



# Warrington Township Police



Daniel J. Friel • Chief of Police

October 14, 2022

MEMO TO: Pennsylvania House Majority Policy Committee

From: Daniel J. Friel, Chief of Police of Warrington Township

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To prepare for this discussion, I reviewed our Uniform Crime Reports from 2019 to present. Compiling this data is an ongoing task, so our records for 2022 are incomplete. They date only up until the beginning of October, and obviously, there are still a few months left in the year which will no doubt increase our numbers even further.

In looking over the statistics a few things jumped out at me that I'd like to share with the panel.

We've seen increases in nearly every category of crime that affects the average citizen or business owner in our township. These categories include: Robbery, Burglary, Thefts from Vehicles, Retail Thefts, Credit Card Fraud, and Identity Theft.

For example, there has already been a 363% increase in credit card fraud since last year. Just to show that last year wasn't an anomaly, it's also a 317% increase over the average of the past three years. Identity Theft is up 328% since last year, and again, that's a 216% increase over the average of the past three years.

These crimes stand out because they are not typically committed by people from our area. In most circumstances, criminals will come to Warrington, or other towns like ours, and attempt to defraud our business owners using fake or stolen ID's or stolen credit cards, typically driving cars with stolen or dead license plates that cannot be traced back to them.

We're attractive to criminals, in the sense that they are less likely to be recognized by people in our community, and they know police will not pursue most vehicles attempting to escape, due to the threat it poses to innocent people.

In some cases, the simple act of theft can become something much more dangerous. Our Target has been robbed, meaning physical violence was used in the commission of the crime, three times this year alone.

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, four suspects from Philadelphia assaulted a Target employee while stealing \$2400 worth of Cricut craft machines from the store. Luckily, one of our officers was in the area investigating a traffic accident when they fled, and all four were apprehended.

That same month, three suspects came down to Target from Staten Island NY and filled up multiple pillowcases of merchandise. When they were confronted, they sprayed a customer inside the store with bear spray. Again, luckily, police were in the area and the suspects were taken into custody. We discovered that same subjects had committed a similar crime the night before in Montgomery Township.

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, two suspects wearing hats and masks threw a store employee to the ground so that they could escape with two large storage bins filled with \$19,000 worth of Apple products. The vehicle the suspects fled in came back to Rochelle Park, NJ.

Due to the large amount of businesses located in Warrington, we are also an attractive target for drug addicts. Our officers have interviewed countless addicts who say they steal items up here, then sell those items to bodega owners in the city, all so they can use the money to buy drugs.

We've already had 136% more retail thefts committed in Warrington this year than last year. That's a 115% increase over the last three years averaged together, and the holiday season has not even begun yet.

This type of behavior is not new. Hard drugs have always created a desperation in their users and to support their habit, they've always sought out sources of money. What appears to be changing, however, are the drugs.

We first learned about "xylazine" in 2019 in a report issued by the DEA. It mentions how xylazine, a veterinary tranquilizer meant for horses and cattle, was being added to heroin in Puerto Rico. The next report came in 2022, when the FBI issued a nationwide request for any agency with information on the drug. Their request stated that the drug had been turning up more often in toxicology reports around the country. The drug began quickly taking root in Philadelphia. By September, I was advised that xylazine, or, "tranq" as it was being called on the streets was responsible for 34% of the fatal overdoses in the city, and that Narcan was ineffective in reversing it.

And just like anything else in the city, it would not be long before it showed up here.

That same month, several subjects stole multiple items from Wegmans and were stopped by Warrington police on Easton Road. Both males involved in the thefts had open wounds on their arms that were so extensive that our officers could see tissue, nerves, and bone. One of the subjects advised us that his arm was supposed to be amputated, but both refused any kind of medical treatment.

Unfortunately, new drugs are not the only item of concern we inherit from Philadelphia.

Everyone is aware of the alarming trend of carjackings that have plagued the city and surrounding areas this year. On June 13<sup>th</sup>, it happened here. Three suspects, two from Philadelphia, attempted to rob a motorist in Doylestown, and when that failed, they came south on 611 and attacked someone at the Lukoil at Easton and Bristol and stole his car. Fortunately, Warrington police, with the help of one of our K9 units, were able to catch them and take all three into custody.

