
PROJECT SAFEGUARD



***"A NEW POP
STRATEGY FOR
GLOBAL PROBLEMS!"***

***A PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING
PROJECT
FRESNO POLICE DEPARTMENT***

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PROJECT SAFEGUARD

A Problem Solving Strategy in the Fresno Police Department

Abstract

SCANNING

Even with the unparalleled success the department has documented through problem-oriented policing, District Commanders received consistent feedback from many groups and citizens that the city was experiencing global problems that transcended specific geographic locations.

ANALYSIS

It was determined that contributing to the global problems were public fear and dissatisfaction with the department. The causes were: Lack of follow up contact with victims; negative media saturation with crime stories; lack of visible police presence; inattention to "minor" crimes; and, no solicitation of citizen feedback.

RESPONSE

Project Safeguard brought together approximately 200 personnel from the department and assisting agencies for a day long saturation of a specified policing district. The project included the use of Fresno Police helicopters, traffic officers, the graffiti removal program, the U.S. Border Patrol, the FBI, and Citizens on Patrol. Facets of the five Project Safeguards conducted have included: Re-contacting crime victims; searches of the residences of people on probation and parole; arrests of wanted people; verification of registered sex offenders; citizen surveys; saturation patrol, and positive media images.

ASSESSMENT

Results of Project Safeguard thus far include: 1,296 victims re-contacted; 324 arrests; 589 probation and parole searches; 153 vehicles towed; and, 613 checks on registered sex offenders.

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A Problem Solving Strategy in the Fresno Police Department

Description

SCANNING

Community based policing was first proposed in the Fresno Police Department in 1979. In 1981 this policy was implemented by decentralizing the department and dividing the city into areas of similar size. This allowed for increased lines of communication with the public and the formation of a working partnership. Officers were assigned to specific sectors, allowing them to become more familiar with the neighborhood characteristics, residents, and problems, giving them the opportunity to impact those problems successfully.

Since the inception of Community Based Policing, the city's population has soared, the demand for police services has increased dramatically, while little or no growth in department resources occurred. This resulted in a significant reduction of proactive patrol efforts, erosion of the partnerships forged through proactive police-community interaction, and a virtual elimination of preventative programs. Being reactive instead of proactive did not address the root of the neighborhood problems, which led to return calls at locations because the symptoms had been addressed, but not the causes.

In 1993, the department addressed the erosion of services by shifting its focus toward Problem Oriented Policing, an enhancement of the original Community Based Policing Model. Whereas the old view of Community Based Policing focused on patrol activities, the new vision of Community Policing (or Problem Oriented Policing) transcends all divisions of the department and engages the cooperation and interaction of other city departments, public and private service providers, community organizations, businesses, schools, state and federal agencies, neighborhood leaders, and citizens in addressing the underlying causes of crime and quality of life issues.

The initial city-wide effort within the department was started with the use of specialized "P.O.P." teams who worked extensively with citizens and agencies. They did not respond to dispatched calls for service, but instead identified and prioritized neighborhood problems. P.O.P. quickly became the vehicle that guided the department to a new way of thinking, evaluating, reacting, and assessing. After seeing firsthand how successful this type of approach was, support by officers, staff, and non-sworn personnel increased geometrically. Currently, sector officers and other sections within the department also engage in the P.O.P. approach, and the city of Fresno is experiencing an unprecedented drop in crime and calls for service.

However, even with unparalleled success using problem-oriented policing throughout the city, District Commanders, who were recently decentralized, received consistent feedback from various groups, citizens, and politicians that the city was experiencing global problems that were beyond the scope of individual POP projects undertaken in the districts. Despite the numerous

problem oriented policing success stories, state awards, and national awards for addressing specific problems, there were larger conditions in the community as a whole that transcended conventional surgical approaches toward problem solving.

Finally, by filtering our entire approach through the "Broken Window" theory, it became evident that some larger concerns had been underemphasized.

ANALYSIS

In-depth discussions then ensued with key community members, District Commanders, local politicians (mayor, city council members), interest groups, and random citizens. In summary, the problem was defined as a continued sense of fear in the community, the feeling that the department was not responsive to all levels of crime, and an uncertainty about the department's effectiveness. Further analysis pinpointed the causes as follows: Lack of follow up contacts with crime victims; negative media saturation with crime stories; lack of visual presence of the police in the community; lack of attention to "minor" crimes; no solicitation of citizen feedback on police performance or crime problems; and, a concern that some of our criminal element was still not being held accountable.

