

PUBLIC SAFETY INSIDER

Dedicated. Professional. Always Ready — Atlantic City Public Safety

Inside the Issue

Get a sneak peek at what's inside this month's edition:

- **Chief's Corner:**
Updates, insights, and words of encouragement from our Chiefs, sharing priorities and perspectives with our teams.
- **Community Calendar:**
Stay informed about upcoming events and important dates happening in our community this month.
- **Spotlight on Service:**
Recognizing exemplary work and outstanding contributions from individuals and teams across all departments. See who's been making a difference!
- **Wellness Highlight:**
Tips and guidance for staying healthy, resilient, and supported during the holiday season.
- **Safety Tips:**
Essential advice for keeping you and your family safe, with practical tips for home, travel, and winter preparedness.



ACFD assisting community members during the winter storm

WELCOME

Happy New Year! As 2026 begins, the Atlantic City Police Department, Fire Department, and Beach Patrol continue to build on last year's achievements while staying focused on serving and protecting our community. This edition highlights key accomplishments, operational milestones, and program successes that demonstrate the dedication and teamwork of our public safety teams.

January is a time to reflect and plan for the year ahead. We celebrate our personnel's hard work and look forward to continued collaboration, training, and innovation. Thank you for your commitment and professionalism in keeping Atlantic City safe for residents, visitors, and colleagues alike.

Safety Tip: Winter Safety

Winter weather creates hazards for pedestrians and drivers. Wear shoes with good traction, walk carefully on icy or snowy sidewalks, and stay aware of your surroundings. When driving, reduce speed, leave extra space between vehicles, and allow time to reach your destination. Planning ahead and staying cautious helps keep your family and community safe all season long.



Atlantic City Police Department

Spotlight on Service

In December 31, 2025, the Atlantic City Police Department's Charlie 1 Platoon executed a critical citywide patrol on New Year's Eve, demonstrating exceptional professionalism and teamwork. The platoon maintained full staffing, with no officers calling out sick, and additional personnel from Bravo 1, B2, TDU, and VICE volunteering to extend their hours or join the platoon to ensure coverage and rapid response.

During this high-demand shift, Charlie 1 achieved the following operational outcomes:

- **Arrests:** A total of twelve arrests were made, including five DUI arrests by Officers Danny Rodriguez, Atiqul Islam, and Michael Gunsser, and seven additional arrests for possession of controlled substances, domestic violence assault, weapons violations, and apprehension of a male wanted for home invasion.
- **Collaboration:** Officers from multiple units worked seamlessly as one platoon, ensuring full coverage of Atlantic City during one of the year's busiest nights.

ACPD responded to 172 calls between 8PM and 8AM.



This Month in Pictures



Photos courtesy of Sgt. Mohammed Kaiser.

Toy Run & Distribution Day | December, 22, 2025

A day of holiday giving: ACPD NCOs traveled through local communities, while the School Resource Officers delivered toys directly to students in local schools.



A Message from the Police Chief

Chief's Corner

As we enter 2026, the Atlantic City Police Department is stepping into a new era of public safety technology powered by artificial intelligence. As highlighted in Mayor Small's 2026 State of the City address, ACPD is partnering with **AXON** on a major initiative that will modernize how we respond, investigate, and protect our community.

A key component of this effort is the introduction of an **Autonomous Drone as First Responder (DFR) program**, allowing drones to be deployed immediately to priority calls and provide real-time aerial awareness before officers arrive, enhancing safety and situational awareness.

ACPD will also implement advanced technologies, including the **Axon AI ERA Bundle, Fusus, and Prepared**, which will streamline report writing, evidence management, training, and real-time crime center operations, reducing administrative workload and allowing officers to focus more on policing and community engagement.

Additionally, ACPD will begin deploying the **TASER 10**, AXON's latest less-lethal device, offering increased range and improved accuracy to further support our officers and public safety.

This partnership represents a significant investment in our officers, our technology, and the future of policing in Atlantic City.

