Call for Action

Having discovered a geographic link between traffic collisions and criminal activity, Officer Gilhooly approached Lieutenant Rob DeBuck, who had a similar mandate from the Chief to do something about crime. The lieutenant had been studying the broken windows approach to deterrence.

Political scientist James Q. Wilson and criminologist George Kelling co-authored the cover story in the March, 1982, issue of The Atlantic Monthly. The article, titled Broken Windows, explained how neighborhoods might decay -- both physically and culturally -- if no one attends to their maintenance. The authors argued that the best way to fight crime was to fight the disorder that precedes it. Plagued by graffiti, panhandling, farebeating, and other problems, the New York City Transit Authority used the ideas contained in Broken Windows as a guide to restoring order to the subway. The New York City Police Department soon followed with a community-policing strategy focusing on order maintenance. Despite initial skepticism, the strategy caught on in both organizations and resulted in significant reductions in disorder and crime.

Kelling and his wife, Catherine Coles -- a lawyer and anthropologist specializing in urban issues and criminal prosecution-published Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities (Free Press, 1996); the book expands substantially on the 1982 article. In Fixing Broken Windows, Kelling and Coles examine the competing claims of individual liberty and community in determining to what extent public spaces should be protected. They emphasize that the crime problem is a combination of disorder, fear, serious crime, and urban decay; and, they contend that the current model of the criminal-justice system has failed by not recognizing the links between these elements and by ignoring the role citizens can play in crime prevention.

There are many elements in the approach to crime reduction advocated by Kelling, Wilson, and Coles. Some of the elements, such as foot patrols and citizen involvement, form the core of what now is known as Community Oriented Policing. The theory on which this approach is based is that disorder and crime are inextricably linked, as described by Wilson and Kelling (1982) in their original article.

Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepai red, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. This is as true in nice neighborhoods as in rundown ones. Window-breaking does not necessarily occur on a large scale because some areas are inhabited by determined window-breakers whereas others are populated by window-lovers; rather, one unrepai red broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing. (It always has been fun.)

From Broken Windows
Philip Zimbardo, a Stanford psychologist, reported in 1969 on some experiments testing the broken-window theory. He arranged to have an automobile without license plates parked with its hood up on a street in the Bronx and a comparable automobile on a street in Palo Alto, California. The car in the Bronx was attacked by vandals within ten minutes of its abandonment. The first to arrive were a family -- father, mother, and young son -- who removed the radiator and battery. Within twenty-four hours, virtually everything of value had been removed. Then random destruction began -- windows were smashed, parts torn off, the upholstery ripped. Children began to use the car as a playground. Most of the adult vandals were well-dressed, apparently clean-cut whites. The car in Palo Alto sat untouched for more than a week. Then Zimbardo smashed part of it with a sledgehammer. Soon, passersby were joining in. Within a few hours, the car had been turned upside down and utterly destroyed. Again, the vandals appeared to be primarily respectable whites.

Officer Gilhooly, Lieutenant DeBuck, and APD traffic lieutenant, Paul Heatley, saw merit in the broken windows theory. They reasoned that if untended property eventually becomes fair game, untended behavior eventually leads to a breakdown of community control. The officers theorized that streets and roads are to the residents of cities, such as Albuquerque, what the subways are to New Yorkers. If the New York Transit Authority can restore order to their subways by faithful maintenance and law enforcement, perhaps civility could be restored to Albuquerque streets by focusing special traffic enforcement effort on the most visible indicators that no one cares. The APD officers identified aggressive driving, graffiti, and open-air drug sales as major targets.

The officers approached the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department and found both assistance and creativity in the Traffic Safety Bureau. The Bureau's Chief Planner, Virginia Jaramillo, and Police Traffic Services Program Manager, Michael Quintana, were committed to Looking Beyond the Ticket, a concept that links traffic enforcement to the overall mission of a law enforcement agency. Bureau staff helped the officers tap into existing traffic safety programs and create new ones, forming a partnership that included traditional and non-traditional members. The resulting special enforcement program, called Safe Streets 1997, is summarized in the following paragraphs.

**Traditional Partners**
- State, City, and County Law Enforcement and Motor Transportation Officers
- Neighborhood Associations
- State Traffic Safety Bureau
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

**Non-Traditional Partners**
- State Highway and Transportation Department Commissioners, Construction and Engineering
- Albuquerque City Department of Planning and Engineering
- Albuquerque Mayor's Office
- Television, radio, and print news reporters and media marketing departments
- Metro Court Staff and Judges
- Road construction contractors
- Federal Highway Administration
Safe Streets 1997

Safe Streets 1997 was composed of several related elements, including saturation patrols, follow-up patrols, freeway speed enforcement, and sobriety checkpoints. These traffic enforcement tactics were supported by several programmatic elements, including Know Your Speed, Operation Buckle Down, Community DWI, the Traffic Safety Education and Enforcement Program, Operation DWI, Safe Ride, Take the Pledge, *DWI, and the Citizen Complaint Hot Line.

