

**NARCOTIC DETECTION/
CRIMINAL
APPREHENSION
THROUGH
ENFORCEMENT
AND EDUCATION**

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PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING PROJECT
MOTEL/HOTEL TRAINING

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SCANNING

In April of 1998 I decided to address a problem that the Twin Falls Police Department were encountering with the local hotel/motels. It became obvious, to me, from the information that I had received from the Narcotics Unit, that a majority of the criminal element they were targeting were either staying at our motels or frequenting them.

ANALYSIS

The first thing that I did was make personal contact with the hotels/motels that had a high rate of calls for service or that were identified as being a "safe haven" for the criminal element. I asked the managers what their concerns were and how they felt the police could address those problems. I then explained to them that my goal was to work with them and help them police their establishment.

RESPONSE

The first plan which I implemented was advising the managers to keep a list of problem tenants and creating a phone tree for the managers to inform each other of the people that they had kicked out of their hotel/motel.

My second plan was to provide a training session for the managers that would educate them in the area of narcotics and fraud. I did conduct that training with assistance of the Narcotics Unit and the detective in charge of investigating fraud cases.

ASSESSMENT

The results of the partnership that was developed were immediately noticed. The calls for service increased as a result of the managers increased knowledge of the criminal element, along with their faith in the police's ability to help them.

I received positive comments from other patrol officers and the narcotic detectives as to the amount of cooperation that they have received from the hotel/motel managers while conducting criminal investigations.

The quick thinking and cooperation of the managers resulted in an increase in arrests of wanted subjects and narcotic violators. Due to some of the arrests, search warrants were obtained that resulted in the recovery of stolen property.

All of my response goals have been accomplished with the exception of amending the city code so that it will require the managers to verify identity of renters by examining photo identification and logging the information.

There was some concern that the problem would filter out to rental properties throughout town. Those problems, if they arise, will be addressed by aggressively enforcing the nuisance abatement laws.

SCANNING

In April of 1998, I decided to address a problem that the Twin Falls Police Department was encountering with local hotels and motels. It became obvious by the information that was being provided by the Narcotics Unit that a majority of the criminal element which they were targeting were either staying at the hotels/motels or at least frequenting the hotels/motels.

A majority of the crimes are directly related to the use and or sale of methamphetamine. It seemed more appropriate to target the source of the criminal activity and not the symptoms.

The method to deal with the problem at the time was to make traffic stops on the vehicles leaving the area, and through a valid Terry stop apprehend narcotic violators. This method dealt with the enforcement aspect of our job. It became apparent to me that we, as a department, also needed to provide education to the managers of the hotels/motels so they could better police their own establishments.

ANALYSIS

When I started this project I had been an employee of the Twin Falls Police Department for just over a year. The stories that I heard from more senior officers were

that the hotel/motel managers were uncooperative with the Police Department. I set out to investigate that claim.

I contacted the managers of all of the hotels/motels that we responded to frequently and or were known by our narcotics officers to be a safe haven for narcotics violators. As I met with the various managers, I tried to get a feel of what they perceived to be their biggest problem. Their biggest concern was suspicious people, and not knowing when to call the police. I then briefly advised them that I wanted to help them by offering our assistance and expertise. In talking with the managers, I discovered that a majority of them didn't communicate with the other hotel/motel managers, nor did they know what their rights were as managers.

I first recommended that they begin to keep a list of tenants that they have kicked out of their establishment or were arrested by the police. I suggested that they share that information with the other hotel/motel managers so that their problem didn't become someone else's problem. I recommended that they start a phone tree notification system that would make it easy for them to share information. They all agreed to try the phone tree system.

I asked all of the managers if they would be willing to attend a training session provided by the Police Department. They were told that the training would include: how to recognize a methamphetamine lab; how to spot counterfeit currency; and general tips on how to spot a potential problem renter. All of the managers were receptive to the idea of a training class.

RESPONSE

After receiving positive comments on the proposed training, I talked with other department members to gain assistance in the training. Detective Andy Johnson, of the Narcotics Division, was more than happy to assist with the training on clandestine laboratories and other narcotic training. I also gained the assistance of Detective David Heidemann who agreed to assist with the training on counterfeit documents.

I then contacted a representative of City Hall to reserve the City Council Chambers as a place to conduct the training. During the time that I was setting up the training and the date of the training, which was May 28, 1998, I continued to keep an open line of communication with the hotel/motel managers. I provided them with my business card and I encouraged them to call the police when they had a problem. I also encouraged them to leave a message on my voice mail when they had a question that didn't require immediate police assistance. I was also able to answer questions that they had in reference to the Police Department. This allowed me to build up the trust that some of them already had with the Police Department and create trust that most of them didn't have with our department.

I found out that a good majority of them didn't call the police because they didn't think we wanted to help them. I heard the complaint that when they did call the police, they at times, were never told what the outcome was or what their options were.

I advised them to tell the dispatcher that they wanted contact by the police officer when they called for assistance. I also did my part by spreading the word to the other officers, that the managers were pro police and would like contact when responding to their establishments.

