



Des Moines Iowa Police Reserve Police Unit

Year Started: 1985
Number of Reserves: 25+
City Population: 203,433
Number of Sworn Officers: 374
VIMS Client Since: 2010

The VIMS Impact:

“VIMS has saved me countless hours of unnecessary or duplicated work which I in turn can now put towards other projects.”

What Feature(s) do you like best about VIMS and why?

VIMS allows me to check on the hours worked and keep up with our reserve officers monthly requirements thus reducing liability and protecting the department.

What do your reserve officers like best about VIMS?

VIMS allows our reserve officers to enter their hours while at home and they do not have to fill out time sheets and turn them in at the department and gives them more flexibility and specified duties when entering their time.

Overview from Officer Scott Baker Reserve Unit Coordinator Des Moines Iowa Police Department September 2013



Des Moines is the capital and the most populous city in the state of Iowa and was incorporated on September 22, 1851, as Fort Des Moines which was shortened to “Des Moines” in 1857. Des Moines is a major center for the insurance industry and also has a sizable financial services and publishing business base and credited with being the “number one spot for U.S. insurance companies” and dubbed the third largest insurance capital of the world. Forbes magazine ranked Des Moines as the “Best Place for Business” in 2010 and, in 2011, ranked the city #1 among “America’s Best Cities for Young Professionals. Des Moines is an important city in presidential politics as the capital of Iowa, which is home to the Iowa caucuses. The caucuses have been the first major electoral event in nominating the President of the United States since 1972. Hence, many presidential candidates set up campaign headquarters in Des Moines. A 2007 New York Times article stated “if you have any desire to witness presidential candidates in the most close-up and intimate of settings, there is no better place to go”.

What were the initial goals of starting the reserve program?

Our reserve program was formed in 1950 and they were known as the Polk County Unit of the Civilian Defense Auxiliary Police and many of them were former WWII Auxiliary Police in the 1970’s they became what is now the Des Moines Police Reserve Unit.

What are the primary functions of your reserve unit?

In the beginning the reserve officer duties consisted of assisting with traffic direction in the downtown area, neighborhood Christmas celebrations, dignitary visits, and during the annual spring floods. Now they primarily serve as a secondary officer in a two person patrol car with the same arrest powers as a full-time police officer.

What are the qualifications to become a reserve officer?

DMPD reserve officers need a high school education are given a basic knowledge test, need to pass a health physical, be in good physical condition, have no criminal history and pass an extensive background investigation much like our full time sworn officers and successfully complete the reserve officer police training academy.

What type on initial training do reserve officers receive?

Our reserve officers receive approximately 290 hours of training, which is much more than the State of Iowa requires, before they ride with a Field Training Officer for 160 hours.



Photo of 2010 Des Moines Police Reserve Officers (in blue uniforms) graduating along with their reserve counterparts from the Polk County IA Sheriff’s office.

How do you primarily recognize and/or reward your Reserves ?

Our reserve officers are able to be rewarded with any of the service awards that our full-time officers can achieve and of course have the ongoing gratitude of our department and the community they serve. In December of 2011 Reserve Police Officer John Carter was awarded the Des Moines Police Departments highest honor, the Medal of Valor, along with five other full time officers for their heroic efforts to pull three teenagers from a burning vehicle on August 28, 2011.

What were your most current year's total hours volunteered by all your reserve officers?

Total hours donated by the reserve officers in 2012 was 5,749 hours equal to 143 man weeks.

What is your annual operating budget and how are you funded?

We fund the reserve unit out of the basic department budget, Patrol Fund.

Do you provide support for such as Parades, Fairs, traffic control for events, etc?

Our officers provide assistance in many functions. We have many, many special events in Des Moines (nearly 200 this year) that are supported by the department and the reserve officers have the option to sign up for the events also and they are chosen on a seniority basis taken after the police officers if there are still spots to fill on the event.

What is the most significant event known that your reserve program can take credit for?

In 2008 and 2010 our city was inundated with flood waters and many of reserve officers came in from home or their regular full time jobs to help clear the flood plain in an incredibly fast amount of time. We also had one of our reserve officers work beside five full time officers in rescuing teens out of a burning car to save their lives. The incident was caught on dash cam video and made national news. The reserve and full time officers all received numerous awards.

Prior to using VIMS, what methods or programs did you use to track hours, schedule events and shifts, track recognition, training, etc.??

A handed down, outdated Excel spreadsheet system of keeping track of their hours worked.

What challenges did you encounter utilizing the previous methods?

The biggest problem before VIMS I encountered was the fact that our reserve officers would work and fill out a sheet, then turn it into me and I had to physically enter all the information. This caused me about 20 hours per month of extra unnecessary work. VIMS makes it fast and easy to give the command staff an accurate account of the hours worked by our reserve unit.

Pictured below the six Des Moines Police officers who risked their lives to pull two people from a burning vehicle last year receiving the Sullivan Brothers Award of Valor given to Iowa peace officers and firefighters who display heroism beyond normal duty. Gov. Terry Branstad presented the award at the Iowa State Capitol to the six heroes.

From left to right:

Reserve Officer John Carter;
Senior Police Officers
Aaron Cawthorn, Jeremy
Sprague and Robin Swank;
Sgt. Michael McTaggart;
Gov. Terry Branstad; Senior
Police Officer Collin Boone;
and Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds.

