

This research was supported by grants #0319007375 and #0321007376 awarded to the Evaluation Unit by the Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control. Points of view and opinions stated in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Governor's Crime Commission.

THE EDEN PRAIRIE PREMISE SURVEY EVALUATION:
A GUIDE TO THE COMPLETE
COMPLIANCE STUDY

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Prepared for presentation at the National Conference on Criminal Justice Evaluation (Washington, D.C., February 22-24, 1977); Panel 10, Citizen Action Against Crime -- Evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

The premise survey is rapidly gaining popularity among law enforcement agencies as one method of increasing residential and business security. In many communities, premise surveys, in which officers inspect homes and businesses in order to inform citizens about possible corrections to their security deficiencies, are an integral part of the local crime prevention effort.

Most law enforcement agencies follow the procedure of having officers give the premise survey recipients lists of recommendations. Quite often these lists are long and confusing, without much attention given to the importance of each security deficiency. The approach in Eden Prairie (Minnesota), however, is different in that the recommendations are "prioritized"; that is, they are listed in the order of a burglar's most likely point of entry into a particular structure. The number and order of the recommendations differ from structure to structure because of differences in the premises' existing security, architecture, and surrounding landscape.

In addition to actively promoting these inspections, some departments have experimented with their premise survey procedures in an attempt to gain optimal compliance with the officers' recommendations. The Eden Prairie premise survey evaluation (published in August, 1976) not only presented a review of the actual compliance attained, but it also analyzed the quality of the changes made as a result of the prioritized system.

THE EDEN PRAIRIE COMPLIANCE STUDY RESULTS

The Eden Prairie analysis, which was based on the total number of

recommendations made to fifty respondents to a follow-up questionnaire, led to the following findings:

Compliance

Of the 50 respondents:

- 62.0% made some kind of security change as a result of the premise survey; 41.9% made two changes and 29.0% made three or more.
- all 62.0% made some change in full compliance with the inspecting officers' recommendations; and 83.9% of those who made changes made all of their changes in full compliance.
- 83.9% of those who made changes made at least one change by themselves.
- 87.2% made at least one change for less than \$10.00.
- 77.4% made at least one change within a month of their premise surveys.

Of the 255 recommendations:

- 29.0% elicited security changes (the overall compliance rating of the 31 respondents who made changes was 47.7%).
- 95.5% of the changes were made with full compliance.
- 73.8% of the changes were made by the respondents themselves (with no outside assistance).
- 54.2% of the changes were made for less than \$10.00. (No changes made by the respondents themselves cost more than \$25.00.)
- 67.9% of the changes were made within one month of the premise survey. Even for the changes of more than \$25.00, the majority was changed within a month.

The analysis of the specific locations and devices of the changes showed

that:

Location:

- front doors and patio-sliding glass doors each received 16.8%

of the recommendations, which was the highest percentage for any location.

- compliance on the patio-sliding glass door recommendations was 41.2%, the highest for any location.
- the front door compliance figure of 26.5% was the second lowest for any location.

Device:

- the device most often recommended (31.3% of the time) was the double-cylinder deadbolt lock.
- compliance is highest for "charlie bar" recommendations (77.8% compliance), followed by channel locks (42.9%) and double-cylinder deadbolt locks (39.7%).
- 85.7% of the charlie bars and 80.0% of the channel locks were changed within the first month of the premise survey, compared with 50.0% of the double-cylinder deadbolt locks.

Non-Compliance

Of the 50 respondents:

- 38.0% made no change whatsoever. Another 60.0% made some changes but did not comply with all of their recommendations.
- 71.4% cited "no time to make the changes" as the reason for not making at least one change; 44.9% gave this reason for more than one recommendation.
- 14.3% indicated that at least one of their recommended changes would be too expensive to make.
- 71.4% plan to make at least one change, and 24.5% had had an estimate made for at least one recommendation.

Of the 181 unchanged recommendations:

- the most popular reason for non-compliance was "had no time," cited 46.4% of the time.
- "too expensive" was mentioned the least -- 8.3% of the time.
- for 49.7% of their unchanged recommendations, the respondents indicated plans for change, although only 10.5% had received estimates of cost.

