

# TELEMASP BULLETIN

## TEXAS LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM

October 1998

Vol. 5, No. 7

### Arlington's Geographic Policing Model

#### Introduction

As a result of the Kansas City Patrol Preventive Experiment and other studies, many believe that police efforts do not reduce crime. However, it has recently been proven that focused police efforts can make a difference (Hoover 1998). The 1992-1993 Kansas City Gun Reduction Experiment revealed that by focusing on one area—gun crimes—the police can help reduce crime. In the targeted area, gun crimes decreased by an astounding 49% (Sherman, Shaw and Rogan 1995). These focused police efforts are termed crime-specific strategies.

A method used by many departments is to focus on neighborhoods. It is thought that by using crime-specific strategies and focusing on quality of life issues, the police can reduce crime. An excellent example is the Arlington Police Department's "Geographic Policing Model." By changing deployment strategies and personnel responsibilities and roles, the Arlington Police Department succeeded in increasing departmental communication and cooperation. Other strategies such as generalizing detective assignments were also implemented, yielding a host of beneficial results.

#### The Arlington Police Department

In October 1997, the Arlington Police Department instituted a citywide change in personnel distribution. At the heart of this change was the organization of

officers based on a geographic area to better meet community needs. The new design was appropriately termed the "Geographic Policing Model." Included in the model was a new sense of team management and the empowerment of line level officers.

Arlington is located in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex with an approximate population of 290,000. Encompassing 123 square miles and employing 478 sworn officers with three patrol sectors, Arlington is the sixth largest municipal police department in Texas.

After extensive research and planning, the department felt that a geographic organization of personnel was the best way to improve community service. In October 1996, a pilot Geographic Policing Model was implemented in East Arlington. The model included role and duty changes for every rank, but the most significant and important changes occurred at the sergeants' rank. Nevertheless, lieutenants, patrol officers, and detectives were also important to the model's success. An

**Special Bulletin  
Co-Sponsored by the  
Texas Regional Community  
Policing Institute**

*Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas  
Texas Regional Community Policing Institute*

increase in problem-solving and other proactive tactics was encouraged, resulting in new strategies. Additionally, the department formed community partnerships to fight crime and disorder.

After the excellent effects the Geographic Policing Model had in East Arlington, the department adopted the model citywide. Some of the results included a decrease in crime, increased quality of life, better departmental communication, and higher officer job satisfaction.

### Pre-Implementation

The Arlington Police Department began implementing community policing several years ago, developing key ideas that, in part, helped make the Geographic Policing Model a success. One issue included an educational requirement. In 1985, the department implemented a four-year college entry requirement. Research indicates that higher educated officers tend to be less rigid (Worden 1990), thus enabling creative approaches to problems. This helps line level officers respond to community needs in new and more effective ways.

The department credits the smooth transition to the Geographic Policing Model to an open planning stage and communication with all officers. Key officers were invited to participate in the early planning stages, and the department kept officers informed of changes that would occur and how they would be implemented. Volunteers staffed the pilot model in East Arlington and provided in-service training to all officers. The department also instituted academy training to address the model.

A modification of officer performance evaluations was needed. Although the department had previously changed its evaluation system to address problem identification and solving, it was necessary to specifically address the officers' assigned geographic areas. Thus, officers were evaluated partly by their response to community needs and problems in their specific area.

It was important to keep in mind other city departments and divisions when making the transition to a Geographic Policing Model. The cooperation, for example, of code enforcement, dispatch, and streets greatly

increased the likelihood of the model's success. Without these departments being part of the team, officers could have become disenchanting, thus limiting their problem-solving strategies.

Accountability was an issue permeating the entire Geographic Policing Model. Officer accountability increased cooperation among personnel and resulted in new problem-solving methods. Modeled after New York City's "Computer Statistics" (COMSTAT) program, Arlington held command staff accountable for specific geographic areas. During weekly meetings, officers and command staff discussed crime in their area, possible explanations for the crimes, and actions taken.

