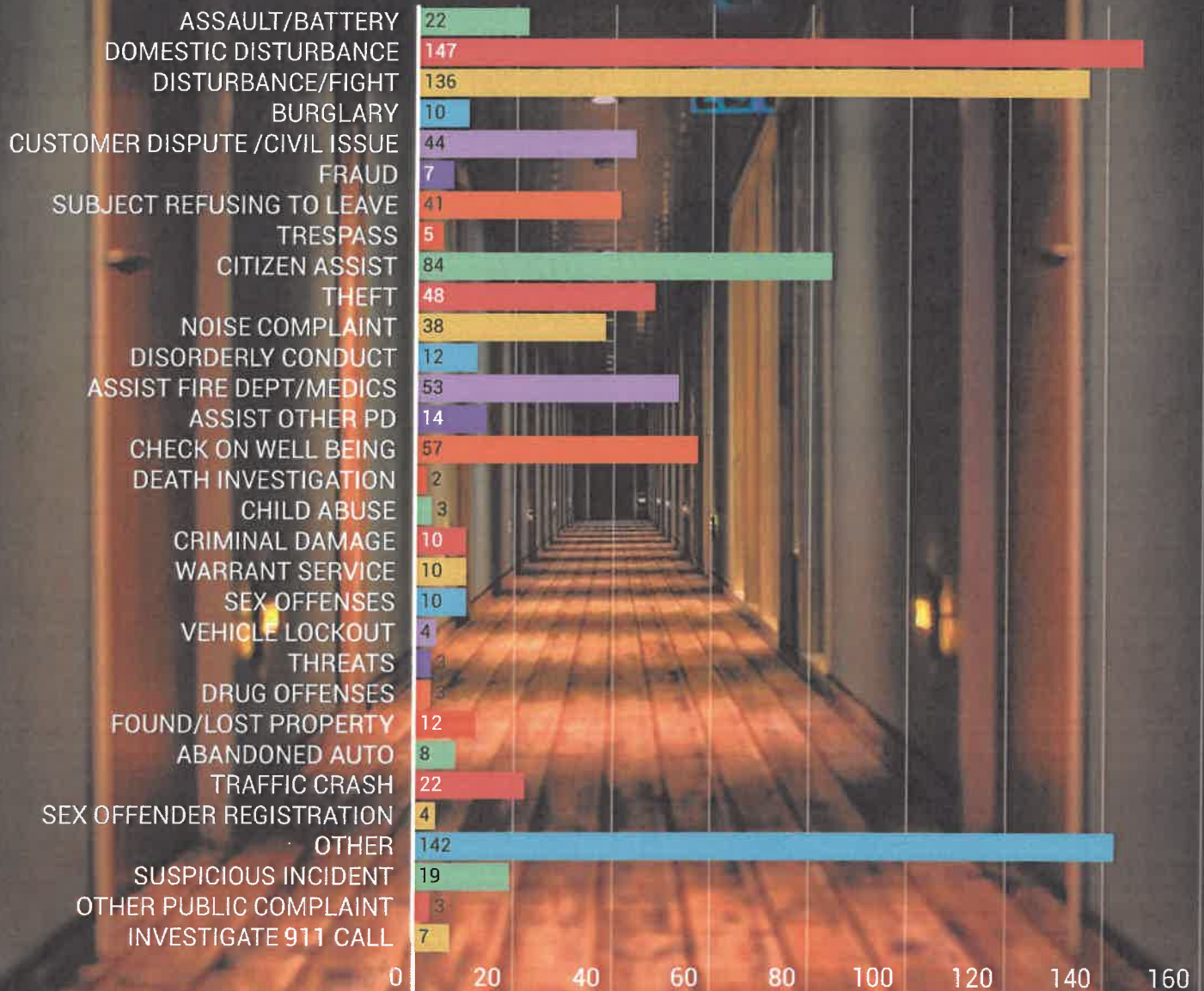


LOMBARD POLICE CALLS FOR SERVICE AT HOTELS



JUNE 2019 TO MID AUGUST 2021-999 TOTAL CALLS

Schaumburg adopts new hotel rules in response to local, regional rise in crime



Schaumburg has adopted a list of new regulations for its 30 hotels intended to curb an increase in crime that Police Chief Bill Wolf says predates the pandemic and is both local and regional. *(Daily Herald File Photo)*



Eric Peterson

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Schaumburg has adopted a list of new regulations for its 30 hotels intended to curb an increase in crime that Schaumburg Police Chief Bill Wolf says predates the pandemic and is both local and regional.

