

Soothing the Beast to Enhance Quality of Life

Summary:

MacArthur Blvd. has historically been a troubled community within Washtenaw County. For decades traditional policing methods have had little to no impact. In early 2009 we began to see an increasing level of violence and crime overall. The "Town Square" was the local party store where numerous violent altercations took place. In one instance a young woman was shot twice in broad daylight. As she fell to the ground her assailant calmly leaned over to her, whispered something in her ear and pumped another round into her chest. The suspect then holstered his weapon and slowly walked away as 40-50 residents watched.

In short, it was dubbed the "Wild West" by local media and became a one stop shop for the local "dope boys" – Come in, take over an apartment, set up shop on the Blvd., bring in your dope, repackage it, distribute it throughout the rest of the county and all the while hanging out and having a good time.

This area was clearly our most troubled community within the county and was escalating in violence. Understanding that crime is not just a police problem but that it is a community problem we enlisted the help from local community stakeholders in our attempt to build a strong and sustainable community and ultimately address the root causes of crime within this neighborhood.

We first established a Special Problems Unit of deputies to get the crime under control. We then established a Community Organizing Team made up of Apartment owners, management, local elected officials, residents and law enforcement. This group set out to accomplish 20



tangible tasks all designed for systemic community change. We then implemented a 3 man team of deputies that would focus on becoming a part of the community and working on the long-term sustainability of what the SPU and COT had begun. Finally, we brought in our Street Outreach Workers to team up with residents for numerous community building events.

What it resulted in is an increased perception of safety for residents, better relationships between law enforcement and residents, a lower crime rate and ultimately a higher quality of life for those living and working within the neighborhood.

A. Scanning:

MacArthur Blvd is a one (1) mile long roadway in Superior Township and is home to two (2), low-income HUD and subsidized housing projects totaling 413 apartments, mostly occupied by young, African American single-mothers between the ages of 17 and 30. MacArthur Blvd. accounts for 3% of the 13,000 resident population for the township and was responsible for 90% of the investigative police resources provided to the township through a contractual agreement with the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office. "The Blvd." has, since the late 80s, been a major law enforcement focus area due to the large number of calls originating from this neighborhood. This particular project was initiated due to the increase in crime and escalation of violence including competing drug sales, gangs, burglaries, murders, and the shooting of an occupied patrol unit.

More recently dubbed the "Wild West" by local media for its notorious crimes and reputation within Washtenaw County the Blvd., from a residents perspective was "out of control". Residents complained of shots fired on a daily basis, there were several attempted murders, a homicide, an open drug market, numerous assaults, and many more violent



confrontations amongst residents and visitors to the area. Additionally, the "Town Square" was a centrally located party store that functioned as the hub for dope deals, alcohol sales, and large gatherings that often facilitated violent eruptions. The Superior Party Store had constant traffic from the complex until 2:00am, drug paraphernalia was easily the highest selling items within the store and drugs were being sold from behind the counter. In short, it was a one stop shop for the local "dope boys" – Come in, take over an apartment, set up shop on the Blvd., bring in your dope, repackage it, distribute it throughout the rest of the county and all the while hanging out and having a good time. The Blvd. became the new "hang-out" for visitors, friends and family of residents, similar to a campus community where most of the traffic is transients from neighboring areas. In 2009, the "Duffle Bag Gang" emerged. This gang was responsible for breaking into numerous occupied apartments and nearby homes stealing property and became one more factor that terrorized residents.

By taking a historical look at crime rates, and types of crime we could see an increasing trend that had to be addressed. Residents, landlords, Township officials, local serving agencies, and the Sheriff's Office all agreed that improving the quality of life within this neighborhood was a top priority.

B. Analysis:

In July 2009, an 8 person Special Problems Unit (SPU) was assigned to the Blvd., tasked with designing sustainable intervention models to address the root causes crippling this community's ability to police itself. The SPU team was able to observe and identify major problems for the MacArthur Blvd area through a number of different methods. Those observations were then supported by crime analysis, through the evaluation of calls for service to the area. Calls for service were then broken down by crime type, time of year and time of day.



