



Perris News

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

Zone Policing is a Success for Perris

The official name is COMPSTAT. Perris' chief law enforcement officer calls it zone policing.

Whatever its name, a new approach to crime busting that puts more control—and more accountability—in that hands of Perris patrol officers and their supervisors was credited this week with causing a 13.6 percent drop in major felonies in the first nine months of this year.

The drop is much greater than at any other Riverside County Sheriff's Department station, where the average drop is just 3.3 percent. The sheriff contracts with many cities for law enforcement services, including Moreno Valley, Lake Elsinore, Temecula and Hemet.

"I'd say this experiment is a success," said Capt. James McElvain. "There was a lot of angst at the station when we implemented it. But the change was brought in slowly. Nothing was done quickly. Everybody had a say-so."

The new system works like this:

Perris police officers are assigned to four specific zones with the city. Barring an emergency like a major traffic accident or crime, they spend their entire shifts working those specific areas, getting to know the streets, houses and businesses, homeowners and their kids. Keeping them in one part of the city also lets them identify the people who don't belong, those who might commit crimes. Zone cops are encouraged to get out of their cars and chat with residents. They are required to know the manager of every 24-hour business in their zone.

"They are more engaged in the community than in the past," he said.

When crimes are committed, the times and locations are entered in a logbook, which zone supervisors scan daily. Supervisors in adjacent zones share crime times, locations and other specifics, which helps them develop coordinated approaches to curb criminal activity. Sometimes, when problems are uncovered and suspects identified, Perris police work with City code enforcement officers or Riverside County parole and probation personnel in targeted sweeps.

Beat officers and their supervisors meet with station lieutenants and with McElvain to apprise senior staff about problems and progress they see in the field. Crime statistics are analyzed twice a month as well as long-term and those numbers are entered into computer-based database available to all police who works in specific zones.

In the end, McElvain said, everybody from the beat cop to the station commander gets asked the same question: What am I doing to solve crime in my zone?

"If we had gone through all this work without success, it would have my head spinning," he said.

So far, the approach seems to be working.

Burglaries are down 11 percent. Auto theft is down 42 percent. Vehicle burglary has declined 31 percent. Although larcenies and robberies have gone up, so have arrests for those crimes. Robberies are up 21 percent but arrests for those crimes are up 45 percent. Larceny is up 12 percent; arrests have skyrocketed 130 percent.

Serious crimes tracked by the FBI and local law enforcement include homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, auto theft, vehicle burglary and larceny. Through the end of October, Perris police responded to 1,926 reports of those crimes. Last year, the number was 2,231. Deputy Larry Holloway, a zone supervisor, said the officers under his supervision are "absolutely motivated" to reduce crime in Perris and put the bad guys in jail.

"It's working," he said. "Crime is going down. It's an ongoing process and we're still working on it. The bottom line is people have to trust us and call us when they see something happening. City Council members were delighted after McElvain briefed them at a recent meeting.

"Fantastic news," said Councilwoman Rita Rogers.

Mayor Daryl Busch praised the zone-policing success.

"You've given us real facts," Busch told McElvain. "It's real important to know our city is in good hands. We appreciate it."



Police Capt. Jim McElvain stands in front of zone maps used by the City of Perris to track crime statistics and trends. A new zone policing program is credited with reducing crime in the City more than 13 percent this year.

###

Close this Page

Print this Page