

OFFICER ACCOUNTABILITY BUREAU

The goal of the Lawrence Township Police Department is to provide the most professional police services possible to the citizens of Lawrence Township and the State of New Jersey. Honesty and integrity are paramount to this goal. The mission of the Officer Accountability Bureau is to fully and impartially investigate all complaints about police officer conduct. Lieutenant Timothy Drew commanded the Officer Accountability Bureau and is designated as the Internal Affairs Officer.

Police procedure mandates that complaints about police officer conduct be accepted 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Complaints are accepted from all persons regardless of race, color, creed, sex or handicap. Complaints are also accepted from juveniles and arrested persons, as well as other law enforcement organizations. In addition, complaints can be received in person, by telephone, mail, email or anonymously.

Complaints received about police officer conduct are generally broken down into nine categories. These categories include allegations of committing a crime, excessive use of force, improper arrest, improper entry and improper search. They also include differential treatment and demeanor complaints, as well as serious and minor rule infractions. All complaints are investigated fully using a variety of investigative techniques. During 2019, the Officer Accountability Bureau received 49 complaints about officer conduct. Those complaints are broken down into the following categories: 9 complaints for demeanor, 35 for other rule violations, 4 alleging differential treatment, and 1 alleging other criminal violations. The results of these 49 complaints are: 14 were sustained, 14 were exonerated, 10 were not sustained, 0 were unfounded and 5 cases were administratively closed (this generally occurs when the complainant voluntarily requests that the complaint be withdrawn). As of the end of 2019, 6 cases are still under investigation.

2019 Internal Affairs Complaint Dispositions

Type of Complaint	Sustained	Exonerated	Not Sustained	Unfounded	Admin. Closed	Total Dispositions
Excessive Force						
Improper Arrest						
Improper Entry						
Improper Search						
Other Criminal Violation					1	1
Differential Treatment		3				3
Demeanor	2	4	1		2	9
Domestic Violence						
Other Rule Infraction	12	7	9		2	30
TOTAL	14	14	6	0	5	43

Sustained: The investigation disclosed sufficient evidence to prove the allegation against the officer by a preponderance of the evidence.

Exonerated: The alleged incident occurred, but the actions of the officer were justified, legal and proper.

Not Sustained: The investigation failed to disclose sufficient evidence to clearly prove or disprove the allegation.

Unfounded: The alleged incident did not occur.

Administratively Closed: Examples include situations when a complainant withdraws the complaint or the subject officer terminates employment.

In accordance with the New Jersey Attorney General’s Guidelines on Internal Affairs, police agencies are required to publicly report when an officer has received a fine or suspension of 10 days or more. During 2019, no Lawrence Township Officer received a suspension of 10 days or more.

The Officer Accountability Bureau reviews each Use of Force incident that occurs to ensure proper levels of force were utilized by the officers. In 2019 Lawrence Township Police Officers arrested 1,179 individuals for various crimes and offenses. Of these 1,179 arrests, officers had to use force on 26 occasions. In total, 98% of the force used was limited to physical force. Physical force involves contact with a subject beyond that which is generally utilized to affect an arrest. Examples include wrestling a resisting subject to the ground, using wrist locks or arm locks, striking with the hands or feet, or other similar methods of hand-to-hand confrontation. One of the incidents required the officers to use mechanical force. Mechanical force involves the use of some device or substance, other than a firearm, to overcome a subject’s resistance. Examples include the use of a baton or other object, canine physical contact with a subject, or chemical or natural agent. The single use of Mechanical Force in 2019 utilized by Lawrence officers was by the use of a chemical agent (O.C. Spray/Mace). None of the incidents required the use of deadly force. Deadly force is force which a law enforcement officer uses with the purpose of causing, or creates a substantial risk of causing, death or serious bodily harm. Significantly, there were no serious injuries sustained by any arrestee during any of the use of force incidents.

2019 Use of Force Report

Total Number of incidents necessitating the Use of Force	26
Total number of persons against whom force was used	27
Total number of incidents involving officer use of Physical Force	25
Total number of incidents involving officer use of Mechanical Force	1
Total number of incidents involving officer use of Deadly Force	0

Another function of the Officer Accountability Bureau is to conduct random drug testing of sworn police personnel at least twice in a calendar year. The first random test took place in February. The second took place in November. During these drug tests, officer names are randomly selected and an impromptu drug test is conducted. During this year, all officers tested were negative for any use of illegal drugs. No officers were tested under the suspicion of using illegal drugs.

In conclusion, the Bureau strives to ensure all complaints brought to the attention of the department will be investigated fully and impartially. The utilization of the WatchGuard in-car video cameras and the WatchGuard body worn cameras has assisted in the investigation of the majority of the complaints. Information gained from complaints and investigations is used to train officers, review procedures, and plan for the future.