



COPS

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Springfield Police Department

Springfield, Missouri

www.springfieldmo.gov/spd

Community policing element

Problem/issue

Community partnerships

Quality of life

Problem description

Criminal activity concentrated around neighborhoods and businesses.

Community policing strategies implemented

The Springfield Police Department’s (SPD) Crime Prevention Unit began looking at the possibility of expanding the concepts of neighborhood watch to area businesses. The end result was a program, titled Business Watch, which focused specifically on business-related criminal activity issues.

Almost immediately after the Business Watch program was developed, the Crime Prevention Unit contacted Springfield’s City Utilities (CU) to see if it would be interested in receiving the Business Watch training, which was also known as “The Watch.” The Crime Prevention Unit wanted the opportunity to partner with CU in an effort to train CU’s employees to be able to better identify criminal activity and urge them to report that activity if and when they observed it in the field. CU accepted the training offer, and Crime Prevention Officer David Snider developed an interactive, in-service training program for the employees.

The in-service training included the basics of reporting crime and how that information could be used to deter criminal activity and solve many different crimes. Emphasis was placed on the fact that utility workers often times had an advantage of seeing criminal activity as it unfolded. The presentation included the following information:

- CU employees had the ability to provide law enforcement with additional “eyes and ears” in the field.
- CU employees working in the field are in places that can be advantageous and often times inaccessible to police officers.
- CU field employees often times work in utility vehicles and can see from elevated vantage points.



- CU field employees are often times on foot in neighborhoods while they are performing repairs, conducting maintenance, and taking meter readings.
- CU field employees often times see and hear things as they are happening.

Other parts of The Watch included segments on how to identify suspicious activity, people, and vehicles. The program covered how to report the activity and why relaying the information to the police is important. It also conveyed the importance of being a good witness and testifying in court should that need arise.

The in-service training was provided to 501 CU employees (including CU administrators), with 24 different sessions, from April through September 2012. As a result of this partnership, a unique decal is being created and integrated for display on CU field vehicles. The display of this decal will show a professional, working relationship between the SPD and CU.

Change and/or impact as a result of these community policing efforts

The following are the changes/impacts this community policing effort has had or has the propensity to have and who has or could benefit from it:

Preventing/identifying criminal activity - The Watch program has increased the ability for criminal behavior to be prevented and/or identified because there are 501 extra sets of eyes and ears in the field to assist in those activities. The citizenry, the involved CU workers, and ultimately the SPD have or could possibly benefit from this enhancement.

Reporting of criminal activity – With trained CU workers in the field, The Watch program has increased the possibility that criminal activity will be reported to the SPD. This type of activity would benefit the citizenry, the CU worker if the crimes are occurring on/against CU property, and the SPD if the information is successfully used to solve the crime in question.

Strengthening the relationship between the SPD and CU – Community engagement is a vital aspect of any crime prevention program, and The Watch has strengthened the relationship between the SPD and CU. Also, CU workers feel more confident in their abilities to identify and report criminal activity to the SPD. Because of this, the benefit to both entities and the citizenry in general can't be quantified.

Lessons learned through program implementation

When the Crime Prevention Unit first looked into revitalizing the SPD's neighborhood watch program, the Crime Prevention Unit realized that the program simply overlooked the need to partner with area businesses in the above-described manner. By expanding the concepts found in the neighborhood watch program to businesses, it allowed for a much more complete program.



The Business Watch program has allowed the SPD to truly engage the community it serves and develop meaningful relationships with area businesses, to include CU. This type of relationship and training program will no doubt assist the SPD in combating criminal behavior in the future.

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