



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

HOWARD COUNTY

POLICE

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HOWARD

a message from
**CHIEF OF POLICE
GREGORY DER**

When I returned to the Howard County Police Department as Chief in 2022, policing here – and throughout the nation – had just gone through an historic period of scrutiny and reform. Combined with the lingering societal effects of the pandemic, it was a challenging time for policing. But those circumstances also presented an opportunity for our department to grow and evolve. And as I'm set to retire in June 2026, I can look back at my four years as Chief and take great satisfaction in all that we have accomplished.

In 2025, HCPD continued its progress in a number of areas. The department is nearly fully staffed, a rarity nationwide for agencies our size. This speaks to the high regard in which recruits hold our department and our reputation in the region for exemplary training and professionalism.

Incidents of robbery, aggravated assault, human trafficking, burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson decreased in 2025. We have taken a targeted approach to reducing crime, most notably in establishing a permanent, full-time unit of officers assigned to downtown Columbia. These officers' knowledge of the area and their proactive approach to deterring crime have made the entertainment and business hub of Howard County a safer place.

We continue to make the roads safer by increasing traffic stops. Traffic safety is something near and dear to me, and I've made it a point of emphasis since I became Chief. In 2025, officers increased reportable traffic stops by 25 percent over 2024 and a staggering 182 percent over 2023. I hope this trend continues into 2026 and beyond.

We also have established a new Office of Homeland Security that combines the resources of local, state, and federal criminal justice agencies to streamline intelligence sharing and increase preparedness.

I'm confident that in my time as Chief, HCPD has contributed to making Howard County a safer place in which to live, work, and play. These last four years have been the pinnacle of my three decades in law enforcement, and I'm forever thankful to the more than 700 employees and volunteers at HCPD for their hard work and dedication each and every day.

Sincerely,



*Gregory Der
Chief of Police*



FACTS

at a glance

It is the mission of the Howard County Police Department to provide a sense of safety and security for everyone by protecting life and property, reducing the opportunity for crime and disorder, enforcing criminal and traffic laws, assisting victims and promoting positive community engagement and effective partnerships.

HOWARD COUNTY POLICE

Organized	1952
Chief of Police	Gregory Der
Authorized sworn officers	510
Civilian employees	236
Total calls into 911 Center	388,018
FY25 General Fund Budget	\$155,188,281
Starting salary for officers	\$67,517
Sworn officer training	32 weeks classroom 14 field

HOWARD COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Founded	1851
County Executive	Calvin Ball
Full-time Employees	3,223
Population (US Census)	339,668
Area	251 square miles
County Seat	Ellicott City
FY25 General Fund Budget	\$1,656,862,175
Chief Administrative Officer	Brandee Ganz
County Council	Liz Walsh Opel Jones Christiana Rigby Deb Jung David Yungmann

a message from COUNTY EXECUTIVE CALVIN BALL

As Howard County Executive, I am profoundly grateful for the dedication and service put forth daily by the brave men and women of our Howard County Police Department (HCPD). Their professionalism, courage, and commitment to community policing continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our residents and community members.

Since taking office in December 2018, my administration has prioritized ensuring that HCPD has the resources it needs to meet our county's evolving public safety needs. From expanding patrol staffing to investing in technology and training, these efforts have strengthened response times, enhanced officer preparedness, and supported proactive, community-centered policing.

Meanwhile, we also recognize that a single act of violence can have a profound impact on our community. While crime continues to trend downwards, these singular incidents remind us that we must remain vigilant and continue working collaboratively to address the root causes of crime. Public safety alone is not achieved through enforcement, but with engagement, prevention, and trust.

That is why we continue to invest in initiatives that bring our community together. Through partnerships with schools, community organizations, and stakeholders, we are advancing programs that support youth engagement, violence prevention, and neighborhood safety. Efforts like our Youth Engagement Strategy (YES!) Council are helping to foster stronger connections and create pathways to opportunity.

Together, we are making meaningful progress. By supporting our officers and strengthening our partnerships with the community, we are ensuring that Howard County remains a place where people feel safe, valued, and protected.



Calvin Ball
County Executive

YEAR *in review*

CRIME TRENDS: During 2025, incidents of robbery, aggravated assault, human trafficking, burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson decreased. There were five victims of homicide in 2025 that did not involve domestic violence or vehicular collisions. The domestic incidents included six additional victims. A vehicular collision accounted for one more. The crime rate in Howard County, which is crimes per 100,000 residents, continues to be far below the statewide average, even as the population continues to grow.

