



POLICE DEPARTMENT

*City of San Carlos*

GREGORY P. ROTH AUS

*Chief of Police*

June 9, 2006

Mr. Rob T. Guerette  
School of Policy and Management  
University Park, PCA 366B  
Florida International University  
11200 S.W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street

Miami, Florida 33199

Re: The 2006 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing

Dear Mr. Guerette,

In comparison to other police departments located in the San Francisco Bay Area, San Carlos is considered a small police department. Located between San Francisco and San Jose, San Carlos has a population of 28,000, a large industrial area and a private pilot airport. The department consists of 34 sworn police officers and 21 support staff who are dedicated to the principles of problem-orientated policing and are constantly striving to improve upon its reputation of excellence and professional law enforcement.

Staffing can be an issue for a small department. Common practice is to staff communication centers of this size with only one dispatcher, and San Carlos is no different. This can present a formidable challenge when calls for service escalate. The same observation can be made with our investigations unit which is staffed by one sergeant and two full-time detectives.

When significant incidents occur in a small agency, its staff is mandated to respond by being further committed to bringing those to justice even if it requires sacrificing personal time and working longer hours. The attached application serves as an example of this type of dedication and effort which I feel deserves consideration for your prestigious award. From October 2004 through March 2005 the communications center for the San Carlos Police Department received over 4,000 911 calls from a non-activated cellular telephone. The subsequent investigation required the coordinated effort of our detectives, staff from the FCC and Sprint Mobile to develop innovative approaches to isolate and track the signal's origin. This process took several weeks during all hours of the day and eventually resulted in the recovery of the telephone and the identity of the person responsible.

I appreciate the review committee's consideration. Any future correspondence can be directed to Commander Richard Cinio. His telephone number is (650) 802-4246.

Sincerely,

  
Gregory P. Rothaus  
Chief of Police

# **“THE BABBLER”**

## **A UNIQUE RESPONSE TO A UNIQUE 911 HANG-UP SITUATION**

SAN CARLOS POLICE DEPARTMENT, INVESTIGATIONS UNIT, 2005

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**THE PROBLEM:** Beginning in October 2004, the San Carlos Police Department began to receive numerous 911 calls from a non-activated cellular telephone. This in and of itself may not seem unusual as police departments will on occasion receive 911 “hang-ups” from public, cellular and home telephones. It soon became apparent that this situation was drastically different than what had previously been experienced not only by this police department, but all others as well. The calls were repetitive and on occasion exceeded 200 in a one-hour time. This placed a tremendous burden on our solo dispatcher who has to handle other emergency calls and routine business requests from the public. The calls initially could not be traced through the re-bid process because the telephone had never been registered with a carrier and never activated.

**ANALYSIS:** From October 2004 through March 2005 the communications center for the San Carlos Police Department received over 4,000 911 calls from a non-activated cellular telephone. It was determined early on that traditional efforts to locate the caller would be unsuccessful since the telephone was never activated. Non-activated cellular telephones still have the capability to dial 911. It became apparent that the subsequent investigation would require the coordinated effort of our detectives, staff from the FCC and Sprint Mobile to develop innovative approaches to isolate and track the signal’s origin.

**RESPONSE:** Because of the severity of the situation, several unique investigative strategies had to be developed. Since the signal was directed at a local Sprint Mobile tower, our investigators partnered with them to engineer new software adjustments which allowed for signal recognition and eventual transfer to the California Highway Patrol (CHP) for a period of sixty days as the calls were hampering our efforts to field legitimate calls for service. The number of calls eventually impacted the CHP despite their greater capacity to respond. Eventually, the FCC was contacted for

and spend a great deal of time outside their normal business hours to assist with the investigation. Our investigations staff coordinated every aspect of the investigation and showed great tenacity. All this provides the ability for the staff of the San Carlos Police Department to help others with proven effective strategies should this occur again somewhere else.