

MINNEAPOLIS

# Minneapolis touts progress in police reforms, but lags in closing out complaints and force reviews

Chief Brian O'Hara said staffing issues have exacerbated backlogs on MPD's side.

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From left, Minneapolis City Attorney Kristyn Anderson, Community Safety Commissioner Todd Barnette, Police Chief Brian O'Hara and Civil Rights Director Michelle Phillips speak during a news conference at City Hall in Minneapolis on Monday. (Jerry Holt/The Minnesota Star Tribune)

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Minneapolis is struggling to eliminate backlogs of police misconduct complaints and officer use-of-force reviews, largely due to a staffing deficit, though the city has made strides in other reform goals since March 2024, according to an evaluator's report released Monday.

The report, by Washington, D.C.-based independent monitor group [Effective Law Enforcement For All](#), is the first to measure the city's progress in complying with the terms of a settlement struck with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights after the 2020 police killing of George Floyd.

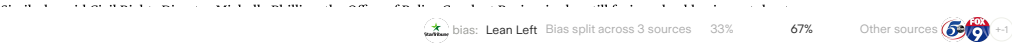
As of last September, the Police Department still had more than 1,100 force cases in queue for review by command staff, a mandatory process when an officer restrains a person, uses a Taser or baton, fires a gun or uses any other measure of force.

"Of greater concern," the report says, is that 15 of those were classified as "critical incidents," such as an officer-involved shooting.

The report also cites lags in misconduct complaints handled by the Police Department's internal affairs unit and the city's Office of Police Conduct Review. As of Jan. 30, internal affairs counted 44 cases as backlog, according to data presented to a city committee recently. The Office of Police Conduct Review had 83 complaints in queue that were over a month old, a separate report shows.

Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara said Monday morning the department has trained more members of the command staff to help conduct the internal affairs investigations and opened up overtime hours to expedite the process. The city has also contracted with a law firm to help with the force reviews, he said.

"I can't say with certainty that the backlog will be cleared by the deadline," O'Hara said. "But I feel very, very confident that if not cleared, we will have made substantial progress. It still remains to be seen."



The deadline to eliminate or make “substantial progress” to clearing the backlogs is March 17, the one-year anniversary of the monitor’s contract going into effect.

David Douglass, one of the court-appointed monitors, called the deadline “artificial,” noting it’s part of a working agreement with the city and not mandated in the settlement. “A lot of progress is being made,” Douglass said in an interview Monday. “We’ve worked closely with them all along the way and we’re comfortable with that.”

As a whole, several city leaders touted the report as evidence of the progress the city has made since entering into the court-enforceable agreement with the state, on track to comply with several of the one-year goals. Much of that work comes in the form of writing or revising confusing and ineffectual policies, addressing technical or equipment issues and revising training. O’Hara said the department has overhauled the field-training program, as an example.

“This is the beginning of a long journey that will take time,” said Community Safety Commissioner Todd Barnette, “but the city is fully on board and working diligently toward sustainable reform beyond compliance with the settlement agreement.”

The Minnesota Department of Human Rights agreement is expected to last at least four years.

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