



## City of Orem Police Department

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Gary Giles  
Chief of Police

### **DESTINATION ZERO PROGRAM**

*Strategic and Comprehensive Safety Award Nomination for the Orem, Utah Police Department*

The City of Orem, Utah Police Department has always been a forward-thinking department that is very concerned about its employees. Innovation is encouraged at all levels within the Department whether it is making suggestions on how to improve a process or suggestions on employee recruitment and retention. We take great pride in our community outreach and the positive effects that has within our community. Our current police department social media following exceeds 54,000 people.

Orem is a city of approximately 99,000 residents located 40 miles south of Salt Lake City along the I-15 corridor. The City is home to the Utah Valley University (Utah's largest state university in terms of enrollment) with a student population of around 35,000. There is no on-campus housing so students either live nearby off-campus or commute to the school each day, making traffic in Orem an adventure.

The Orem Police Department currently has 91 sworn officers when fully staffed along with an additional 30 non-sworn staff. It has its own 911 PSAP dispatch center who also dispatch for a smaller local agency. The Department has a 5-dog K9 unit, participates in a multi-agency SWAT team, administers for a County-wide drug task force, and also includes a traffic/motor unit, street narcotics team, and Neighborhood Preservation Unit. Most recently, the Department has assigned one sergeant full time as a "Mental Health Officer". His job is to become familiarized with and give assistance to those community members with mental health issues. He follows up on all suicidal subject calls, works with the local mental health providers, and has a part-time social worker also assigned to the unit. Additionally, it is the goal of the Orem Police Department to have all officer certified as Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officers within the first two years of their employment. Due to several new hires, we are currently at about 80% certified.

Below, I will outline several bullet-pointed programs that we have implemented as a department in regards to officer wellness and general officer safety and will try to explain, as much as possible, utilizing the award criteria of Innovation, Implementation, Participation rate/success, Data, and Marketing/Promotion.



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### Wellness Program:

- **Mandatory Therapy Visit** (once per year per employee) with Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Therapist. This includes all police officers, dispatchers, and Victim Advocates.
  - This program was instituted around March 2018. At first, employees were hesitant since many in the law enforcement field do not like the thought of a therapist. They were told that no one would need to 'talk' and that the therapist would play checkers with them for an hour if they chose.
  - Initial sign-ups went well and after a few weeks, word passed on that it wasn't so bad after all. A few months later, two of our officers were involved in a shooting in which they had to shoot and kill a 17 year old. Both had just recently completed their mandatory visits and were now familiar with the resources available to them.
  - In only a few months, employees have gone from being skeptical, to fully invested in the program. At a recent auxiliary meeting, several wives were overheard talking about how great the program is because their husbands would "never" had gone to a therapist. Although the counselor cannot tell me what employees talk to her about, she did confirm that she has yet to play checkers with anyone.
  - In addition, the City contracts with the same EAP company for free visits for employees and family throughout the year, if they choose. This has been a long-standing contract.
- **PT standards have been in place for well over a decade.** The Orem Police Department has had physical fitness standards for many years. Officers are required to pass at least once per year. Officers who cannot pass the regular tests are able to take a 'job skills' test.
  - Because implementation of this program occurred many years ago, most officers who are currently working are hired with the knowledge that this test will come up every 6 months. Many employees work out all year long to stay in shape, but other seem to get motivated about a month prior to the testing periods.
  - In order to provide a way for officers to succeed, a workout room was built at the police station and equipped with high-end equipment.
  - Officers are also allowed (work load permitting) to exercise for two hours per week on-duty
  - Workout and Nutrition program at the first part of the year with monetary and gift card incentives
- **Began a department Wellness Committee to assess needs within the department.**
  - This committee was organized toward the end of 2017. The focus of the Wellness Committee was on Financial, Physical, and Emotional health of the employees. Because it is an employee-driven committee, participation rates are high.



