



CITY OF PORT ORCHARD

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Press Release

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The Port Orchard Police Department (POPD) released its 2008 Annual Report today, and with it, some significant information concerning the reduction of crime rates in the City. Although the numbers showed an increase in property crimes, mainly burglaries, which reflect a nationwide trend attributable to the downturn in the economy, the report also shows a tremendous reduction in the amount of violent crime during 2008.

For many years Port Orchard remained on the Top 10 list of cities our size with the highest rate of violent crimes per capita. Thanks to an incredible effort on the part of the dedicated men and women of the Port Orchard Police Department, along with strong support from elected officials and community members, violent crime has been cut drastically. The City has moved from Number Two in the state to Number Fifteen, and off the Top 10 list in violent crimes for cities our size for the first time since the Police Department began tracking it.

What makes this even more significant, is that the numbers reflect the period prior to annexations, which will reduce crime numbers in the City even further when McCormick Woods, an area that traditionally has very little crime, becomes part of the City later this year.

"I'm extremely proud of our Police Department," stated an elated Mayor Lary Coppola. "They have proven that through hard-nosed police work, pro-active problem solving, and creating community partnerships, it's possible to make a real difference in our City."

A citizen satisfaction survey rated the POPD with an A or A+ in every category tracked. This too is up -- even from last year, when the department scored mostly A's or A+'s. "This speaks very highly of the level of service the Port Orchard Police Department continues to provide our citizens, and about the high quality of the men and women that staff our Police Department," added Coppola.

In the report, Police Chief Al Townsend noted some challenges the department will face in 2009, including diminished revenues and higher costs, noting how other regional government's funding issues impact Port Orchard. He cited the increased costs of housing prisoners, along with early release at state prisons and less community supervision of convicted felons -- all which place even more burdens on local police. In addition, we will see higher than ever expectations for police service as related to annexations.

The POPD will continue to evolve in the way it provides police service to ensure the best and most efficient service possible to the citizens of the City. Examples include temporary reallocation of personnel to patrol functions as needed, along with expanded use of the Internet. In addition to internet-based reporting of minor crimes, there are links on the City's newly upgraded Web site for finding and tracking registered sex offenders, downloading a lease clause for drug use prevention in rental units, and a number of other public safety additions.

Finally, the City understands its responsibility to serve its newly annexed areas and has budgeted for, and authorized hiring, the necessary personnel. And while many Police Departments are being forced into layoffs or leaving open positions unfilled, there remains a standing commitment to the citizens by both the POPD and the City's elected officials, to maintain the highest levels of public safety possible, and to make Port Orchard the safest City in which to live, own a business and raise a family.