



Photo courtesy of Gresham Police Department.

# Allowing Police to Respond Quicker!

## Gresham Makes History With Drones As First Responders

The Gresham Police Department has become the first law enforcement agency in the State of Oregon to implement the Drones as First Responders Program (DFR) and the sixteenth law enforcement agency in the Country. The program had its inaugural launch on Friday, July 14, and will continue as a pilot program depending on staffing levels.

"Without the additional staffing the Gresham Safety Levy would have provided our department, we have to find innovative ways to be more efficient while keeping our community safe," said Gresham Police Chief Travis Gullberg.

The drones dedicated to the DFR program launch from Gresham City Hall and are deployed specifically for exigent circumstances which could include but are not limited to, searching for lost or missing persons and crimes in progress. The drones have the ability to provide critical information to ground personnel. It is important to note that the drones do not record video unless it is necessary for the collection of evidence. The drones deploy

with their cameras at a 15-degree angle, meaning, they are aimed straight ahead in order to better locate the scene and they return to City Hall at the same angle.

The City of Chula Vista, California, which implemented DFR in 2018, has recorded the average response time for a drone to a priority one call as three-point nine minutes and the patrol unit on scene as six-point six minutes. For priority two calls, they recorded drones arriving on scene within an average of five-point three minutes and patrol units on scene within ten-point one minutes.

The Gresham DFR program allows an officer to get visuals a situation in approximately two minutes, which can be almost half the amount of time of a patrol unit response.

"Utilizing the Drones as First Responders program allows our police to respond faster to our community's needs while keeping our officers safe," said City Manager Nina Vetter. "Drones have the ability to arrive at a scene within a couple of minutes, which allows our officers to have their eyes on an incident in record time and can potentially reduce the amount of personnel needed."

With the failure of the Gresham Safety Levy in May 2023, the City of Gresham is leveraging technology in order to continue the efforts of the Safe Gresham initiative developed last year.

# Nearly a Third of Oregon Superintendents are New



## Districts struggling to hire and retain superintendents over the past years

(AP) School districts across Oregon have struggled to hire and retain superintendents in the last five years, according to the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators. The job has frequently become contentious, as school leaders handle the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and face tensions from school boards, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported on Wednesday.

"We've seen an incredible amount of turnover," said Krista Parent, the coalition's deputy executive director. Sixty of Oregon's 197 school districts have superintendents in the first or second year of the job, she said. Twenty-five districts will have new superintendents this year, including two of the states largest: Salem-Keizer and Hillsboro. Nyssa, Crook County, Jordan Valley and Oakridge school districts were still seeking a superintendent as of this week.

Parent, who is a former National Superintendent of the Year, said Oregon and the entire country are in "crisis mode" for school district leadership. According to her data, Oregon has had 154 new superintendents in the last five

years. Some districts, including Corbett and Woodburn, have had three or more leaders in that time.

Parent said a natural exodus of superintendents who were retiring or aging out of the system was expected, as has happened in other fields. But turnover at this level was unexpected — exacerbated by lasting impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and school boards' recent increased politicization, she said. Having constant change in the superintendent's office often leads to instability in a school district, she said.

But Parent said more is needed, including requiring training for school board members and superintendents about how to work together. With current tensions between elected school board members and superintendents high in some places, that training could lead to better relationships, she said.

She said bringing in leaders who reflect a district's diverse student populations also needs work. According to Parent's data, only nine of the superintendents in 216 school districts or education service districts in Oregon are people of color, and only 49 are women.

"You don't just jump to the superintendency. You're an assistant principal and a principal and a curriculum director and so on," she said. "And so, if we're really going to change the system, we have to start here and get that pipeline to a place of having a lot of diversity."

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