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- They began conducting voluntary trainings and sessions on Financial wellness, Physical health, and emotional survival in law enforcement, regularly sending information out to employees in regards to emotional and hearth health research and coping strategies.
- A Mental Health/Wellness section was added to all new employee Field Training Manuals which includes familiarization with resources and recognition of danger signs.
- Short Briefing-type trainings are provided at least once per month to each shift on a mental health or wellness topic
- After Utah legislature passed a peer counseling bill in March 2018, which protected conversations with certified peer counselors, Orem PD pioneered the way, working with state Peace Officers Standards and Training to identify a certification course. We hosted one of the first classes, certifying fifteen of our own employees and inviting outside agency employees as well. We now have 15 certified peer support counselors who receive regular training and updates. These peer support counselors were used in a recent officer-involved incident in which two of our officers had shot and killed a suspect.
- We currently have five employees (officers and dispatchers) who are certified with the state Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team who respond to outside agencies when requested.
- City-wide, employees can turn in each month for physical activity, eating healthy, and wearing their seatbelt. These points can be redeemed at any time for gift cards to be used at a variety of stores in the city
- The City has a long-standing policy of mandatory seatbelt use
- All officers are provided a full physical with a Doctor including EKG, bloodwork, sight, and hearing testing at least every two years at the Department's expense.
- An auxiliary association was organized (mostly spouses, but some female employees wanted to be involved) including social media and email groups in order to assist and support each other. Support meetings are held and relief, such as dinners arranged for department families in need are regularly done.
- Because we understand that retirement does not take away the stressors experienced throughout their career, a Retiree Facebook page was started to keep
- Department administration has a real open-door policy in which employees can feel comfortable making suggestions or discussing issues with top administrators
  - If employees don't feel comfortable speaking with administration, an anonymous on-line 'complaint/suggestion' board was set up for employees to voice their concerns without worry of repercussion.
- In order to reduce stress and strain at workstations, the following items have been obtained over the past year:
  - Electronic massage chair in a break area in dispatch that can be used by any employee



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- Under desk treadmill that can be moved to any dispatch position to maintain activity even while restricted to a particular area
- Exercise (yoga) balls that can be used at a desk in place of chairs in dispatch to help with stretching and moving
- Rising (standing) computer desk have been installed in dispatch and any office where an employee requests one.
- An online **peer recognition/nomination program** was put in place (Guardian Tracking) in which co-workers can leave good job letters, award nominations, letters of commendation, etc. The program has been extremely successful and is used thousands of times each year by employees recognizing their co-workers.
- An **awards committee** was organized to come up with department awards as well as criteria for the awards. Ribbons were designed for each award and can be worn by officers on their uniforms.
- **Patrol Schedule** - A new 4/10 shift was implemented with three month rotations. The three months allowed officers enough time to adjust to the shift work, but not so much that they could not plan vacations, school, etc. Crews rotate as a team, allowing for family cohesion while balancing newer and experienced officers. Crews work either days, swings, or graves on Mon-Thursday or Thursday-Sunday. This allows for one overlapping day (Thursday) for training and also allows officers to have weekends off every three months.
- The Department tries to improve employee morale through **community involvement** and outreach. Current Department social media has over 54,000 followers. Events such as Summer Kids Camp, Autism Easter egg hunt, National Night out Against Crime, Department Trunk or Treat, Shop with a Cop, and Citizens academy give officers the opportunity to interact with the community on a whole different level. Officers on patrol are required to make several non-enforcement positive contacts each week in order to get to know the community members. This positive police/community relationship has a very drastic effect on employee morale.
- Orem PD worked with a local artist, Jason Bullard (No Greater Love Art), allowing some of our officers and uniform to be used in photos and prints for a national anti-suicide campaign called *Blue H.E.L.P.*



