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Experience Exchange

VICTIM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Mrs. X's social security check had arrived that morning and she had gone to the bank to cash it. On the way home, she stopped at the food stamp office to purchase a month's supply of stamps. As she stepped off the bus in front of her hi-rise, a group of teen-aged boys pushed her down and ran off with her purse which contained the food stamps and rent money.

The police took Mrs. X to the hospital. Although her injuries were not serious, the woman was frantic with fear and helplessness. At that point, St. Paul's Elderly Victims of Crime (EVOC) came into play.

An EVOC volunteer went to the woman's home, talked with her, calmed her down, and called her daughter. EVOC intervened with her landlord, the St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and explained why the rent payment was not coming. Volunteers also explained the situation to the food stamp office. The stamps could not be replaced, but the woman was able to buy more at a reduced price because her income for the month was reduced by the theft.

EVOC volunteers had the locks on the woman's door changed, and because her Medicare and social security cards had been in the stolen purse, ordered new ones. A volunteer escorted the woman to the hospital for treatment of additional injuries she discovered after the attack. The volunteer also discussed steps she could take to avoid becoming a victim of crime in the future.

Mrs. X exemplifies many of the elderly crime victims EVOC has served since it began in 1976. The program was the brainchild of St. Paul Police Chief, Richard Rowan, who interested the Mayor's Office of Information and Complaints in sponsoring the project.

EVOC is now part of the mayor's information office and is co-sponsored by the St. Paul Police Department, Ramsey County Community Corrections VPO Program, and the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program, which supplies six volunteers for the program.

Since EVOC began, volunteers have spoken to over 500 people about the program and about crime prevention.

Mrs. Ferne Freidman, a retired

social worker for the St. Paul Family Service Agency and supervisor of EVOC, notes:

"As we go on, we find we are spending more time with prevention of crime than with victims, and that's good." She adds that EVOC's most important work now may be spreading the word on crime prevention.

According to Mrs. Freidman, prevention of crime may involve a volunteer accompanying an older person to a bank, helping him establish an account, and showing him how to make withdrawals in the form of money orders, rather than carrying cash or keeping it in his home. Or it may be aimed at making an older person feel more secure in his home.

In addition to helping crime victims obtain emergency financial assistance, file insurance and Medicare claims, and notify companies of lost credit cards, EVOC will help the elderly victim obtain legal or counseling services and apply for compensation from the Minnesota Crime Victims Reparations Board. Currently, EVOC volunteers are vigorously promoting Operation ID and Neighborhood Crime Watch.

EVOC is also working with the mayor's office and the Metropolitan Transit Commission to develop a temporary identification card that crime victims can use for bus transportation while their stolen Medicare cards are being replaced, a five to six week process.

Further information may be obtained from:

Mrs. Ferne C. Freidman
Office of the Mayor
273 City Hall
St. Paul, Minn.
Telephone: (612) 298-4747

BLOCKWATCHERS

Would-be criminals in Cleveland, Ohio are finding that they have more

than just the police to worry about thanks to the city's Blockwatchers program.

Through the program, seniors are being recruited and trained by the Community Relations Unit of the Cleveland Police Department, which is sponsoring the program, to watch for suspected criminal activity. Professional guidance is provided at training sessions where older residents learn how to call the police, collect and relay information for them, and properly identify suspects.

Because of the special training received by Blockwatchers, they are permitted to bypass the complaint evaluator and make direct contact with the police radio in reporting a crime, following the same procedures as police officers. They also have a significant role as witnesses to the commission of serious crimes and in the identification of suspects who have been arrested.

Those who have completed the Blockwatcher Program training course are issued a Blockwatch Registered Number which indicates the district in which he or she lives. The respective district, the officer in charge of the police radio, and the Blockwatcher's Outreach Center retain a confidential record of Blockwatchers residing in the area.

Additional details on the project can be obtained from:

Lt. Hubert Forrey
Community Relations Unit
Cleveland Police Department
1300 Ontario St.
Cleveland, Ohio 44113
Phone: (216) 623-5141

SUMMER YOUTH PATROL

A summer program, initiated last year in Nashville, Tenn. is helping to dissolve the climate of fear among elderly residents in many housing projects.

Community Youth Relations Aides of Tennessee, is designed to use the

talents of unemployed teenagers in housing projects and help older victims of robbery, assault, and burglary in these areas as well. Also known as Mayor Richard Fulton's Summer Youth Patrol, the program is funded under CETA's Title III.

