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Situational Policing

By JAMES J. NOLAN, Ph.D., NORMAN CONTI, Ph.D., and JACK MCDEVITT, M.P.A.

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*"Would you tell me, please,
which way I ought to go from
here?"*

Alice

*"That depends on where you
want to get to."*

The Cheshire Cat

—Lewis Carroll's
Alice in Wonderland

A recent study explored whether community policing could work in different types of neighborhoods. The analysis found it successful in some communities, but not in others. Of the 15 participating Chicago police beats, the researchers rated 9 excellent or reasonable and 6 struggling or failing. Although the study's findings prove enlightening, the research question itself garners even more interest for it suggests that community policing *should* have similar benefits in different types of neighborhoods.¹

To this end, the authors present a theoretical framework to help police decide what type of community policing strategy could work best in specific neighborhoods. Making this decision requires an identification of the ultimate goal of policing (i.e., its desired end). This holds particular importance because it provides the basis for evaluating competing strategies and the ultimate measure of police effectiveness. Through the Situational Policing Model, the authors hope to present a clear and observable desired end state for officers as

they work to respond to neighborhood crime and disorder. Choosing the right road, or policing strategy, depends on where the police are heading. Once this destination becomes set, officers will be better able to decide which roads most likely will get them there.

BROKEN WINDOWS OR BROKEN EFFICACY

For over 20 years, the Broken Windows Theory—that neighborhood disorder leads to serious violent crime—has influenced policing.² Many authorities believe that physical and social disorder serve as predictors of violent crime. To this end, practices, such as zero-tolerance and order-maintenance policing, have become popular.³

More recently, researchers have raised important questions about any causal link between disorder and crime because they say the two are, essentially, the same thing. In other words, disorder *is* crime—they just differ in seriousness. These experts suggest that disorder and crime stem from the same societal problem (i.e., weakened informal social control).⁴ They argue that it is not disorder that predicts crime but the level of *collective efficacy*—“the cohesion among residents combined with shared expectations for the social control of public space”—that predicts both crime and disorder.⁵ Put another way, residents feel liable for safety and upkeep in some neighborhoods more than others, and this feeling of

shared responsibility relates to the level of crime.

In a comprehensive study of 196 Chicago communities, these researchers found that not only was neighborhood-level collective efficacy the most significant predictor of crime and disorder but when collective efficacy and structural characteristics, like poverty, population density, and mixed land use, were taken into consideration, the connection between disorder and crime all but disappeared. These findings have implications for modern policing policies and practices.

NEIGHBORHOODS AS DEVELOPING GROUPS

Collective efficacy characterizes the neighborhood as a whole. The social sciences



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have established that groups, organizations, and entire societies have collective properties, like efficacy. Much of the knowledge about the dynamics of collective entities comes from studies of small groups, an emerging focus of scientific analysis starting in the 1940s and continuing today.

For example, these studies pointed out that many groups pass through, regress to, or get stuck in identifiable developmental stages.⁶ For their purposes, the authors suggest that at any point in time, a neighborhood can exist primarily in one of three.

- 1) Dependence: The group depends on the leader for direction and the members share the assumption that the individual is competent and able to provide effective leadership.
- 2) Conflict: The group experiences conflict that, likely, occurs over incongruent assumptions about its goals, the roles of the members, or whether the leader can meet the unrealistic expectations of the membership.
- 3) Interdependence: The group successfully has resolved its conflicts and members work together interdependently toward their agreed-upon goals.

Normal group development occurs this way, sequentially

through the first two stages and into the third, where the members work together most effectively. However, this process is dynamic, and, at any time, a group may regress to or get stuck in one of the first two stages, which limits its efficacy. A consideration of how this developmental sequence might play out in a neighborhood dealing with crime and disorder can make this concept clearer.

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Choosing the right road, or policing strategy, depends on where the police are heading.

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Stage 1: Dependence

Community members depend on the police to solve problems related to public order, and officers are willing and sometimes able to do so. Most residents view officers as competent and respect them. As long as the police can address most of the problems of community disorder, the neighbors likely will remain satisfied with their services and continue to depend on them. Officers may view the neighborhood as unable or unwilling to care for itself. They may see themselves

as having a mandate to protect the community.⁷ If police cannot meet the neighborhood's expectations, the community moves to the next stage of development.

Stage 2: Conflict

In situations where police cannot address community problems or keep the neighborhood safe, residents become dissatisfied and frustrated—both with authorities and with each other. They still see officers as having the primary responsibility for maintaining order in the neighborhood and keeping them safe, but they consider the police ineffective. Individual residents may decide to act on their own because of a negative view of officers and a recognition that the community has yet to develop the structures, processes, and trusting relationships that would inspire collective action. The dissatisfaction and frustration that exist in the neighborhood may result in complaints against the police. In defending themselves, officers may consider additional programs, such as high-visibility foot or bicycle patrols, to try to appease the residents and regain their confidence. At this point, police may feel vulnerable because they face unrealistic expectations with limited resources.

To move out of stage two and toward stage three,

can solve these problems, neighbors gladly will turn over their responsibilities to them. However, as disorder and crime grow beyond the capacity of officers to deal effectively with them, residents can become dissatisfied with police services, and conflict can develop. A vulnerable neighborhood is comparable to a person who, although not yet sick, has a weak immune system and, therefore, a high susceptibility to illness.

3) Anomic: These communities have a high rate of

crime and disorder and a low level of neighborhood development. Residents typically are both dependent on officers to take care of community safety problems and dissatisfied because of their lack of success. Police respond to excessive numbers of neighborhood complaints far beyond their ability to handle them successfully, resulting in tension and frustration between officers and the community.

4) Responsive: These neighborhoods experience

high levels of crime and disorder, but residents work together with the police to resolve problems.

SITUATIONAL POLICING

The authors opine that policing styles should not follow a department's standard mode of operation but should reflect the conditions of the community. To this end, each neighborhood type can be matched with a preferred policing style.

Supporting and Recognizing: Strong Neighborhoods

Residents of strong neighborhoods may not have concern

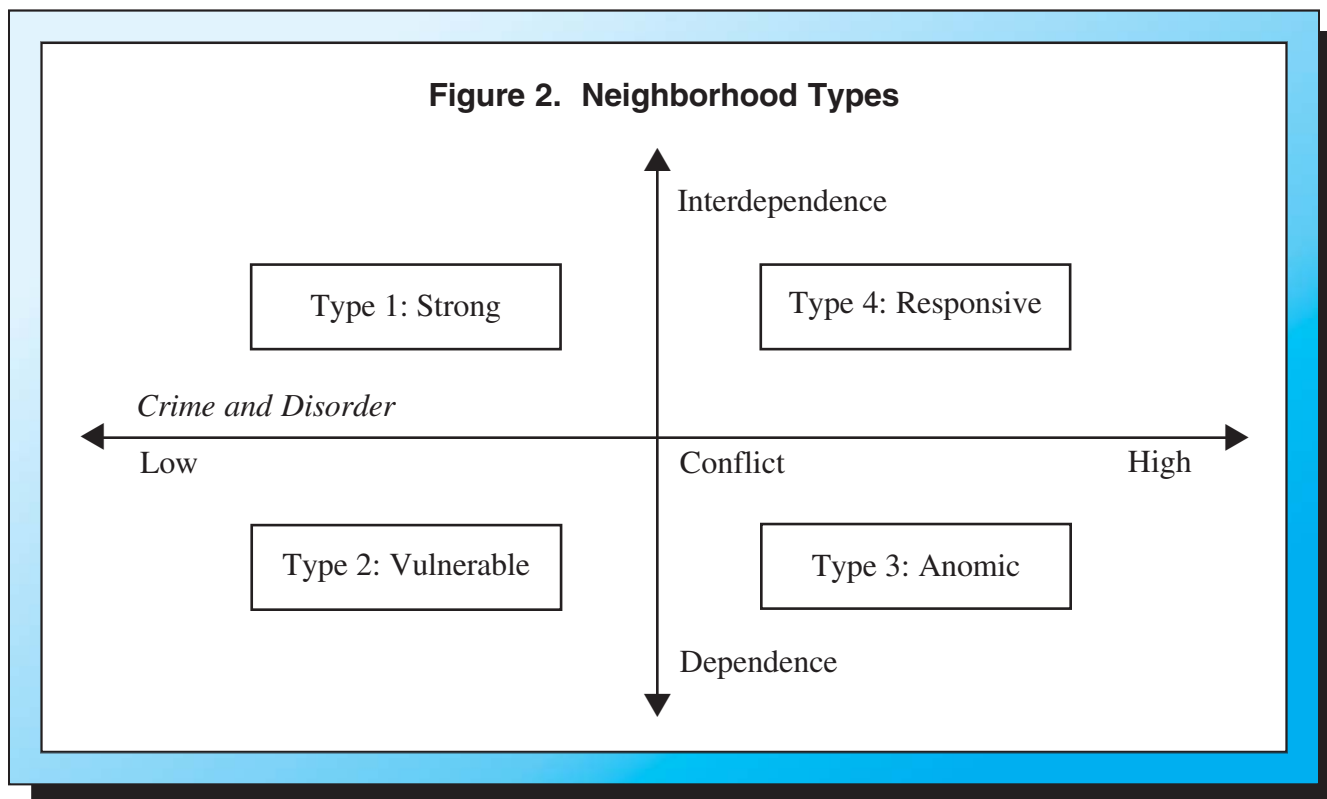
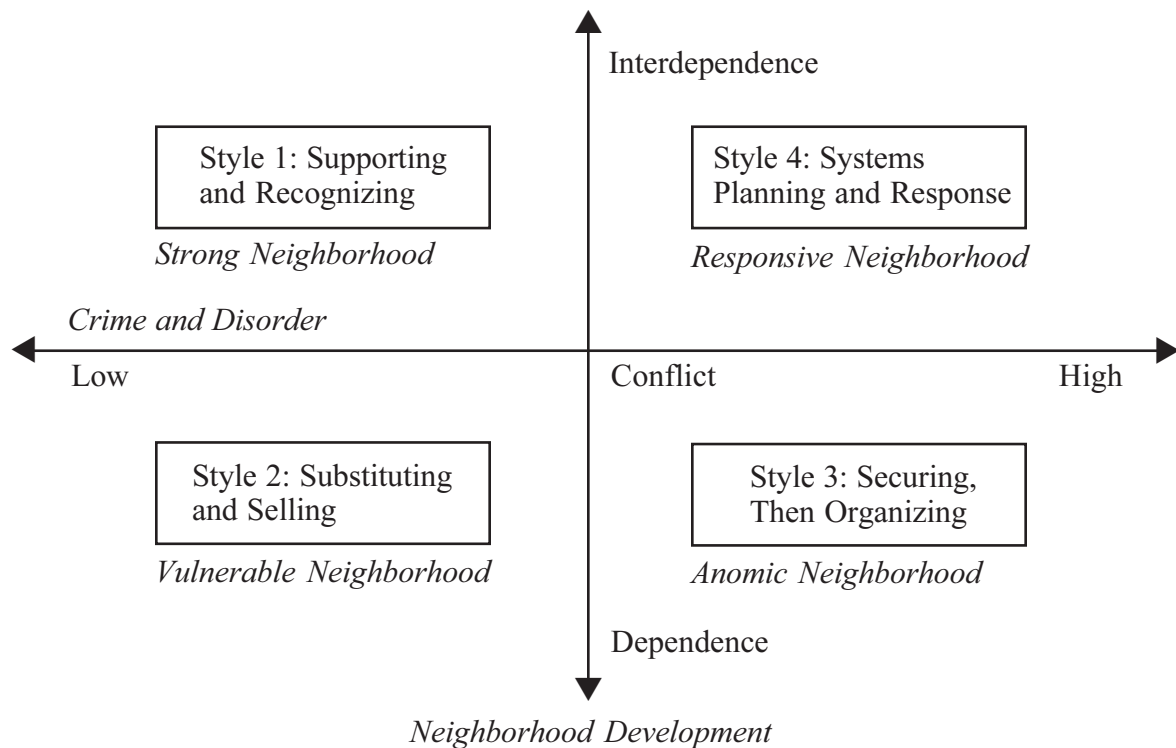


