

ELWOOD POLICE

THE ANNUAL REPORT

SEASON 2014



Inside:

YEAR IN REVIEW

Community Statistics and Officer
Training



Village of Elwood

• Established 1873 •

Proud of our past, Building our future.



2014 ANNUAL REPORT

The Official Publication of the Village of Elwood Police Department



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Mayor Offerman speaks at the Memorial Day ceremony held at Abraham Lincoln Cemetery

Village President

William Offerman

Board of Trustees

Dean Lowrance

Francis "Bud" Jones

Mary Matichak

Doug Jenco

Don Lapaglia

Jasen Melahn

Village Clerk

Patricia Buchenau

Village Administrator

Nick Narducci



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SEASON 2014



INTRODUCTION

Dear Residents, Business Owners, and Visitors:

I am pleased to provide to you the annual report of the Elwood Police Department. Looking back on 2014, it was an exciting year for the 14 men and women of the police department. This report provides a summary of the activity and accomplishments during the past year. On behalf of our members I would like to acknowledge our sincere appreciation for the significant resources dedicated to the Elwood Police Department by the Village President and Board of Trustees.

I hope you find this report both informational and educational as it is our desire to communicate to our residents the level of commitment and reliability they receive from the members of their police department. We continue to work towards providing enhanced specialized training for the employees that serve our community. The men and women of the Elwood Police Department are extremely dedicated in providing the best service possible to our residents and those citizens who travel through our town.

The dedicated public servants of the Elwood Police Department are proud to preserve and safeguard a community with one of the lowest crime rates in all of Will County. We remain passionately committed to our community policing philosophy and believe that problem solving is the preferred method to strengthen our partnership with the community.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or any other member of the department. We look forward to enduring community collaboration as we continue our advancement to excellence in community service.

Fred W. Hayes

Chief of Police



State Representative Tom Cross and Chief Hayes cut the ribbon for the Midwest Security Expo



Chief Hayes meets with Governor Pat Quinn



The knowledge to protect.
The ability to serve.



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Elwood Police Department is to protect and serve the community we police in a legal, ethical and professional manner, using the community policing strategy, and engaging in problem-solving when appropriate.



DEPARTMENT VALUES

We believe in the principles embodied in our Constitution, and recognize the authority of federal, state, and local laws.

We believe in the dignity and worth of all people.

We believe a disciplined department professional in both conduct and appearance is necessary to maintain public confidence.

We believe we must maintain the highest standards of integrity and honesty in all our actions.

We believe we are accountable to the residents of the community and each other.

We believe our authority is to be exercised responsibly.

We believe in managing our resources in prudent and productive ways.



It Takes Teamwork to Keep A Village Safe

First Responders include fire, police and emergency medical personnel.



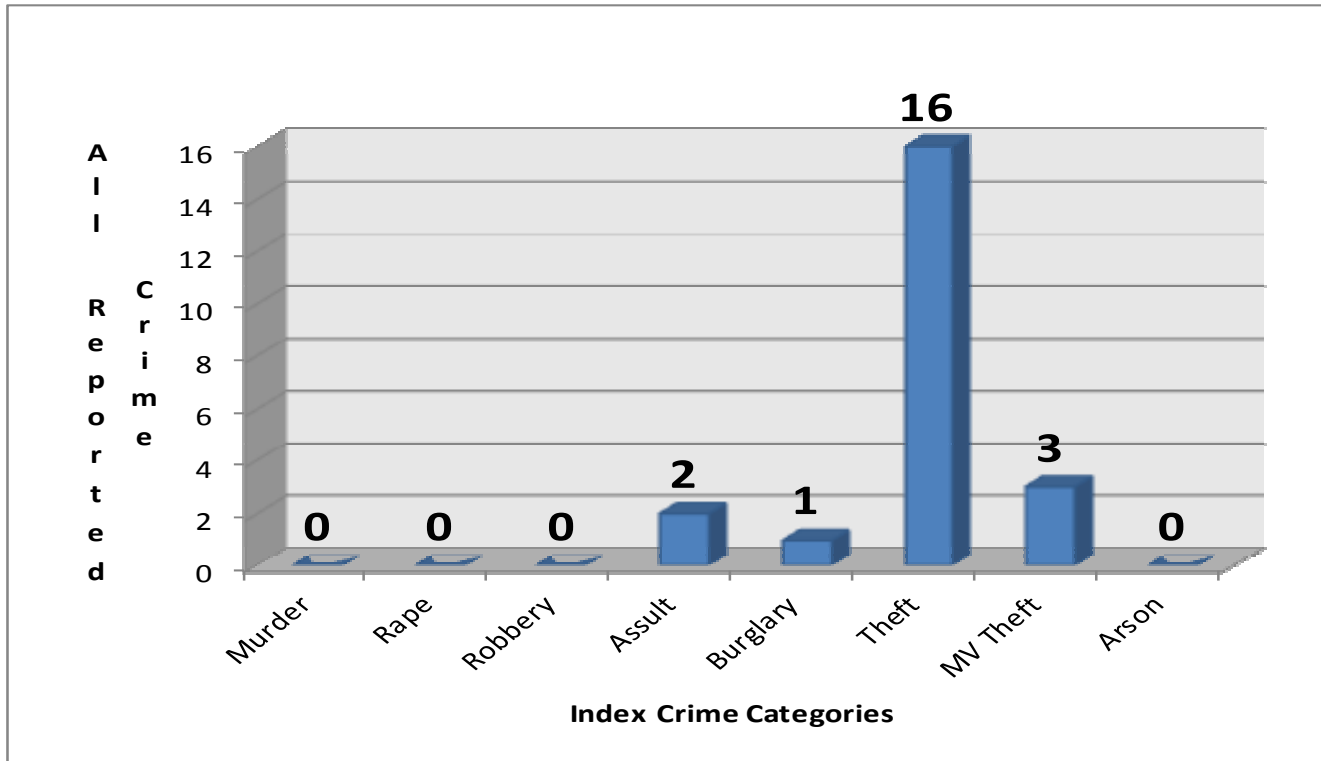
Officer Ken Jaburek and Public Works Director Max Bosso direct traffic around the fire scene of Thompson's Bar July 16th.

Elwood Fire Protection District firefighters work to extinguish the blaze.



Elwood Crime Remains Low in 2014

by Uniform Crime Report



The above crime statistics graph represents all reported crime in the Village of Elwood for 2014. During 2014 Elwood received 22 reports of crime compared to 22 for 2013 which reflects a continued decrease in all reported crime when compared to the past five years. The department responded to only one report of Burglary which usually involves forced entry. Theft continues to be the lead crime category.

