

Crime analysis vital to Safe City unit

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Tulsans may wonder what makes one police task force different from another.

But police say the answer is clear when it comes to the Safe City Initiative -- the reliance on real-time police data in an effort to prevent crime.

When coordinators set out to develop the unit, they decided to emphasize targeting crime hot spots throughout the city and criminals who frequently commit violent offenses.

The unit's supervisor, Capt. Matt Kirkland, said Safe City Initiative officers meet weekly with crime analysis officers, who identify crime trends and hot spots with advanced mapping technology.

Capt. Travis Yates said, "By using real-time data and providing that data to officers working the Safe City Initiative, it gives them direction and focus that no doubt has made a positive impact in our community."

Yates is the supervisor of the department's Crime Analysis, Planning, Evaluation and Research Section.

Intelligence-led policing involves the collection and analysis of information in an effort to inform police decision-making at both the tactical and management levels, he said.

"This style of law enforcement is predicated on the notion that a principal task of the police is to prevent and detect crime rather than simply to react to it," he said.

The department is researching whether other units could adapt some of the methods used by the Safe City Initiative. Police Chief Ron Palmer has said that he was interested in bringing to Tulsa a program such as Comstat, a crime-analysis and management tool that has proven successful in New York City.

Kirkland said this data-driven technique requires frequent updates, because once criminal activity has dropped off in the targeted area, officers need to move on to the next hot spot.

"It is just a matter of getting all of the officers used to looking at this kind of data for their use every day," he said.

Studying the data also helps officers focus on what crime categories need to be most important.

"It lets us stay on top of, not only geographic hot spots, but also the crime trends that are occurring," Kirkland said.

The analysis has also allowed Safe City officers to realize the overlap in crimes committed by career criminals or their associates.

"We are seeing that most people are not simply burglars or simply robbers," Kirkland said. "They may be involved in car thefts or associated to active car thieves.

"You will find that if you follow stolen cars, that you will end up finding robbers and burglars. There is just a very close association with these crime types," he said. "That is just something that a more consistent, scientific analysis of the data has shown us."

Kirkland added that the Safe City officers have also been gathering their own information from people whom they encounter and providing it to other units.

"I think there is a lot of information that flow back and forth. There is really kind of a synergy we have got going at the department," he said.

Progress report

Through Oct. 27, Safe City Initiative officers had:

- Made 182 arrests.
- Seized 29 guns.
- Seized 76.86 grams of cocaine.
- Seized 1,076.56 grams of marijuana.
- Seized 321.48 grams of methamphetamine. They also had served:
- 55 felony warrants.
- 201 misdemeanor warrants.
- Four search warrants.

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