Figure 3. Policing Styles



about crime and disorder because they experience few such problems. Officers assigned to these communities might offer police resources that support and enhance local, community-based efforts (e.g., youth activities). They also may work to expand neighborhood access to resources and decision-making processes and broaden the involvement of residents. The police department might want to recognize community members or groups who have had particular successes. Strong

neighborhoods generally demand and need the least amount of police services.

**Substituting and Selling:
Vulnerable Neighborhoods**

As in strong neighborhoods, crime and disorder do not represent serious problems for residents. This fact makes it difficult to motivate neighbors to organize around these issues. However, residents may have concerns other than crime that they would want to work on together.

For example, several years ago, one of the authors resided in a vulnerable city neighborhood, consisting of 16 square blocks, where about 60 families with young children lived. Most of these households considered child care a huge issue. Recognizing this, the neighborhood organized a babysitting co-op where the families would take turns watching each other's children for points (four per hour). Each month, the points were balanced and each member received a report. This

cooperative arrangement cultivated strong relationships among the residents. Over the years, when crime and disorder began to appear, the neighborhood was well prepared to work with the police interdependently.

To this end, in many vulnerable neighborhoods, the police simply might help to develop a crime watch or other residential crime prevention group that also may become involved with addressing other nonpublic safety problems. Policing vulnerable neighborhoods involves broadening the definition of public safety to include other concerns that normally do not fit into its framework.

Securing, Then Organizing: Anomic Neighborhoods

Because anomic neighborhoods have widespread crime and disorder and disconnected, frustrated, and fearful residents, they depend on the police for help. As they begin work in an anomic neighborhood, officers should help via more traditional means, such as stepped-up law enforcement (e.g., traditional law enforcement practices, such as drug raids and sweeps, undercover operations, and strict enforcement of relatively minor crimes). Once police have demonstrated to residents their commitment to working together with them by temporarily resolving some of their

most significant problems, officers must participate in organizational efforts. Police do not necessarily have to serve as community organizers, but they must make sure that organizational efforts are going on and support them. This is the only way for an anomic neighborhood to become a responsive one.

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Recent studies have shown that collective efficacy is a significant predictor of both crime and disorder.

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Systems Planning and Response: Responsive Neighborhoods

These residents organize and work to regain control of public spaces. However, many of the social problems that give rise to crime and disorder in these neighborhoods lie far beyond their ability to deal effectively with them. Most of these issues also extend outside the expertise and resources of the police department. Other means (e.g., city and state public safety and social services; the public school system; local advocacy groups; urban

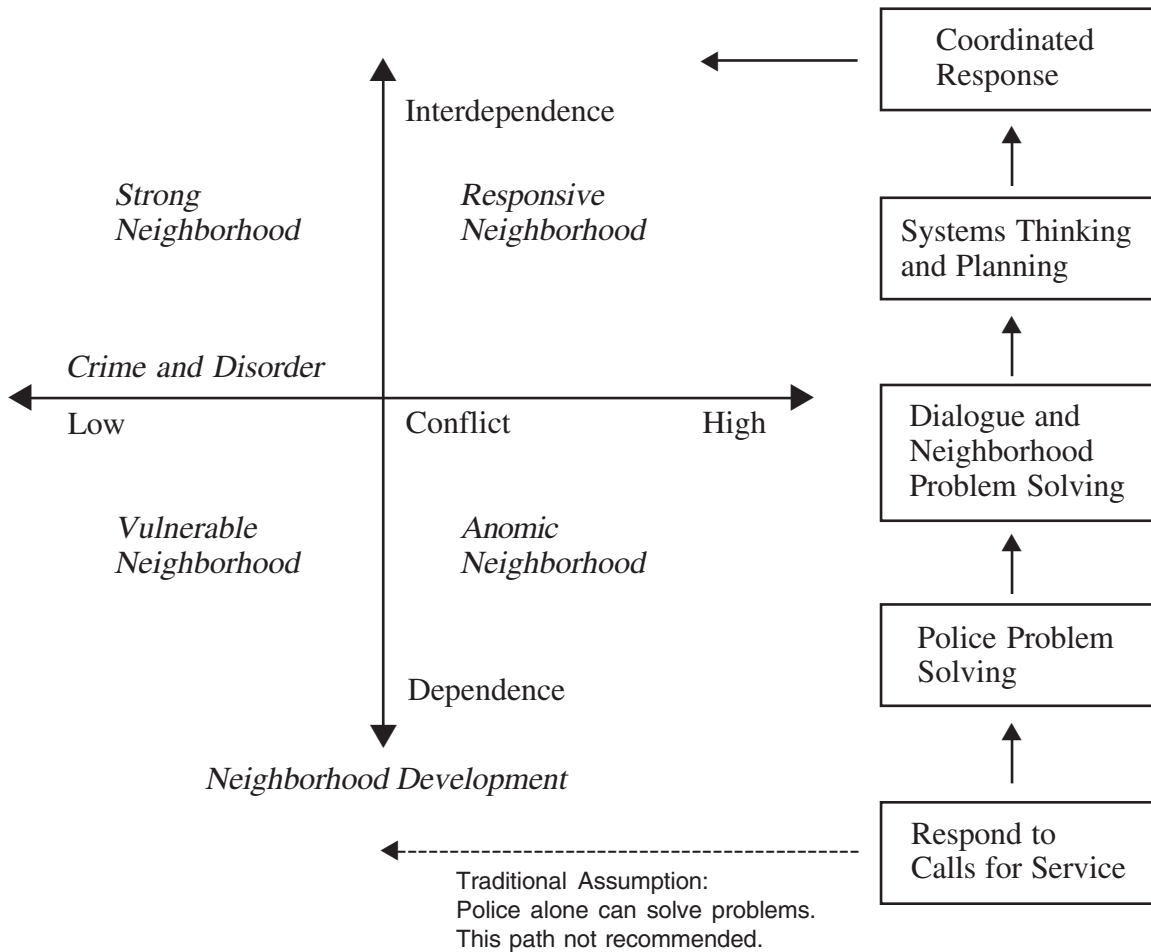
planners, especially those focused on economic development; and other neighborhood-based services) become necessary to deal with the problems in these communities. Change requires a vision and a coordinated response. Police in these neighborhoods can help bring together local residents with other public service agencies. One example of this is the ability of local community policing officers in Chicago to submit priority requests for city services to the appropriate agency.

SITUATIONAL POLICING IN MOTION

The authors contend that effective policing involves not only reducing crime and disorder but facilitating neighborhood development. In other words, police must strive to move the community along two dimensions: toward low levels of crime and disorder and high levels of integration and collective efficacy (interdependence). Therefore, matching the policing style to the neighborhood type represents only the first step in the process. From this point, officers must find the appropriate methods for moving the community in the right direction, toward the desired end goal—a strong neighborhood.

The anomic neighborhood can serve as an example. The

Figure 4. Situational Policing in Motion



right side of figure 4 lists policing strategies that will help move these communities toward the responsive, then to the strong quadrants. If crime is high and the citizens are dependent (stage one), police should use a professional, service-oriented approach as the logical and preferred first step. By

responding to citizen complaints as law enforcers, officers can begin to deal with the neighborhood crime problems and demonstrate to residents that their problems can be impacted. The dotted line at the bottom of figure 4 indicates the direction police usually want to follow based on the utopian

idea that, given increased resources or more efficient responses to calls for service, they could reduce crime without collective effort. This assumption has proven fictional over the years because departments do not have the resources needed to eliminate crime and disorder through more or better

services. Even if some circumstances allowed this possibility, it would serve only to keep the neighborhood psychologically dependent (stage one).