Rises in thefts, car break-ins, assaults, batteries, domestic disputes, juvenile nuisances and noise complaints are among what Schaumburg police have experienced.

Comparing the first quarters of the past three years, there were 267 citizen-generated calls in 2019, 266 in 2020 and 325 in 2021.

None of Schaumburg's issues have risen to the level of a fatal, gang-related shooting at a party at the Indian Lakes Hotel in Bloomingdale last February, which is cited among the regional motivators for the new rules.

Extended-stay hotels have seen a particular rise in domestic violence calls as it's become more common for people to make such places their primary residence, Wolf said.

While it's difficult to identify all the reasons for the rise in incidents at hotels that began to bubble up in 2019, Schaumburg's new regulations are intended to address the specific problems the village has seen, he added.

These include new requirements for parking lot lighting, security, video surveillance and the enforcement of curfews for juveniles in common areas, limited room occupancy, the keeping of registration records, restricting or monitoring access at public points of entry between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., and limiting the length of stay to 28 days except for corporate contracts and emergency situations.

Wolf said he's aware a few of the requirements might incur a financial cost for some hotels, but he has made an effort to keep all hotel owners aware of the rules as they were being discussed. And while he has received questions from two property owners, he hasn't gotten any complaints.

The village reached out to the Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association and Schaumburg-based Meet Chicago Northwest, the visitors bureau and marketing organization for eight communities in the Northwest suburbs.

"There is nothing more important than the safety of our employees and guests," Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association President and CEO Michael Jacobson said in a statement Friday. "We've worked in a constructive manner with the village of Schaumburg the same way we've worked with city and state officials for years to address their concerns and find new ways to enhance security at our hotels."

Representatives of Meet Chicago Northwest could not be reached for comment.

Schaumburg Trustee Frank Kozak chairs the village board's public safety committee, which has been discussing the issue for months. The 30 hotels are such a significant part of Schaumburg's economy that he believes the rules benefit everyone in the village.

"We have a good reputation in the Northwest suburbs and we want to keep it," he said.

Wolf added that the benefits will be felt by the out-of-town guests who stay at these hotels when they have a variety of choices in the area.

"By having safer hotels in Schaumburg, we feel people will want to stay in Schaumburg," Wolf said.

Another change brought by Schaumburg's new rules is that it makes membership in the police department's existing Safe Hotel Program mandatory.

Started about five years ago, the program provides an open line of communication between the police department and hotels, including occasional meetings with guest speakers, Deputy Police Chief Kristine Provenzano said.

While the department provides recent crime statistics and other useful information with hotel operators, they in turn are asked to keep an eye out for signs of suspicious activity and particular types of crime, such as human trafficking.

Over the years the number of members in the program has fluctuated, but it is now mandatory, Provenzano said.

Wolf said the new length-of-stay rule keeps guests without a corporate contract from remaining 30 days or longer -- the point at which one can establish residency and force the same legal process to evict as an apartment renter.

Though not wishing to volunteer any names, he said three municipalities reached out to Schaumburg within days of the new law being approved to get copies.

Bloomington, however, was not among them.

Bloomington Village Administrator Pietro Scalera said the management problems at Indian Lakes Hotel were isolated and known to the village ahead of last winter's shooting, but before-the-fact efforts to fix the situation were not addressed by the property owner.

Afterward, the hotel owner complied with the village's request to surrender all its licenses and shut down. The property is now on the market.

Scalera said he understands why a village with as many hotels as Schaumburg would take the approach it did to a general rise in crime. But Bloomington now has one remaining hotel -- a Marriott -- that has not seen any problems, he added.

However, based on their knowledge of a 2020 shooting at an Airbnb property in Roselle, Bloomington trustees recently prohibited any rentals shorter than 30 days, Scalera said.

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