

Chapter 12

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Mental Illness

Mental Illness

A Mental Illness Problem in Los Angeles County, Calif.

Over the last two decades, in part due to a national trend toward deinstitutionalizing the mentally ill, individual communities have struggled to handle this group's special needs. Local mental health agencies, often strapped for funds, frequently cannot cope with all these needs. More and more, police are called to intervene when the mentally ill require medication or psychiatric care, are involved in disputes, or endanger their own or others' lives. Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office (LASO) Sgt. Brian Smith said, "So many of the mental health programs in counties throughout California have been eliminated that many of the mental health clinics tell callers requesting crisis service to simply call 911."

Overcrowded jails, which often are the wrong place for the mentally ill, force the police to turn to hospitals and institutions for placement of those who are a danger. The LASO estimated that 15 percent of its call load involved mentally ill people. On average, if a deputy committed a mentally ill person to an institution, it took 3.2 hours — certainly a lot of time, particularly on a busy shift with a lot of calls. In addition, LASO deputies were frustrated at "being forced to resolve a situation where the uniform created an adversarial [atmosphere]," Sgt. Smith reported. There was some concern that a uniformed response might contribute to a confrontation, concluding with the need for physical force.

In addition, some deputies believed they were not informed enough to handle these situations. They needed more information about the people they were responding to, their medical histories, and their insurance coverage (so that proper placement could be made). For instance, a veteran's hospital might already have a significant case file on a person, and be able to provide better treatment.

In October 1991, the LASO collaborated with the mental health department, teaming a sergeant and a mental health counselor in one region of the county to see if they could have greater success in handling calls involving the mentally ill. This response stemmed from research the LASO had done on handling special populations. They had read an NIJ publication, *Police Response to Special Populations*, which Sgt. Smith said encouraged police and mental-health-service providers "to work more closely together in an allied effort to address the problems associated with the mentally ill." The book outlined successes from other jurisdictions, and the LASO crafted a response that suited the particulars of its own jurisdiction.

A one-month pilot project was put together and studied to determine the feasibility of this new approach. During this time, the police-mental health counselor evaluation team spent over 123.5 hours on 43 contacts, with the following results: Seven people



were committed to county psychiatric hospitals; one person was arrested; eleven people were admitted to private psychiatric hospitals; five walkaways were returned to board-and-care facilities; follow-up phone referrals led to additional use of private bed space; physicians were enlisted after hours to help with patients exhibiting extreme behavior; and twelve people were either returned home for family care, with referrals to private services and outpatient clinics, or convinced to take prescribed medication.

Due to this initial effort's success, the LASO formed five additional collaborative mental health evaluation teams. Each team is trained in nonviolent confrontations, and the police receive intensive training in de-escalating incidents involving the mentally ill. Generally, "the teams evaluate the patient at the point of contact, and arrange appropriate placement depending on [the patient's] needs and resources," Sgt. Smith said. The teams' objectives include providing better service to the mentally ill; maximizing the availability of patrol deputies; providing more expert intervention; helping patrol deputies assess a person's need for mental health services; defusing volatile encounters with the mentally ill; providing background information on patients so appropriate assessments and placements can be made; working on chronic or acute neighborhood disturbances involving the mentally ill; training deputies on care and services available for the mentally ill; maintaining a computer database on people with mental illness and their needs, and on the services available, from least-secure to most-secure placements; intervening in attempted suicides where mental illness might play a part; working with courts for the secure placement of the dangerously mentally ill; and helping relatives of those with mental illness.

Sgt. Smith said that, for the most part, the teams transport the mentally ill themselves, avoiding ambulances, so that the patient

. . . is rapidly [placed] in the mental health care system, assuring stabilization. This process bypasses extended waiting periods at county psychiatric emergency rooms, and frees patrol deputies to return to community . . . duties. The [mental health] units are equipped with knowledge and resources that enable them to seek placement funded by sources other than the county tax-supported system . . . The units also attempt to ensure that private, county and state service providers who are licensed to receive difficult patients do not refuse these patients in order to pick and choose high-paying, low-maintenance patients.

The teams found that many of the people who were formerly placed in county psychiatric facilities had Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, or veteran's benefits. One measure of success was that the teams diverted 70 percent of the people "away from county-funded programs . . . [alleviating] the overcrowded conditions of the county psychiatric emergency rooms, and retaining vital bed space for indigent-acute mentally ill individuals," Sgt. Smith said. By diverting people to more appropriate placement, and preserving county mental health facilities for the needy, the mental

health teams saved the county \$1.4 million for fiscal year 1993 to 1994, according to an evaluation of their efforts.

Another success was the development of a diversion policy for minor-misdemeanor offenders "who are in psychiatric crisis." They no longer are criminally booked. Instead, "the person is placed in an appropriate care facility, and [the person's] crime [is] held in abeyance, pending no further problems," said Sgt. Smith.

Finally, the LASO checked whether the teams had an impact on violent confrontations during encounters between police and the mentally ill. They looked at cases where police arrived and the mentally ill person had a gun or knife, or threatened some other type of harm. On 170 occasions, the teams were able to convince the person to stop the threatening behavior, after a patrol deputy had failed to do so.

Through July 1997, the teams had intervened in more than 5,000 cases. In only 219 of those did they recommend arrest. In more than 1,000 cases, they determined that the people did not need to be hospitalized.*

Editors' note: Over the last decade, experts have suggested several ways to measure the effectiveness of problem-solving efforts. These measures include (1) reducing the number of problem incidents; (2) reducing the harm from the problem; (3) eliminating the problem completely; (4) finding the right organization or person to handle the problem; (5) handling the problem more effectively; and (6) leaving those most affected by the problem better equipped to deal with the problem in the future. For many problem-solving efforts, the measure most used in assessment is the first: whether the number of incidents has declined. It is notable that in this case, the LASO was successful by several of the less traditional measures. They reduced the harm from the problem – a significant number of potentially violent confrontations were avoided, and the monetary drain on the county mental health system was lessened. Also, the LASO enlisted the support of a more appropriate agency for their collaborative team approach, bringing mental health clinicians to the streets when the problems with the mentally ill were occurring. Finally, the LASO and county mental health department believe police encounters with the mentally ill are better handled now with this new team approach. The patients are better served – their mental health needs are better understood. And most encounters no longer result in long waits at county mental health facilities or the jail, or in physical confrontations.

Two Mental Illness Problems in St. Louis, Mo.

CASE STUDY NO. 1

In 1992, a man began repeatedly phoning the chief's office of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department. The chief's special assistant, Mike Scott, and his aide, Sgt. Robert Heimberger, handled the calls. The man complained about juveniles

*Sources: Project description submitted by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; conversations with Sgt. Brian Smith; written material submitted by Smith in support of project results.

involved in drug dealing. He claimed to be a confidential police informant, former military intelligence officer, grand juror, and neighborhood-watch leader. He spoke of his efforts to rid the neighborhood of crime and gang problems. After about a dozen such calls, Scott and Heimberger researched the dispatch and incident report files. They discovered that between January and May 1993, the police were dispatched to the man's home 27 times. The calls varied from minor disturbances to more serious armed robberies and assaults.

In just three years, the man had been listed as the victim in 17 felony reports, most of which were for assaults, burglaries and robberies. He had also been arrested for aggravated assault. Crime summaries showed the man reported either unknown assailants who robbed him on the street, or unknown intruders who assaulted him in his home. The reports further identified associates who were regular crime suspects. In addition, several police officers had been injured in a suspicious fire at the address.

The man had made most of the calls for service, complaining about people hanging around in the street, not leaving his home, or stealing money from him. Officers had handled most of these calls without writing a report. They had spent over 100 hours handling the initial criminal investigations alone. Patrol officers and detectives had spent substantial, though undocumented, time handling calls and following up on investigations. However, no single patrol officer or detective had handled more than a couple of incidents.

The man had thought patterns characteristic of a mental disorder such as schizophrenia. He also said he routinely brought people into his home to stay. Scott and Heimberger verified that the man was a Korean War veteran, and that Social Security was his only source of income. On one police report, the man had listed his sister as an emergency contact. Heimberger called her, and she told him her brother had behaved strangely ever since being discharged from the military. She had refused to let him live with her because of his behavior. Scott and Heimberger also visited the man's home, where their original impressions of him were confirmed.

