

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!
- Training & Equipment:**
 Updates on current and upcoming training opportunities, as well as new equipment and resources available to help us do our jobs even better.
- Safety Tips:**
 Essential advice for keeping you and your family safe, with practical tips for home, travel, and winter preparedness.



Thank you to the City of Atlantic City Dispatchers!

WELCOME

Welcome to the April 2026 edition of our newsletter! As spring arrives in Atlantic City, it brings a renewed sense of energy and activity across our community. The Police Department, Fire Department, and Beach Patrol continue to stand ready, adapting to the changing season while remaining fully committed to keeping our residents and visitors safe.

April marks a time of growth, preparation, and opportunity. With warmer days ahead, our teams are actively training, strengthening collaboration, and gearing up for the busy months to come. This season reminds us of the importance of readiness, resilience, and teamwork. Thank you for your continued dedication and support as we move forward together, serving our community with pride and professionalism.

Safety Tip: Spring Weather Preparedness

Spring weather can be unpredictable, with sudden rain, wind, and thunderstorms. Stay aware of local forecasts and be prepared for changing conditions throughout the day. Use caution when traveling, as roads and walkways may become slick or flooded. Staying alert can help keep you safe during the spring season.



Atlantic City Public Safety

Spotlight on Service: Communications Center

Honoring National Public Safety Telecommunicators



April 12–18, 2026 is **National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week**, recognizing the men and women of our **Communications Center** who are often the first voice heard in an emergency call.

Under the leadership of Chief Shawn Wilson, the Communications Center serves as the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and Public Safety Dispatch Point (PSDP) for Atlantic City, handling every 9–1–1 call within or involving the city. While Atlantic City has just under 40,000 residents, its population can swell to more than 250,000 on any given day, making this work especially demanding and critical.

Staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, these highly trained civilian professionals are truly the first, first responders. Every call for Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services begins with them as they receive, assess, and prioritize each request with precision and care.

The Communications Center operates as a coordinated team, including Call-Takers, Tango Dispatchers, Look-Up Personnel, Fire Dispatchers, and Police Dispatchers, all working under a supervisor. Each position is staffed by a dedicated individual working in sync to ensure every call is handled efficiently and accurately.

The Center also serves as the communication hub for all city departments. Any personnel with a radio can immediately connect with Communications, ensuring constant coordination across Police, Fire, and city services.

To support their mission, Communications Officers use advanced systems including ShotSpotter, tip411, the citywide camera system, and the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. These tools enhance awareness, improve response times, and support real-time decision-making.

In the past year, the Communications Center handled more than 250,000 calls and coordinated over 160,000 responses, each requiring focus, professionalism, and calm under pressure.

Though often unseen by the public, Communications Officers are essential to every response. They are the steady voice in critical moments, the link between the public and first responders, and a constant source of support for personnel in the field.

This month, we proudly recognize and thank the Communications Center and Chief Shawn Wilson for their leadership, dedication, and commitment to keeping our community safe.



Atlantic City Police Department

Spotlight on Service



On March 7, 2026, at approximately 5:04 PM, officers responded to a report of a naked female walking on Tennessee Avenue toward the beach. While units were enroute, surveillance personnel provided real-time updates, advising that the female had entered the water.

Officers Gavin Rauch and Matthew Stanwood arrived on scene and observed the female continuing farther into the ocean. Due to dense fog, visibility quickly became limited, and officers began to lose sight of her. Despite repeated verbal commands, the female continued deeper into the water.

Without hesitation, Officers Rauch and Stanwood removed their equipment, handed it off to another officer, and entered the ocean. At the time, the air temperature was approximately 45 degrees, and the water temperature was 39 degrees. The officers reached the female in chest-deep water, nearly out of view from shore. She actively resisted and stated that she had been instructed to harm herself. The officers were able to safely restrain her and bring her back to shore.