TRAFFIC SAFETY: HCPD maintained a strong focus on traffic safety through targeted, complaint and data-driven high-visibility enforcement. The Traffic Enforcement Section, working alongside patrol officers, conducted focused details and saturation patrols targeting speed, aggressive driving, DUI, distracted driving, Move Over violations, and illegal car rallies. These efforts were often supported through collaboration with other sections and partner agencies, including C.O.P.S. and the Sheriff's Office. Officers conducted 25,315 traffic stops in 2025, which identified 40,284 traffic violations.

HOMELAND SECURITY: The department established an Office of Homeland Security in late 2025, intended to enhance public safety and strengthen domestic security by working in partnership with local, state, and federal criminal justice agencies to prevent, investigate, and resolve criminal activity, while safeguarding the residents, businesses, and visitors of Howard County.

THE MALL IN COLUMBIA: HCPD established a permanent, full-time unit of officers assigned to the Columbia area from the Community Outreach & Pathways Section (C.O.P.S.), including the Merriweather District, The Mall in Columbia, and the Columbia Lakefront. These officers will operate from a full-time satellite office inside the Mall in 2026. The department has also added an additional patrol beat dedicated exclusively to the Mall area 24 hours a day.

COLD CASES: Howard County police announced notable successes in three cold cases in 2025.

Detectives used DNA profiling to identify the Jane Doe victim from the department's oldest cold case homicide and reunited two of her surviving adult children who were previously unaware of what had happened to their mother. For 54 years, the victim's identity remained unknown and the homicide investigation went cold, until advances in technology and exhaustive research led to her identification as Sarah (Sadie) Belle Murray (Sharkey).

The unit successfully closed the 1975 homicide of Roseann Sturtz, a case that remained cold until detectives recovered lost evidence that implicated a man already serving a life sentence in prison for committing other murders during that time period. Charles William Davis Jr., has been incarcerated in the Jessup Correctional Institution since 1978. He confessed.

Howard County police also arrested a suspect and charged him with two counts of murder in a 2020 shooting in Columbia that killed 30-year-old Rabiah Ahmad and forced the delivery of her baby girl, Ahja, who died five days later. Edward Robinson, 31, of Columbia, was charged with two counts each of first- and second-degree murder and related assault and handgun violations.

YOUTH OUTREACH: The department continued to offer a variety of programs geared toward local youth in 2025, including BearTrax, Collision Avoidance Training, the Community Athletic Program, Explorer Post 1952, P.L.E.D.G.E. Summer Leadership Camp, Teen Court, and Youth Police Academy. The Youth Division organized several field trips during the year, including ice skating and pickleball. They also attended several professional sporting events and did service projects.

GIVING BACK: HCPD officers, civilians, and charitable organizations continued the law enforcement tradition of giving back in 2025. Members took part in annual events including the Polar Bear Plunge, Torch Run, Shop with a Cop, Heroes and Helpers, Rebuilding Together, and numerous fundraisers and donation drives for those in need.

The Office of the Chief and Community Outreach partnered up to host local Casey Cares Foundation families for an afternoon of fun. The children were able to explore several of our police vehicles, meet a K9, play sports and video games with officers, enjoy a snowball and more! The department also hosted a pajama drive in support of the foundation's mission to provide ongoing, uplifting programs for families with critically ill children, donating a total of 115 pairs of pajamas.

Academy Class 51 worked to foster positive community relationships by participating in Howard County Office of Aging and Independence's Project Holiday, providing practical and comforting gifts to older adults in Howard County who are at a high risk for loneliness and social isolation. They also hosted a collection drive for toys and sensory items for the Linwood Center which provides schooling and adult programs to individuals with autism and other disabilities. Additionally, recruits raised \$1,500 to benefit the American Cancer Fund by creating a pledge group during No-Shave November.

The Howard County Police Officers' Association, FOP Lodge 21, remained deeply committed to giving back to the community in 2025. From hosting free Kona Ice events, to sponsoring the Shop with a Cop program during the holiday season, to supporting local families in need through charitable donations, Lodge 21 made a lasting impact. Their ongoing efforts reflect a strong dedication to ensuring that county residents feel safe, supported, and connected to the officers who serve them.