### Role Modifications

**Lieutenants.** A lieutenant's responsibility expanded with the inception of the Geographic Policing Model. Rather than responsible for just a shift, they are now responsible for a geographic area 24 hours a day. Each lieutenant was assigned three beats which helped to eliminate compartmentalization, such as "that's a night shift problem" or "that's a day shift problem." Being responsible for "all" problems in his/her area, lieutenants communicated and worked with all shifts to coordinate activities. Thus, this change increased communication and cooperation among shifts.

Lieutenants are also responsible for analyzing crime in their area by reviewing weekly crime reports and noting trends or unusual occurrences. Sergeants then complete their own review and present findings. This assists lieutenants, while assuring that sergeants become familiar with crime trends in their specific geographic area. During weekly meetings, lieutenants explain crimes and police activities in their area to other lieutenants, command staff, and administrators.

The change in the lieutenant's responsibility was a key factor in promoting departmental teamwork. Working with all personnel in their area helped reduce crime and response to community needs.

**Sergeants.** The sergeant's job duties also changed from a shift to a geographic area. One sergeant was assigned to each of the three beats within the lieutenant's geographic area. The sergeant, like the lieutenant, was responsible for a particular area 24 hours a day. Although the three sergeants had different shifts, they

were given flexibility to switch and/or alter their shift times with one another. This allowed them to have a better knowledge of their area and an opportunity to communicate with personnel assigned to other shifts.

Although sergeants were given flexibility to modify their shifts, it was difficult to maintain proper coverage because of days off and vacation time. It was also difficult because at the onset of the Geographic Policing Model, sergeants worked 10-hour shifts. The 10-hour shift was initially instituted to enable greater communication by overlapping shifts. After careful consideration, however, the department returned to 8-hour shifts, hoping to eliminate coverage problems and offer sergeants more opportunities to modify shifts.

With a return to 8-hour shifts, communication between sergeants and personnel became a concern. Some officers who worked different shifts than their sergeants felt alienated from their supervisor and the chain of command. It was important for all three sergeants to communicate well with one another to keep abreast of personnel concerns and issues.

Another issue concerned evaluation of personnel who were not on the supervising sergeant's shift. Since a sergeant was responsible for all officers in his/her area, he/she evaluated those who he/she often did not work with directly. Some officers thus raised questions regarding their evaluation by a sergeant who did not even work on their shift. It became important for sergeants to modify their shifts so as to have an opportunity to work with all the personnel they supervised. Therefore, a sergeant who worked on the same shift with an officer also participated in the evaluation by discussing with the supervising sergeant the officer's work performance. Teamwork among all three sergeants helped reduce any concerns that officers raised about being improperly evaluated.

Sergeants were encouraged to practice more proactive problem-solving tactics. They reviewed crime or calls-for-service reports, for example, to analyze them for new trends and significant increases or decreases. Sergeants could then research the fluctuation or trend and devise a strategy to eliminate the problem. The Arlington Police Department took the view that not only crime, but also quality of life issues, were important. Apparently, Arlington's focus on quality of life issues helped to reduce crime as well as raise the

community's satisfaction with the city and the police department.

**Patrol.** Line-level officers also faced a change when the Geographic Policing Model was implemented. Being assigned to a geographic area, patrol officers were encouraged to become more proactive and develop problem-solving tactics. This included more cooperation with the community to better serve their needs. Officers developed partnerships with apartment and business owners or managers, and others. For example, apartment managers informed officers of suspicious or troublesome tenants, while officers informed managers of tenants who had been arrested. Through this cooperation, apartment complexes such as East Arlington's Indian Creek had a dramatic decrease in crime and other problems.

Partnerships with local businesses aided in robbery prevention and quality of life issues such as loitering and vandalism. To build a partnership with local youths, one officer organized a trip to a baseball game at Arlington's ballpark. Officers also took proactive measures to prevent problems that might arise during worker strikes. When it was learned that a strike was going to occur, officers met with the strikers and discussed Arlington's trespass laws and other important issues, thus diffusing potential problems and decreasing the likelihood for calls-for-service.

