



Hermantown Police Department
5111 Maple Grove Road, Hermantown, MN 55811
218.729.1200 // cops@hermantownmn.com

AROUND TOWN

During the week of 12/04/22 to 12/10/22, the Hermantown PD had 193 calls.
The following are selected incidents HPD responded to this week.

Chief

Jim Crace

Commanders

Mark Gunderson
Jon Esterbrooks

Sergeants

Griffin Pfeiffer - K9
Jon Pernu - K9

Detective

Jake Williams
Jeff Dwyer

Officers

Jason Salo
Tim Battaglia
Jon Enright
Erika Johnson - SRO
Olivia Gottschald
Jonathan Stracek
Andrew Leibel
Alex Prouse
Brandon Solem

K-9 Officers

Tuuko
Jack

Records

Jessica Sorensen
Dana Ross
Samantha Knapp

Assaults

On 12/08/22, School Resource Officer Johnson was advised of an assault that had occurred at the end of the school day on 12/07/22. She reviewed surveillance video of the incident, in which a 13-year-old male grabbed an 11-year-old male and pulled him to a side wall. Another 11-year-old student walking with the victim attempted to intervene before the older boy grabbed him and had both boys by the front of their jackets. The older boy pushed the younger boys backwards and one fell to the ground and hit his head. This incident resulted in suspension for the teenager.

On 12/09/22 at approximately 7:30 p.m., officers were advised that a 35-year-old man reported his wife was laying in the snow having some sort of mental health crisis. He advised dispatch that he was able to get the woman back into their vehicle and continued on their way home. Officer Gottschald spoke to the man by phone and could hear a female screaming in the background. The man stated he had to pull over again and officers responded to the location. The 36-year-old woman was crying and kept telling Officer Gottschald she wanted to go home, while denied ever getting out of the vehicle to lay in the snow. The man told Sgt. Pernu that he believed his wife had been drinking at home earlier in the day before they went out to dinner and that it was contributing to her behavior. Both parties agreed that they would continue to drive home and Officer Gottschald followed to ensure they arrived safely. A short time later, the man again pulled his vehicle over and advised Officer Gottschald that the woman hit him as they were driving. She noted redness under his eye that had not previously been there. He explained that she told him she hated him and was going to kill him and added that she had slapped him numerous times in the car before officers made contact with them, as well. When Officer Gottschald asked the woman if she was willing to speak about the incident, she replied that if she had to sleep at the jail, she did not wish to answer any questions. The woman was taken into custody and lodged at the St. Louis County Jail for domestic assault.

At 9:42 p.m. on 12/09/22, Officers Prouse and Gottschald were dispatched to the report of a person with a weapon at the Kwik Trip on Haines Road. St. Louis County Sheriff's Deputy Kuhnly located the suspect a short time later on Maple Grove Road near the 7 West Taphouse. Officer Gottschald spoke with the 20-year-old reporting party, who stated he was inside the store with his girlfriend when he noticed the suspect looking at him from the vestibule. He stated the man continued to stare at him and he exited the store and then followed them as they walked to their vehicle. He said that once he neared the corner of the building, he observed the suspect to be holding a silver blade that he estimated to be four inches long. The man said that he and his girlfriend got into the vehicle and locked the doors immediately. He further stated that the suspect attempted to open the rear passenger door, where a group home client was seated, then he began to leave the parking lot on foot. Officer Gottschald spoke to the 39-year-old passenger in the vehicle, who had also seen the suspect with the blade in his hand. No knives or weapons were located on the 32-year-old suspect when he was taken into custody. Officer Prouse observed a heavy odor of alcohol emitting from his person, but the man denied consuming any alcoholic beverages. He declined to make a statement



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about the incident and was lodged at the St. Louis County Jail for 2nd degree assault and for an active warrant for violating probation on a 1st degree assault case.

Accidents

Just after 4 p.m. on 12/07/22, Officer Solem was advised of a hit and run accident that occurred in the Walmart parking lot. The male driver of the victim vehicle stated that he was backing out of his parking spot and noticed an employee was pushing a line of carts through the row, so he stopped. He said that at that time, the suspect vehicle turned to drive north down the row and crashed into his rear bumper. The victim's wife provided the license of the suspect vehicle, a gray Chevy Crossover, that was parked down the row. Officer Solem observed damage to the front of that vehicle, but noted that it did not appear to match the damage that would have occurred from this accident. Officers Salo and Solem made contact with the driver of the suspect vehicle as he came out of the store. The 39-year-old man stated that he wasn't involved in the accident and the damage to his vehicle was from a previous accident. It was determined that the man's driving status was revoked and he had no insurance on his vehicle. He was advised to find a ride from the scene. Loss prevention reviewed video with Officer Solem, who observed that a blue vehicle was involved in the accident, not the gray Crossover. Video showed the victim's wife walk to the blue suspect vehicle after the crash occurred. The driver spoke to her briefly and continued to walk into the store. The woman later told Officer Solem that she had spoken to the driver of the blue vehicle, but he denied hitting their car and did not identify himself.

