



2024
Annual Report

Chief's Message



It is my honor to present this year's Annual Report, reflecting on our department's achievements, challenges, and the dedicated service of the men and women who protect our community every day.

One of the most notable aspects of our department this year is the transformation of our workforce. With half of our staff having less than three years of experience, we are in a unique period of growth, learning, and adaptation.

Our new generation of officers brings fresh perspectives, energy, and a strong commitment to serving our community. They are guided by the mentorship of our seasoned officers, ensuring that our core values of integrity, professionalism, teamwork, accountability, and community trust remain at the heart of everything we do.

Despite their limited tenure, our newer officers have stepped up in extraordinary ways - adapting to evolving challenges and demonstrating resilience in the face of adversity. Their dedication, along with the leadership and experience of our veteran staff, ensures that we continue to provide the highest level of service to the Washington community.

Training, professional development, and community engagement remain our top priorities as we equip this new generation with the tools they need to succeed. Through ongoing investment in their growth, we strengthen our department and enhance our ability to serve and protect.

I offer a tremendous thank you to our community for your ongoing trust and engagement. The community collaboration at the end of the year, as we partnered to provide a memorable holiday experience for some local children in need, demonstrated the spirit of purpose and partnership that truly makes our community thrive.

The unwavering support of our local elected officials and city partners was instrumental in helping us navigate the challenges we faced in 2024 and encouraged us to explore new opportunities for growth in bettering our community for the future.

I want to thank every member of this department - both new and experienced - for their commitment to our mission. Together, we will continue to evolve, improve, and honor the trust placed in us by the community we serve.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Lester".

Jim Lester
Chief of Police

Mission Statement



The Washington Police Department is a dedicated group of professionals who are committed to excellence in law enforcement and serving the community with pride; making the City of Washington a safe and enjoyable place to live, work or visit.

Our mission is to encourage community partnerships to solve problems and improve public safety in a manner that is consistent, fair, impartial and transparent.

Teamwork: The Washington Police Department works together in carrying out the mission of our department. Police Department staff are respectful to each other and work collaboratively to solve problems and serve the Washington community.

Professionalism: The Washington Police Department treats the public and our colleagues with courtesy, professionalism, and respect. We understand that our appearance, words and demeanor contribute to the community's confidence in us to do our jobs promptly and efficiently.

Integrity: The Washington Police Department is honest, truthful, and consistent in our words and actions. We are committed to the enforcement of laws and the preservation of order and property to maintain the community's trust.

Advocacy and Empathy: The Washington Police Department has compassion for victims of crime. We have respect for and promote the diversity of the community. We advocate for and collaborate with agencies that provide supportive services for victims, youth and others involved in the criminal justice system.

Accountability: The Washington Police Department takes great pride in being accountable and accessible to the community we serve. The police department staff are expected to serve as role models and leaders within the community.

Communication: The Washington Police Department believes in transparency and recognizes that communication with city leaders, community organizations, citizens and the media are important to maintain the community's confidence in our ability to adequately serve them.

The Police Department



Administration

The Police Department administrative team handles the hundreds of incident and arrest reports generated by the department each year. In addition, the administrative office processes golf cart permits, parking tickets, record requests, citations, and walk-up window traffic. Administrative Assistant Rhonda Hill manages the administration office.



She has been a member of the Police Department since 2005 and served previously in a similar role with the Washington County Sheriff's Office.

Chief of Police Jim Lester has served the City of Washington since 2019. He has more than 36 years of experience in law enforcement, investigations, emergency medical services and emergency management.



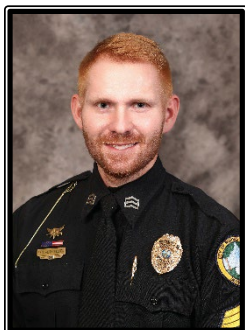
Chief Lester has specialized training in internet crimes and assists with investigations as part of the Iowa Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. He is Treasurer of the Iowa Sex Crimes Investigators Association and serves as President of the Iowa Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers.

Lieutenant Shamus Altenhofen has served the Washington Police Department since 2010 and graduated from the ILEA that same year. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in 2020.



Lt. Altenhofen is an Iowa Law Enforcement Academy Certified Firearms and Rifle Instructor. He is also the department's rifle armorer and has additional specialized training in narcotics investigations, crisis intervention and tactical operations management. He also maintains the department scheduling and training records.

