

# **ENHANCING SAFETY AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

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## OVERVIEW

The safety of the Ohio State community is the university's highest priority.

Ohio State in late 2020 announced a task force to review safety issues on campus and in neighborhoods near the university following an increase in crime in the off-campus area and the murder of student Chase Meola. The task force's goal was to identify, implement and advocate for additional approaches that address violence, crime, and high-risk activities and behaviors. The university implemented all 15 of the task force's recommendations.

In September 2021, the university announced an additional \$2 million a year over the next decade to enhance safety and security on and around campus, bringing the total campus public safety budget to \$35 million annually.

Crime is down on- and off-campus. We work closely with the Columbus Division of Police (CPD) to exchange information and assess crime trends. Major crimes in 2023 dropped significantly from the prior fiscal year.

Safety enhancements include increasing police and security patrols, installing more than 60 license plate readers on campus and in the surrounding area and adding 20 LED light fixtures off-campus. The university also worked with the city of Columbus to add surveillance cameras in the University District and at all campus parking garages.

The university remains fully committed to improving safety on and near campus.

This report details the enhanced safety program the university has recently implemented and invested in, building upon existing expansive resources.

## SAFETY MEASURES AND ACTIONS

Ohio State has taken many steps, in line with best practices, to enhance student safety. The university's investments and initiatives coincided with a decrease in crime on and off campus. Below is a selection of safety enhancements and resources.

### TASK FORCE FINDINGS

In fall 2020, Ohio State [established](#) a Task Force on Community Safety and Well-Being to review safety issues on campus and in neighborhoods near the university – and to identify, implement and advocate for additional approaches that address violence, crime, and high-risk activities and behaviors. Soon after, the group [announced](#) 15 short-, medium- and long-term recommendations. The university has implemented each recommendation, which includes extending the hours of the popular Lyft Ride Smart program, enhancing surveillance and lighting in the University District and increasing security patrols off campus.

### ENHANCED LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY MEASURES

OSUPD has hired nine sworn officers since January 2022. Increasing sworn and non-sworn security officers is a key part of increasing safety, but only part of a suite of tactics that include:

- Increasing the police presence in the off-campus area with a combination of Ohio State University Police Division (OSUPD) and CPD officers through a crime interdiction program that pays officers overtime to add patrols.
- Renewing and expanding a joint patrol program between [OSUPD and CPD](#) to include three full-time OSUPD officers working with CPD to patrol the University District. The partnership enhances the sharing of information between agencies and allows OSUPD to respond to calls, connect students directly to Ohio State resources and serve as a liaison with CPD.
- [Relaunching the Community Crime Patrol](#), a group of highly trained citizen patrollers working to increase safety in Columbus neighborhoods by being extra eyes and ears for community partners.
- Announcing a partnership with the University District Organization to provide a [full-time, licensed independent social worker](#).
- Partnering with Undergraduate Student Government on a steering wheel lock pilot project for students, with priority for those who drive Kias and Hyundais.
- Launching [Buckeye Block Watch](#), in which civilian safety partners patrol the off-campus area and offer resources and information while reporting suspicious activity. Buckeye Block Watch is trained in how to deal with difficult situations and engage with the public. Training is also tailored to University District-specific information including working in popular and well-trafficked areas, and members are tasked with quality-of-life improvements such as recording streetlight outages.

## SURVEILLANCE, LIGHTING AND OTHER OFF-CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS

Law enforcement and security professionals are a key part of ensuring the safety of students, faculty and staff. Additional ways to support the Buckeye community include:

- Making immediate repairs, in fall 2020, of many lights in the off-campus area in conjunction with the City of Columbus.
- [Adding](#) permanent lighting in the University District areas frequented by students and the campus community. Twenty mobile lights were placed in the University District in fall 2021, and all have since been transitioned to permanent light fixture upgrades.
- Placing more than 60 license plate readers in the area in partnership with the City of Columbus. These devices assist law enforcement with investigations.
- Installing surveillance cameras in the University District and at every campus parking garage.

## RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Ohio State provides the campus community a variety of tools and resources by:

Offering [complimentary personal safety alarms](#) to students, that, when triggered, create a loud noise. The Office of Student Life also offers free home safety devices, including door and window alarms and smart plugs.

- Making available online tools that allow students to learn and engage in safety information at their own pace. The [Surviving an Active Aggressor video](#) highlights the Run, Hide, Fight method. The Department of Public Safety, in close partnership with CPD, created a [Stay Safe, Buckeyes](#) class that covers topics such as crime prevention, how to report a crime, responding to people on the street who aggressively ask for money, mental health and more. More than 22,100 students completed the training through August 2023.
- Adding an [Off-Campus Community Crime Map](#) to the Department of Public Safety website, which consists of statistics from Columbus police and shows crime reports near the campus area. Ohio State pre-programmed the map to a one-mile radius.
- Improving our rideshare partnership by expanding the hours and service area of the discounted Lyft Ride Smart Program to the Short North area along High Street. A \$4 discount is offered to students between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.

## SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS AND EDUCATION

At the start of each semester, departments and offices from across Ohio State work together to remind existing campus community members and introduce those new to the university about our safety resources and about living or working in a large, urban environment. Faculty and staff – with a special emphasis on students – receive text messages, targeted social media messages, app pushes, Ohio State News Alerts and more dedicated to safety. Tactics and offering by the Offices of Marketing and Communication and Student Life, Administration and Planning and others include:

- Sharing enhanced communications on safety issues by using text and email from [Ohio State News](#) to provide brief, timely updates to the university community. These news and updates are designed to provide safety tips, health resources, timely traffic information and more.

- Introducing [Ohio State News Alerts](#) to supplement safety communications, including text messages that are targeted directly to students to get them important safety information about enhanced programs that would benefit them right away. (In addition to Ohio State News Alerts, the university has two types of safety notifications: [Buckeye Alerts and Public Safety Notices](#).)
- Expanding access to parents, families and the community to receive Ohio State News text alerts when there is a timely update for students, faculty and staff about health and safety on and around campus. Parents, families and others can provide their cell phone number to receive the news alerts via text message by texting 'NEWS' to 644678.
- Sending targeted mobile push alerts to students via the Ohio State app to promote safety offerings and reinforce the regular emails, social media and other platforms in which safety news is shared. These notifications reinforce key university, Department of Public Safety and Student Life initiatives such as the Community Crime Map, Lyft Ride Smart and free safety devices.