



# Keeping everyone safe: Changes Made to Pasco Police Practices, 2016



**Bob Metzger**  
Chief of Police

## **Mission Statement**

We are dedicated to serving our community with excellent law enforcement services.

## **Vision Statement**

We proudly partner with our community to ensure Pasco is a safe place to live, work and visit.

## **Values**

**Passion:** Our work is our calling.

**Pride:** We give our best to Pasco.

**Service:** We connect with our diverse community by treating everyone with dignity and respect.

The city of Pasco is a diverse community of almost 70,000 people. It is served by a police department consisting of an authorized strength in 2016 of 76 commissioned officers. Over the past 20+ years the department has been on a mission of providing community oriented policing services to the city. This has resulted in many positive developments including a significant reduction in crime from 158 crimes per thousand to the current 27 crimes per thousand to rank us as one of the safer cities in the state of Washington. This has not come easily or quickly but the department has never veered from this course and the results have been positive.

Recent events have caused some to question the department and how it relates to the community and how it conducts its mission. What follows is information on what the department has done and is in the process of doing. This document reflects where the department is today and realizes that policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is very dynamic and constantly under review and revision. It is hoped that this will give a clearer understanding of what the Pasco Police Department is doing for the people who live work and visit our city.

Much of what the department does is based on several “best practices” including but not limited to:

The President’s Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing

IACP and Washington State Model Police Policies

Accreditation standards for police departments

State and US Court rulings

Publications from the Department of Justice

Publications from the COPS office

Publications from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)

Review of practices of other police agencies

Professional training of staff

## Background

The Pasco Police Departments efforts in community policing began in earnest in the late 1980's. At that time the crime rate was high and a concerted effort was needed to reduce it. The city added a utility tax that allowed the department to add additional officers to the staff. As a result of this the Area Resource Officer program and a Gang Unit was established.

The Area Resource program had the city divided into four sections with an officer assigned to each section as a resource to both the residents and police staff. Offices were established in those areas with the officers working out of those. One of the area offices opened in Kurtzman Park which was a high crime rate area. Over the years with the presence of this office the crime rate there was reduced and the park is now a family friendly area. Another office that opened was downtown. This allowed an officer to work with merchants on issues including theft and prostitution. This has also resulted in crime in that area dropping as well. Another office was established in Alderwood and dealt with the multifamily housing and again reduced crime in those areas as well. The fourth office was established on the far west side and was to assist that area as it grew and developed. These efforts are still going today and is one of the reasons that the community keeps crime down.

The gang unit was put together to deal with the issues at the time and also was successful. Over time though the growth of the city and the lack of growth in the police department led to the cutting of this unit to make sure that patrol was adequately staffed. The public safety sales tax of 2011 allowed for this unit to be reestablished under a new name, street crimes unit, and a revised mission. Both of these units were very successful and were a large part of the reason for the crime drop in the city.

These are just two examples of efforts made by the department to assure Pasco was a safe city.

## Hiring/Recruitment

Officers hired by the Pasco Police Department go through a rigorous process that follows civil service guidelines. The first step in the process is to take a standardized written test. Pasco, like a majority of the cities in the state of Washington uses the services of Public Safety Testing, (PST). Candidates wishing to test for this department sign up through the PST website and take the test at many locations around the state including Pasco. Then when the city is in need of new officers, the secretary/chief examiner, obtains a list of candidates who have scored above a 70%. The chief examiner then sets up interviews for new candidates. The interview scores along with the written test scores and then tabulated with additional preference points given for military and reserve officer service. This is then put into a list from high to low score. The Police department is then allowed to review the top 5 candidates from this list.

When the police department gets this list the top 5 candidates are given a preliminary background check to determine if there is anything that would prohibit them from continuing on in the process. The remaining candidate(s) are then sent a further background questionnaire for more detailed information. This information is then reviewed and an investigation into this is conducted by a trained background investigator. If the background is good then the candidate is given a polygraph. If this is successfully passed the candidate then is given an interview with the police department command staff. If the command staff agrees that the candidate is suitable for a police officer position the information is forwarded to the city manager for final approval. If approved by the city manager the candidate is given a conditional employment offer and is given a psychological and physical examination.

## Training

Training has always been important to the Pasco Police Department. From the time officers are hired until they retire the training is continuous and always being reviewed and updated.