With assistance from additional personnel, the female was wrapped in blankets, placed into an Atlantic City Fire Department vehicle, and transported to AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center. Officers Rauch and Stanwood demonstrated exceptional bravery and a strong commitment to the preservation of life. Due to their swift and selfless actions, a life was saved.

This Month in Pictures



Firefighter Awarded Certificate of Valor | April 15, 2026

Firefighter Joseph Reitzler receives the Certificate of Valor for his heroic rescue of a trapped resident during a fully involved Atlantic City structure fire on July 11, 2024.



A Message from the Police Chief

Chief's Corner

I would like to extend my appreciation to the Atlantic City Police Foundation for their generous contribution of \$3,000 to support our Police Explorer Program. This funding was used to purchase uniforms for our explorers.

The Explorer Program is an outstanding initiative that provides young men and women with a firsthand look at careers in law enforcement. Participants gain valuable life skills, leadership experience, and mentorship from our officers, all while building strong connections within the community. Programs like this not only help shape the future of policing, but also strengthen the relationship between our department and the residents we serve.

I also want to take a moment to recognize and thank our Public Safety Telecommunicators during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week. Our dispatchers are the critical link between the public and our officers, and an essential part of every emergency response. Their professionalism, dedication, and ability to perform under pressure do not go unnoticed. Simply put, they do a fantastic job every day, and I am grateful for their dedication and service.

Finally, I am excited to announce our next hiring class. On April 27th, nine full-time police officers and eleven Special Law Enforcement Officers will report to the Atlantic County Police Academy to begin their training. Filling these positions is an important step forward in strengthening our staffing levels and ensuring we are fully equipped to meet the needs of our community.

Chief James Sarkos

Atlantic City Police Department

Neighborhood Coordination Unit

Building Trust, One Block at a Time

Since 2019, **Atlantic City's Neighborhood Coordination Officer (NCO) program** has strengthened the relationship between police and the community. What began with 12 officers and two outreach officers has grown into a key community policing effort.

Modeled after a New York City program and adapted locally, NCOs are assigned to specific neighborhoods. Residents see the same officers regularly, not just during emergencies. Officers attend civic meetings, take part in local events, and maintain a steady presence in the neighborhoods they serve.

That consistency has built trust. Residents know officers by name, and officers know their communities well. In some cases, residents have even provided bicycles to help officers patrol their neighborhoods.

At its peak, the program grew to 24 officers. This allowed for more proactive work, including addressing drug activity and supporting targeted enforcement. Today, the unit operates with six officers, but continues to have an impact through long-standing relationships and experienced personnel.

Officers are intentionally placed in neighborhoods where they can connect through shared language, culture, or lived experience. This has helped improve communication and trust.



Youth engagement is a major focus. Officers run after-school homework programs in Stanley Holmes Village and Busby Village. They also lead initiatives such as the Junior Police Academy, Police Explorers, community barbecues, and National Night Out, reaching thousands of young people each year. Some participants have gone on to become police officers.

The program has helped shift how residents interact with police. Officers are now seen as familiar and accessible, not just present during emergencies. Even during periods of national tension around policing, these relationships have helped maintain trust.

Now in its seventh year, Atlantic City remains one of the few municipalities in New Jersey to sustain an NCO unit, continuing to focus on connection, consistency, and community partnership.

In neighborhoods across the city, the impact is clear: safer streets, stronger relationships, and a shared sense that police and residents are working together, not apart.

Neighborhood Coordination Unit:

- Lieutenant Will Santiago
- Sergeant Mohammed Kaiser
- Ward 1 Officer Mark Pincus
- Ward 2 Officer Anthony Alosi
- Ward 3 Officer David White
- Ward 4 Officer Jamar Dabney
- Wards 5-6 Officer Syed Shah
- Officer Lorenzo "Rock" Bethea



This Month in Pictures



Breakfast with First Responders at MLK School

Breakfast at MLK School brought together police officers, firefighters, crossing guards, and bus aides for a community gathering with students. During the visit, Sgt. Ivan Lopez spoke on pedestrian safety, emphasizing the importance of staying alert while walking in and around the city.