Five years ago denial would have been our first strategy. However, because our department has been immersed in the P.O.P. philosophy, we knew the problem was real and required a long term solution. It was obvious that we needed to look inward.

The Fresno Police Department has approximately 580 police officers and serves a resident population of over 400,000. It is approximately 220 officers short of having the conservative ratio of 2 officers per thousand residents. Therefore, resources must be maximized and synergy must be created not only between the department and other agencies, but among units within the department as well. It is incumbent on the department to continually examine our service delivery and philosophy to broaden and adapt our problem solving approach to emerging policing priorities.

In June 1997, the department transitioned to district policing, which entails a precinct concept of service delivery. Each of the five districts within the city are now headed by a District Commander (captain) who has authority, accountability, and responsibility for providing efficient and effective policing services for the district. The resources available to the new District Commanders are Patrol Officers, K-9 Officers, Problem Oriented Policing Officers, and Community Service Officers. The centralized "Metro Bureau" houses the Traffic Unit, Youth and Community Services Section, Violent Crime Suppression Unit, and the Helicopter Unit. The Investigations Division is also the centralized resource for the various crime follow-up units in the department.

The transition to district policing was consistent with Mayor Jim Patterson's commitment to Fresno citizens to expand delivery of safety services. This transition also provided an opportune time for the department to devise and implement a plan that would address the global problems that were creating public fear and a feeling of lack of responsiveness by the department.

While each of the city's five district POP Teams continually uses the SARA model to address specific district problems, it became obvious that there was a need to bring all of the department's resources to bear on larger district and city-wide issues. Additionally, other resources outside the department that routinely assist officers in dealing with problems would need to be involved. An idea then developed for an ongoing single day project that would bring all of the resources the department could muster to attack the causes of the global problem and provide long term improvement. Such a project would be conducted in a different district each week in order to impact the entire city. As the plan unfolded, the Crime Analysis Unit emerged as a significant component by playing a key role in researching crime and potential suspect data in the targeted area, and disseminating information regarding the times, locations, and nature of criminal activity occurring in the district.

RESPONSE

After the analysis "Project Safeguard" was developed as the initial way to address the causes of the global problems identified in the analysis phase. All Project Safeguard activities would be directed to impact: Lack of follow up contacts with crime victims; negative media saturation of crime stories; lack of visual presence of police; inattention to "minor" crimes, lack of citizen feedback, and activities that hold all criminals accountable.

As currently designed, Project Safeguard operations are an all day effort (0600 to 2100 hours) to instill public confidence in the Police Department, reassure victims of continued agency interest of their victimization, and use specific tactics to combat crime and disorder. Each Project Safeguard operation brings together approximately 150 personnel from the Fresno Police Department and 50 personnel from the Fresno County Probation Department, State Parole, California Highway Patrol, and California's Department of Justice. The project deploys approximately 100 marked vehicles into the target district. The operations have involved the use of such diverse components as Fresno Police "Skywatch" helicopters, traffic officers, burglary and sex crimes detectives, the U.S. Border Patrol, the F.B.I.'s local task force, the City's graffiti removal program, "Citizen's on Patrol", and all of the Department's K-9 teams. By focusing a variety of units and resources in a specific district at one time, a number of goals have been accomplished that would otherwise have taken considerably more time to achieve by the district itself. These goals directly impact the causes of our identified problems. Additionally, in furtherance of the "Broken Window" theory, objectives are applied consistently throughout the districts.

FACETS OF PROJECT SAFEGUARD

Project Safeguard consists of the following components:

- * Re-contacting crime victims to seek additional leads on crimes;
- * Use of "Problem Oriented Policing" strategies to determine and deal with the root causes of crime trends in the district;
- * Extensive searches of the residences of people on probation and parole;

- * Arrests of wanted people, including misdemeanor suspects;
- * Command posts staffed by District Commanders and officers engaging in productive exchanges of information with citizens;
- * Citizen surveys, through random contacts, of causes of fear and suggestions for the police department;
- * Resident checks of registered sex offenders;
- * Proactive patrol
- * Saturation patrol in marked vehicles
- * Media awareness

Crime Victim Re-contacts

In the days leading up to a Project Safeguard operation, Community Service Officers from the city-wide Crime Prevention Unit obtain copies of approximately 300 recent crime reports. An emphasis is placed on misdemeanor and burglary reports with low solvability factors, as such cases are generally not followed up by detectives. The crime reports are assigned to the five district Problem Oriented Policing Teams, all of which will be working in the targeted district during the operation.

