

# Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission Community Policing Report Annual Report

**Agency:** Takoma Park Police Department

**Region:** I

**Reporting Period:** 2017

**Agency contact name:** Chief Antonio DeVaul

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**Number of sworn members:** 38

**Non-sworn members:** 19

**Population:** 17,000

**Square miles serviced by the agency:** 2.5

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The Takoma Park Police Department is committed to providing the highest quality of police services by promoting an environment where police department employees and the community work in a partnership with a goal of improving the quality of life within our expanding multi-ethnic community, while at the same time maintaining respect for the diversity, individual rights and dignity of all residents. This is integral towards developing and maintaining strong relationships. Our goal is to continue to expand these relationships, especially with those within our community who may have mistrust of the police.

## Social Media



The Takoma Park Police Department is active on social media. The department uses Facebook and Twitter to keep the community aware of quality of life issues, crime related incidents, traffic related issues, missing persons, as well as to provide daily crime prevention tools. Currently, the department has 1,375 followers on Facebook and 2,535 followers on Twitter.



**Takoma Park Police** @TakomaParkPD · 2 Nov 2017

It's the #9PMRoutine Sheriff **Woody**. Everyone locks up their 🚗 and 🏠 doors to protect their valuables. It's a great #crimeprevention routine.



**Takoma Park Police** @TakomaParkPD · 2h

Seat belts dramatically reduce risk of death and serious injury. Unless you've got nine lives (you don't), wear your seat belt EVERY SINGLE TIME.

#WearYourSeatbelt #Seatbelt #SeatbeltSafety #MarylandLaw #ClickItOrTicket #buckleup





**Takoma Park Police** @TakomaParkPD · Mar 27

Do you want kids to think that **texting** & driving isn't that bad? Because, this is how you get kids to think that **texting** & driving isn't that bad. **Texting** & driving is NEVER okay. Make sure you're leading by example. #hangupanddrive #arrivealive #itcanwait

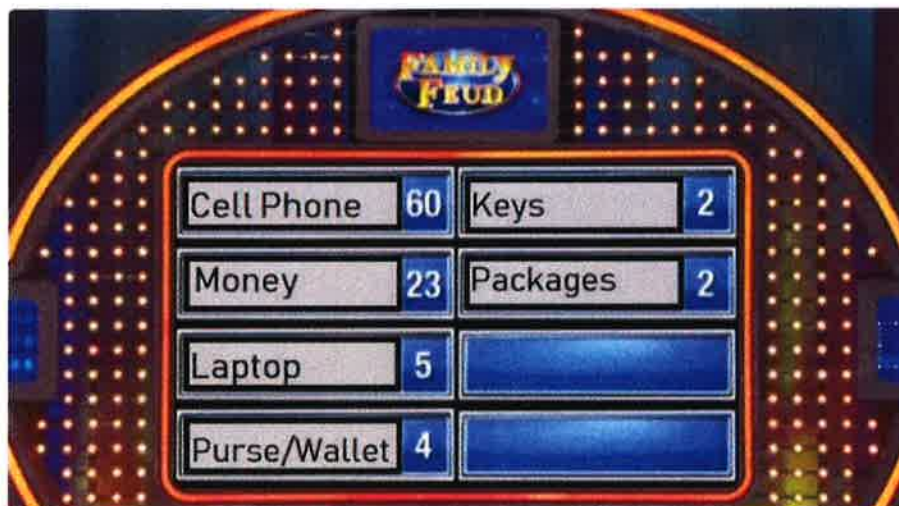


**Takoma Park Police** @TakomaParkPD · Jul 11

The top six answers are on the board, here is the question:

Name an item that should NOT be left in your vehicle. ?💡

**If they see it, they can still steal it.** Property in plain view is enticing to thieves. Don't make it easy. #crimeprevention #FamilyFeud



### **Caring About Residents Everyday (CARE)**

CARE is a program directed at our residents who live alone with special needs, or just need to be checked on each day.

CARE is another way we can give back to the community and take care of those in need.

Residents who register will call the police department once each day between 12:00 pm and 5:00 pm. If they don't call, we will call them. If they don't answer, we will send a patrol officer to check on their welfare. This program is to protect those in need and bring a sense of peace to those friends and relatives who care, but who are not close enough to check themselves.