A letter was drafted and sent out to all of the hotel/motel managers. The letter provided information on the time and place of the training. It emphasized that a partnership between the community and law enforcement to address community problems was very important.

Several of the managers responded by saying that they would attend the training. On the date of the training, May 28, 1998, there were eight representatives of various hotels/motels present. After thanking everyone for attending the training, I outlined why this training was so important. I briefly described our dilemma with methamphetamine and the crime that results from the use of the drug.

It was emphasized that although our community is small, we do have a large array of areas that are hit by all types of crime. They were told that they needed to be our eyes and ears to what is going on in the community. I then quoted Sir Robert Peeles' 7th principle:

"TO MAINTAIN AT ALL TIMES A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PUBLIC THAT GIVES REALITY TO THE HISTORIC TRADITION THAT THE POLICE ARE THE PUBLIC AND THAT THE PUBLIC ARE THE POLICE: THE POLICE BEING ONLY THE MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC THAT ARE PAID TO GIVE FULL TIME ATTENTION TO DUTIES WHICH ARE INCUMBENT ON EVERY CITIZEN IN THE INTEREST OF COMMUNITY WELFARE AND EXISTENCE."

I provided them with some information that would help them screen potential tenants. The following guidelines were provided:

1. Inspect photo identification of all tenants. They should be wary of the people who drive to the hotel/motel and then claim that they don't have identification. They should also be suspicious of the people who claim to have a local address and no real reason to be staying in a hotel/motel.
2. Obtain vehicle license plates when possible, to ensure that you have the correct information, and require that they bring in their vehicle registration.
3. Explain the hotel/motel rules to all tenants prior to accepting money. If you have a loud noise policy, enforce it. Let all tenants know that the police will be called when they think that criminal activity is ongoing.
4. Report all suspicious activity, i.e. frequent guests, numerous incoming/outgoing phone calls.

It was heavily stressed that it is virtually impossible to combat or suppress crime unless we all do our part. Verifying identification alone will not keep criminals from inhabiting their establishment. I used the analogy of the balloon air displacement theory to describe why it's important that law enforcement work with the community. If only one of us is aggressively pursuing a problem, the problem will go to the area that is not active in combating it. If we both press on the problem from different sides, the problem will either leave or be eliminated.

I described the criminal as being just like a weed. If all you do is pick at it instead of uprooting it, the weed will not only flourish but other weeds will accompany it.

Criminals behave in the exact manner. If you don't go after them aggressively with every

tool available they will learn to hide from the minimal enforcement and in turn, will attract other criminals to join them.

The training was then turned over to Detective Andy Johnson who provided information on the characteristics of methamphetamine labs. He showed a video tape recording of a methamphetamine lab that was taken down by the State Narcotics Officers at an area motel. None of the hotel/motel managers could spot anything out of the ordinary with the items in the room until they were pointed out by Detective Johnson.

The following red flags were pointed out to them:

1. Liquid drano (red devil lye an active ingredient in the methamphetamine process) on a shelf.
2. Glass jars on the shelf. (Some of them with liquid in them.)
3. Small plastic funnels.

The managers were then shown the various methods of packaging narcotics, and the methods that are used to ingest drugs. We displayed a large collection of drug paraphernalia so they would know what they are looking at when they find strange objects in their rooms. They were instructed to be cautious when they clean the rooms because narcotic violators often hide their syringes. This is a serious health risk for the managers and their cleaning personnel.

All of the managers had several questions in reference to the detection of narcotics and narcotic paraphernalia. Some of the questions lead us to believe that one of the motel managers had seen evidence of a methamphetamine lab in one of their rooms after someone had checked out. The police were never called, and the manager cleaned up the mess and re-rented the room. The various health considerations were given to the

owners and all of them were instructed to contact the Police Department if they notice anything unusual.

Detective Heidemann was unavailable for the first training session and the area covering fraud and counterfeit currency was covered by Detective Sergeant Chuck Dudley. I was able to provide them with a guide on detecting counterfeit twenty dollar bills. I discouraged them from accepting checks or credit cards without first verifying the name on the check with photo identification of the person presenting the check.

The training session ended and I handed out a critique sheet for the training. Everyone enjoyed the training and requested that the training be conducted at least twice a year. They also wanted a section of the training to include information on our local laws.

A follow-up training class was conducted. There were approximately 15 hotel/motel representatives present. Detective Johnson and I presented the same information. Detective Heidemann was present and provided detailed information on check forgeries, counterfeit currency, and credit card fraud. The City Attorney, Fritz Wonderlich, provided answers to the legal questions from the managers.

ASSESSMENT

After the training, our calls for service increased at some of the hotels/motels, largely in part to the cooperation of the managers who began to call the police when they

had a problem. We, as a department, started to receive information from the various hotels/motels in reference to drug activity.

