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## Joplin watchdog group questions police use of Flock cameras

Police chief says street cameras do not violate rights

BY DEBBY WOODIN  
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A Joplin watchdog group has raised questions about the use of FlockSafety cameras by the Joplin Police Department.

Michael Williams, a resident who is involved in a local organization called "Deflock Joplin," questions the need for the camera systems that record license plate numbers and details of cars. Williams said he considers it to be an intrusion of privacy by law enforcement agencies using the license plate readers.

Additionally, he raises red flags about potential misuse of Flock camera systems

and the details they record that can be used to track motorists for nonpolice reasons.

That was the case in January when Williams, looking through publicly accessible data on Flock records for Joplin, noticed a trend.

He found Joplin police activity on Flock's publicly accessible camera system data with an unusual amount of activity on the logs by one particular user.

"I thought maybe it was incorrect" at first, Williams said. Then he thought it could be misuse.

It turned out that hunch was correct.

Joplin police on Jan. 12 announced that an officer was no longer employed as the result of an ongoing internal investigation that determined there had been misuse of the city's license plate reader system.

An investigation by the

department's Office of Internal Affairs began in December after it was learned there had been improper use of the system, according to a statement released by the department.

Williams said that was one example, but there are 1,000 police departments nationwide using Flock systems. That multiplies the risk of misuse of individual motorist's data, Williams said.

"One of my biggest concerns is that the Joplin Police Department can only see their own logs. If another city has a bad actor or is selling it (Flock data) to someone else, the Joplin Police Department wouldn't have any way to tell," Williams said.

'DEFLOCK.ME'

Williams said he first

SEE FLOCK, 2A

## Crash injuries down

JPD chief highlights 2025 traffic trends, city and police efforts

BY JOHN HACKER  
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Joplin traffic accidents were up in 2025, but injury crashes declined slightly and the number of fatal crashes dropped by nearly half.

Joplin police Chief Richard Pearson laid out crash statistics and police and city initiatives during a press conference Friday at the Joplin Public Safety Training Center.

He said the numbers of crashes ebbed and flowed over the past five years, but 2024 saw a spike in fatalities to 13 compared to nine in 2022 and 2023 and six in 2021. There were seven fatality crashes last year.

"One thing of note is from 2024 to 2025 our fatalities went down by almost 50%," Pearson said. "We like to believe — and we think — this can be attributed to enhanced enforcement of some of our pedestrian safety ordinances. These ordinances have been designed to do just that — decrease fatalities, decrease the amount of pedestrian-involved accidents as it relates to vehicles."

Overall, the number of crashes involving property damage was up from 1,155 in 2024 to 1,254 in 2025. That reversed a trend that saw declining numbers of traffic crashes since at least 2021.

The number of injury crashes was down slightly from 318 in 2024 to 314 in 2025.

Pearson said four of the 13 fatality crashes in 2024 involved pedestrians being



Joplin police Chief Richard Pearson makes a presentation Friday regarding the department's efforts in 2025.

GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

hit by vehicles; in 2025 there were no pedestrian deaths among the seven fatality crashes in Joplin.

"In 2025, the city adopted ordinances intended to prevent pedestrian crashes — which most often occur on arterial roadways — and ensure crosswalks are used," Pearson said. "That's why you see some of these ordinances that the city has enacted. The specific goal of these ordinances is to increase safety and reduce accidents, and that's what we think has happened in our increased enforcement of some of these ordinances. And we identified the most common cause of these crashes was failure to yield. People simply weren't paying attention, and they didn't yield when they were supposed to and it caused an accident."

Pearson said patrol officers also spent time con-

centrating on high crash locations in 2025.

"You can see that increased enforcement of our pedestrian safety rules has worked," he said. "It might not be popular, but a lot of the things we do in law enforcement are not popular but they are necessary."

Pearson said the overall number of calls for service received by JPD dispatchers in 2025 was 79,532, a slight drop from the 79,571 calls received in 2024 and a big drop from 2023 when the number spiked to 87,700.

He said the department is authorized by the city to have 115 sworn law enforcement officers but it only has 86 sworn officers with 11 current job openings: four officers on light duty, six officers in the police academy, six in field training and two officers deployed with the military.

Pearson said Friday's presentation will be followed with the full written 2025 annual report, which he hoped would be released in the next two weeks.

### FLEX PLATOON

Pearson also highlighted the work of a flex platoon, a unit he created in the Joplin Police Department after he was hired to become chief in late 2023.

Pearson said the flex platoon was a small unit that can help with investigations, searches and other incidents where specific units need assistance.

He talked about the flex platoon helping patrol officers and detectives serve search warrants that have uncovered guns, drugs and missing people.

"Patrol is the backbone of any police agency, and

SEE CRASH, 2A



President Donald Trump speaks with reporters Friday in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House in Washington.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Supreme Court strikes down president's sweeping tariffs

Ruling sparks fierce pushback, vow of new levies

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court struck down President Donald Trump's far-reaching global tariffs on Friday, handing him a stinging loss that sparked a furious attack on the court he helped shape.

Trump said he was "absolutely ashamed" of some justices who ruled 6-3 against him, calling them "disloyal to our Constitution" and "lapdogs." At one point he even raised the specter of foreign influence without citing any evidence.

The decision could have ripple effects on economies around the globe after Trump's moves to remake post-World War II trading alliances by wielding tariffs as a weapon.

But an unbowed Trump pledged to impose a new global 10% tariff under a law that's restricted to 150 days and has never been used to apply tariffs before.

"Their decision is incorrect," he said. "But it doesn't matter because we have very powerful alternatives."

The court's ruling found tariffs that Trump imposed under an emergency powers law were unconstitutional, including the sweeping "reciprocal" tariffs he levied on nearly every other country.

Trump appointed three of the justices on the nation's highest court during his first term, and has scored a series

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