POP officers re-contact the crime victims to determine if any additional information has been developed by the victim or their neighbors. Any developments are immediately investigated by the POP officers. The officers, because of the opportunity to give these cases special attention, have been able to follow up on "hunches" and speculation by victims, thus checking out

possible leads that have gone unchecked by the original responding officer. This information has led to the identification and even the arrests of suspects. This is significant because these are cases that otherwise would have remained uninvestigated by detectives.

The POP officers also play another role in contacting victims. They seek to assure the victims that the department is concerned about their plight of being a victim, and has not forgotten about them. Victims are given information about neighborhood watch, volunteer citizen patrols, the citizen's police academy, and other police services. Victims are also asked if they would like to have a home security inspection or property engraved with their driver's license number. Victims desiring these services are provided with them by one of the Community Service Officers who are assigned to work with the operation.

Lastly, victims are given surveys which ask them to rate the police department, the presence of police in their neighborhood, and their level of satisfaction they received when they called police. They are also asked about crime and disorder problems in their neighborhood, and their suggestions as to what the department can do about these problems. They have the option of asking for additional contact from the department at a later date.

Problem Oriented Policing Strategies

In addition to being given a "case load" of previously reported crimes to follow up on, each of the POP teams are given target areas in the district to proactively patrol after they have completed their victim contacts. The officers are given the nature of the problem affecting the

target area. As all of the officers have received extensive training in the SARA model and are aware of the internal and external resources available to combat identified problems, they can address the problems in the target areas using POP philosophy.

Probation and Parole Searches

Juvenile Probation Officers team up with officers from the Youth Services Section and conduct unannounced searches of the residences of juveniles on probation. During each Project Safeguard between 80 and 100 of these searches occur. Juveniles found with drugs, stolen property, or illegal weapons are arrested, as are those who possess gang paraphernalia or other items in violation of the conditions of their probation.

Adult Probation Officers team up with officers from "Tresno H.E.A.T.", a combined auto theft prevention team of Fresno police officers and California Highway Patrol officers, to conduct unannounced searches of the residences of adults on probation. Adults found in violation of the conditions of their probation are arrested.

Parole Agents team up with members of the department's Violent Crime Suppression Unit, a unit that targets violent offenders and gangs. They look for wanted parolees and also search the residences of high risk parolees. Each Project Safeguard operation has resulted in the arrests of 8 to 10 wanted parolees. These are some of the most active criminals in the community who each victimize multiple citizens on a weekly, if not daily, basis.

Arrests of Wanted People

In the days prior to the operation, the Violent Crime Suppression Unit receives information from detectives about people wanted for any level of criminal activity occurring in the district being targeted by the operation. The unit then attempts to develop information about the suspects' possible whereabouts and on the day of the operation goes out in search of the suspects. Probation and parole agents also come to the operations with a list of wanted people whom they are seeking.

Command Posts

To enhance and promote community relations, a command post is established for each operation. The department's SWAT bus, which is a full size converted transit bus, is parked in a high profile location such as a shopping mall parking lot. It is staffed by the District Commander, police officers, and community service officers. Large signs identify the command post as part of Project Safeguard and proclaim the command post as being open to the public. Tables are set up with information on neighborhood watch, the citizen's police academy, citizens on patrol, and other services provided by the department. The public is given tours of the SWAT bus and a large screen television outside the bus shows the video down- link being broadcast from the police helicopter. The media also attends information updates at the command post and is provided with progress reports on the operation throughout the day.

For convenience purposes, citizens wishing to report crimes or problems in their neighborhoods are assisted by the personnel at the command post. The information is

investigated and eventually forwarded to the appropriate area of responsibility.

