



# Fort Walton Beach Police Department

Year in Review 2024

Robert Bage, Chief of Police



Throughout 2024, the Fort Walton Beach Police Department continued its commitment to the success of the community. Officers partnered with many different organizations to further our goal of community engagement and making the community safer. We continued our strong commitment to community first policing.

## **Core Responsibilities:**

- Ensure a highly visible police presence by utilizing innovative strategies, technology, equipment, to create a safer community for all.
- 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 led policing through timely statistical analysis of crime trends to optimize crime reducing strategies based on specific problems and geographic locations.

## **2024 Major Accomplishments:**

- Major Community Events:
  - Hosted: Construction Junction, Family Community Day, National Coffee with a Cop Day, Cones with Cops, Candy with a Cop, Faith & Blue Event, Grinch Glow Ride, Winter Food Drive, Winter Wonderland, and a Citizen's Police Academy.
  - Participated in the annual MLK parade, FWB Mardi Gras parade, Billy Bowlegs Torchlight parade, and the FWB Christmas parade.
  - Participated in: Numerous trunk-or-treat events with local community groups, Ruck March Fundraiser, Children Clothing Project at HSU Foundation, Brooks Street Community Halloween event, and Wreaths Across America.
  - Winter Wonderland at the Fairgrounds in which multiple truckloads of toys were collected for Toys for Tots, \$1,196 in cash donations were also collected for Toys for Tots, and \$1,075 in cash donations for PAWS.
- Officers teamed up with Panama City, Panama City Beach, and Springfield to travel to the Sarasota area to help with relief efforts after hurricane Milton.
- Completed the conversion of a storage room into a Functional Fitness Gym and training facility to provide our Officers with an area for advanced dynamic training scenarios and physical fitness. Also applied for and received the Fit Cop Grant to install an outdoor fitness training area. Both these projects are part of the Department's overall Officer Wellness program.
- Completed a Carport project which prevents degradation and loss of city assets by providing a covered area for specialty vehicles, parade items, and speed trailers.
- Maintained our accreditation status from the State of Florida.
- The Department increased its social media outreach to 3,300 Instagram followers and 32,800 Facebook followers.
- Implemented a new Computer Aid Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management System (RMS) from Tyler Technologies. The new system is cloud hosted and has a community dashboard (<https://fortwaltonbeachpd-fl-letrms.connect.socrata.com/>).
- FDLE SAFE (State Assistance for Fentanyl Eradication) Grant was extended into 2025. In 2024, the department made 19 arrests under the SAFE grant for fentanyl related crimes. One arrest was for murder.
- The Department started the County wide Post Overdose Support Team (POST) to follow up on overdose calls. The Department received an award from the Health Department for its work on POST and opioid overdoses prevention.
- Overdose calls decreased by 34% in 2024 compared to 2023.
- Traffic Crashes increased by less than 1% in 2024 compared to 2023.
- Total Crime (Group A + Group B) decreased by 10% in 2024 compared to 2023.



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## Statistical Comparisons:

Quantitative Performance Measures	2024	2023
Group A Offenses (Arson, Assault, Burglary, Narcotics Offenses, Fraud, Homicide, Kidnapping, Robbery, Sex Offenses, Weapons Violations & Theft)	1,402	1,255
Group B Offenses (any crime that is not a Group A Offense)	797	1,182
Total Crime (Group A + Group B)	2,199	2,437
Total Use of Force	17	31
Officers Hired	11	6
Traffic Crashes	855	848
Traffic Tickets	1,708	3,586
Adult Arrests	654	647
Juvenile Arrests	29	67
Ordinance Violations	130	127
DUI	97	183
Public Requests for Calls for Service	18,145	17,928
Officer Initiated Calls for Service	13,015	17,767
Total Calls for Service	31,160	35,695
Priority 1 Calls: Call to Dispatch	2:08	2:53
Priority 1 Calls: Dispatch to on Scene	2:29	3:38

## 2025 Major Projects and Initiatives:

- Continue to partner with local stakeholders to educate the public, mentor the youth and reduce the fear of crime.
- Enhance the daily operations by providing state-of-the-art technology and practical training.
- Completed the re-accreditation process (this is required every three years).
- Identify and apply for grants from public and private sources to expand capacity and resources with minimal fiscal impact.
- Identify strategies to mitigate the opioid epidemic and other illegal drug issues.
- Continue to work on the feasibility of a police training facility center at One Hopeful Place.
- Explore opportunities for natural resource and boating enforcement.
- Continue to partner with other City Departments on beautification efforts and quality of life improvements.
- Obtain and train a community wellness dog.
- Conduct a Citizen Police Academy.
- Develop a Strategic Plan for the Department.