Lieutenant Benjamin Altenhofen has served the Washington Police Department since 2015. He graduated from the ILEA in 2013. He was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 2020 and the rank of Lieutenant in January of 2025.



Lt. Altenhofen is an Iowa Law Enforcement Academy Certified Defense Tactics Instructor and has specialized defensive tactics training through the Gracie Jiu-Jitsu University. He is also in charge of the department Field Training program, Evidence and Property Management and is the department's Glock armorer.

The Police Department



Investigations



In June 2024, Investigator Brian VanWilligen was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. The promotion was in recognition of his exceptional service to the department and the supervisory role has him reviewing officer reports and providing assistance and direction as needed for the patrol staff.

Sgt. Van Willigen has been a member of the Washington Police since July 2005 and has been an Iowa Law Enforcement Academy certified peace officer since 1990. Sgt. VanWilligen has extensive training and experience in patrol and criminal investigations. He is a certified Standardized Field Sobriety Test Instructor and provides training and evaluation services to new officers at the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy several times each year.

Sgt. VanWilligen focuses on major criminal investigations involving sexual assaults, child abuse, domestic violence, and financial crimes. In addition, he provides case follow-up and assistance for cases initiated by patrol officers, coordinating with the County Attorney's Office, providing assistance to other agencies and works closely with victim advocates from DVIP and RVAP. The Investigator assists with crime scene processing, death investigation, search warrant preparation, evidence management and patrol duties as necessary.

The Investigations Division works closely with the Washington County Sexual Assault Response Team and the Iowa Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. Utilizing equipment provided by the ICAC Task Force, Investigator VanWilligen assists with investigations involving cellular phones. During 2024 the DataPilot was used seven times to assist in gathering investigative data.

Investigator VanWilligen also serves as a Drug Recognition Expert (DRE). He is one of just 120 DREs in the State of Iowa. DREs provide specialized assistance to officers in identifying and classifying individuals into various categories of drug use including Central Nervous System Stimulants (Methamphetamine), Cannabis and Central Nervous System Depressants (Prescription Medications). During 2024, Investigator VanWilligen conducted seven DRE evaluations.

The Police Department



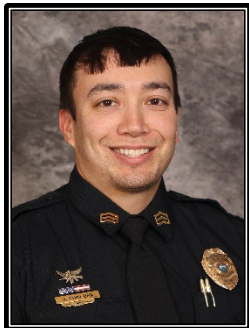
Patrol

The patrol officers are the most visible members of the Police Department, providing frontline law enforcement services to the community, 24 / 7 / 365.

Patrol officers are responsible for responding to emergency and non-emergency calls for service, conducting proactive patrols to deter and prevent crime, enforcing traffic laws and engaging with the community to promote public safety and build trust.

The most significant change in 2024 was the August retirement of veteran Lieutenant Lyle Hansen. Lt. Hansen served the Washington community for 39 years. His departure and the resignation of Officer Seth Adam after almost 15 years of service left some voids to be filled.

The Patrol Division is led by two Sergeants, who work opposite shifts and manage the night shift patrol duties.



Sergeant Jason Chalupa has served the Washington Police Department since 2017 and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 2020. He graduated from the ILEA in 2010.

Sgt. Chalupa is an Iowa Law Enforcement Academy Certified Firearms and Rifle Instructor and Emergency Vehicle Driving Instructor. He has additional specialized training in narcotics investigations and tactical operations management.



Sergeant Eric Kephart has served the Washington Police Department since 2020 and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in January 2025. He graduated from the ILEA in 2008.

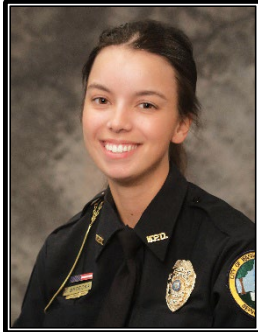
Sgt. Kephart serves as the department's K-9 Handler and works with his K-9 partner Dex. Sgt. Kephart is the department's Conducted Energy Device (Taser) Instructor and is a certified Field Training Officer.

The Police Department



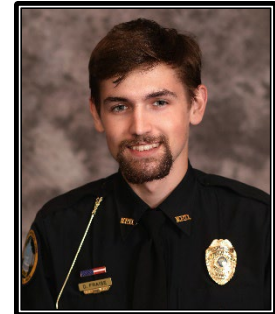
Patrol

Officer Mia Brdecka joined the Washington Police Department in 2022 and graduated from the ILEA that same year.

