

# Police Department



The people of Meridian are the Police Department's most precious resource, and that philosophy is reflected in the department's new mission statement:

"We value the opportunity to provide service that is courteous, responsive, firm, efficient and fair. We regard members of our community as partners and indispensable resources in a combined policing effort. Respect for the individual worth, dignity and rights of those we serve is the foundation of our department."

With that policy at the core of our policing efforts, Meridian remains the safest city in the state with a population over 30,000. The FBI's Uniform Crime Report showed our crime rate declining in 2001 over 2000 and, in fact, the figures are the lowest since 1991.

A continuing emphasis on training has not only provided valuable instruction to our officers but has also saved taxpayers thousands of dollars. For example, six officers last year



*Officer Larry Cannon, decked out in a bite suit, is attacked by K-9 Yoe, who is being put through his paces by K-9 handler, Officer Chris Read.*

completed in-house accident reconstruction training—classes that would have cost nearly \$20,000 had they been held elsewhere. Our department currently has certified instructors in



firearms, emergency and non-emergency vehicle operation, defensive tactics, ethics, less-than-lethal weapons, standardized field sobriety and K-9 and handler instruction. Our officers last year logged more than 13,000 hours of training.

Efforts to protect our children have been enhanced through the donation of a Dell computer and software by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The LOCATER (Lost Child Alert Technology Resource) software allows our officers to instantly transmit information on missing or endangered children nationwide. Another new system—BOLO or Be On The Lookout—was implemented last year to allow officers to immediately notify the local media of situations

or events that warrant public awareness. Under BOLO, the public would be alerted in the event of such situations as missing persons, major traffic problems or escaped prisoners, for example.

In a move to increase efficiency and provide countywide animal services, the city and Lauderdale County entered into an agreement to make the Animal Control office a county function. Our Police Department maintains two officers in the facility to serve the citizens of the city.

As we work aggressively to maintain our low crime rate and provide the best training for our officers, our next major goal is to make recommendations on finding a much-needed new home for our department.

"Wild Blue"

*Opposite page: New Meridian police officers qualify at the firing range at the Public Safety Training Center; left: Police Chief Benny Dubose, standing, and Detective Dean Harper take a look at the new computer and software donated by the Center for Missing and Exploited Children; far left is the center's logo; above: Volunteer drinkers try to walk a straight line as officers are trained in the techniques of the standardized field sobriety testing program.*