Chief James Sarkos

Stay Safe, Stay Ready: Tips for Surviving the Winter Weather

Winter Storm Preparedness

Winter storms can arrive quickly and create dangerous conditions, from heavy snow and ice to power outages and extreme cold. Preparing in advance and knowing how to stay safe during the storm can protect you, your family, and your home. The following guidance provides practical steps for winter readiness, including assembling essential supplies, protecting your household, and avoiding common hazards.

GETTING READY FOR WINTER STORMS

Getting Ready

- **Stay informed:** Monitor local weather and news, even if the power goes out. Use a battery-powered or hand-crank radio and keep backup phone chargers.
- **Plan ahead:** Know where you'll go, how you'll get there, and what to take if your home loses heat.
- **Pets:** Make sure they have food, water, and safe shelter.
- **Reconnect with loved ones:** Write down important phone numbers in case of separation.

Gather Supplies

- **Go-kit:** Three days of essentials to carry, including batteries and chargers for devices like phones, CPAPs, or wheelchairs.
- **Stay-at-home kit:** Two weeks of food and water, one month of medications and medical supplies if possible.
- **Customize:** Include diapers, formula, wipes, pet food, leashes, carriers, or photos of pets.
- **Other essentials:** Snow shovel, ice-melting products, warm clothing, emergency supplies for your car (blankets, boots, first aid kit).



Winter storms can create dangerous conditions for everyone. By staying informed, preparing your home and go-kits, checking on neighbors, and taking proper precautions, you can help keep yourself and your family safe. Remember to plan ahead, protect pets, and have emergency supplies ready for power outages or extreme cold.

This guidance and all information in this section are provided by the American Red Cross to help you prepare for winter weather safely.

STAYING SAFE DURING THE STORM

Winter Safety

- Stay warm indoors
- Use space heaters and fireplaces safely; keep flammable items at least three feet away and turn off heaters when unattended.
- Dress in layers, including coat, hat, mittens, water-resistant boots, and scarves.
- Walk carefully on ice and snow; avoid overexertion while shoveling.

Power Outages

- Leave one light on to know when power returns.
- Use flashlights or battery lanterns instead of candles.
- Check on neighbors and loved ones.
- Keep food cold; discard perishable items above 40°F.

Generators

- Never run a generator indoors or plug it into a wall outlet.
- Keep it outside, away from doors/windows, and plug appliances directly.

Frostbite & Hypothermia

- Watch for numbness, pain, skin color changes, shivering, confusion, and drowsiness.
- Seek medical care immediately if these signs appear.

Frozen Pipes

- Open cabinet doors to circulate warm air.
- Let exposed pipes drip slightly.

Atlantic City Fire Department

Strengthening the Fleet: New Apparatuses in Service

ACFD Welcomes New Ladder and Engine

The Atlantic City Fire Department is kicking off the year with two exciting additions to its fleet. Ladder 2 and Engine 8 are now in service, helping firefighters respond faster and more effectively across the city.

Ladder 2 will primarily serve Ducktown and Chelsea, while Engine 8 is designed to access the Boardwalk, Piers, and Beach Areas, locations where traditional engines are too heavy to operate. Ladder 2 is a 100' Rosenbauer Tractor Drawn Aerial, fully equipped for structure fires, vehicle accidents, water rescues, and elevator emergencies. Engine 8 combines the water flow and pumping capabilities of a full-size engine with a smaller, lightweight design to improve access to tight or restricted areas.

“The addition of this new ladder is a significant asset to the department,” said Deputy Victor Chief Logan. “It also provides us with a reserve apparatus, ensuring we have a backup ladder available to support additional responses during emergencies.”

Both apparatuses were officially welcomed during a ceremony at Fire Station 4, attended by Mayor Marty Small, Sr., Chief Scott Evans, department leadership, and firefighters. Ladder 2 and Engine 8 were pushed into the station as part of a longstanding fire service tradition, symbolizing their official placement into service.

With these additions, the Atlantic City Fire Department strengthens its ability to respond to emergencies citywide. Whether it’s a fire in a residential neighborhood or an incident along the Boardwalk, these new apparatuses provide crews with the tools they need to keep the community safe.



