

PADUCAH POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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The Paducah Police Department is pleased to announce that the number of major crimes reported dropped 16 percent overall in 2016 from the previous year, but they remain about where anticipated by a five-year average.

Major offenses, classified by the FBI as "Part I Crimes," dropped by 249 reports in 2016. The decline was fueled by a drop in the number of larceny reports, from 1,239 to 965.

The number of robberies reported dropped from 37 to 34, and burglaries fell from 160 to 153. Homicide remained constant, with one in both 2015 and 2016. Rapes increased from nine to 14 and assaults rose from 45 to 52. Auto thefts reported increased to 75, and arsons increased from four to seven.

The five-year averages for those crimes are: homicide - two; rape - 14; robbery - 35; assault - 44; burglary - 143; larceny - 1,102; auto theft - 51; and arson - five.

The increase in auto thefts is concerning, but brings to light a matter law enforcement cannot stress enough to the public - do not leave your keys in your vehicle. Of the 75 reported thefts, the keys had been left in the vehicle in 21 cases. Additionally, 26 of the remaining 54 reported thefts were classified as "unauthorized use." (For example, a citizen loaned a vehicle to someone, who did not return it when scheduled.)

The police department lost a civilian Records Clerk and three seasoned officers - two captains and a detective with 21 years of service - to retirement in 2016. We remain a young department, but hired three experienced "lateral" officers in 2016. A fourth officer hired last year still is attending the state Basic Law Enforcement Training Academy, but will be back and serving the public in Paducah in a few months.

In 2016, there were 1,301 major offenses reported to the Paducah Police Department.

As in 2015, there was one homicide in 2016. Officers were called in the early morning hours of April 16 to a reported shooting at The Brickhouse, 901 Boyd St. Witnesses told police several people were shooting firearms and Gary Johnson, 46, was struck during the gunfire. Denzel Powell, 23, Christopher Smith, 34, and Tracell Nunn, 27, were charged in connection with his death.

Part II Crimes - simple assaults, forgery, fraud, criminal mischief, sex offenses (other than rape), drug violations, offenses against family and children and "all others" ended 2016 with 2,875 reported offenses, up 73 from 2015's 2,802. The increase was not seen in one or two particular categories; rather, there were small increases and decreases across the board.

Paducah police officers received 52,191 calls for service (including officer-initiated calls) in 2016, up 13 percent from 2015. 2,287 of those resulted in the arrest of an adult, and 118 in charges against juveniles.

There was a three percent increase in the number of adult arrests in 2016 compared to 2015, and a drop of 70 in the number of juveniles charged.

Paducah police officers served 1,179 warrants and 215 criminal summonses in 2016, compared to 988 and 140, respectively, in 2015.

The law allows law enforcement officers to intervene and take mentally ill people into custody when they represent a danger to themselves or others, and they are unwilling to take action themselves. In 2016, the Paducah Police Department took 70 people into emergency custody, compared to 75 in 2015, 55 in 2014, 53 in 2013 and 34 in 2012. This trend mirrors national numbers, a matter of concern for all law enforcement agencies.

Officers investigated 1,894 vehicle collisions in 2016, down slightly from 1,904 in 2015. In total, 375 of the collisions resulted in injuries to 589 people. There were three people killed in three separate collisions. Officers issued 4,983 traffic citations – ranging from speeding and red light violations to having no insurance and texting while driving – and 3,608 courtesy notices.

“We are pleased that collisions are down, even slightly,” Chief of Police Brandon Barnhill said. “We concentrate on traffic enforcement – speeding and traffic light violations, impaired driving and distracted driving – but we must continue to work with and educate the community to reduce the number of collisions in our city.”

In the Support Services Division, detectives in the General Investigations Unit cleared 80.67 percent of the cases they investigated in 2016, up a whopping 10 percent from the unit’s clearance rate in 2015. The detectives were assigned 244 cases. Detectives were called out on investigations 90 times, and were tasked with 10 applicant background investigations.

The department’s Digital Forensics Unit conducts forensic investigations on computers, cell phones and other digital media for the Paducah Police Department and for other law enforcement agencies in western Kentucky.

In 2016, the DFU examined 409 computer hard drives, cell phones and other digital media, which includes SIM cards, flash drives and GPS units, compared to 312 in 2015 and 304 in 2014. These examinations were conducted in connection with cases ranging from homicide and robbery to sex and drug offenses and thefts. The DFU opened 152 cases for investigation and assisted nine other area law enforcement agencies with exams.

The Drug and Vice Enforcement Unit opened 127 cases and had a phenomenal clearance rate of 96.7 percent. They investigated 407 tips and collected 272 pounds of prescription medications for disposal through the department’s semi-annual Drug Take-Back day.

Also under the Support Services Division is the department's Records Unit. As the name implies, it is responsible for maintaining all the department's records.

There were 703 parking tickets written in 2016. Officers logged in 3,006 pieces of evidence; oddly, almost exactly the number entered in 2015 (3,005). Evidence personnel, with approval from the court, disposed of approximately 2,552 old items of evidence. The Evidence Unit maintains nearly 12,000 items of evidence and conducts random quarterly audits to maintain the integrity of the system.

"We are extremely proud of the service the Paducah Police Department provides to our community," Chief Barnhill said. "We have excellent personnel who receive the best in training and equipment. We expect them to provide the highest level of professional service possible to the citizens of and visitors to Paducah."