

crime prevention review

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Tri-Cities Burglary Prevention Program

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Chief Jon J. Sparks has served law enforcement in California and Arizona for the past fourteen years. He began his career as a patrol officer in Oakland, where he worked as a juvenile officer, supervised the community relations unit, worked in personnel and at the training academy, and also served as District Supervisor in patrol. In 1974 Chief Sparks was appointed as Director of Public Safety/Chief of Police in Coolidge, Arizona, and in 1976 was selected as Chief of Police in Laguna Beach. He is a graduate of Golden Gate University in San Francisco and has done graduate work at UCLA, Chapman College and the University of Michigan. He is a member of the Orange County Chiefs of Police and Sheriff's Association, the South Coast Regional Mental Health Advisory Committee, and serves as the police disaster advisor to the Orange County American Red Cross Chapter.

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Joyce Glaser is a 1977 graduate of the University of California, Irvine where she majored in social ecology, specializing in criminal justice. Until recently, she was employed at the Laguna Beach Police Department as a Crime Prevention Officer and is now with the Fountain Valley Police Department. Since August of 1977, when she began her crime prevention position, she has attended the Basic Crime Prevention Institute, the Advanced Crime Prevention Institute, and numerous other seminars and classes in crime prevention and related subjects. Joyce is also a member of the California Crime Prevention Officers' Association.

INTRODUCTION

Beach cities on the southern California coast share many unique characteristics—climate, topography, tourists, population growth and often a foreign criminal element that vacations at the residents' expense. The growth that has occurred in Orange county in the last ten years has also drastically increased the "policing population" of sleepy beach villages like Laguna Beach. Homeowners and renters in new cities and areas like Lake Forest, Mission Viejo and El Toro often come to the beach to shop and enjoy the sun and sand. Unfortunately, with the many thousands of tourists and visitors, there is also a small percentage of criminals who migrate to beach

cities to take advantage of criminal opportunities that a leisure community offers. The relaxed homeowner and vacationer attitude of open doors and windows often results in thefts and burglaries—a "business" for criminals.

This population growth in Orange county has also created instant neighborhoods that lack the cohesiveness or *ad hoc* self-help groups that are found in many other existing southern California cities. Also, the rapid expansion of cities has diluted the relationship between law enforcement and the citizenry. The general citizen consensus is that the police are a "reactive" agency geared to handle crime problems, and that the citizen is relatively safe and secure because of the police role. Police preventive patrol is proactive, but often economically and operationally difficult to maintain. When the citizenry relies solely on the police to implement reactive or proactive approaches, the effect and impact of the effort is drastically minimized.

The realities of the crime problems in the U.S. and locally are that (1) as the population continues to grow, burglaries continue to increase annually, (2) police personpower per capita is being reduced by diminishing revenue sources, (3) law enforcement can only clear approximately 20% + of property crimes, and (4) only a fraction of burglary offenders are ever adjudicated to the point of incarceration. These are realities that *stabilized* neighborhoods and cities are facing day to day. In addition to these realities, beach cities must contend with a tourist population influx and a mobile, leisure resident population that often places security low on their priorities.

Given the above problems, how can law enforcement agencies in southern California beach cities and communities implement cost effective, "activity efficient" and "impact oriented" programs that will reduce crime? Many have been examined, including the traditional patrol vehicle saturation approach that has been used to deter criminal activity and remove opportunities for crime, but when the saturation subsides the criminal element often reappears.

The popular concept of crime prevention has been implemented by police agencies across the country. Since the cities of San Clemente, Irvine and Laguna Beach share similar problems, they decided to apply for a LEAA grant to implement the Tri-Cities Burglary Prevention Program.

PROGRAM CONCEPT

The concept of encouraging citizen participation in the delivery system of law enforcement services has been tailored to meet the needs of many California cities. The crime prevention cooperative police/citizen approach has facilitated citizen participation and been a valuable tool in bridging the gap between the stereotype police role and the citizen apprehension regarding the professional "cop". To design a grant program that will fit within the semi-military confines of police authority, yet be accepted by the factions of middle class beach communities, was the challenge.