Being that the party store was central in the dynamics of the neighborhood, CFS to the store was also evaluated. We found that incident reports tripled during the warmer months. In addition, the majority of these incidents were occurring on Saturday, Sunday, and Wednesday between the hours of 10:00pm and 2:00am.

Through partnerships with the apartments' management, the team was able to identify problem units and residents who mismanaged their visitors. Neighborhood Watch meetings had already been established in one apartment complex, but through SPU efforts both housing project residents were invited to the table. Neighborhood Watch allowed for open communication between residents, management and law enforcement. This constant stream of communication allowed deputies to project community problems to residents and allowed residents to provide deputies with valuable lessons regarding their community. Through a survey conducted within the county jail, the office was able to determine the percentage of individuals who were residents of this community and would soon return following their period of incarceration.

In 1988, the "Charlie Car" unit was assigned to the community to address resident complaints of loitering, larceny and the formation of gangs. The Charlie Car concept was introduced to the agency and allowed to use non-traditional methods to follow the model of Problem Oriented Policing. In the 20 years since, the community has received constant law enforcement attention that did little to decrease criminal activity. An exhaustion of resources including drug sweeps, only resulting in minor drug arrests, "jump-outs" and warrant sweeps were all used but seemed to only temporarily bandage a much larger issue. Problems continued to persist with no sustainable method of intervention, escalating to several shootings and a rash of burglaries. This historical agency knowledge of doing the same thing over and over and



hoping for new results was a key component to the agencies readiness to attack the problems in a much more global and dramatically different way than had ever been attempted in the past.

One of the more terrifying incidents occurred at the Superior Party Store, where a young lady, in broad daylight, was shot twice before she fell to the ground by a known assailant who, after she fell leaned over her, said something to her and pumped one more bullet into her chest. He then calmly holstered his weapon and walked away. There were 40-50 people loitering outside the store during the shooting as she cried for help. Not only did people ignore her cries, but some even walked over her as she lay on the ground bleeding. In another disturbing incident a young man was shot 22 times with an AK47 while leaving an apartment after he had just argued with a known drug dealer. These incidents show the tone of the neighborhood, but also demonstrate the fear that resonating with many neighbors.

Through many attempts throughout the years the underlying problem seemed to stem from residents of the low-income HUD properties having little invested in the progression of the community in which they live because there was no sense of ownership. This community is located in an isolated area, surrounded by four (4) sub-divisions, mostly mid to high income families. In addition, this community lacks essential resources such as, enhanced public transportation, good food resources, and recreational facilities. Youth in this area attend schools listed among the ninety-two (92) persistently low achieving school districts by the state of Michigan.

Although many issues that plague this community cannot be solved with law enforcement resources, using a more global approach to analyze the problems behind the crimes has given us insight in how we do have the resources to impact such an area. The Sheriff's Office sits in a unique position, able to utilize the many resources in the county to improve quality of life for our



neighborhoods. And although it has taken us some time we have realized that crime is not just a law enforcement problem, and that it cannot be solved with law enforcement resources alone. The need for intervention has to be a collaborative effort, bringing all stakeholders to the table to design and implement long-term strategies for revitalization. With this understanding, there was a community forum held in which residents and deputies entered into a verbal contract to take action and implement proactive measures to address the problems of the community. The forum allowed for all to identify those whose participation would be necessary for the intervention to be effective, and if those parties were not present they needed to be invited to the table before the project could move forward. Soon, complex owners, management, township officials, political leaders, residents and the Sheriff's Office were engaged in open dialogue and on the same page.

C. Response:

The goal of this project was to get a handle on the "out of control" crimes that were taking place. By creating a perception of safety we could assist in promoting residents' investment in the community in which they live. Another focus of the project was to change the culture of the "Town Square" by addressing the party store. The final goal was to utilize the resources of our Community Engagement division to facilitate creative initiatives to bridge the gap between residents, the Sheriff's Office and the neighboring communities. All of this in an attempt to encourage an enhanced sense of community that would in turn improve quality of life for all residents.