After an initial stage of stepped-up law enforcement, a second wave of activity might include problem solving.⁸ Problem-oriented policing has proven effective over the years in identifying and eliminating the underlying causes of many of the calls for service. At first, the police might do problem solving on their own, without the participation of residents. But, at some point fairly early in the process, officers must establish dialogue with residents to include them as problem-solving partners. As relationships build and communication develops and deepens, police and citizens must reach a shared realization that officers alone cannot fix neighborhood problems and keep residents safe. With this common understanding, activities may begin to take place that move the neighborhood toward the responsive quadrant, where residents are ready to organize for systems thinking and planning around crime, disorder, and related issues. Recent years have brought a number of successful methods for this level of planning and coordinated action.⁹ These means could easily be adapted to neighborhood-level efforts aimed at restoring order.

Through comprehensive, system-level planning and action, the goals of reducing crime and disorder while forming interdependent neighborhood relationships can be accomplished.

CONCLUSION

Although neighborhood disorder has been associated with crime, researchers have challenged its causal relationship. For the past 20 years or more, policing practices have been based on the belief that neighborhood disorder causes serious crime. Consequently, a number of contemporary policing strategies, such as zero-tolerance campaigns to rid neighborhoods of visible signs of disorder, have been developed and implemented. However, in recent years, the rationale behind order-maintenance policing has come into question. Recent studies have shown that collective efficacy is a significant predictor of both crime and disorder.

By applying knowledge of group and social processes to local neighborhoods, the authors argue that police efficiency in solving problems of community disorder may unintentionally and unwittingly contribute to the maintenance of low measures of collective efficacy at the neighborhood level. However, officers can play a significant role in promoting collective efficacy.

The police should view the Situational Policing Model as a guide. It bridges the philosophical gap between traditional law enforcement and community policing by identifying situations where each style is appropriate. Most important, it provides a desired end state at which police departments can aim and against which competing strategies can be evaluated. ♦

Endnotes

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Use of Force and High-Intensity Tactical Police Flashlights Policy Concerns

By R. Paul McCauley, Ph.D.

During a recent police shooting incident, an officer parked his cruiser facing the direction of oncoming traffic in a narrow alley and activated the red, white, and blue roof lights; high beams; and takedown lights. He then exited the vehicle, drew his weapon, and positioned himself in the darkness behind the car. The suspect ran toward the bright lights, passed them, and entered the unlit area. Upon recognizing that a policeman—or someone—waited in his path, the individual extended his arms forward. The officer fired.

Law enforcement agencies routinely have used patrol car lights to create a wall of illumination for officers to maneuver behind; opinions exist that departments can similarly employ high-intensity tactical police flashlights (HITPFs).¹ Some experts consider them powerful new tools that give officers a nonlethal force option, one that can control potentially violent suspects by, for example, diminishing their vision, affecting their depth perception, intimidating them, and putting them at a mental disadvantage.² Further, they think that because of sensory overload, some individuals may become less prone to violence during an incident.³

Officer use of handheld and gun-mounted HITPFs presents serious considerations for departments. As with all police equipment, policy guidance proves critical—particularly as related to use of force.

Uses by Officers

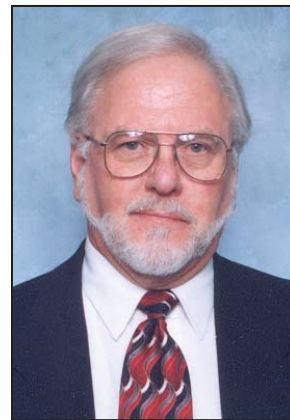
Blinding illumination—whether experienced from a flashbulb or a tactical police light—bleaches out the retina. The length of time that

vision becomes impaired partly depends on the intensity and duration of the exposure. The health of the retina represents another variable; while this may relate to age,⁴ no scientific evidence exists that supports the theory taught by some trainers—that for every 10 years individuals age, they need four times the light to see what they used to easily.

Of course, suspects simply may close or avert their eyes and continue to walk, run, swing their arms, lunge with an edged weapon, or fire a gun. While the light, at least, obscures subjects' abilities to visually target, it seemingly does not apply any physical force or pain to gain control or compliance from these individuals.

Agency policy makers must decide for their departments if light is controlling or painful to determine where HITPFs fall in the use-of-force continuum. And, they must formulate or adjust use-of-force policy and training accordingly.

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Deadly force refers to any means reasonably likely to cause death; nondeadly force entails any other method, including physical efforts used to control, restrain, or overcome the resistance of an individual.⁵ In this regard, the Confrontational Force Continuum⁶ represents an example of a model employed to train police officers in the appropriate application of force. It consists of seven levels.

1) Officer presence: Police assume control of the suspect through their announced or uniformed presence.

2) Verbal command: Presence has failed; officers now begin verbal persuasion and, if needed, issue commands or warnings.

3) Open hand: Where practical, police place their hands on suspects and advise them that they are under arrest. Officers counter any resistance beyond this point. Often, wrestling, grabbing, or pushing occurs.

4) Pain compliance: Police employ pressure-point control or pepper spray (which they sometimes may deem appropriate at level 3). This greater force could be justified when the officer encounters weapons, a larger suspect, multiple individuals, combative behavior, or persons under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

5) Mechanical compliance: These methods usually involve physical tactics that employ counterjoint pressures and leverage, such as wrist locks, arm bars, or other “come along” techniques. Officers may apply them using handcuffs or the police baton.

6) Impact: Police use impact weapons only when mechanical control methods prove

ineffective or inappropriate. When practical, officers should direct blows to the soft-tissue areas, such as the backs of the legs or buttocks, prior to striking a joint or bone.

7) Deadly force: Police resort to this ultimate step only to protect themselves or others from death or serious injury or to apprehend a forcible felon (after exhausting all other reasonable means) who presents an imminent risk to the community if not immediately detained.

Considerations for Departments

The author opines that light is only subjectively painful, that not all people will say it hurts their eyes. Certainly, illumination can disrupt normal behavior and cause varying degrees of discomfort. However, HITPFs do not produce any physical contact or injury. Therefore, the author suggests that HITPF usage merely results in visual effects, thereby relegating it to a use of force applicable only at level 1.

But, at level 1, HITPF use presents a potential problem. That is, cases could arise in which investigators use the light before individuals can identify

them as officers; of course, suspects may respond in a manner that produces a threatening situation. Not only is an HITPF alone insufficient to announce an officer’s presence (anyone can carry a flashlight) but, in fact, the light may create a visual barrier preventing subjects from recognizing police. This blinded person may or may not be armed. Obviously, this situation is not only dangerous but subject to legal scrutiny and possible civil litigation. Departmental policies, procedures, and training must require officers to verbally identify themselves in HITPF-use situations.

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As with all police equipment, policy guidance proves critical—particularly as related to use of force.

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In this regard, the author recently conducted an experiment in which he asked 17 college students to move toward him in a darkened hallway. Each time, the author shined an HITPF into the participant's eyes. Fourteen of the students extended to some degree one or both arms in response to the light beam. In a real-world situation, officers could mistake this response as threatening, justifying an escalation of the level of force—perhaps, even to deadly force, depending on the circumstances. Further, some could argue that the officer's actions created the dangerous situation.

Also, departments must ensure that their officers do not consider an HITPF a reliable force option; it may well not be. The author argues that it serves only as a light source, merely used to illuminate the suspect. Certainly, it does not provide a physical barrier that shields law enforcement professionals from harm. It also does not apply force capable of gaining control of or compliance from suspects; it may not even intimidate them.

Agencies must clarify when and how to use HITPFs and when to employ higher levels of force. For example, if a male suspect in a low-lit area knowingly encounters a police presence and ignores a command to stop, continuing to move toward the officer, should pepper spray become the next level of force used? Of course, factors, such as the distance between the subject and the officer, presence of a weapon, and speed of movement, would help answer that question. But, if police choose to use pepper spray will they face disciplinary action for failing to use the HITPF effectively?

Clearly, they need policy guidance and training. Confusion on the part of officers concerning appropriate uses of force can present danger to themselves, subjects, and innocent bystanders.

Conclusion

High-intensity tactical police flashlights can serve as effective tools for law enforcement officers. However, agencies must provide their personnel with clear policies and training regarding how and when to use light. And, when placed in dangerous situations, officers need to have the knowledge and ability to decide—without hesitation—if higher levels of force are appropriate. The safety of law enforcement personnel and the citizens they serve depends on it. ♦



personnel with clear policies and training regarding how and when to use light. And, when placed in dangerous situations, officers need to have the knowledge and ability to decide—without hesitation—if higher levels of force are appropriate. The safety of law enforcement personnel and the citizens they serve depends on it. ♦

Endnotes

¹ B. Murphy, "Force Option Lights," *Combat Tactics*, January 2003, 1.

² Ibid; and R. Huntington, "Blinded by the Light," *American Rifleman*, April 2003, 151.