Often when an LEAA grant is implemented in an individual city, a "shotgun syndrome" occurs and the program credibility is diluted because of its isolated thrust in a single city and because the community is being introduced to a new, untested program. Also, the effect of media stimulation is limited to that city's resources.

The general concept of the tri-cities program is to send trained, non-sworn officers into the communities to convey a better understanding of the burglary problem, and to "cause people to take action" to help prevent becoming victimized. More specifically, the cities utilize "target hardening" techniques, neighborhood saturation and door-to-door canvassing to encourage citizen participation to help prevent crime.

The program is primarily to reduce the burglary rate increase in areas specifically impacted by the project. Essentially, the goal is to harden the target by physically securing buildings with better locks and hardware. Statistically, the objective was to demonstrate that those residences and businesses that have received one or more specific burglary prevention services, such as home security inspection, will show better protection against burglaries than those receiving no such services. By keeping accurate data—name, address, socio-economic status, date victimized, force/no force entry, contacted date, compliance date, etc., it is possible to measure success.

A secondary goal of the program is to increase the level of burglary consciousness of those persons living in the target area. The continued reinforcement of the necessity for security may instill in persons a greater sense of individual importance in preventing crimes.

The benefit of such a crime prevention program is that three agencies can work to standardize and coordinate their needs, resources and personnel before implementation. During the program, the shared communication network solidifies and enhances the day-to-day tasks, e.g., a localized crime prevention newspaper column developed in one city can be reworked and implemented in one of the other cities.

The program is also designed to allow participating agencies the administrative freedom to focus on local crime problems such as construction site thefts in Irvine and no-force entry burglaries in Laguna Beach.

This proactive approach toward abating crimes can also promote a personal sense of belonging in neighborhoods that seem to have lost their "community" identity because of the rapid growth and mobility of the 1970's. Certainly the liaison established between law enforcement and the citizenry represents a solid, established link in the attack on crime in our neighborhoods.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

To implement the tri-cities grant program, a project director, Chief Jon J. Sparks, and a project coordinator, Lt. Frank Dillon of the Laguna Beach Police Department, assumed the duties and responsibilities of directing, coordinating and administering the program activities. Each agency (Laguna Beach, San Clemente and Irvine) then hired two Community Service Officers (Crime Prevention Officers) trained in basic crime prevention theory and practice, including conducting residential and commercial security inspections, hosting seminars in burglary prevention, and public speaking.

Once the logistics of office space, data collection and day-to-day scheduling were worked out, the plan of action was defined. The program and the

staff were then presented to the respective city councils. To set the program in motion, a comprehensive news release was prepared for local newspapers and civic organizations detailing program goals.

The Community Service Officer's primary task is conducting the security inspections in order to detect weaknesses in the home or business, and to demonstrate ways of better protecting the perimeter security, specifically the proper placement of locks and alarms on doors, windows and interior/exterior security. Property identification, by engraving the driver's license numbers on valuables, is highly recommended, as in the nationally recognized Neighborhood Watch Program.

Aside from physically securing the premises with better security hardware, the psychology of increasing the level of burglary consciousness is accomplished by media exposure, news releases, seminars, public presentations and distribution of crime prevention brochures and pamphlets. California crime prevention programs in beach cities have had to approach media stimulation in a more aggressive and unique manner. Because of the seasonal and recreational activities of leisure communities, the crime prevention teams have had to plan their public educational displays and media releases at a time when local festivals and related beach activities are not in progress. The challenge is to develop current localized brochures and crime prevention literature that is brief, to the point and timely. Too often, agencies simply place their stamp on national or privately produced literature, hence the relevance, investment and impact is minimized by the agency's lack of creativity. Local residents are more likely to read "localized" materials that specifically relate to their community.

Another interesting aspect of promoting localized crime prevention techniques is the Community Service Officer's dress code or appearance. The cities of Laguna Beach and San Clemente have opted to have their Community Service Officers dress in blazer outfits, while Irvine chose a modified police uniform. The dress code is an example of the flexibility and uniqueness of this program. This approach has proven to be quite beneficial in that each community has identified their officers in a manner appropriate to community standards. A more open, interpersonal one-to-one relationship is facilitated by their acceptable, yet professional, appearance.