When considering tactics to address the problem, the SPU team pondered arrest sweeps, undercover stings, deals with the party store, saturation patrols and all the other traditional law enforcement tactics that rarely work for long-term, systemic change. There were a number of things that made the task daunting; the community was isolated; There were strong anti-police



sentiments; The community dynamics made the problem seem overwhelming to many deputies who chose not to patrol the area; The historical problems of the community had been there for years and making change was doubted by many. The SPU team decided there was a need to design a more long-term approach to address all of these dilemmas.

One thing we all agreed on is that the crime was out of control and it trumped cost or any other measure – This is where we began, addressing the "out of control" sentiment that everyone in the community shared. It was our common message regardless of what part of the agency or what part of the community you represented.

This new shared understanding was the impetus for the community stake holder meeting. That first meeting was tense as landlords blamed the police, the police blamed residents, residents blamed the owners and the owners blamed the elected officials. However, after hours of blame and several meetings later we eventually worked our way to twenty (20) tangible tasks that, if done, could once and for all begin to change the Blvd. (see Appendix for Community Outreach Team tasks)

This group would grow to become the Community Organizing Team (COT) and each person within the COT was responsible for a task. Some were minor and some would take considerable time to have an impact, but all were steps towards structural change within the community and all were agreed to by the entire team. Now we had the SPU team focused on law enforcement interventions while the COT focused on building community and both working in tandem.

As the months passed and the crime began to decrease it was evident that the SPU team could not remain in place forever and that they could not be present on the Blvd at all times. This resulted in the establishment of a two-man team assigned to the Blvd area after the original SPU



transitioned to include a larger focus area. This two person team began in January 2010 and was relieved of traditional enforcement roles, such as radio runs outside of the MacArthur Blvd area. This team had to become intricate members of the community, acquiring the trust of residents, working with management daily, building relationships, fostering community, and continuing the task of systemic change that the SPU team had begun. This team had the support of the agency and was encouraged to utilize the agencies resources, including K-9, road patrol, Detective Bureau, Special Threat Response, Street Outreach Workers, as well as outside resources to address the ongoing problems of the area.

In order to become members of the community these deputies spent considerable time out on foot, walking the grounds, meeting residents, learning building numbers, learning the hidden trails, understanding the physical structure, and understanding community norms.

As they did this they were able to identify those "controllers", who would have more long-term impact for change. The local "grandmother" of the neighborhood, who was well respected by even the most troubled visitors. The township, who began to take action through the enforcement of ordinances, clean-up areas and zoning. There were many complaints of disorderly youth; the township revised its curfew ordinance for minors.

The team then built great working relationships with the apartments' management in which they were able to tie CFS to problem units. Management provided deputies with a tenant list, where the deputies would then read through incident reports to see if individuals involved were in fact residents who were in breach of their rental agreements. This also gave deputies an idea of frequent visitors to the neighborhood. The team began to issue trespass notices to any person found loitering, causing trouble and were not residents. Through a partnership with judges, those who violated those notices were arrested and held for 48 hours. They were able to



match names with photographs, which allowed for better intelligence of visitor traffic. This intel was used to hold residents accountable for their company and quickly began to change the culture of the area.

Management sent out mailers informing residents of the new standards for visitors and apartment behavior. They restated their lease agreements and enforced violations. Working with deputies, management received reports on problem tenants so that they could focus on their own lease violations. Management also established visitor parking, since it was determined that offenders seem to park in the lot, play loud music, drink alcohol and smoke marijuana. They then entered into a contractual agreement with a local towing company to enforce parking violations. Vehicles not parked in designated areas were towed. There were 172 vehicles removed from the complex in 2010. All of this sent a clear message to residents that the behavioral norms of the community were changing.