In Halloween of 2021, our region experienced a new kind of criminal activity, where a large group of thieves broke into homes all within a single night throughout Bucks and Montgomery County. In Warrington alone, they committed four burglaries within what appeared to be an hour. That group was later identified as being a South American crime ring, coming down from New York.

In August of this year, a different group came to Warrington. This group committed 4 burglaries, stole 3 cars, and broke into 17 different vehicles. What we discovered, through investigation, is that the thieves were seeking out open vehicles to steal from. If they encountered a garage door opener inside the unlocked car, they used it to make entry into people's homes to steal more things. Once inside the house, if they could locate a set of car keys, they'd steal the car as well.

The same group committed similar crimes throughout the Central Bucks area, Delaware County, and New Jersey. Cars stolen during these events were later recovered in Doylestown, Philadelphia, and New Castle County, Delaware.

Aside from the other criminal trends I've mentioned, this year we've seen a marked increase in catalytic converter thefts. This year alone we've investigated the thefts of 24 catalytic converters that were cut out from parked vehicles. The vehicles were sometimes left for just a few minutes while their owner went into a store, sometimes parked in front of their residences overnight, and sometimes part of large groups of vehicles owned by businesses in our area.

In one instance just a few days ago, County Line Fence had five catalytic converters stolen in a single night. The estimated cost of repairing the trucks was \$24,000.

Warrington Township is extremely fortunate to have a police department that is fully staffed and equipped with the resources it needs to provide the highest quality law enforcement service possible. Aside from our patrol division, we have a detective division of expert investigators, a K9 division with dogs specially trained for narcotics and explosives detection, a highway unit to keep motorists safe, and both a SWAT team and MERT team, made up of our officers and others from surrounding agencies, for emergency situations. This is the key reason why most of the major crimes I've described above resulted in the swift arrest of the suspects involved.

Successfully combating crime requires a synergistic relationship between law enforcement and the entire community. Give us the means to support our efforts and we can continue to protect and serve in the manner you've come to expect, regardless of whatever challenges we may face going forward.

# WARRINGTON TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT CRIME STATS

## CRIME STATS 2019-2021

YEAR	ROBBERY	BURG	TFV	RETAIL	CC FRAUD	ID THEFT
2019	5	12	4	89	16	10
2020	1	9	34	133	11	15
2021	3	8	14	87	11	7

## THREE YEAR AVERAGE 2019-2021

3 YEAR AVG	ROBBERY	BURG	TFV	RETAIL	CC FRAUD	ID THEFT
	3	9.6	17.3	103	12.6	10.6

## CRIME STATS FOR 2022 AS OF 10/1/22

YEAR	ROBBERY	BURG	TFV	RETAIL	CC FRAUD	ID THEFT
2022	4	12	16	119	40	23

**ROBBERY:** 130% over 2021 and last three year avg

**BURGLARY:** 150% over 2021, 125% over last three year avg

**THEFT FROM VEHICLE:** 114% over 2021, no increase over last three year avg

**RETAIL THEFT:** 136% over 2021, 115% increase over last three year avg

**CREDIT CARD FRAUD:** 363% over 2021, 317% over last three year avg

**ID THEFT:** 328% over 2021, 216% over last three year avg

# Biography

Chief Daniel J. Friel began his law enforcement career in 2000 after being sworn as a Warrington Township Police Officer. Chief Friel climbed the ranks quickly with achieving Patrol Sergeant in 2007, Lieutenant in 2013, and Deputy Chief in 2015. That same year, he was promoted to Chief of Police, as only the 4<sup>th</sup> Chief of Police in Warrington Township history.

Throughout his career, Chief Friel received specialized training in leadership, command, supervision, field training, SWAT, counter terrorism, criminal investigations, and narcotics. In 2005, Chief Friel was an original founding member and organizer of the Bucks County SWAT HAZMAT team.

Chief Friel is a graduate of the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Command Institute and the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command. In 2015, Chief Friel was selected to attend the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

In 2020, with support from the Township, Chief Friel successfully completed the largest capital building project in Township history when the department moved into a brand new 18,500 square foot state of the art police facility.

In 2021, Chief Friel accomplished the goal of certifying the Warrington Township Police Department as a Pennsylvania State Accredited Law Enforcement Agency.

Developing and maintaining a positive professional reputation with the community is both a long-term goal and top priority for the police department under his administration.