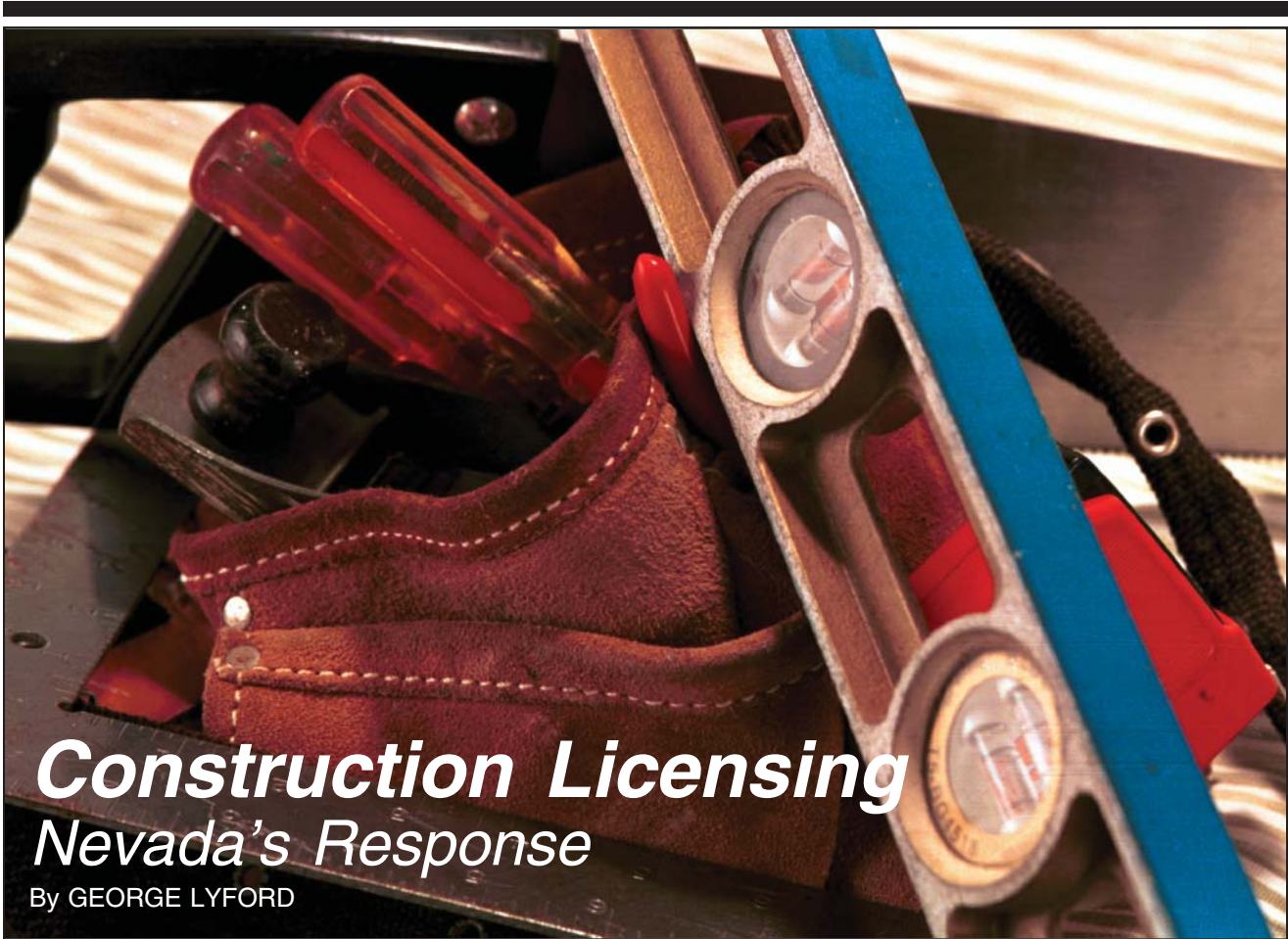
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Construction Licensing Nevada's Response

By GEORGE LYFORD

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The construction industry represents one of the largest employers in the United States. Nationally, approximately 7.1 million people work in the various trades.¹ Most states regulate the industry through contractor licensing laws designed to promote public confidence and trust in the competency and integrity of licensees and to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Although most contractors comply with the applicable laws and perform valuable services, a small minority work as unlicensed

contractors, performing substandard work, providing no warranties, subjecting homeowners to civil liability, and ignoring state and municipal licensing requirements. Many unlicensed contractors cannot meet the various licensing specifications, which entail passing a trade test, providing dependable references, and establishing sufficient financial responsibility to engage in the construction business. Other such unlicensed contractors may be employees of licensed contractors working side jobs and unable to guarantee their work when problems

develop. In these circumstances, the contracts often are verbal with little or no paper trail, and payments are made in cash. The unlicensed contractor's paperwork usually displays a cell phone number and a mail drop for an address. Further, homeowners may not know the individual's last name.

The Problem

Contracting without a license is an administrative or criminal violation in states that license contractors. Aside from the various state licensing requirements, many

municipalities also require some form of business registration and impose administrative or criminal penalties for non-compliance.

People who use the services of unlicensed contractors expose themselves to civil liability under their homeowners' policies if contractors or their employees are injured on the job. Moreover, homeowners have little recourse if the work is not performed properly except to sue the unlicensed contractor civilly and hope that they can locate some assets. Several states have enacted legislation that voids a contract if the contractor is not properly licensed, thereby releasing the homeowner from the obligation to pay for faulty services. However, this does not stop the unlicensed contractor from placing an illegal lien on the

customer's property. Many elderly homeowners are not aware that the lien is illegal. In these cases, the unlicensed contractor may pressure them to pay for the unlawful services, thereby continuing the fraud.

The Law Enforcement Aspect

Many law enforcement agencies have officers who investigate fraud or the theft of construction equipment. However, they do not enforce licensing requirements for contractors. Officers typically are not aware of the various licensing tools available to them. Patrol officers often encounter contractors either through the investigation of complaints or traffic stops. Such opportunities can produce significant results and provide valuable information for homeowners.

Law enforcement officers and prosecutors mistakenly may believe that when a contractor, either licensed or not, enters a contract and, subsequently, fails to perform the requested services in a workmanship-like manner, the matter is handled civilly. Further, they incorrectly may assume that these cases are more appropriately referred to the civil court system for resolution. The state regulatory agency usually has the ability to enforce the provisions of the contract and ensure the work is performed properly. Homeowners who use unlicensed contractors' services are precluded from seeking monetary recovery from the various residential recovery funds established in many states, and they have little recourse through the civil court system of collecting any judgments they may receive.

Departments should ensure that their officers know that contracting requires a license. Failing to obtain the proper license or advertising (without a license) as a contractor may be crimes in some states. As a result, what initially appears to be a civil or administrative matter also may constitute a criminal issue. The prosecution of unlicensed contractors through the criminal court system may result in restitution ordered by the court, giving consumers a viable avenue to follow.



Mr. Lyford, a retired FBI agent, serves as the director of investigations for the Nevada State Contractors Board in Henderson.

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Contracting without a license is an administrative or criminal violation in states that license contractors.

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Nevada Contractor Licensing Requirements Pocket Information Card

NEVADA STATE CONTRACTORS BOARD
Southern Nevada 2310 Corporate Circle, Ste. 200 Henderson, NV 89074
Northern Nevada 9670 Gateway Drive, Ste. 100 Reno, NV 89521

Unlicensed Contractor Hotline
Las Vegas Reno
702-486-1160 (ph.) 775-850-7838 (ph.)
702-486-1166 (fax) 775-850-7854 (fax)

24-Hour License Verification
702-486-1100 or 775-688-1141 (Information Line)
www.nscb.state.nv.us

UNLICENSED CONTRACTING

NRS 624.700 – It is unlawful for any person or combination of persons to engage in the business or act in the capacity of a contractor within this state or submit a bid on a job situated within this state without having an active license.

NRS 624.720 – It is unlawful for any person to advertise as a contractor unless he has a license in the appropriate classification.

"Advertising" includes but is not limited to any sign, card, device, marking on a motor vehicle, newspaper, magazine, airway transmission, Internet or telephone directory.

First Offense – Misdemeanor
Second Offense – Gross Misdemeanor
Third Offense – Class E Felony

Nevada's Response

Most state regulatory agencies actively pursue unlicensed contractors. In Nevada, the first offense is a misdemeanor, the second a gross misdemeanor, and the third a felony. Nevada also enacted unique legislation that empowers the state contractors board to conduct background investigations, obtain the fingerprints of applicants and licensees, require contractors to pass law and trade tests prior to licensing, and ensure that contractors establish their financial responsibility. The Special Investigations Unit of the Nevada State Contractors Board was established to aggressively pursue unlicensed contractors and uses proactive patrols of commercial and residential construction sites to identify them. This legislation includes specific statutes to give on-scene criminal citations, issue cease-and-desist orders, disconnect the telephone

numbers of unlicensed contractors, regulate the advertising of contractors, and make the diversion of funds from a construction project a felony if the amount exceeds \$1,000.

Additionally, Nevada implemented a law enforcement awareness program that provides the contractor licensing requirements, in approximately 15 minutes, to local law enforcement agencies during briefings. As a result, officers receive the basic information and tools they need to better serve the public during the normal course of their duties.

Officers aware of the local licensing requirements may take appropriate action when they observe a vehicle carrying construction equipment and displaying a company name without a license number. In Nevada, exhibiting a company name is considered advertising, and officers can charge unlicensed contractors with a

misdemeanor if they do not have a valid contractor's license number displayed. Officer observations, coupled with their background, training, experience, and knowledge of construction licensing laws, may provide sufficient cause to stop the vehicle and inquire further.

Law enforcement officers know that stopping a vehicle for a minor violation can result in a significant arrest or seizure. Having knowledge of local contractor licensing requirements provides patrol officers with another tool to assist in the performance of their duties. They should take a proactive approach and ask for licensing identification. Consequently, Nevada developed a pocket card (modeled after Miranda cards) for law enforcement officers that provides them with basic information identifying the specific statutes and elements of licensing violations. Thus, they can make a probable cause

arrest if appropriate. The card also includes telephone numbers officers can use to verify a license and report unlicensed contracting activity. Officer inquiries of unlicensed contractors routinely identify fugitives, unregistered sex offenders, convicted felons, people using false identities, illegal aliens, the recovery of stolen construction equipment, and various schemes to defraud.

