

## **Update on Middlefield Police Protection**

### **February, 2023**

#### **Police Protection**

Recently a lot of Middlefield residents have been asking about our town's police protection. Some folks question if we have enough police protection and should we increase the police presence to 24/7.

Middlefield and Rockfall already has 24/7 police protection. The Town of Middlefield has contracted with the Connecticut State Police to have two Resident Troopers. This contract provides Middlefield and Rockfall with two troopers who each work 40 hours a week; one on the day shift, one on the evening shift. Their days on and off rotate. Often their shifts are adjusted to weekends (when there is a town-wide event) or midnight shifts when there are stake-outs or an extraordinary need.

When our resident troopers are not on duty (scheduled time off, vacation, training, injury, sick, etc) our town is protected by Patrol 5 out of Troop F - Westbrook State Police Barracks. Patrol 5 exclusively covers Middlefield, Durham, and select state owned properties in Middletown. Patrol 5 runs 24/7 when Middlefield's resident troopers are not on duty. In other words, Patrol 5 is actually cruising through Middlefield, Durham, and the state properties during the graveyard shift and/or other times when our resident troopers aren't on duty. So, when you call 911 - anytime day or night – there is a trooper available in the immediate vicinity (not driving up from the shoreline). This is the same coverage we implemented many years ago when we eliminated our constable program. Periodic review of call volume with Troop F is conducted and based on call volume, it has been determined a third resident trooper is not warranted.

#### **State Police Activity**

Residents don't often see just how active our Resident Troopers and Patrol 5 are in Middlefield, or how many calls they receive. I am frequently in contact with the resident troopers and the barracks over the course of a month. I let them know your concerns and they inform me what they see happening in town and how they are addressing the issues.

The period from Thanksgiving through New Years is the quietest time of the year. The following information helps provide some insights into police activity in Middlefield during a quiet month.

#### **Monthly Statistics**

##### **Town of Middlefield**

##### **December 2022**

Motor Vehicle Accidents (Non-Injury)	3
Motor Vehicle Accidents (w/ Injury)	2
Motor Vehicle Accidents (Fatality)	0
DWI	1
Criminal Investigations	11
Traffic Stops	33
Motorist Assists (Disabled, Abandoned, etc.)	20
Patrol Checks (schools, roads, town/state prop., residential)	71
Medical (State Police Dispatched)	5
Alarms	16
Total Calls for Service	212

## Recent Criminal Activity

We have recently seen an increase in car burglaries and car thefts in Middlefield. Historically, burglaries and car thefts tend to come in waves and then subside as criminals target an area and then move on. Middlefield experienced 14 reported vehicle burglaries and 6 stolen vehicles in 2022. I refer to them as burglaries and not break-ins as no car was “broken into” – all of the cars involved had been left unlocked. I believe all 6 of the stolen vehicles were left unlocked and the owners’ keys left inside. Our Resident Trooper Matt O’Brien, reflecting on his over 10 years experience as a trooper, reports having only investigated one (1) vehicle theft in that time where the keys weren’t left in the vehicle.

Below are the Middlefield statistics for the past five (5) years on car burglaries and auto thefts. The town averages 5 stolen vehicles per year and 16.6 burglaries a year.

Year	Stolen Vehicles	Vehicle Burglaries
2018	7	25
2019	3	12
2020	7	21
2021	2	11
2022	<u>6</u>	<u>14</u>
TOTAL	25	83
Average	5	16.6

## What’s being done?

In addition to the existing 24/7 police patrols, we have taken the following actions:

- We continue to assess the areas of town experiencing the most 911 calls to assure those areas are most heavily patrolled.
- We have installed some surveillance cameras in order to help identify vehicles/people committing crimes (not just burglaries and auto thefts, but dirt bikes and ATVs on public roadways and public property). We are evaluating locations for expanding the number of surveillance devices.
- We have ordered materials and are in the process of scheduling meetings to establish/re-energize neighborhood watches – expect late February time frame.
- The Resident Trooper, our Emergency Management Director and I recently met with the Beseck Lake Neighborhood Watch to find out what was working and what help we could provide.
- We are installing/repositioning signs to remind folks to remove valuables from your vehicle, lock it, and take your keys.
- We are starting a campaign to encourage folks to call 911 - if you have an issue, the troopers need to know.

## What can you do?

Middlefield taxpayers spend over \$60,000 per year for the 911 service. We spend almost \$400,000 on police protection. It’s valuable, but baffling to see people on social media inform their neighbors of a suspicious vehicle in their neighborhood, report a package taken from their stoop, post a video of someone trying to open a locked vehicle; and never report it to police. If you see something – say something! But, say it by calling 911. Police will respond. The State Police allocate resources to Troop F based on number of calls and crimes committed. If you don’t want to dial 911, you can call the barracks directly at (860) 349-9685 – please program it in your phone so it’s available when you need it.

Leaving keys and valuables inside unlocked vehicles and not reporting criminal and suspicious activity to police, only serves to enable the criminals.

Here's what you can do to help us protect you, your property and our community:

- Take all valuables out of your vehicle.
- Take your keys out of your vehicle.
- Lock the vehicle when you leave it.
- Lock your doors when you leave your home.
- Call 911 to report suspicious activity, thefts, trespassing, attempted burglaries.
- Add the Troop F barracks number to your phone favorites.
- Join us for the Neighborhood Watch meeting when details are finalized.

We do live in a small safe community, but we must be mindful that there are those in town and from out of town that aren't respectful of other's property.

Stay vigilant. Stay safe.