Citizen Surveys

In addition to the POP officers giving surveys to the victims they are assigned to contact, all officers are encouraged to provide surveys to people they randomly encounter while driving through neighborhoods. The citizens are given a stamped return envelop so they can return the survey at a later time. The survey also asks if the person would like follow up contact from the department. The Crime Prevention unit processes all returned surveys, provides copies to the involved District Commander, and responds to each person desiring further contact.

Sexual Offender Registration Checks

California law requires persons convicted of certain sexual offenses to register with their local law enforcement agency every year and to update their address anytime they move. Many registered sex offenders are not current with their registration. The department historically did not confirm registration information. In the days leading up to a Project Safeguard, members of the sexual assault unit work with designated members of the 5 policing districts' POP teams in searching files to list all of the registered sex offenders believed to be living in the targeted district. On the day of the operation, these officers team with members of the California Department of Justice's Sexual Predator Apprehension Team to respond to the last known addresses of registered sex offenders and verify they are in compliance with registration requirements. Those who are not, are given written notice to update their registration within 5 days. The compliance rate pursuant to this notice is very high. Those who do not comply are subject to later arrest.

Proactive Patrol

In the days leading up to an operation in a District, the Crime Analysis Unit researches crime data to determine the most active sectors, and zones within sectors, in various crime categories. This information is then compiled into an assignment sheet, dividing the problem locations among the five District POP teams assigned to the operation. Each POP team is responsible for proactively patrolling their assigned target locations during the operation. The victim re-contacts they are assigned to make are in their targeted areas.

The targeted districts are not announced to the public prior to the operation in order to not forewarn wanted people and out of compliance parolees and probationers. However, a media release is made in the hours before an operation to encourage the media to be present at the command post and with the various units working in the field. Two briefings are held for personnel. A 6 am briefing is for the units that are more enforcement oriented, while a 1 pm briefing addresses the five district POP teams, Crime Prevention Unit personnel, and Citizens on Patrol. The media and public are invited to attend the afternoon briefings, which generally occur in High School cafeterias. These briefings have been well attended by media, city officials, and even students on campus.

Saturation Patrol

Specific target areas within the district are identified by the Crime Analysis Unit and the district's P.O.P. team. Information regarding type, time, and location of crime activity is disseminated to units assigned to high visibility patrol in marked vehicles. Target areas are

assigned to the five P.O.P. teams conducting pro-active patrol. These teams are responsible for detecting and responding to suspicious activity of all types. Several bike patrol teams as well as department helicopters are also used to provide saturation patrol to the target areas.

Media Awareness

A press release giving location and activity details is disseminated before each project. The media are invited to attend all briefings, ride along with officers, and conduct interviews of involved personnel. Television news "pool cameras" are assigned to the teams. News releases are produced as noteworthy incidents occur throughout the day. A media paging system is used to summon the media to locations of significant arrests, contraband seizures, or other activities with which the media may have an interest. At the conclusion of each project, a summary of the day's activities is released to the media. The high profile nature of the projects, along with the inclusive approach toward the media, has resulted in positive media images for our department.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment of the effectiveness of Project Safeguard is based upon the short and long term results of each facet of the operation. Since the project includes a number of diverse objectives, these results are both qualitative and quantitative.

Traditionally, identification and arrests of criminals is one of many aspects used as a measure of success. Another important objective is the volume of random, unannounced

residence searches of people on probation and parole. Proactive patrol has also resulted in supplemental quantifiable activity such as arrests of unlicensed drivers and the impounding of their vehicles.

The high numbers of victim re-contacts and provision of crime prevention services has resulted in a significant base of victims experiencing positive, productive encounters with officers. Positive public perception is galvanized through the high profile nature of the projects, the inclusive approach toward citizens and the media, and the solicitation of public input through citizen surveys.

Equally significant is the previously unperformed verification of sex offenders compliance with the conditions of their registration requirements. This has resulted in improved tracking of offenders, validation of information in the department's sex offender database, and the eventual arrests of offenders not in compliance. The follow-up potential of this information is invaluable to sex crimes investigation and is yielding documented suspect identification and arrests. Finally, an average of twenty out of compliance registered sex offenders are coming into the department weekly to voluntarily register due to Project Safeguard and media coverage.