Conclusion

Laws regulating licensed contractors protect the public.² In many states, contracting without a license may be an administrative or criminal

violation. Although law enforcement officers may investigate construction-related crimes, they often are unaware of licensing requirements and the tools available to enforce state contracting laws.

In Nevada, the State Contractors Board responded to this dilemma by establishing a unit that pursues unlicensed contractors by using proactive patrols. Further, Nevada law enforcement agencies provide officers with training on basic licensing requirements, identifying what officers should look for when they conduct patrols, issue traffic citations, and respond to various complaints. Having a

basic knowledge of local contractor licensing requirements provides law enforcement officers with another tool to protect and serve their communities. ♦

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2003.

² Nevada State Contractors Board, <http://www.nscb.state.nv.us>.

Agencies can visit the Nevada State Contractors Board Web site at <http://www.nscb.state.nv.us> or the National Construction Investigators Association Web site at <http://www.nciassociation.org> to identify individual state contractor licensing agencies.

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Focus on Strategic Planning

“SWOT” Tactics Basics for Strategic Planning

By Randy Garner, Ph.D.



“We must plan for the future because people who stay in the present will remain in the past.”

—Abraham Lincoln

Often considered a daunting task filled with such complicated procedures and terms that it makes some want to ignore the activity altogether, strategic planning need not be an overly complicated process. Instead, managers can view it as simply considering where their organizations are—or should be—going over the next year or more and how they will get there. As it relates to law enforcement agencies, a strategic plan is the product of a leadership process that helps departments better focus their energies and resources to ensure that all members work toward the same goal.

The entire strategic planning process may take many forms and follow a variety of paths. At some point in the process, however, planners will identify or update the strategic philosophy. This may include a mission, vision, or value statement—or some combination. While each has similarities, some general distinctions exist. Typically, a mission statement is a brief description of the intent of the organization, an expression of the agency’s unique reason for existence usually contained in a formal statement of purpose. A vision statement, which many agencies increasingly use, offers a vivid image of the desired future. It compellingly describes how the department will or should operate at some point in the future and how customers benefit from its services. A value statement often lists the overall priorities of how the organization will operate. It may focus on moral values, such as integrity, honesty, and respect, or operational values, such as efficiency or effectiveness. This also may include an agency’s core values or principles that describe how it should conduct itself in carrying out its mission.

THE PROCESS

Four basic questions comprise the essence of the strategic planning process: 1) Where is the organization now? 2) Where does it want to be? 3) How will it get there? and 4) How does it measure its progress? While a number of terms are associated with this process, departments should focus only on what works for them. Some agencies have separate mission, vision, and value statements; others combine them. Some organizations create strategic goals, strategies, objectives, and tactics; others merely offer an identified goal and the objectives to reach it. Some review and update their current mission or vision statements before doing an analysis of their environments; others examine their mission statements after completing an assessment. More important than any particular order is examining all aspects of the agency and the

environment it operates in while remaining flexible enough to make adjustments as needed.

Regardless of the terms or order used, getting started remains one of the most important parts of the strategic planning process. It is akin to pushing a car: the greatest difficulty lies in getting it rolling; after that, the task becomes easier. Departments should not get lost in the search for the perfect method or approach; it does not exist. Rather, they should start with the basic questions and move forward, not getting sidetracked by “analysis paralysis” wherein they overly obsess about getting everything just right or worrying about “neatness” in the beginning. They should concentrate on just getting the process started.

Generally, agencies should consider three main tasks when working on a strategic plan. The first, strategic analysis, is a review of the organization’s environment, both internal and external. The next, strategic direction, involves what the department must do as a result of the major issues and opportunities that it may face. Finally, action planning deals with explaining how the agency will accomplish its strategic goals. Each component is important in creating the overall plan.

Strategic Analysis: “SWOT” Tactics

Not surprisingly, for an organization to determine where it wants to go in the future, it must assess where it is now. In this part of the strategic planning process, law enforcement administrators can call on the “SWOT” team for help. Simply put, this acronym stands for assessing an agency’s *strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats*, a critical phase in the general planning process as it

helps determine exactly where the agency is and what resources it may or may not have. Strength assessment identifies what the department tends to do well and can include a skilled, professional staff and a modern, well-equipped facility. Weaknesses denote what the agency may not do so well or what diminishes its effectiveness. Inadequate financial resources may fit into this category. Opportunities reflect what the organization might seize upon to do better. This area could include increasing community interactions and taking advantage of particular grants. Finally, threats are environmental factors that may hinder performance. Examples could include a rising demand for service or increased legislative mandates that can impact resources. Managers should consider “SWOT” analysis for issues both external to the agency, such as population growth and increased industrialization, and internal to it, such as an aging workforce that might result in excessive turnover or competing priorities for resources. “SWOT” analysis constitutes one of the most important aspects in the overall strategic planning process.

Strategic Direction: SMARTER Goals

To move from an assessment of where it is to a plan for where it wants to be, a law enforcement agency must articulate particular strategies and identify strategic goals. When considering goals, a department can use the acronym SMARTER to create *specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic, and timely* goals that *extend* the capabilities of those working to achieve them while being *rewarding* for the organization and its members. An organization should make its goals as specific as possible so as not to cover too broad an area or to

“
Simply put, this
acronym stands for
assessing an agency’s
*strengths, weaknesses,
opportunities, and
threats....*
”

require completing a large number of steps or satisfying a vast array of objectives. Usually easier to assess for success, specific goals lend themselves to helping an agency determine if it has accomplished them. Those charged with carrying out the goals must find them acceptable and realistic in scope. “Pie in the sky” ideas or goals that have no reasonable chance of success do not help the organization or the individuals who must work toward a goal’s completion. Some, believing that they are providing challenging direction to an agency, may set such lofty or demanding goals that no one possibly can satisfy them and, thus, predestine the organization to fail—exactly the opposite of the intended effect.

Timely goals identify a specific issue that a department can accomplish in a reasonably appropriate time frame. Additionally, an agency should avoid overly simplistic, easy, or obvious goals. Instead, goals should challenge the organization within its limits and extend the capabilities of those working to achieve them. Careful consideration in goal creation can lead to renewed enthusiasm for the agency and its mission.

Strategic Success: Action Planning

Once a department has assessed the environment (“SWOT” tactics) and arrived at a set of (SMARTER) goals, it must place the strategic plan into action. One of the biggest problems in strategic planning (after giving up on trying to find the “perfect way”) is not following the steps to implement the plan. It does little good to spend the time and energy identifying where the organization is and determining where it wants to be to then let the

whole thing stagnate for a lack of action. In fact, strong leadership at this critical stage often proves key to successfully implementing a strategic plan. An action plan simply sets forth the goals, specifies the set of objectives needed to reach them, and identifies the responsible entity for accomplishing each one and in what time frame. This process ensures that the hard work of developing the strategic plan will become more than an exercise of enumerating “dreams.” The difference between a wish and a goal is the initiation of an action plan that specifically outlines the responsibilities for success.

The Essence of the Strategic Planning Process

- Where is the organization now?
- Where does it want to be?
- How will it get there?
- How does it measure its progress?

CONCLUSION

The purpose of strategic planning is to help a law enforcement agency better recognize where it is, where it wants to go, and how it can best get there. Although different departments use varying terms, they should focus on the creation of a thoughtful plan to achieve growth and success. This need not

be an overly difficult task. As the saying goes, “if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” This proves particularly true in organizations that may face numerous challenges and competing priorities. The law enforcement profession cannot afford to practice “pinball leadership,” getting bounced around by every unexpected event. Instead, leaders must plan proactively to create a future that encompasses the vision they desire and the plan required to achieve its success. ♦

Dr. Garner, a former police chief and executive director of the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas and the Texas Regional Community Policing Institute, currently is the associate dean of the College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas.

Book Review

Spores, Plagues, and History: The Story of Anthrax by Chris Holmes, M.D., Durban House Publishing, Dallas, Texas, 2003.

Spores, Plagues, and History: The Story of Anthrax provides a well-researched, historical perspective on the origin and use not only of anthrax (*Bacillus anthracis*) but other biological pathogens that have afflicted humans and animals over the centuries, both as an act of nature and as a deliberate act of man. Dr. Holmes presents interesting new theories on the causation of devastating plagues throughout history and the deaths of prominent historical figures that may be attributable to anthrax. He also documents the lives and work of both ancient and modern-day doctors and scientists—some obscure, others well known—whose efforts have led to the discovery, development, prevention, and even weaponization of these pathogens.

Dr. Holmes begins by examining the October 2, 2001, “Index Case” of a Florida man infected with inhalation anthrax at his place of work. He then follows with the exposures and infections resulting from letters mailed to Senators Daschle and Leahy, Tom Brokaw, and other media corporate offices. He describes the ensuing panic and alterations of daily routine caused by thousands of hoax anthrax letters received throughout the nation during the months of October and early November 2001 and the FBI’s ongoing investigation. Then, the attacks stopped. Why?

To fully understand its effects on the body and use as a biological weapon, Dr. Holmes dedicates one chapter, aptly titled “The View from the Petri Dish,” to explain the anthrax development process, from animal disease to human disease, along with diagnosis,

treatment, and prevention. From the present-day medical, veterinary, and scientific knowledge of anthrax and other pathogens and with a forensic epidemiologist’s eye, Dr. Holmes looks back to the time of Moses then moves forward through recorded history to provide new possible theories to long-ago plagues and mysterious deaths.

Dr. Holmes uses his unique novelist skills to create a narrative and dialogue in “The Plague of Athens, 430 B.C.” via a fictional Macedonian physician who discusses the real plague of Athens with fellow citizens, religious leaders, and a general and head of the Athenian state. This introduces the teachings of the cult of Aesclepius and of Hippocrates, the “Father of Medicine,” whose Hippocratic Oath every medical school graduate repeats to this day.