The aides' primary responsibility is to protect the elderly. Teenagers work in their designated neighborhoods as liaisons with the Metro Police Department's Community Relations Division, building rapport with the older citizens. Under the direction of Ms. Kitty Smith and Warner McCreary of the Mayor's Office of Community Services, the program has hired over 100 low-income youths between the ages of 15 and 18.

Participants are chosen on the basis of overall maturity, academic and athletic achievement, and a "positive attitude toward the needs of senior citizens." Armed with walkie-talkies, the youths escort and protect older persons in the designated housing areas and provide a neighborhood watch particularly on the days when they receive their social security checks. Ms. Smith says that many elderly are afraid to venture out during the day because they have been assaulted as they walk to the store or go to the bank to get their checks cashed. Many have had their checks stolen from their mailboxes.

Last summer, young enrollees in the Mayor's Summer Youth Patrol project were involved in a two-week training and orientation course conducted by the Metro Police Community Relations Division. Films were shown depicting the lifestyles and needs of the elderly and lessons in self-defense were given to the students.

Mr. McCreary observes that since the Youth Patrol Project began, there has been a substantial decline in assaults, larcenies, and forced entry burglaries. Police officers and neighborhood residents concur that



overall crime is down this year compared with the previous two years. Many friendships have developed between the elderly and their young protectors and the program has served "to discourage the anti-social behavior of potential juvenile delinquents."

Further details on the Nashville Summer Youth Patrol can be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

**Warner McCreary
Metropolitan Courthouse
Room G 23
Mayor's Office of Community
Services
Nashville, Tenn. 37201**

PUSHBUTTON ARMY

"Just push the button," said Mike McCann of the Action Council of Central Nassau (N.Y.) Inc. The button was pushed and the ensuing wail of the

alarm provoked shrieks from secretaries up and down the corridor and colleagues came running to see what had happened. At the same time a bright light was flashing. It seemed as if an emergency vehicle had landed in the middle of the offices of the Administration of Aging. Although Mike quickly turned off the horn and light, everyone in earshot was aware that something unusual had happened. It had—the Community Assistance for Senior Safety and Security (CASSS) had made its point.

As the *New York Times* reported on July 31, 1977, 77 year-old Eugene L. Karbach had a personal need which he met and which is now having "an impact on the quality of life for the growing number of elderly people in Nassau County." Mr. Karbach had suffered a stroke a year ago last spring. As the *Times* reported, "I was alert," the 77 year-old

sales executive said, "but I knew something was wrong." He managed to summon a neighbor who called a doctor.

Two weeks later, he came home from the hospital. For a couple of weeks more a nurse looked after him. And then, Mr. Karbach, whose wife has been in a nursing home since March 1973, was alone again, wondering what might happen if he were stricken once more.

"I knew exactly what I wanted," Mr. Karbach said. "I wanted to alert somebody if something was cockeyed here and I wanted to let them in."

Mr. Karbach discussed his ideas with an electrician and the result was "this contrivance." The contrivance was an early model for the device Mike McCann displayed in the AoA offices.

Elements of the system are the "panic button" about the size of a small pocket radio or beeper which weighs only about an ounce and a half; a control panel with transformer, battery charger, and batteries so the device is not dependent on electric power; a receiver with an antenna, which picks up the signal from the panic button; and mounted outside the house are the horn and flashing amber light. The panic button has a clip so it may be fastened to the person's clothes and kept handy. The signal range is long enough so it can be activated from outside in the yard as well as in the house. Frequencies are individually adjusted so that one panic button will not activate other receivers.

The alarm alerts neighbors to the need for help and the flashing light identifies the scene of the emergency for both neighbors, police, and fire officials. Neighbors are instructed to call police or fire officials immediately on hearing the alarm. The shut-off switch is at the control panel so once activated the device continues its call for help until it is manually shut off.

The cost of the complete device is about \$85. Experiments are being conducted on a similar system for apartment dwellers and on hooking smoke detectors into the system.

On July 6, 1977 the Nassau County Department of Senior Citizen Affairs gave approval to CASSS with a Title III grant of \$20,000 to provide the safety alarm system to the priority "target population of elderly who are handicapped, prone to strokes and heart attacks, etc., and living alone." The approval included commendation for the Action Council's report that it was working with the Office of Manpower Development and would be using installation workers 55 or over. The proposal was supported by the Nassau County Police Department and the County Fire Commission.

Agencies interested in the CASSS system may obtain information by contacting:

Operation Outreach
Action Council of Central Nassau
3130 Hempstead Turnpike
Levittown, N. Y. 11756

BLOW THE WHISTLE ON CRIME

Not quite as dramatic as flashing lights and sirens is the whistle blowing campaign initiated by the Ohio Commission on Aging at its June 1977 Governor's Conference on Aging on the fairgrounds in Columbus.