Photos courtesy of Edward Lea

Atlantic City Police Department

Spotlight on Service

On December 11, 2025, around 14:00, officers responded to a call involving a male in crisis on the top level of a casino parking garage. Upon arrival, Sergeant John Waddell observed the individual seated on the edge of the roof. Sergeant Waddell and Officer Brent Dooley immediately responded to the upper level of the garage, while Officers Braxton and Johnson secured ground posts, and additional units closed off the surrounding area as a safety precaution.

On the roof, Officers La'Quay Green, Ahmed Waqar, and Justin Peyton engaged the individual in conversation. Sergeant Waddell and Officer Dooley assisted, and through calm communication and coordinated efforts, the individual was safely guided away from the ledge after allowing Officer Waqar to take hold of his hand. Detectives Kaplin-Caldwell and Robert Carty responded to the scene, and the individual was transported by ambulance to the hospital for further evaluation.

While on scene, officers were contacted by individuals concerned for the male's well-being, who advised that supportive resources would be available to him following his release. Sergeant Waddell later spoke with the individual at the hospital to relay this information. All officers involved responded quickly and professionally, demonstrating teamwork and compassion while assisting an individual in crisis.



This Month in Pictures



Autonomous Drone Demonstration | January 21, 2026

Mayor Small highlighted the Drone as First Responder program for Public Safety Departments during the State of the City Address with a live demonstration.



Photo courtesy of Chief Downey



A Message from the Beach Patrol Chief

Chief's Corner

As the off-season continues, the Atlantic City Beach Patrol remains hard at work preparing for the next summer season. While our guards are no longer stationed on the sand, the winter months are an important time for planning, preparation, and reflection.

During this period, our focus is on training development, equipment evaluation, and continued coordination with our public safety partners. These efforts allow us to build on the success of last season and ensure we are ready to return to active operations when the beaches reopen.

As we move through the winter, preparations are also underway for recruitment for the **2026 Beach Patrol season**, which will begin in February. We look forward to welcoming a strong mix of returning veteran guards and new recruits who are interested in public service, teamwork, and lifesaving.

Although the shoreline is quiet this time of year, the work behind the scenes continues. We remain committed to maintaining the high standards of safety and professionalism that protect our residents and visitors each summer.

See you on the beach

Chief Steve Downey

Atlantic City Fire & Police Departments

Spotlight on Service

The Atlantic City Fire Department and Atlantic City Police Department personnel responded swiftly to a report of a man in distress in the water near the Rhode Island Avenue Beach jetty on December 31, 2025. Firefighters arriving on scene observed the individual floating beyond the jetty and immediately initiated a cold-water rescue under the direction of Battalion Chief Kenton T. Brookings. Firefighter Dominic Gitto entered the water using a rescue longboard and continued lifesaving efforts despite the individual becoming combative and armed with a concealed screwdriver. Additional fire resources arrived by watercraft as crews worked through challenging conditions, including rough surf and freezing temperatures.

During the operation, Firefighter Gitto suffered hypothermia and was transported for treatment before being released later that day. As the rescue continued, Atlantic City Police Officers Justin Peyton, Scott M. Sendrick, Nickolas Cardani, Jerae Langford, and Sergeants Annese K. Parks and Valmir Loga entered the water to assist fire personnel, safely gaining control of the individual and taking him into custody. The incident underscored the exceptional teamwork, training, and courage displayed by Atlantic City's first responders in a highly dangerous and unpredictable situation. Both departments commend all personnel involved for their decisive actions, coordination, and commitment to public safety.



Stay Strong, Stay Consistent

Practical Steps to Start the Year Right

By Sgt. David Shapiro, ACPD



A new year brings a natural reset, but for Police and Fire, January does not mean a slower pace. Calls continue, schedules remain demanding, and the job still requires your best. Rather than chasing extreme New Year's resolutions, a more effective approach is focusing on intentional, sustainable goals that support health, performance, and quality of life over time.

Set Goals That Work With the Job

The most successful goals are not the most aggressive—they are the most realistic. As you think about the year ahead, consider what would improve how you feel physically, reduce stress at work or at home, and support longevity in this profession. Focus on one or two priorities instead of trying to change everything at once.