Centurions For Justice (Howard County Police Minority Officers' Association) joined Columbia Baptist Fellowship and community volunteers at the Oakland Mills Interfaith Center for a Thanksgiving turkey and food giveaway for more than 875 families in Howard County.

The Beyond the Badge Foundation, a non-profit created by several HCPD officers, held its annual Stuff the Backpack event, filling up an astounding 5,200 new backpacks with school supplies for schoolchildren throughout Howard County and the region. The foundation also organized a charity golf tournament, held a coat drive, awarded scholarships to local high schoolers, and adopted multiple families for Thanksgiving and Christmas.



Pictured: Officers interact with local children at community events.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF



THE CHIEF OF POLICE is the highest-ranking officer and leader of the Howard County Police Department. They work to develop goals, formulate plans and implement programs and policies designed to strategically solve problems. The Chief meets regularly with community leaders to address concerns, solicit input and maintain a direct connection to residents.

The Colonel oversees the four commands detailed on the following pages, as well as the Budget Fiscal Section and Strategic Planning, including accreditation.

The Executive Officer provides essential daily operational and administrative support to the Office of the Chief and oversees office staff, Executive Protection, Honor Guard, and Chaplains.

The Office of Public Affairs communicates with the public and the news media. The office is also responsible for social media, the HCPD website, special events, and all public relations and marketing for the agency.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BUREAU

THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION is responsible for the administration and investigation of police personnel complaints. Complaints can range from minor performance deficiencies to allegations of misconduct. All complaints are investigated with adherence to established and accredited policies and procedures with a commitment to provide thorough and impartial investigations. This division also includes the Citizen Advocate—the designated contact for the public on matters relating to police misconduct.

THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING DIVISION is comprised of the Firearms Section and the Training Section, which includes the Entry-level and In-service Units. This division coordinates police training for new recruits, recertification for current officers, and training and professional development programs for the agency's civilian staff.

THE QUALITY ASSURANCE DIVISION is responsible for reviews, inspections, and audits and is taxed with maximizing the agency's commitment to integrity and professionalism. The Division includes the Staff Inspections Section, Liquor Inspector, and Policy Coordinator. They are responsible for ensuring strong policies and policy compliance.



OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY

THE TECHNOLOGY AND ANALYSIS DIVISION houses the Computer Operations Section, which is responsible for the IT needs of the agency to include remote access, MDCs and desktop computers, critical databases and software integration; the Body Worn Camera (BWC) Section, which is responsible for BWC inventory management, training, deployment, system evaluation, and policy and procedure review; and the Crime Analysis Section, which is responsible for identifying and interpreting crime patterns in an effort to enhance resource deployment and support investigations and proactive policing.

THE OPERATIONAL PREPAREDNESS DIVISION is home to the Real Time Information Center, including the Drone and ESV Unit, and the Intelligence Section, including the Intelligence Unit which provides information on criminal activity to patrol officers and investigators. This division acts as liaison to the Office of Emergency Management and collaborates with other county agencies in the Emergency Operations Center when activated.

ANCILLARY SERVICES

The Police Foundation is comprised of local business leaders who provide assistance to the department by sharing business and management expertise. The foundation provides funding for various youth programs, manages a scholarship fund, purchases non-budgeted equipment and sponsors the annual Police Pace 5K.

The Citizens Advisory Council is comprised of volunteer Howard County citizens who meet monthly to facilitate the flow of information to and from the police department and engage in creative problem-solving efforts. The council then makes recommendations to the Chief to improve police services.

Pictured: Chief Der attends a graduation ceremony; a member of Education and Training works with recruits; a member of the Honor Guard takes part in a ceremony.