The Elwood Police Department is in compliance with the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program and Illinois State Police I-UCR as mandated by state statute. The police department submits documented reported crimes to I-UCR under the following two main categories, 1. Violent Crimes Against People 2. Crimes Against Property. A total of eight crime categories are then recorded as follows, Violent Crimes (Murder, Forcible

Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault) and Crimes Against Property (Burglary, Theft, Motor Vehicle Theft, Arson).

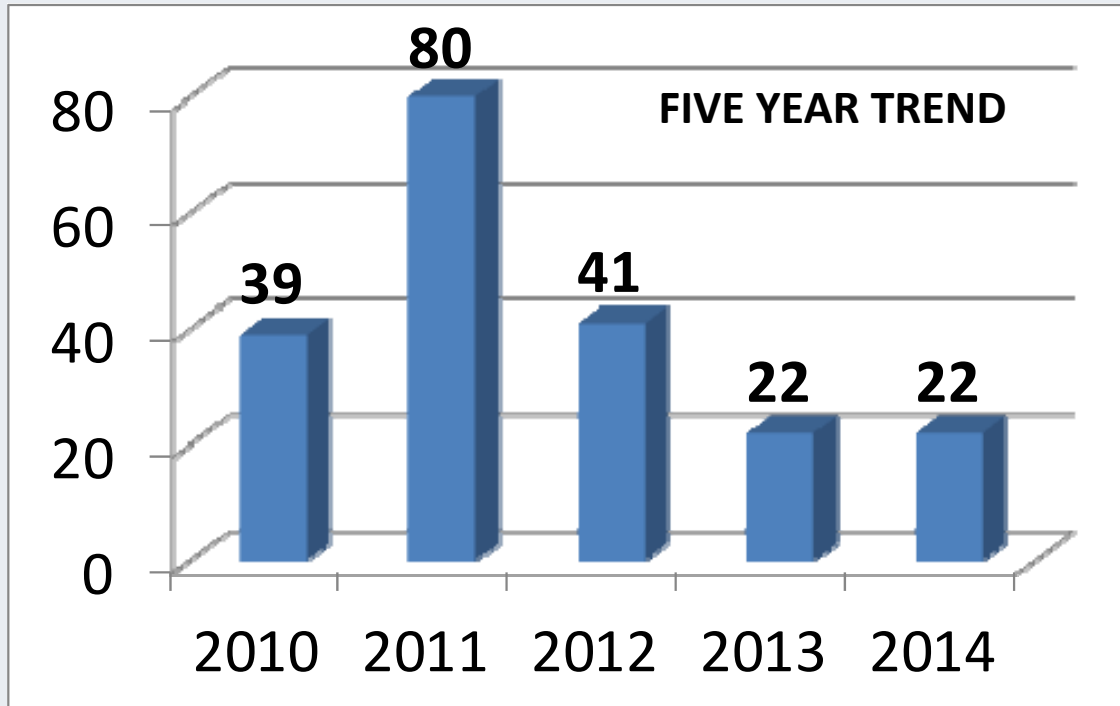
A sizeable portion of the reported thefts occurred within the intermodal industrial park. The department investigated several major cargo thefts from the warehouse distribution centers. These large value thefts require extensive criminal investigative skills.



Crime Statistics

SEASON 2014

by Uniform Crime Report



Every year the Elwood Police Department submits crime data to the Illinois State Police. The data they collect is on specific crimes and they are as follows: Murder, Criminal Sexual Assault, Robbery, Aggravated Assault and Battery, Burglary, Theft, Motor Vehicle Theft, and Arson.

The eight crime types are considered serious crimes or Part 1 Crimes as defined by the International Association of Chiefs of Police Committee on Uniform Crime Reports. The total raw number of these aforementioned crimes is called the Total Crime Index.. Originally developed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the Illinois Uniform Crime Reporting (I-UCR) Program was implemented on January 1, 1972. The Illinois State Police was given the responsibility to act as the central repository

for crime statistics. Reporting crime statistics is mandated by Chapter 20 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes, 2630/8.

Reporting agencies submit data on a monthly basis to the I-UCR Program. Participating jurisdictions include villages, municipalities, counties, colleges, universities, park districts, railroads, forest preserves, hospitals, and other miscellaneous agencies throughout Illinois.

When comparing the crime statistics of one agency to those of another, many factors should be taken into consideration before drawing conclusions. Geographic and demographic factors specific to each jurisdiction must be considered and applied if one is going to make an accurate and complete assessment of crime in that jurisdiction.



Officers arrest subject during traffic stop on Route 53



Commander Kerr provides training on weapons to Officer Wright and Leddin



Significant Accomplishments 2014

by Elwood Police Department

During the past year the Department continued to make significant progress towards achieving organizational excellence. Although not all inclusive, several of these accomplishments are highlighted below.

Administration:

- Developed model policy for the new Illinois Firearm Concealed Carry Act and trained Elwood Police and Elwood Fire Protection District in its application.
- At the request of the Tri-River Police Training Association, the Elwood Police Department shared our model policy and lesson plans for the new Illinois Firearm Concealed Carry Act with police and EMS 1st responders throughout the State of Illinois.
- Conducted a systematic review of Concealed Carry Applicants in order to make objections to applicants who represent a clear and present danger within the village.
- Purchased (5) 2014 Ford Interceptor Sedan public safety vehicles at \$24,764 a unit
- Renewed the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Will County Major Crimes Task Force
- Created the Medication Take-Back Program in cooperation with Will County Health Department
- Entered into a new Intergovernmental Agreement with the Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System (ILEAS) for mutual aid
- Purchased a FBI certified fingerprint SAFRAN Morpho Trust Live Scan biometric system at \$30,650
- Worked closely with Elwood Community School Superintendent and Principal in emergency response protocol.