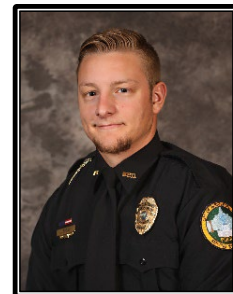
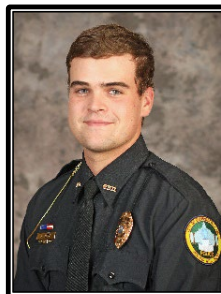
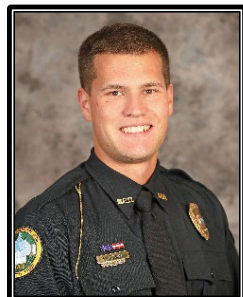


Officer Brdecka has received specialized defensive tactics training through Gracie Jiu-Jitsu University, has completed the Advance Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement program, has specialized training in social media investigations and provides assistance with Iowa Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force investigations. She regularly assists the ILEA classes with evaluating domestic violence scenarios.

Officer Devin Fraise joined the Washington Police Department in 2023 and graduated from the ILEA that same year. He previously worked as Dispatcher/Jailer for Keokuk County.



New Officers in 2024



Officer Ryan Burkhart joined the Police Department in March 2024. He previously served 20 years in the United States Navy and one year with the Marion Police Department.

Officers Easton Botkins and Noah Kleese joined the Police Department in July 2024, and both attended and graduated from the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy in December 2024.

Officer Jacob Butler joined the Police Department in September 2024 after working for two years with the Keokuk County Sheriff's Office.

Specialty Training



Our officers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the community, collectively totaling more than 120 years of law enforcement service. To maintain the highest standards of professionalism and readiness, the department invests heavily in ongoing training and skill development.

In the past year alone, officers have completed over **800 hours of specialized training** in critical areas, including: Opioid Safety, Implicit Bias, De-Escalation, Diverse Communities and Bias Prevention, Autism, Hazardous Materials, Hazard Communications, Officer Mental Health Awareness, Case Law updates, Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement, taser recertification, firearms training and annual firearms qualifications.

The Police Department has certified instructors in the following areas:

- Defensive Tactics
- SFST (Standardized Field Sobriety Testing)
- Taser
- Firearms
- Crisis Intervention Training (C.I.T.)
- CRASE (Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events)

In addition to certified instructors, the department is also fortunate to officers trained in the following specialty areas:

- Drug Recognition Expert (DRE)
- Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement
- Law Enforcement Intelligence Network (LEIN)
- Narcotics Investigations
- Clandestine Lab Investigations
- Field Training Officer Program
- Evidence / Property Management
- Domestic Abuse Investigations
- Sexual Assault Investigations
- Social Media / Digital Evidence Investigations
- Cyber Predators and Online Child Abuse Materials
- Child Abuse Investigations
- Crime Scene Photography
- Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Investigations
- DataPilot Cell Phone Extractions
- Glock Armorer
- Rifle Armorer

In addition, the K-9 Team of Sgt. Eric Kephart and K-9 Dex participated in more than 220 hours of training with other K-9 Teams from the SE Iowa region.

2024 Police Department Activity



The following charts show a summary of the activity and types of offenses responded to and investigated during 2024. Calls for service numbers do not always include requests to return phone calls, assistance provided to other agencies, probation/parole checks or instances when officers are approached while on patrol or at other locations for minor issues or requests for assistance.

2024 Activity Summary

Calls for Service	6,151
Incident Reports	647
Total Offenses	693
Complaints / Affidavits Filed	454
Arrests	401
Animal Calls	317
Traffic Stops	1,516
Traffic Citations / Warnings	782
Traffic Accidents	181
Parking Tickets	163
Vehicle Unlocks	302
Mental Health Crisis Responses	149
Arrest Warrants Served	111