The store received an emergency suspension of their liquor license following the LAWNET investigation, changing the dynamics of the community slightly. There were less disorderly, less intoxications and a decrease in loitering. They eventually got their license back after complying with regulations, bringing the store up to code. The party store seemed to be an intricate piece to the problems of the Blvd, to combat that, the newly formed team began weekly liquor license inspection from January through March of 2010. The team submitted reports to the LLC for repeated violations. Once there was an expectation set with enforcing violations at the party store, the team scaled back inspection to bi-weekly for a period of time, then monthly. Deputies wanted to convey the message that they were very visible through foot patrols showing a clear presence in the area and around the party store, but that they were not there to simply shut down the store. In June of 2010 the Superior Party Store burned down. At the time there were



multiple pending violations and a scheduled LLC hearing. Without the store being a central location for distribution of illegal drugs, alcohol and a venue for loitering, foot traffic in the area dropped drastically.

Through activities sponsored by the Community Engagement division, residents were given the opportunity to bond with deputies and other members of administration. During crucial summer months, community engagement established a weekly baseball and basketball tournament using nearby courts and fields to encourage positive team building activities for the youth in and surrounding the Blvd. The office gave ownership of these events to the community by encouraging local youth to be the driving force behind the project. "Ballin' on the Boulevard" is an eight (8) week long summer basketball tournament that allows youth age eight to seventeen to compete for such prizes as gift cards, basketballs and trophies for their performance on the court. Youth are attracted to the activities and become comrades on a court that was once the hot spot for neighborhood fights and illegal activities. Members of the community volunteered their time and donated baseball equipment for youth to use during the baseball event. One community member offered additional time to work with local youth wanting to learn more about the game of baseball.

As an agency we also added in a referral process so that deputies responding to calls in the area while the team was away could get all information to the team. This helped team members know what was going on while they were away but also allowed for the other deputies in the area to be a part of the overall project. This was significant for the internal culture of the agency and the beliefs around the effectiveness of the project.

With any major project, there can be barriers that arise in the implementation process. Some difficulties encountered included negative feedback on the towing strategy. This policy



had not previously been enforced, so there were many complaints by residents and visitors who had their cars towed. The cost to retrieve a vehicle is \$250 or \$170 to have the tow company release the vehicle once in tow. Initially, apprehending offenders of the open drug market only made way for replacement offenders or for displacement of offenders. The larger SPU teamed moved on to encompass a larger area due to this concern. Also, there were accusations of harassment made by the Party Store owner as he was subject to weekly inspections. Finally, the internal dynamics of our own agency were a challenge as some doubted that the community could ever change.

D. Assessment:

The interventions on the Blvd made it possible for community building to take place. A tone has been set for current residents that will project onto new residents. Deputies are working on a welcome packet for incoming residents that will include township ordinances, policies for the area and non-profit contact information for any assistance residents may need. With management being more involved by enforcing tenant policies, residents were held accountable. Even when deputies are not visible in the area, this long-term change allows for enforcement to take place. Now our three focus areas are Crime rate, relationship with the WCSO and perception of safety. There are many older residents and some seniors we seem to communicate most with through their involvement in Neighborhood Watch; we see a need to reach out to the young moms of the community.

Through conversations with residents and residents' interviews conducted by local reporters, we found the intervention to have a massive positive impact of the quality of life for residents.

One resident reported that she had gotten a permit to carry a concealed weapon to protect her as she walked to the party store at night. Since the intervention, she has "not felt the need to carry"



her gun. She feels comfort in seeing the deputies on a regular basis. Another resident reported that he "feels safer sleeping at night" and that "the community is getting better". We were able to to fully understand the impact of the intervention during a Neighborhood Watch meeting where an elderly resident, who uses a cane to assist with walking, explained she had been crawling under her kitchen table nightly to dodge gun fire and since the intervention she has not had to crawl under her table in quite some time.