Heimberger contacted the Veterans Administration Hospital, and a caseworker agreed to contact the man. After a phone conversation with him, the caseworker agreed to place him in VA housing, where his mental illness could be managed. Meanwhile, Scott and Heimberger sought help from Jim Rudden, a district police officer who had extensive contacts at social service and mental health agencies. Rudden took the man to a local social service agency to speak with counselors. The counselors confirmed that the man had a chronic, but treatable, mental disorder.

Scott and Heimberger spent no more than one hour making phone calls to address this problem and find help for the man. As of November 1993, police officers had been dispatched to the man's new home only once in four months, to preserve the peace.

CASE STUDY NO. 2

In October 1993, St. Louis patrol officers Fran Krupp and Laure Lamczyk received a call regarding burglars in a home in the Wells-Goodfellow neighborhood. They met the caller, an elderly woman who was legally blind. The woman complained that some people had broken into her basement, and that she could hear them talking while they did their laundry. Although the officers found no signs of intruders, the woman was convinced that people had entered her basement. However, for the time being, she was satisfied with the officers' inspection.

Officer Krupp later recalled having heard several other assignments to that address. She checked the computer-aided dispatch system and found records of 188 calls to the address in the past year. It was the 10th highest call location in the district. Over the past three years, police had responded to the address nearly 300 times, for either "burglars in the building" or "disturbances." Krupp also discovered that no officers had ever written reports on these calls.

Talking with other officers who had handled calls at this location, Krupp heard the same story repeatedly – an elderly woman had called the police because she heard noises coming from her basement. Each call had been unfounded and coded out. Police had already spent an estimated 240 hours handling the previous calls, and these calls would continue if the department did not do something.

Field supervisors agreed that every time a call was dispatched to this location, the precinct sergeant would call the complainant to determine if the police were really needed. If not, the sergeant would code the call and call off the responding officers. Krupp and Lamczyk contacted a close relative of the woman and described the problem. The relative knew that the woman sometimes called the police, but was shocked when he learned how often. On Oct. 18, 1993, Krupp, Lamczyk and Sgt. Greg Wurm met with the family. During the 30-minute meeting, the family agreed that something had to be done. They assured the officers that they would work with the woman to stop the unnecessary calls.

Several weeks later, Krupp noticed that no calls had been dispatched to the address. Concerned for the woman's well-being, Krupp and Lamczyk went to her house to check on her. When they arrived, the woman greeted them at the door and told them that her family had forbidden her from calling the police without first checking with them. As of February 1994, only one call had been dispatched to the woman's home.*

Editor's note: These two cases share certain similarities. Both reveal how an underlying mental condition can generate incremental, but sizable, work demands on the police that can easily go undetected in an incident-oriented environment. The proper care and treatment of the callers were not necessarily simple or entirely effective, and evidently, the police were not best suited to address the underlying problems. The families and other agencies were.

*Sources: Keys to the City: Problem-Solving in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, Vol. 2, No. 7, and Vol. 3, No. 1.

Additional Editors' Comments on Mental Illness Problems

Encounters with the mentally ill are some of the most challenging police face. The variety and complexity of mental and emotional problems people can have make it difficult for police to accurately assess how best to proceed in each situation. The efforts documented in this section highlight different approaches to handling problems with the mentally ill. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office chose to improve its handling of the mentally ill countywide, based on successful experimentation. The St. Louis efforts demonstrate more localized approaches to improving police response to the mentally ill.

The editors discovered several other noteworthy efforts. In Montreal, police research found that one woman called the police 2,000 times in a three-year period, complaining of break-ins, fires, shootings, and attempted suicide. Constables met with the woman, her physician, the emergency medical service, and court liaisons seeking solutions. Her physician told constables the woman had symptoms of schizophrenia, evidenced by hallucinations. The court ordered that she undergo a psychiatric evaluation, but the problem persisted. After a second court-ordered evaluation, it was determined that the woman was on the wrong medication, causing hallucinations about crime and victimization. Court psychiatrists prescribed more suitable medication, and the police have received no further calls from the woman.

A St. Petersburg, Fla., officer discovered that police are asked approximately 145 times a year to find missing people whose memory is impaired. The officer recommended that the police adopt a program developed by the Alzheimer's Association, called "Wanderer's Identification." Alzheimer's sufferers receive a bracelet or necklace with their name and a code number. The county sheriff's computer stores vital information about the person, retrievable by the code number. Many other police departments are working with local chapters of the Alzheimer's Association to institute similar efforts, efforts that are time-saving to police and helpful to memory-loss sufferers.

Minneapolis, Minn., police piloted a program to aid families in crisis. After analyzing 911 "domestic dispute" calls, police found that many involved children who were despondent, drug-addicted, suicidal, or acting out from some unresolved issue. As a result, a mobile crisis team of mental health workers is now dispatched if an officer determines a need, providing immediate expert intervention.

Chapter 13

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Neighborhood Disorder

Neighborhood Disorder

A Neighborhood Disorder Problem in Glendale, Calif.

Glendale, Calif., a community of 200,000, began looking at problems associated with its day-laborer population. Day laborers, sometimes referred to as "casual" laborers, solicit temporary employment in residential and commercial areas. Residents and businesses objected to traffic problems caused by the laborers' swarming around vehicles at intersections, seeking work. Traffic was sometimes blocked, and because the laborers had to be outdoors to solicit employers, they used the nearby alleys, parking lots and streets as restrooms. Littering was a significant problem, as well.

Glendale police officers Javier Ruiz and Ron Gillman decided to address the problem, which residents complained had been plaguing the city for almost 25 years. They met often with residents and business owners to hear their complaints. They were also concerned about the laborers' welfare. They met with them frequently, knowing a successful response depended on their cooperation. Officer Ruiz said: "The majority of [day laborers in Glendale] are recent immigrants and refugees from Central or South America and Mexico. Additionally, there are migrant farm workers seeking an economic alternative in an urban work force." Many of the laborers had few other options. Some had limited English-language skills and formal education. Others lacked legal-immigrant papers. This heightened the competition among them for a day's employment, sometimes ending with fights and assault charges levied.

In the past, officers had used extra and directed patrol to address laborer problems, but this met with little success. At one point, Catholic Charities, Glendale's largest social-service provider, offered its office space as a meeting point for the laborers, but this proved impractical due to its distance from home building-supply stores, a central point for hiring the laborers. For this current effort, Ruiz and Gillman enlisted the support of Catholic Charities, as well as the Salvation Army.

The officers made two site visits to cities with designated hiring spots for day laborers. They agreed that a hiring center could resolve many of the complaints from both sides. They recommended a Glendale site near a Home Depot store, where many laborers already gathered. A day-labor advisory board convened that included police, Home Depot, city, resident, business owner, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, and redevelopment agency representatives.

Home Depot agreed to supply building materials and an office trailer for the site, and to fund a staff position at the site for five years. Catholic Charities agreed to administer the site if the police could find funds for the position. The officers got two grants (totaling nearly \$100,000) to fund part of the construction. Ruiz and Sgt. Pete Michael oversaw the project's construction and evaluation phases.



The city passed an anti-solicitation ordinance to steer day laborers to the center. The center's design minimizes traffic congestion and allows employers to make orderly arrangements with and pickups of the laborers. The center offers English-language and computer classes, as well as classes on immigration issues.

Officers measured the project's success in different ways. They found a decrease in the number of incidents involving day laborers that required police, fire and other city services. Prior research had shown only a 10 percent daily hiring rate for the laborers. Since the center's opening, the daily hiring rate had increased to over 80 percent, adding to the laborers' enthusiasm about the center. Perhaps as a result, the laborers have voluntarily complied with the anti-solicitation ordinance; through October 1997, no enforcement had been necessary.

Residents are no longer subjected to swarming, and the laborers no longer use alleys, parking lots and streets as restrooms. Employers also benefit from the center. The laborers are divided by specialties (painting, plumbing, framing, etc.), which helps to assure employers that those hired have the skills for the job. The officers did not think displacement would be a problem; quite the reverse, they thought the center would attract day laborers from other cities. Thus, they worked with nearby cities, offering advice on starting day-laborer centers there.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several respects, aside from its success in stopping the swarming that caused the residents' initial complaints. The officers convinced diverse groups of the proposed solution's viability. Some city officials and politicians were reluctant to get involved due to the immigration issues. Social-service advocates were mainly interested in the humane treatment of the day laborers, but they had little ability to fund an effort. Some residents saw the workers as a good, independent source of labor, while others saw them as an immigration and traffic problem. The officers had to convince Home Depot that it would receive a good return on its investment. And some laborers were suspicious of any efforts to regulate their livelihood. The officers had to do a significant amount of research and work to address all these interests and justify the construction of the center. The project is also notable because the officers proposed a center whose design minimized traffic and congestion problems.