A practical way to stay on track is by using SMART goals:

- **Specific:** Be clear about what you want to improve
- **Measurable:** Track progress, even if it's simple
- **Achievable:** Fit it into your real schedule
- **Relevant:** Support health and performance
- **Time-Bound:** Set a target date

For example, "work out more" becomes "train three days per week through March," and "spend more time with family" becomes "schedule one uninterrupted family meal or activity each week through March."

Consistency Over Perfection

Missed workouts, overtime, and family commitments will happen. That is part of this profession. The focus should be on consistency over time, not perfection. Small habits done regularly are more effective than short bursts of motivation.

Sleep, hydration, mobility, and stress management are essential. Support resources, including Resiliency Program Officers and peer support, are available when needed. Reaching out reflects awareness and professionalism.

January is not about reinventing yourself overnight. It is about setting a direction and taking the first step.

Atlantic City Police Department

Spotlight on Service

Two Atlantic City Police Department officers were recently recognized in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, one of the most widely read law enforcement publications in the world, reaching over 200,000 criminal justice professionals each month in more than 100 countries. The Bulletin highlights best practices, training insights, and examples of exemplary service, and this recognition showcases the courage and professionalism of Atlantic City's officers.

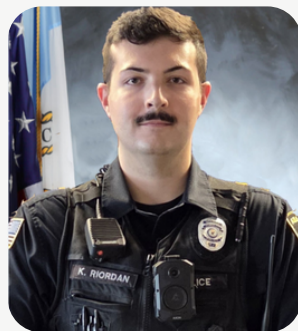
The feature focused on Sergeant Jonathan Walsh and Officer Kyle Riordan and their heroic response to a teenager caught in a rip current. One summer evening, the young swimmer was being pulled out to sea when Sergeant Walsh and Officer Riordan were among the first to arrive. Without hesitation, Sergeant Walsh removed his duty gear and entered the water to secure the struggling teen. Officer Riordan entered moments later to assist in bringing the teenager safely back to shore. Additional officers soon joined to ensure the rescue was completed safely, and the victim was promptly treated by EMS and transported to the hospital.

This recognition underscores the quick thinking, teamwork, and bravery displayed by ACPD officers in unpredictable and dangerous situations. Sergeant Walsh and Officer Riordan's actions are a powerful example of the department's commitment to protecting residents and visitors alike.

To read the full article in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, visit: <https://leb.fbi.gov/bulletin-highlights/bulletin-notes>



Sergeant Jonathan Walsh



Officer Kyle Riordan



This Month in Pictures



Photos courtesy of Sgt. Mohammed Kaiser.

Moose Lodge Holiday Event Sponsored by Retired ACPD Officer | December 2025

Atlantic City Rescue Mission and families enjoyed the Moose Lodge holiday party, sponsored by retired ACPD Officer Heidi Clayton and her organization, Four on the Floor Dog Training, with support from ACPD (including Chief Sarkos, Sergeant Kevin Law, NCOs) and Santa (Officer J. Inganito).

This Month in Pictures



Photos courtesy of Sgt. Mohammed Kaiser.

Three Kings Day Celebration | January 14, 2026

ACPD NCOs, NCO Lieutenant Wilber Santiago, Officer David White, and Officer Syed Shah participate in Three Kings Day Celebration hosted by the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County.

Atlantic City Beach Patrol

Inside the Winter Shop: How Atlantic City Beach Patrol Prepares Its Lifeboat Fleet

During the off-season, when Atlantic City's beaches are quiet and the ocean looks deceptively calm, the work of the Atlantic City Beach Patrol shifts indoors. Inside the Beach Patrol's maintenance space at The Compound, Chief Steve Downey and Deputy Chief Dave Russo spend the winter months rebuilding the backbone of summer ocean rescues: the patrol's lifeboat fleet.

The Beach Patrol operates approximately 55 lifeboats, and after a full season of heavy use, nearly all of them return with some level of damage. At any given time, Chief Downey and Russo are typically working on three to four boats at once. Repairs range from patching cracks and replacing fiberglass to inserting plywood reinforcements where the boats have taken repeated impacts from surf, sandbars, and hard rescues.

