



# Mardi Gras, Police, & You

## 2026 Edition



This document outlines both **public safety and policing issues** that arise during the Mardi Gras season in New Orleans. Mardi Gras is a wonderful time in the city when residents and visitors alike enjoy parades, parties, balls, and the general excitement that takes place all over the city. During this period, the city is **policed differently**, and it is important for the public to **understand how interactions with law enforcement may occur**, be able to **identify possible police misconduct**, the role of police oversight during Mardi Gras, and know how to navigate this fun season safely.

First, a brief understanding of who the Office of the Independent Police Monitor is and why we created this tool. The Office of the Independent Police Monitor (OIPM) is an independent branch of city government responsible for providing oversight to the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD). The OIPM provides oversight through monitoring, reviewing, and providing assessments and recommendations. One component of our work is providing resources to the community to explain how policing works and to equip and empower all to ensure engagements between the police and the community are safe.

### Who is Policing During Mardi Gras?



**NOPD Officers:**  
900 officers on duty for both major parade weekends.



**Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office Deputies:**  
175 deputies per day for major Parade weekends.



**Louisiana State Police:**  
The official number for 2026 has not been released, but 150 officers were staffed in 2025.



**Other Police Departments, Sheriff's Offices and Agencies:**  
National Guard Troops will remain throughout downtown. JPSO will provide deputies, as needed. There will be 230 state personnel and 500 federal personnel supporting local law enforcement.

#### What does this mean for you?

**NOPD is not the only law enforcement agency handling crime and interacting with the public.**

**This means there may be different approaches to engaging with the public that will be governed by different agency policies.**

**If you believe misconduct occurred, you may need to report it to other agencies or parishes. You can still ask the OIPM for help!**

### Policing Basics During Mardi Gras

During the weeks leading up to the “big” Mardi Gras weekend, the NOPD will operate according to a Mardi Gras Incident Plan with procedures for NOPD personnel. All officers report for daily roll call, then receive shift assignments.

#### Shift Information

- Officers are frequently working high volume of shifts during festival season, even if not directly stationed on route or in the 8th District.
- Officers typically work **12 hour shifts** as well as **additional overtime hours** in order to meet the demand required of festival season. Typical overtime and secondary employment restrictions may be lifted during festival season in order to meet the demand needed.

#### What does this mean for you?

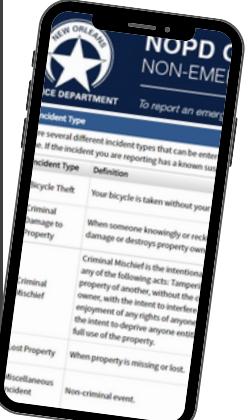
**It means there may be delays in some non-emergency responses in our districts during Mardi Gras festivities.**

**Please report non-emergency crime by calling:**

**(504) 821-2222**

**Or online:**

[nola.gov/nopd/nopdonline/](http://nola.gov/nopd/nopdonline/)



## **NOPD Involvement Pre-Festival Season**

- NOPD personnel assist with permits, applications, coordination, approval, and inspection of Mardi Gras parades, routes, and floats prior to festival season. NOPD personnel (motorcycle officers) assist with moving floats to setup location of parades in days immediately prior to parades.
- NOPD uses data and information from prior festival seasons to best coordinate efficient and safe parades in the current year.



## **NOPD Involvement During Festival Season**

- **General Security**
  - Officers are stationed throughout parade routes and in key locations. They are there to maintain general police presence, act as a crime deterrent, and to quickly respond to incidents as they arise. Officers are to offer immediate assistance to individuals along parade routes.
  - Officers are to enforce and dissuade violations of city ordinances such as barricade jumping and interference, disorderly conduct, etc.
- **Crowd Control**
  - Officers are stationed throughout parade routes to respond to larger disturbances and conduct crowd control.
- **Traffic Direction**
  - Officers assist throughout and in between parades in controlling traffic flow of cars uninvolved in parades, moving barricades as necessary, directing traffic to avoid parades and bystanders, etc.
- **Monitoring / Facilitating Parades**
  - NOPD is authorized to remove any person, element, float, or vehicle from parade if they violate provisions of city code.
  - NOPD mobile command units are used throughout festival season to track parades, respond to disturbances, coordinate officer responses to incidents, etc.
  - NOPD monitors issues on route, such as broken tractors, stopped vehicles, injured krewe members, and responds to each incident to ensure parades run smoothly and without significant delay.
  - Monitor and facilitate EMS deployment on route as needed.
- **Lost Child Stations**
  - Lost children stations are staffed by the NOPD. On parade days, stations are open one hour before the first float of the first parade and until crowds disperse. NOPD will also distribute free, reusable identification bracelets to families at these locations. If a child is lost for any reason, law enforcement officers can immediately contact parents with the information on the bracelet.