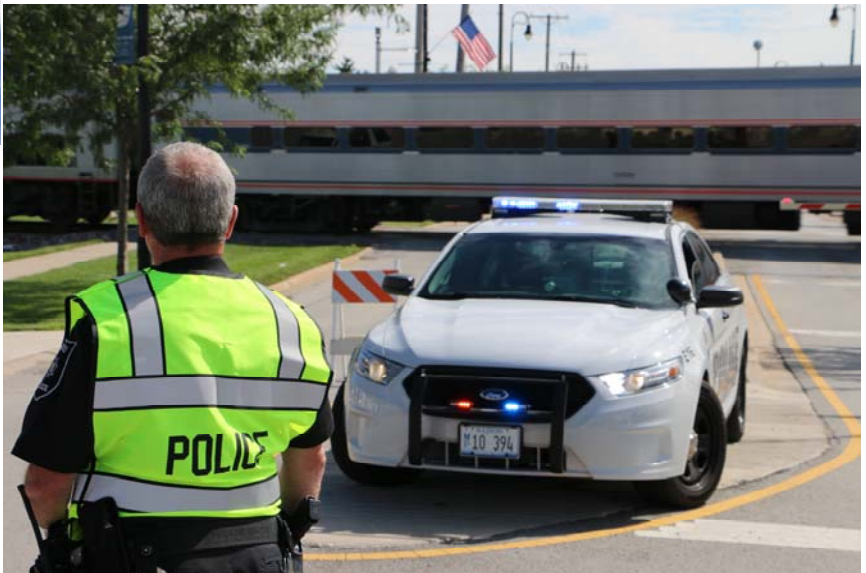
Training

- Conducted 90 hours of firearms qualification and training including handgun, patrol rifle and off-duty handguns. Conducted realistic firearms training based upon analysis of actual police/criminal deadly force encounters, such as lateral firing drills, multiple offender drills, low-light tactical urban courses of fire with both handguns and rifles.
- Re-certified all officers with the Taser X-26 Tasers.
- Trained all officers in Active Shooter/Rapid Deployment methods; participated in the September 26, 2014 Braidwood Active Shooter Response Exercise.



Significant Accomplishments 2014

by Elwood Police Department



Training Accomplishments 2014

by Elwood Police Department



In 2014 members of the Elwood Police Department participated in 1,188 hours of training which represented a 63% increase in the amount of training from the previous year. A total of 485 training hours were received by officers in the category of traffic safety enforcement including Accident Investigations, DUI Enforcement, Commercial Truck Enforcement, and Child Seat Safety. Officers attended the following courses:

Medical Marijuana & Marijuana
DUI Arrests

Lead Homicide Investigator
Course

Domestic Violence Crisis Inter-
vention

Illinois Juvenile Court Act Up-
date

Constitutional Law Update for
Police

Street Evidence Tech 1

National Child Passenger Safety Tech

DWI Detection & Standard Field Sobriety
Testing

Criminal Related Inter-
viewing

Acting Patrol Officer in
Charge

Explosive Recognition
Security Planning

Crisis Intervention Team Training (CIT)

**Providing officers the
knowledge they need to
be effective in the field
and to advance in their
career...**

Interviewing and Interrogation

Close Quarter Handgun Skills: Level 1

Patrol Rifle Qualification and Training

Use of Force Workshop for Patrol

Mobile Field Force training

DUI Standard Field Sobriety Testing (SFST)

Legal Hot Topics, Search & Seizure

Breath Analysis Instrument
Operator Course

Supervision of Police Person-
nel (SPP)

Safe Schools and Healthy Stu-
dents

Constitutional Law Update for
Police

Laser Shot Training

Child Safety Seat

Life Star Helicopter Landing

Training

Shooting Skills for the Woman Officer

UCR Reporting Program

Law Records Management System Re-
porting

Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention

Active Shooter Scenario Training

Advanced Truck Enforcement

Practical Homicide Investigation

Pistol and Patrol Rifle Training Course

Addressing the Mental Health Call

Mental Preparation for Combat

Taser Re-certification Training

Sex Crimes Investigation

Taser Instructor Course

AR-15/M-16/M-4 Armorer Class



ELWOOD'S POLICE CHIEF INSTALLED AS PRESIDENT OF ILACP

Tinley Park, IL, June 21 -- Village of Elwood Police Chief Fred Hayes took office as President of the 1,200 member Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police (ILACP) at the organization's Summer Conference in Tinley Park on June 21st. Police Chiefs from around the state also assembled to receive specialized training in "Smart Policing Leadership" which helps law enforcement executives in providing quality police service to reduce crime and the fear of crime in their respective communities and throughout Illinois.

Chief Hayes is an ILACP-Certified Police Chief and an Adjunct Professor at Lewis University in the Department of Justice, Law and Public Safety. He was the Illinois Crime Prevention Association's 2009 Chief of the Year, among multiple professional awards during his past 34 years in law enforcement. Also in attendance at the installation banquet were Elwood Mayor William Offermann, Administrator Nick Narducci, and Director of Engineering and Public Works Max Bosso. Lemont Police

Chief Kevin Shaughnessy served as master of ceremonies as Honorable Chief Judge Richard C.

Schoenstedt of the 12th

Judicial Circuit Court Will County administered the oath of office to incoming President Hayes.

As the guest speaker for the evening Chicago Police Superintendent (ret.) Terry Hillard praised Hayes for his accomplishments. Hayes is following in the footsteps of his father, the late

Fred Hayes Sr. who previously served as the ILACP President in 1980 during a 42 year career in law enforcement. "The ILACP must continue to enhance the operational effectiveness of Illinois Law Enforcement agencies throughout the state to improve the safety and quality of life for all the people of Illinois" Hayes said during his acceptance speech.

In addition to receiving enhanced legal instruction during the training conference, Police Chiefs also received a detailed presentation from Connecticut Police Chief Douglas Fuchs on his response to the Sandy Hook School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. Law Enforcement leaders received valuable lessons learned from the response to one of our nation's most tragic mass shooting incidents.



COVER STORY POLICE CHIEF IN BIG, SMALL TOWNS

Elwood's chief Fred Hayes will head state association, just like his father

By BRIAN STANLEY
bstanley@shawmedia.com

ELWOOD--The local police chief will become the chief of the state's police chiefs.

Fred Hayes is set to be sworn in Saturday as president of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police.

"I can share my experience of operating the fourth-largest police department in the state and one of the smallest. I think that's given me a unique perspective," Hayes said.

He spent 31 years on the Joliet Police Department, which had 275 officers when he served as chief from 2006 to 2011. The Elwood Police Department, which he's led since 2011, has 10 full-time officers.

While chiefs from larger departments, which have more activity, and smaller departments, which have fewer resources, can't always relate, Hayes believes networking benefits both.

"While there are some variances, I've learned the problems are extremely similar. The basics of policing are universal," Hayes said. The ILACP is made up of 800 agencies and about 1,200 members.

New bosses can reach out to veterans about issues they've faced in command. The association's policies can be offered to smaller departments that experience a line-of-duty death or officer-involved shooting, Hayes said. "Something like that can be a huge burden on the department, which still has to continue operations. We're as much a resource for the com-



TOP: Elwood Police Chief Fred Hayes directs a semitrailer driver after the driver was observed making an illegal U-turn on Walter Strawn Dr. on Thursday. Hayes, a former police chief in Joliet, will be named President of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police. BELOW: Hayes listens to the driver Thursday.

through one-year terms as vice presidents.

