

Community

Problem

Solving

Identifying Results

By Tom Muchleisen

"National Night Out" Crime Prevention, Hercules, CA

If you thought Community Policing was a shift away from statistics and numbers, think again! We still need these methods to quantify our success and evaluate strategies.

The Hercules Police Department serves a multi-ethnic community of approximately 20,000 in the San Francisco Bay area. The department and the city of Hercules made the philosophical shift to Community Problem Solving (CPS) in the latter part of 1992.

We were doing a pretty good job keeping crime down and interacting with citizens, but as in many agencies our officers were inclined to spend most of their time in their cars. This was in part due to our growth; for several years in the 1980s, Hercules was one of the fastest growing cities in the state. The population grew from 3,000 in 1978 to approximately 20,000 today.

One of our first goals, to establish a Mission Statement, resulted in the following:

We, the members of the Hercules Police Department, are committed to the improvement of the quality of life for the citizens of Hercules by working in partnership with them. We will work to maintain safe and secure neighborhoods while treating everyone with respect and dignity. We will be open-minded and consistently improve ourselves professionally in order to serve the community.

With this statement in hand, we got the officers to commit to it. We encouraged them to spend more time out of their cars in order to identify and solve problems relative to the Mission Statement (quality of life issues).

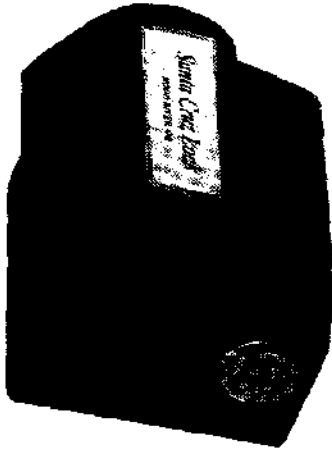
A significant problem that was quickly identified and addressed was an increase in violence between two rival gangs. The violence had escalated to a shooting and a retali-



Hercules Police Department Officer Rob Pesmark checking graffiti (top) and Officer Tim Herbert with D.A.R.E. students (bottom).

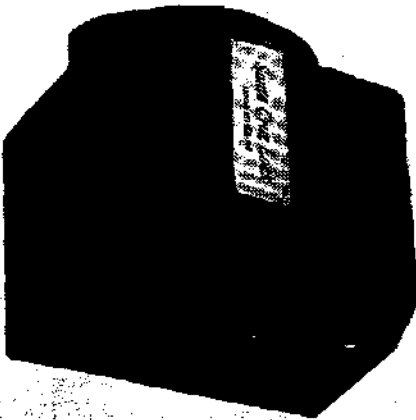
SANTA CRUZ

GUNLOCKS AND MOUNTS



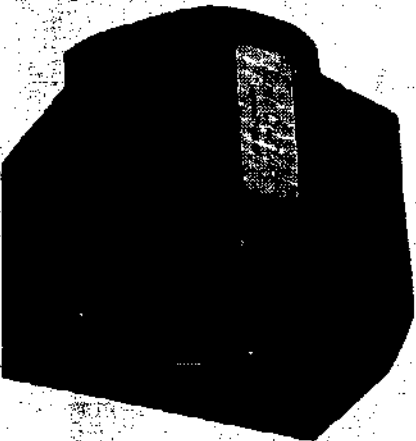
STANDARD

Remington 870
Winchester
Mossberg
Ithaca
etc.



MEDIUM

Mini 14
large
shotguns



LABSE

AR-15
MP-5
etc.

MOUNTING BRACKETS
muzzle down, overhead, cage,
screen, floor, trunk

GUNLOCK VERSIONS
electric only, electric plus key or
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ation firebombing in the same evening.

Two officers with a special rapport with the youth in the community and local gang members initiated a mediation meeting between the two gangs. Nearly 50 gang members attended the meeting and a successful truce was negotiated. (We consider this a success because the truce has held for over a year.) The parents of the gang members were a part of the process and exchanged ideas and suggestions.

As our CPS philosophy emerged and our officers began spending more time out of their cars, we realized that whatever strategy was used for Community Policing, or problem solving, there should be a way to capture some of the time spent on CPS and the results of problem-solving activities. If we were to realize our success, plan or rethink our strategies, and recognize and reward the efforts of the officers doing the problem solving, then we needed a process for evaluation and tracking.

We developed a method of evaluation by adding Community Problem Solving codes to our list of disposition codes. For example, if an officer is out talking with local business people (problem solving), he would radio the dispatcher a code "CPSB" for "business" prior to the contact. Upon going back into service, the time spent is captured for this particular business contact.

Additional codes include: "CPSJ" for juvenile contacts "CPSP" for park contacts "CPSN" for Neighborhood Watch meetings "CPSS" for school contacts and school programs "CPSC" for self-initiated citizen contacts.

In addition to the tracking codes, we developed a short report form for CPS special activities. The form covers the event or problem, location, number of attendees, officers involved, and whether or not a Neighborhood Watch is in effect in that area.

Another strategy the department is developing is called "Adopt a Neighborhood." The city is divided into several specific geographical areas, and officers sign up for those areas to identify and solve problems. Although we have a two-beat patrol area, officers are allowed to go off beat as required to solve problems emanating from their assigned areas.

Although we still have a long way to go, by developing new strategies and capturing important problem solving activities we have sufficient data for recognition purposes. During the department's annual command inspection, we awarded our first "Officer of the Year" honor for community problem solving efforts.

Regardless of the strategies utilized by any agency, it is important to quantify Community Policing and problem-solving efforts in order to measure success and to facilitate recognition in evaluations and awards. If CPS is to survive, we must be able to capture results and recognize and reward the efforts and strategies of our officers. L&O

Sgt. Thomas Meuhleisen is a 16-year veteran officer with the Hercules, CA, Police Department.

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