St. Paul Police Data Shows Drop in Use of Force Incidents

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St. Paul Police Chief Todd Axtell has made changes to how the department manages use of force incidents involving officers with a goal that force is used reasonably, when necessary, and done with respect.

St. Paul Police Department saw a 32 percent drop in use-of-force incidents from 2015 to 2016, according to data turned over to 5 EYEWITNESS NEWS.

"Trust in the community, and trust with our officers because they have faith in the system to know that their actions are being reviewed and monitored, they are being treated fairly," Axtell said. "Our community has faith in process to know that the uses of force are taken seriously by the department's leadership."

St. Paul Police top commanders review every use-of-force incident on a weekly basis plus now have a supervisor respond to every incident on the streets.

"It's absolutely important," Axtell said. "What is monitored is managed."

St. Paul Police shared additional data that few outside of the department have seen including how injuries among suspects have dropped 20 percent from 2015 to 2016.

Axtell credits additional de-escalating training techniques is paying off as fewer officers are pulling their weapons down 12 percent during that same period.

"I think where you see lots of uses of force, and there isn't a lot of accountability you see them repeat," said Jonathan Blanks, a researcher at the Cato Institute in Washington D.C.

Blanks oversee the Cato's project on National Police Misconduct Reporting Project that was launched in 2012.

"If department's don't hold their own accountable they are just going to erode the trust in the community and make their own jobs harder," Blanks said.

St. Paul Police said last year there were more than 250,000 calls for service last year, where three-tenths of 1 percent involved use of force incidents.

"Thinking twice about use of force is a concern," said Dave Titus, president of the St. Paul Police Federation. "It's going to create fewer contacts on the street, and officers are going to be reluctant to address suspicious activity."

St. Paul Police preliminary data found serious crime decreased 2.4 percent last year, violent crimes against persons down by 8.2 percent.

But crime did go up according to preliminary records including more auto thefts, residential and commercial burglaries, and firearm discharges in St. Paul.

If you want to check out current crime data broken down by neighborhoods in the city of St. Paul, click here.

Axtell, a 27-year veteran of the department, was named chief back in the spring of 2016.