection, 12 felony finds, three six (6) tracks, one (1) assist with other agencies, which included tracks, and drug sniffs, five (5) building searches, one (1) public relation event and one (1) call in which K-9 Mako was used for K-9 presence.

K-9 IX and Patrolman Nicolino had 205 training hours for the year with their K-9 group, which meets monthly for training sessions and classes/seminars that include legal updates or K-9 first aid.

Our therapy K9 program helps first responders and all staff within the Ravenna Police Department cope with exposure to traumatic events. It supports efforts to increase resilience to improve mental health and wellness. The therapy K9 will also be available to help community partners whose mission is to provide services to those affected by trauma, mental health, and crime.

K-9 Tucker and his handler, Patrolman Steve Lincoln, were used 83 times in 2024, with 43 times in which K-9 Tucker was used for K-9 presence and 40 times being present at public relations events.

K-9 Tucker and Patrolman Lincoln had 16 training hours with their K-9 group, which meets monthly for different training sessions and classes/seminars.

Crisis Intervention Team

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) at Ravenna PD comprises 27 dedicated sworn officers who completed 40 hours of specialized training to recognize and respond decisively to individuals amid a mental health crisis. Every patrol officer and all 11 dispatchers are fully CIT-certified, ensuring that our entire department is equipped to handle these critical situations with expertise and compassion.

Both officers and dispatchers consistently apply advanced de-escalation techniques and crisis intervention strategies to guide individuals experiencing mental health crises toward appropriate treatment. In 2024, officers responded to 334 mental health crisis calls compared to 103 in 2023, with September seeing the highest volume of these incidents. Impressively, nearly 95% of these cases were resolved successfully through active listening and de-escalation.

To recognize the outstanding contributions of those in this vital field, the Mental Health and Recovery Board annually honors the CIT Officer of the Year. In 2023, the board expanded its recognition by introducing two new awards: the CIT Champion of the Year and the CIT Dispatcher of the Year.

For 2024, Ravenna PD proudly nominated Patrolman Zach Milush for the CIT Officer of the Year, a testament to his unwavering dedication and exemplary crisis intervention skills. Patrolman Zach Milush’s CIT training and professionalism have profoundly impacted the City of Ravenna. On April 2, 2024, he and fellow officers responded to a dire emergency at the Coleman Access Building, where a male subject had attempted suicide by inflicting three severe lacerations on his arm.

Patrolman Zach Milush remained composed despite the situation's intensity, demonstrating exceptional poise and compassion. He expertly de-escalated the crisis, ensuring the scene remained controlled while providing immediate, lifesaving aid. Without hesitation, he applied two tourniquets to the subject’s arm, effectively stabilizing the bleeding and preserving his life as paramedics arrived.

Patrolman Zach Milush's decisive actions and steadfast commitment to CIT principles exemplify the highest standards of crisis intervention, proving once again that training, skill, and compassion save lives.

Wellness Program

In 2024, the department took a significant step toward prioritizing officer wellness by implementing a comprehensive mental health and wellness program. Law enforcement professionals routinely face high-stress situations that impact their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. However, many officers are reluctant to seek help due to long-standing cultural stigmas within the profession. Recognizing the urgent need for change, the department shifted from a reactive approach to a proactive strategy, ensuring that support and resources are readily available to all personnel.

This initiative provides essential resources, including counseling services, peer support groups, and training on healthy coping mechanisms. By making participation mandatory, the program ensures that every staff member and sworn officer receives the support they need, reinforcing that mental well-being is just as vital as any other aspect of professional development. Through mental health training, community partnerships, policy alignment, and continuous evaluation, the department fosters a culture where seeking help is normalized and stigma is reduced.

This commitment to officer well-being is essential for individual resilience and a strong, effective police department. The program enhances department performance and strengthens community safety by equipping officers with tools to manage job-related stress. This initiative has the potential to save lives, making it one of the most transformative steps the department has taken in supporting those who serve and protect.

School Resource Officer

The Ravenna Police Department has one (1) full-time School Resource Officer (SRO) assigned to the Ravenna Schools. Patrolman Steve Lincoln has held this assignment since 2021. SRO Lincoln is a uniformed presence in the school and is responsible for providing the safety and security of both the staff and the students who attend the school. In addition to providing security, he instructs in law-enforcement-related matters, and answers calls for service within the school and its immediate vicinity.