Another problem-solving method used by the Arlington Police Department was documented in *Problem Solving Quarterly* (Fall 1997). A high number of calls-for-service was generated from a local nightclub, ranging from public intoxication to assaults to DWIs. Officers devoted an inordinate amount of time and resources to handle these calls. To resolve this situation, a meeting was held with the nightclub's management. As a result, the management and police department formed a partnership. The nightclub management agreed to take several steps, including denying entrance to patrons previously arrested at the club, and the police department assisted the nightclub by providing training to beverage servers (Boyd, Russell and Smith 1997).

An endemic issue in encouraging and promoting proactive methods was managing the number of calls-for-service. Since first shift officers traditionally received fewer calls-for-service, they had more oppor-

tunity to use proactive methods and develop community partnerships. Officers on the second and third shifts, however, had less time to engage in these activities because of the numerous calls-for-service. As calls-for-service increased, officers often left their assigned beat to answer calls. Since one of the Geographic Policing Model's goals was for beat officers to remain in their own area, a reserve unit was used from another area to answer calls-for-service. The nature of the call naturally dictated the response time needed, and if necessary, a beat officer temporarily left his/her beat. However, using reserves in the described manner helped reduce this occurrence.

**Detectives.** One of the most important changes resulting from the model increased the communication and cooperation between detectives and patrol. Before the Geographic Policing Model was implemented, detectives were responsible for a particular crime type that may have occurred anywhere in the division. With Geographic Policing, detective responsibilities were generalized to all types of crime. They are now assigned to a particular beat and are responsible for all criminal investigations in that beat. This put one detective responsible for one beat and gave him/her a sense of ownership over the area.

Formerly, detectives worked out of department headquarters; however, they are now stationed in their respective sector building. This placed them nearer to their geographic area and facilitated communication with patrol. Detectives attended patrol briefings and exchanged information with officers who worked in their beat. No longer do detective and patrol divisions work separately. The Geographic Policing Model created a true sense of teamwork between the two divisions, resulting in a better response to crime and community needs.

**Community Groups.** Implementation of the Geographic Policing Model created new relationships between the police department and community groups. This was particularly true in East Arlington where the Geographic Policing Model was first implemented. In the East Arlington sector headquarters, there is a meeting room used by community groups. One group, the East Arlington Renewal, is composed of volunteers who are committed to reducing crime and disorder in East Arlington, thus providing residents a safer and better community to live in.

At a recent East Arlington Renewal meeting, approximately 50 individuals attended. Included were east sector police officers and the assistant director of code enforcement for the city of Arlington. During this meeting, the East Arlington Renewal presented family dinner gift certificates to the police department for East Arlington's officer of the month.

The proliferation of homeless people was a growing concern in the East Arlington area. To address this concern, one sergeant researched the problem and then designed a presentation to show at the East Arlington Renewal meeting. He addressed such issues as identifying homeless persons, problems they may have caused, and what was being done to alleviate these problems. Those in attendance were impressed, and it helped community residents better understand the issue and police response.

The assistant director of code enforcement hosted a discussion that explained code enforcement and what the community could expect from it. He pointed out that code enforcement worked from within the police department. Code enforcement officers now have office space at the police department's three sector headquarters, and code officers will begin a new program where they ride along two hours a day with a police officer. Cooperation between the police department and code enforcement can be instrumental in reducing nuisance violations and raising a neighborhood's quality of life.

Formerly, these meetings would have had a much lower turn-out and there would not have been any officers in attendance. The director of East Arlington Renewal credited part of the increased attendance and membership to the Geographic Policing Model. Residents now see that the police department truly wants to help improve the community, and that together the department and the community can accomplish this goal.

### Program Effects

**Reported crime.** According to the *Uniform Crime Reports*, crime throughout the country has declined in recent years. The total crime index dropped to a 10-year low of 13.5 million offenses in 1996, and violent crimes dropped 6.5% in one year (FBI 1997). Texas also witnessed a decreased crime trend, showing a

more than 25% decrease statewide from 1990-1995 (FBI 1997).

In 1997, all of Arlington's UCR numbers, except assault, were lower than their 1991 statistics. Although this is also true for most cities in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, some of Arlington's decrease may be due to the Geographic Policing Model.

The city of Arlington has seen a steady decrease in crime since 1991. Department personnel agree that some of the drop in crime is due to the redeployment of officers and proactive methods, among other characteristics of the Geographic Policing Model. Time will be the best measure, with 1998 being the first full year the city has used the model.