Chief Downey has been with the Beach Patrol since 1988 and is entering his 12th year as Chief. Deputy Chief Russo, who joined the Beach Patrol in 1977, brings decades of experience to the shop floor. Each winter, the fleet undergoes extensive inspection and repair to ensure every boat is structurally sound and ready before the first lifeguard stand is placed in late spring. Th inspections and repairs are handled by Deputy Chief Russo and Lieutenant Michael Garry.

The lifeboats are a critical tool for Beach Patrol lifeguards, especially in Atlantic City, where large numbers of visitors may be unfamiliar with ocean conditions. Language barriers, rough surf, frequent rip currents, and the city's unique beach topography all increase the complexity of rescues. When seconds matter, lifeguards rely on equipment that is dependable and battle-ready.

Established in 1891, the Atlantic City Beach Patrol is the first municipally paid professional lifeguard force in the United States and maintains a renowned and unequalled ocean safety record. That legacy is built not only on training and experience, but on quiet winter work like this —long before the crowds arrive.



Atlantic City Fire Department

Spotlight on Service

AC Firefighter Brings Mentorship and Opportunity to Atlantic City Youth Through Wrestling Program

Atlantic City Fire Department firefighter Marcus Holmes is extending his commitment to service beyond emergency response through his nonprofit youth initiative, *Pin the City Wrestling*. Now in his second year with the department, Holmes founded the organization approximately two and a half years ago to provide free wrestling instruction, mentorship, and positive structure for Atlantic City youth. Pin the City Wrestling is a Police Athletic League (PAL) program offered at no cost to families and supported through grants, fundraising efforts organized by Holmes, and community partnerships. Recently, the program received a significant boost with the donation of \$15,000 wrestling mats from the Atlantic City Police Foundation.

A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Holmes moved to Atlantic City at age 16 to live with his father after experiencing behavioral challenges. "I was getting into a lot of trouble, and wrestling really helped turn things around for me," Holmes said. That experience shaped his belief in the power of mentorship and discipline—values that closely align with his role in the fire service.

What began with just twelve children and no uniforms has grown into a steady team of 45 wrestlers, with several dozen additional youth regularly attending practices and training sessions. Holmes' 13-year-old daughter is also involved as a member of the Lions wrestling team. Last month, Holmes invited several Atlantic City firefighters to attend a practice ahead of the Lions' first match against Egg Harbor Township, where firefighters brought snacks, sports drinks, and words of encouragement, reinforcing the strong connection between the Fire Department and the young athletes.

Through *Pin the City Wrestling*, Holmes and his fellow firefighters are helping provide structure, support, and positive role models for Atlantic City youth—demonstrating that service to the community continues long after the call ends.



Photo courtesy of Marcus Holmes



A Message from the Fire Chief

Chief's Corner

The coldest months of the year always test our resilience, and January has certainly been no exception. From frigid temperatures to icy conditions, our firefighters, officers, dispatchers, and support staff face added challenges on every call—yet they continue to perform with skill, professionalism, and dedication.

Over the past month, our teams have responded to a wide range of emergencies, including high-rise fires, water rescues, and medical calls in difficult weather conditions. Each operation has highlighted the importance of coordination, training, and teamwork—not just within our department, but with partner agencies across the city. These efforts protect residents, visitors, and each other while reinforcing the trust the community places in us every day.

Even in these harsh winter months, our teams continue to respond to the many challenges the season brings. Whether assisting residents and visitors during emergencies or navigating difficult conditions, our firefighters approach every call with skill, professionalism, and dedication. Their teamwork and commitment keep our community safe and reflect the strength of this department.

As we continue through the winter months, I encourage everyone to stay vigilant, look out for one another, and take the necessary precautions both on and off duty. Thank you for your hard work, dedication, and commitment to keeping Atlantic City safe—no matter the weather.

Chief Scott Evans

Atlantic City Fire & Police Departments

Spotlight on Service

On January 14, 2026, during the early morning hours, Atlantic City Fire and Police Department personnel responded to a structure fire at a high-rise residential building on Atlantic Avenue. Multiple calls reported smoke and visible fire from upper floors, prompting a rapid and coordinated response.

