Problem-Oriented Policing in a Mid-Sized City

Tom Casady
Chief of Police
Lincoln, Nebraska
What’s a mid-sized city?

- Lincoln: 251,000
  - 73rd largest U.S. City
  - 317 sworn officers
- UCR Group II and Group I subset
  - Populations of 100,000 to 499,999
  - 223 cities with total population of 41,159,030
Features of mid-sized cities

- Greater volume of police incidents
- More media attention on police
- Political environment more partisan
- Heterogeneous culture
- Influence of unions
- “Big city” problems
- Resource availability & scarcity
POP Projects

- Theft of high-value metals
- Storage garage burglaries
- Off-campus drinking party disturbances
- Open garage burglaries
Theft of high-value metals

- Scan revealed huge increase, local and international problem

- Two major strategies:
  - Local ordinance
    - ID, fingerprints, 72 hour hold or permit
    - No prior theft convictions
  - Targeted public awareness
    - Construction trades
    - Residents near construction
Metal Thefts at Construction Sites
Lincoln, Nebraska
Results:

Cases
- 44%
Storage garage burglaries

- Outbreak discovered in 2000
  - Discussion at ACUDAT meeting
  - Sgt. Jeri Roeder

- Strategy
  - Higher-security locks
  - Public awareness
Results:

- 65%
Party disturbances

- Strategy formulated in 1997-98
- NU Directions coalition
- Lincoln College Partnership
The impact of high risk drinking on crime

- Young people are at risk.
- Rapes, assaults, DUI offenses, and other crimes.
- High-risk drinking contributes to significant neighborhood decay.
Density of Party Complaints Near Campus
Strategies

- **Party Patrol**
  - Objective: increase perception of risk by underage and high-risk drinkers and hosts
- **Increased arrests**
- **Reports to student judicial affairs**
- **Enhanced publicity**
- **Landlord accountability**
Maintaining a disorderly house arrests

Results:

- 34%
Open garage burglaries

- Southeast Lincoln
- Project initiated in late 2007
- Sgt. Jason Stille’s squad
- Built on prior POP projects
  - Flyer distribution
- The graveyard shift’s new approach
Open garage burglaries
Open doors found by officers
Results:

2006: 305
2007: 259
2008: 193

-37%
The common thread...

...prevention!
Problem-oriented policing is a great complement to a COMPSTAT process.
Impediments to POP

- Poor data
- Lack of analytical capacity
- Absence of champion
- High CFS volume per officer
- Multiple and conflicting expectations
- Inadequate training
- No management support structure
- Negative organizational culture
Overcoming obstacles

- It’s all about results
- Show everyone it works!
  - Officers
  - Community
  - Media
  - Elected officials
- Mainstream POP