

BACKGROUND

Seattle Police Department

September, 1999

About the Seattle Watch Program

Many police departments throughout the country have looked at ways of improving their accountability to the public as service providers. Serious examinations have taken place as to how to better allocate and coordinate resources, set priorities, and foster

communications and collaboration within these departments. Seattle is one of the leaders in this endeavor through a process known as *SeattleWatch*.

During the early months of 1998 Seattle Police Chief Norm Stamper asked his Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to study police crime fighting, problem solving, and accountability. Their task was to develop an accountability model that would meet the specific needs of the Department and Seattle's communities. Various groups in the Department, representing a variety of ranks met to discuss the possibilities. Trips were made to New York and Los



West Precinct Lt. Dick Schweitzer, Lt. Al Lorette, South Precinct Capt. Debbie Allen and Lt. Neil Low discuss the issues and concerns of their jurisdictions at the monthly *SeattleWatch* meeting.

Angeles to study their accountability models and learn what aspects could be applied in Seattle. After months of collaboration, research, and analysis *Seattle Watch* was implemented in January of 1999.

SeattleWatch is a collaborative model that uniquely combines structured problem solving with accountability. The utilization of a formal problem-solving model ensures that problems are clearly identified, thoroughly analyzed, and responded to, and that the responses to them are assessed for their effectiveness.

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Participation

SeattleWatch was designed to support problem solving and accountability at all levels of the organization, throughout government, and even within communities. As it is intended to be an institutionalized process for the Department systematically and continually to assess the quality of the service it delivers, it has a direct effect upon, and involves the participation of, everyone in the Department. There is, however, a focus on unit commanders—both sworn and civilian. This focus is not simply a top down approach. Lateral accountability is emphasized through the communication and collaboration process between commanders. There is also accountability upward, by ensuring that the needs of the unit commanders and their personnel are adequately assessed and supported by SLT.

The *SeattleWatch* process culminates each month with the **Commanders' Meeting**. The Department's 26 unit commanders and the 8 members of SLT, including the Chief of Police, attend the

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The SeattleWatch Process

Each month members of the Support Team and CAU meet with each of the four precinct captains in *SeattleWatch Planning Meetings*. The *SeattleWatch* and precinct crime analysts brief the captains on activity that occurred in the precinct during the previous month and highlight concerns, such as significant increases in calls for service or a crime series. However, crime analysis data alone cannot measure everything, so the captains also rely on anecdotal information from members of the community and line staff in order to paint a comprehensive picture of what is going on. The captain then determines if there is a problem or issue that he or she would like to have addressed through *SeattleWatch*. Past problems that have been identified include disturbances at a new teen nightclub, a car prowl series, prostitution in and



Chief Stamper and Capt. Tom Grabicki in a *SeattleWatch* forum.

around motels, and an emerging neighborhood gang problem. Accountability for the problem is ensured by the designation of someone as the single person in charge of overseeing the problem solving process. This **Problem Lead** is responsible for contacting all of the involved parties, ex-

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Participation

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meeting. Seating is arranged in a circular format in order to encourage dialogue. Representatives from the Seattle Police Officers Guild, Mayor's Office, City Attorney's Office, and King County Prosecutor's Office are invited to attend. This meeting creates regular opportunities for communication and collaboration

between all of the Department's commanders.

A Support Team comprised of sworn and civilian employees from several bureaus is responsible for logistical and analytical support. The Support Team is currently led by two Operations Bureau lieutenants and reports administratively to the Director of the Community and Information Services Bureau. A key component of the Support Team is a

full-time crime analyst, who provides geographical and statistical data to the commanders and SLT in order to promote problem solving, prioritization, and tracking. This analyst coordinates his work with the four precinct-based crime analysts.