The analysis of location and device showed that:

- unspecified deadboly-lock recommendations generated the highest percentage of disagreement with the officers' recommendations. The 37.5% disagreement of unspecified deadbolts is nearly five times higher than the disagreement with double-cylinder deadbolt lock recommendations.
- key-operated locks received the lowest figure for "plan to change."

Individual Priority Analysis

Compliance figures for the individual priorities indicated that:

- priority one had the highest compliance rating of any priority (44.0%). Priority two shows the second lowest compliance rating, and the compliance figures for the other priorities show a similar disregard for the prioritized system.
- although priority one has the highest compliance, it does not have the highest percentage of changes made within one month of the premise survey. Priorities two, three, and six received more immediate attention.

When the respondents were grouped according to the number of recommendations they had received, it was found that:

- compliance shows no steady decrease as the number of recommendations increases. The highest compliance found in this analysis was for those with six recommendations (43.6% compliance) despite this group's low percentage of changes made for less than \$10.00.
- the priority system was best followed by those with five and six recommendations. Those with six recommendations had the highest compliance rating for the first priority, which at 75.0% is nearly twice that for any other group.
- in every group, the top-priority recommendations were among the first two changed.

The Eden Prairie report stressed the importance of including evaluation as an essential component of any premise survey endeavor. This paper offers the Eden Prairie compliance study as a guide to other departments in developing their own complete premise survey programs -- programs that include an analysis of compliance.

The results of the Eden Prairie study are by no means conclusive enough to provide answers to all premise survey questions in general. The data base was rather small to begin with, and in the process of factoring out specific variables for individual analysis, the pool of data began to run dry. A major qualification of the findings is that the entire analysis was based on residential units, nearly all of which were single family dwellings. In addition, the uniqueness of the Eden Prairie area may inhibit generalization of the results. Eden Prairie is a fairly affluent suburb of Minneapolis, with a population of nearly 10,000. The city is also quite young, and it has not developed as serious crime problem as have most of the surrounding communities. In an effort to keep the crime as low as possible, the city has a strong crime prevention program. The result of their strong commitment, which began when the Public Safety Department was formed in 1973, may have produced citizen crime prevention attitudes and behaviors different from those found in older cities where crime prevention has taken longer to catch on. In fact, most Eden Prairie premise survey recipients first were members of Operation Identification, indicating their willingness to participate in crime prevention activities. Nonetheless, the Eden Prairie results do contain several suggestions for other premise survey programs, even for those not using a prioritized approach.

EDEN PRAIRIE AS A PREMISE SURVEY PROGRAM MODEL

For departments whose premise survey program is yet in the conceptual stage, the accomplishment of the Eden Prairie program suggest that it might be wise to implement a prioritized system right from the beginning. Listing the recommendations in order of importance seems to be sound advice, and the data indicate that citizens are following the officers' advice to some extent.

Highest compliance was found among the top-priority recommendations, in many cases despite the high cost involved. Additional data showed that two-thirds of the top-priority recommendations elicited the first changes made, and the remaining top-priority recommendations were the second changed.

Departments currently using other premise survey strategies also would do well to consider a prioritized approach. Even if they prefer another method, the Eden Prairie results have several implications. Those concerned with simply raising their compliance levels might review the comparative compliance ratings of the individual devices. Combined with the findings on cost and delay in making changes, the analysis might help to allay some fears that recommending certain devices (such as the double-cylinder deadbolt lock) will automatically lower the compliance ratings. If, after reviewing the data on specific devices and locations, these departments do give more thought to what they recommend, they will be converts, of sorts, to the prioritized approach -- in their thoughts, at least, if not in their lists of recommendations.

The Eden Prairie study offers still other interesting results for those departments already following a prioritized format. These departments should be encouraged by the finding that longer lists of prioritized recommendations did not seem to overwhelm survey recipients into non-compliance. In fact, the priority system was best followed by those with five and six recommendations, rather than by those with only two or three. Also, although the data did not show that the respondents followed the priorities one-by-one in making their changes, it was shown that the most important changes had the highest compliance, and of those recommendations not changed, respondents' plans for change were highest among the most important recommendations. Finally, it is quite likely

that the prioritized system, through its well-organized lists providing clear-cut directions for the citizens, was responsible not only for motivating people to make security changes, but also for the high-quality changes made by those who were receptive to the program.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PREMISE SURVEY EVALUATION

At present, many departments are offering premise surveys without doing sufficient research on citizens' actual compliance with the officers' recommendations. The absence of data on how many people are responding to premise surveys by making security changes makes it quite difficult to assess the value of such crime prevention activity. Understandably, some departments feel that regardless of the citizens' compliance, premise surveys are effective public relations tools that lead to a better relationship between citizens and the police. Other departments feel, however, that premise survey programs and the knowledge about the citizen police relationship will never be complete without a compliance study.

