

## SUMMARY

### PARTNERS AGAINST CRIME

Scanning: The City of Sugar Land experienced a 43.75% increase in part I crimes in the first quarter of 2010 when compared with 2009.

Analysis: We needed to determine which crime was pushing the increase and why. Statistics showed that burglary of a motor vehicle (bmv) had significant increases with a rise of 54.64% in the first quarter. In this affluent area there was ample opportunity with many vehicles left unsecured; and the sometimes enormous value of property left in vehicles attributed to the increase in bmvs.

Response: We chose a two prong attack for this problem. Education and Enforcement were the two key components to our initiative.

#### Enforcement

- Created an Impact Team to focus on bmvs
- Reached out to other peace officers for assistance such as fire marshals
- Assigned a detective to better coordinate with the Impact Team
- Created a Crime Reduction Unit in patrol
- Used citizen volunteers for surveillance efforts and community outreach

#### Education

- E-Policing to reach out to and educate citizens
- BMV awareness banners

- Crime prevention brochures
- Partnered with Elementary Schools for community meetings
- Partnered with area businesses

Assessment: Part I crimes dropped, and we ended 2010 with an overall decrease of 3.35% in comparison to the previous year.

## **DESCRIPTION**

### Scanning

Each month the Sugar Land Police Department's Command Staff meet to discuss current crime trends and to develop strategies to reduce crime. At the beginning of 2010, we saw that the part I crimes for the first quarter were up 43.75% in comparison with the previous year. The number of part I crimes in the city are important because we are historically ranked at the top of the safest cities in America. Our highest ranking has been fifth in the nation for our population category. Our city council has adopted a goal for the city to achieve the safest city in the nation. Our ranking is highly publicized and seen as an indicator of overall effectiveness of policing.

At the end of 2009, the Sugar Land Police Department was going through a transition period. Our police chief had been promoted to an assistant city manager position creating a vacancy. In October of 2009, Douglas Brinkley was promoted to the position of police chief. Chief Brinkley promoted a new assistant chief of operations and a new captain of patrol. The change in leadership is difficult at any time but was made even more so with the crime increase. The newly promoted personnel were tasked with addressing the daunting increase in part I crimes.

Analysis

Part I crimes encompass eight crime categories- murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/ theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Our first task was to determine what categories were driving the increase. Our stats showed the largest percentage increase was a 200% increase in aggravated assault, but the raw numbers were small with only 15 reports in the first quarter. In many of the cases, there were multiple victims so in truth there was not much increase in the actual number of events. We felt that the police department could not make a significant impact in this arena. The second highest percentage increase was 47.18% in the theft category.

We honed in on thefts but needed to dissect the problem a little more before we could attack. In the theft category, we found that shoplifting comprised a majority of reports averaging 60%. We dug deeper and did find that particular businesses at the mall were experiencing an increase in reported shoplifting. We contacted the loss prevention offices at these locations for a possible explanation. We discovered that the loss prevention managers and officers had recently turned over, so a new crew was watching the stores. This new crew was energized with their new responsibility and more focused on catching criminals in the act rather than preventing the theft as the previous crew. Experience had shown us that this attitude would eventually wane and the number of reported shopliftings would eventually level out. We determined that no extra police intervention was necessary to address the shoplifting issue.

Next in the theft category, we saw that burglary of a motor vehicle (bmv) was a major culprit with a 54.64% increase in the first quarter in comparison to the previous year. The bmv's happened mostly in parking lots where police intervention could have an impact in crime

reduction. We felt we had identified which crime to focus on and set to our next task of trying to determine why that specific crime was increasing. We reviewed each bmv report and found that one of every eight cars was left unlocked. In most of the bmv cases, valuables were left in plain sight for the opportunistic criminals to easily shop for victims. Pickings were good when sometimes as much as \$1500 cash would be left inside a vehicle.

We looked at how we handled this type of issue in the past for successes and failures. Our city is divided into five beats, and each beat has an assigned beat manager of the lieutenant rank. Each lieutenant is responsible for the crime stats for their beat. When the lieutenants saw an increase in crime, they would utilize their beat officers often on overtime to attack the increase. The extra visibility eventually would lead to a decrease in crime but often no arrests for the targeted crimes. The availability of overtime and minimum staffing requirements effected how often these operations could run. Often the problem was simply displaced into other parts of the city causing adjacent beat managers to deal with the issue.

