

# 9

## Patrol Operations

### LO1 Understand the Traditional Methods of Doing Police Work and Examine Their Effectiveness

The three cornerstones of traditional police work are (1) random routine patrol, (2) rapid response to calls by citizens to 911, and (3) retroactive investigation of past crimes by detectives. (Cordner, Scarborough, and Sheehan, 2007, 383)

The average U.S. police officer arrives at work at the beginning of his or her shift and receives the keys and the patrol car from the officer who used it on the previous tour. The officer then drives around a designated geographic area (**random routine patrol**). When the officer receives a call from the police dispatcher, he or she responds to the call and performs whatever police work is required—making an arrest, administering first aid, breaking up a fight, taking a crime report, and so on (**rapid response to citizens' calls to 911**). If the call involves a crime, the officer conducts a preliminary investigation

**random routine patrol**  
Officers driving around a designated geographic area.

**rapid response to citizens' calls to 911**  
Officers being dispatched to calls immediately, regardless of the type of call.

**retroactive investigation of past crimes by detectives**  
The follow-up investigation of crimes by detectives that occurs after a crime has been reported.

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After studying this chapter, the student should be able to:

- LO1** Understand the traditional methods of doing police work and examine their effectiveness
- LO2** Discuss the activities involved in the patrol function
- LO3** Describe the findings of the Kansas City patrol study
- LO4** Examine the issue of rapid response to citizens' 911 calls
- LO5** Discuss some of the innovative ways of performing the patrol function
- LO6** Describe some of the innovative ways of responding to 911 calls and crime problems in the community
- LO7** Examine new methods of resource allocation
- LO8** Discuss new tactical approaches to patrol operations
- LO9** Describe new efforts to combat the drunk driving problem and efforts targeting aggressive driving
- LO10** Discuss special operations, including SWAT teams, emergency service units, and K-9 units

## LO2 Discuss the Activities Involved in the Patrol Function

### foot patrol

Police officers walk a beat or assigned area rather than patrol in a motor vehicle.

### Kansas City patrol study

The first study conducted to test the effectiveness of random routine patrol.



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When we think of the police, our first image is that of a man or woman in uniform driving a police car, at rapid speeds with lights and siren, to the scene of a crime or an accident. We also may think of the uniformed officer on foot patrol (“walking a beat”) in a

downtown business area moving a drunk and disorderly citizen away from a group of shoppers. (**Foot patrol** is a method of deploying police officers that gives them responsibility for all policing activity by requiring them to walk around a defined geographic area.) We may think of a police officer on horseback or on a motorcycle. All these officers have one thing in common: they are patrol officers.

Since the time of Sir Robert Peel (the promoter of the first organized, paid, uniformed police force in London in 1829), patrol has been the most important and visible part of police work to the public. Peel’s major innovation and contribution to society was the idea of a continuous police presence throughout a community that is organized and delivered by means of regular patrol over a fixed beat by uniformed officers. Patrol is the essence of policing.

### Activities of the Patrol Officer

Patrol is known as the foundation of the police department. Patrol officers are the uniformed officers who respond to calls for service, emergencies, and all sorts of disturbances that occur. They are the most visible arm of the criminal justice system as well as the gatekeepers to that system.

The patrol function has changed little since 1829 and has three main goals:

- The deterrence of crime
- The maintenance of a feeling of public security
- Twenty-four-hour availability for service to the public

Traditionally, the primary services provided by the patrol function include activities that involve both enforcing the law and serving the public.

## ACTIVITIES OF A PATROL OFFICER:

- ▶ Enforcing laws
- ▶ Deterring crime
- ▶ Maintaining order
- ▶ Keeping the peace
- ▶ Enforcing traffic laws
- ▶ Keeping traffic flowing
- ▶ Investigating accidents
- ▶ Conducting preliminary investigations
- ▶ Responding to calls for assistance
- ▶ Assisting vulnerable populations

## LO3 Describe the Findings of the Kansas City Patrol Study

Random routine patrol, otherwise known as preventive patrol, involves a police officer driving around and within a community when he or she is not on an assignment from the radio dispatcher or a supervisor. Tradition has held that random routine patrol creates a sense of omnipresence and deters crime because a criminal will not chance committing a crime if a police officer might be just around the corner. Random routine patrol was believed to enable police officers to catch criminals in the act of committing their crimes. Just how effective is random routine patrol? The **Kansas City patrol study** was the first attempt to actually test the effectiveness of random routine patrol.

