

Peace Officer Statistics

2021 Interim Report

Recommendation

That the August 25, 2021, Citizen Services report CS00186, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 2, 2020, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide:

2. an interim use of force report to Committee in Third Quarter of 2021.

Executive Summary

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, peace officers continue to be deployed to various new tasks, including the Transit Safety Initiative, along with education and enforcement of public health orders and the City's Temporary Mandatory Face Coverings Bylaw 19408. From January 1 to June 30, 2021, 315 use of force incidents were documented, meaning that use of force occurred in 0.8 percent of the 38,000 recorded interactions between City of Edmonton peace officers and members of the public. A review of each use of force incident is conducted immediately upon being reported to Administration.

City peace officers receive ongoing training, and all policies and procedures are updated or written using Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), diversity and inclusion, and cultural awareness lenses. Administration has provided input to the Government of Alberta to inform and revise the Peace Officer Program. Administration is also currently working with stakeholders on identifying and updating training needs focusing on GBA+, community building, cultural awareness and inclusivity for all.

Administration has reviewed and revised hiring processes and practices, including ensuring hiring panels have differing perspectives and focusing on anti-racism, biases and other enforcement skills.

Report

Currently, the City of Edmonton has approximately 160 peace officers who provide a variety of different public services. As of June 30, 2021, these officers have responded to over 38,000 events this year, including complaints from the public and files initiated proactively by officers.

Use of Force

Peace officers primary focus is to gain voluntary compliance through education, conversations, officer presence, and warnings. Peace officers are able to exercise discretion, but on some occasions, formal enforcement is required and a ticket may be issued. Enforcement practices are based on a variety of factors such as the seriousness of the offence, a history of repeat occurrences involving the same individual, and other public safety considerations.

Between January 1 and June 30, 2021, peace officers recorded 315 use of force incidents (Attachment 1). Of those, 11 were required to be reported to the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General due to the use of a baton or oleoresin capsicum spray (OC spray or pepper spray). The use of a baton or OC spray is a defensive option for peace officers. In the first half of 2021, use of force occurred in only 0.8 percent of the documented public interactions with all of the peace officers. This is comparable to the first half of 2020 where use of force occurred in 0.9 percent of all documented public interactions, and this is similar to the most recent Edmonton Police Service statistics.

Between 2015 and June 30, 2021, the majority of use of force occurrences (83 percent) involved the lowest level of force available on the provincially standardized continuum of force, which includes voluntary handcuffing and escort holds. Conversely, over that same time period less than 2 percent of use of force incidents involved the use of intermediate weapons (baton or OC spray).

Formal Complaints

Between January 1 and June 30, 2021, there were five formal complaints filed against peace officers, of which one was related to use of force. Of the five formal complaints, one was a written public complaint, two were abandoned by those who submitted them, one was resolved informally, and one was employer-initiated and reported to the Peace Officer Program. To date, none of these complaints have resulted in disciplinary findings.

2021 (Jan 1-Jun 30) Complaints Against Peace Officers	
Type	Totals
Formal Complaints	5

Non-Formal Complaints/Concerns	9
Reportable Events	8
Reportable - Use of Force	11
Reportable - Discipline	0

Administration is examining the root causes leading to use of force incidents with the intent of identifying systemic means to mitigate use of force encounters. In an attempt to avoid conflict by involving formal enforcement processes, Administration has incorporated formalized referral mechanisms to social service agencies and has implemented hiring practices for peace officer recruitment purposes that consider cultural awareness and unintentional biases.

Continuous Improvement Measures

Peace officers are provided ongoing training and work alongside partner social agencies as part of their day-to-day duties. Additional training opportunities continue, such as trauma-informed practices, mental health first aid, and diversity and inclusion.

As outlined in the Safer for All report, Administration provided input to the provincial Peace Officer Program as it relates to training standards, policy and procedures, and reporting requirements. Information was sought from all other peace officer employers to inform and revise Peace Officer Program policy decisions and those results are due for release later this year. Administration is also currently working with stakeholders on identifying training needs with a focus on creating and fostering a culture that embraces GBA+, community building approaches, cultural awareness and inclusivity for all.

Since August 2020, Administration has revised enforcement related job postings and hiring practices. Hiring panels have been intentionally created with differing perspectives and more focus on attitudes toward anti-racism, acquired and unconscious biases and other enforcement skills. Officers have increased the use of referrals to various social agencies as opposed to addressing the issue from a purely enforcement perspective.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton is a safe city			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Increased transparency and peace officer accountability	Number of use of force incidents	2021 YTD: 315 2020: 576 2019: 506	Decrease in incidents

Attachments

1. Peace Officer Force Report Data

Others Reviewing this Report

- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- K. Armstrong, Deputy City Manager, Employee Services
- K. Fallis-Howell, Acting City Solicitor