Theft

On the morning of 12/06/22, Officer Stracek was advised of fraudulent transactions using a resident's Venmo account. The 57-year-old woman found multiple transactions on her Venmo account totaling \$4,650. Three of these occurred on 12/02/22 and one on 12/04/22 and the money had been sent to the woman's adult daughter, who lives in the home. The victim's husband provided their daughter's transaction history, which included thirteen transactions to "Heidi Harries" between 11/19/22 and 12/04/22. These transactions totaled \$4,950. The victim explained that the last time she used Venmo was over a year ago and if she sends money to her daughter, it is through a bank app, not Venmo. She also reported that she began receiving notifications on 12/02/22 from her credit card. The alerts were for a "Cash App" and her account was trying to pay "Heidi Harries." She later advised Officer Stracek that her husband had received a fraud notification on his credit card requesting money for "Heidi Harries." The woman stated she had confronted her 27-year-old daughter, who denied being involved; however, when Officer Stracek viewed screen time settings on the victim's phone, it showed that her Venmo account had been open for four minutes on 12/02/22 when multiple transactions had been made. The woman also provided credit card statements that showed a \$1,000 transaction with PayPal and a full refund for the same amount. She stated she doesn't use PayPal. This case has been forwarded to investigations for follow up.

On 12/10/22, shortly after 1:30 p.m., Walmart Loss Prevention reported that a recently trespassed party was in the store. Officers Stracek and Leibel responded and Officer Stracek noted that he had responded to Walmart on 11/27/22 when the 34-year-old woman had attempted to push out



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a cart containing \$1,360.82 worth of merchandise. Loss Prevention reported that on the current date, the woman had loaded a cart with pushed it into the garden center, just as she had in the previous incident. She left the cart and went out through the main doors, entered a van and drove it to the main sidewalk along the building, parking outside the locked garden center doors. As she was doing this, a 31-year-old woman approached the cart and was attempting to open the locked doors to make a quick getaway with the items. The pair was unsuccessful and the woman parked the vehicle back in the lot. Approximately a half hour later, the second female exited the store and got into the van, which then left the lot. Officer Stracek performed a traffic stop on the van and made contact with the women, who denied being involved in suspicious activity or attempted theft. The older woman eventually admitted that they were trying to steal the items. She was issued a citation for trespassing and was lodged at the St. Louis County Jail for an active warrant. Both parties were trespassed from Walmart and Sam's Club properties for a year.

At 2:40 p.m. on 12/10/22, Walmart reported another shoplifting incident involving a male that attempted to push out a cart full of items. When Loss Prevention confronted the man in the vestibule, he left the cart and fled to the parking lot, where he got into a white Kia. Officer Stracek located a white Kia Soul in the area, but only observed a female driver. It was later discovered that the 40-year-old suspect, who had been identified by Loss Prevention based on previous contacts with him, was associated with a white Kia Soul. Police records also indicated that the male suspect had confessed in November 2022 of stealing items from Walmart, Target, and Best Buy; the value of the items recovered in that case was \$7,356.95. Officer Leibel discovered that on this date, the man had attempted to take 69 items valued at \$1,118.92. Reports have been forwarded to the prosecuting attorney for possible felony theft charges.

Drugs

On 12/09/22 at approximately 4 p.m., Officer Stracek was conducting stationary traffic enforcement on Miller Trunk Highway when he observed a white SUV traveling 70 mph in a 55 mph zone. He was able to perform a traffic stop on the Mazda CX-5 after it turned onto Highway 194. The 22-year-old driver said she didn't know why she was pulled over. When asked how fast she thought she was going, the woman said she "could've sworn 60 mph," and also said she believed the speed limit on the highway was 60 mph. The driver said she couldn't afford to get a ticket because she would lose her license and explained that she had already lost it three times for speeding. A check of the woman's record showed five speed convictions since September 2020, along with citations for following too closely, a hands-free violation, and driving after suspension. Officer Stracek also noted that her license had been reinstated in May after being suspended four times in 2021 as a habitual violator. While at the window of the vehicle, Officer Stracek detected a mild odor of fresh marijuana. The woman claimed she had medical marijuana but was unable to provide packaging for it. She further stated she didn't know what the law was regarding medical marijuana but said she had the "medical" since 2018. The woman denied that there was marijuana in the vehicle and told Officer Stracek he needed a warrant to search it. After Officer Stracek explained the motor vehicle exception, the woman admitted she did not have a marijuana prescription and admitted there was a grinder in the vehicle. Officer Stracek located the grinder with marijuana in it, along with multiple other items of drug paraphernalia. The 22-year-old woman was cited for possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia, and speeding.