He discusses developing technologies of the industrial revolution that caused new outbreaks of anthrax and other occupational diseases, creating the need for a true public health care system. He documents the work of many notable scientists, such as John Henry Bell, Robert Koch, and Louis Pasteur, whose research (sometimes scientific, sometimes fortuitous), findings, and experiments have created worker health standards, manufacturing processes, laboratory procedures, and life-saving vaccines still in use today.

Finally, coming full circle, Dr. Holmes presents the use of anthrax and other pathogens as biological weapons, starting with the Assyrians poisoning their enemies’ wells in the ninth century B.C., the medieval practice of catapulting infected human and animal bodies over walled cities under siege, and the Japanese biological experiments on both humans

and animals during World War II. These experiments and ensuing research data captured by both the United States and the Soviet Union lead Dr. Holmes to his detailed discussion of the bioweapons of today.

Dr. Holmes completes this history of biological pathogens and their devastating results with a simple yet ongoing question that titles his final chapter, "Are We Prepared for the Next One?" He looks at personal, community, and national preparedness, not to scare but to educate and understand. Only by proper understanding of the biologic, both its capabilities and weaknesses, can an appropriate public

health response be mounted and mass prophylaxis be considered.

This book provides historic and scientific perspectives of anthrax and its likewise devastating sister pathogens. It could benefit all professionals in the law enforcement, hazardous materials, scientific, forensic, veterinary, and medical communities.

Reviewed by
John A. Sylvester
Retired FBI special agent
President of Executive Response Solutions
San Diego, California

Wanted: Book Reviews

The *Bulletin* invites criminal justice professionals to submit reviews of recently published nonfiction books they have read on topics relative to their field of expertise for possible inclusion in its Book Review department. The magazine publishes only positive reviews of between 350 and 500 words or 1 ½ to 2 pages double-spaced. As with article submissions, the *Bulletin* staff will edit book reviews for style, length, clarity, and format.

Book reviewers should include two or three compelling points that the author makes, along with the complete title of the work; the names of the authors or editors; and the publishing company, city and state, and publication date. As a guide, the staff suggests that reviewers examine book reviews in past issues of the *Bulletin* to acquaint themselves with the magazine's requirements. Reviewers should submit their book reviews typed and double-spaced on 8 ½- by 11-inch white paper with all pages numbered. When possible, an electronic version of the review saved on computer disk should accompany the document. Send book reviews to:

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FBI Academy
Madison Building, Room 201
Quantico, VA 22135
telephone: 703-632-1952
e-mail: leb@fbiacademy.edu

“The List” **A Warrant Service Strategy**

By James D. Fox and Michael S. New



Located in southeastern Virginia, the Newport News Police Department serves a population of over 180,000 in a jurisdiction covering nearly 70 square miles. With a force of just over 400 full-time law enforcement officers, the department found itself plagued with thousands of outstanding warrants. To help remedy this, it decided to publish “The List,” as citizens referred to it, in the local newspaper. The alphabetical, two-page announcement containing the name of every person who had an outstanding warrant in the city of Newport News ran only for 1 day, but the results proved long lasting.

The Problem

As of November 29, 2004, the department had over 4,000 outstanding warrants on file, comprised of 2,692 misdemeanors and 1,395 felonies. Many

of the fugitives were wanted for violent crimes, including the use of weapons upon their victims. The department’s small Fugitive Apprehension Unit could not reduce the number of warrants with its normal service process partly because almost half of the fugitives lived beyond the city limits. The unit often sent letters to nonviolent fugitives living outside the area advising them to come to the station to have the warrant served on them. For violent offenders, the unit relied on the jurisdiction in which the fugitive lived to attempt to serve the warrant. These other agencies, however, also had backlogs of unserved warrants. With older warrants not being served and approximately 1,800 new ones coming in each month, the department needed a solution that would reduce the surplus.

The Idea

Appointed on August 1, 2004, the chief has a mantra of “fighting crime is our number one priority” that drives every operational decision in the department. His statements and actions have amply demonstrated that the department will work with the citizens of Newport News to reduce crime and make the city a safe place to work, live, and spend leisure time. He has tasked each division to think “outside the box” and develop new, proactive strategies to deal with crime. Every action should reinforce the crime-fighting effort that he has embraced.

The Plan

The decision to publish “The List” required an in-depth operational plan. The commander of the Fugitive Apprehension Unit prepared the details to handle the project, dubbed Operation Clean Sweep. With emphasis on ridding the city of fugitives, drugs, and guns, the department knew that once the newspaper published the announcement, it had to have a system approach for responding to the telephone calls.

Operation Clean Sweep involved members of many units in the department, as well as personnel

from the sheriff's department. In addition, the FBI learned of the venture and committed nine agents from its Norfolk office. Each unit had a function that would contribute to the project's success. Overall, the department assembled a staff committed to the operation that began on December 6 at 3 a.m. and lasted until 11:30 p.m. the following night.

The Public Information Office worked out the details of the publication of the names with the newspaper, including the cost. Ultimately, the U.S. Attorney's Office agreed to pay for the two-page notice because the operation included the removal of guns and drugs from the community, a tie-in with the Project Safe Neighborhoods program.¹

The Action

On the morning of December 6, the announcement containing 3,947 names appeared in the newspaper. It gave the telephone number of the Fugitive Apprehension Unit with instructions for citizens to call the number if they knew the whereabouts of someone named.

The Operation Clean Sweep plan consisted of an office team of dispatchers, staff assistants, volunteers, and detectives. The civilian personnel and volunteers fielded calls from citizens and persons who had outstanding warrants. They directed those individuals whose names appeared where to turn in themselves to have the warrant served. They also completed lead sheets on tips received from citizens who called with information on the location of fugitives. Detectives immediately received the lead sheets to determine if an active warrant existed. If one did, they contacted the appropriate operation street team for an attempted service of the warrant.

The Planning Division had provided an alphabetized list of warrants divided into precincts. Each had two or three street teams assigned to attempt service of these warrants when not acting on leads received from citizens. If they made an arrest that required transportation for booking, a team comprised of a sheriff's deputy and a police officer took the prisoner to the jail. The sheriff's department handled the entire booking and magistrate's process, rather than requiring one of the street team members to become involved.

As soon as the newspaper arrived at residences and businesses on the morning of December 6, leads began to come in to the published telephone number. "The List" became commonplace, hanging on office walls throughout the community. The newspaper sold all of its copies that day. The department received an offer from a local car dealership to pay for future announcements due to the increased volume of sales of the newspaper. Representatives from the local news stations and the national media accompanied the street teams and generated positive stories about the operation.

The Results

Operation Clean Sweep ended on December 7, 2004, after the department received 381 calls from citizens throughout the region. Officers attempted to serve 294 warrants and arrested 127 of these individuals on 135

charges. One week after the operation, 207 arrests had been made with more occurring in the following months. An incredible number of individuals surrendered with many doing so because of pressure from family members after reading their names in the newspaper. The notice also caused fugitives from outside the city limits to submit to arrest.



FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin Author Guidelines

While the primary objective of the operation was to reduce the number of active warrants, the department had other successes from it as well. It offered a dramatic statement to the citizens that the department had directed its focus on fighting crime. Arresting fugitives undoubtedly reduced the potential for them to commit more crimes, and the operation sent a strong message to individuals contemplating criminal activity in the city. Needless to say, the citizens in the community were extremely pleased that the department removed the fugitives from their midst.

Conclusion

The Newport News, Virginia, Police Department faced a challenge that many other law enforcement agencies have encountered: a large number of outstanding warrants. With limited resources, the department decided to attack the problem using an innovative approach. It published the names of the people who had outstanding warrants in the city in its local newspaper.

The members of the department once again had applied the problem-solving concept of using a creative response to a traditional law enforcement problem. A total of 141 people participated over the 48 hours of the operation, and city residents felt the impact of their efforts. ♦

Endnote

¹ For additional information, access <http://www.projectsafeneighborhoods.gov>.

Chief Fox heads the Newport News, Virginia, Police Department.

Lieutenant New commands the Fugitive Apprehension Unit of the Newport News, Virginia, Police Department.

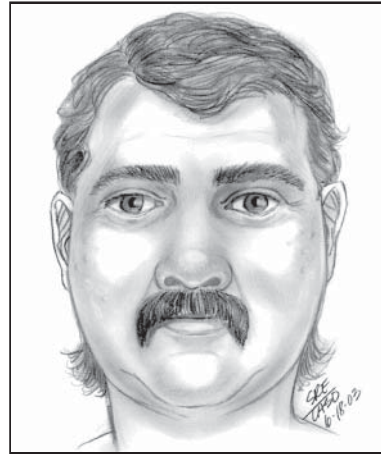
Length: Manuscripts should contain 2,000 to 3,500 words (8 to 14 pages, double-spaced) for feature articles and 1,200 to 2,000 words (5 to 8 pages, double-spaced) for specialized departments, such as Police Practice.

Format: Authors should submit three copies of their articles typed and double-spaced on 8 ½- by 11-inch white paper with all pages numbered, along with an electronic version saved on computer disk, or e-mail them.

Criteria: The *Bulletin* judges articles on relevance to the audience, factual accuracy, analysis of the information, structure and logical flow, style and ease of reading, and length. It generally does not publish articles on similar topics within a 12-month period or accept those previously published or currently under consideration by other magazines. Because it is a government publication, the *Bulletin* cannot accept articles that advertise a product or service. To ensure that their writing style meets the *Bulletin's* requirements, authors should study several issues of the magazine and contact the staff or access <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/leb/leb.htm> for the expanded author guidelines, which contain additional specifications, detailed examples, and effective writing techniques. The *Bulletin* will advise authors of acceptance or rejection but cannot guarantee a publication date for accepted articles, which the staff edits for length, clarity, format, and style.

