



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Director Nicholas J. Arnold





A Message from The Chief

As the Director of Public Safety for the City of Portage, every day I have the honor to serve alongside some of the finest police officers, firefighters, civilians, and volunteers in the country. These are dedicated and wonderful men and women who are responsible for delivering nationally recognized public safety services to a city of 49,000 residents, covering 32.3 square miles, with a daily influx of roughly 5,500 additional people who work in or visit our city. Each and every day, they are committed to providing professional and caring community service to the citizens of Portage.

Our mission is to deliver superior public safety services that make people's lives better. We work in partnership with our diverse community to safeguard the lives, rights and property of the people we serve.

With unwavering dedication, our first responders provide innovative professional public safety services to all of the members of this community. We strive to accomplish this by maintaining our honor, courage, commitment, leadership and teamwork while always conducting ourselves with the highest ethical standards.

It is through the public's trust and support that the Public Safety Department can provide a safe and healthy environment for our community to thrive. I am proud of the men and women of this agency and feel fortunate to serve the community alongside them as we work in partnership with our community members to keep the City of Portage safe.

In closing, I feel blessed to have been chosen to be a part of such a fine organization. With the many challenges that face public safety today, I am extremely proud of our ability to adapt and remain steadfast in our commitment to providing the best possible police, fire, and EMS services to our city.

Nicholas J. Arnold
Public Safety Director—Police/Fire Chief

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 01	DEPARTMENT INFO 4 2024 By the Numbers Calls for Service Crime Statistics Executive Team Staff Roster Personnel Updates Recognition & Awards
-----------------------------	---

SECTION 02	POLICE DIVISION 12 History Police Operations Administrative Services Specialty Assignments Police Training
-----------------------------	--

SECTION 03	INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES DIVISION 24 Accreditation Detective Bureau Professional Standards Internal Affairs and Use of Force Analysis Records Bureau Volunteers
-----------------------------	--

SECTION 04	FIRE DIVISION 32 History Fire Activity & Response Analysis Fire Stations Emergency Services Apparatus & Equipment Fire Training Fire Prevention Community Risk Reduction Pub Ed & Events
-----------------------------	--

	PORTAGE PUBLIC SAFETY FOUNDATION 47
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Section 01

DEPARTMENT INFO

The Portage Department of Public Safety provides public safety services for a city spanning over 35 square miles, with a nighttime population of roughly 49,000. Due to its many service-oriented businesses and commercial operations, the daytime population is significantly higher.

On July 1, 2011, the Portage Police Department and Portage Fire Department were administratively merged to form the Department of Public Safety. While maintaining distinct operational roles, both divisions are led by a single Public Safety Director, who also serves as Police Chief and Fire Chief.

Police Division

The Police Division is a full-service law enforcement agency providing 24/7 patrol, school resource officers, a community engagement team, and various specialized service teams.

Fire Division

The Fire Division is dedicated to fire suppression, emergency medical services, fire prevention, rescue operations, training, and emergency management. Firefighters also conduct child safety seat instruction, fire safety education, and station tours to promote public awareness and safety.

Facilities

- Public Safety Headquarters: 7810 Shaver Road (Police Operations)
- Fire Station No. 1: 7830 Shaver Road
- Fire Station No. 2: 6101 Oakland Drive
- Fire Station No. 3: 8503 Sprinkle Road

The Portage Department of Public Safety is dedicated to excellence, ensuring that Portage remains a safe place to live, work, and visit. The department is commanded by a Director who has overall authority over both public safety divisions within the municipality. This role also services as the Police Chief and Fire Chief.



Director of Public Safety
NICHOLAS J. ARMOLD

Nicholas J. Arnold joined PDPS in April 2014 as the Senior Deputy Police Chief of Operations and was appointed Director of Public Safety in March 2017 following the retirement of Chief Richard White. Prior to his tenure in Portage, he served for 26 years as a certified police officer and firefighter with the City of Huntington Woods, retiring at the rank of Deputy Chief.

Arnold earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Lake Superior State University. He has completed advanced training through the Northwestern University Center for Public Safety—School of Police Staff and Command and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy (Session #268).

In addition to his role as Director of Public Safety, Arnold serves as president of the West Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police (WMACP), representing 12 counties and over 110 agencies. He is also a member of the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission and sits on the Advisory Board for the Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) Law Enforcement and Police Academy programs.

2024 BY THE NUMBERS



2,537

Total Arrests



0

Homicides



1,147

Traffic Crashes



5,492

Citations Issued



547

Aggravated Assaults



146

B & E's



3,574

EMS/Medical Calls



125

Fires



6

Arsons

CALLS FOR SERVICE



46,481

TOTAL CALLS FOR SERVICE



5,473

FIRE

↑ 4.9%



41,008

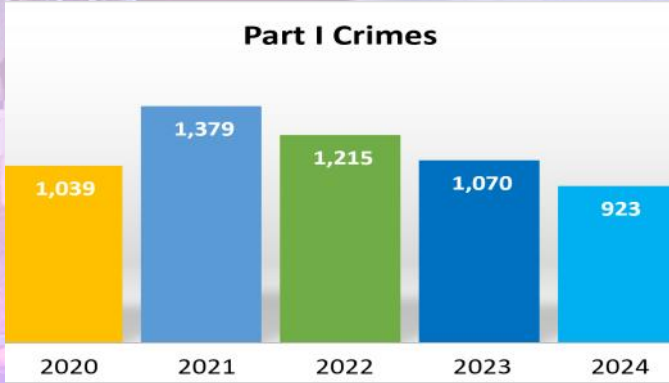
POLICE

↑ 2.9%

CRIME STATISTICS

PART 1 CRIMES

Part I crimes are the most serious offenses and most likely to be reported to the police.



DOWN 14.8%
from 2023

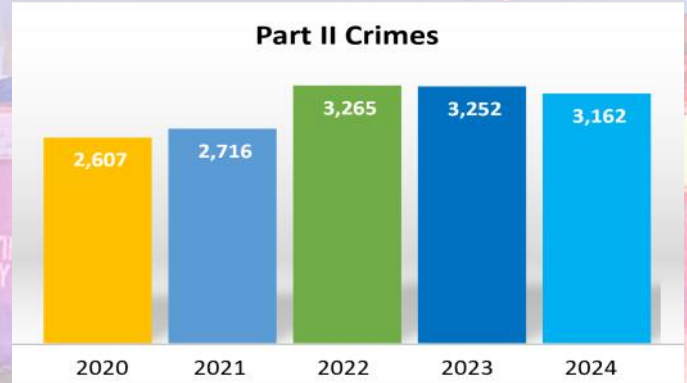
Part I Crimes	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Criminal Homicide	2	2	4	1	0
CSC	17	32	36	22	40
Robbery	10	20	10	13	10
Aggravated Assault	81	72	100	88	94
Burglary / B&E	140	140	116	118	145
Larceny	689	930	832	711	547
Motor Vehicle Theft	90	175	110	106	81
Arson	8	6	1	7	6
Kidnapping	2	2	6	4	0
TOTAL	1,039	1,379	1,215	1,070	923

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program divides offenses into two groups, Part I and Part II crimes. Each month, participating law enforcement agencies submit information on the number of Part I offenses they had (offenses cleared by arrest or exceptional means) and the age, sex, and race of persons arrested for each of the offenses.

Only arrest data is used to calculate Part II offenses.

PART II CRIMES

Part II offenses are less serious and are tracked only by arrest data.



DOWN 2.8%
from 2023

Part II Crimes	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Simple Assault	376	410	511	475	473
Forgery/Counterfeit	61	56	47	22	42
Fraud	323	355	338	360	335
Retail Fraud	436	459	594	747	766
Embezzlement	30	19	33	24	22
Stolen Property	13	14	14	13	22
Vandalism	175	201	226	207	184
Weapons Offenses	35	56	41	50	42
Sex Offenses	21	17	49	54	26
Drug Offenses	88	95	108	100	96
Family Offenses	37	42	53	48	37
DUI	94	106	114	106	98
Liquor Violations	14	9	8	5	14
Disorderly	289	230	314	237	171
All Other Part II	615	647	805	804	834
TOTAL	2,607	2,716	3,265	3,252	3,162

EXECUTIVE TEAM



STAFFING BY THE NUMBERS

2024 Allocations:

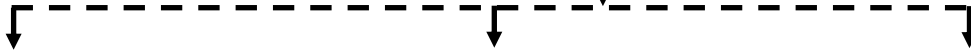
	Sworn	Civilian
POLICE	70	15
FIRE	37	2
TOTAL	107	17



NICHOLAS J. ARMOLD
Public Safety Director
Police/Fire Chief



JEFF VANDERWIERE
Deputy Director
Deputy Police/Fire Chief



BRYAN MAYHEW
Assistant Chief
Police Division

- Patrol Operations
- Administrative Support
- Community Engagement
- School Resource Officers
- Police Information Center
- Property and Evidence
- Police Division Training
- Police Fleet & Equipment



MATT WOLFE
Assistant Chief
Investigative Services

- Detective Bureau
- Professional Standards
- Accreditation
- Records Bureau
- Strategic Planning
- Public Information Officer



JED WILD
Assistant Chief
Fire Division

- Fire Operations
- Fire Marshal
- Community Risk Reduction
- Fire Division Training
- Fire Fleet & Equipment