The Ohio program started in a session at the conference on crime against the elderly. Some 2,100 whistles were distributed and the session became the testing ground with ear-aching results, according to the Commission report. "Blow the Whistle on Crime" is reported by the Subcommittee on Housing and Consumer Interests of the House Select Committee on Aging as having originated in Los Angeles and used in some form in about 300 cities.

Further information about the Ohio program is available from:

Coordinator
Seniors Against Crime
Ohio Commission on Aging
50 W. Broad St.
9th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

CRIME EDUCATION

A Montgomery County, Md. crime prevention program is helping the elderly to protect themselves from the financial, physical, and emotional traumas of victimization.

The program originated in September 1975 at a public hearing on the area agency's annual plan for the aging. Don Wassmann, Director of the Montgomery County Area Agency on Aging, which was the original grantee for the program, explained: "A number of our senior citizens voiced their concern that elderly people are victimized to an extent far beyond their proportion to the population. They asked what could be done."

To find out, the area agency and the Montgomery County Police Department, which now administers the program, developed a model project on crime prevention geared to the senior citizen. The target area is Silver Spring, a 25-square mile district with a high concentration of elderly—some 16,000 people over 60. This region accounts for 50 percent of the street crimes in the County. The program is funded through a three-year Law Enforcement Assistance Administration grant from the Governor's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice.

The program has three major components. One is to immediately respond to the victim.

A two-person Crime Victimization Response Team works with the victim. One member is Corporal Clifford Melton.

When a crime occurs against an elderly person, we record it

immediately," Corporal Melton said. "If there was a burglary, we go through the house with the homeowner and show how it can be made burglar-proof.

"If a person has received some bodily injury like a broken limb, we find resources to help with medical expenses, line up a visiting nurse or maybe a home visitor and, if necessary, arrange for paralegal counseling. We also help to fill out the crime victim compensation forms, which are pretty complex." Because of its small staff, the Crime Response Team will be aided in the future by elderly volunteers, who will assist in calling the victims to find out if they need help, thus speeding up contact with those elderly who need immediate assistance.

Corporal Melton has talked to approximately 3,000 senior citizens at group gatherings and the number multiplies as the listeners in turn inform their friends of the program.

The third component of the program is a recently completed survey which provides a comprehensive picture of the rate of crimes against the elderly in the Silver Spring district.

The information also analyzes the effectiveness of the program, and can be used as a guide for other communities.

The survey has come up with some interesting findings. For one it reveals that there is no "typical" victim of crime except that victims are more likely to live in the older sections of the area adjoining the District of Columbia. Contrary to popular belief, older women are no more likely than men to be the victims of crime, and living alone does not increase the chances of victimization.

The survey also reveals that despite their general fear, older people tend to think they are safer in their neighborhood than they really are. They generally do not take safety and

security precautions, the survey found, until *after* they have become the victim of a crime.

Don Wassmann and Clifford Melton feel the program has many advantages. It is, they say, a pilot project to determine what does and does not work in the area of crime prevention for the elderly. Since it is one of the few programs of its kind, their efforts and results are being scrutinized and sometimes adopted by other regions of the country.

Just as important, the crime prevention program is already helping to reduce crime against senior citizens and is providing special help to the elderly victim.

A new brochure on crime prevention tips and results of the crime victimization survey may be obtained by writing to:

Corporal Clifford R. Melton
Montgomery County Police
Department
2350 Research Blvd.
Rockville, Md. 20850
Telephone: (301) 840-2585

HOME SECURITY

The Community Relations-Social Development Commission (CR-SDC) in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, has worked to develop an in-home security program for 500 homes of age 60-plus victims. The victims in the test target area are being located through outreach activities, police reports, hospital social service departments, clergy, and crime news reporters.

Through a tremendous "tapping and pooling" operation, the Milwaukee program has obtained \$65,000 from the Community Development Agency for hardware and materials. Goodwill Industries is providing the training of installers and supervision of retired workers employed in the project. Plans have been developed to tie the winterization program into the security program so the older persons being

served will have a one shot home-rehabilitation program.