### Response

History had shown that our past responses to this type of crime increase met with only short term success and often only with individual beat managers who moved the criminal activity to adjacent beats. We needed a more holistic approach to these specific crimes that took a broader look and engaged the community more. We determined that we needed a two prong attack. The first would be the enforcement prong which attempted to funnel the criminal activity into a particular area where officers could intervene and arrest suspects. The second would be a stronger push to educate the public on how they could assist by reducing their vulnerability to

crime. Our measure of success would be the number of reported bmvs and the overall number of part I crimes.

For better enforcement, our first decision was to create an Impact Team comprised of two officers and one sergeant that would focus on bmvs and that did not answer calls for service. The Impact Team was responsible for monitoring bmvs throughout the city and developing action plans based on the current trend. This team had more flexibility to adjust their work hours and days off as needed correlating into a quicker response when spikes cropped up. This team alternated between using high visibility police presence as deterrence and setting up sting operations to possibly catch a criminal in the act.

To assist the Impact Team in their efforts, we reached out to other city peace officers that were rarely used in that capacity- the city fire marshals. While arson investigation is their primary function, they found that working with the Impact Team to detect and investigate bmvs helped to hone their investigation/police skills while affording us the additional manpower. We also found that our citizen volunteers named the Community Assistance Support Team (CAST) were abundantly helpful. It can get boring real fast to sit and watch a bait vehicle in a parking lot. Our citizen volunteers eagerly helped out in this capacity. They felt like they were used in a more important capacity and had a larger role in crime fighting in the community. We got the extra eyes and ears needed for the surveillance tasks.

The enforcement aspect did not stop with simply the detection of crime. Sometimes a suspect vehicle or person description was provided when the initial bmv report was made. Leads like this were often stagnant by the time that the report was assigned to a detective and any follow up commenced. A single detective was assigned to assist the Impact Team with any leads

on bmv cases. This closer working relationship between patrol officers and investigators provided a quicker run down of suspects and recovery of stolen property.

Educating the public was going to be a key component to our plan. Some may say that we are a victim of our own success. Sugar Land has been one of the safest cities in the nation, and people have the expectation that they can leave valuables lying around without worry. This perception was a hindrance to our ability to reduce crime as many people did not feel a need to stay informed about criminal activity in the area.

Our crime prevention unit was up to the challenge and came up with several innovative ways to increase the level of communication with the community. We were already speaking about crime trends at homeowner association meetings but the attendance level was extremely low. Our crime prevention unit worked with the local elementary schools to pass out crime prevention literature to parents as they dropped off their children at school. The literature invited parents to a meeting at the school on the following day where crime safety tips were discussed.

Crime Prevention Officers were already collecting email contacts through a program coined as E-Policing. Contacts were sent a monthly crime prevention newsletter that alerted residents to crime trends and provided safety tips. We expanded this program and sent out daily crime report emails to subscribers that outlined the location and types of crimes reported the previous day to help create better awareness of crime in their area.

Our commercial areas were usually the highest targeted areas by bmv suspects. The crime prevention units partnered with business owners, especially the mall and fitness centers, to educate patrons. Officers set up booths at the entry to the business and passed out crime prevention brochures to customers as they entered. On other occasions, CAST would drive the

parking lots looking for valuables left in plain view. CAST would leave a flyer on the windshield of the car bringing to their attention that unattended valuables left in plain sight were easy targets for thieves. If no personnel were sitting at the locations, officers would leave a large banner standing in the front lobby of the business reminding patrons to secure their vehicle and hide valuables.

Our final piece of the puzzle was to create more buy-in from the patrol officers to treat a seemingly minor crime as a major issue. To help focus their efforts and make it more appealing for them to get involved, we created a Crime Reduction Unit (CRU) in the patrol ranks. Each day an alternating shift sergeant was assigned to CRU. If the shift had staffing levels above minimums that day, the CRU sergeant would assign alternating officers to CRU. The CRU sergeant was responsible for determining the latest hot spot for bmvs unless a more pressing crime trend was occurring. The CRU sergeant would give the CRU officers a specific area to patrol that day with the objective to make as many traffic or pedestrian contacts as possible. Our purpose was to identify suspicious persons and increase the perception that the police were everywhere by having the red and blue overhead lights on as much as possible.