STAFF ROSTER

POLICE—SWORN

ALLEN, Levi
ARMOLD, Nicholas
BARKER, David
BEGEMAN, Craig
BENNETT, Zach
BOGARD, Scott
BRYANT, Jermaine
BURKE, Gregory
BURLESON, Kevin
BUSH, Ryan
CLARK, Ronald
CLARK, Steven
COLLIER, Michael
CUTSHAW, Jessica
**DELEEUW, Dale*
DEXTER, Evan
DEY, Kaitlin
DMOCH, Adam
DOSTER, Kyle
FISHER (QUINN), Lacey
FONGER, Jason
GABRIELLI, Carlin
GARRISON, Austin
**GERTH, Benjamin*
GIBSON, Robert
GLEESING, Kevin
GONZALEZ, Jennifer
HAMBRIGHT, Brandon
HAMILTON, Megan
HESS, Dereck
HOUSER, Daniel
**HUNSTAD, Brent*
KIMBLE, Benjamin
KITE, Henry
KUHARIK, Aaron
LARSON, Nathan
LORD, James
MARTIN, Matthew
MATTSON, Nicholas
MAYHEW, Bryan
MCMILLAN, Brandon
MORAN, Kyle
MORGAN, Lynley
NEMECEK, Robb
PIERMAN, Brannon
REYES, Jorge

REYNHOUT, Brent
REISGRAF, Alex
ROSSITER, Tom
SCAVO, Tyler
SCHUMACHER, Michael
SLAVIN, Nathan
SOUTHWARD, Mallory
SPICER, Abe (Josh)
STAPERT, Brett
SWAFFORD, Jason
SWIER, Chris
TOMSIC, Matthew
TURANZAS, Evan
VANDERWIJERE, Jeffery
VANDYKEN, Justin
VANPORTFLIET, Derek
VESEY, Eric
WALL, Brandon
WENTWORTH, Jordan
WOLF, Sarah
WOLFE, Matthew

FIRE—SWORN

ABDULLAH, Arik
BARNUM, Mitch
BARTEL, Andrew
BYRNE-THAYER, *Ciaran*
CHASE, Aaron
DUNN, Derek
EVERETT, Chip
FACE, George
FARR, Tyler
FERRINGA, Brandon
**FRENCH, Stacy*
GRAHAM, Bill
HAMBRIGHT, Jared
HAVERKAMP, Nick
HELMER, Travis
HERNDON, Austin
HOLLISTER, Clay
HOWELL, Dakota
JOZWIK, Heather
KLOK, Brian
KUHN, Rachel
LAROE, Scott
LEATHERMAN, Robert
MAHONEY, Jacob

MANDERS, Harrison
MCCOY, Mark
MILLER, Mike
NASON, Rick
O'REILLY, Tom
PATHUIS, Aiden
PLAYFORD, Lou
QUEZADA, Paul
RICE, *Randall*
RILEY, Debora
SAUNDERS, Jeremiah
SHARPLEY, Cameron
TANNER, Steve
TOEPFER, Andy
VANOVERBEEK, Josh
VERMEER, Jeremy
WALL, Greg
WILD, Jed

CIVILIANS

ALANIS, Ariana
ARENA, Traci
BIELSKI, Maria
BOGARD, Ashley
CALLAWAY, Tony
EVANS, Jenny
GALICIA, Paolo "Vito"
GARLOW, Barbara
**GIPSON, Teresa*
GRAY, Sandra
HOVENKAMP, Ken
LACKEY, Brenda
MALZ, Diane
MEYERS, Rebecca
**NEARCHOU, Aki*
**SCOTT-FARNSWORTH, Tammy*
SMITH, Clayton
STOMMEN, McKenzie
TRUMAN, Jacqueline
VANAUKEN, Vanessa
VLIER, Megan
WADE, Callie

**Retirement or Separation*

PERSONNEL UPDATES

RETIREMENTS

Stacey French
Fire Marshal
26 Years of Service

Retired: March 2, 2024



Tammy Scott-Farnsworth
Records Clerk
10 Years of Service

Retired: March 14, 2024



PROMOTIONS



William Graham
Division Chief
Promoted:
January 7, 2024



Rob Leatherman
Division Chief
Promoted:
January 7, 2024



Steve Tanner
Fire Marshal
Promoted:
May 13, 2024



MCKENZIE STOMMEN
Intelligence Analyst
Promoted:
June 30, 2024



Michael Collier
Lieutenant
Promoted:
September 1, 2024



Michael Schumacher
Sergeant
Promoted:
September 1, 2024

NEW HIRES

Firefighter Andrew Bartal
Firefighter Brandon Feringa
Firefighter Austin Herndon
Firefighter Dakota Howell
Firefighter Rachel Kuhn
Firefighter Scott LaRoe

Firefighter Harrison Manders
Firefighter Aiden Pathuis
Firefighter Jeremiah Saunders
Firefighter Cameron Sharpley
Officer Kaitlin Dey
Officer Megan Hamilton

Officer Nathan Larson
Officer Jorge Reyes
Officer Tom Rossiter
Officer Tyler Scavo
Administrative Assistant
Maria Bielski

RECOGNITION & AWARDS



Firefighter of the Year
Mike Miller
Captain



Sworn of the Year
James Lord
Detective



Civilian of Year
Traci Arena
Records Clerk

MERITORIOUS SERVICE

Officer Adam Dmoch

COMMENDATION

Officer Sarah Wolf

Officer Scott Bogard

Detective Brett Stapert

Officer Matthew Martin

Officer Brandon McMillan

Sergeant Michael Schumacher

Officer Derek VanPortfliet

Officer Brent Hunstad

OUTSTANDING INNOVATION

Assistant Chief Bryan Mayhew

LIFE SAVING AWARD CITIZEN

John Zesiger (2)

CIVILIAN CITATION

Katherine Maxey

LIFE SAVING AWARD

Officer Michael Schumacher

Officer Brent Hunstad

Battalion Chief Robert Leatherman

Battalion Chief William Graham

Battalion Chief Chip Everett

Assistant Chief Jed Wild

Battalion Chief Lou Playford

Fire Marshal Steven Tanner

Battalion Chief Rick Nason

Captain Dereck Dunn

Captain Jared Hambright

Captain Micheal Miller

Captain Mark McCoy

Captain Brian Klok

Firefighter Heather Jozwik

Firefighter Aiden Pathuis

Firefighter Ciaran Byrne-Thayer

Firefighter Nicholas Haverkamp

On-call Firefighter Debora Riley

Firefighter Mitch Barnum

Firefighter Joshua VanOverbeek

Firefighter Tyler Farr

Firefighter George Face

Firefighter Rachel Kuhn

Firefighter Arik Abdullah

Firefighter Andrew Bartal

Firefighter Andrew Toepfer

POLICE DIVISION



Section 02

POLICE DIVISION



ASSISTANT CHIEF
BRYAN MAYHEW

POLICE DIVISION BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, the Police Division
responded to:

41,008
Total Calls for Service

In 2024, Portage Public Safety
officers made:

2,537
Total Arrests

The Police Division is led by an Assistant Chief who reports directly to the Deputy Director. As a senior law enforcement official within the department, the Assistant Chief is responsible for the coordination, management, and oversight of all police operations. This includes ensuring the effective deployment of personnel, overseeing special operations, maintaining public safety initiatives, and fostering collaboration with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

Assistant Chief Bryan Mayhew joined Portage Public Safety in 2000. Throughout his career, he has served honorably in many roles to include patrol officer, field training officer, school resource officer, patrol sergeant, K9 team supervisor, and lieutenant. Mayhew was promoted to Assistant Chief—Police Division in 2023.

In addition to operational leadership, Assistant Chief Mayhew plays a critical role in policy development, resource allocation, and strategic planning to enhance crime prevention efforts and community engagement. He works closely with command staff, supervisors, and frontline officers to ensure adherence to department policies, best practices, and legal standards.

Mayhew also represents the division in high-level meetings, public forums, and interagency collaborations, advocating for initiatives that promote law enforcement efficiency and community trust. His leadership is instrumental in maintaining the division's commitment to professionalism, accountability, and service excellence.

Through his leadership, the department remains committed to proactive policing, efficient emergency response, and fostering strong community relationships.

MISSION

The members of the Portage Police Division strive to serve as guardians of the peace through courtesy, service, and integrity.

VALUES

*Excellence, Professionalism, Respect, Compassion,
Community Partnerships*

POLICE DIVISION HISTORY

- 1963 City of Portage Chartered
- 1964 Richard Wilde Hired as First Police Chief
- 1966 Reserve Police Unit Established
- 1967 David Sharp Promoted to Police Chief
- 1970 Youth Section Established
- 1970 Department Assumes School Crossing Guard Responsibilities
- 1971 Department Moved to Present Police/Court Building
- 1975 George E. VonBehren Hired as Police Chief
- 1977 City Emergency Preparedness Plan Developed by Police Department
- 1979 Police/Fire Central Dispatch Established
- 1985 Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police Traffic Safety Award
- 1985 Computerized Records Implemented
- 1988 Police/School Liaison Program Instituted
- 1988 Volunteer Parking Enforcement Program Implemented
- 1989 D.A.R.E. Program Instituted
- 1990 Old City Hall Remodeled and Field Operations Relocated
- 1995 Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police Traffic Safety Award
- 1995 Richard J. White Hired as Police Chief
- 1996 Crime Prevention Program Instituted
- 1998 Police Computers Upgraded to a PC Network
- 1998 Police Citizens Academy Implemented
- 1999 Kalamazoo County District Courts Consolidated
- 2001 D.A.R.E. Program Transferred to Sheriff's Department
- 2001 Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN) Certificate of Excellence Awarded
- 2003 C.A.L.E.A. Accreditation Awarded
- 2004-2005 Remodel of Annex and Headquarters Building
- 2006 C.A.L.E.A. Reaccreditation
- 2007 Electronic Citations Implemented
- 2008 Digital Mobile Video Recording Implemented
- 2008 Bicycle Patrol Implemented
- 2008 Electronic Accidents Implemented
- 2009 C.A.L.E.A. Reaccreditation
- 2011 Prisoner Holding Facility Closed
- 2011 Records Department Upgraded to a Digital Dictation System
- 2011 Police and Fire Departments Consolidated to Department of Public Safety
- 2012 C.A.L.E.A. Re-accreditation
- 2015 C.A.L.E.A. Re-accreditation
- 2015 Motorcycle Patrols Implemented
- 2015 Canine Program Implemented
- 2017 Nicholas J. Arnold Promoted to Public Safety Director – Police/Fire Chief
- 2018 Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission (M.L.E.A.C.) Awarded
- 2018 C.A.L.E.A. Re-accreditation
- 2018 C.A.L.E.A. Communications Accreditation Awarded
- 2018 Dispatch Center Decommissioned
- 2019 K9 Zorro End of Watch
- 2021 M.L.E.A.C. Re-accreditation
- 2022 C.A.L.E.A. Re-accreditation
- 2023 M.L.E.A.C. Re-accreditation
- 2024 Community Policing and Resolution Team (CERT) Implemented