A Neighborhood Disorder Problem in Los Angeles, Calif.

The Virgil/Burns neighborhood of Los Angeles comprises apartment complexes, single-family homes and small businesses. Its crime rate started increasing noticeably in 1991 and 1992. Most of the calls for police service were for narcotics-related disturbances and vandalism, although more serious crimes like robbery and assault were also on the rise.

Los Angeles Police Department Senior Lead Officer Suzanne Campbell targeted a 2-by-4-block area where the concentration of calls and crimes was highest. She discovered that 82 calls for service had been dispatched in this area in a four-month period of 1992. She identified five main sources from which the calls were being generated.

*Source: Day-labor project narrative submitted in support of nomination for 1997 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; personal communication with Officer Javier Ruiz and Sgt. Pete Michael, October 1997.



The first source was a parking lot behind a bakery, where gang members and drug users gathered at night. Transients gathered there to drink during the day. The second source was two streets near a day care center, where drug wholesalers were supplying 12 to 15 retail dealers. The third source was a multiple-level parking garage the Los Angeles Community College owned that had become a haven for transients and drug dealers and users. Few people parked in the garage anymore. The fourth source was an abandoned house that had become a flophouse for drug dealers and users, prostitutes and runaways. Because the city had declared a moratorium on razing residential property, the house could not be removed, and prior efforts to board it up had failed. The house was a health and fire hazard. The final source was a nightclub that generated many complaints about noise and drug dealing among patrons. Officer Campbell noticed that many of the same people were connected to all five locations.

Besides encouraging area property owners to improve fencing and lighting on their properties, Campbell targeted the five high-call sources. She persuaded the bakery owner to move several dumpsters away from a retaining wall. The parking lot's popularity was partly due to the dumpsters, which provided easy access over the wall onto adjoining properties. The owner also made some minor improvements to the lot's lighting. While he was unwilling to invest in improved fencing, he did tell Campbell that he planned to tear down the bakery within six months. The owner of the property next to the bakery was even more cooperative. He erected a 10-foot, spiked wrought-iron fence in front of his property, and razor wire and motion-sensitive lighting in the rear. He hired a full-time property manager and maintenance worker, who removed all graffiti. With the support of extra police patrol, these improvements led to a complete halt in calls for service within two weeks.

Campbell knew who the main area narcotics wholesaler was. She detained him on outstanding arrest warrants, one of which was a federal warrant for illegal immigration. The man also had cocaine on him when she detained him. He was incarcerated and faced up to ten years' imprisonment and deportation. Several additional drug-dealer arrests near the day care center seemed to convince the remaining dealers to move elsewhere.

In and around the college parking garage, Campbell found an abandoned vehicle and discarded furniture. The garage's exterior was covered with graffiti and overgrown weeds. She had the vehicle towed and asked the college to clean up the garage. Within two weeks, the garage was cleaned and repainted, and structural renovations had begun. Six weeks later, it remained free of graffiti, and students again used it for parking.

With respect to the flophouse, Campbell learned that the city was soon to lift the moratorium on demolition. She contacted the owner and worked with him to get the necessary demolition permits. As soon as the city lifted the moratorium, the house was demolished, and the owner put the lot up for sale.



To address the problem nightclub, Campbell attended a community meeting, where she learned who the club's owner and his attorney were. Although the club was violating several alcohol-license conditions, the state Alcohol Beverage Control Board was too understaffed to help enforce the law. Campbell met with the club owner's attorney and explained the nuisance being created in the neighborhood. It turned out that the owner owned at least a dozen other city clubs that were under better control. The attorney told Campbell that the owner would likely cooperate, with a little pressure. Campbell encouraged neighborhood residents to send written complaints about the club to the police department division that investigates such matters. With those complaints in hand, division members met with the owner and advised him of the nuisance and possible penalties. The owner chose not to renew his lease, and closed the club.

For two months after these interventions, none of the streets where the five problem spots were located showed up on the police department's report of multiple-call locations. After a series of robberies was solved with an arrest, the following two months again revealed no multiple-call locations in the target area. The gang that used to gather at the bakery disbanded. Most of the transients and drug dealers left the area, and complaints about drug dealing near the day care center stopped. Campbell's efforts seem to have revitalized the neighborhood.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for the way the officer pinpointed the exact sources of the neighborhood problems. Rather than relying on broad-based campaigns targeting the entire neighborhood, she tailored her responses to the specific problem locations and inspired overall neighborhood improvement. In addition, she secured several property guardians' voluntary compliance and the nightclub owner's cooperation, with only a little pressure. This project received a 1993 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

A Neighborhood Disorder Problem in Spokane, Wash.

In the early 1990s, Spokane, Wash., a city of 200,000, began experiencing gang-sponsored drug dealing. The 1100 block of West First Avenue in downtown Spokane, adjacent to the city's historic district, housed older, deteriorating buildings; residential high-rise hotels; the city's only special-needs public-housing complex; a railroad viaduct; a Greyhound bus terminal; bars; an adult video store; and an extremely active gang-run crack trade. Spokane police officer Rick Albin, a neighborhood problem-solver, said, "Gangs chose the West First area because of its proximity to cheap room rentals, the only Greyhound bus terminal, and because it was already a neighborhood where most of the low-income, special-needs and elderly residents had already 'given up' the street."

In the late 1980s, the block generated 1,000 calls for service a year. By 1995, the call load had risen to 3,300. Officer Albin said, "This call load, from basically one city block, represents approximately 3 percent of the service load for the entire city . . ." The *Spokesman-Review*, a local newspaper, stated the block "accounted for 165

*Source: Project report submitted in support of nomination for 1993 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

times its share of the Spokane Police Department's attention." In the 1980s, the block experienced a high level of property crimes. By 1995, the block was experiencing a high level of violence. Drivers circled the block to buy drugs, and the drug trade attracted prostitution. The gangs recruited juveniles into the drug market, knowing that federal (and even local) prosecution of juveniles for dealing was less likely. The public-housing tenants – all either elderly or disabled – became targets for intimidation by the block's dealers. Two drive-by shootings on the block wounded six people in August 1996. Residents were terrified.

As part of a HUD drug-elimination grant, a survey of public-housing residents verified high fear levels and the dangers of the block's drug problem. Local media found much to report about on the block; fear and violence levels were high; and the block, it was suspected, contributed to neighborhood deterioration beyond its borders.

Officer Albin and others gathered a wide variety of information about the problem. The gang members were "Crips," infamous for their impact on Los Angeles' neighborhoods. Spokane's special investigations unit tracked each member's involvement: some had moved to Spokane from Los Angeles, while others had always lived in Spokane. Washington State University Professors Quint Thurman and Ed McGarrel surveyed block residents, and police surveyed businesses about safety. Officer Albin said, "Surveys showed the majority of [residents] felt captive to the inevitable loss of their neighborhood, and that they had adjusted their lifestyles around that loss." Bob Lincoln, a doctoral candidate and Spokane police planner, conducted observational research on the block, and did a social and physical inventory of the neighborhood. Police civilians and HUD consultants did crime-prevention-through-environmental-design (CPTED) studies and found the block's mixed uses challenging. Some businesses left the area, a few accommodated the drug trade, and the rest tried to stay legitimate.

Officer Albin, city agencies and residents implemented a number of responses to address the problems. Business owners formed a local steering committee. The police provided residents with training in community organizing. The city and the businesses adopted many of the CPTED recommendations. They improved alley lighting, banned on-street parking, removed litter, repaired and renovated buildings, fenced off the viaduct (where dealers hid drugs), and changed traffic flow, restricting right turns and stopping the circling of cars for drugs and sex. Albin reported the following:

Particularly high-risk areas (such as dark areas underneath the railroad viaduct) were painted white and fenced off . . . Positive-use activities (social, business promotion, etc.) now replace former activities in high-risk areas. The steering committee also donated funds to hire a part-time marketing/research assistant, and alliances were formed with other downtown groups and Washington's State Economic Development Council to facilitate coordinated change.