## **How does Oversight Assist During Mardi Gras?**

During Mardi Gras, the OIPM will continue to provide our services to the public. Here's how we assist:



### **Complaint Intake**

- If you believe you've experienced or witnessed misconduct regarding a NOPD officer, you can file complaints with our office. You can file the complaint via phone, email, social media, or our website. You can file the complaint anonymously or with your name disclosed.
- If you believe you've experienced or witnessed misconduct by a different law enforcement agency, you can reach out to our office and we will see if we can assist with next steps. Each law enforcement agency has different protocols for filing misconduct allegations and we will try to identify the law enforcement agency and how to proceed.

### **24 Hour Hotline for Police Interactions**

**Call or Text: 1(877) 225-OIPM (6476)**

**You can contact this number in English, Spanish, or Vietnamese.**

**Report complaints of misconduct or accounts of positive policing.**

### **On Call for Officer Involved Shootings and Critical Incidents**

- The OIPM will be on call 24 hours a day to monitor any force investigations into officer involved shootings or critical incidents. The OIPM will attend the scene and monitor the investigation to ensure the force investigation complies with policy and law.

## Public Safety Walks and Monitoring of Police Operations

- The OIPM will conduct a public safety walk with NOPD leadership to ensure that the NOPD is considering all public safety concerns and protocols. The OIPM will also monitor police presence in spots identified in prior years as high arrest or use of force areas.



## Video Review and Community Outreach

- You can forward social media content, videos, and questions regarding police encounters during Mardi Gras to our office and we will look into the matter.

# Mardi Gras is a SEAR 1 Event... and that means?

Mardi Gras is \*again\* a SEAR 1 event, as it was last year, which means it requires **extensive federal interagency support**. SEAR stands for Special Event Assessment Rating. The Department of Homeland Security determines what events are classified as SEAR events and then what rating within the SEAR classification the event will receive. The rating scale is from Level 1 (most) to Level 5 (least). To the right is the description of these ratings from the Department of Homeland Security Fact Sheet.

Level	Description
1	Significant events with national and/or international importance that require extensive federal interagency support.
2	Significant events with national and/or international importance that may require some level of federal interagency support.
3	Events of national and/or international importance that require only limited federal support.
4	Events with limited national importance that are managed at the state and local levels.
5	Events that may be nationally recognized but generally have local or state importance.

For the 2026 carnival season, the Department of Homeland Security has declared:

- **SEAR 2** status for the weekend of **February 6 - 8**
- **SEAR 1** status from **February 13 - February 18**

**The additional security protocol includes patrol boats on the river, bomb sniffing dogs, drones, and additional street barriers.** The national guard will remain deployed throughout the downtown area. There are only certain types of bags and handbags allowed within the security zone and officials will be conducting bag searches. Coolers and ice chests are also prohibited from being in the security zone.



**What does this mean for you?**

**There will be additional federal agency partners on the streets of New Orleans and stationed at checkpoints.**

**You may be asked to open your bags and consent to bag searches prior to entering areas of the French Quarter.**

**Legal guns are permitted through checkpoints as long as the gun owner is not intoxicated or otherwise violating Louisiana or federal law.**

# Common Reasons The Police Approach You During Mardi Gras



## Intoxication

It's important to remember that even during festival season, **acting excessively intoxicated could lead to arrest**.

Driving intoxicated or tipsy will result in police encounters.

It is against the law to carry or drink from an opened **glass or metal container** near a Mardi Gras parade route.

## Crossing Barricades



**Fencing or roping off** any part of public property along the parade route, including neutral grounds, is prohibited by law.

Be mindful of barricades or devices that separate the street from the neutral grounds and follow them.

**Crossing police barricades** may result in the police approaching you.



## Guns

**Do not bring guns on the parade routes!** It is illegal to carry a firearm at a permitted parade. If your gun is not legal or if you are accused of committing a crime around a parade route, your criminal penalty will increase. **The police will be vigilant about guns near parade routes.** If you have a gun near a parade route, you may be approached by an officer.

It is illegal to carry a gun on the premise of an alcoholic beverage outlet (ABO). **This means do not carry a gun in any bar or establishment that serves alcohol to drink on the property.** It is also illegal to carry a gun while under the influence of alcohol or any controlled dangerous substance.



### What does this mean for you?

**Guns and excessive public intoxication are public safety concerns. It will most likely result in a police interaction.**

**Guns in the French Quarter (even legally owned guns) - particularly on Bourbon Street - may be illegal and result in a police encounter.**

## Police Encounter Basics to Remember

### Police Protocol When Suspecting Criminal Activity

If law enforcement has reason to believe criminal activity is taking place, they have the right to stop you.

Once stopped, they may only detain you for a brief period while they investigate the situation.

In Louisiana, it is mandatory to identify yourself when stopped by the police. Failure to do so could result in an arrest.

### What to Do When Stopped by the Police

If the police stop you, it's important to know your rights. Ask if you're under arrest; if not, you should be free to go.

The police can only arrest you if they have a warrant or probable cause to suspect that you've committed a crime.

Additionally, you have the right to know why you're being arrested.

### What to Expect During a Temporary Police Detention

If you happen to be detained by the police but not yet under arrest, they may conduct a pat down to search for any weapons.

Be aware that during a temporary stop, a pat down can only be performed if the police have reason to believe that you pose a threat.

