

## SPD busy but efforts more effective The Sheridan Press



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SHERIDAN — Violent crime in Sheridan is down 57% from a three-year average and 80% from 2014, Sheridan Police Chief Rich Adriaens said Sept. 16. High-visibility enforcement is having a positive impact on the community, he said.

Last week, Adriaens presented an update of Sheridan's crime and traffic safety to the Sheridan City Council. Data shows SPD is still busy but outreach efforts are more proactive and effective, he said.

Overall, Adriaens said SPD is conducting fewer but more effective traffic stops, there are fewer calls for service, alcohol and injury vehicle crashes have increased but there has been a recent retraction, property crime is up and methamphetamine is an issue facing Sheridan.

In 2018, voluntary customer satisfaction surveys from Sheridan citizens to the SPD showed traffic safety was respondents' No. 1 priority.

The SPD uses a nationally-recognized program, Data-Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety, to analyze hot spots for incidents and use high visibility enforcement in those areas.

DDACTS only uses information about the time and place of incidents to collate data and does not include identifying information about individuals or specific groups, SPD Lt. Travis Koltiska said.

“[It's] about as non-biased policing as you can have,” he said.

Koltiska said the SPD has seen success using the program since 2017, when they adapted the existing model of managing traffic data to be more in-depth.

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About 22,000 vehicles travel on Coffeen Avenue per day. Adriaens said SPD plans to use traffic data to determine if the SPD is serving a larger population than currently believed.

The SPD saw a 40% reduction in vehicle crashes between the first and second year of using DDACTS, Koltiska said.

“[DDACTS] draws on deterrent value of highly visible traffic enforcement and the knowledge that crimes often involve the use of motor vehicles...the goal of DDACTS is to reduce the incidence of crime, crashes, traffic violations and social harm in communities across the country,” Adriaens’ presentation indicated.

Year-to-date from 2016-2018, there was an average of about 200 state reportable traffic accidents in Sheridan, 10 to 11 of which involved alcohol and 15 which resulted in injury, according to Adriaens’ presentation.

“When there’s an alcohol-involved crash, we take consideration of that and see if our alcohol enforcement efforts are working out,” he said.

There have been 186 state reportable accidents in Sheridan this year, 15 involving alcohol and 21 with injury. Adriaens said total traffic accidents continued to trend lower throughout August.

In July, SPD traffic stops were down about 4% from the three-year average, calls for service were down 4% and arrests were down 5.4%.

“One of the things that the DDACTS program helps with is it reduces your calls for service. All your proactivity ends up showing itself in people calling you less,” Adriaens said.

DUI arrests remained similar to 2016-2018 data for the month of July, while alcohol citations dropped by 20 in July 2019 and there were 12 fewer alcohol-involved cases.

This shows outreach efforts during Rodeo Week to keep alcohol-involved cases down were successful, Adriaens said.

Alcohol-involved crime has consistently spiked during the month of July over the past five years. This year was the first time in 20 years that there were no public intoxication arrests from Thursday night to early Sunday morning during Rodeo Week, he said.

“That’s a real success not just for the police department, really not at all, it’s a success for the community,” Adriaens said.

Wyoming Highway Patrol brought double the normal amount of resources to help during Rodeo Week, made 503 traffic stops and performed 22 drug seizures, Adriaens said.

There have been 26 more DUI arrests overall this year than the three-year average, five fewer alcohol citations and nine more alcohol-involved cases, according to the presentation.

Adriaens said a suspected growing Sheridan population and increased alcohol sales contribute to an increase in DUIs.

Overall sales and alcohol use in bars was up by 19%, sales in stores were down by less than 1% and sales in restaurants were up by 10% between July 2018 and July 2019. Statewide, liquor and wine sales have increased 30% over the past nine years.

Property crime increased this year over the three-year average from 191 property crimes and 13 to 14 cases involving methamphetamine between 2016-2018 to 256 property crimes and 23 cases involving methamphetamine so far in 2019. These numbers reflect cases, not arrests, through the SPD.

Methamphetamine addictions funded by theft contribute to higher rates of property crime, Adriaens said.

“Frankly I think we’re more effective out there being visible...and having people worried about driving through our town with that stuff than we are doing conspiracy cases,” Adriaens said. “But our responsibility is greater than just the citizens of Sheridan and even, really, greater than the state of Wyoming.”

Adriaens said SPD can improve outreach with the Sheridan Veteran’s Affairs Health Care System and use DDACTS to help determine programming for issues like domestic violence, theft, outreach to victims of trauma and substance abuse.

There isn’t current data available for the effectiveness of SPD following up with victims of domestic violence and providing resources after incidents because it’s a new approach, he said.

A study showed about 30% of drug addicts have experienced trauma in their life and there’s room to develop a way to address that reality, he said.

“This is a community issue, it’s not an outsiders issue. Our addicts are our addicts, it’s our kids and our friends and that’s why all of these things, it takes a community to work on them,” he said. “We can’t arrest our way out of it or traffic stop our way out of it, but that’s why high-visibility enforcement really has an impact. Because it’s the folks that are here every day that are seeing that.”

SPD does outreach in schools to help prevent youth from starting habits that could lead to addictions. Marijuana is an issue in Sheridan schools but methamphetamine has not appeared as a problem among youth, he said.

Overall, statistics fare well for Sheridan crime rates but efforts by SPD will continue in particular areas of concern.

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Allayana Darrow joined The Sheridan Press in August 2019 as the public safety and crime reporter, her first professional position in journalism. She was born and raised in northern California and has lived in every state along the West Coast. She received a bachelor's degree in journalism from Western Washington University in Bellingham, where she worked on several university publications. Allayana loves the west for its stunning natural beauty, intricate history and unique communities. Email her at [allayana.darrow@thesheridanpress.com](mailto:allayana.darrow@thesheridanpress.com).