### Assessment

We checked the success of our bmv prevention efforts and saw a steady decrease in the number of bmvs over the year. In comparison to the previous year, our percentages for bmv went from a 54.64% increase in the first quarter down to 45.62% decrease in the fourth quarter. We arrested twenty four suspects for bmv in 2010 compared to eight suspects in 2009. The extra enforcement with the Impact Team and CRU led to almost 10,000 more traffic contacts in 2010 than in 2009. Our initial increase of 43.75% in part I crimes in the first quarter of 2010 abated to

a 26.30% decrease in the fourth quarter. Overall, the part I crimes for 2010 ended up with 3.35% decrease in comparison with 2009. This was a reason to celebrate. Being a newly promoted command staff, we hated to potentially have to go to city council and talk about a huge increase in crime.

We realized other ancillary gains from this initiative as well. We demonstrated that we could better come together as a department to address crime issues. We developed better working relationships with other police agencies and other city departments. Our citizen volunteers felt better about their contributions. Our city leaders recognized the efforts of all officers to reduce criminal activity in the community. Most importantly, residents gained a deeper appreciation for crime in their neighborhoods.

Since we have demonstrated that seemingly minor crimes and how we deal with them can have a major impact on our crime stats, our command staff remains committed to monitoring activity in this category. So far this year, we continue to enjoy a decrease in the number of bmv reports averaging about 24% down from 2010 and overall part I crimes for 2011 are down about 23%. At some point, we know that the crime will rise again. We stand poised to change our method of attack as the needs dictate.

