



Best Practice: Using Data to Target High-Crime Areas

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CITY: New York City

POLICY AREA: Safety and Security

BEST PRACTICE

"Operation Impact," implemented by the New York City Police Department, is a crime reduction strategy that utilizes data to deploy officers to high-crime areas.

ISSUE

The New York City Police Department seeks tirelessly to reduce crime. To this end, Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly has implemented several crime-reduction strategies since taking office in January, 2002. As a result, violent crime has fallen by more than 29% from 2001 to 2008, and property crime has decreased by more than 23.2%. In 2009, New York City saw well under 500 murders, the lowest number since the advent of modern record-keeping 45 years ago. Operation Impact, initiated in January 2003, has been integral to these achievements. The program resulted from Commissioner Kelly's understanding that crime, after having been reduced to historically low levels, survived in isolated stubborn pockets across the city. Addressing these "hot spots" of crime represented the best avenue for furthering the Department's accomplishments and perpetuating New York's reputation as America's safest big city.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Operation Impact's goal is to reduce crime throughout the city by deploying more officers to high-crime hot spots, known as "Impact Zones." The NYPD employs innovative mapping and statistical tools in order to identify these zones and once identified, develops progressive policing methods that are appropriate to the nature and number of crimes in each Impact Zone. Operation Impact focuses its efforts on gangs and narcotics, high-crime public housing developments and ongoing crime trends.

IMPLEMENTATION

Beginning in January 2003, the NYPD began to deploy a majority of its Academy's graduating officers via Operation Impact to twenty Impact Zones throughout the city. The Department monitors these Impact Zones on a daily basis, tracking crimes, enforcement and officer deployment. Additionally, it conducts daily intelligence briefings to examine current crime trends and conditions. Mapping and analyzing crime data—type, location, time, and date—enables the Department to delineate the zones appropriately.

Operation Impact had an immediate positive effect on crime rates in the Impact Zones, and the Department continues to develop and refine the program. An example of the successful use of Operation Impact is its use in the 75th precinct. When mapping revealed that this precinct, one of the city's largest, also had one of the city's most significant crime rates, the Department launched "Operation Trident" to focus exclusively on that area. The precinct's unique geographical dimensions and crime patterns led the Department to create three separate "hot-spots," each run by a police captain. These areas are allotted numerous resources and officers, thereby cutting down on response times, maximizing police presence, and incisively targeting crime where it occurs.



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COST

While the mapping software and statistical tools used to analyze crime data do come with an initial price tag, these elements were not, and are not, used exclusively for Operation Impact. Therefore the program incurred no significant upstart expense, however, the most salient requirement is manpower. In order to flood high-crime areas with law enforcement officers, the Department must be able to graduate a significant number of officers from its Academy each year. The sheer size of New York City requires that about 1,800 new officers per year be deployed for Operation Impact alone.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Operation Impact has been, and continues to be, a successful crime-fighting tool. The following chart demonstrates the reduction in crime within the Impact Zones as of April 11, 2010 versus the same period last year.

	2009*	2010*	% Change
Major Felony Crime	1,717	1,661	- 3.26%
Murder	10	9	- 10.00%
Robbery	420	399	- 5.00%
Assault	421	410	- 2.61%
Grand Larcenies	513	492	- 4.09%
Grand Larcenies (Auto)	106	103	- 2.83%

*January 11th through April 11th

TIMELINE

Operation Impact began in January of 2003 as a 90-day initiative. High crime target areas were saturated with a "critical mass" of resources, utilizing recruits from the graduating Police Academy class, as well as personnel from the Detective Bureau, the Gang Division, the Narcotics Division, the Warrants Division, and the Vice Enforcement Division (which enforces laws governing issues such as gambling, prostitution, sale of alcoholic beverages, and the sexual exploitation of children). Operation Impact is now in its fourteenth manifestation; it is under constant review and is fully revised every 6 months depending upon current crime patterns.

LEGISLATION

N/A

LESSONS LEARNED

The majority of New Yorkers had never experienced crime rates as low as they were when Operation Impact was launched in 2003. Driving crime rates even lower was a challenge. After Operation Impact was implemented, it was quickly apparent that the program would help meet that challenge. Its initial and continued success has been remarkable.

TRANSFERABILITY

With a population greater than 8 million and an area of over 300 square miles, New York City is faced by policing challenges that, in both nature and scope, are present in few other cities. Operation Impact addresses those challenges by assessing



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how best to allocate the resources of the largest police force in the country toward specific crime-zones and against specific trends. These strategies—adopted by the State of New York in 2004—would be transferable to a police department equipped with the resources and personnel needed to support the type of concentrated policing that Operation Impact requires.

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