The police used foot and bike patrols, local businesses supplied pagers, and police sent letters to vehicle owners whose cars were seen stopped on the block to buy



drugs. Officer Albin, citizen volunteers and two state corrections officers staffed a sub-station in the public-housing complex, making services accessible to residents and area businesses. The district attorney supplied a legal intern and agreed to vertical prosecution of the block's offenders, using more serious statutes, and also supported greater corrections contact with released offenders. Apartment owners and hotel managers formed an association, and most agreed to screen residents. They also adopted some CPTED recommendations to make public space less attractive to dealers and users. The steering committee recruited new businesses to anchor the block, including a farmers market and an art gallery. Block auto dealers and others in the area contributed close to \$20,000 to install video surveillance cameras to monitor 20 blocks, including West First Street. Police monitor the videos from an office in the public-housing complex.

As for evaluation, police report a 75 percent decrease in violent crime since December 1996, and a 35 percent decrease in calls for service on the block. Washington State University is evaluating other project results, and is documenting physical and social changes over the coming year.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several ways. Officer Albin and others tackled a huge problem, one that probably festered for years before violence and chaos erupted. Block residents suffered from fear, intimidation, property crimes, and violence. Intimidation can paralyze people, and getting them to act requires a highly coordinated and organized effort. In this case, collaborative responses caused a 75 percent decrease in violence, requiring an enormous amount of work and commitment from police, residents and businesses. This project entailed a wide range of strategies to tackle the problems, and successfully disrupted an entrenched and violent drug market that impacted the entire neighborhood. The strategies addressed each identifiable aspect of the problem: the circling of cars to buy drugs, the hiding of drugs in the viaduct, the lack of surveillance on the block, the lack of follow-up with offenders reentering the community, and the movement of evicted dealers from one apartment or hotel to another. And to replace the drug dealing and related crime, project participants initiated positive block activities and businesses.

Additional Editors' Comments on Neighborhood Disorder Problems

In some cities, whole neighborhoods experience disorder and high crime. Although only specific sites (e.g., parks, bars and liquor stores) may experience the crime (e.g., drug dealing, loitering and prostitution), the whole neighborhood feels the bad effects. In these neighborhoods, officers focus on crime hot spots and illegal behavior. In their problem-solving efforts, however, many officers have found that these neighborhoods have few recreational activities for the children living there, almost no after-school programs, and few services for adults. The police cannot address all of

*Sources: West First Street Project narrative submitted by Spokane Police Department in support of nomination for 1997 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Solving; "Cooperative Effort Is Paying Off Again," by Doug Floyd, The Spokesman-Review, Saturday, June 21, 1997; "Making Our Cart Bad-Apple Resistant," by Doug Floyd, The Spokesman-Review, Sunday, July 13, 1997; personal communication with Officer Rick Albin, October 1997.

these issues, but in many of the problem-solving efforts reviewed, they enlisted the support of other city and nonprofit agencies, applied for grants, supported rehabilitation loans to upgrade area housing, and did other social and civic work to improve neighborhood conditions.

In the efforts described in this section, officers took on whole neighborhoods experiencing problems and pinpointed the exact locations or sources of their problems. Two Glendale officers recognized that large numbers of men hanging out on street corners and swarming around cars looking for work created a sense of neighborhood disorder. They enlisted government, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and won community development grants to address the long-standing problem. In Los Angeles, Calif., an officer focused on five sources of one neighborhood's disorder problems. In Spokane, Wash., an officer found that one block accounted for 3 percent of the entire city's calls for service. After focusing on the problem's crime aspects, he worked with community activists to initiate positive neighborhood activities helping to turn around one community's reputation.

During the research, the editors found several other efforts worth reporting. Norfolk, Va., police used traffic engineering, community-court watch and interagency government collaborations to shore up a neighborhood experiencing much crime and disorder. In addition, they sent family-assessment teams to repeat locations of family disputes. The police accomplished a lot, but the neighborhood retained its image for violence and disorder. As a result, an officer worked with the community to transform the neighborhood's image, highlighting its revival.

A St. Louis officer found that a tavern and liquor outlet generated much neighborhood disorder. The officer made arrests for drug dealing and gambling, and along with the residents, removed garbage and litter from area properties, sought improved neighborhood lighting, pushed for demolition of vacant buildings and community use of vacant lots, requested the revocation of one establishment's liquor license, removed graffiti, and sought additional neighborhood recreational activities.

In Bridgeport, Conn., one drug-and-gang-infested neighborhood accounted for one-sixth of the state's 1992 homicides. The police worked with local community development and social service agencies and, among other things, devised one of the nation's most comprehensive crime-prevention-through-environmental-design strategies, placing traffic diverters at over 40 intersections to increase the effort and risk for drug buyers.



Chapter 14

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Parks

Parks

A Problem Park in Georgetown, Texas

Blue Hole Park is located about 20 minutes north of Austin, Texas, along the San Gabriel River in Georgetown. It is a picturesque park, surrounded by limestone cliffs and covered with vines and oak trees. A park dam creates a unique swimming hole. In the mid-1990s, the park became a problem location. Calls for police service increased significantly, especially during summer months. The calls were for assaults, disorderly conduct, drownings, drug offenses, fights, indecent exposure, public drunkenness, and robberies. A double suicide also occurred in the park. The problems were, at times, exhausting police resources.

Georgetown police watch commander Sgt. David Morgan and two patrol officers, Robert Newell and Fred Pitcher, took on Blue Hole Park as a problem-solving project in April 1995. Their goal was to restore the park's reputation as a place to swim, fish and enjoy the natural beauty in peace. (The park had developed a reputation as a party place largely free from official oversight and regulation.)

During summer months, out-of-town visitors predominantly used the park. They came from Austin, Dallas, Houston, and Killeen. Many were soldiers stationed at Fort Hood Army Base, the largest military base in the world. Unfortunately, many visitors had little interest in the park's future. Broken bottles, cans and trash littered the park. Vehicles haphazardly parked near the ecologically fragile riverbanks were contributing to soil erosion and pollution. Four feet of silt had accumulated in the riverbed, near the banks.

Sgt. Morgan and the officers analyzed the problems in greater detail by meeting with a nearby neighborhood group and reviewing police reports taken at the park in the past few years. The officers learned that officials had seldom consulted the nearby residents, mostly minorities, about decisions affecting their neighborhood. Residents told the officers they wanted a uniform set of policies for all city parks. For example, if alcohol was not banned in other parks, they did not want it banned in Blue Hole Park.

The officers identified several concerns. Park users, often intoxicated, jumped or dove off the 30-foot-high cliffs into the river, resulting in injuries and drownings. The gravel road running alongside the river was too narrow to hold the vehicle and pedestrian traffic. There was no designated parking area, often leaving 85 or more vehicles parked along the riverbanks. As many as 200 pedestrians mingled with vehicle traffic along the roadway. Emergency vehicles had difficulty getting through the traffic. The only road into the park exited into a residential neighborhood where children played. Nearby residents were afraid. A historical cemetery at the edge of the park had been vandalized. The officers concluded that a disproportionate amount of the city's reported crime was occurring in the park. Drunken offenders and victims contributed to much of the crime and disorder.



To gain some immediate control over the problems, the police began strictly enforcing laws in the park. In one month, they issued over 200 citations and made many arrests. Over 90 percent of the arrestees were from out of town.

The officers next turned their attention to the park's main attraction, the cliffs. People would walk across the dam to reach the cliffs, where they would drink alcohol and jump or dive into the river. Many people, including the police, assumed the land behind the cliffs was part of the park. In fact, the federal government's Resolution Trust Corp. owned it, and leased it to a local cattle rancher. At the officers' request, the rancher agreed to help the police enforce trespassing laws. He was incurring damage to his property and risking liability, so he was eager to cooperate. The city posted no-trespassing signs.

Next, the officers developed a traffic-control plan for the park. They got a local rock quarry to donate enough large boulders to create a barrier along the riverbank. This would serve to protect the riverbank, better define the roadway and restrict parking. They further restricted parking along the drive leading out of the park. After discovering that park traffic and parking regulations were unenforceable for lack of proper authority, the officers worked with the city attorney's office to write and pass new legislation.

