



Paducah Police Department Media Release



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Crimes against persons in the City of Paducah fell 11 percent, while crimes against property (theft, etc.) rose in 2017.

Despite concerted efforts by the Paducah Police Department in 2017 to inform and involve the public in protecting themselves, thefts and auto thefts shot up last year, negating positive numbers in other categories of serious crime.

Major offenses, classified by the FBI as “Part I Crimes,” rose by 90 reports in 2017 in the City of Paducah.

Larceny (theft) reports increased from 993 in 2016 to 1,080 in 2017. 126 of those were thefts from vehicles, and the vast majority of those vehicles were left unlocked, making it easy for criminals to steal, uninhibited.

Auto thefts jumped from 76 to 95. Of those 95 reported thefts, 28 were classified as “unauthorized use.” (For example, a citizen loaned a vehicle to someone, who did not return it when scheduled.) But most concerning is the fact that in nearly 75 percent of the remaining auto theft reports, the vehicles were left unlocked with the keys inside.

“We cannot stress enough the importance of our citizens protecting themselves from thieves,” said Chief of Police Brandon Barnhill. “We can try to educate, inform and provide preventive efforts, but, ultimately, we have to make it more difficult for criminals to steal. Residents can do that by locking their vehicles and removing or hiding valuables from view.”

In response to an increasing number of auto thefts and thefts from vehicles, the police department rolled out the “Lock It or Lose It” campaign in late summer. It is designed to remind residents to lock their vehicles to help prevent thefts.

However, in September, both we and county officials were investigating a rash of thefts from vehicles, many of which were unlocked. And in a two-day

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period in October, we investigated the theft of two vehicles, both of which were left unattended with the keys inside.

Other than a man charged with murder after a fatal vehicle collision Jan. 19, 2017, on Paducah's southside, there were no homicides in the City of Paducah in 2017; there was one in 2016.

Honey R. Hastings was in the right-turn lane of John Puryear Drive, about to turn right onto Irvin Cobb Drive. Robert C. Thomas was driving east on Irvin Cobb Drive at a high rate of speed and hit Hastings' car broadside in the driver's door. Hastings was pronounced dead at the scene. Officers found suspected synthetic marijuana in Thomas' vehicle, and he later admitted smoking synthetic marijuana shortly before the wreck occurred.

Reported rapes fell from 15 to 13; robberies were down from 33 to 26. Aggravated assault reports remained about the same: 51 in 2017, 52 in 2016. Reported burglaries rose from 152 to 168, and arsons remained the same at seven.

The police department lost two patrol officers and two sergeants to retirement in 2017. One of the patrol officers was the department's senior officer with 27 years of service. We hired two experienced "lateral" officers in 2017, and four new officers who still are attending the state Basic Law Enforcement Training Academy. They will graduate and be back in Paducah, serving the public, in a few months.

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 2017 with 2,849 reported offenses, down 43 from 2016. With the exception of simple assaults, the decrease was not seen in any particular category; rather, there were small increases and decreases throughout. Simple assaults, however, fell by nearly 50 reported offenses.

Paducah police officers received 52,275 calls for service (including officer-initiated calls) in 2017, nearly steady from the 52,191 calls for service in 2016. 2,357 of those resulted in the arrest of an adult, and 132 in charges against juveniles.

There was a three percent increase in the number of adult arrests in 2017 compared to 2016, and an increase of 14 (11 percent) in the number of juveniles charged.

Paducah police officers served 1,209 warrants and 220 criminal summonses in 2017, compared to 1,179 and 215, respectively, in 2016.

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 2017, the Paducah Police Department took 54 people into emergency custody, compared to 70 in 2016.

We are pleased to report that the number of traffic collisions fell for the second year in a row. Officers investigated 1,737 vehicle collisions in 2017, down from 1,894 in 2016 and 1,904 in 2015. In total, 334 of the collisions resulted in injuries to people, down from 375 in 2016. Sadly, the number of people killed in motor vehicle collisions jumped from three in 2016 to six in 2017.

Officers issued 4,079 traffic citations - ranging from speeding and red light violations to having no insurance and texting while driving - and 4,155 courtesy notices.

"It is always a win-win situation when there are fewer vehicle collisions," Barnhill said. "Generally, there are fewer people injured and less property damage. Collision reduction will continue to be an area of focus for the Paducah Police Department."

In the Support Services Division, detectives in the General Investigations Unit cleared 77.66 percent of the cases they investigated in 2017, down slightly from 2016. The detectives were assigned 322 cases, a huge jump from 244 in 2016. Detectives were called out on investigations 90 times, and were tasked with 13 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. The unit added a third investigator in 2017.

Last year, the DFU examined 323 computer hard drives, cell phones and other digital media, which includes SIM cards, flash drives and GPS units, compared to 409 in 2016 and 312 in 2015. These examinations were conducted in connection with cases ranging from homicide and robbery to sex and drug offenses and thefts. The DFU opened 142 cases for investigation and assisted 18 other area law enforcement agencies with exams.

The Drug and Vice Enforcement Unit opened 226 cases - nearly 100 more than in 2016 - and had an amazing clearance rate of 98 percent. They investigated 428 tips and collected 221.5 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 423 parking tickets written in 2017. Officers logged in 3,112 pieces of evidence, six more than in 2016. Evidence personnel, with approval from the court, disposed of 3,108 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.

"The City of Paducah has one of the finest police departments in the Commonwealth of Kentucky," Barnhill said. "Our personnel are second to none; the officers are some of the best-trained and best-equipped in the state, certainly in western Kentucky. We will continue to serve this community with pride and professionalism."