Atlantic City Fire Department

Spotlight on Service



Firefighter Joseph Reitzler of the Atlantic City Fire Department was recently awarded the prestigious Certificate of Valor by the Atlantic County Firefighters Association for his extraordinary bravery during a July 11, 2024 fire in Atlantic City. During that incident, crews from Ladder 2 arrived at a four-story wooden building that was fully engulfed, with residents jumping from windows to escape intense fire and smoke.

Amid the chaos, firefighters learned that one person remained trapped on the fourth floor. Under extremely hazardous conditions, Firefighter Reitzler climbed Ladder 2's 35-foot aerial ladder, reached the victim, and guided them safely down—preventing a likely tragedy. He later credited Captain J.D. Morgan and Firefighters Casey Roe and Jimmy Vandyke for helping to quickly position the ladder.

At a ceremony held April 15 at the Anthony "Tony" Canale Fire Training Center, Deputy Chief James Gillespie III praised Reitzler's courage and dedication, and officials from the county, state, and federal levels presented additional commendations in his honor. Firefighter Reitzler's actions exemplify the courage, teamwork, and professionalism of the Atlantic City Fire Department.

Eyes on the Road: Distracted Driving Awareness



April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

Distracted driving occurs any time a driver's attention is taken away from the road, whether by a cell phone, adjusting controls, eating, or other activities. Cell phone use remains the most common and dangerous form, as it takes a driver's eyes, hands, and focus away from driving.

In 2024 alone, distracted driving contributed to 3,208 fatalities and more than 315,000 injuries nationwide, highlighting the ongoing impact of this preventable behavior. ***In New Jersey, using a handheld cell phone while driving is illegal and subject to fines and penalties.***

To reduce risk while driving:

- Put your phone away or use "Do Not Disturb" mode
- Pull over safely before sending or reading messages
- Allow a passenger to manage calls or directions
- Keep your full attention on the road at all times

Remaining alert and minimizing distractions can help prevent serious crashes and save lives.





A Message from the Beach Patrol Chief

Chief's Corner

On May 1st, the 2026 Beach Patrol season officially begins, marking the transition from off-season preparation to full summer operations along the Atlantic City shoreline.

This month is spent de-winterizing and reopening all beachfront District Stations, along with moving essential rescue equipment (including lifeboats, lookout stations, ATVs, UTVs, and PWCs) from the municipal yard. This period also includes administrative processing and the return-to-duty workflow for all seasonal personnel.

Before reporting back to active duty, all returning members must complete required physical and professional recertifications. This includes a ½ mile run in under 3:45, a 200-meter swim in under 4:00, and updated certifications in Advanced Life Saving, Basic Life Saving, CPR, and AED use. These standards ensure every member is fully prepared for the demands of the upcoming season, with full staffing expected by late June ahead of the Fourth of July holiday period.

The season formally kicks off on Friday, May 22nd, when Mayor Small and the Public Safety Chiefs join the Beach Patrol for the traditional "unlocking of the ocean," officially opening Atlantic City's beaches for summer 2026. The ceremony is followed by a Memorial Day wreath drop at sea, a long-standing tradition honoring those who served. In partnership with Resorts Casino and Janet from Chester's, the event consistently draws a strong crowd and serves as the symbolic start to the summer season.

See you on the Beach,

Chief Steve Downey

Atlantic City Police Department

Spotlight on Service

On January 30, 2026, officers responded to the 1400 block of Emerson Avenue following a report of a male with a firearm outside the residence. Upon arrival, Officers John DeFeo and Eric Vargas were flagged down by family members and made contact with the reporting party. One of the individuals was initially uncooperative, while officers began gathering information from others on the scene. Witnesses reported that a vehicle had fled the area, and a partial description was broadcast over police communications.

