

Motorcops.com Training Article

Establishing A Police Motorcycle Squad

By: Sergeant Allan Attanasio
Mountainside, N.J. Police Motorcycle Squad

Establishing a motorcycle squad within your department requires a great amount of groundwork by the officer that plans on proposing the idea in addition to a large commitment by the department. The first hurdle is to convince the chief, governing body and the public of the benefits of having a motorcycle squad. Simply stating that we want motorcycles will not be enough. You will need to be prepared to provide them with statistics and answer questions in regard to initial vehicle & equipment costs, training, cost savings in fuel & maintenance, accident statistics and the advantages of motorcycles over other patrol type vehicles (cars, bicycles, atv's, horses and foot patrols). As an example, my department has experienced a savings of approximately \$20.00 to \$25.00 per shift that a motorcycle is on patrol instead of a car. Calculating that over a five day period for fifty-two weeks a department can save \$5,200.00 to \$6,500.00 per year in fuel costs alone. There are many resources available to help compile the statistics that will be needed to present a proposal. Checking with neighboring departments that have a motorcycle squad, police motorcycle manufactures and various internet sites will be a good start in compiling a proposal. Also, there is valuable information in the Motorcops.com Police Motorcycle Survey.

The next decision to be made is what type of motorcycle will best suit the needs of your department. Currently I am aware of three manufactures offering police motorcycles. They are Harley Davidson, B.M.W. and Honda.

Some considerations when selecting a motorcycle are the type of roadways to be traveled. Will the motorcycle be operated mainly on highways, congested city roads or parks? Do you want a dry or wet clutch system? Do you want ABS or standard brakes? A full review of all the available motorcycle specifications for the available models is a good start. You can also consult with other departments that use or have tested the various models to find out the pros and cons of each.



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F650 GS-P



R1150 RT-P



R1200 RT-P



ST1100P



ST1300P

After selecting a make and model funding needs to be established. Options are purchasing, leasing or donations (if allowed within your jurisdiction). Each option has its own advantages and disadvantages. Again you must decide which option best suits your needs. Initial funding outlay, years of service and resale value are some areas to be considered.

The administration of the department then needs to establish a policy for the use of the motorcycles. The motorcycles need to be assigned to a division within the department. Experience has shown that the best division for them is within the traffic division as most of the details conducted by motorcycle officers relate to traffic enforcement and control. Another option is for them to be assigned to the patrol division, however when they are needed for traffic assignments the patrol division can realize a shortage of personnel. A good policy should also include officer selection standards, training requirements, uniforms and safety equipment requirements, hours of operation and if in areas where extreme weather is a factor, weather standards need to be addressed. Again neighboring departments can be consulted for guidance in establishing a policy as well as a review of any P.O.S.T. standards set by your state. Some states have no P.O.S.T. requirements, which would allow a department to assign any officer with a motorcycle license to a motorcycle with no additional training. Operating a police motorcycle greatly differs from civilian motorcycle operation. The motorcycle officer is constantly scanning the roadway for motor vehicle violations, criminal activity, operating communications equipment and weaving through stalled traffic in response to emergencies. As can be seen by these examples, police motorcycle training is not an area that should be ignored.

General maintenance and motorcycle cleanliness are two areas that are generally left to the motorcycle officer unless the department maintains a

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motorcycle mechanical staff. Tire air pressure, fluid levels, light bulb replacement and washing of the motorcycle are usually the extent of the maintenance left to the officer. Most departments require that any maintenance beyond that be made by certified motorcycle mechanics. A maintenance schedule should also be established.

When selecting an officer to assign to a motorcycle squad the administration should conduct a full review of the officer's personal file. The fact that an officer possesses a motorcycle license should not be the only factor considered. Motorcycle officers often work alone and in various weather conditions. The officer should have a good health and disciplinary record, be a self motivated officer as well as having mechanical abilities. The officer should also be willing to (if allowed by contractual agreements) adjust his work schedule to be available for special enforcement details, escorts or community events. A yearly review should also be conducted by the squad supervisor, to ensure that the officer is continually meeting required standards.

As can be seen from these examples, establishing a motorcycle squad can require quite a bit of work for both the proposing officer and the department administration. These are just a few examples of what may be needed. You may want to explore additional resources to fit the needs of your department.

Bio: Sergeant Attanasio is a 23 year veteran of the Mountainside, N.J. police department. He is currently certified by the New Jersey Police Training Commission as a Police Instructor. In addition, he holds state and national certifications as a Motorcycle Instructor, Traffic Accident Reconstructionist, Police Traffic Engineer, Firearms Instructor and Fire and Explosion Investigator. He is also a faculty member at Farleigh Dickenson University in Hackensack, N.J. where he teaches the Motorcycle Safety Foundation courses for the continuing education department.