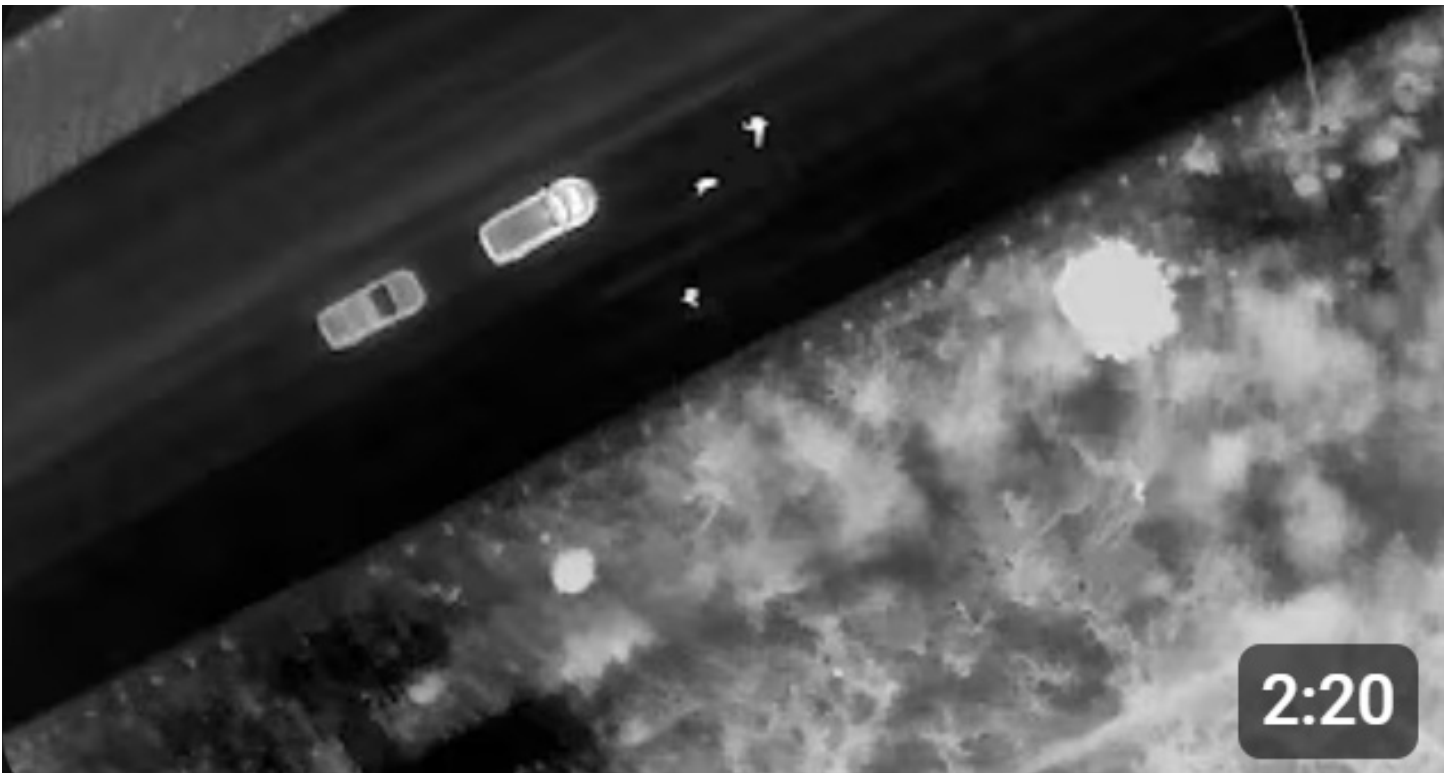
FIELD OPERATIONS COMMAND

Deputy Chief Jeffrey Specht

PATROL DISTRICTS

The Northern and Southern Patrol Districts are divided into four platoons each. Officers respond to calls for service, enforce traffic and criminal laws and address community needs. In addition to patrol officers, Field Operations includes the following programs and positions:

Duty Officers work the front desk at each district station and handle incoming calls and walk-in inquiries, as well as write certain types of police reports; and Police Cadets, who provide a wide range of administrative and operational services. Cadets often have aspirations to become sworn police officers.





COMMUNITY SERVICES BUREAU

THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH DIVISION offers crime prevention and education programs to citizens and businesses and works with individual communities to solve issues as they arise. The division includes:

The Community Liaison Section who provides focused efforts and assistance to specific populations within the community as well as general community groups.

The Crisis Intervention Section which consists of two officers, a sergeant and an embedded state-licensed counselor working side-by-side to reduce the cycle of repeat mental health issues.

The Community Outreach and Pathways Section (C.O.P.S.) which includes dedicated officers and a sergeant who address community needs through crime prevention and targeted enforcement. This group focuses on Howard County's village centers, main street Ellicott City as well as the extensive footpaths, open spaces and parks.