In 2022, we began our law enforcement therapy K9 program. Through a generous donation, we were able to purchase K9 Tucker. As an agency that embraces community engagement, we realized therapy dogs could be beneficial tools to serve our citizens uniquely. Dogs transcend cultures, religious beliefs, and political affiliations, so we knew they could provide a segue into establishing more robust relationships with our diverse population.

SRO Lincoln also oversees the Ravenna Police Department Juvenile Diversion Work Service Program. This program is designed to allow juveniles to complete a program that will enable them to maintain a clear criminal record with the Ravenna Police Department. Failure to

complete the program results in the juvenile's crime being prosecuted formally in the Portage County Juvenile Court. In 2024, there were 16 total participants. 14 participants completed the program, and two (2) failed to complete the program.

School Crossing Guards

Ravenna PD employs two (2) crossing guards. These dedicated individuals are managed by the Detective Bureau Sergeant and are assigned to help children cross the road at two (2) school locations in the city.

Training

For the calendar year 2024, Ravenna Police officers completed 24 hours of Continuing Professional Training (CPT), including eight (8) mandatory hours in the following areas:

- Legal Updates – 2 hours
- Responding to Mental Health – 2 hours
- Crisis Mitigation & De-escalation – 2 hours
- Marsy's Law & Victims' Rights – 1 hour
- NIBIN (National Integrated Ballistic Information Network) – 1 hour

In addition to the eight mandatory hours of Continuing Professional Training (CPT) in 2024, Ravenna Police officers completed 16 hours of training across various critical areas. Officers participated in Arrest, Search & Seizure training and courses focused on Officer Personal Wellness, including Officer Wellness and Vicarious Trauma. Officers also received additional training in Use of Force, Report Writing 2023, Impacting Narcotics in Ohio, Use of Body-Worn Cameras, and Responding to Sexual Assault, further enhancing their skills and preparedness. Officers also completed training on Distracted Driving, Evidence Collection Procedures, Preserving Cellphone Evidence, and Testifying in Court to reinforce key skills. Furthermore, officers enhanced their investigative skills through Interviewing the Crime Victim training. These courses ensured continued professional development and preparedness in crucial aspects of law enforcement.

In 2024, each officer also received approximately 20 additional hours of hands-on training, including firearms, defensive tactics, use of force, traffic stops, pursuit review, building searches, de-escalation tactics, Taser, etc. In addition, the training staff strives to recertify officers in various disciplines early in the calendar year to allow for any necessary rescheduling or make-up training.

The department enhanced officer training and preparedness by purchasing and installing the MILO training system. To support this, we remodeled a room at the motor pool, creating a dedicated space for practical training. MILO is an advanced simulation system for law enforcement, military, and government agencies to improve critical incident response, de-escalation, decision-making, and firearms proficiency. This technology provides scenario-based training, allowing officers to sharpen their tactical judgment and mission-specific skills in a

controlled, interactive environment. By incorporating MILO into our training program, we equip our officers with the necessary tools and experience to handle real-world challenges confidently and professionally.

Ohio Collaborative

The Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board is a multidisciplinary group that establishes statewide standards for law enforcement agencies. The compliance process involves reviewing documentation by an Ohio Collaborative assessor for each agency to prove it complies with standards annually. A standard consists of four elements:

- Policy/procedure
- Knowledge/Awareness (read and sign)
- Proficiency (Roll-call training/quizzes)
- Compliance (agency activity and accountability)

At the end of 2020, our department began achieving compliance with the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board standards. In 2021, the department achieved compliance and was issued a certification of standards that govern the Use of Force, Recruiting, and Hiring. In subsequent years, the Collaborative added standards covering Community Engagement, Body-worn Cameras, Telecommunicator Training, Bias-Free Policing, Investigation of Employee Misconduct, and Motor Vehicle Pursuits.

UAV Program

Small, remotely operated unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also called drones, are an efficient and effective way of providing law enforcement with critical information when responding to calls for service, emergencies, or criminal investigations.

