

**Director William McVey:**

Director McVey joined Bensalem Township Police Department in 1998. He has spent the past 24 years in varying roles within the Department. These roles include K-9, Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Deputy Director. In his role as Public Safety Director, Director McVey is responsible for the management and operation of the Police Department, Bensalem Fire Rescue, and the coordination of Township Volunteer companies and Emergency Medical Services. In addition to his duties as Director, McVey serves as the second vice president of the PA Southeastern Chiefs of Police Association and is an Executive Board Member of the PA Chiefs of Police Association. Director McVey has a Master's from St. Joseph's University and is a graduate of the PERF's Senior Management Institute for Police, and Northwestern University School of Police and Command.

**Bensalem Township:**

Bensalem Township is an area of 21 square miles which is located between Philadelphia on the south and Bucks County on the northeast. Four major arteries travel through Bensalem which include Interstate 95, US Route 13, US Route 1, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Our current population is just shy of 65,000 residents. However, there is an estimated daytime population of 250,000. Bensalem Township has 19 hotels and motels with over 2,000 rooms and 39 apartment complexes. Bensalem is also the home of PARX Casino.

**Bensalem Township Police Department:**

Bensalem Township Police Department is recognized as one of the premier law enforcement agencies in Pennsylvania. We have over 100 sworn officers and over 150 total employees. We are the largest municipality and police department in Bucks County and we are internationally accredited through CALEA and state accredited through PLEAC. Bensalem Police Department is the only department in Bucks County to have the gold standard of CALEA Certification.

Bensalem Township Police Department's main priority is the safety and security of our residents, visitors, and those who travel through the Township. To help achieve our mission, the Bensalem Police Department embraces a very proactive stance on crime, crime reduction strategies, and state-of-the-art technologies to assist in their duties.

**Crime in Bensalem Township:**

Over the past several years, the Bensalem Township Police Department averages in excess of 60,000 calls for service per year. These 911 services are for all varieties of emergencies and also include the number of arrests and traffic stops in a given year. On average, Bensalem Police Officers stop between 10,000 and 14,000 vehicles each year. These vehicular stops are a great tool to enhance safety, detect crime, and deter crime. In addition to vehicle stops, Bensalem Police handle approximately 3,000 criminal arrests per year. This is the most in Bucks County.

In 2021, there were 3,863 crimes reported in Bensalem Township. This was a 12 % increase from 2020. Of those crimes, it should be noted that 1726 were Part 1 crimes, which include homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft, auto theft, and arson. These are the more serious crimes that we track and continually monitor as part of our efforts to keep our Township safe. The clearance rate for Part 1 crimes in Bensalem was 29% in 2021.

**Property Crimes:**

Like most suburban towns, Bensalem is affected most by property crimes. These include burglary, theft from autos, and retail theft. Our Township has seen significant rises in property crime over 2022. Specifically, theft from auto is up 50% and burglary is up over 100%. Many of these are crimes of opportunity. A large majority of these crimes have been thefts of catalytic converters and burglaries of storage facility units. Two examples of how devastating the impact of these crimes can be are as follows:

*Between April and September 2022, there were multiple catalytic converter thefts from Stroehmann Bakery in Bensalem. These thefts occurred on four separate dates and 42 Catalytic Converters were removed from their truck fleet, totaling a loss of \$84,000 to the company.*

*Between February and June 2022, there were at least 66 burglaries of Extra Space Storage Units in Bensalem Township. The suspect was ultimately identified as a Philadelphia resident. He was arrested and charged with numerous counts of burglary. The total value of his crimes is undetermined at this time but 66 individuals were victimized.*

**Violent Crime and Guns:**

Although we are more plagued by property crimes, it is violent crime that causes us more concern. Bordering a City with over 400 homicides and 1000 carjackings is alarming, especially when we see video images of it every day on the news. We have experienced an increase in robberies in 2022, but more significantly, we have seen an increase in the number of illegal firearms we have seized. In Bensalem, our illegal gun seizures are up 62% over the past two years. Many of these guns are seized as a result of our proactive measures and therefore prevent more shootings and tragedies from occurring. Three examples of recent seizures of illegal guns possessed by felons are as follows:

*In a 2021 incident, Bensalem Police responded to a shooting outside of one of our Wawa establishments. Upon police arrival, it was determined that 9 shots were fired outside the entrance toward the cashier's area. Fortunately, no one was struck or killed. The shooter fled on foot. While running from the police, the suspect pulled a firearm but was subdued by police without lethal force being used. The individual who fired nine shots into the Wawa, was recently released from Philadelphia's custody on unsecured bail after being charged with attempted homicide for another shooting. Why would an individual who attempted to kill someone with an illegal firearm be on the streets and have the opportunity to do the same act, just months later? This example clearly shows that the system is broken. I am pleased to say that that individual was later successfully prosecuted by Bucks County's District Attorney's Office and is now serving a state sentence for aggravated assault and for possessing an illegal firearm.*

*In a 2022 incident, Bensalem Police stopped a vehicle for a traffic violation. This investigation led to the officers discovering marijuana and an illegal firearm. The driver / suspect was a convicted felon who was out on bail from Philadelphia for a case where he was charged with illegally possessing a firearm. This is another case where an individual was out on bail from Philadelphia for a firearm offense and was later arrested in Bensalem for the same violation.*

*Again in 2022, an Officer made contact at a local hotel with a suspect who was wanted out of the City of Philadelphia for possession of an illegal firearm. After the suspect was taken into custody and a search warrant was obtained, officers located narcotics and an illegal firearm. Again, this suspect was a convicted felon and a person not to possess a firearm.*

After reviewing this statistical data and the case examples, we have to evaluate why this is occurring. First and foremost, we have to look at our neighboring city. The three cases I provided examples of clearly show what happens when you allow felons to be out on bail when they should be in prison. This is an ongoing problem with the Phila District Attorney's Office. The Phila District Attorney's Office has also de-criminalized retail thefts under \$500. This has had a devastating impact on retail establishments in the city as well as surrounding municipalities. A 29% increase in Bensalem is evidence of this. With little or no penalty, more criminals are committing retail thefts and other crimes.

Lastly, Philadelphia's Driver Equity Law allows criminals to drive with impunity. I believe we are seeing more illegal guns on car stops in suburban areas as a direct result of this. The criminal in Philadelphia no longer has to worry about being stopped by police unless they commit a moving violation. Vehicle stops are an effective tool for police to stop crime before it occurs and when you take that ability away, more crime and victimization are the result.

In Bensalem, 42% of the criminals we arrested in 2021 were Philadelphia residents. This number was 29% two years ago. This is a 13% increase and one that indicates the problems of Philadelphia are becoming the problems of suburban towns. We need to keep our police forces funded, strong, and proactive with the support of our District Attorney's Office to keep our communities safe.

As I was finishing typing this testimony on Friday, we had three male subjects rob an elderly patron at Boscov's and steal his car. The suspects fled from police south into Philadelphia before the pursuit had to be terminated due to the risk. This is yet again another example of how these dangerous criminals, who show no regard to the safety of our citizens and officers, continue to put our communities at risk.