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### Safety

- All officers are outfitted with brand new IIIa rated **ballistic vests** upon hire. Vests are replaced, at City's expense, every 5 years. Wearing of the vest is mandatory per policy and officers are very appreciative that the Department is willing to take care of their safety.
- In 2016, we purchased enhanced ballistics for all officers including ceramic rifle/rated plates in molle-style vests and Kevlar helmets for every officer which also includes a trauma/first aid kit
- The Department noticed that most officers, when responding to critical incidents, seem to grab the long rifle rather than the shotgun. Shotguns were phased out with the intent of concentrating training efforts on handgun and rifle. The Department shooting range was upgraded to include a 100 yard rifle lane with moving target options as well as a future upgrade of a 200 yard lane. All rifles were outfitted with red-dot sights for quicker target acquisition and top-shooters' rifles were outfitted with more sophisticated scopes. There has been a lot of innovation that has gone in to the upgrades as well as the type of more life-like scenarios presented at training. Officers have been extremely receptive of these changes and upgrades
- **Body Cameras** – Since 2015, All uniformed and some plain clothed officers are assigned top-of-the-line Axon body cameras. These cameras have already saved many officers from false accusations and were critical evidence in a recent officer-involved shooting. The Department is currently in the process of transitioning our older Panasonic in-dash cameras to Axon Fleet in order to put all video evidence on the same system so that officers don't have to learn so many programs and to save time.
- An **Active Assailant Group** was formed after a mass-stabbing at one of our local high schools in 2016. The goal of this group was to identify any high-risk targets in the City, pre-plan responses, educate the public, and prevent an attack from ever happening.
  - Along with the Active Assailant Group, a **Rescue Task Force** was formed which included several paramedics from the City's Fire Department. Ambulances were outfitted with body armor and paramedics train alongside officers in active gunman situations in order to get paramedics to victims much faster.
  - An in-house grid system was set up for all identified target and overlays of the grid were added to a GIS map for access in the field at both command centers as well as on officers' smart phones. This grid system was designed in-house and is very innovative.
  - Officers worked closely with the School District and were able to gain permission to remotely access the camera systems in all high-schools in the City (4) with cameras being re-named according to the grid system. We are currently working to gain remote access to cameras in ALL schools in the city. In addition, Department administration as well as day shift patrol and investigations units have 'adopted' elementary schools and conduct random walk-throughs to promote visibility and familiarity with the schools.



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- Several larger ballistic shields and breaching tools were purchased and deployed in some patrol vehicles (mostly supervisor cars) making them accessible each shift
- Rapid deployment bags were issued to each officer which includes extra rifle and handgun magazines and tourniquets (All department firearms are the same (Glock handguns and Rock River rifles) making interchangeability of magazines simple)
- In 2018, we implemented a full-time **Mental Health Unit** with one sergeant and a civilian social worker. Their job is to follow up with all suicidal people calls, get to know our “local problem people” who may have mental health issues. They work with them with many resources to make sure they do not become violent, hurt themselves or others, and that they do not occupy too much police time. This program has been embraced by the Department, the community, and has been applauded by the mental health authorities in the area. I list this in the safety area because I believe it reduces the chances that officers will be hurt by someone with mental illness if we can take care of the problem before they do.
- Due to the Provo River and several canals running through the City as well as nearby Utah Lake, Personal Flotation Devices were issued to all police officers to assist in emergency water rescue. This idea came about after officers had a difficult time getting to a child who had fallen into fast moving water last year (2017).
- Upgrades have been made to the City’s firing range and additional monies are being used to purchase more ammunition than in past years, allowing for more training. Officers used to qualify twice per year on firearms. Current firearms training includes at minimum 8 firearms trainings per year (including night and cold-weather shoots) and officers can qualify at any (or all) of the trainings.
- Along with other nearby agencies, Orem PD maintains a Virtra shooting/scenario simulator and has specific weeks throughout the year to conduct realistic training. This simulator was obtained in 2017 through a grant.
- Magnetic Mic Holders were purchased for all vehicles, allowing for safer operation during high-stress critical incidents
- All police officers are required to complete an 8 hour Emergency Vehicle Operations (EVO) Course upon hire and then every two years after that. The course includes high-risk driving, review of policy and procedures, pursuit driving and decision making, and PIT maneuver.
  - In addition to EVO training, all employee who drive a city vehicle are required to take an online 1 hour course each year on defensive driving and awareness.
- Building Security has been enhanced over the past year to include glass partitions restricting access to admin areas as well as updated surveillance cameras throughout the building and surrounding areas.



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As I hope you can see, the Orem Police Department has employed a comprehensive safety and wellness program with many facets within both programs. We feel that many of our projects are models for other agencies and have been extremely successful. We hope you feel the same way.

Chief Gary Giles