

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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An Analysis of the Effective Use of Citizens On Patrol

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**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

The utilization of Citizens On Patrol is varied across the country and the state. Some law enforcement agencies are extremely successful in the use of these volunteers and others minimally use them. If the liabilities and benefits are equal, why doesn't every agency use them? The goal of this research is to identify and compile all practical job tasks for these volunteers to assist law enforcement. The research should also identify the possible liabilities and problems associated with these volunteer programs.

The research will be conducted by the identification of various job tasks these volunteers are currently performing nationwide. The job task listing will be compiled from information published in law enforcement periodicals and journals containing relevant articles on this topic. The author will conduct a detailed search of Websites of agencies currently supporting Citizen On Patrol programs. The author will supplement this research with information obtained at the International Volunteer Administrators Conference held in Denver, Colorado on October 9-12, 2002.

This research will demonstrate that Citizens On Patrol programs are a valuable resource currently being underutilized by law enforcement agencies in the state.

INTRODUCTION

The world is changing every day in many ways. The events of 9-11-01 have altered forever the mindset of most Americans. Our mainland has been attacked by terrorists who are as dedicated to this country's destruction, as we are to defend it. The problems of protecting a country as large as the United States, with its largely open borders, are an impossible situation. The Department of Homeland Security, federal, state, county, and municipal law enforcement cannot attempt to defend all the potential targets of terrorists. These targets include: water treatment plants, reservoirs, water towers, electrical power distribution grids, hospitals, sports complexes, and many other varied locations. Local governments must conduct a risk assessment potential profile of potential targets and attempt to patrol them with current or even reduced staffing levels. The answer now will be the same as in the Revolutionary War; ordinary citizens will be pressed into the protection of their country. President Bush in his 2002 State Of The Union address announced the creation of the Citizen Corps in an attempt to coordinate a nationwide volunteer initiative. The author was told in a personal interview at the National Volunteer Coordinator's 2002 conference by a FEMA representative, "it's like building a 747 while its in flight".

The use of volunteers in law enforcement is usually defined by geographic area, population density, and the mandate of the respective agency administrator. There are predominantly two types of volunteer groups existing in the majority of departments: The Citizen Police Academy and Citizens On Patrol. Citizen Police Academy programs are information programs established to allow citizens the opportunity to learn about the operation of most areas of the sponsoring law enforcement agency. The Citizens On Patrol groups are organized to actively patrol designated neighborhoods and report suspicious or criminal activity.

They are not sworn commissioned officers and have powers of arrest. Their mission is to observe and reports incidents requiring some type of official response only.

These volunteers may patrol in a vehicle provided by their department or in their personal vehicle. Vehicles provided by the department will be marked with decals identifying the occupants as COPS, VIPS, or Volunteers On Patrol. The vehicle, if equipped with emergency lighting, will have lens with colors other than red or blue. The lights provide warning to overtaking traffic, but cannot be used to conduct traffic stops. The majority of these volunteers use their own personal vehicles in which to patrol in. This particular group is known by many different titles for example: Code Blue, Volunteers On Patrol, or other similar acronyms. These units are organized with essentially the same type of mission profile, to observe and report criminal activity, not respond directly to it.

The volunteers must be 18-21 years old, as a minimum. There is apparently no maximum age for volunteers, depending on their assignment. They must complete and pass a criminal background check, usually performed by their sponsoring law enforcement agency, prior to attending the first instruction class. Most agencies require these volunteers to attend a Citizen's Police Academy, prior to or after COPS training. Most programs then require the volunteer to ride with commissioned law enforcement officers to experience first hand, the problems and situations facing their community.

The majority of these programs require a minimum number of patrol hours per month, as a condition for remaining active with the program. Every program stresses non-confrontation, either verbal or physical, stressing safety at all times. Every program strictly prohibits volunteers from carrying weapons of any type on patrol. Volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement and a waiver of personal liability. Volunteer liability is covered under Workman's Compensation

guidelines in cities that are members of the TML (Texas Municipal League). This coverage is effective only while the volunteer is actively engaged in or assigned to city sponsored activities only.

The author intends to identify all current applications these volunteers are currently successfully handling. The author will research articles in law enforcement and volunteer publications that profile successful programs. The author will submit information obtained during the attendance of the National Volunteer Coordinator Conference, held in Denver, Colorado in October 2002. The author will also conduct interviews with program coordinators in person and by telephone, about volunteer usage in their respective agencies. The research will show that volunteers are not being utilized to their utmost potential by most law enforcement agencies in the state. The use of qualified trained volunteers in some applications can extend the capabilities of any law enforcement agency in the state.