There have been Project Safeguard operations in each of Fresno's five policing districts in the five weeks since the project's inception. Tangible results, in just five workdays, are as follows:

Felony arrests	126
Misdemeanor arrests	198
Probation searches	501
Parole searches	88
Victims contacted	1,296
Investigative leads	59
Vehicles towed	153
Traffic cites	192
Home security Inspections	95
Sex offender registration checks	613

In addition, returned surveys have been analyzed by the District Commanders to assist them in maximizing the efficient deployment of their personnel. Positive media coverage, which reports arrest results and number of victim re-contacts, has occurred before, during, and after each operation. The media now anticipates and looks forward to the next Project Safeguard.

After each Project Safeguard, the District that was targeted has: Less wanted people; less parolees and probationers out of compliance with parole or probation conditions; less visual blight such as graffiti and abandoned vehicles; and, more identified suspects in previously reported crimes. This has translated into increased citizen satisfaction, more responsiveness to victim needs, and new lines of communication with the citizenry to address crime and disorder issues.

From a fiscal standpoint, Project Safeguard has demonstrated that the cost of the operation can be very minimal. Personnel are brought together on their regular duty day, and no unusual supplies or resources are needed that require a funding source. Patrol staffing levels in the four districts not targeted on an operation day are not affected. Most of the units involved are citywide resources, who are simply focused in a specific district for one day. While the four district POP teams that are from outside the target district may be pulled away from their district responsibilities for the day, their district will directly benefit from the synergistic operation when it targets their respective districts.

In summary, the identified problem (continued sense of fear in the community, the feeling that the department was not responsive to all levels of crime, and an uncertainty about the department's effectiveness) has been unequivocally impacted by Project Safeguard in the first five operations. It has had a positive evaluation by the resulting reduction and potential elimination of the causative factors. The lack of follow up contacts with crime victims has been positively impacted through the ongoing victim contacts that officers make at the victims' residences or work places city-wide. Further investigative leads are sought, information is conveyed, and

further police services are offered. The causation factor of negative media saturation has been reversed by offering opportunities for positive coverage of the various components of the project from beginning to end. The lack of visible police presence previously sensed by the community is countered with a large scale directed effort using tactics that include patrol saturation with marked vehicles, bike patrol, helicopters, and motor officers. This has been confirmed by feedback from politicians and their consultants, informal leaders, business owners, and citizen contacts and surveys.

The lack of attention to "minor" crimes in the community has been effectively minimized by officers on proactive saturation patrol looking for public disorder activity and re-contacting victims of all types of crime. The issue of there being no solicitation of citizen feedback on police performance or crime problems is countered with citizen surveys which receive follow up action by the department, and accessibility to District Commanders and officers at the public access command posts. Lastly, the community concern that the criminal element was not being held accountable for their crimes has been effectively dealt with through high numbers of arrests, residence searches of probationers and parolees, and holding registered sex offenders in compliance with registration requirements.

Project Safeguard will continue to be monitored to determine the level of success being attained in solving the identified global problems. The responses to each of the previously discussed causes, which have been evaluated positively to date, will be continually analyzed to ensure continued effectiveness. Crime data, victim surveys, and calls for service levels will be

PROJECT SAFEGUARD

A Problem Solving Strategy of the Fresno Police Department

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

Project Safeguard was implemented by Chief of Police Ed Winchester and involves personnel from units throughout the department.

The Fresno Police Department provides Problem Oriented Policing training for all sworn officers as well as non-sworn staff. There are Problem Oriented Policing Teams in each of the department's five policing districts. The department provides POP training to other law enforcement agencies.

Officers involved in Project Safeguard are given specific objectives and allowed ample time to achieve them. Superior performance or unique policing approaches are commended.

Approximately fifty of the personnel assigned to Project Safeguard are members of district POP teams and utilize past successful strategies to solve problems they encounter. Examples include the extensive use of bike patrols as an alternative policing strategy, and blight removal through the use of the city's graffiti paint-out trailer.

No significant problems have been identified pertaining to the problem-oriented policing model.

There has been no significant monetary commitments for this project, as the resources are generally drawn from existing on-duty personnel. Allied agencies have provided significant numbers of their on-duty personnel. Days off have been adjusted in some cases to allow for the large number of officers to be present the day of the operation.

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