# Transcript for the City of Ohio State Podcast Season 4 Episode 7: Campus Safety

The City of Ohio State podcast takes a deep dive into the support services that keep OSU's Columbus campus running 24/7. Hear from industry experts in facilities, construction, real estate, public safety, transportation and more. The City of Ohio State podcast is brought to you by the Office of Administration and Planning. Go bucks.

Hello, and welcome to the City of Ohio State podcast. I'm your host, Brooke Bartholomew. Last month, we got an inside look at the team who works behind the scenes, making campus run smoothly for Buckeyes year round. This month, we're joined by the Ohio State University Police Division chief, Dennis Jeffrey. He's here to give us the rundown on all things safety. As Buckeyes make their way back to campus for fall semester. Chief, thank you for being with us. Thank you for having me. Pleasure to be here. Of course. So you were named chief in November of twenty twenty four? So we're approaching one year. But before that, you were deputy chief with OSUPD, and before that, you were with the Columbus Division of Police for nearly three decades. So can you talk about what lessons you've learned specifically as chief over the last year that are shaping your approach to campus policing? Yeah, really, it's about communication. You know, the university is a small city in itself, so there's so many different entities that you really have to familiarize yourself with and really build relationships. So what I've really been doing over the last three years is building relationships. And I think sustaining those is really important and always collaboration and anything we do. So that's really important to us. And for any returning or new Buckeyes, what types of safety programs can they take advantage of to have a safe and successful year? Yeah, we have programs such as the Lyft Ride Smart. So it's a you know, if you want to get somewhere, it's a great way safely to get in a vehicle. Uh, cabs on demand. Uh, the community crime map is a great way to, uh, have an idea of what's going on near campus if there's issues, that gives you some idea of maybe where you want to avoid areas. Um, there's safety devices, you know, those are given out by student life. Um, uh, different things that'll help you safety not only on your person, but in your home. And we have other things such as stay safe Buckeyes and Buckeye Alerts that are all very helpful in helping keep people safe. Yeah, those safety devices that you mentioned, students can get those for free at the union. And for some students, this might be their first time living away from home. So how can they keep safety top of mind in residence halls and in off campus housing? Yeah. Really? What? You know, if you're in a residence hall or maybe off campus, you know, keep your valuables safe, keep your doors lock your windows locked. These are kind of common sense, but sometimes we forget we have roommates. You know, you might think they're going to lock the door. You know, just always make sure those doors are locked and windows are locked. Um, you know, and really, um, try to avoid if you're in a residence hall, um, what we call tailgating. So if someone's coming behind you, you know, don't open the door for them. It might seem rude, but really, what we're trying to do is create that safe environment for folks that may not live there. Um, so we really want you to be cognizant of what's going on around you, not only on campus, but off campus as well. And going off of that, if you could recommend sort of a safety checklist for parents to review with their student before they arrive on campus, what would be on it. Familiarity with geography. So you think we're a huge campus? If you've never been here, I would really recommend not only looking at maps, but walking the spaces where your classes are going to be, where the dining halls are. So, you know, all these different streets and you know where lighting is. So maybe areas you want to avoid that aren't well lit. Um, you know, and really just understanding situational awareness. It seems simplistic, but, you know, it's a big campus and it's a big city we're in now. So just really looking where you're going, you know, have people know where you're going. So if you're not traveling with someone, maybe contact your roommate and say, I'm leaving at this particular time, I should be there at a certain time. So, you know, people are kind of checking up on you, kind of a buddy system, if you will. Maybe sharing locations, too, with family. Absolutely. Yeah. And, you know, um, rave Guardian, there is a mechanism to do that. So if you want to use that technology, that is helpful too. But, you know, it's as simple as just, hey, my roommate, I'm going to be home at seven o'clock. If I'm not, give me a call. So, you know, just checking up on one another. And speaking of technology, can you talk about what kind of security technologies are in place across campus and how do those things assist your team in keeping students safe in solving crimes? Yeah, the number one is cameras. So there are approximately six thousand cameras on campus. So it's a great tool for us. Um, if we do have a situation, you know, we can monitor those cameras. It's been very helpful for solving crimes. Um, we also have alarms. Many of the buildings have alarms on them. So if someone's trying to get in that doesn't have authorization, we receive an alarm notice for that location so we can go check it out. Could you also talk about license plate readers? Yeah. Um, so we have a system called flock. And basically what it does is if, say, for instance, a stolen vehicle, we enter that into the system. So when it goes past these readers we get an alert. So that just lets us know if individuals are coming on campus that might want to do some bad things. We can get ahead of that and try to stop that car before it gets on campus. Yeah, great helpful technology. So last August, the Joint Patrol program expanded. Ocpd now has four officers who have full time joint patrol duties. This program pairs Ocpd officers with Columbus Division of Police Officers to patrol the off campus area. So what can you tell us about the partnership and why it's so important? Yeah, it's really important to have that partnership. Most of our students live off campus, so this gives us a way to have some of our officers off campus. So for instance, if a student does unfortunately have a situation, maybe they're a victim of crime, our officers can connect with them and provide university resources. It also is a great way to do follow ups. Our officers are out, um, you know, helping with investigations. So they're assisting maybe detectives at CPD, maybe have a burglary. So it's really a two fold thing. They can be there in the moment, but they can also do really valuable follow ups. And while it's scary to think about, Ocpd always trains for the worst possible scenarios to ensure they're ready for anything. And that includes an active aggressor threat. In the event of an emergency like that, a Buckeye Alert would be issued. Locks are installed in each classroom in case people need to shelter in place. But what other tips do you have for everyone to be prepared should the unthinkable happen? I think the biggest tip is knowing your surroundings before that event happens. So if you're in a in a particular classroom, where are the exits? Where the stairwells, what elevators? You don't want to have to figure that stuff out when that bad moment happens. So I think the number one thing you can do is be situationally aware. So understand how am I going to get out of here? And if I, you know, what can I use to blockade a door? When you think about that beforehand, it's going to help you in the moment because you're going to be under stress. Um, and this will help you kind of pre-plan, if you will. And finally, with the return of fall means the return of the best time of the year, in my opinion, Buckeye football. So can you talk to me about the safety precautions in place as we prepare to host the Texas Longhorns here at Ohio Stadium on the thirtieth? Yeah, huge game. Obviously, our big first big game. And there's going to be a lot of individuals on campus to, you know, either attend the game or be in the campus area. Big thing is once again understanding where you're at. Traffic is a big thing. We want to make sure you're watching where you're walking, you know, making staying on sidewalks. Scooters are a big issue. Um, if you're using those type of devices, really be careful because there's going to be so much more vehicular traffic on campus that you really need to be aware of that. And really just once again, understand that we'll have a lot of folks that aren't accustomed to campus, so just be aware of that too. Could you talk a little bit about the partnerships you guys have with all of our surrounding agencies, and how they all help campus game day go smoothly? Yeah, we couldn't do it without them. We have hundreds of officers working, and these are all OSU officers, as you mentioned. We have highway patrol, Columbus Police, Franklin County Sheriff's Office, and they are critical. We couldn't put on these games without them. If you just think about the amount of traffic control is needed. So they're really, really integral in us having a successful football game. We've gone to game days with you all before. And just to see that morning brief with all of these agencies and see how you guys work together is really, really cool. Chief Jeffrey, thank you so much. We really appreciate your time and insight, and most of all, your commitment to keeping the Buckeye community safe. Well, my pleasure. Thank you. The City of Ohio State podcast is brought to you by the Office of Administration and Planning. Until next time, be kind and go Bucks.