### **Community Cam Program**

On July 30, 2015, the Takoma Park Police Department announced a new crime fighting/prevention tool through which detectives can work in partnership with the community to assist in solving crimes. Today's video technologies have become commonplace and affordable, creating a proliferation of video systems in both commercial and residential applications. The systems oftentimes provide critical evidence in criminal cases as well as prevent crime. Traditionally, investigators knock door to door, looking for witnesses and evidence. Our Community Cam Program streamlines and enhances the process.

The Community Cam Program allows members of the community who live in the City of Takoma Park to register any residential or commercial video surveillance system with the Police Department free of charge. If and when a crime occurs in an area of a registered camera system, detectives will have immediate access to the location of any registered cameras on their mobile devices. This will allow them to quickly obtain valuable video evidence to enhance apprehension capabilities. Working in partnership with the owner of the system is just one more tool in the police-community partnership to make Takoma Park a safe community. The registration information is confidential and can only be accessed by detectives and the police department's crime analyst. Participation is voluntary and the system owner may withdraw at any time.

Takoma Park Police is the first department in the Washington Metropolitan area to institute this type of program. There are other programs used by Philadelphia, New Orleans, Ventura, California and Lenexa, Kansas that are similar to the Community Cam Program and have proven to be an effective crime fighting tool. The registration process is a 3-step process and takes about five minutes to complete.



The use of technology in crime fighting is essential and this is a great way to involve our community members to actively assist in our efforts to make our city safer.

### Community Police Academy

The Community Police Academy is a 12-week long program consisting of one class a week. The classes cover the following topics:

- Communications
- Basic Criminal Law & Current Hot Topics
- Traffic Law (with traffic stops practicals)
- Criminal Investigations
- Victim/Witness Rights
- Driving Under the Influence (with field sobriety text practicals)
- Use of Force/Tasers (with practicals)
- Speed Camera Program
- Emergency Preparedness
- Crime Analysis
- Firearms
- Media Relations
- Gangs
- Bike Patrol/Laws
- Canine & demonstrations
- Emergency Response Team
- Patrol Procedures (with practicals)
- Community Relations/Policing



The presentations are slide show/lecture style and are given by officers, detectives and civilians of the Takoma Park Police Department. There are also multiple opportunities for hands-on learning through equipment demonstrations, practical scenarios, field trips and ride-alongs with patrol officers.

The Takoma Park Police Department believes that educating the community results in gaining their understanding and support. Through implementation of the Community Police Academy, the community gains new insight into how law enforcement officers perform their duties. The success of any law enforcement agency depends largely upon the amount of cooperation and support it receives from the community it serves.

### Homework Club

The Homework Club offers young people an after school experience where they can socialize with their peers, earn Student Service Learning (SSL) hours, enjoy some pizza, and complete their homework. It's a comfortable and supportive environment embracing teamwork and an increased positive attitude towards school. These kids take homework seriously, together, one assignment at a time!



### National Night Out

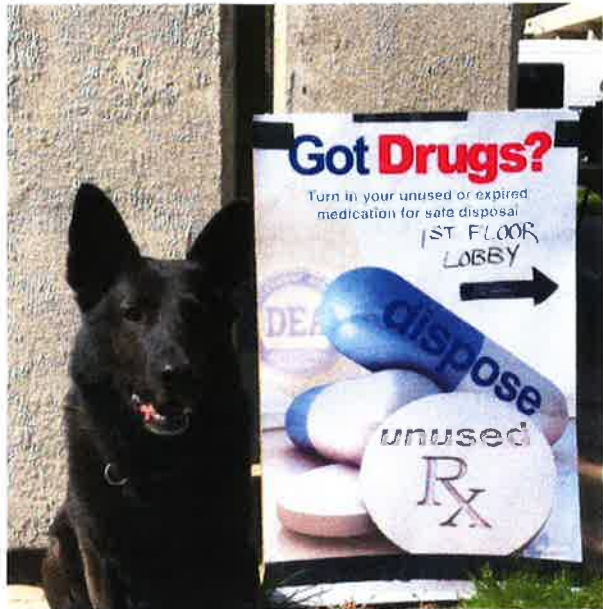


The City's National Night Out Against Crime observance takes place every year the first Tuesday in August. National Night Out is held by individual communities to demonstrate their commitment to being partners in the fight against crime. National Night Out Against Crime is designed to heighten awareness, strengthen neighborhood spirit and enhance police-community relations.