Fire Department units arrived within minutes and began fire suppression, forced entry, and apartment-by-apartment searches on impacted floors. As additional alarms were struck, firefighters worked to contain the fire and safely evacuate residents. Police Department officers assisted with evacuations, helped account for residents, and secured the scene, allowing fire crews to operate efficiently inside the building.

Over the next several hours, first responders continued operations under challenging conditions. The fire was ultimately brought under control with no civilian fatalities and only minor injuries reported. Approximately 60 displaced residents were transported to temporary shelter locations, where city departments and partner agencies provided medical evaluations, transportation, and housing assistance.

This incident highlighted the strong coordination, professionalism, and shared commitment to public safety demonstrated by the Atlantic City Fire and Police Departments, along with supporting agencies, during a complex and dangerous emergency.



Atlantic City Police Department

Spotlight on Service



On Thursday, December 11, 2025, officers responded to a working structure fire in the 1000 block of Baltic Avenue with reports of juveniles trapped inside. Officers Ahmed Waqar and Rashawn Cochran arrived on scene as the fire department was arriving. Officer Cochran observed a female outside a connected unit and entered the residence with her.

As smoke rapidly filled the unit, Officer Cochran carried two small juveniles to safety while the female removed a third juvenile. Sergeant John Waddell later located a 10-year-old juvenile who had initially been believed to be trapped inside the fire structure. The juvenile was escorted to an ambulance staged at Pennsylvania and Baltic Avenues and was reunited with family shortly thereafter.

The two-alarm fire affected three units. Detectives Maarouf and Regalbuto ensured all juveniles were safely sheltered, while Sergeants Robert Toscano and Corey Treadway established a secure perimeter. Sergeant Chris Miller documented the scene using a department drone, and Captain Kevin Fair maintained command while coordinating assistance from the American Red Cross for displaced residents. This incident occurred immediately following another critical call within the city, and despite responding to back-to-back emergencies, officers acted swiftly and professionally, preventing loss of life and injury. Their dedication and teamwork exemplify outstanding service.

This Month in Pictures



Water Rescue | December 31, 2025

Atlantic City Fire and Police personnel respond to a cold-water rescue.

Safety Alerts at Your Fingertips

Timely alerts and practical tips to help keep you safe.

Staying safe starts with staying informed. Our social media pages are one of the quickest ways to keep up with important safety updates, community alerts, and helpful tips you can use every day. When you follow us, you gain:

- **Real-Time Updates:** From emergency notifications to road closures and weather-related warnings, we share timely information that helps you make informed decisions.
- **Community Connection:** Social media allows us to stay connected with you. We can answer questions, share resources, highlight community events, and work together to keep our neighborhoods safe.
- **Behind-the-Scenes Insights:** Take an inside look at the work being done every day by our local safety professionals.

In addition, we encourage you to sign up for AC Alerts, Atlantic City’s official emergency notification system. AC Alerts delivers real-time updates on emergencies, road closures, and public safety incidents directly to your phone, email, or landline, helping you stay prepared and connected with your community.

Stay informed. Stay prepared. Stay safe – connect with us online!



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SIGN UP



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ACPD K9 Graduation
February 13, 2026
 Celebrate the graduation of Two Patrol Narcotics Dogs and One Bomb-Detection Dog as they complete their rigorous training. Officers and K9s are recognized for their hard work and dedication to public safety.

PAL Black History Month Annual Trip
February 2026
 The Police Athletic League hosts its annual Black History Month trip, providing participants with an educational and cultural experience to celebrate and learn about Black history and heritage.

Saint Patrick’s Day Parade
March 7, 2026 | 1:00PM
 Celebrate Irish heritage and community spirit at the annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade on the boardwalk! Enjoy festive floats, marching bands, and local organizations bringing music, color, and tradition to the streets.

ACPD Academy Graduation
March 2026
 The Atlantic City Police Department will celebrate the graduation of its newest academy class, recognizing the hard work and dedication of recruits as they complete their training and prepare to serve the community.

The Public Safety Insider is brought to you by the Public Safety Information Office. It is produced by Chelsea Moore and Public Safety PIO Matt Duffy. Please contact us at MDuffy@acnj.gov with any ideas or suggestions for future newsletters, we love your input and contributions! We wish you a safe and prosperous year ahead!