



## Statement from the Chief of Police

**CATRINA A. THOMPSON**



Good Evening Winston-Salem,

Yesterday afternoon, I was made aware of a video beginning to circulate through social media of a Winston-Salem Police Patrol Vehicle being operated that contained a stuffed animal in the form of a “monkey” that appeared to be riding in the rear seat of the Patrol Vehicle.

We immediately began to investigate and located our Patrol Vehicle with the “monkey” being displayed as shown in the social media video. I have attached to this media release the original video, still photographs of the placement of the “monkey”, and photographs of the “monkey” and other donated stuffed animals.

I bring this episode to your attention in the spirit of transparency, because I realize that citizens have found the display of the “monkey” stuffed animal appearing to be riding in the rear seat of a Marked Patrol Car to be offensive.

As you will see in the attached photographs, the “monkey” and a “bear” stuffed animal are actually placed on the front bracket of the protective shield to the Patrol Car. The stuffed animals are easily accessible to the operator of the Patrol Car and all of our Patrol Cars are equipped with a variety of types of stuffed animals.

The Winston-Salem Police Department has equipped all of our Patrol Cars with stuffed animals for over 20 years. The stuffed animals are regularly donated to the WSPD by various organizations and individuals for the primary purpose of calming children that have been traumatized by violent acts, vehicle crashes, fires, or any other type of trauma that may have occurred to a child.



**Winston-Salem**

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The stuffed animals have proven to be a successful initiative for the WSPD. We have taken administrative actions to change the appearance of the display of the stuffed animal, specifically the “monkey” to ensure no one else is offended. I assure you this will not reoccur.

In the future, we will confirm our stuffed animals are not offensive. I apologize to any community member that found this circumstance to be offensive.

As with all matters of concern to the public regarding the WSPD, I take this matter very seriously. As further information, I would like for you to know that WSPD Officers receive State of NC Mandated Training each year in Juvenile and Minority Sensitivity Training, with which the WSPD supplements that training with topics such as Implicit Bias Training, Bias Free Policing, and Fair and Impartial Policing. I have a specific Departmental Policy against Bias Based Policing, and through our Administrative Investigation, we have determined that there was no ill intent that resulted in the placement of the “monkey” stuffed animal.

As I stated earlier, we have taken administrative action to remove the “monkey” stuffed animal from the Patrol Vehicle and ensure a display such as that seen in the video, will not reoccur. I apologize again to anyone offended during this incident, as the women and men of your Winston-Salem Police Department work tirelessly to gain your trust and confidence, as well as build relationships and partnerships with all members of our community.



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I certainly understand why community members would be offended, and we work every day to continue building trust in the WSPD, as well as keeping you safe by attempting to reduce crime and the fear of crime.

Thank you for your time and continued support,

**Catrina A. Thompson**

**Chief of Police**

**Winston-Salem Police Department**



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