In 2024, the department conducted 171 drone deployments, logging 63 flight hours and covering 189.93 miles, a significant increase from 111 deployments in 2023.

The mission of the Ravenna Police Department's UAV Program is to safely, responsibly, and transparently provide airborne support to police operations to preserve peace, reduce response times, and increase the quality of life in Ravenna.

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 people.

We have four (4) certified drone pilots that employ two (2) DJI Mavic 3 UAVs with night vision, zoom, and thermal image capability.

Firearms Transition

In 2024, we took a critical step in upgrading our duty firearms, replacing our aging .45 ACP handguns, which had been in service for 12 years, with modern 9mm models. This transition was driven by both practicality and performance. The rising cost of .45 ACP ammunition had placed an increasing strain on our budget, while 9mm rounds provided a more cost-effective solution without sacrificing effectiveness.

Additionally, the ergonomic design of the 9mm duty handguns offered a better fit for our diverse officers, improving comfort, control, and overall performance in the field. Upgrading our firearms was not just a logistical decision; it was a necessary investment in officer readiness, efficiency, and safety. By making this transition, we ensured that our personnel were equipped with the best tools available to meet the evolving demands of modern policing.

Body Worn Cameras

Research has consistently shown that body cameras reduce use-of-force incidents and complaints, strengthening public trust while promoting officer safety. Additionally, body cam and dashcam footage are crucial in prosecutions, providing critical evidence for the prosecutor's office.

Before deployment, officers underwent comprehensive training, and the program officially launched on June 26, 2019. Since then, the department has observed a decline in use-of-force incidents and increased compliance when individuals are informed they are being recorded. These cameras foster transparency and help mitigate injuries during resistance or noncompliance incidents.

To maintain the effectiveness and reliability of this initiative, the department continues to invest in updated technology. New cameras are purchased annually, and outdated or broken equipment is systematically replaced. Grant funding has been secured in past years to support these upgrades, ensuring that the program remains cost-effective without placing additional financial strain on the community. This ongoing commitment reflects the department's dedication to public safety, accountability, and operational excellence.

Chaplaincy Program

Chaplain Bill Wisniewski continues to serve our department with unwavering dedication. He volunteers his time to support staff and the public during crises. His presence provides a vital resource, offering comfort, guidance, and compassion when needed most.

Prescription Drug Take-Back Program

The Ravenna Police Department again collected over 1000 pounds of unused prescription medications in 2024, which were collected and destroyed by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

The Ravenna Police Department's Prescription Drug Take-Back Program protects our citizens and the environment by providing a safe and responsible way to dispose of unused prescription medications. This initiative helps prevent the diversion and abuse of prescription drugs, reducing the risk of misuse—especially among young people who may access medications from household medicine cabinets.

Improperly disposing of these medications, such as flushing them or throwing them in the trash, can pose serious environmental hazards by contaminating our soil and waterways. Wastewater treatment plants are not equipped to remove pharmaceutical compounds, allowing them to enter our surface and groundwater. By participating in our take-back program, citizens are helping to keep our community safe and our environment clean.

Technology Updates

The implementation of FLOCK cameras in our community in 2024 has proven to be an invaluable tool for law enforcement. With 10 strategically placed cameras, the system has helped solve numerous crimes by providing real-time data and video footage. These cameras are equipped with advanced license plate recognition technology, allowing them to quickly identify suspects and vehicles involved in criminal activity. This technology has significantly improved investigative efficiency, enabling law enforcement to connect suspects to multiple incidents across jurisdictions.

In addition to aiding numerous investigations, these cameras act as a powerful deterrent, reducing crime by increasing the likelihood of detection and capture. The Madison Street shooting remains under investigation, with one arrest tied to at least 13 other shootings in Northeast Ohio—connections that were identified through the FLOCK camera system. Overall, FLOCK cameras have enhanced both proactive policing and community safety, making our streets safer for everyone.

Staffing Changes

Retirements

- Patrolman Jason Burrell- July 19, 2024

New Hires

- Patrolman Christopher Dynys- February 16, 2024
- Patrolman Ellie Smith- December 2, 2024

Resignation

- Patrolman Jeff Wisniewski- March 2, 2024