

Columbus To Split 2 Large Police Precincts, Add Precinct

Wednesday, January 13, 2010 12:58 PM

Updated: Wednesday, January 13, 2010 7:23 PM

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Columbus Division of Police announced Wednesday that two large precincts will be split as part of a reform plan aimed at improving efficiency and safety.

The department said it will divide the 14th precinct, located on the city's far-east side, and the 18th precinct, located on the city's north side, 10TV's Maureen Kocot reported.

According to a press release issued by Chief Walter Distelzweig, the plan also creates a new precinct while realigning others to balance workload. In addition, the plan allocates police personnel based on calls for service during the week and peak hours each day, police said.

There was no timetable for when the plan takes effect.

At his print shop on state Route 161, David Cooper, also heads the Northland Alliance, said the police in his 18th precinct neighborhood are stretched too thin.

"It used to be that anything north of I-270, before Polaris came into existence, it wasn't an issue because you were dealing with farmland," Cooper said.

But Cooper said officers told him on a bad day it can take 40 minutes to answer a call for help. Now the division is splitting the 18th precinct, which currently covers 20-square miles, Kocot reported.

Staffing will be restructured, so the responsibility of downtown events, like Red, White, and Boom and Ohio State events do not fall on the same police commander.

"This is a major undertaking. This is half of the police department we are looking at reorganizing, reforming," Distelzweig said.

The Division said it is keeping officers on foot and on bicycle patrol, but because Fridays and Saturdays are the busiest days, some patrol officers could soon have to forget about weekends off.

"I don't care if you were hired last year or 40 years ago, when you took this job we told you you're going to be working holidays, you may not have a summer vacation, this is a 24-7, 365 operation," Distelzweig said.

The division believes the changes will reduce response times.

The plan has drawn criticism from the union representing Columbus police officers, Kocot reported.

In a statement, the Fraternal Order of Police, Capital City Lodge No. 9 said it believed the city's reform plan was seriously flawed and did not include substantial input from the public or "rank and file" police officers.

"The proposed plan also ignores the relationships that patrol officers have developed over many years in the communities they serve, the statement read. " Unfortunately, the plan negatively impacts and diminishes the years of hard work that have been accomplished through community policing."

Watch 10TV News and refresh 10TV.com for additional information.