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*Unidentified
Homicide Victim*



Drawing of Suspect

On May 25, 2003, a hiker walking his dog near the Shady Rest campground in the Mammoth Lakes National Forest in California discovered a shallow grave with human remains scattered around the area. In addition to the skeleton, the following clothing items were found: women's pants, size 1-2; a bra, size 32A; Bass shoes, size 5M; a small top; a Cold Air Design coat; and a Jacqueline Smith watch, still running. Investigators estimate that the victim had been dead for 6 to 9 months and had spent the winter under the snow. The victim has been entered into NCIC and the ViCAP National Database. DNA analysis showed that the victim was 100 percent Native American whose life history may be that she was born and raised through childhood in the American Southwest or in northern Mexico. She subsisted on a very poor diet, including a great deal of corn. Sometime later, she moved south to southern Mexico, possibly Oaxaca, where she spent about 10 years of her life. Finally, during the last 2 years of her life, she traveled to California where she was killed. The victim is described as a Zapotec Indian from Mexico, 30 to 40 years old, 80 to 90 pounds, 4 feet 6 inches to 4 feet 8 inches tall, with longer than

shoulder-length black hair. (The photograph is a skull reconstruction of the victim.)

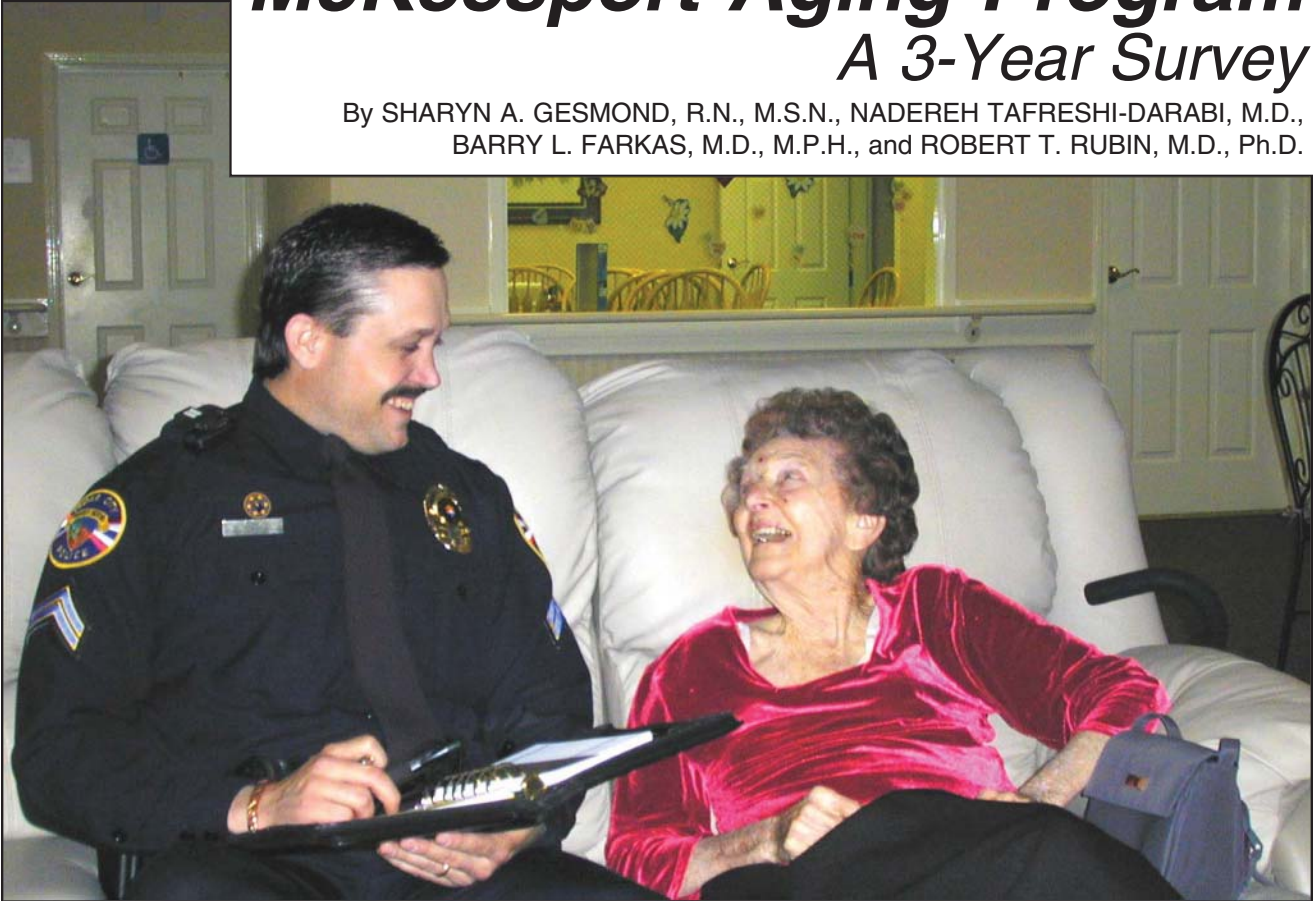
A few days after the skeleton was found, a witness was located who remembered an incident that occurred in the fall of 2002 when a short female with Asian characteristics came into the Mammoth Lakes Visitor Center with her husband. The woman told an employee that her husband treated her bad, and she was fearful of him. The husband asked about campsite rules and stay limits. The employee described the woman's husband as "abrasive" and "mean-spirited." He was a white male, heavysset, 5 feet 9 inches tall, 175 to 200 pounds, with brown hair.

Alert to Law Enforcement

Law enforcement agencies should bring this information to the attention of all crime analysis units, officers investigating crimes against persons, and missing person units. Any agency with information on the identity of the homicide victim or suspect in this case should contact either Detective Sergeant Paul Dostie of the Mammoth Lakes Police Department at 760-934-2011 or Crime Analyst Ken Whitla of the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP) Unit at 800-634-4097. ♦

McKeesport Aging Program A 3-Year Survey

By SHARYN A. GESMOND, R.N., M.S.N., NADEREH TAFRESHI-DARABI, M.D.,
BARRY L. FARKAS, M.D., M.P.H., and ROBERT T. RUBIN, M.D., Ph.D.



The elderly population in the United States is expected to expand by about 50 percent over the next two decades.¹ It, therefore, becomes increasingly important to identify areas of risk that can impact the safety, independence, and overall well-being of senior citizens. Promoting safety interventions based on identified areas of risk can enhance their quality of life and reduce their healthcare expenditures.

The growing number of older adults concerns public safety officials. A common

perception depicts them as more frequent victims of crime—particularly, more serious, violent crime—than other segments of the population. Perhaps, this results from media and public attention given to elderly victims of violence² and because of the mental and physical changes with aging that can compromise older people's abilities to anticipate, avoid, and escape crime.³ Social isolation and depression also can contribute to their vulnerability.⁴

Senior citizens, however, experience crime, especially violent crime, at a lower rate

than younger persons.⁵ Property crime constitutes the highest percentage of illegal activity against older people.⁶ Victims age 65 and older report some types of crime, such as personal theft and personal violence, more often than younger individuals,⁷ likely due to the greater negative impact these crimes have on their lives.

BACKGROUND

Most research on police issues with elderly individuals has focused on their fear of crime, decisions to report such occurrences, and perceptions of

service, rather than on the frequency and nature of their contacts with police.⁸ An exception, a study in one of four National Institute on Aging sites for Established Populations for Epidemiologic Studies in the Elderly (EPESE),⁹ used information from public health, medical, criminological, and law enforcement personnel to analyze the prevalence and types of police interactions with older adults. In a random sample of 200 senior citizens from the New Haven, Connecticut, EPESE cohort of 2,182 elderly individuals, researchers found that 47 (24 percent) had 86 police encounters over a 7-year period (1985 to 1991). Forty-three percent of the contacts involved an older adult as a crime victim. Burglary, the most prevalent, represented 16 percent of all contacts. The next highest concerned mental health issues with 10 percent, followed by larceny with 9 percent. Subject characteristics most associated with victims included being male and non-Caucasian.

An 8-year follow-up of 1,800 senior citizens in the New Haven EPESE cohort yielded similar results: 523 (29 percent) had 1,056 police encounters.¹⁰ Elderly people were victims in 61 percent of the incidents, complainants in 16 percent, perpetrators in 7 percent, and witnesses in 4 percent. The most prevalent crimes were larceny (17 percent), burglary

(16 percent), auto theft (13 percent), vandalism (8 percent), and robbery (6 percent). Subject characteristics associated with victimization again included being male and non-Caucasian, as well as high functioning (no impairments in activities of daily living). The study concluded that older adults have substantial police contacts, primarily as crime victims, and that disparate crime and health data sets can be linked to inform the relationship between senior citizens' victimization status and their quality of life.¹¹

“

Senior citizens, however, experience crime, especially violent crime, at a lower rate than younger persons.

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Persons age 65 and older have three times the risk of fire-related deaths and a higher rate of nonfatal fire-related injuries than younger adults.¹² The higher fire-related death and injury rates in elderly people likely are due to their reduced mental capacity to detect a fire or their compromised physical abilities to escape one.¹³

Senior citizens living independently or in older homes

with faulty wiring also face a greater risk of fire-related injury and death.¹⁴ Defective heating equipment, space heaters, and electric blankets cause more injuries and deaths among elderly individuals than in the rest of the population.¹⁵ Unsafe use of smoking materials constitutes the leading cause of fire deaths among older adults,¹⁶ and cooking accidents represent the main reason for fire-related injuries in this age group.¹⁷

Although many public safety agencies have special programs for senior citizens,¹⁸ few communitywide studies on this segment of the population and its contact with these organizations exist. The authors, therefore, designed the McKeesport Aging Program (MAP) to gain such information about older adults' safety inside and outside their homes by examining contacts with fire and police agencies in McKeesport, Pennsylvania. Authorities in the community and surrounding areas have used the findings to direct and promote home safety, community education, and other programs for elderly residents.