Crime analysis has been described as the "bread and butter" of *SeattleWatch*. The Department's **Crime Analysis**

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Units Represented at the Commanders' Meeting:

Chief of Police	West Precinct	Internal Investigations	Property Crimes
Chief of Staff	North Precinct	Special Operations	Communications
Operations Bureau	South Precinct	Emergency Management	Domestic Violence
investigations Bureau	East Precinct	Fiscal, Property	information Technology
Support Bureau	Research & Grants	& Fleet Management	Records, Identification
Community & Information	Crime Survivor Services	Youth Crimes	& Evidence
Services Bureau	Violent Crimes	Audit & Procedures	Training
Human Resources Bureau	Crime Prevention	Public Affairs	Narcotics & Vice
Professional	Finance, Strategic Policy,	Community Service	Intelligence
Responsibly Bureau	& Planning	Officers	Metropolitan



SeattleWatch: Addressing the Problems

North Precinct: Lower Aurora Prostitution

Prostitution activity in and around low rate motels in the Lower Aurora area have brought related problems of increased traffic, disturbances, narcotics, and other disorder issues into the neighborhood. The problem was being repeatedly brought to the attention of North Precinct Captain Cindy Caldwell by members of the community and line level employees. Captain Caldwell decided to present the problem at the *SeattleWatch* Commanders' Meeting. The realization that the problem was unlikely to be eliminated was recognized, thus the focus was on finding better ways to control the problem. Efforts to train the motels on how to better discourage the illegal activity received only limited success. The Traffic Unit offered support by increasing its presence in the area to serve as a deterrent. Initially, undercover operations targeted prostitutes and Johns, but more thorough analysis revealed that targeting the criminal activity of pimps and problem motels would more likely have a long lasting effect. A Tactical Task Force was formed using North Precinct and Vice Section staff who are coordinating their efforts with the City Attorney and the Crime Prevention Section.

South Precinct: Abandoned Vehicle Round-up in West Seattle

Captain Debbie Allen of the South Precinct used *SeattleWatch* to share with other commanders an effective problem-solving effort that was used to overcome problems with impounding abandoned vehicles. In an effort to alleviate community concerns that the Precinct had attempted an aggressive abandoned vehicle round-up in West Seattle. The project soon overwhelmed itself as the tow companies could not effectively keep up with demands. This left everyone frustrated. The West Seattle Anti-Crime Council took the initiative to form an Abandoned Vehicle Committee in partnership with the Police Department. A large scale meet-

ing, which included representatives from the City Attorney's Office, the Mayor's Office, City Council, the Department of Construction and Land Use, the Revenue & Consumer Affairs Division, the tow companies, and the community met to investigate the situation from everyone's perspective. Procedural changes were adopted that streamlined the reporting, ticketing, impounding, and tracking process. The abandoned vehicle round-up is running more effectively than ever. The project served as a useful model for other commanders in terms of both dealing with abandoned vehicles and collaboration.

West Precinct: Increased Criminal Activity around 3rd Avenue and Pine Street

Violent crime was escalating in the area of 3rd Avenue and Pine Street, which was already known for high levels of narcotics activity. Much of this activity was attributed to a new gang, the "3P Mafia," that was trying to assert itself in the neighborhood. There has also been a massive influx of residential and commercial development in the area, which has heightened the demands of the community on the police to keep the area safe. Captain Jim Pugel selected this problem as a high priority for the West Precinct and looked for innovative ways to shift limited resources into the area. He enlisted the support of the Gang Unit and the Department of Corrections. He also managed to deploy additional foot beat officers. Concurrently, the Precinct is partnering with the Downtown Seattle Association and utilizing a federal grant to support more long-term problem solving in the area. This has included the use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to remove environmental conditions that contribute to the problem and efforts to increase the community's ability to positively influence the neighborhood. The incidents of violence have dropped off significantly.

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Addressing Problems

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East Precinct: Increased crime in area around Studio 420 in the Broadway Corridor

During a *SeattleWatch* Planning Meeting, CAU Detective Ross Bartley identified a "hot spot" of increased calls for service in the area of the 400 block of East Denny Way. The calls for service represented a variety of call types, and Detective Bartley was unable to pinpoint the cause of the dramatic increase through his data analysis. East Precinct Captain Toni Malliet indicated that she had been receiving information from officers and numerous complaints from community members about a new teen club that stays open into the early morning hours. It turned out that this club was in the middle of the identified "hot spot." Property crimes in the area were thought possibly to involve club patrons. After selecting the club as her Precinct's *SeattleWatch* problem, other units and agencies were brought to the table in an effort to address the problem.

