

# Stop-and-frisks plunge, but cops struggle to comply with record-keeping rules: NYPD monitor

By Lia Eustachewich and Bob Fredericks | February 16, 2016



Photo Credit: Zuma Press

The number of stop-and-frisks plunged to about 24,000 last year from 45,787 in 2014 — but cops are still struggling to comply with new record-keeping rules that aim to ensure the stops are legal, the federal monitor overseeing the NYPD said in a report released Tuesday.

The report, while acknowledging that it will take time to retrain the 35,000 member force, said more effort has to be put into training so that cops know what's expected of them, monitor Peter Zimroth said.

“It is apparent from focus group sessions and discussions with individual officers throughout the ranks that many police officers, including supervisors, are not well informed as yet about the changes underway or the reasons for them and, therefore, have yet to internalize them,” Zimroth wrote in a letter to Judge Analisa Torres filed with his report.

“Many appear not to understand what is expected of them.”

Zimroth singled out new record-keeping forms that were created and have to be filled out following a federal judge's decision that the NYPD's use of stop-and-frisk was unconstitutional because minorities were disproportionately targeted.

He cited an audit of 600 of the new forms filled out after a stop during a pilot program last summer, and found that about 30 percent — or roughly 180 — were not filled out correctly.

Either the officer did not specify the reason for the initial stop, or did not give the person stopped a tear-off sheet that includes the officer's name, badge number and other information, as the new rules require.

Zimroth also noted that supervisors signed off on many of the faulty reports even though they were not filled out properly.

“These supervisors must ensure that their subordinates are implementing the changes required by the court orders and the parties' agreements—that the stops, frisks and trespass arrests made by their officers are legal and proper and that these activities are correctly documented. Supervisors must take a more active role in oversight, teaching and, when appropriate, discipline,” he wrote.

Zimroth also said the changes ordered by the court have made rank and file cops fearful of being disciplined for an honest mistake — fears he called groundless.

Zimroth also said that the quality of teaching at the Police Academy was inconsistent — and that poor teachers who don't improve should be booted from the classroom.

“The quality of the instruction at the Police Academy is mixed. The monitor and his team observed some excellent teaching and some poor teaching. This unevenness suggests the Academy should develop a more rigorous program of instructor development.

Overall, stops are way down from since 2013, when there were 192,000, and far below the peak of 685,000 in 2011.

Mayor de Blasio said he hadn't read the report yet and didn't comment on its conclusions.

“But I would say we understand that we're in a transition. The NYPD is working very closely with the federal monitor to figure out how to do things better going forward. We obviously want good and accurate information, but that's also about training all of our officers in how to do that properly,” Hizoner said.

“As you know Commissioner Bratton is very focused on retraining and clarifying how officers should handle a host of situations. So we'll look at it and we'll certainly keep working with the monitor on it.”