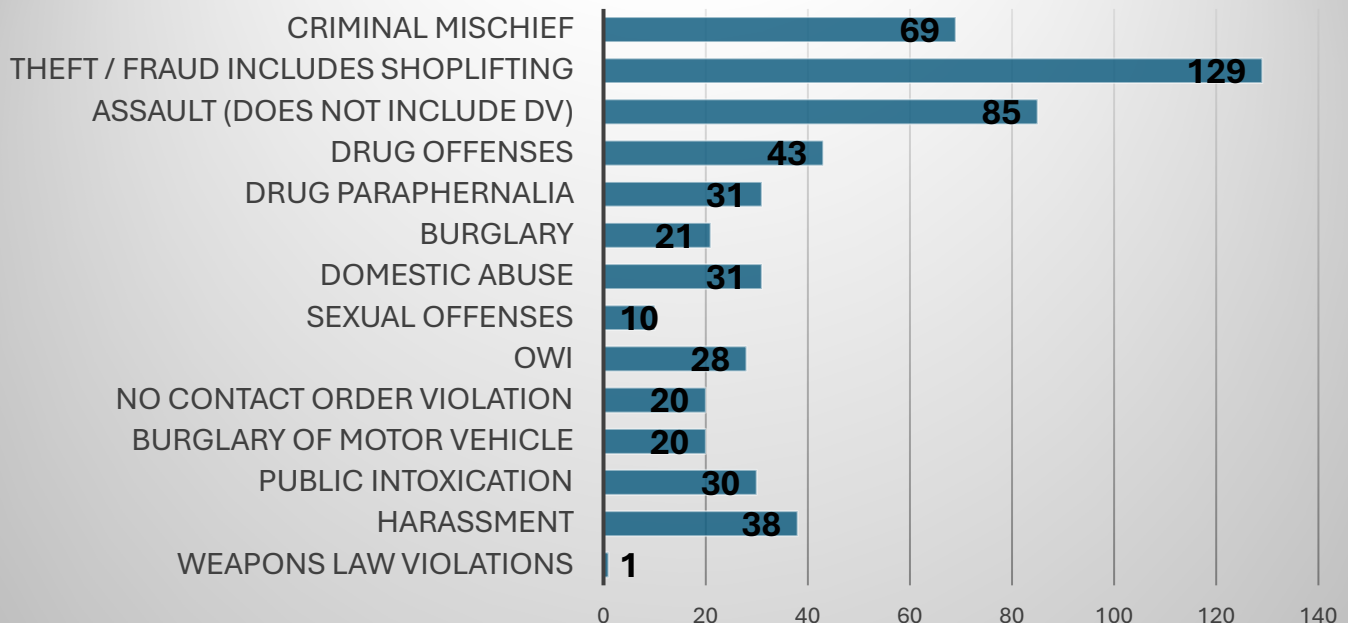
2024 Evidence & Property Summary

Total Items on Site	415
Drug Items	117
Assault Items (Includes S.A.)	34
DCI Lab Returns on Site	153
2024 New Evidence	92
Items Destroyed	60

2023 Comparisons

Calls for Service – 5,026
Incident Reports – 642
Arrests – 320
OWI - 20
Traffic Stops – 794
Citations / Warnings - 434