The author has identified a minimum of over 200 current operating programs in the United States and Canada. These programs operate an independent Website or have a section devoted to the program on the agency Website. These sites are used for general information and the recruitment of potential new members. Some of these sites even have a program application that can be down loaded from the Web.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Grossman and Furano(2002) state that 90 million Americans contribute more than 20 billion hours to volunteer service. The first task of an agency involved in using volunteers, must be able to identify who is a potential volunteer for that agency. Jenson((1998) stated the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department found that most successful volunteers come from one of four main groups: retirees over 55 that want to stay active; homemakers whose household or

child care responsibilities have diminished; working people with spare time in the evenings or on weekends; and young adults who are seeking job experience and looking to make career decisions. The article states the L.A.C.S.O. has 4,300 volunteers. Preimsberger (2001) states the number of volunteers for that agency has increased to over 7,000. States having larger retired populations appear to have significantly more organizations using volunteers. The National Association of Citizens On Patrol, a non-profit organization, organized in Corona, California in July 1999, reported a membership of 3,200 Citizen On Patrol volunteers in 60 cities, in 10 states, with California and Florida having the most agencies using these programs. Frisco is the only Texas city, currently affiliated with the national organization (NACOP).

Grossman and Furano (2002) identify three areas crucial to the success of volunteer organizations: careful screening of potential applicants, comprehensive initial training that is job specific, and ongoing management and support of volunteers. They believe a breakdown of these areas will cause a program to fail. Failure may be caused by critical incident failure, poor or indifferent supervision, failure to maintain the volunteer's interest in the program, or failure to acknowledge their accomplishments or efforts.

Screening: The initial part of the process should identify the suitability of the potential volunteer for the job task assigned. The potential volunteer must submit the necessary personal information for the law enforcement agency to conduct a criminal background check. These volunteers will be perceived as representatives of the sponsoring agency. They will access to sensitive information and need to be trustworthy. Some agencies screen their volunteer applicants under the same requirements required of their sworn officers. The presence of a felony conviction or multiple misdemeanor convictions should disqualify any potential applicant. The applicant's personality should also be considered in the initial screening process. Some

applicant's personalities aren't compatible to the job tasks routinely required. Program managers need to eliminate potential problem personalities, before they enter the next phase of the program. The use of an interview panel composed of program veterans and at least one sworn officer is used by some agencies to aid in this process. The criminal background check should also contain a search of the applicant's drivers license for violation history and current status.

Training: Once the volunteers are accepted into the program, they must be given basic job training. The training must be done in clear, understandable, and manageable classes. The use of police jargon of positions and definitions must be explained or eliminated from this level of training. The comparison of speaking in another language is applicable, if it is used and not explained. The training is given on two levels, basic or entry level and in-service or ongoing training. Specialized training is then given to the unit based on the type of mission or job specialization required of the group. Some examples of specialization are disabled parking enforcement, CERT training, home security inspection, and others.

Management and Support: These volunteer programs must have good management and support to be effective. The program must have rules of operation that set clear parameters of responsibilities and job descriptions. The unit must have a chain of command that is fully explained to the volunteers. This process is needed to limit internal problems and to insure there are consequences for rules being broken. A set period of probation needs to be established and followed to allow for separation of unsuitable volunteers. The program needs to have continual support to prevent stagnation and lack of participation of volunteers. Volunteers also need public recognition of their efforts and accomplishments. The lack of acknowledgement can be fatal to volunteer enthusiasm. Some volunteer managers become frustrated and fail to make volunteers feel needed, and they join other programs that provide encouragement. The author's research

identified many specific job tasks currently being performed by COPS units nationwide. The program guidelines are germane to all programs that were researched in this job task identification.

METHODOLOGY

Is the Citizens On Patrol program being used effectively by police agencies? The reported utilization application of these programs by Texas law enforcement agencies is extremely varied across the state. This research indicates that no agency in the state is using these programs to their potential. The author conducted searches for articles in police periodicals and journals pertaining to starting, maintaining or highlighting articles for Citizen On Patrol type organizations. The author has conducted personal interviews of supervisors of many of the organizations using these types of volunteers. The author attended the International Conference of Volunteer Administration conference held in Denver, Colorado on October 9-12 2002 to gather additional information on program usage. The author has conducted many searches of the Internet to identify agencies that have Citizen On Patrol programs. These sites have the program guidelines including on-line application forms for some agencies. These agencies all used these sites to report job tasks, successes, and volunteer recruitment for the agency. The information gathered from these sources will be listed in a job task identification list to identify common applications for adoption by state law enforcement agencies.