"At the conference a few years ago, they were showing the past presidents' pictures on screen and I saw my dad. The president at the time said it'd be neat to have a father-son combination one day. That planted the seed," Hayes said. The late Fred Hayes Sr.

Carthy because then-superintendent Richard Brzezczek was the speaker at his father's installation dinner in 1980.

"I was still on the list for the Joliet police, and Superintendent Brzezczek was with my parents at the dais so I got seated next to his top deputy James Riordan," Hayes recalled.



Criminal Investigations Function

by Elwood Police Department

It is the policy of this Department to promptly and thoroughly investigate all reported crimes, complaints, and other incidents requiring police service. Patrol officers will conduct preliminary investigations on all dispatched, self-initiated and supervisor-assigned calls. The patrol officer initially assigned to an incident will conduct the preliminary investigation and complete the Offense/Incident Report unless otherwise directed by a supervisor .

Officer James Hartley serves as the department investigator with responsibility to conduct follow-up investigations of reported crimes (i.e. murder, robbery, burglary, fraud, cargo theft, etc.). These investigations consist of inter-viewing suspects, victims, and witnesses; analyzing information for validity, reliability, and accuracy; and compiling a comprehensive and factual case file to be presented in court.

The departments Evidence/Property Section is staffed by Officer Nick Adams. As the Evidence Custodian he must receive, store and release evidence and property in compliance with Department policy and procedure and applicable laws. Inventory each item received, assign a storage location, and record the location in the Department Evidence/Property records system. Ensure all property is adequately identified. Maintain the Evidence/Property records system reflecting the status of all property held by the Department including final disposition.



Officer Adams conducts audit of evidence room

Officer James Hartley Investigative Case File

Case Number	Investigation Period	Investigation Type	Outcome
131022000360	8 Months	Felony Theft	3 Suspects Arrested.
140222000073	3 Weeks	Death Investigation	No Criminal Charges
140313000111	3 Days	Misdemeanor Theft	3 Suspects Arrested
140318000122	2 Days	Traffic-Death Investigation (Assist)	Pending ASA Office
140513000257	1 Week	Fire Investigation	No Criminal Charges
140529000295	1 Day	Battery	1 Suspect Arrested
140614000333	1 Week	Felony Theft (Assist)	1 Suspect Arrested
140626000353	1 Week	Ordinance Violations / Welfare	No criminal Charges
140720000395	3 Days	Misdemeanor Theft / Civil Issue	No Charges to be Filed
140810000444	3 Days	Criminal Damage to Property	No Charges to be Filed
140824000472	1 Week	Sex Offender Registry Investigation	No Criminal Charges
140914000511	1 Day	Domestic Battery (Assist)	1 Suspect Arrested
141104000644	1 Month	Theft of Services (Trac) - Civil	No Charges to be Filed
141116000658	3 Days	Internal Documentation	No Charges to be Filed
141119000664	1 Month	Felony Theft- Ongoing at this time	Criminal Charges Pending



Protect Our Kids, Families, and Environment

OUR GREATEST STRENGTH IS OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT

Medication Take-Back Program

by Village of Elwood

At the March 19th Village Board Meeting Mayor William Offerman and the Board of Trustees approved the Medication Take Back Program. The goal is to allow Elwood residents a safe alternative to deliver all unused, unwanted, or expired medication to local law enforcement officials, who can in turn dispose of these controlled substances in a safe, secure, and non-hazardous manner.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports each year thousands of tons of pharmaceutical and personal care products enter the waste stream. Several United States Geological Survey studies have found that many pharmaceuticals are surviving water treatment facilities and making their way into drinking water.

The EPA has instructed people to stop discarding unwanted medications down the drain. Unused, expired and unwanted medication is a health and safety risk, as well as a potential threat to waterways and local landfills. Will County, in cooperation with the Illinois EPA operate the Medication Take-Back Program, which encour-

ages people to locate a pharmaceutical take-back program for disposal of unwanted medications.

Many local police departments in Will County serve as a drop-off site for the Medication Take-Back Program. In an effort to provide more convenience for our citizens, the Elwood Police Department will now serve as a drop-off location with an installed MedReturn Drug Collection Unit in the lobby at Village Hall.

The Elwood Police Department has established procedures for the collection and safe disposal of unused prescription/over the counter medicines turned into the Elwood Police Department by the community, known as the Medication Take-Back Program.

The Elwood Police Evidence Unit will be responsible for the intake, storage, and disposal of unused medications. As a partner through an intergovernmental agreement, Will County shall maintain an agreement with a Hazardous



Waste Disposal contractor and provide a secure storage area for consolidation of materials received by the Elwood Police Departments Medication Take-Back program. For more information please visit willcountygovern.com or call the Elwood Police at 815-424-1090.

Accepted: Prescriptions, Prescription Patches, Prescription Medications, Prescription Ointments, Over-the-counter medications, Vitamins, Samples, Medications for pets.

Not-Accepted: Needles (sharps), Ointments lotions or liquids, Aerosol cans, Inhalers, Hydrogen Peroxide.

