

# NEWTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

**TRUST ~ INTEGRITY ~ TRADITION**

**[WWW.NEWTONPOLICE.ORG](http://WWW.NEWTONPOLICE.ORG)**



Every day, the dedicated officers of the Newton Police Department carry out their duties with an unwavering commitment to our mission – to serve, uphold public trust, and consistently exemplify competence and professionalism. As a dynamic organization, we evolve in harmony with modern policing standards, ensuring our effectiveness in a world where cultural shifts demand adaptability while meeting the expectations of our community.

As an integral part of this community, we wholeheartedly pledge to sustain and fortify our partnership. Our goal is to provide a police department that is not only proficient but also personable and professional. Our approach is firmly grounded in principles of integrity, compassion, fairness, and respect. We are steadfast in our dedication to evaluating and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness through continuous assessment of our policies and training standards.

At the heart of our values lies the understanding that trust and transparency are paramount in fostering a strong bond between our agency and the people we serve. As a department, we consistently emphasize these principles, recognizing they are the bedrock of a successful and harmonious relationship with our community.

Our dedication to community engagement is evident through various initiatives, including Coffee With A Cop, National Night Out, the C.L.E.A.R. Program, Think Act Grow Program, Positive Ticketing, and Project Self-Sufficiency Season of Hope. We deeply appreciate the invaluable support we receive from the community, which enhances our overall effectiveness.

## TRANSITION OF PERSONNEL

In November 2024, Chief Steven VanNieuwland retired after 25 years of dedicated service in law enforcement. He began his career in January 2000 when he was appointed by Chief Michael Meeker and attended the 201<sup>st</sup> Municipal Class at the New Jersey State Police Academy in Sea Girt, NJ. Upon graduating, he was assigned to patrol duty. Throughout his career, Chief VanNieuwland was deeply involved in PBA Local 138, serving as financial secretary, vice president, and president.

In 2007, he was transferred to the Newton Police Traffic Bureau, and in 2012, he returned to regular patrol duties. The following year, in 2013, he was reassigned to the Detective Bureau. He was promoted to Sergeant in 2017, where he supervised the Detective Bureau as Detective Sergeant. In 2020, he rose to the rank of Lieutenant, overseeing two squads, the 9-1-1 communication center, and crossing guards, as well as taking on responsibilities in support services for the department.

In 2021, Steve was appointed Chief of Police, a role in which he continued to lead the department until his retirement. Over the course of his career, he undertook numerous responsibilities, including serving as a firearms instructor, fatal accident investigator, Drug Recognition Expert, Field Training Officer, certified child seat technician, and facilitator of the Share the Keys program. Chief VanNieuwland was also a graduate of the prestigious West Point Command and Leadership program.

In August of 2024, Lieutenant Thomas Muller retired after 26 years of service in Law Enforcement. Thomas Muller was hired by the Newton Police Department in November of 1998 and graduated from the 198th Basic Course for Municipal Police Officers at the New Jersey State Police Academy in Sea Girt, NJ. Upon graduation, he was assigned to the Patrol Division where he handled the duties and responsibilities of a Patrol Officer. In 2007, Lt. Muller was assigned to the Detective Bureau where he remained for the next 10 years. He is a past President of the Sussex County Detectives’ Association and was awarded Detective of the Year in 2010 by the association. In 2017, Lt. Muller was promoted to the rank of Sergeant and was reassigned to the Patrol Division where he served as a Patrol Sergeant. In 2020, Lt. Muller was reassigned to the Detective Bureau where he served as the Detective Sergeant. In 2021, Lt. Muller was promoted to rank of Lieutenant where he served for the remainder of his career.

In December 2024, Michael Wolanski was promoted to Lieutenant. In January 2001, Michael was sworn in as a full-time police officer by Chief John Tomasula. He was promoted to Sergeant in 2019 under Chief Robert E. Osborn, taking on responsibilities in firearms investigations, accreditation compliance, and community outreach programs such as the Youth Corps and Domestic Violence Response Team. Now serving as lieutenant and head of operations, Michael considers it his greatest honor to lead the patrol division.

In December 2024, Steven Shawger was promoted to Sergeant. Steven was hired by Chief Michael Richards in 2018 where he worked in the patrol division dedicating himself to serving the community with professionalism and integrity.

In September 2024, Anthony Vitrano graduated from the Passaic County Police Academy. With a deep-rooted desire to protect and serve, he has since been honored to join the Newton Police Department. Anthony is both proud and excited to continue his journey, serving the people of Newton with integrity, dedication, and a commitment to making a positive impact on the community.

The Newton Police Department places a strong emphasis on internal affairs processes and professional standards. Our officers are held to the highest standards of conduct, and any citizen complaints are thoroughly investigated to ensure accountability. The disciplinary actions taken are progressive and corrective, contributing to our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement.