PATROL OPERATIONS



LIEUTENANT
KEVIN GLEESING

PATROL BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, patrol officers activities included:

9,149
Traffic Stops

1,795
Hazardous Violations Cited

6
Fatal Traffic Collisions

97
OWI Arrests

548
Foot Patrols

6,176
Proactive Policing Contacts

TELESERVE BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, the Teleserve Officer handled about 7.5% of daily caseloads and calls for service:

1,093
Incidents

458
Cases

Lieutenant Kevin Gleesing oversees Patrol Operations, reporting directly to the Assistant Police Chief. As the commanding officer, he coordinates daily patrol activities to ensure effective law enforcement across the community. His responsibilities include assigning officers to designated areas, monitoring performance, and ensuring optimal coverage throughout the jurisdiction.

During critical incidents—such as emergencies, major crimes, and public disturbances—Lieutenant Gleesing provides on-scene supervision, ensuring swift and appropriate responses. He also oversees special events and traffic control operations, working closely with law enforcement agencies, city officials, and community organizations to maintain public safety. His duties include coordinating security measures, directing traffic management plans, and strategically deploying officers to prevent and address safety concerns.

UNIFORMED PATROL

Uniformed patrol officers serve as the foundation of police operations, representing the largest segment of the agency's workforce. To ensure continuous 24-hour coverage, patrol operates on two primary 12-hour shifts in a complementary cycle. This coverage is reinforced by a strategically deployed "powershift" of officers, providing targeted overlap to enhance operational efficiency and responsiveness.

Patrol officers are assigned to specific districts or city-wide support based on staffing needs. Their core responsibilities include crime prevention, crime suppression, and rapid response to calls for service. Additionally, they engage in proactive policing through self-initiated activities such as high-visibility patrols, targeted enforcement in high-activity areas, and community outreach efforts like Quick PR, which fosters positive relationships with citizens and businesses. These efforts collectively contribute to maintaining public safety and enhancing community trust.

TELESERVE

The Teleserve function enhances patrol operations by allowing officers to focus on crime prevention and neighborhood quality-of-life issues. Officers assigned to Teleserve support district patrol units by handling investigations remotely—via phone, in person at the police department, and through other electronic means.

Their responsibilities include conducting follow-up investigations, obtaining medical reports and case documents, collecting photographs and other evidence, processing detainees, securing warrants, assisting non-sworn personnel with station duties, and performing other tasks as assigned by team leaders.

CSU BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, CSU technicians processed:

66

Major Crime / Crash Scenes

10

Positive Forensic
Identifications

SWAT BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, Portage SWAT officers responded to:

36

High-risk
Incident Responses

DRONES BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, the City of Portage Drone assets included:

6

Drones

7

FAA Certified Pilots

114

Hours of Pilot Training

90

Deployments

CRIME SCENE UNIT

The Crime Scene Unit is a specialized team of officers trained in processing crime scenes, deaths, and investigation of major traffic crashes. The CSU is comprised of nine crime scene technicians and three accident reconstructionist's. Crime scene technicians identify, collect, and document evidence. Accident reconstructionist's are called to the scene of major traffic crash investigations to document and reconstruct elements of the crash, working jointly with crime scene technicians.

KALAMAZOO METRO SWAT

Kalamazoo Metro Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) is a multi-jurisdictional team currently made up of SWAT officers from Portage, Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo Township and the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department. The SWAT team responds to high-risk and critical incidents within Kalamazoo County and at the mutual aid request of jurisdictions within the Southwest Michigan 5th District.

DRONE PROGRAM

Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems, also known as a "drones," are utilized by the department to protect lives, safeguard property, document incident scenes and detect danger that could not otherwise be seen. Drones are heavily regulated and the City of Portage holds a special Certificate of Authorization which provides special flying rights that would otherwise be restricted under Part 107.

The City of Portage has seven pilots authorized to operate its inventory of drones. All Pilots in Command (PIC) are required to obtain and maintain the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Remote Pilot Certification, attend regular team training meetings, and conduct regular training flights.

In 2024, drones pilots assisted with two Secret Service security details, two missing person searches, and citywide tornado damage assessments.

K9 UNIT BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, the K9 Unit was
involved in:

58
Deployments

820
Hours of Training

2
K9 Use of Force Incidents



K9 Riggs



K9 Rhett



K9 Ronan

Tomsic

*The PDPS K-9 program was
launched in 2016 with the introduction
of K-9 Zorro who faithfully served the
department until he passed away of a
sudden illness in 2019.*



K9 ZORRO
2016—2019

K-9 UNIT

The K-9 Unit is a specialized team dedicated to enhancing public safety. Three skilled handlers provide continuous patrol coverage, making the unit a vital asset to the department. Our canine partners—primarily German Shepherds and Belgian Malinois—excel in tracking, suspect apprehension, and evidence detection. Their keen senses play a crucial role in locating missing persons and ensuring a secure environment for our community. Through ongoing patrols, the K-9 Unit demonstrates our commitment to safety and operational excellence.

The PDPS K9 Unit was deployed on 58 incidents in 2024 to include, but not limited to, public demonstrations, narcotics sniffs, free air searches, building searches, suspect tracks, article and area searches.

An analysis of training and deployment activity for 2024 shows that the PDPS K9 Unit is utilized frequently for a variety of functions, not only for PDPS, but for neighboring jurisdictions and for public engagement and crime prevention events.

K-9 Team Assignments

In 2020, Sergeant Wentworth was partnered with K9 Riggs

In 2022, Officer Scott Bogard was partnered with K9 Rhett

In 2024, Officer Matt Tomsic was partnered with K9 Ronan

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES



LIEUTENANT
STEVEN CLARK

Lieutenant Steve Clark oversees Administrative Services for the Police Division, reporting to the Assistant Police Chief. Administrative services are crucial to ensuring the smooth operation and logistical support of law enforcement activities, allowing officers to focus on public safety and community service.

Through strategic leadership and effective resource management, the Administrative Services Lieutenant plays a vital role in supporting the overall mission of the department by providing oversight of the following key areas:

Purchasing – Managing the procurement of essential supplies, equipment, and services needed to support police operations efficiently.

Property and Evidence – Ensuring the proper handling, storage, and documentation of evidence and lost or recovered property in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements.

Fleet and Equipment – Supervising the maintenance and deployment of police vehicles and specialized law enforcement equipment to keep officers operational and ready for duty.

Facilities Maintenance – Overseeing the upkeep and functionality of police department buildings and infrastructure, ensuring a safe and effective work environment.

Training – Managing the development and implementation of training programs to enhance officer skills, maintain compliance with law enforcement standards, and prepare personnel for evolving challenges.

Community Engagement – Coordinating outreach efforts, educational programs, and partnerships with local organizations to strengthen public trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the community.

POLICE SERVICES BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, Police Service Technicians and the Evidence Specialist processed:

1,113
Handgun Registrations

506
**Permits to
Purchase Handguns**

436
Fleet Repair Orders

In 2024, the following items were logged into evidence:

2,200
Items of Property

2,046
Property Disposals

55
Firearms

\$7,350
Counterfeit Bills

38
Found/Stolen Bicycles

INFORMATION CENTER

The Information Center is staffed by two Police Service Technicians (PSTs) and a Records Clerk. This team manages all citizen interactions in the Public Safety headquarters lobby and all non-emergency phone calls.

PST's coordinate fleet maintenance and equipment repairs, provide non-criminal fingerprinting services, register and issue permits for handgun purchases, conduct background checks for facility service contractors and ride-along applicants, and oversee the building's key FOB control system. Additionally, they may cover crossing guard posts when needed and manage sex offender registrations in the absence of the Teleserve Officer.

PROPERTY & EVIDENCE

Police Evidence Technician Diane Malz is dedicated to the precise handling, secure storage, and accurate documentation of all property acquired by the police, ensuring transparency and accountability at every stage. Her role is vital in preserving the integrity of evidence and maintaining a systematic, reliable record-keeping system. By adhering to strict protocols, Diane enhances the efficiency and trustworthiness of police operations.

The property room operates under 24/7 surveillance with enhanced security measures for access. All property is managed and released in accordance with IAPE guidelines and accreditation standards. A comprehensive audit of evidence and property is conducted annually. The 2024 annual inspection yielded zero discrepancies.

FLEET & EQUIPMENT

PDPS provides essential services to the City of Portage utilizing a fleet of Chevrolet Tahoe's, along with various utility vehicles and sedans. Equipped with essential tools ranging from mobile computer terminals to specialized equipment, first aid kits, and AED's, each vehicle ensures officers are well-prepared while on duty.

Beyond standard patrol and traffic vehicles, PST Jenny Evans also manages a range of specialty vehicles, including a Mobile Command Vehicle, a cargo van, and unmarked vehicles for non-uniformed personnel.

This comprehensive fleet enables the Police Division to fulfill its commitment to public safety across a spectrum of law enforcement and emergency response activities.

