



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Back on the Beat: NPP Program Places Officers on Foot Throughout Scranton

SCRANTON, PA. - On a warm weekday evening this April, Scranton Police Department (SPD) Det. Jill Foley and Det. Melissa Forsette met with West Scranton residents concerned about cars speeding along the 200 block of South Hyde Park Avenue. The detectives, who were canvassing neighborhoods on foot as part of a revitalized community policing program, filed a report through a mobile application. The next day, SPD Sgt. Bob Stanek painted speed tracking lines behind the local PNC Bank branch, and within a few short weeks a new speed limit sign was installed by the Department of Public Works (DPW) to help slow down traffic in the residential neighborhood.

Direct contact between SPD officers and residents, paired with cross-departmental solutions, is at the core of the revitalized Neighborhood Police Patrol (NPP) program, according to Scranton Police Chief Thomas Carroll. The program rolled out on April 7, 2025, to improve police service and address concerns that might not otherwise be reported.

“It is so important to have officers working directly in our neighborhoods to help identify and address issues in Scranton,” Mayor Paige G. Cagnetti said. “The power of the NPP program is in the connections we are building between Scranton Police officers and our residents.”

Collaboration and Crime Prevention

In a memo to the Police Department this April, Chief Carroll wrote, “The NPP deployment plan is designed to enhance customer service in the focused areas of disorder in the low to moderate income areas of the city most in need.” NPP increases the visibility of officers and the impact of proactive police work to address everyday issues. Officers should “focus on public safety as well as crime prevention and serve as the conduit for city government.”

“An officer walking the beat will be the most significant indicator that residents will see, but it’s much more than that,” Chief Carroll explained. “It’s about stopping to ask people their thoughts and seeing if they have the time to meet with an officer. We provide them with information on Scranton’s anonymous crime tip line, the City’s 311 service, and more. If we can build trust by addressing blight or replacing a poor street sign, we’re strengthening our officer/citizen network.”

NPP assignments instruct officers to go door-to-door in target areas, meeting with residents and business owners and documenting other issues. To ensure officers are easily recognizable, they are required to wear their patrol uniform and use a marked patrol car. Reports are filed in real time in a mobile phone application and assigned for follow-up by other officers or other City departments.

“We specify the targeted areas,” Chief Carroll said. “We’re telling the officers what we want to accomplish, which is what makes this program most effective.”

Increased public safety and improvements to the quality of life in Scranton are among the hallmarks of Mayor Cagnetti’s administration. The direct intervention of police officers walking the beat in focused areas helps improve neighborhoods as it deters crime.

“Our ongoing investments into officer training and state-of-the-art technology are added tools for the police department,” Cagnetti said. “The real impact of that police work is seen through the interactions officers have with our residents and visitors.”

During another April patrol in West Scranton, officers took note of a concerning issue.

“Follow-up requested. 140 S. Bromley needs to be boarded up. There was a fire, and the doors are not boarded up. There’s a vehicle expired in front of the property,” an officer’s report read.

SPD Ptlm. Brennan McDermott, the department’s NPP coordinator, takes timestamped reports like the one from South Bromley Avenue, refers them outside of the police department, and tracks the issues to completion. The IAP Management Board tied to SPD’s mobile application is filled with notes on personal contacts, observations of suspected abandoned vehicles, and details of which businesses throughout the City are now displaying signs about police resources.

The department can also assign items to outside agencies for larger police operations. For example, more than 200 emergency service workers that shared live information during the Scranton St. Patrick’s Day Parade in March.

A Personable Police Department

Since its relaunch, the NPP program has focused on sections of West Scranton and South Scranton, along with special events downtown. Those three areas include low to moderate income neighborhoods as identified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and they’re among the most populated parts of the City. The areas of focus will change often to ensure the program can have positive impacts across Scranton.

Officers work in pairs and participate in voluntary four-hour shifts, covering an average three-block radius at a time. The memo restarting the program indicates that the footprint could grow to an eight-block radius as the NPP continues over time.

“They have a four-hour block of time, and how they decide to use those hours to accomplish their tasks is up to them,” Chief Carroll said.

During May's First Friday Scranton events, Detective Jill Foley, Patrolman Todd Garvey, Sergeant Jason Gula, and Detective Michael Schultz split their time in pairs to patrol blocks of Linden Street, Biden Street, and Lackawanna Avenue. As the City buzzed with opening art receptions and more, officers were available to prevent issues and identify problems, like at least one illegally parked vehicle near the intersection of Biden Street and North Washington Avenue.

Aside from traditional police work, officers also helped visitors find galleries, recommended local landmarks or restaurants to visit, and even directed one Penn Avenue resident how to sign up for monthly parking downtown. Runners visiting the City to participate in The Office 5K the following day marveled at Det. Foley's photos with cast members of the hit NBC sitcom who have visited Scranton over several years.

