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## Phila. police post data on officer-involved shootings

Robert Moran Inquirer Staff Writer

Without fanfare, the Philadelphia **Police** Department has begun posting **data on** its website about **officer-involved shootings** - the focus of a U.S. Justice Department study requested by Commissioner Charles H. Ramsey.

In May, Ramsey asked the Justice Department's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) to review the **police** department's handling of cases when officers shoot at civilians.

Lt. John Stanford, a spokesman for Ramsey, said the posting of the information was not a result of the COPS review, which also covers all use of force by officers.

"These are all things we'd already been working **on** before COPS came **on** board," Stanford said.

The COPS program conducted a similar review for the Las Vegas Metropolitan **Police** Department. The department there now posts detailed reports **on police-involved shootings on** its website.

Ramsey's request for the review followed a Philly.com report in May that said such **shootings** had increased 50 percent in 2012 over the previous year.

A version of those numbers is now up **on** the department's website, which went up in mid-November, for anyone to see.

The site offers various statistics dating to 2007 for categories such as the total number of people shot in Philadelphia, firearms recovered, assaults against **police**, and **officer-involved shootings** that either injured or killed a person.

A flow chart describes the procedural and investigative steps that follow an **officer-involved** shooting. The site then lists all **officer-involved shootings** for 2013, providing descriptive summaries and whether there has been any prosecutorial action.

**Officer-involved shootings** are down this year. From January through the end of September, they were down 30 percent compared with 2012.

Samuel Walker, emeritus professor of criminal justice at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, applauded the department's release of shooting **data**.

"I have nothing but good things to say about what I see," said Walker, author of the book *The New World of **Police** Accountability*.

"It's everything that **police** departments should be doing, including explaining why they are sharing **police-involved shootings**," Walker said.

**On** the website, the department states:

"We believe that your trust and confidence in the Philadelphia **Police** Department will increase as you understand what our officers encounter, how we prepare them for these encounters, and how we hold them accountable for their actions. We are continuously reviewing and improving our practices, especially those that are as important as the use of deadly force."

The numbers for **police shootings** in previous years **on** the website differ slightly from what Philly.com reported in May. The differences do not substantially alter the general trends, though. For example, the increase from 2011 to 2012 is closer to 40 percent than the 50 percent Philly.com used.

**Police** spokeswoman Officer Tanya Little said the statistics **on** the website were accurate.

David Rudovsky, a longtime civil rights lawyer in Philadelphia, welcomed the release of shooting **data on** the website, but said the department could do much more.

"I think it is useful for the [department] to **post** this information, though aside from the basic facts about time and place, there is no further information as to the reason for, or the context of, the **shootings**," Rudovsky said.

Paul Hetznecker, a lawyer suing the department in two **police**-involved shooting cases, said he did not believe the information posted **on** the website was part of a serious reform effort.

Hetznecker, who argues that the department suffers from deeply rooted problems involving civil rights violations, expressed suspicion about the motive.

"This is a poorly veiled attempt to justify the status quo - that is, the existing de facto policy of rationalizing the unlawful use of deadly force by Philadelphia **police** officers," Hetznecker said.

Rudovsky and Hetznecker pointed out that the Las Vegas website provides detailed documentation showing its internal review process.

For example, Las Vegas **police** posted 64 pages of reports and documents regarding a Nov. 15, 2010, fatal shooting of a man by **police**.

**On** the Philadelphia website, a March 7, 2013, shooting that left a suspect dead contains a three-paragraph description of the matter and one word, declined, to summarize the decision of the District Attorney's Office not to prosecute.

### **Officer-involved Shootings**

To see the Philadelphia **Police** Department's **data on officer-involved shootings**, go to [www.inquirer.com/shootings](http://www.inquirer.com/shootings)

[bmoran@phillynews.com](mailto:bmoran@phillynews.com)

215-854-5983

@RobertMoran215

Caption: Commissioner Charles Ramsey addressing the International **Police** Chiefs Association at the Pennsylvania Convention Center **on** Saturday, October 19, 2013. ( RON CORTES / Staff Photographer )

Commissioner Charles Ramsey addressing the International **Police** Chiefs Association at the Pennsylvania Convention Center **on** Saturday, October 19, 2013. ( RON CORTES / Staff Photographer )

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