At the time of the Eden Prairie report, only two other Minnesota premise survey programs were known to have done any review of their compliance. Both of these studies, however, limited their analyses to basic estimates -- the percentage of citizens who made at least one change in response to any of their premise survey recommendations. Such estimates provide only a peek at the level of compliance. Surely, the issue of compliance deserves closer scrutiny. At the very least, compliance should be computed as the percentage of changes based on the total number of recommendations.

The Eden Prairie analysis pursued the issue even further -- beyond tabulations of compliance into an evaluation of the quality of the changes made. Some departments may feel that it is sufficient to compute rough estimates; and that more extensive research is not worth the time and effort involved. It could be argued, however, that the greatest difficulty in doing a premise survey follow-up compliance study lies in deciding which citizens to include, making the actual contacts, and refreshing the citizens' memories. These first steps are a necessary part of even the most crude follow-up effort. Once initial contact has been established, it does not take much more time or effort to probe deeper than merely asking, "Did you make any changes?" Quite likely, the results will be worth the extra time; the Eden Prairie findings show how much more data can be gathered by using a well-designed follow-up procedure.

The evaluation in Eden Prairie was designed to be as painless as possible for those included in the follow-up. A community service officer hand-delivered pre-tested, fifteen-minute questionnaires to the citizens chosen. Using information on file at the department, the questionnaires were specifically tailored to each situation; the questionnaires refreshed the citizens on dates of their particular surveys and on the number of recommendations they had received. In addition, citizens were provided with copies of their original sheets of recommendations so that there would be no confusion about which recommendations were made in what order. After he explained the purpose and benefits of the follow-up study, the community service officer left the questionnaire and a stamped, return envelope with the citizens, who were asked to return them after discarding the cover sheet, which ensured anonymity. Although the 49% response rate was not as high as was hoped, those who responded did so quite thoroughly.

Most departments could adapt the Eden Prairie strategy in their own compliance studies. Of course, other methods, such as a telephone follow-up or a return visit to the premise, are also potentially successful methods. It is up to the individual departments to choose the follow-up strategy that best meets their needs. A questionnaire was chosen in Eden Prairie because it was considered less haphazard and more accurate than a telephone survey, and less intimidating and time-consuming than an in-person visit. Nonetheless, other follow-up methods may do just as well in other situations, provided that the strategy is well-conceived, thorough in its questioning, and standardized for all cases.

There are two main advantages of the Eden Prairie questionnaire strategy. First, the questionnaire gave the respondents the promise of anonymity. A telephone survey or an on-site visit probably cannot equal an anonymous questionnaire in getting respondents to relax or in evoking candid responses. In addition to seeking accurate data on compliance, the Eden Prairie questionnaire asked for the respondents' personal opinions on the department's premise survey performance, and it included separate sets of questions on Operation Identification and on burglary victimization. The questionnaire's anonymity ensured more accurate responses to these extra questions, which took only a few minutes to complete.

The second main advantage of the Eden Prairie strategy is that the questionnaire can be adapted to meet the needs of other departments. As mentioned, the questionnaire can be expanded to gather information other than compliance data. When adding questions, however, departments should be careful not to include overly-sensitive or lengthy topics which might lower the response rate, thus impairing the study's primary purpose -- to determine premise survey compliance.

It should be recognized that both the data collection and analysis of the Eden Prairie report can be used as a guide for evaluation of prioritized and non-prioritized premise survey programs alike. The basic concepts of data gathering should be adaptable even to those programs which prefer the telephone or in-person follow-up. The non-questionnaire research could base its questions on those in the Eden Prairie questionnaire, which would increase the accuracy of the findings by assuring that every respondent was asked the same questions in a consistent manner.