The following events have occurred since the training:

1. I received a voice mail message from the manager/owner of a motel. She wanted to report suspicious activity in one of her rooms. She advised that it appeared that the renter of the room possibly had stolen merchandise in the room. The manager/owner was able to provide me with both renters names and date of births prior to my making contact at the room. This information was available because she photo copies every occupants identification. I was able to confirm that one of the occupants had three warrants for her arrest. One was for battery and the other two were for delivery of a controlled substance. I made contact with the female subject in the room and placed her under arrest. Located on her person were a baggie containing eight grams of methamphetamine, and a small amount of marijuana.
2. I responded to another motel, searching for a wanted subject. The manager/owner was able to provide me with a name of another subject that was possibly hiding the wanted subject. He also gave me the name of another renter who had made him suspicious. A warrants check of the suspicious person revealed that she had an outstanding warrant for her arrest. We made contact with a female subject in the first room. We were later advised that she had a confirmed warrant for her arrest. During a search of the room, we located a small amount of narcotics and drug paraphernalia. We also located a

male subject who was hiding under the bed. He was the renter of the room and he was subsequently arrested for the narcotics found in the room. The narcotics officers used information obtained from the male subject to obtain a search warrant for another location in reference to a possible methamphetamine lab. Other officers contacted the other suspicious tenant in an adjacent room and arrested her for the outstanding warrant.

3. An officer with the Twin Falls Police Department was conducting surveillance at an area motel reference a wanted subject who was a suspect in several check forgeries. I made contact with the manager of the motel reference the room we were watching. They provided me with the name of the person who was renting the room. It was a relative of the person we were looking for. The manager was cooperative and assisted us in entering the room. He said that the rent was due for the room and the renter had not paid the rent. He was willing to press charges for trespassing on the occupants, if they didn't exit upon his request. When the subjects didn't exit the room, we entered. Upon entry, the room was not occupied. However, we did locate a computer that was being used to produce fictitious checks. We later discovered that the computer was reported stolen from a neighboring town. The search of the room also produced a sheet of fictitious checks that were printed off of a computer, a small amount of methamphetamine and several hazardous syringes.
4. Another officer for the Twin Falls Police Department was contacted by a motel manager reference suspicious activity. He said that the room was

receiving numerous foot and vehicle traffic as well as repeated phone calls to and from the room. The officer was able to stop a vehicle leaving the area of the room. The driver of the truck, who was also the person listed on the motel register, was arrested for possession of a prescription drug without a prescription, possession of methamphetamine with intent to deliver, possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. The passenger was arrested for an outstanding warrant.

A search warrant was obtained for the motel room. Located inside the room were two other subjects. One of the subjects was found in possession of two baggies of methamphetamine and a drug ledger. The other subject was also in possession of two small baggies of methamphetamine and scales used for measuring controlled substances. During the search of the room the narcotic officers located a shirt that belonged to a deputy sheriff for Twin Falls County. It was later learned that the shirt had been stolen during a burglary of a dry cleaner establishment. Both subjects were arrested for possession of methamphetamine with intent to deliver, possession of marijuana, and possession of stolen property.

5. A minor problem occurred with one of the motels. The manager said that a male subject staying in one of the rooms has refused to pay his bill for the next night. When I arrived the male subject was not on the premises. I left the motel and advised the manager to call me when he returned. I did receive a call from her and she said that the subject collected his belongings and left. She utilized the phone tree and called the first motel on the list. It just

happened to be the first motel where the unwanted subject tried to rent a room. Based on the information that was provided by the previous motel manager, the second motel manager refused to rent a room to him.

Due to the frequent turn around of motel managers, this project will continue and the training will be provided as needed. I will continue to talk to the managers on a routine basis.

The only way to measure the success of this program is by the amount of activity that was initiated with the cooperation of the motel managers. Prior to the training there wasn't any cooperation between the Twin Falls Police Department and the motels. We now have an active dialogue with motels that has not only produced several arrests as outlined in the assessment phase, but has provided a positive image of the Twin Falls Police Department to the motels. I don't hear the negative comments about the managers that I used to hear. When I have been advised of an officers concerns about how a motel manager acted, I have been able to clarify the problem. Most of the time it has only been a misunderstanding.

There is always the concern that instead of eliminating the problem, it has only been displaced. The Narcotics Unit actively pursues the investigation of narcotic violators in the residential areas. I plan on initiating similar training for apartment landlords.

I am also currently working on changing our city code to require all motel managers to inspect photo identification of all renters, and inscribe the photo identification on the motel register.

This problem initiative was adopted at all levels of the Police Department. I received the help of other divisions as well as other city departments. I had received some problem oriented policing training prior to taking on this project. No additional incentives were given to officers who engaged in problem solving. It is our department's philosophy to address as many issues as possible through the problem solving model. I received some in-house training on maintaining a problem oriented policing file. I used that training to manage my progress. I didn't encounter any problems with the "problem oriented policing model" during my project. It seems to me that as long as the entire city is on line with the same philosophy, "the sky is the limit" in what you can accomplish. I didn't expend any additional Department money other than two hours of overtime for the first training class, and refreshments for the two training classes.