Calls For Service Summary

SEASON 2014

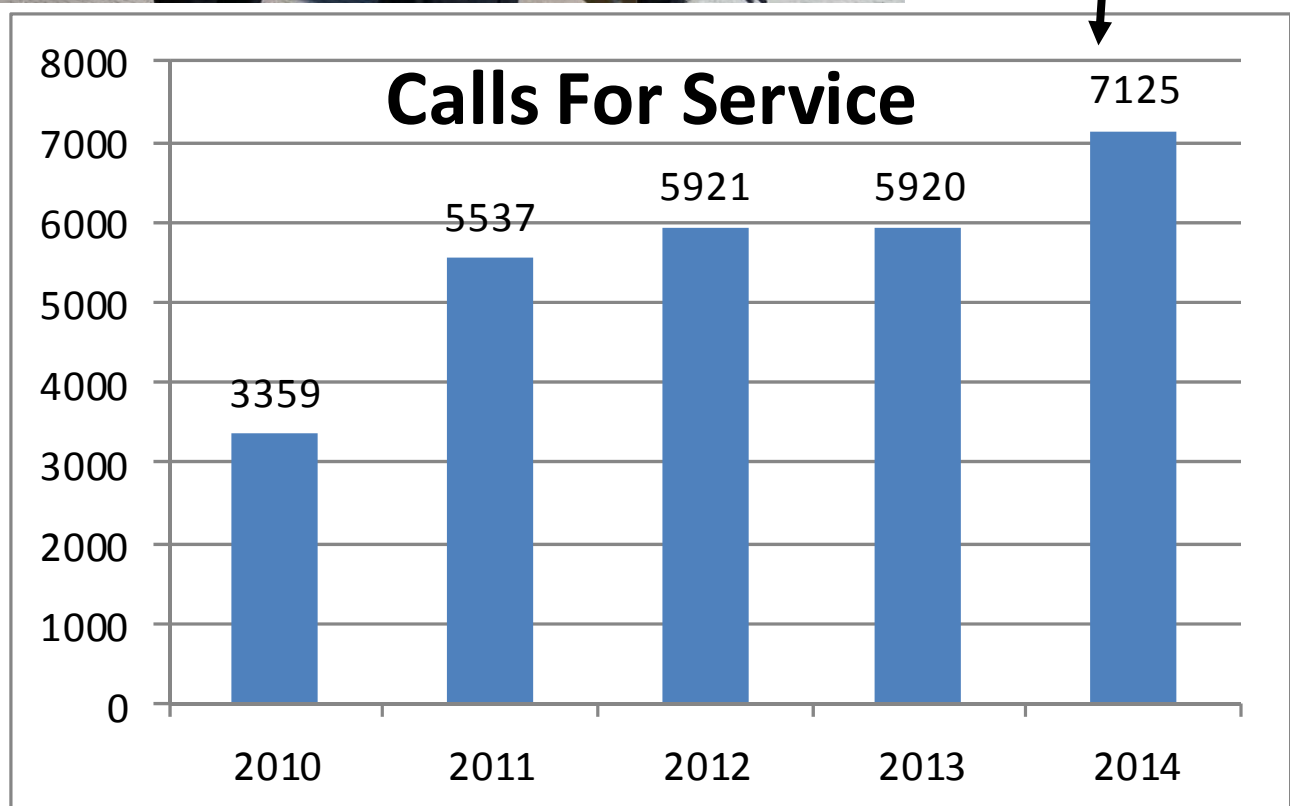
Every time a citizen or resident requests the Police Department to respond to their home to take a police report or meet with an officer, a Call For Service (CFS) is generated. A CFS is also created for police officer self-initiated activity. CFS's encompass a wide variety of activity that includes some of the following:

911 Calls	Assist Fire and E.M.S.
Criminal Reports	Assist other Police Departments
Accidents	Child Safety Seat Inspections
Traffic Stops	House or Building Checks
Loud Noise Complaints	Park Patrols

2014 marked a significant increase in the amount of calls involving a police response. For the past two years the total amount of Calls For Service remained at relatively the same volume. Overall Elwood police officers responded to 7,125 incidents in 2014, resulting in a 20% increase over the previous year. This increase amounted to police responding to approximately 19 calls per day. They include from every ticket written, accidents, suspicious vehicle complaints, domestic disputes, worker disturbances, and even barking dog calls.



**20% Increase in CFS's
Over 2013**



Special Events 2014 by Elwood Police Department



Storm clouds roll in on Elwood Community Days Friday September 5, 2014



Special Events 2014

by Elwood Police Department



Officer Adams places flags for Memorial Day at Abraham Lincoln Cemetery



Officer Lightfoot at Abraham Lincoln Cemetery



U.S. Capitol Christmas tree parked on Mississippi



Officer Leddin and Lightfoot patrol Elwood Community Days carnival

NEW COP CARS HIT THE STREETS

NEW FORD POLICE INTERCEPTORS

Recently the Elwood Police Department began deploying its newest police service vehicles. Considering age, mileage, and mechanical condition of vehicles in the police department's fleet, it became necessary to replace older squad cars, several had over 111,000 miles. With their continued support for public safety, Mayor Offerman and the Board of Trustee's authorized the purchase of (5) five 2014 Ford Police Interceptors. The purchase of five police sedans was budgeted in the 2013-14 Village of Elwood Capital Budget. Using the competitive bid process established by Village ordinance, the Board approved the purchase through the Suburban Purchasing Cooperation (SPC) program, which is sponsored by the Northwest Municipal Conference, DuPage Mayors & Managers Conference, South Suburban Mayors & Managers Conference and Will County Governmental League. The SPC program awarded the purchase for police vehicles to Currie Motors Fleet, in Frankfort, IL. The unit price per police vehicle was \$24,764.00

OFFICER PROTECTION IS PRIORITY ONE

The new Ford Police Interceptors replace the popular Crown Victoria which is no longer manufactured. The Police Interceptors are built at Ford's Chicago Assembly Plant, and have passed stringent law enforcement tests before receiving approval for police operations. Safety cell construction works to direct the force of a collision around the occupant compartment. Crumple zones help absorb and dissipate the energy of a crash. The V6 powertrain on the Interceptors provides the power and fuel efficiency to assist Elwood PD in reducing operating costs.



New Elwood Squad Car at the scene of an accident.



Elwood Squad E15 on Route 53.

