

FROM THE DESK OF THE POLICE CHIEF

Background of a Police Officer

By Ryan Thompson, Pine Knoll Shores Police Chief

I am often asked questions such as, "What do you have to do to become a police officer," and hear comments like, "Anyone can be a police officer." Information on how to become a police officer in North Carolina can be difficult to find. Here is a brief synopsis of what it takes to be a sworn police officer in North Carolina.

Before someone can take an oath of office in North Carolina as a police officer, he or she is required to complete Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET). Community colleges throughout the state offer BLET, and some larger police agencies teach their own BLET program. The BLET program is comprised of a minimum of 620 hours of instruction on 36 separate topics, ranging from physical training, firearms, driving and criminal law. In most cases, those who attend BLET do so on their own time and without compensation, for five days a week over a period of six months.

After taking and passing a three-hour written exam, candidates may start looking for a career with a law enforcement agency. If someone does not find a career with a law enforcement agency within one year of passing the BLET exam, he or she is required to attend the entire course again.

When a law enforcement agency finds someone it believes is a suitable applicant, an extremely thorough background investigation, which can take up to two months to complete, is conducted on the applicant.

After taking the oath of office, the new police officer typically goes through a rigorous three-month field training program. After successfully passing the field training program, the new police officer becomes a solo patrol unit for his or her law enforcement agency.

Law enforcement officers must complete 26 hours of mandated in-service training each year, and are required to qualify with the firearms they carry at least once every calendar year. The majority of, if not all, officers in North Carolina work 12-hour shifts, rotate from days to nights on a frequent basis, and *all* are on emergency call-in status at all times. Of course, this is while also managing a family at home and sometimes attending college courses to further their education.

If this sounds like the worst sales pitch for a career, you might be right. If it sounds like it could be a rewarding experience, then you might just make a good police officer.

Scam of the Month: Identity Theft

Here are some possible scenarios of identity theft: you learn that someone has made purchases using your credit card, or has been issued new credit cards in your name. You discover that a thief masquerading as you has sold your home or vehicle and pocketed the money. You find out that someone has used your health care benefits and then stuck you with their bills.

Identity theft is the fastest growing scam in the United States, and has been the leading consumer complaint to the Federal Trade Commission for the past several years. Many scams and frauds are designed to acquire your credit card and checking account numbers to make it easier to commit identity theft. Identity thieves especially target seniors because they often have substantial savings and little debt.

To protect against identity theft, always check your bills and account statements carefully for unusual charges and activities. Contact your bank or creditors immediately if you notice anything suspicious. Check your credit report annually by visiting annualcreditreport.com. Each of the three national credit reporting services must provide you with a free copy of your credit report once per year upon request.

—Source: ncdoj.gov

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PUBLIC SAFETY

POLICE

During January, there were 3 arrests; twelve 911 hang-up calls; 24 alarm activations; 4 animal calls; 2 larceny calls; 2 disturbance/domestic calls; 16 assist Fire/EMS calls; 3 motor vehicle collisions; 98 traffic stops; 14 citations issued (5 speeding, 2 registration/inspection, 4 license revoked/expired, 2 other traffic violations, 1 narcotics); 15 written warnings issued; 69 verbal warnings issued; 294 business checks; 383 residential checks; and 341 foot patrols in residential areas, parks, beach accesses and businesses. Police personnel participated in 155 training hours. Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) worked 40.5 hours.

FIRE AND EMS

In January, responders handled 1 fire, 18 rescue and emergency medical service incidents, 2 service calls and 5 false alarms or false calls. Personnel participated in 432 training hours.

REMINDER: Lock your doors, especially your vehicles, and don't leave valuables in sight. Report suspicious people or vehicles to dispatch (726-1911) so that the police can be notified. You are not "bothering" the police if you call to report something that doesn't look right. They prefer to assess the situation rather than find out after the fact that you had noticed something and didn't report it. Alert citizens are an asset to the community.

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Articles always welcome.