FINDINGS

The author's research found that no law enforcement agency in Texas is currently utilizing volunteers for all the job tasks identified. The research determined that all agencies identified similar applications, minimum age limits, background checks, and minimum hours for remaining current in the program. This provides a base line of continuity for comparison of job

tasks. The size or location of the agency was not a factor for this research. These factors are important to a jurisdiction containing beaches, major tourist attractions, large recreation usage areas, or gated senior citizen communities. These agencies would have more geographic specific job tasks for volunteers. The type of agency, either Sheriff's Department or Municipal Police, would benefit from these programs equally.

Community Oriented Policing trends being used in some form by many agencies, are based on citizen participation from the community. These agencies are actively attempting to educate their citizens through Citizen Police Academies, Neighborhood Watch programs, and other programs encouraging citizen involvement. These programs are perfect for recruitment of volunteers for Citizens On Patrol. They have already demonstrated a strong sense of community involvement and commitment. The larger the pool of potential volunteers usually provides volunteers who possess a wider range of life experiences, education levels, and varied job skills or occupations.

The use of personal vehicles for patrol is the applied standard for the majority of these programs. There are programs that reported the use of retired police patrol vehicles from the sponsoring agency. There were also programs that have patrol vehicles that are donated by civic organizations, companies operating in the area, and automobile dealerships. These vehicles are marked with different light equipment and decals that identify the occupants as Citizens On Patrol, not police officers. Volunteers also provide personal bicycles, horses, ATVs, motorcycles, golf carts, and a helicopter in one program, to patrol with.

Communications needs are achieved by the use of cellular telephones, citizen band radios, police frequency radios with citizen manned dispatch sites, and police radios with the capability of communication with police dispatch or police officers. Additional equipment used

by some programs include; night vision enhancement devices, radar guns, flashlights with detachable traffic wands, traffic safety vests, traffic warning signs or flags, traffic cones, traffic flares, air tanks, jumper cables, traffic barricades, and any agency equipment needed for the job task.

The uniforms used by these programs varied significantly. Some agencies provide a full uniform for their volunteers to wear in the performance of their duties. These uniforms are significantly different from those worn by the sworn officers of the agency. Some of the agencies allow the volunteers to wear some type of badge with this uniform. The badges are also different from the ones worn by the sworn officers of the agency. The majority of the agencies provide polo type shirts, clearly identifying the wearer as a volunteer. The sponsoring agency needs clear detailed written guidelines specifying how and where the uniform is to be worn. All of the agencies identified provided the volunteers with a photo identity card.

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSIONS

Citizen On Patrol programs are not being utilized effectively by any law enforcement agency in the state. The completion of a job tasks list of responsibilities should assist these agencies to better utilize their volunteers. The job task list will allow agencies to modify their programs to assist their staffs. Volunteers will not be able to assume many of the hazardous duties of sworn officers. They will be able to handle many of the routine tasks that don't require a sworn officer to complete. The agency officers need to recognize and understand the volunteer's role with the agency. They need to accept the volunteers as allies, not as a threat to their jobs.

The volunteer needs to understand the volunteer's role with the agency. They must understand their chain of command and who their direct supervisors are. They must also be

treated with the respect they deserve as unpaid volunteers giving their time to help their community. They must however be held accountable for their actions, since they are representatives of the sponsoring agency. They must accept that there are consequences for violations of department of department policy. They may be dismissed from the agency for undesirable conduct, even if they are non-compensated volunteers. These programs need to be supervised by supervisors willing to accept the special conditions of handling volunteers. The officers willing accept this challenge is preferred to others who are drafted to fill the position. Many sworn officers don't understand or have the patience required to work with volunteers. Many of the agencies researched have a paid volunteer coordinator for the department. The use of the volunteer coordinator allows sworn officers to address their primary assignment, without adding additional duties to a supervisor.

These programs need clearly defined standard operating procedures. These procedures need to be monitored and modified as volunteer responsibilities and job tasks change. These procedures must cover all potential situations that might be encountered, much like agency general orders.

Law enforcement agencies can benefit from better utilization of Citizens On Patrol programs. The threat of possible terrorist attacks on domestic targets will stress law enforcement's capabilities. Funding for addition manpower if authorized, will take time to trickle down to local government. The use of volunteers in handling many current sworn officer assignments will be extremely critical. If law enforcement agencies adopt proven methods of volunteer recruitment, volunteer screening, provide quality up to date training, and provide good supervision and recognition, they will provide immediate assistance to law enforcement

agencies. The identification and utilization of volunteer resources and skills can provide agencies with an unlimited potential.