The Victim Assistance Section who provides crisis intervention, financial assistance and counseling services to people victimized by crime. Members of the section serve as advocates and offer support services to survivors.

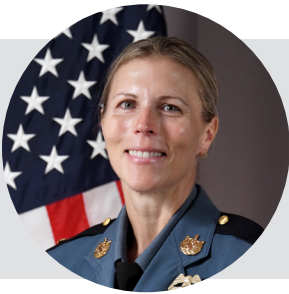
THE YOUTH DIVISION focuses on engaging young people and creating opportunities for interactions with officers.

The School Resource Officer Sections manage officers assigned to 14 high schools. SROs build positive relationships with students and staff while providing a safe school environment and serve as mentors, coaches, teachers, and volunteers to support students during and after school hours.

The Youth Engagement Section oversees the department's youth programs: BearTrax, Collision Avoidance Training, Community Athletic Program, Explorer Post 1952, P.L.E.D.G.E. Leadership Camp, Teen Court, Youth Police Academy, and more.

The Youth Diversion Coordinator processes juvenile police reports and screens them for eligibility to participate in the Diversion or Teen Court Programs.

Pictured: An officer works at his MDC; an officer interacts with children at a community event; a School Resource Officer poses for a photo.



SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Deputy Chief Sarah Kayser

SPECIAL OPERATIONS BUREAU

THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE DIVISION includes the Tactical Section, K-9 Section and Special Support Services, which includes Volunteer Auxiliary Officers, and Emergency Services.

The Critical Incident Negotiations Team consists of officers who are specially trained in a negotiations approach to conflict resolution.

THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT DIVISION is made up of the Traffic Enforcement Section; the Crash Reconstruction Section; the School Crossing Guard Section; the Automated Enforcement Section, which oversees the Red Light, False Alarm and School Bus Units; and the Speed Enforcement Section.



Pictured: A Traffic Enforcement Officer conducts a traffic stop; a Crossing Guard poses for a photo; a K9 Team takes part in HCPD's annual Memorial Ceremony.





CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMAND

Deputy Chief Jayson Janowich

MAJOR CRIMES BUREAU

THE VIOLENT CRIMES DIVISION includes the Violent Crimes and Robbery Sections. Investigations often involve surveillance operations, covert details and search and seizure warrants, as well as interviews of victims, witnesses and suspects. This division also handles the investigation of cold cases.

THE REPEAT OFFENDER DIVISION includes the Crime Reduction Team and the Repeat Offender Proactive Enforcement and Warrants Sections. The Crime Reduction Teams investigate the unlawful possession, manufacture, sale and distribution of firearms as well as criminal organizations and street gangs who seek to disrupt a peaceful community. This division also provides support to other investigative components to enhance the prosecution of repeat and violent offenders.

THE VICE & NARCOTICS DIVISION includes the Narcotic and Street Drug Sections, Vice & Tech Support and is responsible for investigating crimes involving the manufacture, sale, distribution and use of controlled dangerous substances. Members also investigate gambling, human trafficking, prescription fraud and organized crime.

SPECIAL CRIMES BUREAU

THE FAMILY CRIMES & SEXUAL ASSAULT DIVISION includes the Child Advocacy Center, Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault and Child Exploitation Sections. Members work to investigate child abuse, sexual assaults and domestic violence incidents, as well as monitor registered sex offenders.

THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION includes the Residential Crimes Section, District Investigations and Pawn Unit; the Commercial Crimes Section, including Fire Investigations; and the Financial Crimes Section, and Auto Theft Unit. This division specializes in residential and commercial property crimes including pawn and metal theft, auto theft, fraud/forgery, and fire investigations.

Pictured: Chief Der speaks at a press conference.







ADMINISTRATION COMMAND

Deputy Chief Terrence Benn

INFORMATION AND FORENSIC BUREAU

THE COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION houses the County's 911 Center. Dispatchers on four squads handled 388,018 calls for service in 2025, in addition to 1,997 texts to 911. This division is also home to the Quality Assurance Coordinator, Training Coordinator, CAD Administrator and Recording Administrator.

THE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT DIVISION includes the Records Section, which is comprised of two shifts, and Records Crime Statistics, which maintains the department's records, including the Uniform Crime Reporting data on the following pages.