POLICE/SCHOOL LIAISONS

SRO's BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, School Resource
Officers handled:

150
Cases
Involving Students

212
Investigative
Hours

75
Hours
Speaking with Parents

23
Classroom
Instruction Sessions



SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM

School Resource Officers (SRO) are sworn law enforcement officers assigned to schools to enhance safety and security, foster positive relationships with students and staff, and act as a liaison between law enforcement and the school community. Since 1988, Portage Public Safety has provided a dedicated police officer to the Portage Public School system. Today, the School Resource Officer (SRO) program includes two sworn officers, each assigned to one of the district's two main high schools. Their responsibilities extend beyond these schools to the community high school, three middle schools, and eight elementary schools.

School Resource Officers play a vital role in school safety by maintaining a visible presence, serving as members of school administration, attending school functions, teaching prevention classes, and mentoring students.

The School Resource Officer Program is a three-year specialized assignment, with an optional 12-month extension, that reports to the Community Engagement and Resolution Team sergeant. Officer Kevin Burleson has been assigned to Portage Northern High School since 2022. Officer Henry Kite has been assigned to Portage Central High School since 2020. Both officers received extensions to their assignments due to the Covid pandemic.



COMMUNITY POLICING

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & RESOLUTION TEAM

In April 2024, the Portage Department of Public Safety secured a \$1 million COPS Hiring Program (CHP) grant to expand its workforce by eight officers, restructure command staff, and optimize personnel deployment based on a 2022 staffing study. This federal funding strengthens community policing and crime prevention efforts across Portage.

As part of this initiative, the department launched the Community Engagement and Resolution Team (CERT) in July 2024. CERT enhances public safety by reallocating non-hazardous duties from patrol officers, allowing them to focus on higher-risk responsibilities. This strategic resource allocation improves efficiency and service delivery at a lower cost than traditional patrol deployments.

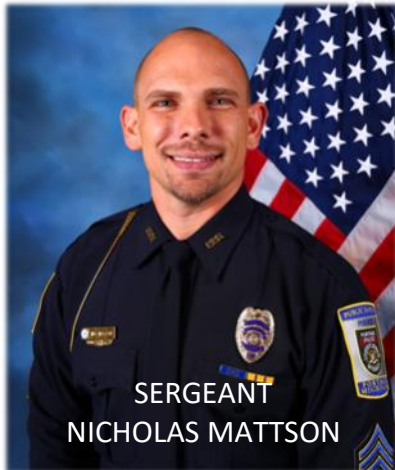
CERT operates as a three-year specialty assignment led by Sergeant Kyle Doster, with Officers Matt Martin, Lacey Fisher, and Brandon Hambright assisting in program development. The team plays a key role in crime prevention, education, and enforcement efforts, including:

- Creating social media content and public safety education programs
- Assisting patrol units and the Detective Bureau with persistent criminal activity
- Collaborating with city departments and external partners, such as Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (ISK) and the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), to resolve recurring service calls

By prioritizing proactive, community-based solutions over enforcement alone, CERT addresses quality-of-life issues, strengthens community trust, and enhances public safety.

One of CERT's first major initiatives was reviving the "Pig Out with Public Safety" event in August 2024. In collaboration with School Resource Officers, this back-to-school event provided over 400 backpacks filled with school supplies to local students—funded entirely through private donations—while strengthening ties with the Portage Community School System.





Sergeant Nicholas Mattson oversees all training for the Police Division, reporting to the Administrative Services Lieutenant. He is responsible for coordinating and scheduling all training programs, managing new employee onboarding, and overseeing the Field Training Program.

To maximize efficiency and reduce costs, training administration prioritizes the use of local resources, minimizing travel and lodging expenses whenever possible. Additionally, the department collaborates with other agencies to develop shared and combined local training opportunities.

ANNUAL IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The department provides annual in-service training in Firearms, Defensive Tactics, and Use of Force, including instruction on less-lethal tools. Additionally, various training topics are distributed electronically to staff throughout the year. These topics typically include:

- Legal Updates
- Sexual Harassment
- Domestic Violence
- De-escalation
- Ethics
- All-Hazard Plan
- Hazardous Materials
- Biased-Based Policing
- Criminal Intelligence
- Crimes Against Children
- Criminal Investigations
- Michigan Mental Health Code
- Accreditation
- Supervisor Development

POLICE TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, officers and professional staff attended:

73
External
Trainings

The department continually assesses individual training needs to support employee specialization, career advancement, and overall job effectiveness. As a member of the West Michigan Criminal Justice Training Consortium, the department benefits from pooled Public Act 302 training funds, enabling access to a diverse range of training opportunities while maximizing the return on investment.

MCOLES CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION (CPE)

In 2024, the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) launched a three-year pilot program mandating Continuing Professional Education (CPE) for all officers. For the first year, officers were required to complete a minimum of 12 hours of CPE credits, including at least 4 hours focused on ethics in policing and interpersonal relations. All sworn employees successfully met these requirements. In subsequent years, the required training hours will increase to 24 hours annually.



QUARTERLY TRAINING PLAN

In September 2024, the Police Division introduced a revised training schedule designed to enhance officer skills while maintaining operational efficiency. Each quarter, all sworn employees participate in a dedicated training day. In exchange, officers receive an additional day off that same quarter.

This approach allows officers to complete required annual training on topics such as firearms, defensive tactics, Taser, and OC spray, while ensuring road patrols remain adequately staffed. It also reduces the need for overtime payment. By balancing training and staffing needs, this schedule supports both officer development and department effectiveness.

FIELD TRAINING PROGRAM

The Field Training Program is a crucial component in developing well-prepared and capable police officers. It helps probationary officers gain the hands-on experience necessary to work effectively in real-life scenarios. Here's a breakdown of key aspects of the program:

The program takes about 18 weeks to complete, during which new officers undergo a structured and comprehensive training process. Field Training follows a five-step program to gradually build the skills required for the role. Each step is designed to ensure that officers are adequately prepared to handle the various challenges they will face in the field.

In 2024, four out of five newly hired officers successfully completed the Field Training Program, showing the program's effectiveness. However, one recruit did not meet the standards, which highlights the program's rigorous evaluation process.

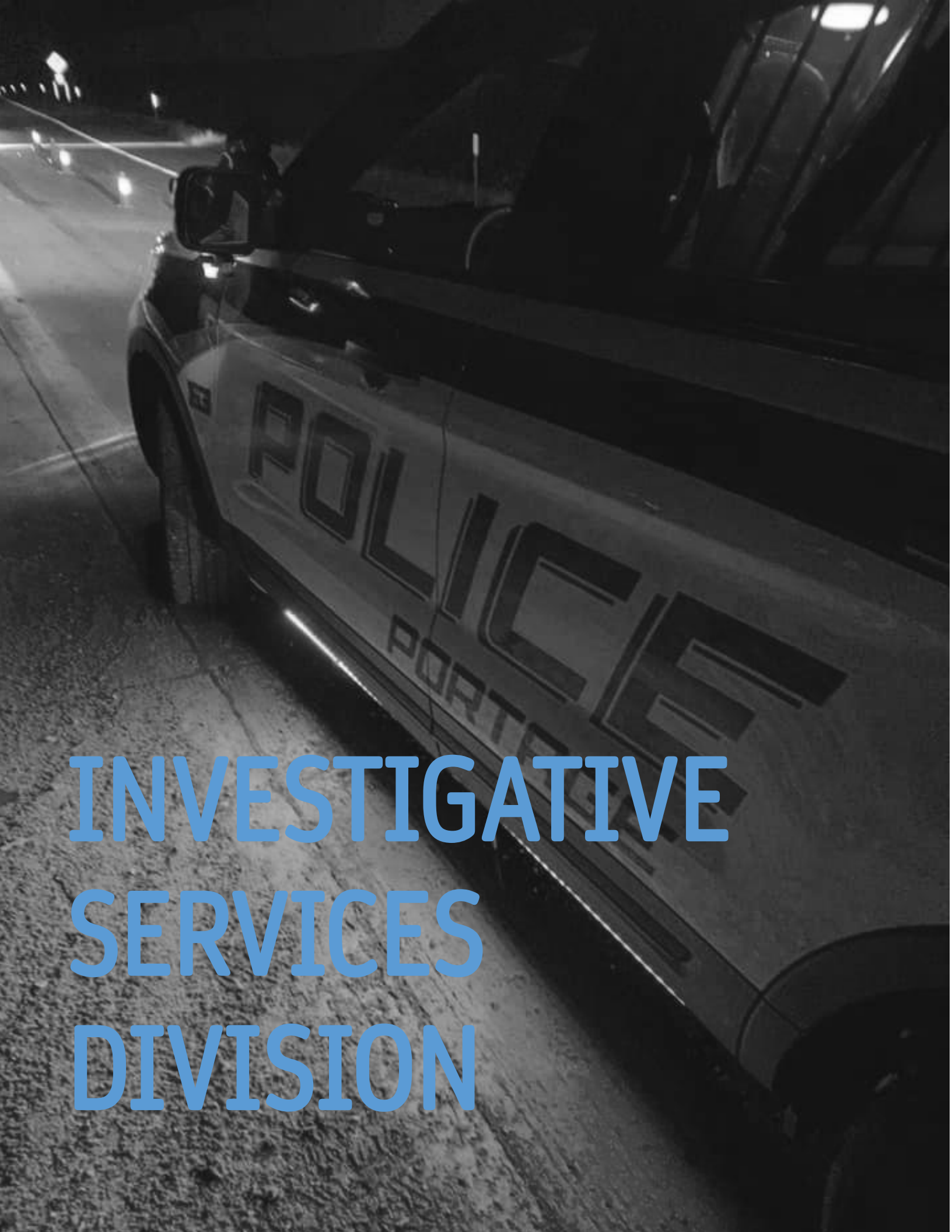
There are 11 Field Training Officers (FTO) within the department. FTOs are experienced officers who play a vital role in mentoring and evaluating probationary officers. These FTOs possess in-depth knowledge of the agency's policies, procedures, rules, and regulations. Additionally, they have supervisory skills that help guide and assess the probationary officers effectively.