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The following information is an 18-month update and description of the Tri-Cities Burglary Prevention program. It is important to note that certain midstream changes in the program have been made to accommodate the needs of each city. For example, our burglary prevention concept was expanded to include other crime prevention topics such as rape, robbery and shoplifting prevention.

1. Crime prevention personnel have performed over 2,980 residential and commercial security inspections making security recommendations and offering specific helpful tips on how to protect homes and property.

2. Spot checks for compliance—over 20% of the premises inspected have been recontacted to ascertain the amount of compliance regarding installation of recommended security hardware. We are very pleased that tri-city

grant personnel can report over 65% of the residents and businesspersons are complying or taking some action to help prevent being victimized. Subsequent victimization has been monitored, and our data reflect that those persons who have complied show a much lower rate of subsequent victimization than those who have not complied.

3. Crime prevention personnel have hosted over 43 Neighborhood Watch or homeowner association security seminars to encourage neighborhood cooperation by reporting suspicious activities and persons to the police department. Irvine Police Department has had considerable success with the Neighborhood Watch Program, whereas Laguna Beach has found it difficult to implement. For example, in the art colony of Laguna Beach, many of the residents are professional persons (doctors, artists, airline pilots). It has been difficult to implement the traditional Neighborhood Watch campaign in those areas where absentee, seasonal homeowners reside. A positive side to Laguna Beach's program is the extremely high level of compliance to security recommendations. This may be attributed to the same homeowners' financial ability to purchase items or their acceptance of knowledgeable, pragmatic information.

4. The crime prevention personnel have hosted over 100 civic organization meetings presenting security seminars on both residential and commercial security. The programs have included information on burglary, shoplifting, robbery and fraudulent documents (bad checks, credit card fraud) prevention.

5. Public educational displays have been held among the three cities. Program personnel have used the Orange County Crime Prevention Mobile Unit van over 55 times at community colleges, shopping malls and the Orange County Fair, as a visual reminder to all citizens of the police department's link to the community. An additional 18,000 contacts with citizens was accomplished through the use of the crime prevention van, at police department front counters and in the field distributing information and soliciting security inspections.

6. Door-to-door contacts are an excellent means of alerting neighborhoods to crime trends in their area. Crime prevention personnel have conducted over 3,200 door-to-door contacts distributing literature and soliciting home security inspections.

7. An integral part of the program is that crime prevention personnel contact burglary victims. Over 90% of all burglary victims have been contacted, either by mail, phone, or in person, as a follow-up to the crime and to perform a security inspection on the premises. A main intent of the citizen contact is to help reduce the "fear of crime", which the victim experiences following a burglary and to help the victim by pointing out what he/she can do to make their homes more secure. Many times the fear and anger which follow the offense is worse than the offense itself; this is especially true for senior citizens.

8. Operation Identification has generated over 836 citizen contacts throughout the three cities. This program, popular in all three cities, encourages citizens to engrave valuables they wish to protect, such as television, stereos, sewing machines, etc., with their driver's license number.

9. Media stimulation to gain exposure has encompassed over 116 news-

paper articles. In addition, a local artist has designed two crime prevention posters, which have been photographed for use on local television channels with a brief crime prevention narrative."

10. The crime prevention personnel are currently working with their respective fire and planning departments in an effort to develop city ordinances for building security. The guidelines are aimed at planning for prevention from the first stages of construction for new residences. This effort is being coordinated to coincide with guidelines set forth by the International Conference of Building Officials and the California Crime Prevention Officers Association. To date, Irvine has an approved security ordinance in effect, and Laguna Beach and San Clemente's are in the final stages of completion and adoption.

In addition to the burglary prevention activities, the staff have agreed to expand their individual activities to meet other needs of each community. The following is a brief list of those activities accomplished during the past 18 months:

Arson Investigation and City Ordinance

Following a series of arsons in a residential area of Laguna Beach, the crime prevention team canvassed the area talking with builders and homeowners to encourage citizens to keep their eyes and ears open to help the police department in the apprehension of the suspect(s). An emergency arson ordinance was written by the crime prevention staff regarding lighting, proper security of homes under construction and clean up of all building scraps at the building site, on a daily basis. We were quite pleased that the builders and homeowners complied and cooperated with the police department, and the arsonist was apprehended.