2024 Reported Offenses



Crime Reporting Statistical Data

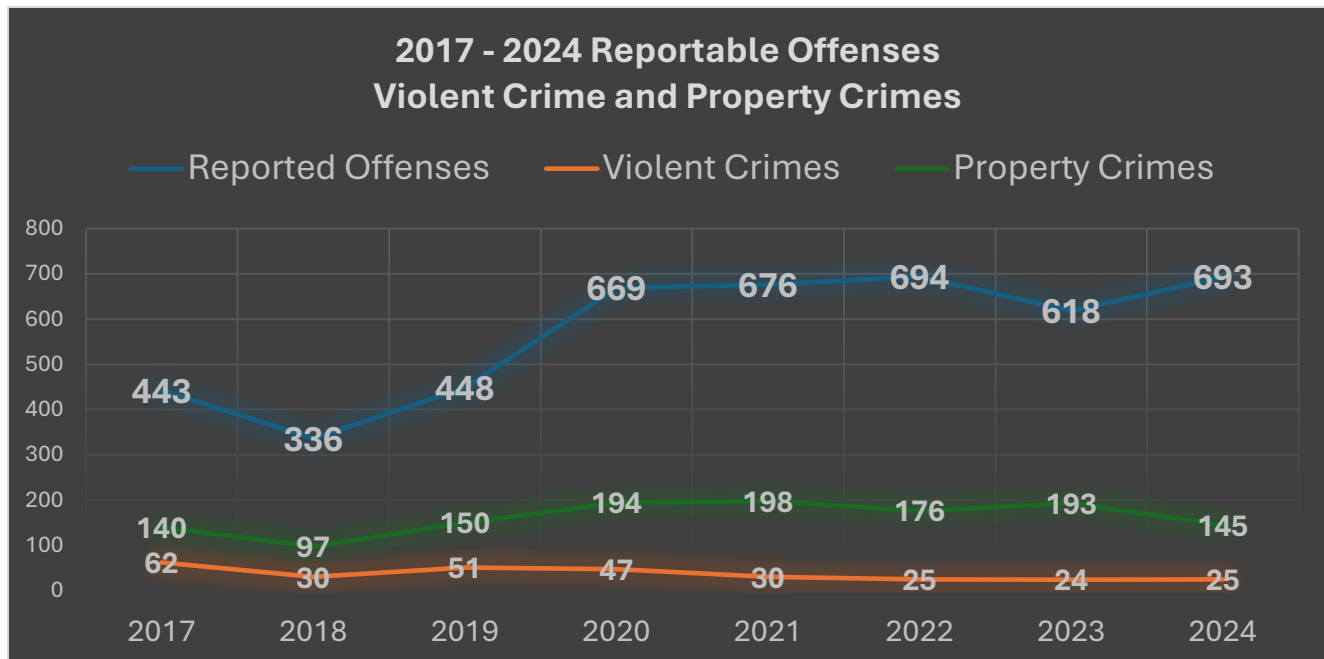


The Iowa Code requires law enforcement agencies to report public offenses or delinquent acts that are reported to their jurisdictions. The UCR program's primary objective is to generate reliable information for use in law enforcement administration, operations and management. The data is used across the country for varied research and planning purposes.

The State of Iowa made several major changes to their UCR Program in 2021 regarding law enforcement data reporting. One of the changes involved classification and coordination of Iowa criminal statutes to align with definitions of the FBI's UCR reporting codes. In addition, Iowa rules require that agencies submit data with less than 4% error rate to maintain state certification. The Police Department consistently submits data in compliance with the state standards.

In the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, violent crime is composed of four offenses: murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Violent crimes are defined in the UCR Program as those offenses which involve force or threat of force. Property crime includes the offenses of burglary, larceny – theft, motor vehicle theft and arson. The object of the theft type offenses is the taking of money or property, but there is no force or threat of force against the victims. The property crime category includes arson because the offense involves destruction of property; however, arson victims may be subjected to force.

The following chart contains data from our local Records Management System.



Police Department Statistics



The Police Department recorded 181 calls for service related to motor vehicle accidents during 2024, with 80 of the accidents meeting the criteria as a state reportable accident. An Iowa DOT reportable accident is an accident that results in personal injury or death or one that results in more than \$1,500 in property damage.

2024 Motor Vehicle Accident Severity

Fatal Crash	0
Suspected Serious Injury Crash	1
Suspected Minor Injury Crash	14
Possible / Unknown Injury Crash	11
Property Damage Only	54