The ultimate goal is to ensure probationary officers can perform the full range of duties expected of them on the job, from interacting with the public to handling complex law enforcement situations. By the end of the program, they should be ready to transition to independent roles within the police force.

EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT (EFE)

PDPS collaborates with the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA) and universities across Michigan to offer the Education for Employment (EFE) and Internship programs. These programs aim to educate high school, college, and university students about law enforcement and the criminal justice system while encouraging them to develop the necessary skills and passion to serve in public safety roles.

Eligible candidates must be enrolled in an accredited institution, either in their junior or senior year of high school, college, or university. Although the department did not host any interns in 2024, the program provides a valuable learning opportunity for students interested in pursuing careers in law enforcement or related fields. For future opportunities, students can stay connected with the PDPS, KRESA, or their educational institutions for updates on the next round of internships and EFE programs.



INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

Section 03

INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES DIVISION



Assistant Chief Matthew Wolfe oversees the Investigative Services Division, reporting directly to the Deputy Director. He manages key areas, including Professional Standards, Internal Affairs, Agency Accreditation, the Detective Bureau, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, and the Police Records Bureau. Additionally, he serves as the agency's Public Information Officer and contributes to strategic planning initiatives.

Assistant Chief Wolfe began his law enforcement career in 1996 with the Portage Department of Public Safety, after graduating from Grand Valley State University and the GVSU Police Academy. Over the years, he has held various roles, including investigator for the Kalamazoo Valley Enforcement Team, field training officer, detective, sergeant, patrol lieutenant, professional standards lieutenant, and acting deputy chief.

Beyond his departmental duties, Wolfe has been an adjunct faculty member at the KVCC Police Academy for more than 20 years. He is also an assessor for the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission and serves as an at-large member of the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police Legislative Committee.

In 2018, Wolfe graduated from Eastern Michigan University's School of Staff and Command. In 2023, he completed the prestigious Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy (Class #285).



ACCREDITATION

In its pursuit of excellence, the Portage Police Division continues to maintain accreditation at both the state and national levels. The Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission (MLEAC) and the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) set rigorous standards that departments must meet to retain accreditation. PDPS is one of only four departments in Michigan to hold dual accreditation.

The Portage Police Division has maintained national accreditation through CALEA since July 2003 and state accreditation through MLEAC since February 2018. In March 2022, PDPS received its seventh accreditation award from CALEA, followed by its third accreditation award from MLEAC in February 2024.

DETECTIVE BUREAU



Lieutenant Ron Clark oversees the Detective Bureau, reporting to the Assistant Chief of Investigative Services. The Detective Lieutenant is responsible for managing the daily operations of the investigative arm of the Police Division. This includes coordinating investigations, overseeing case progress, and ensuring effective communication and collaboration across units.

The Detective Bureau (DB) operates as a critical unit within the agency, with a broad range of responsibilities aimed at solving complex criminal cases and supporting collaborative efforts across different levels of law enforcement.

Core functions include:

- [Major Case and Fatal Accident Investigations](#)
- [Silent Observer Tip Management](#)
- [Surveillance and Special Operations](#)
- [Crime Analysis](#)
- [Intelligence Gathering, Reporting, and Distribution](#)
- [Cell Phone Data Extraction, Analysis, and Mapping](#)
- [Extradition Notifications](#)
- [Case File Preparation to Support Detectives and Prosecutors at Trials](#)
- [Evidence Coordination with In-house and MSP Crime Labs](#)
- [Coordination with Local, State, and Federal Agencies for Joint Operations and Task Force Investigations](#)

The DB plays a key role in ensuring that investigations are thorough, evidence is properly handled, and coordination across different agencies enhances the effectiveness of solving cases. The presence of both detectives and a civilian analyst provides a balance between hands-on investigative work and data-driven insights.

DETECTIVE BUREAU BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, detectives were assigned:

363
Total Cases

In 2024, the DB also assisted other city departments with:

28
City Employment Backgrounds

9
Liquor License Applications

13
Secondhand Dealer Licenses

7
Solicitor Permits

FLOCK BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, 66.8 million license plates were read in the Portage area, resulting in 2,114 alerts, assisting in the investigation of:

49
Stolen Vehicles

7
Warrants

6
Retail Frauds

2
Missing Persons

1
Shooting

2
Robberies

10
Theft/B&E's

INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS

In 2024, the Department of Public Safety expanded its investigative capabilities by creating a full-time Intelligence Analyst position. The analyst reviews, analyzes, and develops source documents and crime data. The analyst works to develop information from a wide variety of sources into actionable intelligence and contributes to the identification of suspects through review of surveillance footage, cell phone analysis, and social media analysis.

This civilian position involves studying patterns and trends in criminal behavior, which is then forwarded to police personnel as a means of impacting crime and quality of life issues in the city, as well as to develop crime prevention programs.

AUTOMATIC LICENSE PLATE READERS

To assist in the reduction of non-violent crimes, 30 automatic license plate readers have been installed across the city since 2022. The stationary cameras capture evidence such as license plates, make, model and color of vehicles. No demographic information about drivers or passengers is collected. Unless flagged as important, the data is stored for 30 days then permanently deleted.

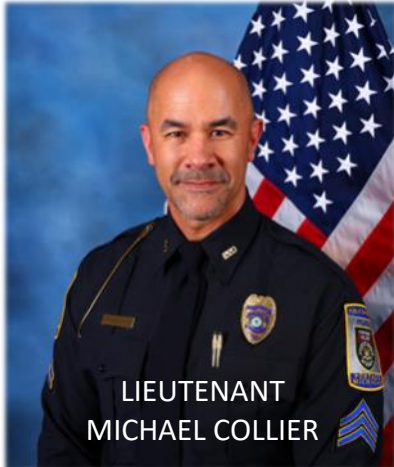
Through the implementation of this citywide system, Portage Public Safety and its law enforcement partners are able to better collaborate and share data in our efforts to make Kalamazoo County a safer place.

DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT (PUNT/SWET)

The Portage Uniformed Narcotics Team (PUNT) was formed to specifically investigate complaints involving controlled substances. Officers assigned to the team focus on conducting more intensive drug investigations by utilizing intelligence gathering, surveillance, and uniformed and plainclothes operations. The unit is comprised of patrol officers, detectives, and a sergeant lieutenant. The PUNT unit is commanded by the Detective Bureau Lieutenant.

The Michigan State Police Southwest Enforcement Team (SWET) works drug crime cases throughout Southwest Michigan—including Barry, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. This assignment expands the Portage officer's capabilities to a state-wide, multi-jurisdictional team. In addition to the added available resources, the assigned officer will enhance capabilities in narcotics investigations in the Portage jurisdiction.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS



Lieutenant Michael Collier leads the Office of Professional Standards and reports to the Assistant Chief of Investigative Services. This position oversees all policy reviews, internal affairs investigations, and assists with the agencies accreditation.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The Portage Department of Public Safety accepts and investigates all complaints against agency employees or policies, whether internal or external. Minor complaints are typically investigated by the employee's supervisor, documented, and reviewed by the Office of the Director. More serious complaints are assigned to the Professional Standards Unit for a thorough investigation.

All instances of officer use of force are reviewed by Professional Standards to ensure compliance with department policies. Internal affairs and the complaint process are governed by Portage Police Policy and Procedural Order 300-4, which mandates that all complaints—including anonymous ones—are accepted and investigated.

Since 2015, the department has used Guardian Tracking software to monitor use of force incidents, policy violations, citizen complaints, and other performance-related matters. The system includes an Early Intervention feature that activates when an employee reaches a predefined threshold of incidents within a set timeframe. When triggered, a review of the incidents and the officer's performance is conducted with supervisory personnel to determine if further action is needed.

In 2024, the Office of Professional Standards investigated 25 complaints (8 internal and 17 external). Allegations ranged from unlawful arrest and policy violations to use of force, bias-based profiling, and other concerns. Of these complaints, 16 were determined to be unfounded.

Over the past two years, complaint trends have fluctuated. While 2024 saw an increase in total complaints, this was accompanied by a rise in unfounded cases, particularly those where officers were exonerated or found in compliance with policy.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, the Professional Standards Lieutenant reviewed:

25
Total Complaints

Those determinations were:

16
Unfounded

6
Sustained

1
Exonerated

1
Policy Violation

1
In-compliance with Policy

INTERNAL AFFAIRS	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Internal Complaints	8	2	3	0	9
External Complaints	17	19	14	14	9
Supervisory Reviews	0	7	0	0	0
Internal Affairs (IA) Investigations	25	3	17	14	9
- Sustained	6	3	4	11	10
- Exonerated/Unfounded	17	17	13	3	8
- Policy Failure	0	0	0	0	0

USE OF FORCE

USE OF FORCE ANALYSIS

Department policy requires a use of force report to be completed when force is used to control a subject beyond the act of incidental touching during handcuffing. The department recorded 2,537 arrests in 2024, a 4% increase from the previous year. Despite this rise, use of force incidents decreased by 9% compared to 2023, maintaining a rate of 5% of all arrests, consistent with prior years.

KEY FINDINGS

- **TASER Pointing:** Increased 36% from 2023, likely due to improved reporting practices.
- **Physical Control:** Decreased 20%, suggesting potential improvements in de-escalation efforts.
- **Injuries:**
 - **Suspects:** Nine reported minor injuries, mainly complaints of pain.
 - **Officers:** Eight reported minor injuries, none requiring medical attention.
- **Complaints:** Two complaints regarding use of force were filed, but neither was sustained following investigation.
- **No demographic trends** (race, age, gender) were identified in internal reviews of use of force incidents.