**Nationwide Prescription Drug Take Back Day**

In April and October of each year, the Takoma Park Police Department participates in the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Nationwide Prescription Drug Take-Back Day. This campaign gives the public an opportunity to prevent pill abuse and theft by ridding their homes of potentially dangerous expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs. Prescription, over-the-counter and pet medications are accepted.



Although we participate in this nationwide event, residents looking to dispose of excess and expired prescription and over-the-counter medications can visit our safe and secure permanent drop off location at our police department. The collection site is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Drugs can be dropped off with no questions asked. The Takoma Park Police Department collects and stores the items and then safely disposes of them through accepted practices as approved by the DEA.

**Watch Your Car Program**

Takoma Park Police offer residents an opportunity to sign up for the “Watch Your Car Program.” This program is a way for police officers to ensure their vehicles are not being driven by an unauthorized driver.



**WATCH YOUR CAR**

The "WATCH YOUR CAR" program is administered by the Maryland Vehicle Theft Prevention Council (MVTPC) and is provided as a public service, free of charge, to owners of vehicles registered in the State of Maryland. It is a voluntary vehicle registration program designed to deter auto theft and assist in the apprehension of auto thieves.

The owner(s) sign an application form stating their vehicle is not normally used between the hours of 1:00 am and 5:00 am which gives permission for a police officer to stop the car between the hours of 1:00 am and 5:00 am to verify that the driver is actually the owner of the vehicle or an authorized driver, designated by the owner. Once registered, the vehicle owner will receive two window decals to be placed on the front and back windows of the vehicle.

### Operation Chill



The Takoma Park Police Department is proud to be in partnership with 7-Eleven in its "Operation Chill" program; a program that aims to reduce crime and build rapport between kids and law enforcement. "Operation Chill" is a great way of teaching the importance of making good decisions, being kind and doing the right thing.

When school's out for the summer, kids in Takoma Park look forward to their next encounter with the 'heat' thanks to 7-Eleven stores' popular "Operation Chill" program that rewards positive behavior with a very cool treat.

Through "Operation Chill," Takoma Park Police patrol officers can 'ticket' youngsters caught in the act of doing good with Slurpee beverage coupons. Appropriate 'offenses' might include helping another person, deterring crime, practicing safety (wearing a helmet during bike riding), participating in a positive activity in the community, or just for having a pleasant conversation with an officer. Each coupon can be redeemed for a small Slurpee drink at participating 7-Eleven stores. The coupons are great for officers who are on patrol in the community. It's an icebreaker, a way to encourage dialogue in a non-threatening, non-law enforcement situation.



Since its inception in 1995, "Operation Chill" has grown to include several hundred law enforcement agencies in the United States and Canada each year, and more than twelve million coupons have been distributed to officers on the beat in cities and towns where 7-Eleven does business.



“Operation Chill” was developed by 7-Eleven, Inc. to positively reward and encourage good behavior by kids during the hot summer months, when communities may experience increases in loitering, shoplifting and graffiti, and to support law enforcement agencies’ community relations projects. The Takoma Park Police Department will use the “Operation Chill” program to reward youth for their good deeds as well as to enhance their relations with the young people of their city.



### **Police Explorer Program**

The mission of the Takoma Park Police Explorer Program is to guide young adults to a better path for the future through training, leadership, teamwork, discipline, friendship, and to assist the Takoma Park Police Department and the residents of Takoma Park through community service. It’s a chance to change, a direction for growth, a look toward the future, and a safe place to be.

Explorers are offered numerous opportunities throughout the year to assist, i.e., the July 4<sup>th</sup> festival/parade, National Night Out, Folk Festival, Street Festival and many other events!



All Explorers have the opportunity to earn community service hours for community events and training. Explorers are expected to keep good grades in school and maintain a high level of respect and good conduct at all times.

Some benefits of being an Explorer:

- Gain exposure to various criminal justice careers and have positive interactions with law enforcement professionals.
- Obtain “hands-on” experience and awareness of the criminal justice system, which can help Explorers make an informed decision on a career in law enforcement or a related field.
- Gain interpersonal growth through self-discipline, teamwork, challenging experiences, and high standards of performance and personal conduct.
- Obtain enhanced character development and improved physical and mental fitness.
- Learn responsibility to self and others through leadership and opportunities.



