

Lower Township's crime rate continues to drop

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — The crime rate in Lower Township continues to fall, according to the police department's annual report.

Lower Township police saw a decrease in calls for service with 53,689 calls in 2016, down from 57,492 in 2015.

According to the report, 661 individuals were arrested in the township, down from 740 in 2015. In most cases, multiple charges were filed against a single individual, it notes. The department sent 317 indictable complaints to the county Prosecutor's Office.

For 2016, theft represented 72 percent of the UCR totals. Sex offenses other than rape in 2016 totaled 14, down from 21 in 2015. Simple assaults in 2016 totaled 124, down from 130 the previous year.

Animal complaints in 2014 totaled 967, decreased to 255 in 2015 and 254 in 2016. In 2016, disorderly conduct incidents totaled 655, down from 667 in 2015 and 746 in 2014. Fraud,

In its Uniform Crime Report (UCR), Lower Township police listed eight identified crime classifications for the past three years:

Offense	2014	2015	2016
Homicide	0	0	0
Rape	1	3	1
Robbery	8	19	6
Agg. Assault	30	13	13
Theft	339	317	313
Vehicle theft	13	13	9
Arson	0	3	0

Total UCR	506	463	435
Violent crime	39	35	20
Nonviolent	467	428	415

forgery and bad checks totaled 746 in 2014 and have been decreasing, with 667 in 2015 and 655 in 2016. Missing persons and run-aways totaled 195 in 2016, down from 212 in 2015 and up from 182 in 2014. Criminal mischief complaints showed an increase to 292 from 2015's total of 238. Property checks in 2016 totaled 25,429, down slightly from 26,096 in 2015 and up substantially from 14,091 in 2014.

A total of 1,125 investigation reports were generated by officers last year with 457 supplemental or follow-up

reports generated.

Domestic violence incidents were down slightly from 415 in 2015 to 378 in 2016. In 2016, 378 domestic violence incidents involved assaults, down from 415 in 2015. In 2016, 54 temporary restraining orders were granted, up one from the previous year. A total of 26 temporary restraining orders were violated in 2016, close to the figure of 23 in 2015.

The number of domestic violence incidents is showing a slight decrease as were incidents involving assaults. According to the

report, the establishment of a cooperative between Lower Township police and the Coalition Against Rape and Abuse (CARA) and community volunteers, a domestic violence victim response team has been developed.

Property offenses include burglary, theft, criminal mischief and shoplifting. The report notes the exact amount of value in theft-related offenses is hard to determine as officers and victims often estimate the value of property stolen and recovered.

In 2016, an estimated \$299,679 of property was stolen, down from \$703,003 in 2015 and \$506,986 in 2014. An estimated \$48,337 of stolen property was recovered compared to \$84,393 in 2015 and \$169,279 in 2014.

By law, each officer who must use force above the norm in arresting or handling an individual must complete a state "Use of Force" reporting form for the county Prosecutor's Office. In 2016, Lower Township police reported nine use of force incidents with eight subjects arrested, three subjects injured and

two officers receiving injuries. Those figures were up slightly from 2015 when six use of force incidents occurred with six subjects arrested, two subjects injured and no officers receiving injuries.

Lower Township police investigated 498 motor vehicle accidents and conducted 3,855 motor vehicle stops during 2016. Total accident numbers were up slightly from 459 in 2015. A total of 152 motor vehicle accident

injuries were recorded in 2016, up from 125 in 2015. Both years had one motor vehicle fatality. Officers issued 1,376 summonses in 2016, down from 1,768 in 2015.

In 2016, Lower Township police made 70 arrests for driving while intoxicated, up from 65 the previous year.

The entire report is available at lowertownshipnj.com. Click on year end reports.

Dune planned for Diamond Beach

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comments will be provided to the Army Corps.

About 30 percent of the project design has been completed, he said. Lower Township's engineer is working on a critique of the project, Galestock said.

Rochette said as an example, if a 10-foot-high dune existed on the beach, the Army Corps would raise it to a height of 16-feet.

"The dune is a wider dune than many of the ones that are existing or that people have seen in different communities," Rochette said.

He said the Army Corps would return every four years, pending funding, to renourish the dune with sand to counter erosion. The dune is being constructed to reduce risk of storm damage, Rochette said.

Dune crossovers would be constructed to provide access for beachgoers following current beach access points, he said.

Seapointe Village Homeowners Association General Manager Jim Yost said their beach complied 90 percent with the Army Corps design criteria for the dune project.

"For that reason, Seapointe Village isn't particularly concerned about it," he said. "We are probably going to undertake it ourselves."

Yost said he saw the benefits of a shore-protection plan throughout the island, particularly in North Wildwood, and largely understood the design criteria for the height and width of the dune. He said Seapointe Village has been actively monitoring the project for several years.

"Seapointe Village has been relying on some experts including Dr. Farrell from Stockton University Coastal Research Center, so we fully understand our dunes and how close we are," Yost said. "Seapointe's dunes are pretty robust, pretty wide."

He said Seapointe homeowners were not really concerned about the project effects on the condominium community. Yost said part of the plan included the Army Corps and federal government looking for a long-term easements on the beach.

The Army Corps is very aggressive with easements and taking eminent domain actions against municipalities and residents that haven't been very cooperative, he said. Yost said he questioned if some of the



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Hotel Icona is one property that would benefit from the protection of a dune system now in the planning stages by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

projects were for shore protection or was it a method for the state to take some oceanfront property.

Rochette said the Army Corps has studied stretches of shoreline and looked at various alternatives to reduce risk of storm damage. He said in most cases a beach fill is the solution, although seawalls have been constructed on inlets.

Similar dunes were in place during Hurricane Sandy.

"By and large, what we found was those areas experienced very little damage," Rochette said.

Projected sea level rise due to climate change is considered when designing projects, Rochette said.

"We do look at these projects over a long period of time. There is a sort of 50-year economic time period we're looking at when we do the studies," he said.

The Army Corps' description of the project notes while North Wildwood is losing sand, "Sand accretion in Wildwood and Wildwood Crest is causing extensive maintenance problems and health hazards with their storm water

management system. The excess sand clogs storm-water outfalls, creates pools of stagnant water, produces unhealthy beach conditions and causes associated interior flooding. During combined periods of heavy rain and high waves the city cannot access the outfalls for excavation and rainwater becomes trapped within the pipes. The subsequent high volume discharge of impounded storm water can also cause spikes in

poor water quality."

The project includes planting "approximately 64 acres of dune grass, 28,000 linear feet of sand fence, 44 extended crossovers, seven new pedestrian crossovers, seven extended handicap crossovers, six new handicap crossovers, eight existing vehicle crossover extensions and five new vehicular crossovers."

Based on 2014 estimates, the total nourishment cost is \$104 million with the first cost of initial construction of \$21.6 million and a total of 12 periodic nourishments at a cost of \$82.4 million.

The Army Corps is undertaking a similar project to construct a dune and berm project between the Manasquan Inlet and Barnegat Inlet in Ocean County. The project, once fully completed, would cover about 14 miles of coastline along the Barnegat Peninsula and will reduce the risk of storm damages for the communities of Point Pleasant Beach, Bay Head, Mantoloking, Brick Township, Toms River Township, Lavallette, Seaside Heights, Seaside Park, and Berkeley Township.

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****2D Kong: Skull Island** PG-13 11:10, 1:50, 7:20, 9:55

****3D Kong: Skull Island** PG-13 4:40

Logan R 11:40, 3:10, 6:50, 9:45

Get Out R 11:20, 2:10, 4:50, 7:30, 9:55

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