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APPENDIX

SAMPLE APPLICATION

JOB TASK LISTING

Citizens On Patrol Application

Personal Information:

Full Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Home Phone Number: _____

Work Address: _____

Work Phone Number: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Drivers License Number: _____ State: _____

Social Security Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Education:

High School Graduate? _____ GED? _____

Highest Grade Completed _____

Name of High School : _____

College Graduate? _____ Degree and Major _____

Name of College: _____

List associations, civic/service clubs, affiliations, etc

Employment:

Presently Employed? Yes/No Work Hours: _____

Name of Employer _____

Position and Duties: _____

References

List two references:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Please list any special training / skills you have which would aide this program:

Are you willing to commit to patrol the minimum amount of hours required by the
program per month? _____

I hereby grant permission for this law enforcement agency to conduct a criminal history
background check. I am also aware that by deliberately omitting or falsifying this
application will be grounds for disqualification/dismissal from this program. If accepted
into the program I also agree to maintain the confidentiality of any information involving
any ongoing criminal investigation, police operations, arrest warrants, or criminal
indictments while volunteering for this law enforcement agency.

Signature: _____

Date: _____ --

JOB TASKING LIST

The author's research identified many specific job tasks currently being performed by COPS units nationwide. The program guidelines are germane to all programs that were researched in this job tasks identification:

1. Child fingerprinting
2. Disabled parking enforcement
3. Neighborhood Watch training and implementation
4. Clerical work at different levels of the sponsoring agency
5. Manning police information desks and tables at community functions
6. Tagging abandoned motor vehicles
7. Completing burglary/theft initial offense reports
8. Processing minor crime scenes for physical evidence
9. Conducting prisoner intake and release at jails
10. Conducting police service surveys to identify citizen concern's
11. Educate public about police programs/services
12. Conduct vacation home checks
13. Conduct searches for lost children and disoriented adults community emergency response team
14. Provide disaster assistance preparedness thru CERT training
15. Provide Sky Warn (severe weather observer) assistance
16. Provide preliminary home and business security inspections

17. Provide evidence processing in the property section of sponsoring agency
18. Provide roadside assistance for disabled vehicles
19. Provide traffic direction at accident scenes and road closures
20. Complete accident reports for minor accidents or private property accidents
21. Man police store fronts or substations
22. Assist sworn officers in crowd observance at special events/sporting events
23. Become mentors to and assist in Police Explorer Programs
24. Conduct patrols on bikes, ATVs, horses, and helicopters of parks and recreation areas
25. Conduct patrols to identify vehicles being operated by impaired drivers
26. Conduct funeral escorts
27. Entering pawn tickets and other information into police databases
28. Provide "Open Garage Door Letter" program
29. Conduct patrols to identify and report illegal dumping and graffiti abatement activities
30. Report city code violations and hazardous locations to code enforcement
31. Report nuisance water violations to code enforcement
32. R.U.O.K. program (daily home checks of elderly citizens)
33. Install emergency beacon lights for senior citizens

34. Conduct letter writing campaign to community leaders in support of police programs
35. Provide safe houses and after school tutoring programs for latch key children
36. Conduct foot patrols and holiday escorts at malls
37. Conduct arson and fire watch patrols in high risk in rural areas
38. Conduct false alarm follow ups to reduce the number of unfounded calls
39. Responsible for placement/removal of officer decoys in parked, locked patrol vehicles in high traffic areas
40. Placement and movement of radar trailers to high traffic areas
41. Verify equipment violation repairs have been made to bicycles after the operators have received citations for the violations
42. Conduct bike safety rodeos for children
43. Conduct bicycle registration and safety inspections
44. Serve subpoenas
45. Put together prisoner extradition packages
46. Maintain mug shot files
47. Conduct follow-up phone calls in missing person cases
48. Assist in crime analysis activities
49. Assist in juvenile diversion efforts for truant and curfew violations
50. Provide family violence intervention referral information to victims
51. Provide tracking dogs for searches

- 52. Assist with youth athletic activities
- 53. Provide care for arrestee's children until a family caregiver is located
- 54. Provide safe alternative to gang programs where children can belong and feel safe
- 55. Provide crisis intervention skills for crime victims
- 56. Assist with sworn officer training scenarios by role playing offenders/victims
- 57. Catalogue agency history and put together museum archives
- 58. Assemble informational brochures and pamphlets for community distribution
- 59. Serve on chiefs' advisory panels representing special interests and views of specific groups within the jurisdiction
- 60. Provide or assist volunteer chaplains in officer crisis situations
- 61. Provide golf cart inspection in senior gated communities where golf carts are the primary means of transportation.
- 62. Provide volunteer ambulance services transportation
- 63. Provide updates to the physical address database updates for 911 dispatch
- 64. Provide low-risk surveillances in support patrol officers and investigators for search
- 65. Provide reporting of burned-out street lights warrants or identification of offenders
- 66. Provide monitoring of seat belt or child safety seat usage
- 67. Conduct vehicle speed surveys using radar guns
- 68. Provide Violence Intervention Service support

69. Provide life skills training for women in abusive or neglect situations

70. Provide regularly scheduled anti-crime patrols of neighborhoods and business areas.