- Get involved in community service and networking activities by assisting sponsoring agency in supplementary law enforcement.
- Are introduced to specialty units, such as K9, Emergency Response Team (ERT), Criminal Investigations Division (CID), Community Policing, CPR/1st Aid, etc.
- Have the opportunity to ride with a patrol officer and experience the job through the eyes of an officer.
- Receive extensive training in various techniques used by law enforcement professionals, such as traffic stops, building searches, search and seizure/arrest techniques, etc.

**Residential Home Security Survey**

Takoma Park Police offer residents, free of charge, a Residential Home Security Survey. This survey is an inspection of their home, performed by a police officer, in an effort to identify areas in which they could improve the physical security of their residence. It is also a good opportunity to review personal safety and security habits with an officer so that their daily routines incorporate habits to decrease the likelihood that they might be victimized by crime.



**Ride Along Program**

The Ride Along Program provides residents the opportunity to ride in a marked police cruiser alongside a patrol officer to observe the daily duties of an officer.

**Safe Place for Online Transactions**

The Takoma Park Police Department joined a national trend by offering a safe place for online transactions. We would like the community to feel safe when dealing with strangers through online classified ad transactions, such as Craigslist. Following that national trend, the department set up a safe place for sellers and buyers to carry out purchases and/or sales in the Takoma Park Police Department parking lot or lobby. There is a camera outside of the police department that is monitored 24/7 and there are always police officers on duty in and outside the station. To ensure our awareness,



those using our facility as a safe place to make transactions, are encouraged to tell police personnel the purpose of their visit. Crime prevention is extremely important to the men and women of the Takoma Park Police Department and the department is happy to continue to be a part of this nationwide safety trend.

**Secure the Call Program**

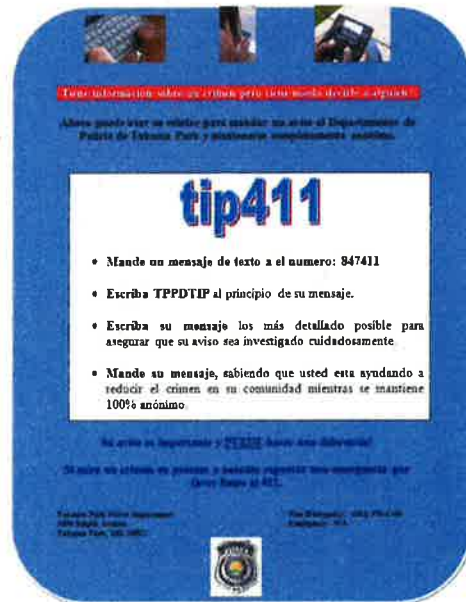
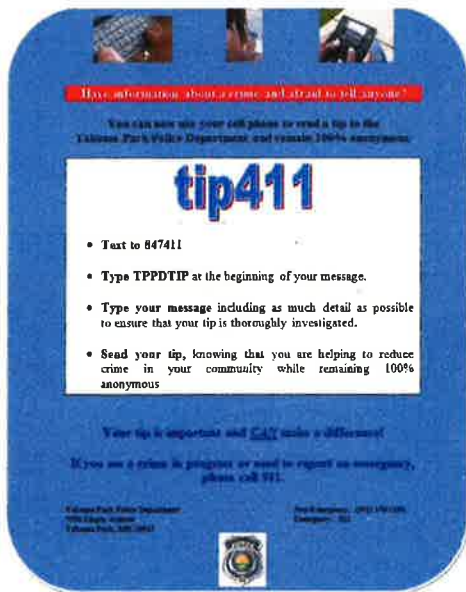
The Takoma Park Police Department partnered with Secure the Call. Secure the Call is a charity with a single mission; to collect and convert as many old cell phones as possible into \*911\* emergency access phones. This is done on a national basis, with collections and distributions going on in most states. They furnish user-ready phones to their Community Partners—a growing network of over 350 law enforcement agencies, senior centers and domestic abuse shelters nationally—at no charge and in the quantity they request. Service to the public is FREE.



They collect phones nationally from a network of over a thousand permanent collection barrels and about two hundred one-month drives per month. All the phones come through the Takoma Park, MD headquarters, where volunteers begin the process and take the phones from the tangled mass previously described to finished ready-to-use FREE \*911\* phones.