TRAINING & POLICY INITIATIVES

- Officers continue to receive annual use of force and scenario-based training.
- The APEX Officer virtual reality simulator has enhanced training on de-escalation and decision-making.
- In 2024, the department expanded instructor training in PERF's "Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics" (ICAT) and Realistic De-Escalation to better address encounters involving mentally disturbed and unarmed individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand de-escalation training to further reduce use of force incidents.
- Continue refining reporting practices to ensure accurate tracking and analysis.
- The department remains committed to responsible use of force, transparent reporting, and continuous officer training to enhance public safety.

USE OF FORCE	2024	2023	2022
Firearm Pointed	33	34	28
Electronic Control Device	34	28	10
Less Lethal	0	1	0
Baton	0	0	0
Oleoresin Capsicum Spray	2	3	3
Canine Bark	2	4	1
Canine Bite	0	0	0
Weaponless	55	69	50
Total Use of Force	126	139	83
Complaints	2	3	2
Total Arrests	2537	2436	2171

POLICE RECORDS



Public Safety Services Manager Teresa Gipson oversees all records management functions, reporting to the Administrative Lieutenant. The Records Bureau plays an essential role in supporting both the Police Division and the citizens of Portage, with a focus on efficient and accurate record-keeping.

Under the leadership of PSSM Gipson, the Bureau has established a solid foundation in managing vital data. PSSM faithfully served the department for over 26 years until her retirement on January 3, 2025. After an extensive hiring process, Records Clerk/FOIA Coordinator Jacqueline Truman was promoted to Public Safety Services Manager, ensuring continuity in this crucial role.

Staffed by eight non-sworn professionals, the Records Bureau is responsible for managing Police Division records, processing FOIA requests, and maintaining state crime, arrest, and accident reporting. The team also provides direct service to the public, promptly responding to inquiries and report requests from citizens and authorized entities.

The Bureau utilizes a robust records management system (RMS) on a Windows platform, which includes a variety of integrated modules for enhanced data accuracy and retrieval. This system supports features such as ID Networks Live Scan, computerized lineups, LEIN/NCIC interfaces, gun registrations, property room barcoding, and bicycle registrations. Additionally, the system connects to statewide resources like sex offender files and mug shots, further supporting law enforcement operations.

By streamlining record retrieval and reducing the need for physical copies, the RMS helps increase efficiency, allowing staff to scan documents directly into case files for easy access and printing across the department. This system, coupled with specialized network applications like Pictometry and Talon, ensures that the Records Bureau remains a vital part of the department's operations, offering both internal support and accessible services to the public.

POLICE RECORDS BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, records clerks processed:

3,285
FOIA Requests

1,091
Accident Reports

7,172
Case Reports

2,392
Adult Arrests

145
Juvenile Arrests





POWERENGAGE

The Portage Department of Public Safety has taken a proactive step in enhancing community engagement with the introduction of PowerEngage in 2024. This text-based feedback tool allows citizens to provide input after non-life-threatening interactions with officers, creating a transparent avenue for communication between law enforcement and the community.

Since its launch in February 2024, the department has sent out 6,836 surveys, receiving 2,666 responses, which yields a 39% response rate—impressive for a new initiative. The department has earned a Citizen Positive Satisfaction Score of 91%, reflecting the positive perception of most interactions with officers.

Officers receive weekly feedback summaries, while administration has access to automated dashboard reports, ensuring continuous monitoring and review. When poor ratings are received, Professional Standards reviews the concerns, ensuring that all feedback is addressed appropriately.

This tool not only improves overall job satisfaction for our officers, it fosters stronger trust and communication between the department and the community. PowerEngage has been instrumental in showcasing our commitment to transparency, accountability, and responsiveness.

Great job. Thanks for helping to keep Crossroads Mall a safe and family oriented business.	Officer Reyes went above and beyond to assist me and I am beyond appreciative of his dedication and his efforts. He is a phenomenal example of what an officer should be.
The officer was a Life saver ! Once we called the Officer showed up promptly and handled our concern Immediately. Job well done please let him know That I'm very Thankful for his help !!!	The officer was very kind and helped me out. I was very shaken up by the incident. I asked the officer for a hug and he was so sweet and tried his best to comfort me.
The officer responded promptly. He was very nice and knowledgeable. Keep up the great job appreciate all you do.	Officer Jennifer Gonzalez was very kind, understanding, and performed admirably (:

PUBLIC SAFETY CHAPLAIN PROGRAM

Portage Public Safety Chaplains play a vital role in fostering positive relationships between officers, firefighters, public officials, and the community. Serving as spiritual counselors, they are trained in Critical Incident Stress Management and Psychological and Spiritual First Aid to address the emotional and spiritual needs of first responders and their families.

The primary mission of the program is to provide comprehensive support during critical incidents, including death notifications, domestic crises, disasters, and other high-stress situations. Chaplains are available to not only assist first responders but also to support community members affected by these events.

Chaplains contribute through five main services: police and fire ride-along's, assisting City Hall with families in need of resources, offering support to victims during times of crisis, and coordinating donations. They donate hundreds of hours annually, ensuring the emotional and spiritual well-being of both public safety staff and the community they serve.

FIRE DIVISION

A close-up, vertical photograph of firefighters in full protective gear. The focus is on the torso and arms of a firefighter in the foreground, showing the tan-colored bunker coat with bright yellow reflective stripes. The firefighter's hands are wearing black gloves and are clenched into fists. In the background, other firefighters in similar gear are visible but out of focus, suggesting a group standing in a line.

Section 03

FIRE DIVISION



FIRE DIVISION BY THE NUMBERS

In 2024, the Fire Division
responded to:

5,473
Calls for Service



The Fire Division is led by an Assistant Chief who reports directly to the Deputy Director. The Assistant Chief is responsible for the coordination and oversight of daily fire operations, training, and overall supervision. This position is also responsible for managing the Fire Divisions annual general budget and capital improvement projects.

Assistant Chief Jed Wild joined Portage Public Safety in 2021 and in 2024, was promoted to Assistant Chief—Fire Division. With a public safety career spanning over two decades, he has served in various roles, including corrections officer, paramedic, firefighter, and training officer. He led the Special Response Team (SRT) medics supporting the Kalamazoo Metro SWAT Team for 13 years and directed fire academies in Van Buren and Kalamazoo counties, achieving consistently high pass rates.

Wild holds an associate degree from Kellogg Community College and a bachelor's in public administration from Siena Heights University. He is a certified state instructor for Fire and EMS and a graduate of the Eastern Michigan University Executive Leadership for Fire Staff and Command program.

Wild remains dedicated to enhancing fire services, training future first responders, and ensuring the safety of the Portage community.

MISSION

The Portage Department of Public Safety—Fire Division exists to foster a high quality of life and enhance safety in our community through compassionate care, professionalism, technical competency, and servant's heart.

VISION

The Portage Fire Division will continually work towards providing the highest quality customer service through training, education, risk reduction and the empowerment of our team members.

VALUES

*Accountability, Honor & Respect, Communication & Teamwork,
Integrity, Professionalism, Compassion*

FIRE DIVISION HISTORY

- 1940 *Portage Fire Department Established*
- 1940 *First Fire Station Constructed at 7721 South Westnedge Avenue*
- 1941 *Ernest Hall Appointed First Fire Chief*
- 1942 *Emergency Response Services Began*
- 1942 *First Alarm Response*
- 1942 *Jacob Mein Appointed Fire Chief*
- 1963 *City of Portage Chartered*
- 1975 *Fire Department Master Plan developed (Rolf Jensen & Associates, Inc.)*
- 1975 *Fire Station No. 2 Constructed on Oakland Drive*
- 1977 *Minimum Staffing of Seven Established by City Administration*
- 1977 *Richard Knopf Appointed Fire Chief*
- 1983 *Jay Reardon Appointed Fire Chief*
- 1984 *Fire Station No. 1 Moved to Current Location on Shaver Road*
- 1988 *Wayne Kitchen Appointed Fire Chief*
- 1994 *Fire Station No. 3 Constructed on Sprinkle Road*
- 1996 *JW Tackett Appointed Fire Chief*
- 1999 *George Sheets Appointed Fire Chief*
- 2001 *Randy Lawton Appointed Fire Chief*
- 2011 *Richard White Appointed Director of Public Safety—Police/Fire Chief*
- 2016 *Commission on Fire Accreditation International Accreditation Awarded*
- 2017 *Nicholas Arnold Appointed Director of Public Safety—Police/Fire Chief*
- 2020 *New Fire Station No. 2 Constructed on Oakland Drive*

Fire Station No. 2

The all-new Fire Station No. 2 went into service on October 20, 2020, prioritizing firefighter health, safety, and training. Located at 6101 Oakland Drive, this 18,364-square-foot facility replaced the city's oldest fire station, which was just 8,000 square feet. Portage Fire responds to nearly 6,000 calls annually, with Stations No. 1 and No. 2 handling the majority. Positioned near I-94, Fire Station No. 2 often deploys first-response teams.

The \$6.1 million project, funded through the city's Capital Improvement Program, was deemed more cost-effective than renovating the original 1974 structure. The old station was demolished in October 2020, making way for the new station's driveway.

Designed for efficiency, the building is split into two sections: an administrative wing with offices and an operations wing with firefighter living quarters. It features gender-neutral locker rooms, individual sleeping quarters for up to eight firefighters, and dedicated "clean rooms" to reduce exposure to contaminants.

Equipped with a modern alerting system, the station provides rapid incident updates across multiple displays, with a progressive wake-up system in the bunk rooms to avoid startling firefighters.

A standout feature is the built-in training infrastructure. The apparatus bay includes a training tower with confined space rescue shafts, a fire hose tower for drying and training, and multiple anchor points for rappelling. These spaces enable year-round training, regardless of weather conditions.