Loitering along "the long strip" was a major problem, but as the visitor parking was reconfigured and enforced the "hanging out" of non-residential "problem people" has significantly decreased. There was also a time when deputies were viewed as the "enemy", but slowly that sentiment has begun to change. We can see this clearly as new cases are investigated and residents are assisting deputies by providing information, something unheard of just two years earlier.

This POP project is still ongoing and evaluations to this point have been through incident report summaries which show a 17.5 % reduction in incidents from 2009 to 2010. Disorderly Conducts are down 36.9% from 2009 to 2010 while Public nuisance decreased by 14.4%. Due to the issuance and enforcement of trespass notices, trespass reports are down 32%. To encourage compliance, deputies set a no tolerance policy for residents who allow visitors with trespass notices to enter their units by informing management who would either serve a warning or a 30-day notice for eviction. Home Invasions decreased by 40%, showing that enforcement sent a clear message to the Duffle Bag Gang that their behavior was unacceptable. As more information came in from residents the number of arrests rose.

The results of the survey conducted within the county jail, which revealed the number of offenders that are returning to this community prompted a more detailed study to take place.



Measuring perceptions of safety amongst residents and how they feel about the Sheriff's Office is key in our future response. What we have found in some of the early reports is that residents are indeed feeling safer and that the relationship to date has improved. This survey however is to be completed by the end of June 2011. This study is being completed by Eastern Michigan University as to be a separate, third party view of the work done to date.

Being that there were systemic changes implemented for long-term effect, the impact of displacement was always a concern that we attempted to prepare for. Other communities with a similar make-up also began projects modeled after the Blvd. Project in an attempt to do more than just push the problem from one area to the next. Residents who were evicted from one complex might try to move to the other, but there was a standard set for the entire community and the residents were educated and informed of the consequences of non-compliance of rules, regulations, policies and ordinances. Management from both communities also experienced a better working relationship between the two complexes which assisted in making sure problem tenants did not bounce back and forth.

Although we see a reduction in crime and incidents for the community, there were some barriers in the success of this project. In any agency with limited resources, it is difficult to allocate adequate personnel to a task and rearrange scheduling for it to be effective. In addition, this approach was new and came during a shift in the culture of the office leaving some without a clear understanding of their newly assigned tasks. The POP officers had a specific method and approach to enforcement and would follow-up with documentation such as photos of those who received trespass notices. Other deputies would not always follow through with the same method leaving holes in the POP records and ability to properly enforce.



To enhance the impact of this project, the office could have offered more administrative support to assist with crime analysis. Much of the recording keeping was done by POP deputies after they had been assigned to the project so there was little for them to learn from or work with.

As we begin to revisit the initial goals of this project many have been accomplished or are well on the way of accomplishment. We have created an atmosphere that allows for problem focused policing and set the tone for residents to have a higher quality of life. There is much more to be done, but we have come a long way since 2008. Although the party store is no longer in operation, the resources we put into properly managing the occurrence of illegal activity had a major impact on changes in the community. The summer initiatives the community engagement division facilitated did in fact bring residents closer together.

We envision always having a strong presence within this community, however through relationship building we continue to generate an atmosphere where our deputies work with residents to build strong and sustainable communities.



Agency and Officer Information:

Key Project Team Members

Commander Dieter Herren Dep. Chad Teets Det. Micheal

Marocco

Dep. Eugene Rush Dep. Sean Urban Dep. Gerrod Visel Dep. Mark VanTuyl Sgt. Marlene Radzick Dep. Scot Williams

Dep. Nicholas Krings Cpl. Kevin Hause Dep. James Roy

Project Contact Person:

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Appendix A

MacArthur Blvd. Community Organizing Team (COT) SUBJECT: Priority Work Paths – June 2009 BY: Jackson 7-13-09