The city had applied for grant funds to develop a hiking-and-biking trail along the river, so the officers worked closely with the parks-and-recreation director to ensure that their proposed changes fit in with the comprehensive plan for the park. The director gave the officers his full support. Over the next few weeks, the officers presented their plan to a citizens police advisory committee, the parks and recreation board's public safety committee, the neighborhood group, and the city council. All groups endorsed the plan. The police chief secured the aid of a local business to transport and place 260 tons of boulders.

In June, Sgt. Morgan and the officers met with the Fort Hood provost marshal at Blue Hole Park. They briefed him on the problems, the soldiers' behavior at the park, and the proposed plan of action. The provost marshal agreed to warn the soldiers about problem behavior, and to take action if the police subsequently informed him of such behavior.

Police officers began enforcing the trespassing laws. Community-service workers cleared brush and picked up trash in the park. Local high school students designed and built an attractive park entrance sign, complete with notices of prohibited conduct. The county allowed a nearby vacant lot to be used for overflow parking. By early July, all plan provisions had been carried out.

By all indicators, Blue Hole Park had been completely turned around. Traffic was orderly and safe. People stopped jumping from the cliffs. Drunken and rowdy people drifted away, and families returned to the park. There was a noticeable reduction in trash and debris. Reports of crimes virtually ceased.

According to now-Lt. Morgan, the results "exceeded our expectations," even two years later. The city has since received the grant for the trail, and the river has been dredged and widened. These improvements have enhanced the park's beauty. The city is applying for another grant to extend the park farther down the river, connecting it with another park. The roadway into the park was paved, and parking was further limited to a few handicap spaces. This has ended all traffic congestion. The city plans to pave another parking area outside the park to accommodate legitimate park users.

The park is now used almost exclusively by local families. The soldiers no longer go to the park. Park users now drink alcohol more responsibly, making more drastic restrictions unnecessary. A new owner of the property behind the cliffs updated the trespassing-enforcement authority granted to the police. The city quickly replaces damaged no-trespassing signs and removes graffiti.

Georgetown police continue to monitor the volume of calls for service at the park. The most recent assessment revealed only about 10 calls in an entire year. No one has drowned since the project was completed, and there have been virtually no medical calls for service, a significant saving of emergency medical and fire resources.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several respects. The response plan was comprehensive and incorporated all the stakeholders' views. The police put a lot of effort into building support for the plan before proceeding with changes. They successfully promoted safe and legitimate park uses, and discouraged unsafe and illegitimate uses, without resorting to more drastic restrictions and enforcement. This project received the 1995 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

A Problem Park in Madison, Wis.

Brittingham Park lies in a southside Madison, Wis., neighborhood known as the "Triangle." In early 1991, Randy Gaber was assigned as the new neighborhood police officer for the Triangle. Gaber arranged several meetings with residents to introduce himself and hear about their concerns. At these meetings, he learned about the problems in Brittingham Park. Residents told him they no longer felt safe there because of frequent assaults, fights, liquor-law violations, noise disturbances, robberies, and thefts. They also complained about the broken glass and litter in the park. In a letter to the editor of a local paper, a security officer at the nearby Bayview Apartments wrote: "There was a lot of drinking going on in the park, and when our tenants would go across the road to enjoy the park, they would be jeered at, screamed at and, sometimes, even sworn at. In short, it was impossible for any of the older folks and the disabled to enjoy themselves, mostly because they were afraid."

In response, Officer Gaber spent more time patrolling the park and talking to park users. He concluded that the residents' complaints were valid. He called another com-

*Sources: "Summary of the Blue Hole Park Project," Georgetown Police Services Division, submitted in support of nomination for the 1995 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing; personal communication with Lt. David Morgan.

munity meeting, at which attendees discussed possible ways to address the problem. Gaber believed that most of the problems were attributable to a few people who used the park mainly for drinking. With the residents' support, Gaber agreed to discuss the problem with the local alderperson, Andy Heidt.

Noticing that most of the park's drinkers drank out of glass beer and liquor bottles, Officer Gaber proposed a special ordinance banning glass containers from the park. Alderperson Heidt agreed to sponsor the legislation, and the city council passed it. Gaber spent a lot of time enforcing the ban. Although he noted some decline in calls for service in the park, the residents remained concerned. They reported that the same group of people continued to drink and harass people in the park. They either hid their glass containers or used aluminum cans or plastic bottles and cups.

Officer Gaber recontacted Alderperson Heidt and made another, more radical, proposal: banning all alcohol from the park. Gaber and Heidt met once more with residents to discuss the proposal. The residents overwhelmingly supported the idea, and with Heidt's sponsorship, alcohol was banned from the park as of July 4, 1991.

Officer Gaber said he was amazed by the ban's impact on calls for service and park activity. He reviewed the past 10 years' data on calls for service in the park. The most recent years' data showed that the police department had recorded 84 calls in 1989, and 91 in 1990; they recorded only 16 in 1991. Calls about disturbances, drunken people and suspicious people all decreased dramatically.

Gaber attributed the reduced number in the first half of 1991 to his increased vigilance at the park. He had initiated seven of the eight calls that occurred after the ban took effect, to enforce the ban. Only one citizen had called the police in the six months after the ban. From Oct. 3, 1991, to April 6, 1992, there were no calls for service to Brittingham Park.

Brittingham Park Calls for Service (1982-1991)

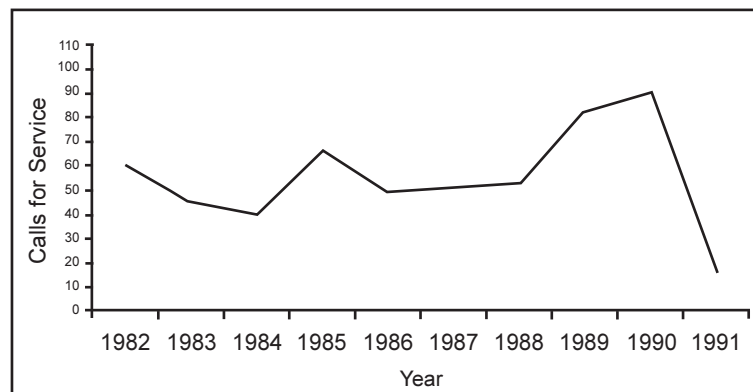


Fig. 1. Brittingham Park calls for service

Residents told Gaber that they once again felt safe using the park. The security guard who wrote the letter to the local paper did so to praise Gaber for his efforts. He wrote: "[T]hings have changed. We don't have to worry anymore. The change has been like night and day. All at once, the elderly can go across the road and enjoy themselves . . . "*

Editors' note: This problem-solving effort is notable in that a localized solution was adopted for a localized problem, namely, banning alcohol from one city park. The solution was supported by nearby residents who, it could be argued, had a higher stake in the park than did nonresident park users. It is highly improbable that the majority of citizens would support a total ban on alcohol in all of Madison's parks. The officer gradually increased the level of coercion in his response, supporting more-extreme measures only when he was convinced less-intrusive measures had failed. He escalated his response from warning people about offensive behavior, to banning glass containers, to banning alcohol entirely. The dramatic decline in calls for service also makes this project noteworthy.

A Problem Park in Mankato, Minn.

In early 1993, officers in the Mankato, Minn., Public Safety Department's problem-oriented policing unit set out to restore peace in the city's Sibley Park. Sibley Park is a 40-acre tract of land along the Minnesota River. In it are picnic shelters, baseball diamonds, a playground, a band shell, a petting zoo, and a parking lot. The parking lot was the problem. It had become popular as far back as 1978 as a place to drink and get rowdy. The police were regularly responding to incidents of assault, drug dealing, harassment, indecent exposure, juvenile drinking, reckless driving, theft, and vandalism. In 1993, the department responded to 81 citizen complaints in the park. The repair bill for the park had topped \$15,000 over the past few years.

As the city built other baseball diamonds elsewhere, athletes drifted away from the park, leaving behind the rowdier crowd. Some of the crowd started to gather on a park hillside, creating two problem locations. People threatened parks department employees who tried to control their behavior. In 1984, the police and parks department officials decided to close the hill to public use. The crowd began to gather in the parking lot around noon every day, and by nightfall, 300 to 400 people filled the lot. The crowd became so rowdy that nearly all other park uses ceased. The ball fields and picnic shelters were empty.

