



**CITY OF MISSOULA**  
**POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
*Public Information Office*  
**PRESS RELEASE**

---

**For immediate release:**

**Date:** March 26, 2021  
**Contact:** *Sergeant Travis Welsh*  
**Phone:** 406/552-6290  
**E-Mail:** [welsht@ci.missoula.mt.us](mailto:welsht@ci.missoula.mt.us)

During this past week many people have asked their local law enforcement agency about the national dialogue surrounding police reform and the verdict in Minnesota v. Chauvin. The Missoula Police Department is aware of the events transpiring across the country. What we are not aware of are other agency reports, complaints, witness statements, evidence, and prosecutorial discussions taking place in other jurisdictions. As such, rather than commenting on those past events, we are more concerned about what we can do to continue our adherence to our mission statement: “We are a community oriented agency committed to delivering professional police service to Missoula. We strive to improve the quality of life of our citizens and the livability of our community.”

Our focus is on the experience here in Missoula. We are looking internally and externally to make sure we are the police department the community expects us to be. Growth and improvement are critical to maintaining public trust and public safety.

As earlier articulated by Mayor Engen, the Missoula Police Department is concerned with hiring the right candidates for a position of “Police Officer.” By law, each police officer hiring list is approved by the independent Police Commission. Each candidate is subject to an in-depth background investigation, physical testing, psychological testing and interviews to weed out unprofessional applicants from joining the department. We have a strong Field Training Program that employs best practices for training and recognizing behaviors in police officers who cannot maintain our professional standards. Our Field Training Officers have the ability to identify those weaknesses, or unacceptable traits and bring them to light. Those individuals either learn to carry out their duty as required by the law, ethics, and policy, or they don’t continue.

We never stop learning, and we continually look for better and more professional ways to interact with the citizens of our great city. That includes recently creating a more efficient, and resourceful schedule to put officers in the field when they are needed the most. We give Supervisors the ability to deploy their resources to meet those needs.

This new schedule also lets us consider more comprehensive training for all officers to include critical incident, de-escalation, and implicit bias courses. We are also beginning to fully understand that human beings have weaknesses, including biases that we may not consciously be aware of, but exist all the same. The training we receive helps us navigate through these biases to ensure we are equally and equitably enforcing the law. The Missoula Police Department is also fully engaged with the new Mobile Response Team made up of first responders and crisis professionals to help us on incidents involving our vulnerable population. That program is giving officers some badly needed assistance, and another tool in the “tool belt” – especially in calls involving mental health.

The Missoula Police Department is not remaining in the past, rather we are enthusiastically embracing the modern and future demands of law enforcement. We look forward to providing the most comprehensive and professional response that Missoulians expect and deserve.

###