GROUP APPROACH

- . Maintain a commitment to collaboration
- Maintain project focus

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN	OPERATIONAL INITIATIVES		
WORK PATHS	ACTIONS STEPS	LEAD	NOTES - COMMENTARY
Leasing Agreements	Danbury Park will provide lease documents Sycamore will provide lease documents	Nancy Teri	
	Review of lease agreements Recommendations for updated a greements	Mirada COT) <u>i</u>
	Suitability standards will be explored	Management	
Working Freference	Danbury will explore	Brenda Paradis	Danbury is interested in the potential to have their property have a working preference component
Work with Judges	Conversation with judges Provide clear criteria for landlords	McFariane/Jackson McFariane/Jackson	Our goal is to understand the judicial process for making decisions around
	Visit C. C.C.C.	/	evictions
Police Logs	Daily logs to management	Lt. JAZ	Management would like daily police logs tying criminal activity to specific addresses
	Monagement/residents would like to know if/when a crime was solved.	Rodeik/Lt. Jaz/Heren/Jackson	
Background Checks	WCSO potentially providing background checks to management	Heren/Jackson	
Letter of accountability	Danbury & Sycamore will send out letter to residents	Tone/Nancy	

Public Safety - Quality Service - Strong Communities



Appendix B

MacArthur Blvd. Community Organizing Team (COT) SUBJECT: Priority Work Paths – June 2009 BY: Jackson 7-13-09

Patrol time	WCSO will look into best times for patrols	Lt. JAZ/Heren	Part of the conversation revolved around making sure that the patrol simes vary based up need.
Parking passes	Danbury & Sycamore will make sure that parking roster's updated and provide a copy to WCSO for their use	Tone/Nancy	
Walk the grounds	Management will walk the grounds with the WCSO to familiarize everyone with property	001	73-
Curfew postings	Danbury will post curfew notices	Nancy	
Curlew ordinance	Township board will review current ordinance and look to update	Township board	
Office efficiency	Denbury is in the process of updating office software	HME	This was brought up during the discussion around managing the workload more effectively
Deputy training	WCSO will facilitate ongoing conversations with the deputies that patrol the area so that everyone is on the same page with what our action steps are	Radsik/JAZ/Heren/Jackson	
Shared cost of OT	Township and Ownership will distuss costs related to overtime spent on servicing this community	Township board/Owners	
Create email list	An email list will be created for ongoing communication amongst COT members	Jackson	
Monthly meetings	Meetings involving COT members will be regularly scheduled	сот	

Public Safety - Quality Service - Strong Communities

Appendix C

MacArthur Blvd. Community Organizing Team (COT) SUBJECT: Priority Work Paths – June 2009 BY: Jackson 7-13-09

Resident lists	Danibury & Sycamore will regularly provide resident lists: to the WCSO	To ne/INamcy/Radzik	
Ballin' on the Blvd.	A summer basketball program will be implemented	Jackson/Tone	This program is just the start in a range of resident oriented activities.
Baseball program	Local resident will facilitate a youth baseball program	Resident/Lt. Jaz	-
Party Stone	A plan will be developed for the party store	COT	The party store has been identified by all involved as an area of focus for criminal

NOTES:



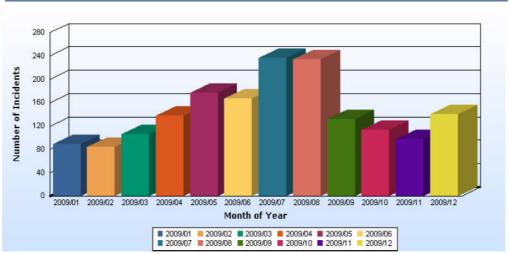
Appendix D





Number of Incidents by Month





Total	1,714	
December, 2009	140	
November, 2009	97	
October, 2009	113	
September, 2009	132	
August, 2009	234	
July, 2009	237	
June, 2009	167	
May, 2009	177	
April, 2009	138	
March, 2009	106	
February, 2009	84	
January, 2009	89	
Month of Year	Count	