Boys and Girls Club Seminars

Each city has hosted seminars given by the crime prevention staff on the subjects of drug abuse, babysitting safety and laws for youth. We believe the schools can be an excellent outlet for crime prevention information.

Senior Citizen Security Installation Program

Recognizing a need for seniors of Laguna Beach to have extra protection against the threat of burglary, the crime prevention team initiated a program which utilized a local service club, the Laguna Beach Jaycees, to aid us in the securing of the homes of low income seniors or seniors not able to complete the security recommendations themselves. The Jaycees contacted the residents following the Crime Prevention Team's security inspection, and provided the security hardware for the seniors, which they then installed free of charge. Because of the community involvement this program encouraged, the Southern Chapter of California Crime Prevention Officers Association awarded the Laguna Beach Jaycees the Crime Prevention Award for the most impressive crime prevention effort by a citizen group. The success of this program has led the Jaycees to commit themselves for an indefinite period of time to the aiding of the Laguna Beach senior citizens.

Child Abuse Training

The Laguna Beach Police Department was fortunate to receive training in child abuse recognition and prevention from the California State Attorney General's Office as a part of their child abuse prevention program. This training resulted in a community awareness of child abuse that has since aligned various health service agencies together.

Environmental Impact Reports (E.I.R.)

Each city involved in the grant program has had police input into the Environmental Impact Reports which are submitted to city planning departments. The crime prevention teams often make up to date security recommendations to aid builders and homeowners in the planning for secure buildings and environments.

Board of Realtors

Recognizing a need for even further expanded community participation, the Laguna Beach team members contacted the Laguna Beach Board of Realtors with the idea that they might be able to assist new homeowners/renters with helpful crime prevention information. The Laguna Beach Board of Realtors agreed to sponsor a program wherein printed folders containing crime prevention and related emergency information and telephone numbers are distributed to new residents. The Board of Realtors' program and the insurance program discussed below are both intended to encourage local groups in promoting crime prevention. Again, these are attempts to utilize local resources to help the community get involved in preventing crimes.

Insurance Program

Local Laguna Beach insurance brokers were contacted and agreed to distribute flyers advertising crime prevention services offered by the Laguna Beach Police Department. To date, 1,650 flyers have been delivered to the insurance offices for distribution to policy holders. The crime prevention team hopes to measure the effect of this program on the number of security inspections and requests for further information from recipients of the flyer.

An integral part of the Tri-Cities Burglary Prevention program is the ability to expand the program to meet each city's individual needs. Too often, grant goals and objectives limit the natural growth of a program. Proper planning during the grant writing stage and accurate data collection during operation will allow a statistical measurement of goal objectives as well as innovative growth of the program.

CONCLUSION

The Tri-Cities Burglary Prevention Program is a cost effective alternative approach to traditional law enforcement services. Though the grant expenditure funding may soon end, the basic concept has been rooted in those three southern California communities as a viable police function. It is a proactive, flexible program that meets the needs of a changing society

and focuses community resources on the criminal element.

The program is an experiment whereby three cities have pooled their energies and resources to meet the crime prevention needs of their individual communities, making allowances for local unique conditions. The unique aspect of the program is that the tri-cities operation is a break from the traditional "shotgun" approach to regional grants. Traditional regional grants tend to dilute the total grant resources and, in the end, no participating agency is completely satisfied with the results. All three cities in this program are comfortable with the product and have applied for a "Crime Suppression" grant based on the same flexible and effective methodology.

In summary, the reduction of "fear of crime" and the obvious benefits of a community working together in an on-going effort of preventing crimes will no doubt have an impact on the improvement of our environment and future. Each home or business that becomes secure through burglary prevention efforts may save citizens hundreds of dollars; a savings and investment realized by the citizens, police and the communities.

We sincerely believe that working together in pooling existing police resources and encouraging citizen participation is the best way to facilitate effective solutions to the every changing problem of crime.

END