Additionally, the expanded facility can store rescue equipment for county and regional teams if needed, enhancing emergency response capabilities.

FIRE ACTIVITY



5,476

Total Incidents



2.3%

Fires



<1%

Rupture/Explosion



65%

EMS/Medical Calls



6.5%

Hazardous Calls



3.5%

Service Calls



13%

Good Intent



<1%

Severe Weather



<1%

Citizen Complaints

FIRE RESPONSE ANALYSIS

The City of Portage has approximately 21,000 residential units, over 2,400 commercial properties, and a population exceeding 49,000. The Fire Division responds to an average of 5,200 service calls annually and conducts more than 3,000 company inspections.

Rescue and medical calls account for the highest call volume, making up approximately 68% of all incidents. In addition to emergency response, the Fire Division hosts over 100 fire prevention and public education events each year, reaching more than 9,000 adults and 12,000 children.

In 2024, the Fire Division responded to 5,476 calls for service. The most common call types were Rescue/Medical, Good Intent, and False Alarms. Overall, alarm responses increased by 4.5% compared to 2023 and have risen by approximately 14% over the past five years.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	% Change 2023-24	% Change 2020-24
Fires	126	128	128	116	125	7%	-1%
Rupture/explosion	5	11	18	4	5	1%	0%
Rescue & EMS	2751	2996	3498	3472	3574	3%	23%
Hazardous Calls	159	208	248	316	359	1%	55%
Service Calls	190	223	172	166	195	1.5%	2.5%
Good Intent Calls	505	603	185	646	710	9%	29%
Severe Weather	378	428	432	500	473	-1%	20%
Citizen Complaints	13	12	9	9	31	70%	58%
TOTALS	4,127	4,609	5,155	5,229	5,476	4.5%	24%

RESPONSE BY STATION





EMERGENCY SERVICES

FIRE SUPPRESSION

The city is served by three fully operational fire stations, staffed 24/7 to ensure continuous emergency response. Approximately 90% of the city is equipped with fire hydrants, providing a reliable water supply for firefighting. In areas without hydrant coverage, automatic tender aid from neighboring departments ensures water availability at fire scenes. Additionally, mutual aid agreements with other Kalamazoo County fire departments provide supplemental support as needed, depending on the type and location of an incident.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL

The Fire Division functions as a medical first response agency, with EMS calls prioritized by dispatchers trained in local protocols. Firefighters respond to all critical medical calls, delivering initial care ahead of the arrival of an advanced life support (ALS) ambulance. Following the termination of the contract with Pride Care Ambulance in March 2023, ALS services are now provided by Life EMS.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RESPONSE

The Fire Division is a key member of the Kalamazoo County Hazardous Materials Response Team. Five members of the Portage Fire Division are certified Hazmat Technicians and part of this specialized team, which assists local fire departments throughout Kalamazoo County in handling hazardous materials incidents, both accidental and intentional. The team is equipped with specialized tools and trained personnel who assess and manage these situations, taking appropriate remedial actions. Cleanup is then handled by the responsible party, using a qualified private cleanup company. The HazMat response vehicle and trailer, HAZMAT 1, are housed at Fire Station No. 2 on Oakland Drive, chosen for its quick access to I-94, enabling a rapid response anywhere within Kalamazoo County.

TECHNICAL RESCUE

"Technical Rescue" refers to specialized emergencies that require advanced training and equipment to manage. These incidents involve expertise in areas such as Rope and Tower Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, Structural Collapse Rescue, Trench Rescue, Grain Bin Rescue, and Ice/Water Rescue.

The Portage Fire Division represents the City of Portage on the 5th District Technical Rescue Team, which includes members from nine counties across Southwest Michigan. The team convenes quarterly for targeted training.

Additionally, the Portage Fire Division is a founding member of the Kalamazoo Technical Rescue Team, composed of Portage Public Safety, Kalamazoo Public Safety, Oshtemo Township Fire Department, and Comstock Township Fire Department. The team meets monthly to train together, sharing specialized skills and equipment to enhance rescue capabilities in the Kalamazoo area.

APPARATUS & EQUIPMENT

FIRE APPARATUS

The fire department operates a diverse fleet of emergency vehicle, including four engines, three 4-wheel drive pick-up trucks used as basic life support rescues, a command unit, a multi-purpose vehicle and a cargo trailer equipped with technical rescue gear. Several four-wheel-drive vehicles are also maintained to support staff and administrative functions within the Fire Division.

To ensure the fleet remains operational and ready for emergencies, the department partners with Emergency Vehicle Products, which provides certified Emergency Vehicle Technicians (EVTs). These technicians conduct both scheduled and unscheduled maintenance on the apparatus. They also assist with the annual mandatory testing of fire pumps and ladders, ensuring they meet safety standards.

In conjunction with these professional services, fire personnel perform daily checks on the apparatus. This dual approach guarantees that all emergency vehicles are always in a state of readiness, whether for emergency response or support functions.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Fire Division members are equipped with state-of-the-art Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to ensure their safety and well-being in various emergency situations. PPE not only provides protection during fires but also safeguards firefighters from chemicals, weather conditions, blood-borne pathogens, and other hazards encountered during accidents and technical rescues.

The PPE is maintained in accordance with guidelines set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). It undergoes an annual “advanced” inspection and professional cleaning conducted by a qualified external agency to ensure optimal performance and safety.

In 2024, the Fire Division received a \$115,000 grant from the State of Michigan, enabling the purchase of PFAS-free PPE. This makes Portage the first fire department in Michigan to equip its crews with this cutting-edge, environmentally safe technology.

FIRE HOSE

In 2024, a total of 19,620 feet of fire hose was tested, with the testing conducted by the third-party provider, National Hose Testing Services. The tests took place over two days at Fire Station 2. Typically, hose testing is a two-to-three-week project for our crews. However, by outsourcing this task to a professional service, the department was able to keep crews in service, minimize downtime for apparatus, and ensure professional documentation of the tests. Additionally, this approach helped reduce the risk of injury to our staff

TRAINING



FIRE TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS



In 2024, the training officer managed:

4,753
Hours of Training

2, 194
Educational Programs

9
New Hire
Field Training

Battalion Chief Rob Leatherman oversees all training for the Fire Division, reporting to the Assistant Fire Chief. He is responsible for the coordination of all training, safety programs, field training, new firefighter onboarding, and succession planning.

Battalion Chief Leatherman was promoted from operations in 2023. With a strong background in both fire and EMS education, he holds multiple licenses and certifications. Rob is passionate about training and development, dedicating his efforts to designing effective programs, conducting hands-on drills, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth within the fire service.

TRAINING PLAN

The Fire Division's comprehensive training plan encompasses Fire, EMS, Officer Development and Driver/Operator training. Designed to ensure continuous professional growth, the program also enables members to meet the continuing education requirements put into effect in 2021 by the Bureau of Firefighter Training, mandating firefighters to have 36 continuing education credits in three years, and 12 credits for officers and instructors.

The annual training curriculum covers key areas, including fire suppression, emergency medical services, technical rescue, hazardous materials, and occupational safety and health. Training is conducted weekly across all three shifts ensuring consistent skill development in each discipline.

The department also welcomed nine new firefighters into its ranks. Training efforts have emphasized skill development and emerging topics, including hoarder conditions and Photovoltaic system safety.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

A Succession Plan has been established to outline essential courses for firefighters aspiring to advance to the ranks of lieutenant, captain and battalion chief. This plan provides a clear roadmap, guiding personnel through the necessary coursework before entering the promotional process.

FIRE PREVENTION



Division Chief / Fire Marshal Steve Tanner leads Fire Prevention and reports to the Assistant Fire Chief. He oversees fire code enforcement, inspections, fire protection plan reviews, and fire cause and origin investigations.

Fire Marshal Tanner is a seasoned fire service professional with over 30 years of experience. He began his career with Portage in 1993 as a firefighter and over the years he has advanced through the ranks, serving as Captain before being appointed Division Chief / Fire Marshal in 2024.

Tanner holds a bachelor's degree in public administration from Siena Heights University and has earned NFPA certifications as a Fire Inspector and Plan Reviewer, reinforcing his expertise in fire prevention and building safety. As a Fire Service Instructor and Field Training Officer, he is dedicated to mentoring and developing the next generation of fire service professionals.

Committed to advancing fire safety through education and hands-on training, Tanner's leadership continues to make a lasting impact on his community and the fire service profession.

ENGINE COMPANY INSPECTIONS

Fire inspections may not be the most glamorous responsibility of a fire department, but they are essential to community safety. These inspections allow the department to engage with businesses on their best days—rather than their worst. Our mission is to protect lives and property, and even the smallest violations can have significant consequences.

To ensure compliance, the Portage Fire Division requires all service providers—including fire extinguisher, sprinkler, and fire alarm companies—to submit inspection reports to Brycer's Compliance Engine. This system then forwards the reports to the fire division for tracking and enforcement.

In 2024, Portage engine companies conducted 2,209 fire safety inspections across commercial and multi-family residential properties, reinforcing our commitment to a safer community.

FIRE PREVENTION BY THE NUMBERS



2024 Inspections:

- 44 Final Occupancy
- 26 Knox Box
- 29 Fire Protection
- 23 Spot Inspections
- 2 Tent/ Membrane
- 82 FOIA's
- 2 Fire Code Consultations

2024 Plan Reviews:

- 24 Site Plans
- 177 Building Plans
- 13 Solar Plans
- 12 Marijuana Centers
- 24 Fire Protection Plans
- 8 Liquor Licenses
- 1 Special Events

2,209
Engine Company
Inspections

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION



DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL
BILL GRAHAM

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2,209
Engine Company
Inspections

Battalion Chief / Deputy Fire Marshal Bill Graham leads Community Risk Reduction (CRR) efforts for the Portage Fire Division, reporting to the Assistant Fire Chief. His role focuses on data-driven strategies to minimize risk and enhance public safety in alignment with the department's Strategic Plan.