They included the Narcotics Section, City Attorney, Fire Department, and Department of Construction and Land Use. Subsequently, inspections were made to ensure that the club was operating within legal standards. The club's management failed to voluntarily address the City's and Department's concern. The City initiated the nuisance abatement process and the property owner did not renew Studio 420's lease. Studio 420 is now permanently closed because of the cooperation and collaboration between the community, City, and Police Department.

Future Goals and Vision for *SeattleWatch*

SeattleWatch is meeting many of its goals. This process institutionalizes many of the problem-solving methods already utilized by employees throughout the Department. *SeattleWatch* is effective because it provides focus on problems of mutual interest to com-

manders, and highlights available or insufficient tools and resources to resolve problems. The overall plan is for *SeattleWatch* participation to expand to include other city and county agencies, as well as community and business partners. •



Studio 420, located in the East Precinct, was a teen club that became a center of noise and loitering complaints from the neighborhood. Concerned community members and the Seattle Police Department met at *SeattleWatch* to resolve the issue.

Participation

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Unit (CAU), despite its small size, has evolved into one of the premier units of its type in the country. It is using cutting-edge technology to provide *SeattleWatch* with the strategic and tactical data analysis needed to identify problem areas and measure the effectiveness of responses to them. This technology includes sophisticated mapping tools that can provide visual references to hotspots, trends, and even predictive patterns of crime and disorder.

The Department contracted with Michael Pendleton, who is an organizational-management consultant, to evaluate the development of *SeattleWatch*. His background includes having served as a police officer in Oregon and as a professor at both the University of Washington and University of Oregon. His task as the *SeattleWatch* **Evaluator**, is to provide an objective assessment of the process, program effectiveness, and participation. His advice and consultation have been instrumental in the success of the program. •



Process

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aming the causes of the problem, and formulating a plan to deal with it.

If the identified problem involves a significant amount of coordination between units, the precinct captain may decide to request the formation of a task force. In *SeattleWatch* there are two types of task forces—tactical and strategic. **Tactical** Task Forces are short-term and are intended to bring immediate impact to a situation, such as a crime series. Tactical Task Forces utilize the **Incident Command System (ICS)** and require the designation of an **Incident Commander**. Generally, if the problem is occurring within a

single precinct, someone from that precinct will be designated as the Incident Commander. If the problem crosses precinct boundaries, another commander will usually be assigned

ing the naming of the Incident Commander or the allocation of resources, the *SeattleWatch* **Tie-Breaker** will make the decision. This role is filled by the Operations Bureau Chief, or in his absence, the Investigations Bureau Chief.

"The accountability structure in *SeattleWatch* is not top-down. It is sideways. Commanders are being held accountable to their peers, and by focusing on specific problems are being forced to share information and resources."

- "Governing" Magazine
September, 1999

the role. The Incident Commander is given the authority to determine what resources are needed and how they should be used. Collaboration with other commanders in sharing resources remains the expectation. If there is a conflict regard-

at chronic issues that require extensive unresolved problems and ensures progress is being made. The meeting process then starts again as the Support Team and precinct commanders begin to prepare information for the next Planning Meeting, e

Strategic Task Forces are broad-scoped and long-range. As Assistant Chief Harv Ferguson put it during a discussion on the task forces, "strategic is the war; tactical is the battle." The Strategic Task forces are intended to look

Chronology of SeattleWatch Development

SeattleWatch developed over many months. The following is a chronology that highlights important milestones in the establishment of the process:

- Feb. 1998** At its annual retreat, the SLT approves development of an accountability structure for commanders and supervisors.
- June 1998** An accountability Work Group is appointed and charged to develop a model for monthly commanders' meetings. Model is approved by SLT for implementation in 1999.
- Nov. 1998** Preparation for first *SeattleWatch* meeting takes place. In a re-occurring process, unit/watch commanders meet with their staffs to solicit their ideas on crime trends and concerns. Precinct commanders gather information on current issues from advisory councils, community contacts, and CPT officers; Community Crime Prevention staff gather information from Block and Business Watch contacts;
- Jan. 1999** The first monthly meeting of *SeattleWatch* is launched. Department formally identifies a facilitator, tiebreaker, and evaluator to insure that monthly meetings work effectively and that the process is achieving its objectives.
- Sept. 1999** *SeattleWatch* is in stride with systems in place to insure follow-through on open items from meeting to meeting and effective coordination of internal resources, in particular Crime Analysis, to support the operational decisions and objectives of commanders.

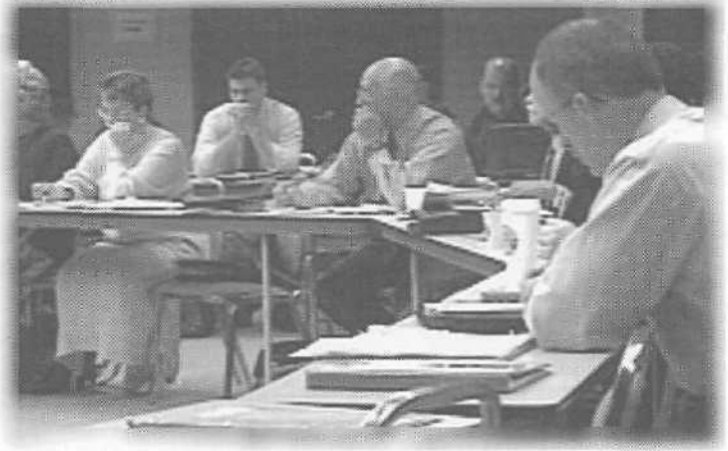


SeattleWatch

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The accountability aspect ensures that the Department is being responsive to the needs and priorities of the community and that Department employees are following through on commitments regardless of rank or position.

SeattleWatch recognizes that any problem that a precinct or section encounters affects others in the Department, either directly or indirectly, and is, therefore, not an individual problem, but a Department one. Accordingly, there is an expectation that information and resources will be shared across unit and bureau lines in order to resolve problems. Internal busi-



The roundtable layout of the meetings promote an equalized discussion.

ness practices often contribute to problems, thus there is also an effort to eliminate bureaucratic barriers to problem solving. ■

Questions & Answers

How can I get involved in *SeattleWatch*?

Contact staff in the Community Information and Services Bureau, at (206) 684-8672, or contact any Precinct Commander to find out about opportunities for involvement.

What is the long-range commitment of the Department to *SeattleWatch*?

SeattleWatch will continue as long as it remains an effective tool for establishing and maintaining accountability.

Does *SeattleWatch* enhance accountability?

SeattleWatch enhances accountability by bringing together commanders from throughout the Department to discuss issues and develop action plans. Action items are reported on and when progress is not realized, the commander is expected to offer an analysis of the problem and a plan for resolving the issue.

Who decides the overall effectiveness of *SeattleWatch*?

The Bureau Commander of the Community and Information Services Bureau is the SLT member assigned lead responsibility for the overall process. However, with the information from commanders and a review of annual GARMS, the SLT decides *SeattleWatch*'s effectiveness.

Are sections effectively sharing resources?

Yes. Once a problem is brought before *SeattleWatch*, resources from stakeholders are pooled, and a response is developed. Although there is room for improvement, commanders report that resources and information are being shared more effectively than in the past.

Could sharing of information compromise investigations?

Information is shared in a manner that will not compromise the integrity of an investigation. Large and small scale missions may be planned without sharing sensitive information. Commanders are expected to be direct when they withhold information for mission integrity or officer safety.

How can patrol officers incorporate *SeattleWatch* into their daily routine?

Employees throughout the Department are encouraged to identify crime trends, patterns, and problems and discuss them with their unit commanders. Precinct or Section Commanders make the final decision about the problems they present at the monthly Commanders' meetings, but individual employees may utilize the same problem-solving model to develop projects to address crime in their areas of concern.