The analyses presented in the Eden Prairie study also should provide the fundamentals for most department's evaluations. The analyses of general compliance, non-compliance, and specific locations and devices should be of interest to all departments concerned about a thorough review of compliance, whether their premise survey procedures are prioritized or not. Non-prioritized programs need not be concerned with the order of the recommendations or the special techniques of evaluating the "prioritized" changes. Prioritized programs, of course, will benefit the most from the Eden Prairie analysis, especially from the Individual Priority Analysis.

THE COMPLIANCE STUDY GUIDESHEET

The Eden Prairie study offers more to other departments than an example of how to conduct premise surveys. Moreover, its implications for evaluation extend beyond merely demonstrating that a compliance study can successfully probe deeper than simple compliance estimates. Ideally, the study should provide direct assistance to departments who wish to conduct compliance studies on their own. The "Compliance Study Guidesheet" is one method of providing immediate assistance.

Many departments have considered or have actually developed "universal checklists" or other guidelines for instructing citizens on how to conduct premise surveys on their own. Although it poses unique difficulties for a compliance follow-up, such "checklist" premise surveys cut down on the time and effort an officer would otherwise have to spend making the inspection. The same philosophy might be applied successfully for evaluation of departments' premise survey programs. In this case, rather than a "checklist" for citizens, the individual departments themselves would follow a standardized "Compliance Study Guidesheet" to help them perform their own analyses of compliance.

The standardized guidesheet approach to premise survey evaluation seems to have several advantages. First, a well-prepared guidesheet might inspire some departments to proceed with their own evaluations, rather than hesitating because of confusion over what to do. Second, this type of evaluation could accommodate a wide range of depth in the analysis, either by hand or computer, to be performed within the department itself. (The Eden Prairie study was completed with State Evaluation Staff assistance which included computer analysis.) Third, the evaluations could be more consistent than if each agency completed an independent study. Consistency has several implications. If they were to use the same evaluation strategy, several adjoining communities, or departments with similar programs, would have consistent results for comparison. Furthermore, the prospect of a consistent data base might inspire additional departments to conduct evaluations. Also, individual departments doing compliance studies at regular intervals would have a better estimate of program changes if the evaluation strategies were the same each time.

The primary disadvantage of the guidesheet evaluation approach is that

it brings with it the potential for individual departments to choose to perform only the most basic analysis. This is certainly no worse than it would be without the guidesheet, and with such widespread differences in departmental resources, it can hardly be expected that all departments would be able to devote equal amounts of time to premise survey evaluation.

A strong argument in support of the guidesheet evaluation proposal, despite its potential lower-quality results, is similar to the philosophy behind the "universal checklist" movement. The checklists sacrifice some quality in hopes of gaining a larger number of completed premise surveys. In much the same way, the guidesheet evaluation strategy might sacrifice some quality in the chance that there will be more data from more studies as a result. After all, the quality of the premise survey program in general will never be known until more is known about the number of changes made. Hopefully, the guidesheet would propel premise survey evaluations beyond tabulations of surveys performed and crude compliance estimates, which, limited though they are in both number and useful information, currently provide most of the knowledge about the premise survey.

A FINAL NOTE ...

It must be remembered that research for the purpose of determining compliance ratings is not an end in itself. Compliance ratings will have their full value only when the actual deterrent effect of "target hardening" (making security changes) is statistically documented. Unfortunately, data on the premise survey's relationship to burglary are next to non-existent. Departments operating premise survey programs definitely should be concerned with their compliance ratings, but they also should attempt to determine what impact their programs -- and the security changes made -- have on the problem

of burglary. Such analysis should consider whether or not actual burglaries of citizens' homes and businesses have motivating effects in getting people to make changes if they had not done so previously. Also, research should be directed at determining the effectiveness of premise surveys in preventing burglary. Ideally, the research would examine burglaries and attempted break-ins at participating targets to ascertain what points of entry were chosen, and to see if changes had been made at these or any locations.

The data base in Eden Prairie was hopelessly small for this kind of analysis. Unfortunately, this type of data is conspicuously absent from most other crime prevention evaluation reports as well. Successful research, however, could be conducted in larger cities with active premise survey programs. If premise survey programs were to include analysis of both compliance and its effects on burglary, perhaps this research could isolate the most effective premise survey procedures and determine the value of this activity as a burglary deterrent. Only after such research has been conducted will the evaluation of the premise survey be complete.



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