With over 30 years of fire service experience, Battalion Chief Graham is dedicated to proactive community engagement and fire safety education. He oversees public education programs, fire investigations, and code enforcement while continuously improving community preparedness.

A graduate of Lake Superior State University, he is furthering his education at Eastern Michigan University. His career is defined by a commitment to firefighter training, inspection process improvements, and risk reduction efforts, fostering collaboration in education and public safety.

The Portage Fire Division remains committed to evaluating and strengthening its CRR programs. Over the past year, these initiatives have expanded educational outreach, reinforced community partnerships, and refined risk reduction strategies through data-driven approaches.

Key Initiatives and Improvements in 2024:

SPARKS Academy Expansion – A structured fire safety education program designed for students, ensuring consistent and engaging lessons across all grade levels.

Project 'CRR Week' – A multi-platform education initiative that uses social media, community events, and printed publications to provide weekly safety messages and promote fire prevention awareness.

Targeted Risk Reduction Strategies – Adjusting CRR efforts based on incident data and community feedback to ensure resources are directed where they are most needed.

Stronger Community Collaboration – Expanding fire safety education and prevention programs through partnerships with schools, businesses, and organizations.

By continuously assessing these programs, CRR ensures that the community remains engaged, informed, and prepared to prevent and respond to emergencies.

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION BY THE NUMBERS



2024 community services provided:

61
Car Seat
Checks/Installations

17
Smoke Alarm
Installations

21
Station Tours

60
Public Education &
Community Events

CAR SEAT SAFETY PROGRAM

In partnership with Bronson Safe Kids Kalamazoo, the Portage Fire Division provides expert car seat safety inspections and installations, adhering to national child seat safety standards. As the most active agency in Kalamazoo County for child seat installations and inspections, we remain committed to ensuring the safety of young passengers.

Fire stations serve as climate-controlled installation sites, offering a safe and comfortable environment. Multiple community car seat safety check events are hosted annually, featuring several technicians for enhanced assistance. This ongoing partnership continues to play a vital role in protecting children and supporting families in Portage.

SMOKE ALARM PROGRAM

The Portage Fire Division, in partnership with the State of Michigan Bureau of Fire Services, provides free 10-year lithium-ion smoke alarms to Portage residents through a grant-funded initiative. Portage is the first agency in Kalamazoo County to partner with MI-Prevention for this initiative, increasing awareness and participation as more residents learn about the program. This life-saving program continues to grow, ensuring more homes are equipped with working smoke alarms for early fire detection and enhanced safety.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Fire Division Strategic Plan is built on the foundation of the departments mission, vision and values, as well as feedback from external stakeholders such as members of the community and community interest groups, internal stakeholders such as public safety personnel, and other City of Portage Departments.

Based on this feedback, the Fire Division developed five “RUNG” groups. Symbolic of rungs of a ladder in which we climb to greater heights, these rung groups focus on five core areas: Operations, Training, Support Services, Community Risk Reduction, and Employee Wellness. Each rung has a committee that has developed a desired outcome as well as strategies, goals and tasks to improve services within the Fire Division and to the community.

In all, the Strategic Plan has developed 5 desired outcomes, 15 strategies, 45 goals and over 175 tasks that are to be accomplished over a three year period.



PUB ED & EVENTS

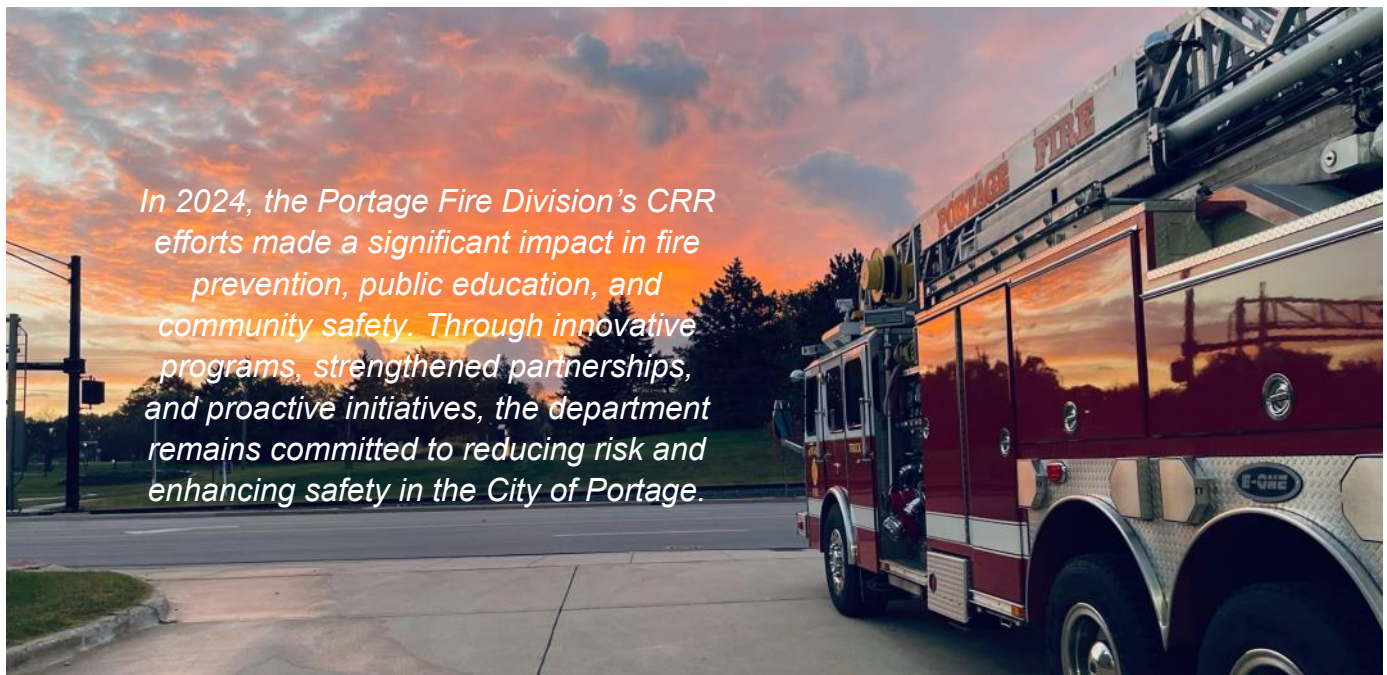
Throughout 2024, the Fire Division actively connected with the community through station tours, school visits, and public education events, reinforcing fire safety awareness and preparedness. Through these efforts, the Fire Division strengthens community relationships, enhances fire safety knowledge, and empowers residents with critical life-saving information.

Fire Prevention Public Education — In 2024, the Fire Division reinforced its commitment to fire safety education through the SPARKS Academy (Safety Practices And Resources for Kids' Success). This structured program delivered age-appropriate fire safety lessons to students across Portage Public Schools, using interactive presentations, engaging book readings, and the ever-popular puppet show to captivate young learners. Led by the Community Risk Reduction (CRR) team and supported by firefighters, the program reached over 10,000 participants. By equipping children with essential fire safety knowledge, emergency preparedness skills, and response strategies for critical situations, SPARKS Academy continues to build a safer and more informed community.

Fire Prevention Week Open House — Held annually on the second Saturday in October, the F.I.R.E. Open House (Fire Safety, Information, and Risk Education) welcomed 386 visitors to Fire Station No. 1 in 2024. Attendees explored fire trucks and specialty vehicles, engaged with firefighters, and observed live demonstrations of firefighting equipment. Firefighters also shared essential fire safety tips, reinforcing prevention measures for families. Educational materials were distributed to further promote fire preparedness. As a key community outreach event, the Open House provides an interactive, hands-on learning experience that encourages public engagement and strengthens fire safety awareness.

Portage Public Safety Showcase — The Portage Public Safety Showcase is an annual event that offers older residents a chance to learn about public safety operations. In 2024, the two-day program featured presentations from various public safety divisions, including Detective Bureau, EMS, SWAT, fire operations, and more. Attendees interacted with public safety personnel to better understand their roles. Life EMS provided lunch, enhancing the community atmosphere. The positive feedback led to the event's official status as an annual program, strengthening community engagement and awareness.

Monster Mash — The Monster Mash at Ramona Park, hosted by Portage Parks & Recreation, attracted over 5,500 attendees, half of whom were children. The event featured fire and police divisions engaging with the community through fun activities like trunk-or-treat, while also promoting fire safety awareness. It combined Halloween excitement with educational efforts, making it a memorable and impactful experience for families.





Elementary School
Fire Safety Education



High School
Fire Safety Education



Talons Out
Honor Flight Reception



Fire Prevention Week
Open House



Public Safety Showcase



Humane Society Fundraiser



Special Olympics
Soccer Game



Monster Mash



Station Tours



Farmers Market



Fire Safety Education Events



Annual Food Drive

The Portage Public Safety Foundation is dedicated to supporting the men and women who keep our community safe.



HELP US
HELP OUR
HOMETOWN
HEROES!



OUR PURPOSE & MISSION

We call them brave, courageous, fearless, loyal, dependable, and yes... we call them Heroes!

Our mission is to assist the Portage Department of Public Safety by providing unfunded essential resources and support to foster positive community relations and superior public safety service to encourage and strengthen the relationships with our community and its public safety personnel.

WHAT WE HELP SUPPORT

The PPSF is dedicated to ensuring Portage Public Safety personnel are fully supported in all areas of their career by providing funding for things not covered by the department's general fund budget.

The PPSF also acts as a repository for private donations. 100% of all donations are used to provide additional funding to enhance activities that foster positive community relationships with our citizens, businesses, schools and churches.

CONTACT US



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Learn more at www.portagepsfoundation.org





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