### The Kansas City Study in Brief

During 1972 and 1973, the Kansas City (Missouri) Police Department, under the leadership of Police Chief Clarence Kelly (who later became the director of the FBI) and with the

## LO4 Examine the Issue of Rapid Response to Citizens' 911 Calls

set the stage for further experimentation with alternative patrol strategies and tactics. Because of the study, police executives realized that they could try alternative patrol tactics without fearing that reduced random routine patrol would result in calamity. (Corder, Scarborough, and Sheehan, 2007, 386) It paved the way for using some, if not all, of the time that had previously been used in preventive patrol in the pursuit of more innovative and creative methods of addressing the crime problem.

Rapid response to citizens' calls to 911 has traditionally been thought of as a way in which the police could catch criminals while they are in the act of committing their crimes or as they are escaping from their crimes. The ideal scenario is this: A citizen observes a person committing a crime and immediately calls 911. The police respond in seconds and arrest the perpetrator. This sounds great, but it rarely works that way.

In 1967, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, in its *Task Force Report: Science and Technology*, found that quick response to a citizen's report of a crime to 911 made an arrest more likely. However, the commission emphasized that only extremely quick response times were likely to result in arrest.

In 1973, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals observed, "When the (response) time is cut to 2 minutes, it can have a dramatic effect on crime." (National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals 194)

In time, further studies of rapid response to citizens' calls to 911 were carried out. These studies took into account the complexity of response time, which consists of three basic components:

1. The time between when the crime occurs and the moment the victim or a witness calls the police
2. The time required for the police to process the call
3. Travel time from the time the patrol car receives the call from the dispatcher until it arrives at the scene

Studies found that victims, for varied reasons, often delay calling the police after a crime or other incident has occurred. The discovery that citizens often wait several minutes before calling the police puts response time in a different light and suggests that rapid response may not be as significant as was once thought. (Kansas City Police Department, 1978; Spelman and Brown, 1981) Studies also found that in cases in which citizens returned home

support of the Police Foundation, conducted an experiment to test the effects of routine preventive patrol. This yearlong experiment has been both influential and controversial.

Fifteen patrol beats in Kansas City's South Patrol Division were used for the study. Five of these beats were assigned to a control group, with no changes in normal patrol staffing or tactics. Five other beats were chosen as reactive beats, and all preventive patrolling was eliminated. Outside patrol units handled calls in the reactive beats, and units left the beats once they had handled the calls. The final five beats in the experiment were proactive beats, in which two to three times the usual level of preventive patrolling was provided. If random routine patrol is an effective way of policing our communities, we should expect to see changes in the reactive and proactive beats.

When the Kansas City study was finished, the researchers concluded, "Decreasing or increasing routine preventive patrol within the range tested in [the] experiment had no effect on crime, citizen fear of crime, community attitudes toward the police on the delivery of police service, police response time, or traffic accidents." (Kelling, Pate, Dieckman, and Brown 16) In effect, the study demonstrated that adding or taking away police patrols from an area does not make any difference within the community. Indeed, at the end of the experiment, no one in the community had any idea that an experiment regarding policing had been conducted in the community. The conclusions of the Kansas City study shocked many people and differed from all the assumptions we had always made regarding police patrol. It had been commonly believed that putting more officers on patrol would cause a decrease in crime, and taking away police would cause an increase in crime.

Gary W. Corder, Kathryn E. Scarborough, and Robert Sheehan describe the value of the Kansas City study by saying that although the study did not result in the elimination of preventive or random routine patrol, it



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