

Police Get \$50K Grant to Study Operations

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MOUNT OLIVE — Mount Olive is one of five Morris County municipalities that has been awarded a grant that will allow the police department to undertake a major review and revamp of procedures within the next two years, police said.

The Morris County Joint Insurance Fund, a municipal insurer, awarded the Mount Olive Police Department \$50,000 - with grants also awarded to departments in Mountain Lakes, Morris Plains, Randolph and Hanover Township -to participate in the New Jersey State Accreditation Program administered by the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police, Eric Anthony, spokesman for the Mount Olive Police Department, said.

The accreditation process will review current police department practices and procedures - everything from crime investigation to evidence handling and storage to records storage and financial and administrative practices - and bring them in line with 112 current standards established by the state police chiefs association, Anthony said.

The Mount Olive Police Department is already in compliance with procedure, Anthony said, but, "I think this is just another way to ensure that we are providing the best for our community," he said.

The bulk of the grant is helping to fund the involvement of the New Jersey-based Rodgers Group in guiding the police department through the accreditation process, Anthony said, something that would have been "nearly impossible" to do without the funds.

The Rodgers Group is a law enforcement consulting firm of former police officers and public officials.

The Mount Olive Police Department applied for the grant in July, accepted the grant in October, and plans to officially start the accreditation process Jan. 1.

Anthony expects the process will take about 12 to 18 months to complete. Departments have up to two years to complete accreditation.

In a statement, Mount Olive Police Chief Mark Spitzer said following best practices should be a priority for public agencies.

Spitzer said in situations that result in litigation, "accreditation often helps establish that proper protocols were established and followed, and that fact eliminates or reduces law suit awards; and that also benefits the taxpayer."

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