In response, the police and parks department employees increased their patrols of the park, installed floodlights in the lot, videotaped disorderly behavior, and scheduled alternative park uses. None of these solutions had any lasting effect. The problem got so bad, even police officers did not want to go to the park. Said Jerry Huettl, then a department supervisor, "After throwing everything but the kitchen sink at the problem, we backed up and asked ourselves what we were doing."

*Sources: Correspondence from Officer Randy Gaber to Professor Herman Goldstein, University of Wisconsin Law School, April 6, 1992; "The Kids' View in Bayview," by Patricia A. Parker, Police Magazine, May 1992; personal communication with Gaber, September 1997.

Officers Marcus Erickson, Chris Boyer, Mike Roy, and other POP unit officers began addressing the problem simply by observing the crowd. They did so not with an eye toward apprehending offenders, but just to better understand what was going on. All the unit's officers spent time watching the crowd so they could gain a common perspective on the problem. Next, they started mingling with the crowd to develop some rapport. They started asking people about the park's attractions. They learned that the park was popular with this crowd because it was remote, had a large parking lot, and was seldom used by others. In addition, the park's layout allowed them to see the police coming from a distance, and there were two exits by which to escape the police. The officers also discovered that many people from other communities were going to Sibley Park just to be part of the scene.

The officers next interviewed park users who were not part of the rowdy crowd. These interviews confirmed that the crowd was intimidating those who were not members of it. The POP unit held a public forum on the park and its problems. Many people expressed frustration over the situation. Most supported a suggestion to ban alcohol from the park. The officers discussed this option with the parks director, but all agreed this would unnecessarily prohibit more responsible alcohol use by other park users. They focused instead on the parking lot as the underlying source of the problem.

Continuing their analysis, the officers learned that the park's ball fields, once the main site of the city's softball tournaments, were now only ancillary fields. The large parking lot, built to hold the softball crowds, now seemed oversized. One officer considered the rowdy crowd's attraction to the lot. He noted that the long, uninterrupted roadway down the length of the parking lot made it ideal for hot-rodding; drivers went down a steeply inclined roadway to the flat lot. This allowed them to gain a lot of speed, yet watch for any obstructions. The officer concluded that the solution was to make the lot inconvenient. He and his colleagues settled on a plan to redesign the lot to eliminate its appeal, while leaving enough parking for legitimate park users. They also decided to create an alternate site that would attract this crowd, yet allow better control of disorderly behavior.

Working with city engineers, the officers changed the park roadway from two-way to one-way. They divided the big parking lot into two smaller lots, one near the ball fields and one near the picnic shelters. By the spring of 1994, the city had completed construction and erected new traffic signs, at a cost of \$5,000. The city authorized a downtown parking lot to be used as a meeting place for car enthusiasts. City ordinances already prohibited alcohol in this parking lot, and it was much more visible to police patrols. Picnic tables and portable toilets were placed on the lot.

The plan worked. The rowdy crowd disappeared from Sibley Park and started showing up at the downtown lot. However, the crowd slowly dwindled to a handful of car enthusiasts. The officers thought the crowd had split into smaller groups who either stayed in their own communities or gathered at other Mankato locations. Complaints about the park stopped. Thirty-, 60- and 90-day assessments all confirmed that the project objectives had been met, and were holding up over time. According to interim Public Safety Director Jerry Huettl, the project remains successful over three years

later. He said: "I don't know where the motorheads have gone. They went downtown for a while, but once that was redeveloped, they left there. Most of them probably just grew up, got married and quit that activity."*

Editors' note: This problem-solving project is noteworthy because the officers took time to study the underlying conditions that fostered the problem. By changing the environmental conditions – in this case, the traffic patterns and available parking space – and providing an alternate site for the crowd, the officers eliminated the problem. Moreover, they did so without resorting to more drastic restrictions (e.g., banning alcohol) that would have negatively affected the larger community. The public safety department also seems to have had the active support and aid of other city departments and local politicians.

A Problem Park in San Diego, Calif.

San Diego's Marian Bear Park is a popular site for bicycling, hiking, picnicking, and walking dogs. It was also once a popular site for gay men to meet and engage in casual sex acts, acts other park users frequently witnessed. In October 1992, after yet another in a long history of citizen complaints to the police about the sexual activity, San Diego Police Department Sgt. James O'Neill asked Officers Timothy Hall and Cindy Brady to address the issue as a problem-solving project.

The park is considered a nature preserve, and so, with the exception of some public restrooms and a parking lot, it is undeveloped. It had no electricity or telephones. Most of the complaints about sexual activity centered on areas around the restrooms and on bushes at one end of the parking lot. San Diego police had set up decoy operations in past years to arrest those soliciting sex in the park. One operation had netted over 90 arrests. Officers made many arrests only after foot chases and resistance from the offenders. Because of limited jail space, most offenders faced only misdemeanor citations. Some nighttime activity was curtailed when police prohibited parking in the lot at night. These measures, although somewhat successful, were expensive, and the foot chases exposed police officers to environmental hazards like poison oak.

When Officers Hall and Brady first surveyed the park, they found up to 20 men in and around the restroom, several of whom were having sex. After arresting two men, the officers interviewed them to try to learn more about the problem. The men admitted it was likely that all the men around the restroom were there to solicit sex. They said the park had been a well-known "cruising spot" for gay men for over 14 years. It was even listed in some national gay publications as such. One man said he learned about the spot from past news reports about police operations. The other man admitted to having previously been arrested in the park for the same conduct. The men told the officers that the privacy the park offered and its long-standing reputation made it an ideal place for men who wanted quick, anonymous sex. When asked, the men said

*Source materials: Project report prepared by Mankato Public Safety Department's problem-oriented policing unit, included in materials for Fifth Annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference, 1994; "Park Disturbances Cease After Parking Lot Redesign," by Glenn Gabriel, *Problem-Solving Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Police Executive Research Forum, 1995; "Sibley Lot Returns to Calmer Days," Mankato Free Press, July 16, 1994; personal communication with interim Public Safety Director Jerry Huettl, July 8, 1997.

videotaping might be the most effective deterrent. The officers returned to the park after booking the men, and found the activity around the restroom and bushes had not stopped.

The officers returned to the park the next day, this time to survey park users. Only one person they spoke with mentioned the sexual activity, though the officers suspected they were interviewing people who were in the park for exactly that reason. Next, the officers attended a meeting of the Marian Bear Park Committee. Almost everyone cited the illegal sex as the main park problem. A committee member suggested using surveillance cameras, but the officers reminded the committee of the potential for controversy over doing so. However, the committee voted to endorse the tactic. The committee also agreed, at the officers' suggestion, to actively promote legitimate park uses.

Before taking any action, the officers consulted with a colleague, an openly gay police officer. He told them he was trying to address a similar problem at another city park. He said he had some success getting a gay-and-lesbian publication to discourage sex in the park. Hall and Brady spoke with the department's official liaison to the gay-and-lesbian community, and they met with the Gay and Lesbian Coalition to explain the problem. Without prompting, a coalition member suggested using a video camera. The coalition endorsed the proposal, as well as the posting of warning signs in the park. The group also considered asking prosecutors to make treatment for compulsive sexual behavior part of the sentence for those convicted of having sex in the park. The officers ruled out having the park bushes trimmed back, because the parks department was committed to preserving the park in its natural state.

Knowing they had firm support from several quarters, the officers placed a marked police car at the park's entrance and videotaped people entering and leaving the park. They varied their schedules and patrolled the parking lots. With help from the police department's legal advisor, the officers designed warning signs. The park committee bought the signs and had them posted around the parking lots. The signs warned that public sex was illegal, and that *all* the park was considered public. The prosecutor agreed with the officers' request that banishment from the park be part of the sentence for anyone convicted of breaking this law.

The officers wrote to the gay publications that had advertised Marian Bear Park as a cruising spot, requesting that they take all San Diego parks off their lists. One of the publications complied with the officers' request. Another publication refused to. The local Gay and Lesbian Coalition responded by asking local businesses to stop advertising in the publication.