Police officers are not permitted to put their hands into your pockets unless they have reason to believe that you are carrying a weapon.



### What does this mean for you?

**Know your rights but also proceed in the safest manner possible in any police encounter.**

**You have a right to record the police but you cannot interfere with a police investigation to record. Stay at a safe distance and follow commands if given.**

# Resources

## Operation Mardi Gras Hub

This hub operating with OPSO, NOPD, the DA's Office, Homeland Security, NOFJC, Silence is Violence, the military, and STAR is at the New Orleans Family Justice Center at 701 Loyola Ave.

Open 2/7 - 2/13.  
(504) 355-0846

**24 hour helpline:**  
**(504) 866-9554**

## First Aid Stations

First aid stations are set up in multiple locations along each major route.

For a full list of locations visit:

[ready.nola.gov/mardi-gras/safety-first-aid/](http://ready.nola.gov/mardi-gras/safety-first-aid/)



## Accessible Charging Stations

Three solar powered charging stations are available during Festival Season. The stations can be found at the following locations:

- **St. Charles Ave and Josephine St.**
- **Harmony Circle and St. Charles Ave**
- **Lafayette Square**

The charging stations are provided by Entergy and the Footprint Project.

## 24-hour Sobering Center

The Sobering Center is located at **732 North Claiborne Ave** and is operated by Odyssey House of Louisiana.

The Sobering Center is a 25-bed facility open to the public that allows individuals to recover from alcohol impairment.

To receive treatment, you must be conscious and ambulatory, non-combative, and be there voluntarily.

## Lost Child Stations

Lost children stations are manned by the NOPD. You can find stations at the following locations:

- **St. Charles Ave. and Napoleon Ave**
- **St. Charles Ave. and Jackson Ave**
- **Canal St. and Baronne St.**

Stations are open one hour before the first parade of the day and are open until crowds disperse.

## Sober Safe Spot

Sober Safe Spots are back! Thanks to Avenue Recovery, Sober Safe Spot offers a place to enjoy Mardi Gras with like-minded members of the recovery community, their family, and friends.

Located near Napoleon and St. Charles Ave, during ALL parades. Look for the logo:



## How to Report Officer Misconduct



### Office of the Independent Police Monitor (OIPM)



**policemonitor@nolaipm.gov**  
**24/7 Hotline: Call or Text 1 (877) 225-6476 (OIPM)**  
**[www.nolaipm.gov](http://www.nolaipm.gov)**  
**2714 Canal Street, Suite 201 New Orleans, LA 70119**  
**@nolaoipm**



### Public Integrity Bureau (PIB)



**NOPDPIB@nola.gov**  
**Office: (504) 658-6800**  
**[nola.gov/nopd/about-us/bureaus/public-integrity/](http://nola.gov/nopd/about-us/bureaus/public-integrity/)**  
**1340 Poydras Street Suite 1900 New Orleans, LA 70119**



Office of the Independent Police Monitor, 2714 Canal Street, Suite 201  
(504) 309-9799 [www.nolaipm.gov](http://www.nolaipm.gov)

24 Hour Hotline for Complaints of Police Misconduct or Accounts of Positive Policing  
Text or Call - 1 (877) 255-6476 (OIPM)

**You can report anonymously or with your name.**  
**You can report misconduct you've witnessed even if it was not directed at you.**

# Public Safety Tips

## Parade Route Safety

**Stay behind designated barricades and out of the street.** Never cross the street during a parade.

Throwing beads or other items back at float riders is not allowed.

Do not obstruct the path of sanitation crews.

**Do not cross between tandem floats.**

## Travel Safety

Expect heavy traffic. Plan ahead and allow extra time for travel.

**Stay alert when driving.** The streets are crowded with pedestrians and fellow parade goers.

Stop for pedestrians using crosswalks and provide at least 3 feet of space when passing a cyclist.

**Never drink and drive.**

## Personal Property Safety

Keep public spaces clear and accessible, personal items such as ladders, chairs, and others should be placed at least six feet away from the street curb.

Additionally, these items should not be located on street intersections or between curbs of public streets.



## New list of Banned Items on the Parade Route

In 2025 the New Orleans City Council adopted **new rules** for the 2025 Mardi Gras Season that banned several items from the parade routes. Those items remained banned for the **2026 Mardi Gras Season**.

### Banned Items on the Parade Routes

- Portable toilets
- Confetti cannons
- Tents, canopies, shelters, screens, awnings, ropes, spray paint, any other type of barricades
- Open flames like barbecue grills
- Gas or diesel generators
- Upholstered furniture, including sofas and chaise lounges, scaffolding, platforms, ladders taller than six feet
- Additionally, ladders must not be fastened together and must be 6 feet back from curb
- Chairs and other personal effects shall be placed at least 6 feet back from the street curb
- Personal items left on the public right-of-way for four or more hours may be removed and discarded.

## Parade Tracker

The City of New Orleans now has a Parade Tracker. It will help you find restrooms, first aid stations, lost child stations, and recycling hubs along the parade route. **Visit at [routewise.nola.gov](http://routewise.nola.gov)**



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