

APD offering up to \$15K hiring on bonuses



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With just under 1,000 officers in the Albuquerque Police Department, the city is offering hiring bonuses to all lateral hires, cadets and police service aides.

Officers who join APD from other departments will receive a \$15,000 hiring bonus – \$5,000 when they're hired, \$5,000 when they complete their fourth week in the academy, and the rest after a one-year probationary period. Police cadets will get a \$5,000 hiring bonus, and police service aides will get \$1,500.

Rebecca Atkins, an APD spokeswoman, said that as of July 26 there were 939 sworn personnel – 369 of whom are patrol officers, 59 who are patrol sergeants and 18 who are patrol lieutenants. That includes 18 bike officers, she said.

Additionally, there are 35 officers, three sergeants and seven lieutenants with the problem response teams, which are tasked with proactive policing.

Starting salaries are \$41,454 for police cadets, \$43,820 for a lateral officer with less than two years' experience, and \$58,240 for lateral officers with at least two years' experience, Atkins said.

Police departments across the country had increased rates of resignations and retirements over the past year. According to a survey of 200 agencies by the Police Executive Research Forum, retirements increased 45% and resignations increased 18% from April 2020 through April 2021.

Atkins said in Albuquerque 76 officers retired and 41 resigned from June 2020 through July 17, 2021.

In a news release, Police Chief Harold Medina applauded APD officers for stepping up “throughout the pandemic and during a divisive period of public scrutiny last year.”

“We have to be bold in order to be competitive,” Medina said. “Offering competitive incentives to future officers and police service aides is necessary to get the boots on the ground to make our community safer.”

Mayor Tim Keller offered similar sentiments, saying that this is a “critical juncture in our city’s history.”

“Even as we continue to push into a robust recovery from the pandemic, public safety departments across the nation are still feeling the effects of the challenges from the last year,” Keller said “Public safety remains our top priority, and we’re making sure more help is on the way. Our investment in competitive salaries has helped us hire over 300 new officers so far.”

Atkins said that while the city has offered bonuses in years past, the most was \$5,000.

“This new hiring bonus is competitive and in line with (the Santa Fe Police Department); however, (their) \$15,000 bonus for laterals is for ‘experienced laterals,’ whereas APD’s has no stipulations for the lateral hires,” Atkins said.

The Las Cruces Police Department is trying a similar tactic, according to the Las Cruces Sun-News. LCPD – which typically has between 185 and 190 officers – is down to 148 sworn personnel.

The Sun News reports the department is offering new hires a base bonus of \$6,000 and up to \$25,000 for those with a master’s or doctoral degree in sociology, psychology, criminal justice or criminology.

Last week, APD announced that six lateral transfers just graduated and 48 cadets are expected to become sworn officers in October. Atkins did not answer questions about which departments those six lateral hires came from.

“In addition to graduating laterals and cadets, more than 100 laterals and cadets are expected to start new classes at APD’s Academy and (Central New Mexico Community College) before the end of the year,” APD spokesman Gilbert Gallegos wrote in a news release.

He said the department is also hiring more police service aides – a class of 35 starts training this month, and a class of 20 will start in the spring. The aides can free up sworn officers to handle higher-priority calls and could become officers in the future.

APD also changed some shifts around from four 10-hour shifts to five 8-hour shifts, Gallegos said.

“The move will increase the number of officers on patrol at peak periods,” he said. “For instance, there will be an increase in the number on patrol every Wednesday by 33%; patrols will increase by 46% every Thursday.”