As the investigation continued, officers learned the incident originated from an earlier dispute at a local establishment. The situation escalated when one of the involved parties returned to the residence, accompanied by a male suspect. A verbal altercation ensued, during which the suspect brandished and pointed a firearm at individuals present before leaving the scene.

Through continued investigation, follow-up interviews, and review of available information, officers were able to identify the male suspect involved. Despite limited cooperation from some parties, officers remained persistent in their efforts, ultimately establishing probable cause and obtaining warrants related to weapons offenses and other charges connected to the incident.

Shortly after the warrants were issued, officers conducting patrol operations located the suspect and took him into custody without incident. A second individual connected to the investigation was also taken into custody. The officers demonstrated strong investigative skills, persistence, and attention to detail throughout the incident. Their ability to piece together information, identify those involved, and safely resolve the situation within a short timeframe reflects a high level of professionalism and commitment to public safety.



Atlantic City Beach Patrol

2026 Lifeguard Training Program



The **Atlantic City Beach Patrol** is offering a **free pre-test training program** for anyone interested in becoming a lifeguard for the 2026 season. These sessions are led by experienced lifeguards and focus on the key skills needed to pass the official test.

Training Dates:

- May 26 – May 30 (Tuesday–Saturday)
- June 1 – June 5 (Monday–Friday)

Time:

12:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Location:

Florida Avenue Beach (in front of Historic Boardwalk Hall)

Note: Location is subject to change. Updates will be posted at www.atlanticcitybeachpatrol.org

Important Details:

- Candidates must attend **at least one training session** prior to testing
- No set attendance times—participate as your schedule allows
- High school students may arrive after school, but **no one will be admitted after 4:00 PM**
- Those who attend training sessions historically have the highest success rates
- Please bring a completed application on your first day. Applications can be found at <https://www.atlanticcitybeachpatrol.com/new-lifeguards>

2026 Lifeguard Test



2026 Lifeguard Test

The 2026 Atlantic City Beach Patrol test is scheduled for Saturday, June 6th. The tryout will consist of five (5) phases of testing. Anyone testing is required to have rowed at least one (1) time in a Van Dwyne rescue boat prior to the tryout to be eligible to participate.

Date: Saturday, June 6, 2026

Time: 9:00 AM sharp (roll call)

Candidates must be present at roll call to participate.

Test Components:

- 500-meter ocean swim
- 1,000-foot singles row
- Surf dash rescue races
- Half-mile boardwalk run (time must be under 3:45*)
- Instructor evaluation & candidate interview

**Minimum standard requirement of Open Water Ocean Lifeguards*

How to apply: Complete candidate application & waiver and submit to Beach HQ.

Wellness Spotlight

What's your algorithm?

A Call to first responders to reset their daily feed.

By Sgt. David Shapiro, ACPD



We all know how social media works, the more we engage with certain content, the more it shapes what we see next in our feed. I have been thinking lately, what is my own personal algorithm set to each day? I'm not talking about likes or scrolling feeds. I'm talking about the mental feed that runs in the background.

As first responders, we're surrounded by trauma, stress, and crisis every single day. From responding to violent crimes, high-stress emergencies, motor vehicle accidents, and individuals with substance abuse and mental health crisis, that content fed into our daily "algorithm" is heavy. Call after call, we are exposed to trauma so it's no surprise that over time our internal feed can become programmed to expect and prepare for the worst.

But here's the power, we have the ability to reset the input. Every time we choose to engage with something positive, we are essentially "retraining" our internal algorithm. We can intentionally focus on small moments of gratitude, build positive healthy routines, and prioritize restorative practices that counterbalance what we see on the job. Whether it's a walk, a conversation, a mindful breathing exercise, or even just a pause to reflect, each of these actions sends a signal saying, "this is what matters, this is what we need more of." And over time, those signals begin to reshape the entire feed.

So, what does your algorithm look like today? What will you allow into your mental feed? Because, like any algorithm, the more intentional you are, the more it can shape a healthier, more hopeful you.

