



NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Police Service Board Report

PUBLIC AGENDA

Subject: Annual Report – Property Offences (including Break & Enter) - January 1 to December 31, 2024

Report To: Chair and Members, Niagara Police Service Board

Report Date: 2025-04-25

Recommendation(s)

That the Niagara Regional Police Service Board (Board) receive this report for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to advise the Board that the Niagara Regional Police Service (Service) is in compliance with By-Law 457-2024 – Property Offences (including Break & Enter).
- By-Law 457-2024 contains provisions requiring the Chief of Police to report specific information in order to ensure compliance with legislative guidelines.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial implications relating to the recommendations contained within this report.

Analysis

In accordance with By-Law 457-2024, the Chief shall make a written report to the Board on or before August 30 of each year in respect of investigations into property offences. The report shall include:

- a) A summary of the written procedures concerning property offence investigations;
- b) The status of Service compliance with the said procedures; and
- c) A summary of crime prevention initiatives for property crime.

This Board Report will outline each of the above and confirm our compliance with the By-Law.

- a) *“...a summary of written procedures concerning property offence investigations...”*

Written procedures regarding Property Offences are found in the following Service General Orders (GOs):

- GO - 095.10 – Major Incidents and Routine Criminal Investigations
- GO - 121.12 – Forensic Services Unit
- GO - 035.13 – Evidence and Property Management
- GO - 037.08 – Fire Calls and Arson Investigations
- GO - 034.12 – Report Submissions

These orders detail the responsibilities of officers when investigating property offences. They were prepared and approved to comply with Adequacy and Effective Policing Regulations LE-006, LE-020, LE-030, LE-042, and ER-004.

GO 095.10 – Major Incidents and Routine Criminal Investigations - identifies the duties and responsibilities of officers conducting routine criminal offences. It also outlines the process to be followed when involved in incidents deemed to be of a major nature. The order outlines the duties and responsibilities of officers who respond to the scenes of crimes, as well as those who undertake follow-up investigations – particularly members assigned to investigative units. The provisions contained in the order effectively address Section 5.1 (a) of By-Law 457–2024, a summary of the written procedures concerning property offence investigations.

GO 121.12 – Forensic Services Unit - was written to assist with the investigation of most types of occurrences where the collection and preservation of physical evidence is appropriate. The order emphasizes the responsibility of the first officer at the scene of an occurrence to ensure proper measures are taken to guard against the contamination of evidence. The order reinforces the need for officers to determine whether a Scenes of Crime Officer, or Forensic Services Officer, is required for a more detailed examination of evidence. Moreover, the order provides a sequential list of considerations that should be entertained by officers undertaking investigations: criteria for examining stolen vehicles, preliminary examination at break and enter crime scenes, seizing exhibits, factors affecting the retrieval of crime scene fingerprints and footwear comparison, and use of mug shots and lineups.

GO 035.13 – Evidence and Property Management - expands on the duties and responsibilities of officers investigating property offences by establishing procedures for the control of evidence/property seized by members of the Service pursuant to the Community Safety and Policing Act, peripheral regulations, and/or federal statutes. The order directs members to properly document and submit, without delay, seized items to the Service's Evidence Management Unit. This includes all evidence/property that is acquired, either directly or indirectly by reason of their duties unless otherwise permitted by this GO, with the exception of licit and illicit drugs and motor vehicles, which are dealt with by way of other Service GOs.

GO 037.08 – Fire Calls and Arson Investigations - identifies the structure, operation, and responsibilities of detectives investigating arson. Additionally, the order establishes the requirement for Service members to liaise, and work in partnership, with the fire departments investigators, members of the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office, and where necessary, personnel from other police services. Lastly, the order directs members of District Detective Offices to monitor fire-related occurrences and arson reports identifying similarities, patterns, and suspects; coordinate, as required, any program or project to combat serial arsons; maintain files on all arson suspects; and monitor any identified high-risk individuals.