To assess the project's impact, the officers periodically went to the park in plain clothes. Even with limited use of the video camera, they found that the cruising activity had noticeably declined. Those who continued to cruise the lots usually left, not finding the willing partners they used to. The officers encountered one man who had

been convicted for having sex in the park and, subsequently, banished from it. His probation was revoked upon notification of his probation officer. By videotaping vehicles in the park and checking license-plate records, the officers learned that more local people were returning there, replacing the out-of-town men who went there for sex. They also noted more women and children frequenting the park, many of whom praised the officers' efforts. The effort received widespread publicity; the only complaints about it were made, ironically, by two former law enforcement officials, one of whom was later found soliciting sex in the park.

The officers estimated that the sexual activity in the park declined by about 80 percent. To stop the offenders who remained undeterred by the videotaping and warnings, the officers conducted undercover operations. All arrestees pled guilty. Because undercover operations were so time-consuming and costly, the officers had to develop another way to address the problem. Through the park committee, they organized a program in which volunteers would watch the park for cruising activity, take down license numbers, and give them to the police. Using motor vehicle records, the police would send vehicle owners letters advising them of the problems in the park. The officers trained the volunteers and developed appropriate reporting forms and guides. With all response measures in place, the officers reported that the department had not received a single additional complaint about people having sex in the park. (In recent months, after several years of relief, nearby residents have once again complained about open sexual activity in the park. A new team of officers is addressing the current problem.)

A local neighborhood publication reported similar activity in another San Diego park in June 1997. San Diego police officers addressing that problem used some of the same tactics as Officers Hall and Brady, including the same warning signs. The publication asserts that, according to nearby residents, the sexual activity at that park has been cut by half since police initiated the project.*

Editors' note: This project is notable for the officers' efforts to garner support for a controversial tactic, public videotaping, before they implemented it. They also sought voluntary compliance from publishers who were contributing to the problem by advertising the park as a prime location for the activity.

Additional Editors' Comments on Problem Parks

Park assets like open space, secluded walks, benches, water fountains, unmonitored public restrooms, multiple entrances and exits can become a draw for criminal behavior including drug dealing, prostitution and open sexual activity. In the efforts documented in this section, officers analyzed and sought solutions to several types of park crime. In each case, the problem activity had deterred residents from using the park. Officers used a variety of tactics, including ingenious physical reengineering, heightened oversight in previously unmonitored areas, and enlistment of community support.

*Sources: "Marian Bear Park: A Problem-Oriented Policing Project Analysis," by Timothy C. Hall and Cindy L. Brady, prepared in support of nomination for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing, July 12, 1994; "Taking Back Presidio Park," by Spencer Soper, in Mission Hills News, June 1997; personal communication with and supporting material sent by Detective Brady.

The editors found several other park-crime projects of note. In Riverside, Calif., open sex in one park prompted officers to restrict certain parking to 20 minutes, limit access to areas, cut back overgrown foliage, convert to handicapped-only parking the spaces adjacent to public restrooms, enlist citizen volunteers for park patrol, and engage the gay community in distributing literature encouraging safe sex and responsible behavior in public places. Montreal officers trying to improve a drug-infested park tested a variety of strategies, including visiting drug rehabilitation centers to better understand drugs and drug addiction. They believe this understanding helped them provide better referrals and counsel for park addicts.

Chapter 15

Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems

Case Studies In Problem Solving

Burglary

Burglary

A Burglary Problem in Huddersfield, England

The Police Research Group, a division of England's Home Office, commissioned a 30-month project designed to reduce burglary and auto-crime revictimization. Researchers Ken Pease and Sylvia Chenery teamed up with local police to test tailored responses against such revictimization. This project, growing out of England's work in crime prevention rather than problem-oriented policing, was inspired by prior research that indicated that some victims are likely to experience revictimization. Police Research Group material notes that, "[o]nce victimised, a person or place is more likely to be victimised again than one who has not [been victimised]."

In the case of residential burglary, researchers found that revictimization tends to occur soon after the first burglary. They learned that 40 percent of all repeats took place within a month of the last burglary. For the target area, researchers found that the biggest predictor of future burglary was a recent past burglary. After a certain period of time, the risk of further victimization declines.

Victimization, the Home Office found, "is heavily concentrated upon particular individuals and places . . ." Of the 3,951 burglaries recorded in the target area in an 11-month period, somewhere between 623 and 927 were repeat burglaries. Researchers found that revictimization was significantly underreported to the police, and that only one-on-one interviews with victims revealed this higher level of revictimization.

Other patterns identified involved burglar break-in points, occupancy when break-ins occur, and items stolen. In over 66 percent of the burglaries and attempted burglaries, offenders gained access to the homes through windows. In addition, in the vast majority of cases, the homes were unoccupied when burglarized, and electronic goods were the most frequently stolen items.

The Huddersfield responses to repeat burglaries incorporate tailored deflection and detection strategies, thus uniting crime-prevention and crime-control strategies to tackle the problem. Responses are graded, matching the revictimization risk level. Adopting an Olympic-medal scale, bronze through gold, project staff assign victims with some repeat risk a bronze response (property marking, security assessment, intense neighbor watch of home), while assigning those with the highest risk (already victimized twice) a gold response, which might include focused police patrol and installation of loaned silent-alarm equipment to increase detection.



Table 1. Police "Medal" System

Measures by Offense Type and Level*			
Offense	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Burglary	<p>Victim receives letter containing crime prevention information and UV marker pen for tagging property</p> <p>Victim receives discount vouchers for security equipment</p> <p>Police check with informants for information</p> <p>Police do a quick check on known pawn shops</p> <p>Police target offenders</p> <p>Police lend victim temporary equipment (e.g., alarms, timer switches and dummy alarms)</p> <p>Neighbors initiate "Cocoon Watch"</p> <p>Rapid repairs are made</p> <p>Security is upgraded</p>	<p>Crime prevention officer visits victim</p> <p>Police use search warrants against suspected burglars</p> <p>Police install monitored alarm</p> <p>Police visit victim (twice weekly)</p> <p>Police lend victim security equipment</p>	<p>Crime prevention officer visits victim</p> <p>Police arrange for expedited results on burglary-scene fingerprints</p> <p>Police install high-tech equipment (e.g., covert cameras and alarms)</p> <p>Police visit victim daily</p> <p>Police strategically place distinctive dye at site to mark offender</p> <p>Police put tracking device on highly vulnerable items</p>
<p>*Modified version of chart appearing in <i>Biting Back II: Reducing Repeat Victimisation in Huddersfield</i>, Police Research Group, <i>Crime Detection and Prevention</i> series, Paper 82, by Sylvia Chenery, John Holt and Ken Pease.</p>			

Detection strategies are used more frequently when revictimization levels are high, due to some early evidence that the same offenders were responsible for many of the repeat burglaries. One area inspector who worked on the effort, John Holt, offered a theory on the high revictimization rate. He suggested that within four months of a burglary, victims received an insurance payment for the stolen items, and replaced them; this made their home a tempting target for a burglar to revisit, as the burglar was already familiar with the home's layout, and with the quality and quantity of its contents.



Results indicated that the strategies had a significant impact. The Home Office reported that, "[w]ithin the first nine months of the project . . . burglary had reduced by 24 percent . . . in the target area." In addition, due to the tailored detection efforts, burglars were caught at an increased rate – 14 percent, up from 4 percent.*

Editors' note: This project has spurred similar efforts focused on repeat burglaries in several U.S. cities. Results are not in, so it is unclear whether the pattern uncovered in this significant researcher-police effort will hold true to the same degree as described here. One factor, such as different victim insurance rates here and in the Huddersfield area, may make an impact. England has studied several other crimes for revictimization patterns, including domestic violence, race-based hate crimes and bullying.

Researchers Graham Farrell and Ken Pease suggest several reasons why police training, anti-crime tactics and prevention strategies ignore revictimization. First, revictimization rates, while often quite high, represent a small percentage of overall crime rates in low-crime areas. Second, a revictimization pattern may take some time to develop (unlike that for weekly calls to police about a chronic location like a drug house). Third, organizationally, it is difficult for police agencies to recognize revictimization because geographic boundaries may camouflage it, officers' shifts vary, and, due to their days off, officers may not know of all revictimizations in an area. Fourth, current police record-keeping may require hand tallying to decipher repeat victimization. Fifth, it is awkward for police to tell a victim there is a high likelihood of revictimization after a traumatic experience, especially if police think part of their job is to reassure victims. Sixth, repeat victims of certain crimes can be some of the most vulnerable and least vocal advocates for their position. Finally, focusing on repeat victimization vs. repeat locations can be painfully misconstrued as blaming the victim.