This Month in Pictures



Emergency Preparedness Presentation

Emergency Management Deputy Coordinators, Sgt. Chris Miller and Tim Mancuso delivered an informative presentation to the Venice Park Civic Association, sharing important guidance on emergency preparedness, safety planning, and community response strategies.

Atlantic City Police Department

Spotlight on Service



Officers Gavin Rauch and Matthew Stanwood were selected as **Employees of the Quarter for the City of Atlantic City** in recognition of their actions during a recent incident involving a female in crisis.

Upon arrival, officers determined the individual had entered the water and was in distress. Without hesitation, both officers entered the water and initiated a rescue, successfully bringing her to safety despite the inherent risks and challenging conditions.

Their swift response and decisive actions were critical in preventing a tragic outcome. The officers demonstrated courage, sound judgment, and a strong commitment to preserving life.

Their actions reflect a high level of professionalism and dedication to the safety of the community.



Picture courtesy of the City of Atlantic City, PIO Office

Spring Forward with Home Safety

Make safety part of your spring routine at home.

Spring brings longer days and warmer weather—a perfect time to refresh your household safety routines.

Last month, we did our annual “spring forward” for Daylight Savings Time, now is a great time to take a moment to check that your home is prepared for emergencies.



Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Safety

Your first line of defense begins with working alarms:

- **Smoke alarms:** Test monthly, replace batteries annually, install on every floor and in every bedroom. Interconnected alarms are best.
- **Carbon monoxide detectors:** Install outside bedrooms and on every level, test regularly, and ensure vents for fuel-burning appliances are clear.

A few minutes now can prevent a tragedy later and give your household peace of mind.



Review Your Family Emergency Plan

Emergencies can happen anytime. Make sure your plan covers:

- **Emergency kits for home and car:** water, non-perishable food, first aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, filter masks, plastic sheeting, duct tape, medications
- **Communication plan:** how family members will contact each other and where to meet
- **Shelter-in-place plan:** sealing doors, windows, and vents if outside air is unsafe
- **Escape plan:** multiple routes and destinations

Even a small review now can make a big difference during an unexpected event.



Spring Safety Quick Checklist:

- Test smoke and CO alarms
- Update emergency plans and kits
- Check first aid supplies
- Prepare for seasonal hazards

National Safety Council. (2026). Spring safety tips.
https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/spring-safety-tips?srltid=AfmBOoqxhseWX2DNFSVnnxuOO-_qlut-BDw5MdCyFgoPN2lzkT4VB-Fh



A Message from the Fire Chief

Chief's Corner

This month marks an exciting moment of growth and renewal for the Atlantic City Fire Department. On Monday, April 20, we proudly swore in eight new firefighters, welcoming them into a department with a long tradition of service, professionalism, and dedication. These new members strengthen our ranks and ensure we can continue to meet the needs of our residents and visitors with the highest level of care.

We are also pleased to reoccupy Fire Station 2 following extensive renovations. This historic firehouse has served the city for generations, and its updated facilities will better support our firefighters as they train, respond, and prepare for the complex emergencies they face each day. Returning our crews to Station 2 not only improves our operational readiness, but also reaffirms our commitment to maintaining a strong presence in the neighborhoods we serve.

In addition, our department will join the Atlantic City Police Department for the “Coursey Cup,” a community cleanup and day of recreational activities focused on team building. Events like this highlight the importance of collaboration—not only between our two departments, but with the community as a whole. Working side by side to improve our city’s streets and public spaces helps build trust, reinforce partnerships, and remind us that we are all on the same team when it comes to keeping Atlantic City safe and strong.

Thank you for your continued dedication, professionalism, and service. As we welcome new members, return to a newly renovated Station 2, and join our partners in community-focused events, I am proud of the work we do together every day on behalf of this city.