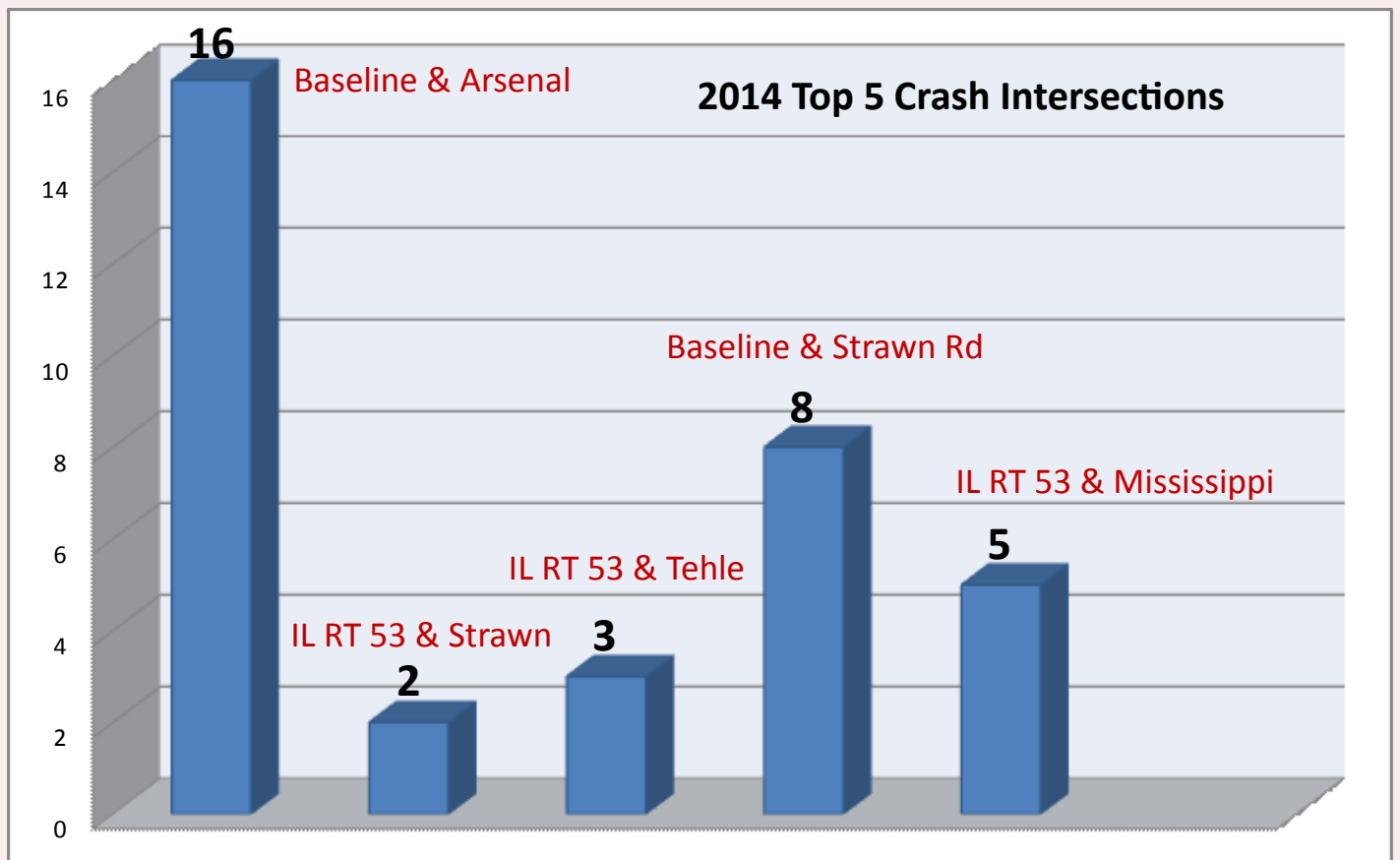


- The all-new Ford Interceptors deliver more performance, handling and fuel economy
- The only all-wheel-drive vehicles specifically built for law enforcement
- Highly efficient 3.5-liter V6 with 280 horsepower

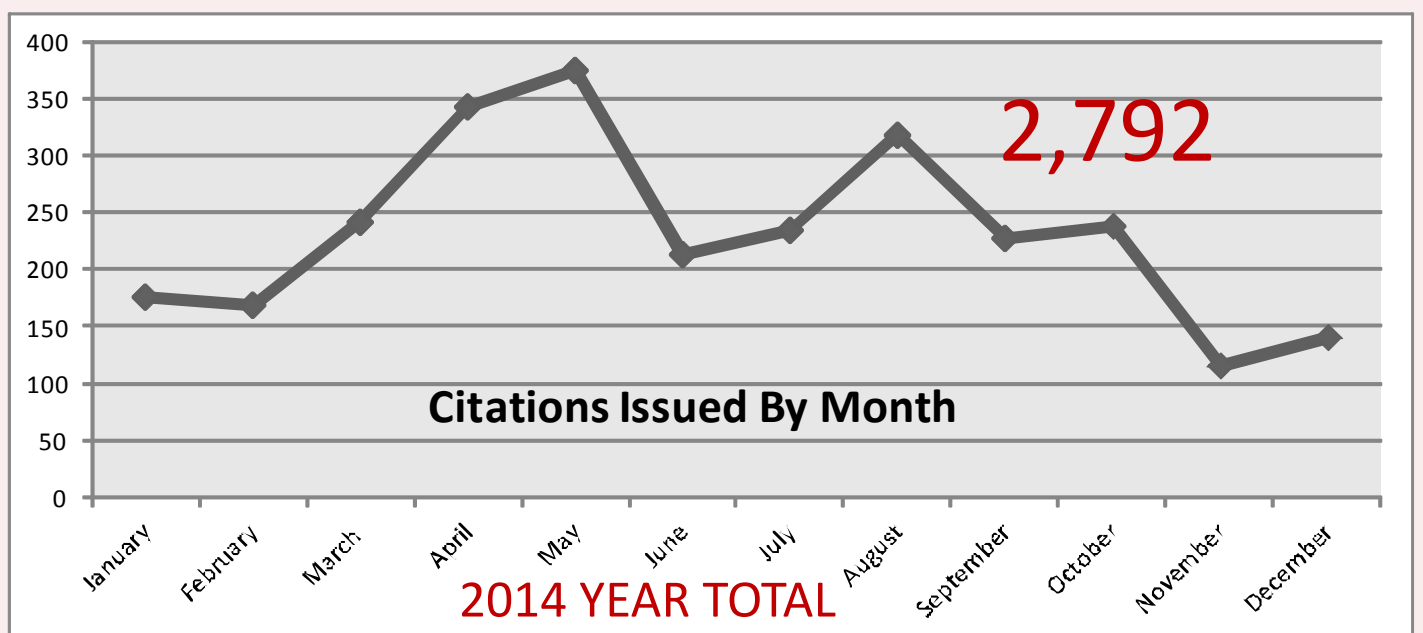
SEASON 2014

Traffic Enforcement Activity

SEASON 2014



The Elwood Police Department completed an annual traffic safety analysis from all crash data compiled throughout the year. This data is further broken down to the top five crash intersections. A review of the crashes by month, day, time, reported injuries, seat belt usage, and types of vehicles involved, was completed. The department closely conducted the analysis with the Director of Engineering for the village, to identify where education, enforcement, or roadway improvements were needed to improve traffic safety. The information is being used to plan several roadway projects for FY2014-15.