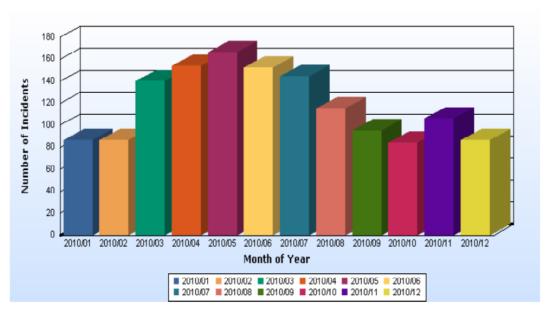
Appendix E





Number of Incidents by Month





Month of Year	Count
January, 2010	86
February, 2010	86
March, 2010	140
April, 2010	154
May, 2010	166
June, 2010	152
July, 2010	144
August, 2010	115
September, 2010	95
October, 2010	84
November, 2010	106
December, 2010	86

Total 1,414



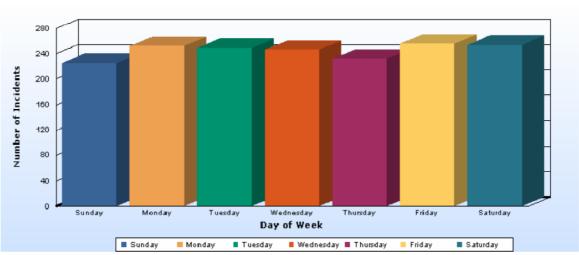
Appendix F





Number of Incidents by Day





Day of Week	Count
Sunday	225
Monday	252
Tuesday	249
Wednesday	246
Thursday	232
Friday	256
Saturday	254
Total	1.714



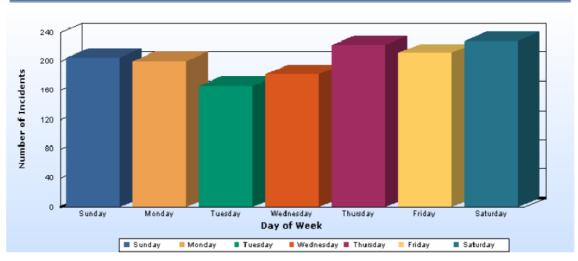
Appendix G





Number of Incidents by Day





Day of Week	Count
Sunday	205
Monday	200
Tuesday	166
Wednesday	182
Thursday	222
Friday	211
Saturday	228



Appendix H





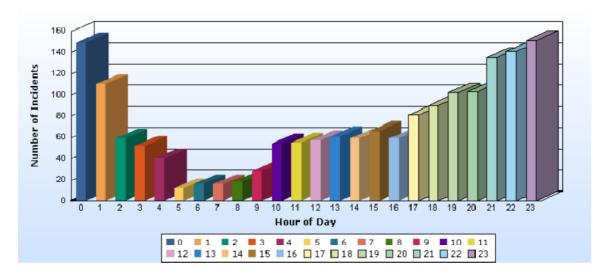
Number of Incidents by Time

Report Description

Timeframe: From 2009-01-01 00:00:00 To 2009-12-31 23:59:00

Location: 6

User Comments: N/A





23

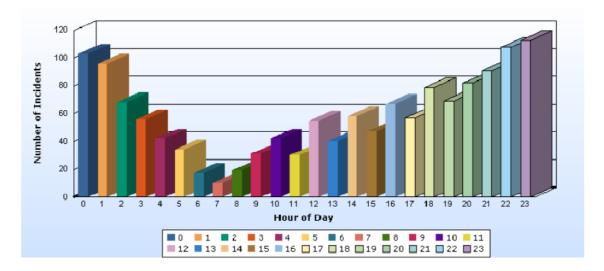


Appendix I





Number of Incidents by Time



Hour of Day	Count
0:00	103
1:00	96
2:00	68
3:00	56
4:00	42
5:00	42 34
	3 4 17
6:00	
7:00	10
8:00	19
9:00	31
10:00	42
11:00	30
12:00	55
13:00	40
14:00	58
15:00	47
16:00	67
17:00	57
18:00	79
19:00	69
20:00	82
21:00	91
22:00	108
23:00	113
Total	1,414