



# MANCHESTER TOWNSHIP POLICE

**Lisa D. Parker, Chief of Police**

**1 Colonial Drive  
Manchester, NJ 08759-3898**

Dear resident,

This year has proven to be a challenge for us all, and I hope that this letter finds you and your loved ones in good health. COVID-19 and the many challenges surrounding the pandemic, as well as a focus on policing following the murder of George Floyd, have tested us all. However, I am proud of the many ways our community has come together to support one another and our first responders. This includes the community's continued support of our Police Department, Emergency Medical Services Division, and volunteer firefighters.

On March 1, 2020, just days before the COVID-19 pandemic began to impact the State of New Jersey, the Manchester Township Division of Emergency Medical Services went operational. As you may know, this Division was created with the support of Mayor Ken Palmer and the Township Council after it became evident that an all-volunteer first aid squad was no longer sustainable due to a steady decline in volunteerism, coupled with a consistent increase in the amount of calls for service. Several days later, the first "presumptive positive" case of COVID-19 was reported in our township. Without hesitation, this group of approximately 24 EMTs bravely stepped into their new roles, unselfishly serving our residents during the uncertainty that surrounded the beginning days of the pandemic.

Since its implementation, the Division of EMS has responded to nearly 5,500 calls for service, with an average response time of 7 minutes, 38 seconds. Of all the calls received, our EMTs responded to 96 percent of these requests for service. In order to ensure that EMS services are always available to answer the call for help when all of our ambulances are busy on other calls, mutual aid agreements have been established with Toms River, Jackson and Berkeley Township to provide back-up service. To pay for this service, insurance companies are billed for payment at the established reimbursement rates outlined by law and more importantly, without engaging in the practice of "balance-billing" our residents. Given the number of service calls, it is anticipated that the revenue generated will cover the added expenses to the township. Neighboring municipalities have proven this model works, having implemented similar services that basically pay for themselves.

When COVID-19 began impacting our community, all Township-owned buildings were closed to the public on March 16. That same day, the Manchester Police Department implemented new procedures to keep our residents and officers safe. Non-emergency police reports that did not require an on-scene investigation, evidence collection, or otherwise require an officer to respond were taken over the phone. The goal was to minimize unnecessary in-person contact and to mitigate the risk of transmitting COVID-19 for our residents and our officers. With that said, during this time our officers continued to respond to calls where immediate assistance was needed, including crimes of violence and crimes against a person. They took the appropriate precautions, including wearing the recommended personal protective equipment (PPE). We continued to serve our residents at all times, as is expected of a police officer even under these circumstances. Additionally, our Public Safety Telecommunicators, who are also essential employees, continued to report for duty during the pandemic. Most of our support personnel worked remotely, so that residents could continue to obtain police reports or apply for a firearm without an interruption of service.

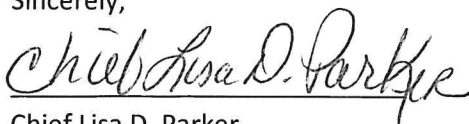
On June 29, Township offices were re-opened on a limited basis to the public; however, we still encourage residents to utilize the online resources located at [www.manchesterpolice.nj.com](http://www.manchesterpolice.nj.com) to avoid making unnecessary trips to our headquarters. Those who do visit our building can rest assured that their health remains a top priority. Visitors will notice a newly installed Plexiglas window located in the lobby where they can safely speak and interact with our officers without coming into contact with them. All employees, as well as visitors, are required to have their body temperature checked before entering our building, which is regularly cleaned and disinfected using products approved to kill the coronavirus. Anyone visiting headquarters is reminded to wear a face covering and use the hand sanitizer stations that have been placed throughout the building. Lastly, social distancing reminders have been posted on the floor and throughout the department's lobby.

During the past several months, communities across the country faced other challenges spurred by the killing of George Floyd. As I stated in my community letter, archived on our police website, the murder of George Floyd was an egregious act against humanity, and an appalling atrocity for which I am anxiously waiting to see justice for the Floyd family. I wholeheartedly support the firing and criminal charging of the involved officers. I firmly believe that there is no place in law enforcement for bad cops who tarnish the badge or bring disrepute to the profession, by violating citizens' rights or engaging in criminal activity, much like what occurred in Minnesota.

As police officers, we fully support everyone's 1st Amendment rights to peacefully protest and hold lawful demonstrations. These fundamental rights are woven into those principles that our country was founded upon. I am deeply saddened by the broad-brush application portrayed by some media that all police officers use excessive force, are racist, and their hearts are filled with bigotry and hatred towards people of color. This is simply not the truth and we need to reassure our community that what happened in Minnesota will never happen in Manchester Township. In New Jersey and specifically in Manchester, many of the standard operating procedures and practices that are just being implemented in other states have been a part of our training for years. In New Jersey, "choke holds" have been banned, except in cases where an officer is fighting for their life. Our officers are regularly trained in de-escalation tactics, and they carry conducted energy devices (also known as tasers) which are an effective means of subduing subjects who are a threat to themselves or others without escalating force. Supervisors are required to complete random audits of the recorded interactions officers have with the public for training purposes. Our goal is to identify a problem if one should exist, correct it, and complete a documented retraining before an incident can occur. We continue to look for ways to be proactive, not reactive. Training our officers to be successful and to have the tools necessary to be successful has been and remains a top priority.

Our community has proven time and time again that we will always support one another, and these past several months have once again shown that the true spirit of caring is present throughout Manchester Township. This is clear from the numerous residents, organizations, and businesses who donated PPE, medical supplies, and food to our agency personnel, or simply offered a kind word to our first responders. Likewise, our partnership with the teachers and principals in our community continues to be a supportive collaborative relationship. I cannot emphasize enough what this invaluable support means to our police officers, firefighters, and EMTs. We are one team working together for the betterment of our community, with the goal of providing the best possible service to our residents and visitors. Thank you for your continued support. Stay safe, and stay healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chief Lisa D. Parker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chief Lisa D. Parker