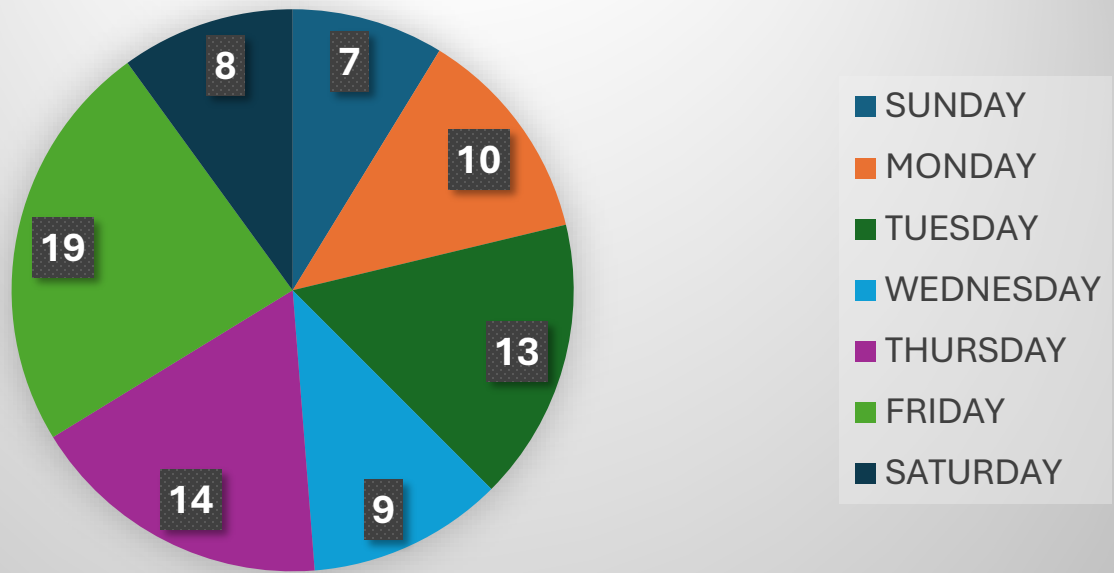
2024 Motor Vehicle Accident Major Cause

Stop Sign / FTYROW	27
Driver Distraction	10
Following Too Close	5
Failed to Keep In Proper Lane	3
Improper Turn	2

Other Accident Information

- 157 Involved Vehicles
- 179 Involved Occupants
- \$563,150 Total Property Damage
- 7 Drug / Alcohol Related
- 53 Drivers Charged
- 54 Drivers Ages 25-59
- 24 Drivers Ages 18 – 24
- 17 Drivers Under Age 18

2024 DOT Reportable Accidents by Day of Week



Community Engagement



Officers are active in community engagement activities throughout the year, and we also have an active Facebook presence with 8.9K followers. Our 2024 highlights include from top left: Sgt. Chalupa at Touch-A-Truck; Sgt. VanWilligen presenting to an ABD alcohol class; Officer Burkhardt high-fives with elementary students; Officer Fraise supporting a local lemonade stand; Officer Cardenas, Sgt. Chalupa and Officer Brdecka at Kidz Fest. Our community really stepped up in December to help us provide some children in need with a Christmas they can remember.

2024 Officer of the Year



Officer of the Year: Lieutenant Benjamin Altenhofen



It is with great pride that we recognize Lieutenant Benjamin Altenhofen as the *Officer of the Year* for the second time.

In 2024, Lt. Altenhofen demonstrated unwavering dedication to both his role within the police department and his community.

In addition to being in charge of our Field Training Program, where he mentored and guided five new officers during the year, he also served as a committee chair for the local Cub Scouts organization, showing his commitment to shaping the next generation and the importance of community involvement.

One of the most remarkable instances of his service occurred in May, when he was returning from training and had stopped in Sigourney at the local Casey's. He noticed a passenger in the car next to his signaling she was choking. Without hesitation, Lt. Altenhofen took action performing the Heimlich maneuver, successfully clearing her airway. His quick thinking and decisive action in a critical moment made all the difference, and the day ended on a positive note thanks to his intervention.

In recognition of his life-saving actions, the family of the woman he helped made a generous donation to the WPD K-9 Fund. This act of gratitude reflects the significant impact Lt. Altenhofen has not only within the department, but also within the broader community.

Lt. Altenhofen's commitment to serving the public extends beyond his police duties. He dedicates time to his community as a committee chair for the local Cub Scouts, further demonstrating his leadership and his passion for making a difference in the lives of young people. His actions in both his professional and personal life set a high standard of service, character, and community involvement.

We are incredibly proud to honor Lt. Altenhofen with this award, as his exceptional service, leadership, and willingness to go above and beyond make him a true asset to the Washington Police Department and to the community he serves.

Commendations



Rookie of the Year: Officer Easton Botkins & Officer Noah Kleese

The 2024 Rookie of the Year award is shared by our two newest officers, Officer Easton Botkins and Officer Noah Kleese. Both officers started with the department in late July. As they readied themselves for the 16-week Iowa Law Enforcement Academy, both had discussions about setting goals for themselves while at the academy.



Officer Botkins set a goal of achieving the ILEA's prestigious 300 Point Club Award for physical fitness. He was one of just two from his class to achieve this distinction, he ran the one-and-a-half-mile course in nine minutes or less, performed 20 or more pull-ups and completed 80 or more sit-ups within two minutes, showing both his endurance and strength.



Officer Kleese displayed superior firearms proficiency, earning a perfect score of 100% in all qualifications during the academy. His dedication to precision and excellence was recognized with the 317th Basic Class Top Shooter Award, a testament to his commitment to maintaining high standards of firearm safety and skill.

We commend both Officer Botkins and Officer Kleese for their extraordinary performance in achieving their personal goals while at the academy. They not only excelled in the above-mentioned physical phases of the academy, both officers demonstrated academic excellence finishing their course work with final scores above 90%.