

"LAYOFFS ARE GOING TO HAPPEN," SAYS NEW JERSEY POLICE DIRECTOR



Police officers in Camden, New Jersey are on edge this morning as they await the prospect of mass layoffs to their 390-member department. The police force protects one of the nation's most dangerous cities, however, the department must make \$13.7 million in cuts to salaries and wages in order to balance a \$28 million deficit for 2011. Layoffs are occurring all over the state's police forces. Trenton, for example, may lose 110 officers in a budget fix, amounting to one-third of its force, according to Police Director Ernest Williams. Williams is tasked with reorganizing the police departments budget, and in turn, designated layoffs where needed, by October. "The layoffs are going to happen," says Williams. "This is a disaster. Never, never have we been confronted with a situation this bad." Williams says he will maintain the department's patrol division, consisting of 350 officers, while making cuts in other units to save \$11 million from the department's \$40 million budget. In Newark, police officials are dealing with a \$16.7 million deficit and more than 250 officers may get the axe. However, the officials are considering alternatives, such as furlough days and other concessions to the 1,300-member force. Union chief and president of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 1, John Williamson says, "The main thing we want to do is to preserve jobs. But on the same note, we don't want to go into bypassing our current negotiation process and opening up our contracts for concessions, if it's not a guarantee that our concessions are going to preserve jobs." In a union meeting held Thursday, Camden officers agreed that they would not make any contractual concessions, unless they were given concrete figures showing the bridging of the budget gap and a guarantee that jobs would be saved.

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