Saturation Patrols

The main strategy of Safe Streets 1997 was to saturate one of the four high-crime/high-crash areas at a time with law enforcement officers. These special patrols consisted of 12 motorcycle officers, supported by members of the DWI team and officers drawn from the local area command. The primary tactic used during the initial phase of the program was to deploy in the gateways used by non-residents to enter an area to purchase illegal drugs and commit other crimes, and to write as many traffic citations as possible. During these saturation patrols, motorists were stopped and cited for all infractions, however minor they might be.

Follow-Up Patrols

The saturation patrols continued in the same area for one month, then shifted to the next area on the list. Twice each week during the second month of the program, officers returned to the first area; the schedule was reduced to one day per week during the third month of the program, as the main focus shifted to the third, and then a month later, to the fourth high-crime/high-crash area. The pattern was continued for the duration of the program. The focus returned to the first area that was targeted during the fifth month of the program. Bicycle and mounted patrols were integrated in this schedule of focus and follow-through. Deploying officers in an area on a reduced schedule after the main special enforcement effort had shifted to another area is one of the features that distinguishes Safe Streets 1997 from other similar special enforcement programs. The reduced presence after the main focus had moved on was intended to convey both the reality and perception of all areas as special enforcement zones.

New Mexico Know Your Speed Program

In response to changes in national maximum speed limits, the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department conducted a statewide engineering analysis to define safe speed limits for all roads and highways. The Know Your Speed program was implemented to remind motorists that speed limits vary throughout the state. This program was incorporated as a key element of the APD’s Safe Streets 1997. The New Mexico State Traffic Safety Bureau helped organize and equip a special freeway unit
as part of the statewide Know Your Speed program. The special unit patrolled the two major highways that intersect in the heart of Albuquerque, a total of 30 miles of urban Interstate within the APD’s jurisdiction. Officers of the Freeway Unit used four unmarked vehicles in their efforts to identify the aggressive driving behavior that motorists see every day, but which is attenuated by the presence of a marked patrol vehicle; State Police, the Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Department, and the Motor Transportation Division also participated in the special freeway patrols.

Persistent speeding in highway construction zones motivated the State Highway Department’s Public Affairs and Traffic Safety Bureaus, and the APD to develop an innovative countermeasure to supplement the daily patrols in unmarked police vehicles. Special cherry picker operations were conducted several times during the special enforcement program. In these high visibility operations, a hydraulically-operated lift (borrowed from the State Highway and Transportation Department) was used to position an officer, equipped with a radio and a laser speed gun, high above the lanes of a freeway. Between five and ten additional officers were deployed at roadside on motorcycles and in patrol cars over a distance of two miles downstream from the cherry picker. The vehicles of speeding and otherwise aggressive drivers were identified by the officer above the freeway and described over the radio; the waiting officers made the enforcement stops. Operations had to be temporarily suspended when all officers were engaged with violators. These special operations usually were conducted for two hours each day (08:00-10:00 or 15:00-17:00 hours) for a period of five consecutive days at different locations. Three cherry-picker operations were conducted that involved four hours each day for two weeks at a time.

The cherry-picker operations generated large volumes of traffic citations, primarily for speeding. As many as 1,400 citations were issued during one five-day week while operating only two hours each day (an average of 140 tickets per hour!). The operations also generated much free publicity for Safe Streets 1997, the statewide Know Your Speed program, and the State Highway and Transportation Department. The media found the cherry-picker operations to be particularly newsworthy and invited officers and State Highway and Transportation Department staff to appear on television and radio to discuss the special enforcement effort. The public responded with considerable support for the program and highway construction workers greatly appreciated the program’s effects.

**Sobriety Checkpoints**

Driving while impaired (DWI) is a serious problem in New Mexico. For this reason, the Albuquerque Police Department was among the first law enforcement agencies is the U.S. to recognize the potential for sobriety checkpoints to deter motorists from DWI. The APD favors large-scale checkpoints, involving 30 or more uniformed personnel. Officers from the New Mexico State Police and Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Department also usually participate in APD checkpoints. The large numbers of officers are necessary because many arrests are made at every checkpoint. The APD has conducted 25 to 30 sobriety checkpoints each year for many years and at least two checkpoints were conducted during each month of the Safe Streets 1997 program. APD checkpoints continue to result in at least 25 DWI arrests each time one is
conducted.