"It's important that people know we're not robots," Ptlm. Garvey said. "I started as a community police officer years ago, and I love this work. This program lets the community see us as more than just police officers."

On a separate patrol one Friday evening in mid-May, Det. Foley and Ptlm. McDermott engaged with business owners and shoppers alike in the South Side Shopping Center on either side of East Elm Street. In another particularly quiet patrol the following week, Sgt. Stanek and Ptlm. Tom Stornable answered a resident's questions about the recent foot pursuit of a man who had allegedly broken into a pair of South Scranton buildings. Officers closed their conversation by providing them with a business card marked with a QR code to quickly access an anonymous tip line for the department.

During a particularly busy patrol on a warm June evening, Det. Foley and Det. Melissa Forsette reported an abandoned home in West Scranton, conducted a traffic stop for a driver who ignored a stop sign, and documented a sedan with no license plate – all within the first hour of their four-hour shift.

Along with removing a stigma around police, NPP is creating positive partnerships with other City departments. Problems identified but not traditionally solved by police officers can include the discovery of faded street signs, malfunctioning traffic signals, poor street lighting, blight, abandoned vehicles, and more. Those issues are assigned to the correct teams, and all steps are recorded until they are solved.

In just the first three months of the NPP program, Scranton police officers have conducted over 500 door-to-door conversations with residents and business owners, recommended the replacement of nearly two dozen street signs, address nine blighted properties, alerted DPW crews to five roadways hazards, and removed almost a dozen abandoned vehicles.

"The partnership among the City departments expedites resolutions," Chief Carroll noted.

"Our City teams are exponentially more effective when they work together," Cognetti said.

Supporting Officers and Residents

Programs like NPP help the SPD develop relationships before crimes occur.

“Historically, police departments are reactive. They wait for a crime to occur, investigate that crime, and then make an arrest,” Chief Carroll said. “Community policing actions like the NPP program creates positive conversations. We are breaking down the barriers to build trust so people can be more comfortable working with the police.”

Trust in, and support of, the SPD is strong right now, after 2024 created what Chief Carroll identified as a turning point for the department.

“It may have been our most challenging year in our 159-year history. We operated at an unprecedented pace to maintain public safety,” he said.

The line-of-duty shooting of Det. Kyle Gilmartin in January 2024 was the first of several major incidents that marked an anomaly of violent crime in Scranton. Gilmartin’s survival and recovery has inspired a local rallying cry for officers who deserve support and serve communities like Scranton well.

“I believe our officers feel more appreciated here in Scranton” than officers may in other communities, Chief Carroll said. “We’re operating on all cylinders, we’re focused on the job, and we have each other.”

“The dedication of our police officers to this critical and challenging job is always inspiring,” Cognetti said. “The Scranton Police Department is one of the finest agencies in the region, and that’s because of the hard work of our men and women that choose to wear the City’s uniform.”

Meanwhile, the desire to join the SPD continues to climb, despite national trends. The accessibility of online testing and the removal of a residency requirement for police officers makes the opportunity to join one of the region’s top law enforcement agencies easier than ever for candidates that meet the department’s rigorous standards. A set of written first-round tests concluded in late April, and another round of initial testing is already planned for August. Additionally, seven of the 31 cadets graduating from the Lackawanna College Police Academy in July will soon become Scranton police officers.

“We have made it easier to access the training and testing necessary to become a Scranton Police officer, and the response from those who wish to serve our community is outstanding,” Cognetti said.

The NPP is made possible through a combination of funding from the HUD’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program totaling \$399,250 for the public service initiative. Officers currently receive overtime compensation for their service to the NPP program if they work a detail in addition to their normal duties. The officer’s regular salary is reimbursed by CDBG funds, and overtime is paid by the City to support the program while staffing challenges remain.

Non-Emergency Contact Information

Community concerns may be addressed through Scranton's 311 service. Issues ranging from abandoned vehicles and blighted properties to refuse pickup and graffiti can be reported online at www.scrantonpa.gov/mayor/scranton311, by phone at (570) 348-4101, or by email at scranton311@scrantonpa.gov. The Scranton Police Department's non-emergency line is (570) 348-4134.

Residents experiencing an emergency should call 911.

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ABOUT THE CITY OF SCRANTON: Incorporated in 1866, the City of Scranton has a population of approximately 76,000 residents and is the sixth-largest municipality in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Scranton City Hall is located at 340 N. Washington Ave., Scranton, PA 18503. Residents requiring services should visit www.scrantonpa.gov

ABOUT MAYOR PAIGE G. COGNETTI: Paige G. Cagnetti was sworn in as the 36th Mayor of Scranton in January 2020. Her administration is focused on driving economic growth, upgrading infrastructure, ensuring public safety, fostering government transparency and efficiency, and improving residents' overall quality of life.