GO 034.12 – Report Submissions - was written to ensure that all members adhere to the Service policies that are in place to address the establishment of procedures on records management, including the collection, security, retention, use, disclosure, and destruction of records, in accordance with the requirements of appropriate legislation.

b) *“...the status of Service compliance with the said procedures...”*

Numerous systems have been implemented to ensure Service members' compliance with the previously mentioned orders. GO 034.11 - Report Submissions, requires officers to submit a report when a criminal offence has been committed or alleged to have been committed. Officers will also report any incidents identified by the Service, or any member, as being worthy of documentation for future reference. The criteria for reporting include property offence investigations.

Section 3.10 stipulates that each submitted report must reviewed by a supervisor in order to ensure accuracy of information contained within the report, as well as adherence to the Service's standard of information conveyance.

GO 095.10 – Major Incidents and Routine Criminal Investigations - obligates the district detective staff sergeant or detective sergeant to review all occurrence reports submitted by members under their command, and return occurrence reports to officers for follow-up investigation, where required. The order also requires the above-referenced supervisory member to review all occurrence reports pertaining to criminal investigations and return them to the original investigating officer, or re-assign as necessary, to a detective for follow-up investigation.

The order also identifies supervisor's guidelines for case management. Supervisors are required to review each incident and determine whether further resources are appropriate. Each incident is assigned a priority between one and three based on criteria identified in the order. Priority one investigations shall take precedence over priority two occurrences, and so on. The priority system ensures that all occurrence reports are reviewed and receive the required attention and follow-up. The Service's Quality Assurance Unit ensures that property offence calls are properly coded so that statistical data may be accurately captured.

c) *“...a summary of crime prevention initiatives for property crime...”*

Service crime prevention initiatives were continued in 2024 are as follows:

Social Media and Mainstream Media Outreach – Service social media accounts, using various platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, are used to ensure public awareness and provide education related to crime prevention. The #9pmRoutine is an example of messaging being delivered to the public, using social media, to remind them to lock up their homes and vehicles for the night, and secure their valuables. Mainstream media is utilized when issuing media releases, and public awareness and education is delivered in newspapers, radio, and television.

Lock It or Lose It – this campaign is a crime prevention initiative that seeks to encourage drivers and passengers to take precautions to protect their vehicles and their contents from theft. Police officers will normally attend busy parking lots and/or areas where thefts from vehicles have been reported. Officers will ensure vehicles are secured and education pamphlets will be left for vehicle owners regarding the campaign, and the importance of protecting their vehicles and their contents.

529 Garage – this campaign is a community watch for bicycles. It is a program that captures all the essential information about your bicycle including serial numbers, photos, and the owner information. It is a resource of law enforcement to search for stolen or missing bicycles, which has helped recover bicycles and return them to their owners. Additionally, the campaign acts as a public awareness initiative, informing people that bicycle thefts do occur, and to take measures to secure them.

Foot Patrols – Region-wide, frontline officers continue to conduct focused foot patrols in designated areas. These patrols provide an opportunity for our community partners and members of the public, to speak with officers and engage in meaningful discussions, which includes crime prevention and education.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) – CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach to crime prevention, fundamentally based upon the theory and belief that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in crime-related incidents and the fear of crime and improve the quality of life. In 2024, police constables continue to receive CPTED training, and our Community Oriented Response & Engagement officers, routinely provide CPTED assessments to focused areas and premises affected by crime.

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable.

Relationship to Police Service/Board Strategic Priorities

To comply with the provisions of Board By-Laws and to maintain compliance with Adequacy and Effective Policing Regulations.

Relevant Policy Considerations

Board By-Law No. 457-2024 – Property Offences (including Break & Enter)

GO - 095.10 – Major Incidents and Routine Criminal Investigations

GO - 121.12 – Forensic Services Unit

GO - 035.13 – Evidence and Property Management

GO - 037.08 – Fire Calls and Arson Investigations

GO - 034.12 – Report Submissions

This report was prepared by Brian Bleich, Staff Sergeant, 3 District Detective Office, reviewed by Dave Gomez, Inspector, 3 District and Shaun Parrent, Superintendent, Community Services. Recommended by Mario Lagrotteria, Deputy Chief, Community Services.



Submitted by:

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Chief of Police

Appendices

Not applicable.