For further information, please contact:

Ms. Nona Taylor
Community Relations-Social
Development Commission in
Milwaukee County
161 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Suite 7156
Milwaukee, Wis. 53203
Telephone (414) 272-5600

SENIOR CB'ER PATROL

The September 1977 *Senior World*, a privately owned and published San Diego newspaper for older persons, reports the following program in which senior citizens are protecting a community:

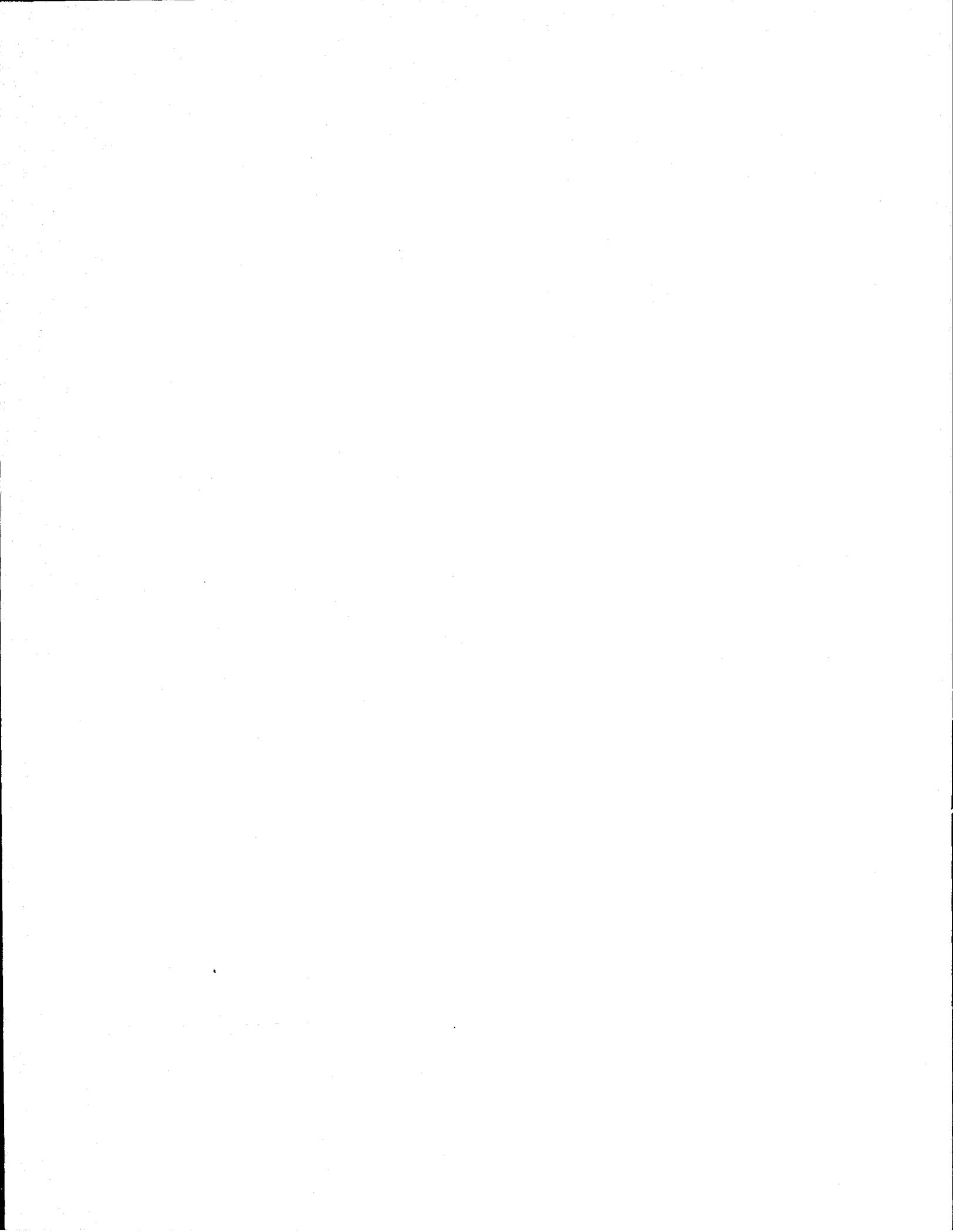
"Senior Patrol Cars Protect Homeowners—they call themselves Kojak, Columbo and Charlie's Angels—and though they don't touch cases of fraud or espionage, senior citizens who go by these names are saving vacationers in their small suburban Seattle town a lot of worry.

"As volunteers with the local police department, they patrol the streets with radio-equipped cars to check the homes of vacationing citizens who could be victims of burglary or vandalism.

"Before launching their project, volunteers received eight hours of training in basic home security and were guaranteed insurance coverage and repayment for mileage and meals. In place of pistols, they carry special Operation I.D. engraving pens which are used to mark valuables that belong to homeowners."

Information about the project is available by writing:

Chief Duaine Garrison
Issaquah Police Department
130½ Sunset Way
Post Office Box K
Issaquah, Wash. 98027



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