METHODS

MAP, a multifaceted program, investigates and provides support for senior citizens living independently in McKeesport and surrounding communities. The authors conducted a 3-year (1995 to 1997) retrospective

Home Safety Incidents

Police Department Incidents (total = 731)		%
Burglary (no contact with victim/mail tampering)	32	
Vandalism	27	
Auto related (theft/damage)	20	
Robbery (theft with force/violence)	9	
Suspicious activity	4	
Financial exploitation (forgery/fraud)	4	
Imposters (scams/cons)	2	
Assistance with fires	2	
Fire Department Incidents (total = 40)		%
Smoke related (food on stove, smoking near alarm)	68	
Utility problems (gas leak)	15	
Person stuck in elevator or in house	12	
Suspicious noise	2.5	
Person locked out of apartment	2.5	

survey of police and fire department records to identify types of contacts involving elderly individuals (those at least 60 years of age). They chose McKeesport because of its demographics—a small, stable city 15 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. Of McKeesport's 24,000 residents, nearly 6,000 (25 percent) are age 60 and over, representing a high percentage of older adults compared with the state at 20 percent and the nation at 16 percent. McKeesport also has a racially mixed population of 72 percent Caucasian, 24 percent African-American, and 4 percent other.¹⁹ Not a wealthy area,

male residents 65 years of age and older have a median annual income of nearly \$19,000 and females of the same age group approximately \$12,000.²⁰

The authors carefully reviewed all police and fire department records that involved an individual at least 60 years of age or that referenced such a person. The institutional review boards of Allegheny General Hospital and the University of Pittsburgh approved the conduct of the survey and the materials used.

Systematic data collection included sociodemographic information, such as age, sex, race, marital status, medical

history, and medication record, and details about the incident, such as why the call was placed, who placed the call (self or other and relation to victim), whether the elderly person was the offender, the specifics of the incident, and its resolution. The authors employed terms commonly used by law enforcement agencies to categorize the types of incidents.²¹ Then, they separated them into either home safety related (HS) or personal health/safety related (PH). The HS category included fire hazards (gas leaks and smoke alarms) and home security issues (burglaries and vandalism). The PH group covered mental health problems (dementia and suicide), safety within the community (wandering and public intoxication), and fatalities before safety personnel arrived.

FINDINGS

The authors grouped HS incidents into major categories by frequency of occurrence. Sixty-seven percent of police and 80 percent of fire department contacts involved home safety. The authors also divided PH incidents into major categories by frequency of occurrence. Thirty-three percent of police and 20 percent of fire department encounters related to personal health/safety.

This retrospective review, representing the first phase of

MAP, yielded important information regarding two main categories of incidents: 1) issues related to the safety of dwellings and 2) those involving personal health and safety. The types and frequencies of incidents accorded with many previously published reports.

Home Safety

The majority of police department incidents related to home safety, and most involved nonviolent property crimes (burglary, vandalism, and auto theft or damage). These findings proved congruent with national trends indicating that elderly people are disproportionately affected by property crimes and relatively less by violent ones.²² Nonviolent property crimes against senior citizens often receive little attention because they are not sensational. But, their frequency has indicated that they should be given prominence in home safety programs, similar to the emphasis on fire prevention.²³ Fortunately, the study revealed relatively few cases of financial exploitation (forgery, fraud, imposters, and scams), representing crimes that appear on the rise and, therefore, attracting the attention of law enforcement agencies and the media.

Most of the fire department incidents concerned home safety, with a vast amount caused by food left cooking on

the stove. This type of forgetfulness often is pathological, being a common sign of dementia and, therefore, a major health issue. Previous research has cited cooking-related fires and smoke inhalation as the largest cause of fire-related injuries among older adults.²⁴ The authors' findings underscored the importance of the kitchen as a danger area in home safety.

Personal Health/Safety

Thirty-three percent of police department incidents involved personal health and safety and included a variety of

issues, such as death, disputes with other persons, intoxication or driving under the influence, mental health-related issues, and missing senior citizens. These findings have suggested the need for community programs that provide social and other contacts for older adults living alone. As well, public service agencies should include staff training on behavioral issues related to elderly individuals, including depression, suicide attempts, substance abuse, and dementia. In contrast, only 20 percent of fire department incidents related to

Personal Health and Safety Incidents

Police Department Incidents (total = 426)		%
Dead on arrival		21
Disputes with others (domestic, harassment)		20
Intoxicated/driving under the influence		17
Mental health (confusion, completed suicide)		13
Seniors missing		10
Assaults on seniors		6
Check on welfare		6
Assistance to fire department, EMS		2
Reported gun shots in neighborhood		2
Dog bite		2
Abuse/neglect by caregiver		1
Fire Department Incidents (total = 10)		%
Assistance to police department, EMS		50
Mental health (confusion, attempted suicide)		40
Dead on arrival (smoking while using oxygen)		10

personal health and safety, and most involved assists to police and emergency medical services or concerned senior citizens' mental health.

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Some public safety agencies have succeeded with training programs targeted toward the needs of older adults. Short training sessions for community police officers in Aiken, South Carolina, increased their ability to recognize and address the health needs of senior citizens.²⁵ A training program for police officers in 11 New Jersey counties focused on understanding Alzheimer's disease and how to handle dangerous behaviors associated with it.²⁶ The Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Police Department organized a group of officers, the Gray Squad, who received specialized training in communicating with and being sensitive to concerns of elderly people.²⁷ Older adults who dealt with the Gray Squad, rather than regular officers, expressed greater satisfaction and had more positive attitudes about police in general.

Public safety personnel must understand the age-related changes and the risks and concerns of elderly people. This increased awareness will facilitate more effective communication with many senior citizens.²⁸ The authors' findings indicated

specific areas in which specialized training for public safety personnel can prove useful.

Public safety officers are particularly well suited for partnerships with social service providers because they share a common goal, the welfare of the community.²⁹ Since 1988, a program called Triad has supported information exchange between the law enforcement profession and the elderly

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Public safety personnel must understand the age-related changes and the risks and concerns of elderly people.

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population in a number of communities.³⁰ Triad consists of a three-way effort among the sheriff, the police chief, and older or retired leaders in the area to enhance services.³¹

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Uniform reporting forms will enable future studies to link personal information, medical history, and public safety encounters to better inform community programs that address the health and

safety needs of older adults.³² Potential obstacles, such as Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations, will require attention but should not prove insurmountable.

Building on this retrospective review, the next phases of MAP, which include in-home safety and personal health surveys of older adults living independently in McKeesport and adjacent communities, are in progress. To date, 278 senior citizens have participated. The findings of these surveys accord with the fire and police record reviews, and community officials are using the data to mount home and health improvement programs.

CONCLUSION

While the issues brought to light by the McKeesport Aging Program are important for the elderly population in every community, they appear particularly relevant for smaller communities that have a high proportion of senior citizens with limited incomes. Financially strapped older adults often neglect both their home safety and their personal health. In this regard, local community agencies have relied on the data from this study to introduce and enhance community programs for elderly people.

Based on the frequency of police and fire department

contacts with senior citizens regarding safety in and around their homes, the city of McKeesport has started a home safety program for this population group. Local government grants have funded the installation of glass-block windows, deadbolt locks, smoke detectors, handrails, and handicap ramps, as well as sidewalk replacement, to qualifying participants. Prevention and intervention programs of this type can significantly improve both the quality of life for older adults and the security of the larger community. ♦

Endnotes

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³¹ Ibid.

³² Supra note 9.

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The Bulletin Honors

The Chula Vista, California, Police Department's memorial wall is the only monument in San Diego County that honors every county peace officer killed in the line of duty—currently numbering 77 from 14 different agencies since 1864. Dedicated on April 12, 2005, the memorial stands at the west end of the department's front courtyard. It consists of a battery of flags; a black, semicircular granite wall; and a bronze statue of two officers—one standing and one kneeling—with their heads bowed, paying tribute to and guarding over the names etched into the wall.



The Bulletin Notes

Law enforcement officers are challenged daily in the performance of their duties; they face each challenge freely and unselfishly while answering the call to duty. In certain instances, their actions warrant special attention from their respective departments. The *Bulletin* also wants to recognize those situations that transcend the normal rigors of the law enforcement profession.



Deputy Chief Huss

Early one morning, Deputy Chief Nathan Huss of the Bluffton, Indiana, Police Department radioed the town dispatch center that he smelled smoke and asked for wind direction and speed. He then searched for the source of the scent and located a burning residence. Deputy Chief Huss woke the seven residents, who were not aware that their home was on fire, and helped them outside. The actions of Deputy Chief Huss ensured the safety of these individuals.



Sheriff Berrong



Deputy Cross



Deputy Wilson

One night, Deputies Rod Cross and James Wilson of the Blount County, Tennessee, Sheriff's Office responded to a fire at an assisted-living home. Upon arrival, the residence was fully engulfed in flames, and the deputies heard screams from bystanders that residents still were trapped inside. Sheriff James Berrong then arrived on the scene,

and the three men began breaking windows and searching for victims. Deputy Wilson and Sheriff Berrong entered the building to help residents to safety, and Deputy Cross assisted from outside. In all, the deadly fire caused five deaths and several injuries. By putting the victims' safety ahead of their own, Sheriff Berrong and Deputies Cross and Wilson prevented even more tragedy.

Nominations for the *Bulletin Notes* should be based on either the rescue of one or more citizens or arrest(s) made at unusual risk to an officer's safety. Submissions should include a short write-up (maximum of 250 words), a separate photograph of each nominee, and a letter from the department's ranking officer endorsing the nomination. Submissions should be sent to the Editor, *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, FBI Academy, Madison Building, Room 201, Quantico, VA 22135.