Arrest rates in Arlington have increased steadily over the last few years; this can not, however, be linked to the Geographic Policing Model. The rise can most likely be attributed to an increase in personnel—as the number of officers has risen, so have arrests. A shift in personnel also contributed to the rise in arrest rates. More officers are assigned to evening and midnight shifts, which tend to produce more arrests.

**Calls-for-service and response time.** Two concerns that arose with the Geographic Policing Model were calls-for-service and response rate times. The geographic deployment of personnel and the encouragement of problem-solving methods may reduce a police department's ability to respond to calls-for-service. This was not the case in the Arlington Police Department.

Though calls-for-service increased as the city's population grew, response time rates remained steady over the past few years. Authorized strength of sworn personnel also increased slightly, helping to keep response times under a 7.5 minute average from 1996 to April 1998. Thus, the department managed their calls-for-service just as successfully under the Geographic Policing Model.

**Police department communication.** Communication within the department increased substantially. At briefings, for example, there was excellent information exchange and knowledge between detectives and patrol. Having an officer and detective assigned to a specific beat increased communications since they are with each other on a regular basis and work together to

rid their beat of crime and disorder. The weekly command staff meetings increased departmental communication between lieutenants and other personnel who discuss crime trends and police response in their area. Command staff can ascertain if a particular pattern occurs solely in their area or if the trend is a citywide problem. Personnel share ideas for innovative police responses and detail their success or failure at solving problems. Successful programs are thus capitalized upon, while failures are minimized.

As previously mentioned, an issue was raised concerning communication between sergeants and patrol. Some patrol officers on different shifts from their sergeant posed a problem. One key to solving this problem was the sergeants' flexibility in modifying their shifts. Officers whose supervising sergeant was on a different shift relied on the sergeant who was on their shift; thus far this has worked well. Sergeants must keep in close contact with each other to be kept informed about their officers.

**Job satisfaction.** Departmental personnel noted an increased level of job satisfaction that appeared to permeate from lieutenants down to patrol officers. With everyone in a geographic area working as a team, cooperation and communication among officers increased. As opposed to working individually or as part of a shift, officers can have a greater impact.

By coordinating all police responses into one area, both a lieutenant's responsibility and job satisfaction increased. As a shift commander, a lieutenant did not address problems occurring on other shifts. Since problems can and often do occur over more than one shift, having 24-hour responsibility can help lieutenants tackle larger problems. Reviewing calls-for-service and crime trends can also provide greater satisfaction. No longer uninformed about calls-for-service and crime patterns, a lieutenant can devise better solutions to problems.

Detectives also benefited from the Geographic Policing Model. Since they now investigate various offense types, their work holds more interest, as investigating one crime type can tend to become monotonous over a period of time. By working in one area, a detective knows both the patrol officer and the citizens who live within that area. Through increased cooperation with patrol and more community involvement, a detective can process a case faster because he/she already has a

knowledge base about the area, the people who live there, and other information that he/she would not have under the traditional policing model.

Though a sergeant's duties became more challenging, many officers welcomed this challenge. Instead of the same mundane answers to problems, sergeants used innovative problem-solving methods. This kept an officer's job more interesting, which can lead to a higher job satisfaction level and lower the chances of burnout. Patrol officers, who were also encouraged to use problem-solving methods, noted a higher level of job satisfaction. With the department supporting their efforts, officers felt that they had the freedom to address problems through different methods. The freedom to devise personal strategies provided an excellent opportunity for all officers to break out of the normal routine, leading to increased job satisfaction throughout the department.

**The community.** One area that greatly improved was the communication and cooperation between the police department and the community. This was evident at the East Arlington Renewal meeting described earlier. The community citizens know that the police department genuinely cares about the city and its residents. This made them more willing to participate in groups such as the East Arlington Renewal, with the goal being a reduction of crime and disorder.

The police department recently surveyed city residents to determine how they viewed officers' fairness and professionalism. The survey also included questions addressing the greatest concerns that people had in their community. Approximately 1,000 usable surveys were returned, and with the information gathered, the department can better determine if officers have performed up to community standards and can identify issues that need to be further addressed in specific communities.