Traffic Enforcement Activity

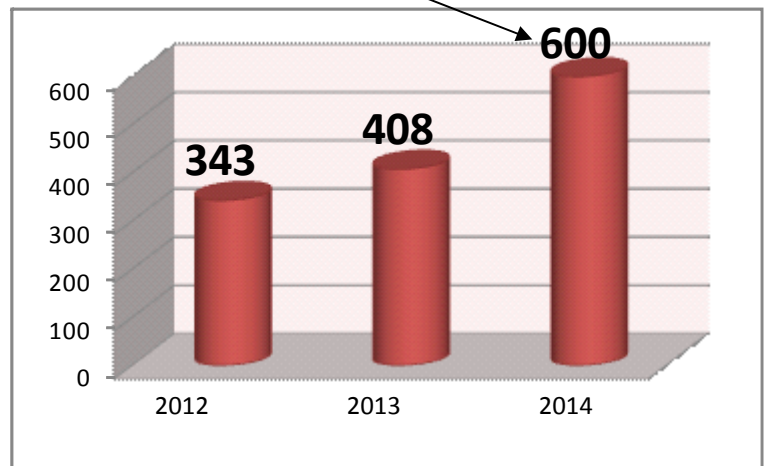
SEASON 2014



Traffic law enforcement is an integral part of the police function. In addition to being a deterrent to potential violators, there is a strong relationship between traffic enforcement and crime prevention. Traffic enforcement on the part of a police department helps to establish a reputation for vigilance. There can be a correlation between a police department's traffic enforcement efforts and the incidence of crime in a community. The department places a priority on its enforcement of three major traffic safety categories; Speeding, Impaired Driving (DUI) and Occupant Protection/Seat Belts.

Number of Speeding Citations

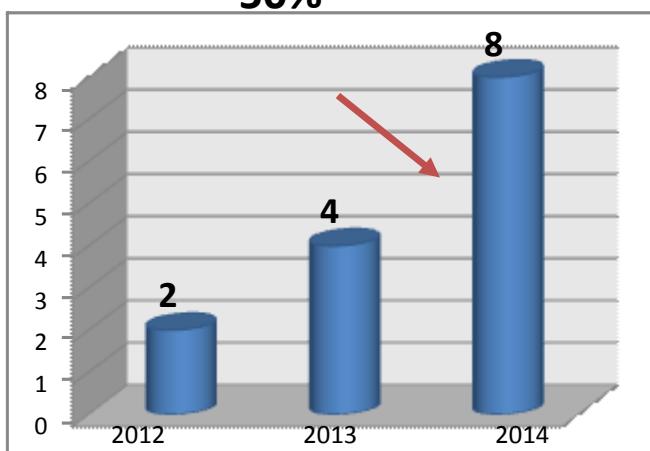
47% Increase



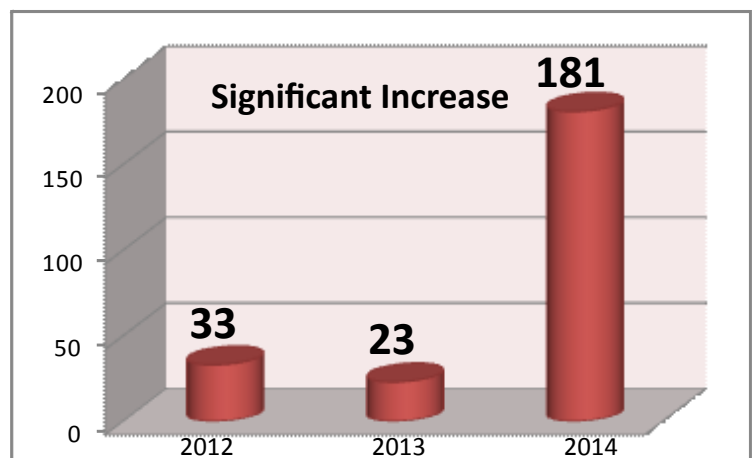
On July 27, 2014, Officer Wright observed a reckless driver on Route 53 traveling in excess of the speed limit, eventually clocking the driver at 140 mph.

DUI Arrests Increased by

50%



Number of Seat Belt Citations



Traffic Enforcement Activity

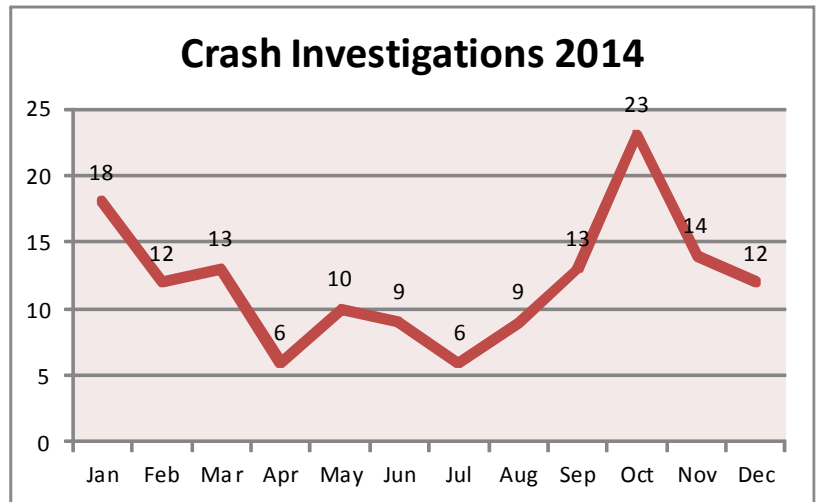


Officer Ken Jaburek directs truck traffic

Each and every day Elwood Police Officers maintain traffic enforcement duties as their top priority. It shall be the policy of this department and a priority to focus its enforcement efforts through vigorous enforcement of three major traffic safety categories; Speeding, Impaired Driving (DUI) and Occupant Protection. Officers conduct special enforcement activities designed to improve the safety of all residents and motorists traveling through the village. Elwood officers are committed to improving the efficiency and safety of passenger vehicles and truck transportation in addition to pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Our enforcement efforts are data-driven and focus on the main factors that lead to personal injury accidents and fatalities, such as not using seat belts, impairment, speeding, and distracted driving. Officers also focus on the dangers posed by the aggressive and reckless driving behaviors of operators of large commercial trucks.

