

Evidence Base for Proactive Crime Prevention

Administration is dedicated to implementing evidence-based practices and policies; in this case hot spot patrols and problem-oriented crime prevention practices (POP) are indicated. These two specific crime and disorder reduction strategies would increase overall efficiency and effectiveness through Multidisciplinary Community Safety teams.

Hot Spot Patrols

Research consistently shows that crime concentrates disproportionately in small geographical locations. These locations are referred to as “hot spots.” Hot spots are durable over a long time, in that criminality remains steady without specific and consistent crime prevention interventions. Recent research on hot spots shows that when the criminogenic factors are removed, they are also often hot spots for health and social issues such as substance use, mental health, or even cancer.

Administration’s hot spot response is currently being implemented in Chinatown with the Downtown Community Peace Officers, as well as through the ETS Network by the Transit Community Action Team (TCAT) Transit Peace Officers (TPO).

Research evidence suggests several factors that assist with the reduction of crime in hot spots including:

- Intermittent foot patrols
 - 15 to 20 minutes at a time in one micro-place (such as a street corner or transit facility) within a two hour period, delivered randomly multiple times a day consistently over a period of several months. Known as the Koper Curve, this work has been attributed to the most significant and long-lasting crime prevention effects.
 - What law enforcement and public safety practitioners do while on foot patrol matters; they must be highly visible and engage with the public. These resources engaging the public increases crime prevention outcomes while promoting public trust and confidence in the public service.

While a common belief persists that crime is displaced to surrounding areas, hot spot patrols do not displace crime; studies have consistently found no noticeable displacement and, in some cases, a diffusion effect, meaning that hot spot policing reduces crime in the areas adjacent to the hot spots as well.

Problem-Oriented Practices (POP)

Problem-oriented practices focus crime prevention efforts on solutions to identified root causes and are designed to be scalable, flexible, applicable and achievable. The POP framework can be used by an individual crime reduction practitioner, a project-based team or an entire organization, all depending on the size and scope of the problem. An integrated approach which uses law enforcement officers, crime analysts and community partnerships is essential to positive outcomes. POP was designed to be a practical crime prevention tool which uses calls for service and community-driven complaints to create information into crime and/or disorder trends. In this way, problems become the focus of the crime reduction efforts. Although there are several frameworks for practitioners to follow, problem solving efforts are typically separated into four phases: scanning, analysis, response, and assessment. Currently, the POP framework is used by the Neighbourhood Empowerment Team and is being implemented in the TCAT TPO teams.

POP efforts are most effective when:

- Focused on specific crime types.
- The contributing agencies are fully committed.
- The project uses proven methods and has realistic expected outcomes.
- Law enforcement agencies work with community partners to problem solve.

Overall, evaluations of POP efforts have found that if implemented correctly and consistently, a POP approach to targeting crime patterns can have a significant impact on reducing crime and disorder. The Campbell Collaboration, an international social science network, conducted a meta-analysis of Problem-Oriented Practices and concluded that POP has a “statistically significant impact on reducing crime and disorder” and is particularly effective when used in conjunction with hot spot policing. As such, hot spot policing and problem-oriented crime prevention show strong results in increasing public safety, reducing crime and reducing overall demand for the public service resources.