**Operation DWI**

Among the programs that supported Safe Streets 1997 was Operation DWI, a statewide effort to target high alcohol-involved crash locations. The program combined a media campaign with high visibility enforcement activities such as checkpoints and saturation patrols, to deter motorists from driving while impaired.

**Safe Ride**

The Bernalillo County DWI Planning Council sponsors the Safe Ride Program, which ensures that there is an alternative to drinking and driving by offering free cab rides home from any bar in Albuquerque. The same organization sponsors the Tipsy Tow Program, which provides a tow home for motorists’ vehicles on major holiday weekends.

**Take the Pledge**

Take the Pledge was part of the APD’s effort to involve citizens in the Safe Streets 1997 program. In cooperation with the mayor’s office and the Office of Community Affairs, police personnel attended meetings of neighborhood associations to describe the Safe Streets program and enlist citizen support and participation by pledging to drive safely. This element of the program was accompanied by an extensive media campaign that included radio announcements, display ads on buses, and bumper stickers.

*DWI

Motorists in Albuquerque can enter *DWI on their cellular telephones to report impaired drivers. Citizens use this toll-free service to report several DWIs each day.

**Citizen Complaint Hot Line**

A Citizen Complaint Hot Line was established to encourage the residents of Albuquerque to report traffic problems. Calls to the hot line were returned promptly by a traffic officer who then met with the citizen, evaluated the complaint, and recommended action. More than 100 tactical plans were implemented in response to citizen complaints. Some of the reported problems were found to require engineering, rather than enforcement, solutions, so the officers recruited city and state traffic engineers to the program. The citizens, law enforcement officers, and traffic engineers then worked together to make changes, where appropriate, such as constructing speed humps and turn lanes, installing traffic signs, and adjusting signal phases.
Changes in the Program

Improving traffic safety and deterring crime in the four target areas were the objectives of Safe Streets 1997. It was hoped that the high-visibility police presence and special enforcement effort would deter both unsafe driving and the incidence of crime in the vicinity of the enforcement. The special enforcement effort began in January 1997; the tactics were developed and refined the first month in preparation for the formal program kickoff in February. All elements of the program were in effect for the first five months of Safe Streets 1997. However, a major change occurred five months into the program, about the time the main focus of special enforcement was returning to the first target area.

The APD’s crime deterrence grant ended in May 1997, which resulted in the withdrawal of beat officers from the saturation patrols. Improving traffic safety was the primary objective throughout the Safe Streets 1997 program and the ending of the crime deterrence grant permitted the officers to focus exclusively on the reduction of aggressive driving and fatal collisions. This traffic safety emphasis was maintained throughout the second half of Safe Streets 1997. The schedule of special enforcement established early in the program was continued, but responsibility for developing and implementing tactical plans was shifted from the central planning staff to the area commands. Officers were encouraged to use their understanding of local conditions and available crime and crash data to develop innovative approaches to their special enforcement efforts. The officers responded enthusiastically because they were committed to improving traffic safety and they felt a sense of ownership of the program that can be lacking when plans are developed and imposed by others.

The ending of the crime deterrence grant was accompanied by a shift in tactics. The officers focused their attention for the remainder of the Safe Streets program on the three violations they believed to be most responsible for fatal crashes: unsafe speed, failure to use safety restraints, and DWI. Officers saturated the high-crime/high-crash areas as before, but the focus of their effort shifted from the side streets to the main arterials and most dangerous intersections. Officers strictly enforced speed limits and adult and child safety restraint requirements, and as always, they paid particularly close attention to the signs of impaired driving. Specialists from the DWI unit could be called for assistance with a suspected impaired driver, which would permit the special patrol to continue. During periods of heavy traffic, officers frequently would stand at roadside or in the median to observe the drivers of vehicles that were stopped in traffic. This high-visibility tactic contributed to public awareness of the special enforcement program and resulted in many arrests for open containers of alcoholic beverages and DWI, and many citations for speed and safety restraint violations.

Officers were encouraged to write tickets as part of the special enforcement program, although there was no formal incentive, aside from that provided by a sense of professionalism and duty (and for some, a little friendly competition). Some traffic officers were especially perceptive, skillful, and motivated in their work, writing as many as 50 citations during a five-hour period. Even patrol officers, who were not a part of the special enforcement program, were encouraged to write at least two traffic citations per day. Many patrol officers resented this policy at first. However, soon after it was implemented, two patrol officers stopped a vehicle for speeding (in
an attempt to satisfy their supervisor) and while writing the ticket they received a bulletin about an armed robbery -- committed by the driver they had just stopped. They, and many of their skeptical colleagues, instantly became firm believers in the merits of traffic enforcement and Looking Beyond the Ticket.