A new police-community partnership that received media attention in the East Arlington area was aimed to reduce apartment crimes. Working together with the East Arlington Leadership Committee, the Arlington Police Department received a "Problem-Solving Partnership Grant" from the U.S. Department of Justice. The goal was to curtail crime and disorder in several East Arlington apartment complexes. Instead of tradi-

tional methods of enforcement used to solve problems, the partnership focused on identifying and implementing nontraditional methods.

Another area to consider in the police-community relationship was citizen complaints made against the police department. Statistically speaking, there was a small decrease in both formal and informal complaints. It is difficult to definitely credit the Geographic Policing Model with the decreased number of complaints made against the department. Police executives, however, noticed a marked decrease in citizen complaints and observed an increase in citizen commendations.

The Geographic Policing Model appears to have greatly benefited the police in community relations. With more citizens becoming involved in community groups, police/community partnerships should strengthen, and support for the police should increase dramatically. Public support can go a long way in helping police in their efforts to reduce crime and improve communities.

## Conclusion

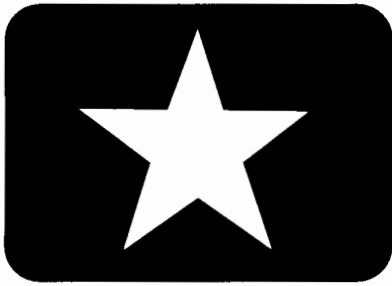
Arlington's Geographic Policing Model has been very beneficial to the department. The changes that occurred as a result of the model illustrate how new programs and philosophies can help create a better police force. Assignments based on beats rather than shifts helped officers feel an ownership for the area they patrolled and made them feel accountable for the area's activity. Ownership for the area permeated all ranks, from detective to patrol.

The cooperation between patrol and detectives is characterized as "amazing," with information exchange now the norm. Police personnel remarked how satisfied they are with the new model, including being able to devise their own solutions to problems. Sergeants, who faced the most change, have become excellent team leaders who keep in tune with what is occurring in their beat. Cooperation with the community has also been a great benefit of the model. Officers are involved with community groups more, and citizens see that the police department does care about neighborhoods. This has led to a reinforcing effect where more citizens are joining community groups after seeing that the police are willing to work with them to help solve their problems.

## References

- Boyd, L., Russell, B., & Smith, R. (Fall 1977). Taming the "cowboys": Arlington police reduce call for service from local nightclub, *Problem Solving Quarterly* 10(3), 1-2.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (September 28, 1997). *Crime in the United States—1996*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Hoover, L.T., editor. (1998). *Police Program Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum.
- Sherman, L.W., Shaw, J.W., & Rogan, D.P. (January 1995) The Kansas City Gun Experience, *National Institute of Justice: Research in Brief*. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Worden, R. (1990). A badge and a baccalaureate: Policies, hypotheses, and further evidence, *Justice Quarterly* 7(3), 565-592.

This project was co-sponsored by cooperative agreement #97-CK-WX-0020 awarded by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions contained within this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



**BILL BLACKWOOD**

**L**aw  
**E**nforcement  
**M**anagement  
**I**nstitute of  
**T**exas

Randy Garner, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

Kay Billingsley  
Publications Manager

For information about LEMIT  
programs, call (409) 294-1669

TELEMASP Monthly Bulletins,  
ISSN 1075-3702, are produced  
under an agreement with the

**Police Research Center**  
Sam Houston State University  
Larry T. Hoover, Ph.D., Director  
Jamie L. Tillerson, Program Manager

For information about TELEMASP  
Bulletins, call (409) 294-1704

This bulletin was authored by Mr. Matthew A. Lysakowski, a Master of Arts student at Sam Houston State University. Mr. Lysakowski received his bachelor's degree from West Chester University of Pennsylvania and served as a park ranger with the National Park Service prior to enrolling in graduate school. His research interests include community-oriented policing and wildlife law enforcement.



*A Member of The Texas State University System*

**Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement  
Management Institute of Texas**

Criminal Justice Center  
Sam Houston State University  
Huntsville, TX 77341-2296

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No. 26  
Huntsville  
Texas