To maintain transparency in our Internal Affairs process, we have compiled the following statistical report summarizing complaints received about officers and their dispositions for the year 2024. The matters investigated and documented within our internal affairs process may have originated from various sources, including citizen complaints, anonymous reports, or internal observations and supervision of personnel.

If no complaints were received in a specific category, such as domestic violence or complaints of improper search, it is not listed in the report. Cases without conclusive outcomes at this time are categorized as pending. This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of our commitment to accountability and transparency in handling internal affairs matters.

TYPE OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMPLAINT	#	OUTCOMES
Demeanor	3	2 exonerated, 1 sustained
Excessive Force	3	3 pending
Improper Arrest	5	2 sustained, 3 exonerated
Other Criminal Violation	0	N/A
Other Rule Violation	8	6 sustained, 1 Exonerated, 1 Unfounded
Total	19	No disciplinary action was taken that resulted in a fine or suspension of 10 days or more



The department maintains a computerized record system that documents the activity of its police officers. Provided below is statistical information regarding some of the calls to which Newton Police Officers have responded and the number of investigations conducted for certain types of incidents.

Type of Call/Police Activity	2021	2022	2023	2024
Homicide	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Robbery	0	2	1	<b>1</b>
Kidnapping	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Burglary/Attempted Burglary	22	17	6	<b>11</b>
Sexual Assault/Contact	7	13	25	<b>20</b>
Assault	22	37	41	<b>29</b>
Theft	55	75	79	<b>63</b>
Motor Vehicle Theft	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
Motor Vehicle Accidents	323	401	421	<b>420</b>
Medical Emergencies	1,365	1,438	1,423	<b>1,430</b>
DWI Arrests	15	17	29	<b>17</b>
Black Bear	46	70	68	<b>77</b>
Criminal Mischief	40	24	19	<b>21</b>
Domestic Dispute/TRO Request	189	207	215	<b>197</b>
Fight/Verbal Dispute/Disturbance	456	428	457	<b>437</b>
Missing Person Adult/Juvenile	18	27	16	<b>24</b>
Vehicle Lock-Out Assist	164	208	160	<b>188</b>
Motor Vehicle Stops	10,124	11,570	12,663	<b>11,384</b>
Weapons Offense/Guns	3	2	1	<b>3</b>
Burglar Alarms	257	205	181	<b>233</b>
Total Arrests Made	193	164	202	<b>215</b>
Total Summonses Issued	3,188	3,464	3,613	<b>3,521</b>
Total Ordinance Violation Summonses	99	113	107	<b>136</b>
Narcan Administration	39	38	28	<b>25</b>
<b>Total Incidents of All Calls</b>	<b>24,175</b>	<b>27,755</b>	<b>30,659</b>	<b>28,785</b>

Explore the wealth of services provided by the Police Department on our website [www.newtonpolice.org](http://www.newtonpolice.org) and connect with us on social media. Our online platforms showcase daily updates and detailed information on our activities, accessible through the Crime Map page on our website.

Our connection with the community is integral to our success, and we deeply value the support we receive. With this in mind, we are committed to fostering an open dialogue with the public and sharing information about our activities to strengthen our partnership in ensuring public safety.

In our relentless pursuit of enhancing the quality of law enforcement services, we anticipate and appreciate continued public support and cooperation. Together, we play a vital role in maintaining Newton as an outstanding place to raise a family, visit, and conduct business. Your ongoing engagement is key to our collective efforts in creating a safe and thriving community.



## PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

The Public Works Department maintained its normal busy schedule during 2024, devoting one day each week (Tuesday) to collecting recyclable items at the curb. They also conducted a Spring and Fall Leaf and Brush Collection Program in which the crew collected leaves and brush that were placed at the curb in bio-degradable bags, lasting each time for approximately six (6) weeks. They also picked up Christmas trees at the curb after the holidays for the month of January.

A sweeping schedule was maintained throughout 2024. Crews sweep the entire Town once a month while the downtown area is maintained once to twice a week. Garbage collection and litter patrol on Spring Street is done on a daily basis. Storm basins are inspected yearly, and crews rigorously repair/rebuild throughout the year weather permitting. Routine road work is also done throughout the year which includes pothole repair, crack sealing, and minor resurfacing projects.

The DPW crew has focused on maintaining and caring for the parks in Town during 2024. Litter and garbage is regularly picked up throughout the parks. Crews prep and maintain fields for sports and special town events as needed.

The Public Works Department, along with the Water and Sewer Division, fixed numerous breaks, leaks, and other various repairs that occurred throughout the year.

The Public Works Department can be reached at 973-383-4160.