This division also includes the Digital/BWC Management Section, which is comprised of a civilian supervisor and six BWC Information Management Specialists. These members are responsible for preparing video recordings for release in response to Public Information Act (PIA) requests and subpoenas.

THE FORENSIC SCIENCES DIVISION includes the Digital Forensics Section, Crime Scene, Latent Print, Ten Print, and Forensic Chemistry Units, who provide forensic examinations through the identification, collection, preservation, and analysis of physical evidence.

Pictured: A crime scene tech poses for a photo; a Recruiter chats with a potential applicants at an event; a member of Animal Control poses with an adoptable dog.



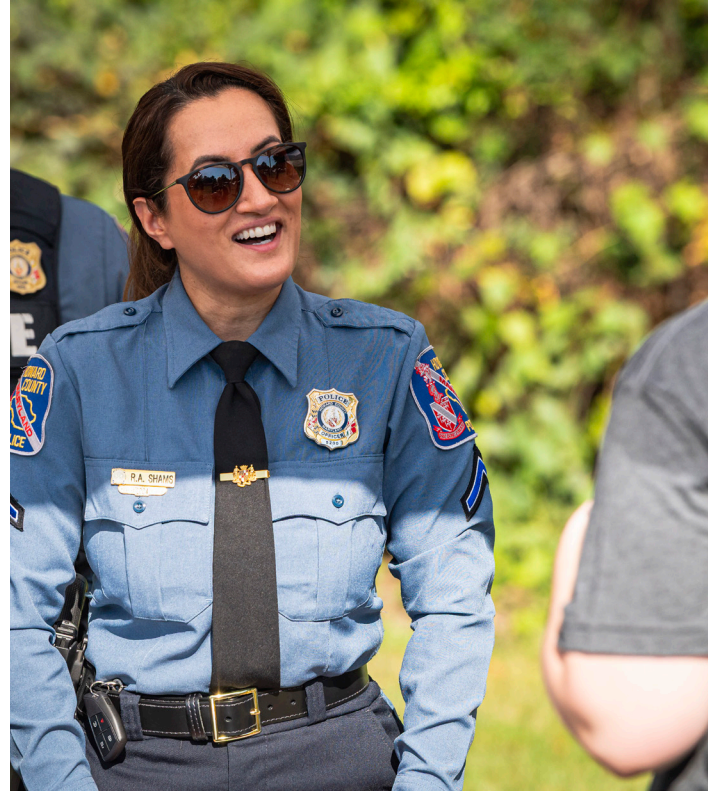
THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES DIVISION includes the Personnel Section, which coordinates with the county's Office of Human Resources for hiring, employment and benefit-related issues; the Payroll Section; HR Tech Services; and Peer Support, which is comprised of police department employees who volunteer to provide support for agency members who are involved in a traumatic incident or are in need of peer support.

This division also includes the Recruitment and Screening Sections, who processed applicants for one entry-level and three lateral academy classes in 2025. The department hires new officers and cadets on a continuous basis.

THE MANAGEMENT SERVICES DIVISION includes Fleet and Facilities, which is responsible for ordering, up-fitting, equipping and assigning 600 marked and unmarked vehicles and coordinating the repair, maintenance and cleaning of multiple police facilities, including managing card access and building security, renovations and moves.

This division also includes the Quartermaster, who handles supplies and inventory for the entire police department, including uniforms and equipment for sworn, civilian and volunteers, the Property and Evidence Section, which provides secure storage of all property and evidence and preserves its integrity until final disposition, and the Wellness Coordinator, who works to support the specific high-stress needs of sworn and civilian members' mental and physical wellness through initiatives designed to encourage a healthy, resilient, and engaged workforce.

THE ANIMAL CONTROL DIVISION investigates animal cruelty cases, rescues endangered animals, accepts unwanted pets, administers a pet adoption program, and conducts humane education programs. The division processed 3,377 domestic, stray, and wild animals at the shelter, facilitated 635 adoptions or release to rescue organizations and returned 215 animals to their owners in 2025. Personnel issued 230 citations and 196 warnings for animal code violations, and continued to expand the pet food bank to support residents during times of crisis.