A Burglary Problem in San Diego, Calif.

Secure Self Storage is a San Diego warehouse with over 1,400 units. Many of its customers are U.S. Navy personnel who often are away for months at a time and, thus, cannot regularly check on their belongings. Many return to find their property missing. During one six-month period in 1993, San Diego police investigated 150 burglaries at Secure Self Storage. Actual victimization was undoubtedly much higher, as past experience indicated that most people do not report burglaries. Each initial investigation took an average of 90 minutes, which, when combined with time spent on follow-up investigations, amounted to a significant expenditure of police resources.

The storage facility is located in the city's eastern police division. The division has a Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol, a group of senior citizens the police train on the prin-

*Sources: "Once Bitten, Twice Bitten: Repeat Victimization and Its Implications for Crime Prevention," Police Research Group, Crime Prevention Unit series, Paper 46, by Graham Farrell and Ken Pease; "Biting Back: Tackling Repeat Burglary and Car Crime," Police Research Group, Crime Detection and Prevention series, Paper 58, by David Anderson, Sylvia Chenery and Ken Pease; "Preventing Repeat Victimization: The Police Officer's Guide," Police Research Group, by Cressida Bridgeman and Louise Hobbs; "Biting Back II: Reducing Repeat Victimization in Huddersfield," Police Research Group, Crime Detection and Prevention series, Paper 82, by Sylvia Chenery, John Holt and Ken Pease; speech by Holt at 1995 Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in San Diego.

ciples and methods of problem-oriented policing. A team of the volunteers, led by 69-year-old Agnes Brookes, a retired church secretary, took on the Secure Self Storage burglary problem as a project. They learned that the warehouse was managed by a husband and wife who seemed somewhat lackadaisical about security. When approached about the problem, they did not seem overly eager to stop the burglaries. The managers were employed by a property-management group that, in turn, was retained by the warehouse's owner. The owner had property throughout the metropolitan area, valued at over \$32 million: Secure Self Storage was but a small part of this investment.

The volunteers began analyzing the problem by walking through the warehouse and inspecting security measures. They paid particular attention to the layout of the warehouse, number and type of entrances, and physical condition of the property. Nothing about the warehouse seemed unusual, but crime statistics showed that the burglary rate there was three times the average for other city self-storage facilities.

The volunteers looked for any similarities among the burglaries at Secure Self Storage that might suggest a cause and a remedy. Suspect information in police reports was rare, and what existed showed no pattern. Some burglars had cut locks, while others had broken into units through adjoining walls. The volunteers found no consistent pattern in time of occurrence, largely because investigators usually did not know when burglaries had occurred. Nor did they find any significant patterns among victim profiles. The only factor common to all the burglaries that seemed relevant was that they all occurred under one set of management practices.

Agnes Brookes, the volunteers' leader, contacted five other self-storage facilities to ask about similar burglary problems and security measures. While she could draw no firm conclusions about what prevented burglaries, she did learn that the other facilities were not experiencing as big a problem with them. The volunteers agreed that this warranted further analysis. Accordingly, Brookes developed a telephone survey, through which she interviewed more than 30 area self-storage facilities. This survey gave Brookes a much better understanding of self-storage security and management practices.

Brookes learned about burglars' common methods of operation. Some burglars stole from one storage unit and stored the stolen goods in another. When sufficient time passed, they removed the goods from the facility. Brookes also learned about effective locks and sensor alarms, and, importantly, about management practices that discouraged theft. Among the recommended practices were to rent suspicious customers units easily observed, time customer visits, periodically check on customers while in their units, and lock doors leading to common hallways, when not in use.

While Brookes was learning about effective management practices, three other volunteers were further studying the Secure Self Storage warehouse. They discovered that the external security was reasonably good. A 6-foot Cyclone fence with Byzantine wire and a controlled entrance made it nearly impossible to move large or heavy objects surreptitiously. Although the entrance gate was electronically controlled through pass codes, several vehicles could pass through the gate before it closed. This allowed people to enter without being registered.

The internal security seemed weaker. Customers were free to move about the common hallways, which were left open. Moreover, many of the unit locks, especially those the property managers sold, were of inferior quality. Some could be broken, cut or picked, while appearing to remain secure. The managers did not screen customers, and assigned them to units randomly. The volunteers concluded that the net effect of these conditions and practices was to leave burglars feeling confident they would not be detected.

To respond to the problem, the volunteers got the property-management group to put some pressure on the managers to cooperate with the police. The volunteers designed and printed a brochure on effective security devices and practices, to be given to customers. They recommended that the managers install pressure pads, restricting access between floors; use different access codes for different hallways; install video cameras in hallways; improve lighting; upgrade locks; and affix special stickers to locks to readily identify tampering.

Once the managers implemented the new security measures, the decline in reported burglaries was both immediate and dramatic. The number of reported burglaries dropped from 150 in the six-month period before the intervention, to one in the three months following. A customer with an unauthorized set of master keys committed that burglary; the customer was arrested and evicted from the warehouse.

With the Secure Self Storage burglary problem under control, Brookes followed up on her telephone survey by preparing and distributing a crime-prevention flyer suitable for all self-storage facilities.*

Editors' note: This project is notable in several respects. Most of the project was conceived and implemented by citizen volunteers with a modest amount of background or training in police procedure. The impact was dramatic, saving the police department's resources, while expending virtually none. It seems that the key to their success was, first, learning what might deter burglaries and, second, using their influence with the property-management group to motivate the managers to heed the prevention advice.

Additional Editors' Comments on Burglary Problems

The nation is witnessing a sharp decline in the number of reported burglaries. In recent years, burglaries dropped well below 3 million cases, from 3.8 million cases in 1981. The early 1970s represented the high point in burglary, with 93.1 burglaries and attempted burglaries for every 1,000 households. The rate is about half that now. Experts suggest several reasons for the dramatic decline, including an increase in the crack market, as compared with the heroin market. Heroin users, they suggest, take the time to commit daytime burglaries. However, crack users are more impatient and prefer robberies and drug dealing – quicker moneymakers, with no need to pawn stolen items – to finance their addiction. Improved residential and commercial security measures may also account for some of the decline, as well as a demographic decline in the number of young offenders, although an increase is expected in the coming years.

*Sources: "The Church Lady Tackles a Burglary Series," by Officer Andy Mills, undated, submitted by San Diego Police Department to Rana Sampson as part of NIJ-sponsored problem-solving project; "*Property Crimes Steadily Decline, Led by Burglary*," New York Times, Oct. 12, 1997; personal communication with Sgt. Mills, October 1997.

The efforts included in this section highlight the value of hot-spot and revictimization analysis in looking at burglary. Even with such large declines in burglary, patterns may emerge in terms of location, type of location (storage facilities, malls, etc.), and victimization, providing information for fine-tuning responses.

The editors uncovered other notable approaches during the research. Mesa, Ariz., police established a program to address burglary in storage facilities. They restricted the hours customers could enter the facility (eliminating the excuse for late-night traffic on the property), provided training, and applied crime-prevention-through-environmental-design principles, including the installation of tamper-resistant locks. Scottsdale, Ariz., police used a two-pronged approach to address the burglary of items such as bikes and golf clubs from open garages. They stopped at homes with open garage doors to warn of burglary susceptibility, and they also provided education to the community on area burglary problems and the ease of theft when there is open access. Tempe, Ariz., police suggested that a repeatedly burglarized storage facility hire a homeless man, whom they knew to be trustworthy, to live at the facility and monitor against break-ins.

Westchester County, N.Y., police convinced the local legislative body to pass a law regulating the sale and exchange of precious metals and gems in the county. Prior to this, gem dealers were buying stolen jewelry (gained from residential burglaries), and county laws required no paperwork documenting the sale or information on the person selling. In Orlando, Fla., to reduce break-ins of vulnerable households in one area, police placed enhanced security measures in the homes of the elderly, single parents and victims of prior break-ins, if they financially qualified for the assistance.

The Peel, Ontario, Canada, Regional Police's crime prevention services is pursuing amendments to Ontario's building codes to reduce burglaries. One hundred ten single-family homes are being built using the suggested burglary-prevention designs. Evaluators will compare these homes with a control group of the same size over a five-year period.