Chief Scott Evans

Atlantic City Public Safety

Atlantic City First Responders Honor Dawson Palmarini

Atlantic City Police, Fire, and EMS personnel recently welcomed Dawson Palmarini as an honorary officer during a special visit recognizing his resilience and his ongoing mission to personally thank first responders across New Jersey. Palmarini, a Toms River resident, was critically injured in a 2019 motorcycle crash and spent several months in a coma after receiving lifesaving care from responding police, fire, and EMS personnel.

Since his recovery, Palmarini has dedicated himself to visiting agencies throughout the state to show appreciation to the first responders who supported his survival and recovery. To date, he has visited dozens of departments and received hundreds of challenge coins, patches, and recognitions. During his Atlantic City visit, he toured Fire Station #4, an EMS transport unit, the Public Safety Building, and was formally sworn in as an honorary police officer and firefighter.

The visit concluded with words of appreciation from both Palmarini's family and Atlantic City leadership, highlighting the lasting impact of first responders on the people they serve. "Dawson's story is a powerful reminder of why our work matters," said Police Chief James Sarkos. "Our police officers, firefighters, and EMS personnel are there for people on their worst days, and it's meaningful to see that impact come full circle."



This Month in Pictures



Community Youth Fishing Initiative | March 2026

ACPD participates in a weekly Youth Fishing Program with the Coalition for a Safe Community, promoting mentorship and youth engagement. NCO Officer Dave White received a Certificate of Appreciation for his dedication to mentoring youth.

Report Concerns with tip411

As the weather changes and activity increases across the city, residents are encouraged to report safety concerns or suspicious activity as soon as they are observed. tip411 offers a quick, anonymous way to share information directly with law enforcement.

The system is available 24/7 and allows residents to submit tips without making a phone call or revealing their identity, making reporting simple and accessible.

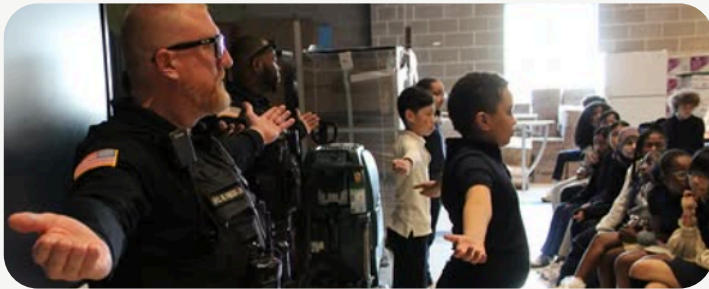
Prompt reporting supports community safety and helps address quality-of-life concerns. Visit the link below to learn more or submit a tip:

<https://www.acnj.gov/pages/tip411-anonymous-tips>

tip411

Atlantic City Police Department

This Month in Pictures



Junior Police Academy Recruitment Underway

Sergeant Mohammed Kaiser, along with Officers Mark Pincus and Jamar Dabney, kick off recruitment efforts for the Atlantic City Police Department's Junior Police Academy, a two-week summer program designed to introduce local youth to the fundamentals of law enforcement while building discipline, teamwork, and confidence.


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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- Clayton G. Graham Memorial Service**
 April 23, 2026 | 11:00AM | Public Safety Building
 The Clayton G. Graham Memorial Service is a time to honor and remember his life, legacy, and contributions, bringing the community together in reflection, gratitude, and respect.

- Uptown School Career Day**
 May 1, 2026 | 8:30 AM
 The Atlantic City Public Safety Divisions will visit to share career insights, answer questions, and inspire students about opportunities in public service.

- Bring Your Child to Work Day**
 April 23, 2026 | City of Atlantic City
 COAC Employees bring their children to work for a fun day of exploring what they do, learning about different careers, and seeing how school connects to real life.

- Atlantic City Air Show**
 May 29-31 2026 | Atlantic City Boardwalk
 Come out and enjoy a day on the beach while watching incredible aircraft and pilots perform high-speed flyovers and aerial stunts along the Atlantic City shoreline.

The Public Safety Insider is brought to you by the Public Safety Information Office. 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 April!