**LEADERSHIP
AWARD**

*Sgt. Kenny
Drummond*



**COMMUNITY
SERVICE AWARD**

*PFC Bennett
Johns*



**FIRST YEAR
SERVICE AWARD**

PO Sean Loftus



**DISTINGUISHED
SERVICE AWARD**

*Lt. Nicholas
Gordon-Cuno*



**DISTINGUISHED
SERVICE AWARD**

Rhonda Karafa



**SCOTT WHEELER
TRAFFIC SAFETY**

*Sgt. William
Smith*



**DETECTIVE
OF THE YEAR**

*PFC Michael
Scanlon*

RECOGNITION



TELECOMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR

*Dispatcher First Class
Denise Grant*



CIVILIAN OF THE YEAR

Erica Carpio



OFFICER OF THE YEAR

*PFC Elijah
Cortez*

VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

*A.O. Paul Bertulis
Explorer Capt. Rosemarie Fontana
AC Volunteer Judith McCormick*

OFFICERS OF THE QUARTER

*PFC Elijah Cortez
PO Cole Aiosa
PO Sunghyun Park
PFC Bennett Johns*

DISPATCHERS OF THE QUARTER

*ECS Marcus Amberman
Dispatcher FC Amanda Marsh
Dispatcher Martha Rowe
Senior Dispatcher Kristi Staley*

CIVILIANS OF THE QUARTER

*Chanel Petty
Erica Carpio
Christopher Chi
Susan Carlson*

CRIME STATISTICS

Crime Statistics are collected and reported based on Uniform Crime Reporting procedures established by the FBI. Prior to 2022 Howard County collected and reported data following Summary Reporting procedures. In 2022, these procedures were replaced by the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The primary difference between Summary Reporting and NIBRS is that Summary Reporting data followed a hierarchal system that listed only the most serious offense associated with an incident; NIBRS reports all charges associated with an incident. Because one incident may have multiple offenses associated with it, the NIBRS system lists a higher number of crimes. This does not necessarily mean the number of incidents where a crime took place is higher. Data displayed on this page for 2025 is a snapshot taken April 16, 2026. Updated data can be viewed at anytime through the department's crime data dashboard at HCPD.org under Quick Resources.

	SUMMARY	NIBRS*			
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
HOMICIDE/NEG MANSLAUGHTER**	11	4	5	11	12
SEX OFFENSE (FORMERLY RAPE)***	68	129	86	88	90
ROBBERY	91	122	139	164	100
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	245	261	236	228	210
HUMAN TRAFFICKING	4	11	9	9	2
TOTAL VIOLENT CRIME	419	527	475	499	414
BURGLARY	286	429	439	458	367
THEFT	3,046	3,587	4,164	4,270	3,760
MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT	282	468	1,046	1,064	954
ARSON	23	27	48	29	27
TOTAL PROPERTY CRIME	3,637	4,511	5,697	5,821	5,108
TOTAL VIOLENT & PROPERTY CRIME	4,056	5,038	6,172	6,320	5,522
TOTAL CALLS FOR SERVICE	92,308	103,757	114,124	126,580	130,349
ADULT ARRESTS/CITATIONS	1,393	1,641	1,725	2,057	2,113
JUVENILE ARRESTS/CITATIONS	179	323	151	177	206
OFFICERS ASSAULTED	91	119	106	77	94

*In 2022 HCPD made the transition from Summary Reporting to National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) as mandated by the FBI; data may reflect a higher number of offenses although does not necessarily indicate a higher number of incidents.

**2024's 10 homicide incidents resulted in the death of 13 people. Under NIBRS, unique incidents are reported.

***In 2022, the category "sex offense (formerly rape)" includes the addition of "forcible fondling" cases, which were not included in previous years.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS STATISTICS

2025 COMPLAINTS

CONDUCT	CITIZEN INITIATED	AGENCY INITIATED
RUDENESS	3	0
INSUBORDINATION	0	1
IMPROPER CONDUCT	1	1
CONFORMANCE TO POLICY	0	4
CONFORMANCE TO LAW	0	1

PERFORMANCE		
IMPROPER USE OF FORCE	0	1
WORK PERFORMANCE	1	7
UNLAWFUL/IMPROPER ARREST	1	0

TOTAL COMPLAINTS	6	15
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Complaints are listed by the total number of cases investigated, not by the number of officers involved. One complaint may involve multiple officers.



HOWARD COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT
COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

3410 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043

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