



*Office of Mayor Lawrence J.
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PRESS RELEASE

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Rockford Police Department Makes Significant Policy Improvements After Officer – Involved Shooting

Rockford, IL –Rockford Police Department Chief Chet Epperson announces significant progress in policy improvements recommended by an independent consulting firm retained by the City of Rockford after the officer – involved shooting on August 24, 2009.

“The department voluntarily went through a thorough independent assessment of our practices and policies immediately following the August, 2009 shooting,” Epperson said. “The national firm of Independent Assessment & Monitoring, LLC recommended modifications to protocols to improve the way we do our jobs.”

The report listed several areas for suggested improvements, and the department released the full findings to the public June 16, 2010, making a pledge to follow through with each finding in the analysis.

Soon after the report’s release, the police department formed a steering committee made up of police administration, union representatives, city officials, and community members to develop an action plan and address the concerns listed in the report. The group divided the work into five action teams charged with addressing specific areas of the department’s systems such as supervisory practices, investigation procedures, and increased training for all officers.

“I am very proud to state that less than 18 months after receiving the report, our department has completed 31% of the recommendations; 67% partially completed; remaining 2% will be completed during 2012,” Epperson said. The improvements made were a department-wide effort and involved all ranks of the organization.

Another significant measure of the improvements made is the reduction of excessive force complaints. Comparing 2010 to 2009, the department’s excessive force incidents decreased 20% to a total of six this year-to-date. “Department training, supervisory oversight, and officer de-escalation tactics have assisted with lowering the number of reported excessive force complaints,” noted Professional Standards Deputy Chief Hopkins.

As a result of the assessment’s recommendations, the department also implemented a new procedure for the public to report complaints or compliments about an officer’s conduct and to do so through newly created informational materials or by reporting it online, with the option to read materials in Spanish. (see <http://www.rockfordil.gov/police/office-of-professional-standards.aspx>)

In addition to the internal improvement efforts, City officials and representatives of the local police union have engaged in mediation through the United States Department of Justice Community Relations Service, focused on improving police-community relations in the region. “Community leaders, representatives from the city of Rockford, and its police union are engaged in mediation and are responding to the concerns identified by the community. We recognize the commitment of all parties to this process and will continue to support their promising efforts to achieve outcomes that will make a real and positive difference in the community.” (Source: Becky Monroe, Acting Directing, CRS)

“Our department still grieves for the families involved in the August, 2009 shooting, and we are working hard to lessen the chance that an incident like this will happen in the future and to build the public’s trust. We are hopeful the policy changes we have made and continue to make will improve our department and the safety of our community as they cover a wide variety of areas, helping our officers and our department to be on the cutting edge of law enforcement technology, tactics and procedures,” Epperson said.

“I am pleased with the progress we are making as a department and a community. While we still have a lot of work ahead, we are progressing because of the shared commitments of this department, the City Council, and the community,” said Mayor Larry Morrissey.

About The Rockford Police Department

The Rockford Police Department is under the command of Chief Chet Epperson and has an authorized strength of 285 officers with an annual budget of \$40.5 million dollars. The department is a national accredited police agency under the auspices of *Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies*. The department's vision is to keep the city free from crime and public disorder by serving citizens in a responsive, honest, respectful manner through problem-solving, community policing initiatives and district policing.

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