



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

civilrights.justice.gov

FAQ about Pattern or Practice Investigations

See the next page for specific information about this investigation

Q: What is a “pattern or practice?”

When officers engage in unconstitutional conduct repeatedly, the police department may have a pattern or practice of violations of federal law. A single incident would not ordinarily establish a pattern or practice, but it can be part of a larger problem. Pattern or practice investigations are civil investigations looking at law enforcement practices broadly rather than investigating one or a few incidents.

Q: Do pattern or practice investigations include investigating individual officers?

Pattern or practice investigations will not determine whether any officer should be criminally prosecuted or individually sued civilly in court. We determine whether, how, and why a pattern or practice of unlawful conduct has occurred. We aim to develop a plan that prevents future civil rights violations by TPD or the City of Trenton.

Q: What did you do to determine whether there is a pattern or practice of violations?

We reviewed documents and data created by TPD and the City of Trenton, including policies, training, misconduct investigations, and incident reports. We also reviewed surveillance video and body-worn camera video associated with incidents, when it was available. We spoke with people throughout the community, including faith leaders, residents, activists, community groups, TPD officers, and City officials. These conversations have been crucial in understanding public safety in Trenton.

Q: What is the purpose of a community meeting?

Community meetings let us hear your experiences and opinions directly. You can also reach us by phone and email—see below or scan the QR code:

Phone: (973) 645-2801

Email: USANJ.Community.Trenton@usdoj.gov





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DOJ's Investigation into TPD and the City of Trenton

See the first page for general information about pattern or practice investigations

Q: What was the purpose of this investigation?

The Department of Justice opened this investigation to see if TPD officers engage in a pattern or practice of conduct that violates people's constitutional rights.

Q: What did this investigation find?

We released a report with these findings:

- (1) TPD officers use excessive force, including using unreasonable forms of physical force and pepper spray.
- (2) TPD officers unlawfully stop, search, and arrest people during pedestrian and traffic stops.

We also found that deficiencies in TPD's accountability system, training, policies, and supervision contributed to the constitutional violations we identified.

You can read the full report at www.justice.gov/crt/media/1377746/dl



Q: What happens now that the investigation is completed?

Next, we'll get input from community members, TPD officers and command staff, and City employees. We want to hear what reforms you think are necessary. Our team will be in Trenton to get that feedback, and you can reach us directly by phone or email (listed on the first page). Then we will attempt to negotiate a court-enforceable settlement with TPD and the City to address the violations we describe in our report. We'll work together with the City and TPD to ensure TPD follows more effective and lawful practices. It will take time to address these structural issues, and we want to hear from you throughout the process.