Perth Amboy Police Pushes the Technology Envelope with Patrolfinder

Police Chief Larry Cattano,
Perth Amboy Police Department
Perth Amboy, NJ

Perth Amboy Police Department (NJ) patrols just 4.5 square miles that border New York City. This semi-urban area is dense, active, and constantly changing. With a table of organization of 145 officers, **Chief Larry Cattano** wanted a clearer way to answer a question every police leader faces: Are officers really covering the city the way leadership believes they are?

Before adopting **Patrolfinder**, the issue wasn't effort. It was perception. As Chief Cattano put it, residents would say, "I never see a police officer. There's never a police officer when you need one." Internally, he knew that wasn't true. "We know the officers are out there. We know the officers are doing their job. We know that they're patrolling," he said. But without data, it was difficult to show that patrol coverage matched the department's expectations. What was missing was a way to demonstrate that work with objective data.

Patrolfinder changed that. Instead of relying on anecdotes or assumptions, the department could now show exactly where patrol units had been. "It was really fortifying what the officers did because we knew they were doing their job," Chief Cattano said. "It simply proves what officers are doing."

That proof matters at the command level. When complaints come in, leadership can now respond with facts. "You may have a perception," he said, "but here is the empirical data. Here's what's actually happening."

Chief Cattano said the department has invested heavily in technology and believes Perth Amboy is among the most technologically advanced agencies in the county. The department operates a drone-as-first-responder program, an acoustical crime detection system, automatic license plate readers, and a real-time intelligence center.

Patrolfinder became an important part of that strategy. He sees the technology as increasing officer safety. Patrolfinder gives dispatch and supervisors real-time awareness of unit locations. "The dispatcher knows exactly where the vehicles are," Chief Cattano explained. "If they call for help or something happens or those types of things during a pursuit, they may not be able to get to the microphone…we know exactly where they are and other officers know where they are." Even in a small city, that knowledge shortens response time and increases confidence in the police department.

Staffing challenges have made technology even more important. Chief Cattano said Patrolfinder's turn-by-turn navigation helps newer officers respond to calls more quickly.

For the newer officers unfamiliar with the city, navigation is critical. He sees Patrolfinder's CAD integration as a major step forward, especially for what he calls the "closest unit concept," rather than relying only on geographical areas. Shift changes also improved. Like many departments, Perth Amboy runs overlapping tours, and coverage gaps used to occur when one shift assumed the previous shift had already handled certain streets. Patrolfinder closed that gap. Officers now see which areas are approaching patrol deadlines. A recent enhancement alerts officers before a street becomes overdue. "Now we added two hours before it turns blue," Chief Cattano said. "This way, the officers think: "'Oh hey, let me get there before it becomes a dot. And that's helping a lot."

The department also uses Patrolfinder for targeted patrols. Judges and officials who have received threats, or dignitaries visiting the city, are assigned patrol points. "We put that in that, for the next X amount of months or weeks…we're going to do extra checks here," Chief Cattano said. Supervisors can confirm that those checks actually occur.

One unexpected benefit came during a network failure. When the department's CAD system was experiencing issues, Patrolfinder still showed unit locations. "It certainly helped knowing where the officers were," he said. "I just have to look up at that screen where those officers are."

The system has even expanded beyond patrol. Parking enforcement now uses Patrolfinder to ensure parking decks, lots, and pay stations are checked on schedule. "So now, if one officer gets pulled away, the adjacent area knows, 'to check the area and can take that job,'" he explained.

Chief Cattano describes modern patrol as more than covering major roads. Beyond just covering the arteries and the veins of the neighborhoods, the chief said, "I even go as far as capillaries."

For Perth Amboy, Patrolfinder enhanced policing—it made it visible. It confirmed what leadership believed, improved officer safety, tightened coverage between shifts, and gave the department data it can stand on. As Chief Cattano summed it up, "Our patrol practices were actually very, very good and the officers were doing as we thought they were doing and covering the areas. This just adds to that."

However, he is taking the technology deeper.

"It has the ability – which we are using – for specific checks, that, 'Perhaps something else is going on here. We really need to keep an eye on what's happening.'"

He's glad Patrolfinder is in his department's toolbox. "I think it's a great product," he said.

To learn more about Patrolfinder, email info@patrolfinder.com, visit https://www.patrolfinder.com or call 800-373-3609.

patrolfinder