**Tip411**

Takoma Park Police Department joined the Tip411 program, which gives the ability to our residents to provide immediate, anonymous tips and intelligence to help fight crime. It's an application that engages the public as a force multiplier by creating awareness through community alerts and expanding our reach through social media.



### **Unity in the Community**

It is important to the Takoma Park Police Department to have meaningful interaction, open dialogue and strengthened relationships between community residents and the police officers who serve and protect them. The initiative was created as a plan of action to build upon the continuation of



community responses throughout the nation to unite local police departments with their communities into one collective voice. The initiative is a step Takoma Park has taken to create and strengthen relationships between the Takoma Park Police Department, elected city officials and community residents by expanding opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds to come together through community dialogue, relationship-building events, sustained partnerships and fundraising campaigns. Everyone in the community is encouraged to attend, volunteer or lend their services

### **Officers as Agents of the Landlord**



The Takoma Park Police Department offers a program in which landlords can contractually agree to allow police officers to act as agents for the purpose of enforcing trespassing laws. This allows the police department to warn and remove individuals from properties where they do not reside and where they are causing disturbances. If the

individual(s) returns, he/she is subject to arrest for violation of trespassing laws without the need to rely on the landlord having to appear in court. The program is a highly useful tool in combating chronic disorderly behavior, drug offenses and other nuisance violations that tend to center around apartment complexes and other business areas.

### **Vacant House Check**

Takoma Park Police Department offers free vacant house checks to residents. A Takoma Park Police Officer will visit a resident's home once a day during their absence and inspect the premises for any signs of suspicious activity. It provides the residents with some peace of mind if they will be away from their property for an extended period of time.

### **Police Chief's Advisory Board**

The Police Chief's Advisory Board was formed in October 2009. Members of the Board are briefed on all activities of the Police Department and bring issues and community concerns to the Chief's attention. Board members meet monthly with the Chief of Police and receive updated

advisories and alerts on crimes and are invited to department events. There are currently 11 members of the Chief's Advisory Board.

### **Shop with a Cop**

Takoma Park Police officers joined Hyattsville City Police with their Shop with a Cop event. The purpose of the event is to foster positive relationships between youth and officers. Young children are selected each year during the end of the year holiday season to shop at one of the local area stores to purchase gifts for members of their immediate family. After shopping, the children will eat lunch, wrap their gifts and continue to get to know the police officers.



### **Yes We Can Leadership Program**

Takoma Park Police started a youth mentoring program at one of the elementary schools in the City. The program focuses on teaching students how to become better leaders in life within their community.





### **Coffee with a Cop**

Takoma Park Police participate in Coffee with a Cop. It provides an opportunity for our residents and business owners to meet with our police officers in a non-threatening environment with no agenda. They ask questions, real conversations occur and strong relationships are built.



### **Pack the Patrol Car School Backpack Donation Drive**

Takoma Park Police participates in a school supplies donation drive. Local residents are asked to donate backpacks filled with school supplies for children in need. Officers deliver the filled backpacks to the schools prior to the start of the school year. School staff members determine the families most in need and present the students with those backpacks.



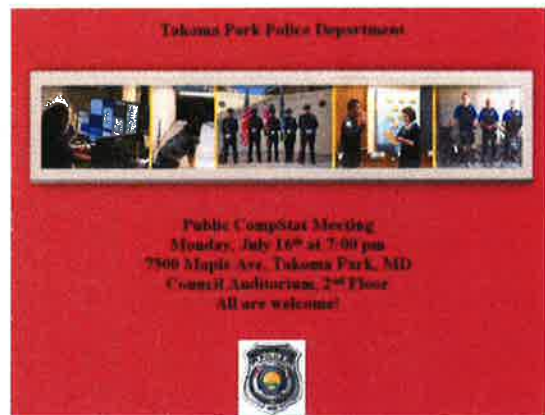
## International Walk to School Day

Takoma Park Police participates in Walk to School Day each year. This is a global event that involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and biking to school on the same day.



## Public Community CompStat Meeting

Takoma Park Police Chief held a public community CompStat Meeting. CompStat is a system to strategically manage law enforcement operations. The purpose of CompStat is to develop effective strategies to combat crime or other issues within a neighborhood, based on data analysis and accountability. It focuses on outcomes and is not used to measure productivity. The goal of CompStat is problem solving and, as a result, creating a safe community.