### **AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION**

#### Key project team members:

Officer Amy Cummins

Officer Eric Babnew

Officer Harris Johnston

Officer Lauren Stockholm

Officer Richard Rivera

Officer Matthew Newport

Officer Brennan Echols

Sergeant Mike Richards



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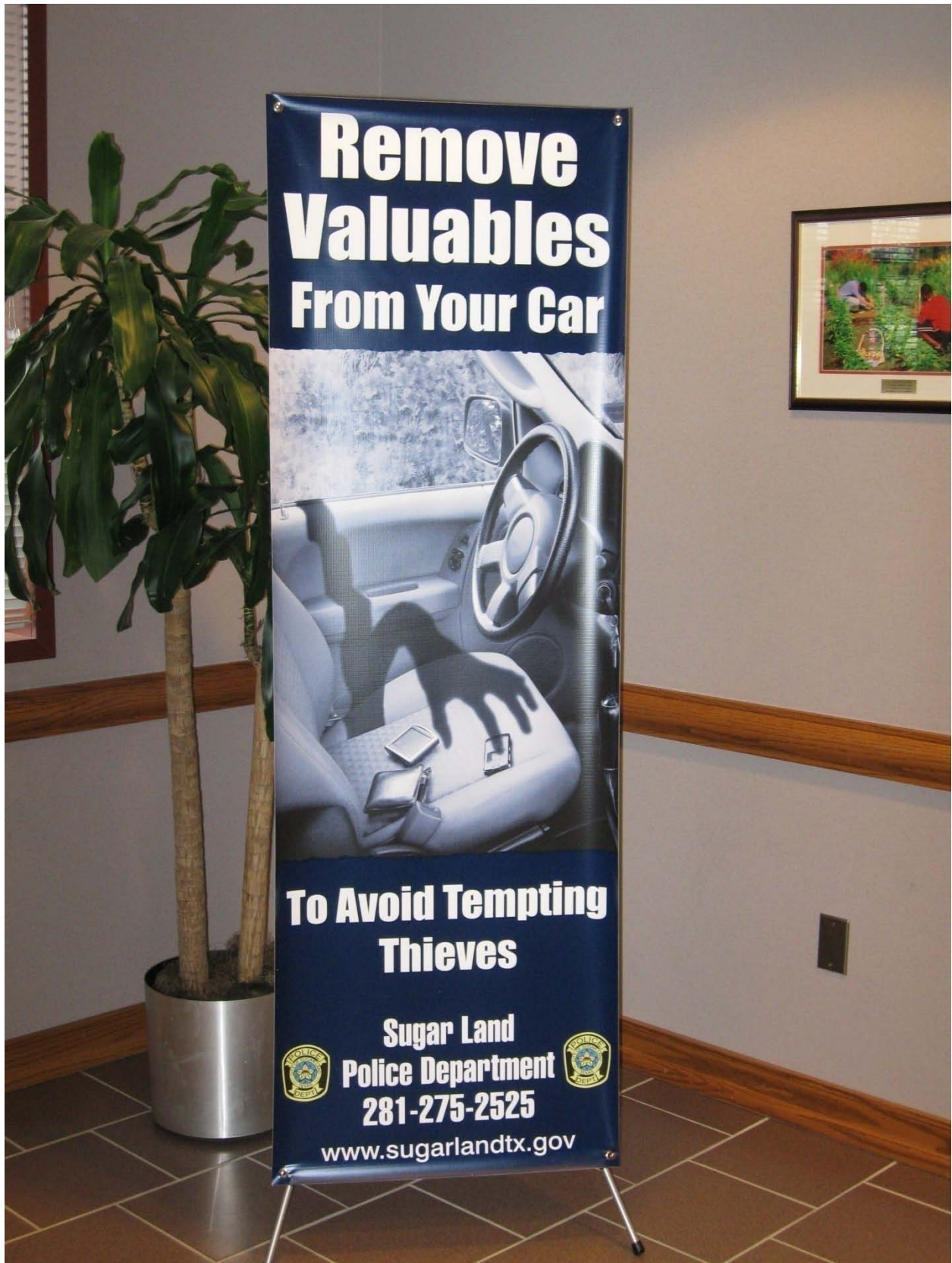
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<b>SUGAR LAND PART I. CRIMES</b>				
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>1ST QTR</b>	<b>2ND QTR</b>	<b>3RD QTR</b>	<b>4TH QTR</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>468</b>
<b>2009 comparison</b>	<b>+43.75%</b>	<b>+20.97%</b>	<b>-6.26%</b>	<b>-26.30%</b>
<b>2010 Overall</b>		<b>-3.35%</b>		

<b>Arrests</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>BMV</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>24</b>



SUGAR LAND  
POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUGAR LAND  
**PARTNERS  
AGAINST  
CRIME**

SAFETY TIPS



## Sugar Land Police Department

**Daily Crime Report**

BEAT 2/ Commercial District

07:00a.m. /05-06-2011- to 7:00a.m./05-09-2011



Date/Report	Location/Type	Status
05/07/11-02:29 11-2772	1401 SH 6 Driving While Intoxicated	Arrest
05/07/11-12:05 11-2776	5005 Sweetwater Blvd Burglary of Motor Vehicle-Items taken from reportee's vehicle while at the restaurant	Report Taken
05/07/11-16:15 11-2780	345 SH 6-Walmart Robbery-Victim reported he was robbed on previous day when cell phone was taken	Report Taken
05/08/11-06:08 11-2790	Southwest Freeway S/SH 6 Driving While Intoxicated	Arrest
05/08/11-15:46 11-2795	16760 Southwest Freeway S-Exxon Burglary of Motor Vehicle-Items taken from reportee's vehicle while at the gas station	Report Taken
05/08/11-18:38 11-2801	1331 SH 6-Lifetime Fitness Theft-Cell phone taken while at the gym	Report Taken
05/08/11-18:58 11-2802	16762 Southwest Freeway S-Ashley Furniture Theft-Cell phone taken while at the store	Report Taken
05/08/11-20:40 11-2804	13115 Southwest Freeway S-Classic Chevrolet Criminal Mischief-Two vehicles vandalized	Report Taken
05/07/11-02:09 11-2770	2222 Texas Drive Driving While Intoxicated	Arrest
05/07/11-15:58 11-2778	16535 Southwest Freeway N Drugs-Person arrested after drugs were located	Arrest