### **Recruit training**

Currently the state of Washington requires that all officers be commissioned by the state. Do achieve that a mandated “basic law enforcement academy” is attended by new officers before they are allowed to work for a police department. This includes 720 hours of basic training. If the candidate passes the academy he or she is then placed into a patrol training officer (PTO) program that is another 800 hours. The PTO training is conducted under the direction of a trained PTO officer and is individualized instruction designed to fully integrate the officer into the department. So before an officer is allowed to go into service by him or herself that officer has over 1500 hours of total training time.

### **In-Service training**

In 2011 the Pasco Police department made a decision to adjust the patrol schedule to a 10/40 model that is used in cities such as Yakima and Vancouver WA. This allowed for 2 days a month when the entire department is on duty. The main reason for doing this was to allow for these days to become training days. These days are spent in training half of the officers on each day so that each officer receives a day of training each month. This means that an officer will receive over 130 hours of in-service training each year which exceeds the 24 hours mandated by the state. This training is exhaustive and is included in Appendix A attached to this document.

## Recent updates in the department

Over the past year the department has undergone self-analysis to make sure that the best services are being offered to the community. The efforts in the area include

- The Police Department requested a U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) review of the Department's policies and training. The Department is awaiting the results of this thorough review and any recommendations, which includes interviews with members of the community and Department, and onsite visits including an examination of policies, procedures, and training programs.
- The Police Department adopted additional Use of Force review criteria, including cataloging detailed records of Use of Force incidents, that will aid in the examination of force and the training of officers.
- The Department reviewed training which included de-escalation of incidents. The Department is prepared to make additional adjustments to the training program after the completion of the DOJ review.
- The Department has actively participated in basic Crisis Intervention (CIT) training with every officer having instruction in dealing with people in crisis. The Department intends to offer CIT training to 80 percent of its officers by the end of this year.
- The City of Pasco established strong community partnerships which helped contribute to an 80 percent reduction in the City's crime rate since the early 1990's. However, recognizing that more can always be done, the Department has implemented outreach programs that advance the concept of community policing, such as:

- **Coffee with a Cop:** In conjunction with the DOJ's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office to help open lines of communication and problem-solving with community members, the Department has started "Coffee with a Cop," bringing police officers and the community members together in a neutral and casual setting to discuss issues and learn more about each other.
- **Citizens Academy in Spanish:** The Department was the first large agency in the area to implement the citizen's academy, and, this year, launched a Spanish language-only Academy.
- **Social Media:** Pasco Police Department has embraced social media in both English and Spanish as a forum to connect with the community. In just a few months, the Department has gained over 11,000 "likes" on Facebook, which provides constant feedback to the Department.
- **Community Meetings:** The City has participated in community meetings held by such groups as the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs and the Department of Justice's Community Relations Service (CRS). Further, Police Chief Metzger meets regularly with local Latino clergy, anti-gang community groups, and a community-based Chief's Advisory Committee.
- **Community Surveys:** The City is conducting surveys of City services, including the perception of the community about public safety services.
- The Police Department has expanded recruitment efforts, focusing on individuals who appreciate serving and reflect diverse communities. The Department has further encouraged bi-lingual applicants by creating a bi-lingual list for Civil Service recruitment, and continued to pay bonuses for officers proficient in Spanish. This has allowed the department to increase the bi-lingual staff from 12 to 18 over the past few months.

- Washington State law requires that police departments have a policy to promote Bias-Free Policing. In addition to having a Bias-Free Policing policy, the City continues to train officers, including sending officers to attend a DOJ training course on Bias-Free Policing.
- Pasco Police have deployed in-car video cameras for the past 15 years. Further, the City is in favor of the use of police body cameras and is working through the Association of Washington Cities and area legislators to address the privacy and public records concerns.
- The Tri-City Special Investigations Unit investigates officer involved shootings in a manner consistent with the President's Commission on "21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing."
- In reviewing the use of force incidents the department decided to have an outside independent review done on use of force by the Police Policy Studies Council. This study noted in conclusion that the investigation and the use of force, "embodied some of the most professional and comprehensive efforts that I've ever observed."
- A management consultant was brought in for a two day leadership team retreat for all supervision and command staff. Goals for this training included, Identify ways to become a more effective leadership team, Establish a clear, shared purpose (vision and mission), Commit to core values and guiding principles, Take first steps to create a strategic plan. One of the outcomes of this was a revised mission and values statement.
- The department began the process of obtaining State Accreditation.

The department will continue to work with the community and any other organization that will enhance our efforts and maintain the safety of our community. Policies, procedures, training and best practices are under constant review and updating and this will continue into the future. The department welcomes all input and appreciates the opportunity to share what has been accomplished with everyone.