School Bus Crash with no injuries 11/7/14



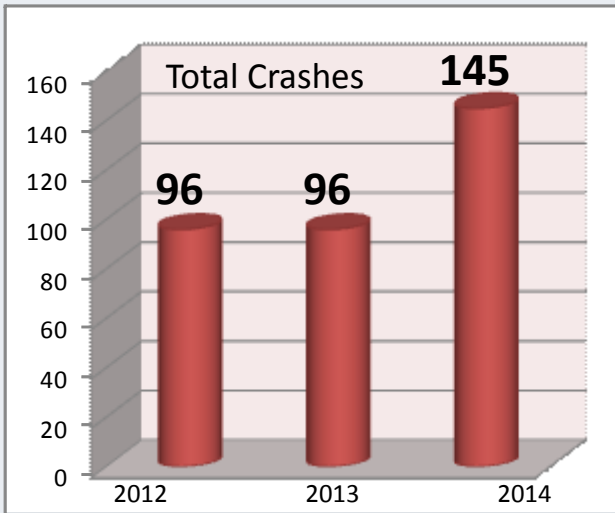
Targeted Enforcement To reduce Accidents on Route 53 & Mississippi



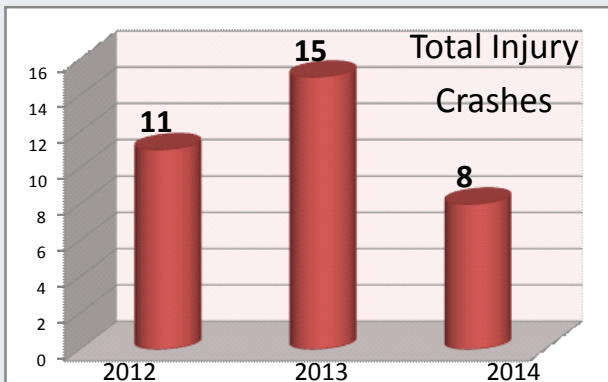
Tragic Fatal Crash Route 53 and Mississippi March 19th

Traffic Enforcement Activity

SEASON 2014



Officer Anderson works a truck crash Route 53 and Strawn



It is the policy of this Department to enforce traffic laws at a level sufficient to ensure the safe and expeditious movement of traffic. Violations will be controlled through preventive measures and proactive enforcement. The heavy commercial vehicle traffic in the area associated with the Largest Inland Intermodal Port in North America presents unique challenges for traffic enforcement. Elwood Officers issued a total of 2792 citations in 2014. Police Officers are expected to strictly enforce commercial vehicle traffic laws which include violations of the provisions in Chapter 15 of the Illinois Vehicle Code concerning Size, Weight, and Load Permits.

Officer Adams at a crash scene Route 53 and Mississippi



- ♦ In 2014 46 % of all accidents occurred on private property
- ♦ Injury crashes decreased by 47%
- ♦ October had the most crashes with 23
- ♦ Most accidents involved a vehicle turning or striking a fixed object

State Rules Illinois' Most Dangerous Rail Crossing Must Close

After a year-long battle, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) unanimously ruled that the state's most dangerous rail crossing, located at Route 53 and Walter Strawn Drive in the Village of Elwood, must be closed within two weeks, no later than January 28, 2015.

Joining the Village in support of closing the crossing have been the Illinois Department of Transportation, Union Pacific Railroad, and staff at the Illinois Commerce

Commission (ICC) that the heavy truck traffic on Route 53 consistently cuts off the 15 to 20 funeral processions of deceased veterans en route to the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery each day. The practice leads to frequent separations of mourning parties from the procession and, in some cases, causing loved ones to miss the interment of those who have honorably served our nation.

In June 2014, the *Chicago Tribune* profiled

crossing posed a real and immediate danger, not only to the people of Elwood, but to the truckers that CenterPoint employs and Amtrak passengers who ride the train," continued Hayes. "We are proud to have fought to protect our residents and ensure that those who are mourning the loss of our beloved veterans can safely and simply travel to Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery."

While some safety improvements had been implemented during the past year, including slowing the closing of crossing gates and adding part-time police officers to monitor traffic at the crossing, the ICC determined efforts to mitigate danger fell short.

"No evidence was introduced by any party [during the hearings] as to traffic signal changes, traffic management revisions or railroad warning device changes or additions that would eliminate the safety concerns as between rail traffic, vehicular traffic, and the funeral processions," Kirkland-Montague wrote in the order. "The conflict between vehicle traffic at and near the Strawn Road Crossing with funeral processions creates an immediate safety concern. In order to remedy this immediate safety concern, temporary closure of the crossing is necessary."

In addition to the shattered crossing gates, an 8-year-old girl was killed after a March 18 collision with a truck nearby, which also left her sister seriously injured. In 2012, an Amtrak passenger train nearly collided with a stalled semi-truck.

Last spring, the Village released a police squad camera video that captured a truck crashing through rail crossing gates at Walter Strawn Drive.



Commission – the agency that governs rail crossing safety across Illinois. The decision came despite the efforts of intermodal facility owner CenterPoint Properties, which argued to keep the crossing open despite the myriad of safety concerns.

"Despite the special interests and clout, justice has finally prevailed today," said Elwood Police Chief Fred Hayes. "We are pleased that the ICC Board agrees with the Village of Elwood, the railroad companies and transportation authorities that safety is Priority #1. This ruling will help us keep our residents, commuters, and truckers safe on our streets and shows respect to our fallen heroes. Ultimately, this decision will save lives."

Due to the 8,000 trucks that pass through the area each day, the troubled crossing has been the site of several accidents and near-misses in recent years, with more than 50 crossing gates smashed by semi-tractor trailer trucks in 2013 alone. In June, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs also decried the crossing, noting

the issue as part of a front-page story entitled: "Small town fights big time truck traffic." Elwood, which began requesting that the rail crossing close since the ICC opened the investigation in November 2013, had been involved in an evidentiary hearing in front of an administrative law judge for several months before today's decision was handed down. At the close of the hearing in December, Chief Administrative Law Judge Latrice Kirkland-Montague issued a recommendation to the full ICC to close the crossing despite vehement objections from CenterPoint Properties, calling it an "immediate safety concern."

CenterPoint argued that closing the crossing would disrupt commerce and negatively impact the corporation's bottom line and only offered short-term solutions.

"This ruling proves that, despite the enormous financial resources they put forward, CenterPoint could not hide the fact that this



Traffic Safety 2014

by Elwood Police Department



A significant amount of time was spent by Elwood officers in 2014 attempting to improve the safety at the Walter Strawn rail crossing. The tremendous volume of commercial truck traffic at the intersection severely interfered with funeral processions traveling to Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. In a one year span trucks broke through over 50 signal gates at the crossing and a near collision was recorded

Route 53 & Walter Strawn



involving an Amtrak passenger train. During the summer months Will County Sheriff personnel were hired to escort funeral procession through the dangerous intersection. Elwood Officers conducted numerous traffic safety enforcement details to combat the excessive violations from commercial trucks. Officer Jim Hartley used his squad car dash camera to film a semi crashing through the lowering gates while stopped at the intersection and blocking the train tracks. In order to avoid a collision with an oncoming Amtrak passenger train, the driver continued through with the train passing by only seconds later. The video made national headlines.





Officers Leddin and Hartley provide Girl Scout Troop 70693 a tour of the Elwood Police Department

SEASON
2014