### Polar Bear Plunge

Takoma Park Police and Junior Explorers participated in the Polar Bear Plunge for Special Olympics. The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for persons two years of age and older with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.



### Winter Coat Drive

Each year, the Takoma Park Police Department holds a winter coat drive. The department collects clean, gently used warm coats in any size from infant to adult. The coats are donated to people in need.





### **Blanket/Towel Drive for Animal Shelters**

Each year, the Takoma Park Police Department holds a towel/blanket drive for animal shelters in need.



### **Click it or Ticket**

The Takoma Park Police Department participates in the statewide Chiefs' Challenge, which emphasizes safety restraint enforcement. Officers focus on enforcement of the state's seat belt laws as part of the nationwide "Click It or Ticket" campaign. Officers stand at various places throughout the City during the campaign in order to issue tickets to any person not wearing a seatbelt or who does not have their child properly restrained. They also educate the public on seatbelt usage and safety.

### **Distracted Driver Awareness**

Takoma Park Police participates in the 'National Distracted Driver Awareness,' campaign, focusing their efforts on distracted driving using traffic enforcement initiatives. Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving; this includes using a hand-held cell phone and texting.

This effort is part of a high-visibility enforcement initiative that combines intense enforcement with further educating the public of the dangers of distracted driving. The ultimate goal is to save lives by convincing motorists to obey the law.

Takoma Park Police continue their efforts beyond the campaign month to focus on drivers who are distracted using hand-held cell phones, or engaging in other distracting activities while driving.

### **Christmas Gift Donations for Youth**

Takoma Park Police officers coordinated a Christmas gift give-away to the members of the community who were less fortunate. An officer had been collecting and saving many die-cast police cars, sports memorabilia and other collectible items; some of which were worth a considerable amount of money. Those items were given away to the children in the community who would not otherwise have Christmas presents to open on Christmas Day. Officers spent a



considerable amount of time sorting and labeling all of items so that they could be given to the age appropriate children. They also personally delivered the gifts.

### Emergency Preparedness

The Takoma Park Police Department's Emergency Manager worked with the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security on many projects, including but not limited to:

Mosquito Task Force with multi-county agencies to educate the public and prevent Zika and other mosquito transmitted diseases.

Takoma Park Boy Scout Troop 33 did a mosquito outreach project in the late based on training and information from the emergency manager.

Nuclear Fallout Ingestion Pathway Plan based on a 50 mile radius from Calvert Cliffs Nuclear facility, effects and precautions.

Family unification plan for after an incident or disaster.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

County Emergency Operations Plan.

Worked with Montgomery County, Gaithersburg, Chevy Chase, Rockville, and other jurisdictions, to work with Everbridge Mass Notifications to better improve the alert system in the National Capital Region and share best practices for use on the Region's Alert System.



Represented the City on numerous conference calls in the winter and during the summer storms as the hurricanes tracked up the coast into the area, providing information to City management.

Participated in Takoma Park Emergency Preparedness Committee's outreach project events in the City, such as Celebrate Takoma, National Night Out, Folk Festival and the Street Festival. As part of the outreach to all, a quiz game and bean bag toss were used to help people understand the need to prepare.

Represented the City on the National Capital Regions Council of Governments Emergency Managers Committee. Committee discussions were centered on regional exercises, training and the yearly Threat Analysis to the region.

Trained City employees on the City response plan to shelter in place, lock down and best procedures for an active assailant attack.

Worked with the Volunteer Fire Department giving a safety presentation to members of the Takoma Park Adventist Church.

Participated in the Montgomery County Emergency Manager's Group meetings and the two training exercises at the Emergency Operations Center.

Met with the senior residents in the community to discuss emergency preparedness.

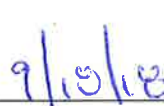


**Other Activities**

The Takoma Park Police Department also participates in various parades and social events., i.e., Fourth of July, Jazz Festival, Street Festival and Celebrate Takoma.

For more information on programs and services offered by the Takoma Park Police Department, please visit [www.takomaparkmd.gov/police](http://www.takomaparkmd.gov/police)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Antonio DeVaul  
Chief of Police

  
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Date