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SELECTED COMMENTS AS THEY RELATE TO CITIZEN  
REPORTING FROM THE RESPONSE TIME ANALYSIS SURVEY -

EXECUTIVE SUMMERY OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, POLICE DEPARTMENT,  
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The selection of the following sections was done by Dennis Goldman, Region Nine Development Commission, EMS/911 Planner.

The analysis of the process of citizen reporting examined four factors for their effects on reporting time. These factors were: a) who called the police, i.e., a victim, a witness, or a third party who was not directly involved in the incident but who was requested to call by another citizen; b) whose telephone was used, i.e., a business, a personal (the victim's or someone else's), or a pay telephone; c) what telephone number was used, i.e., police emergency, police administrative, or "0" for the telephone company operator; and d) how the caller knew the number, i.e., telephone directory, operator assistance, having the number written down, or knowing the number from memory.

An examination was conducted to discern if the social characteristics or the urgency of an incident affected which telephone number the caller used or how the caller knew the number. The type of caller factor was also tested to determine if the length of reporting time was affected by whether the citizen calling the police was a victim, witness, or caller not involved in the incident. This section also included the results of a test call experiment designed when using the police emergency number, police administrative number, or when contacting the telephone company operator and having the operator contact the police.

Dispatch time began when the nature of the crime and the dispatched location were known and ended when the dispatch terminated or when the officer began responding to the call, whichever came first.

Reporting time comprised a large proportion of the total response time continuum. For all Part I crimes,<sup>1</sup> it involved nearly one-half of the total time (48.1 percent) with a median time of 6 minutes, 17 seconds. By contrast, dispatch represented 21.0 percent and travel 30.9

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<sup>1</sup>Part I Crime - As defined in the FBI Uniform Crime Report, the crimes of homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and auto theft.

percent of the continuum, with median times of 2 minutes, 50 seconds and 5 minutes, 34 seconds respectively.

The time taken to report a Part I crime consistently involved a greater proportion of the total response time than either dispatch or travel times for all crime categories assessed. One of the chief objectives of this study was to assess the relationship between the probability of arrest and the time taken to report, dispatch, and travel to the incident scene. As reporting time increased, the probability of a witness being contacted decreased. Serious injuries were not reported more promptly than minor injuries.

The significant reporting delays identified in this study focused attention on a response time interval which has previously received little attention. Not only was citizen reporting time for Part I crimes lengthy, it also appeared to be the time interval which exerted the most significant effect on the probability of an on-scene arrest and the availability of witnesses. Furthermore, the likelihood of making an on-scene arrest appeared to be largely predetermined by the time the police were contacted, in that rapid reporting enhanced the chance of arrest, while longer reporting delays negated the effect of even immediate police responses.

Of the problems identified in reporting, delay due to public communications problems (221 of 544 cases, 22.2 percent) was listed foremost.

Four elements of the reporting process were identified. They were as follows:

1. Who called the police.
2. Whose telephone was used.
3. What telephone number the caller used.
4. How the caller knew that number.

Citizen-callers were classified as victim-callers, witness-callers, and callers. The majority of citizen-callers were victims (70.3 percent), another 8.8 percent were witnesses, and 20.9 percent were callers only.

The 724 citizen-callers interviewed were asked whose telephone they used to call the police. Nearly half of the 716 citizens responding said they had used their own home telephone (48.7 percent). Other responses included use of a phone at the citizen-caller's place of business (28.2 percent), a telephone belonging to someone else (14.7 percent), or a pay telephone (7.3 percent).

There were three numbers which most citizens used to contact the police dispatchers to report a crime, the "Crime Alert" number, the police administrative number, and "0" for the telephone company operator. The Crime Alert number is a direct line to the police dispatchers. The administrative number connects the caller with the department switchboard. Calls to this number were transferred to dispatchers over an intradepartmental extension. Calls to the telephone company operator are transferred directly to dispatchers through the Crime Alert number once the operator has received a request for service. Six hundred nine (84.1 percent) of the citizen-callers responded to the question of which telephone number they dialed to reach the dispatcher. Of those, 600 dialed one of the three numbers, Crime Alert (38.7 percent); police administrative (28.6 percent); telephone company operator (31.2 percent). The other nine callers (1.5 percent) used some other number.

Those citizen-callers who dialed the Crime Alert number or police administrative number were asked how they knew the telephone number. There were 530 citizens eligible for the question, including 115 who remembered using one of the two numbers but who did not remember which of the two numbers they had used. Of the 522 citizens answering the question, 517 gave the following answers:

1. The citizen-caller or someone with the citizen-caller knew the number (204 cases, 39.1 percent).
2. The citizen found the number in the telephone directory (118 cases, 22.6 percent).
3. The number was written down and was accessible to the citizen-caller (115 cases, 22.0 percent).
4. The citizen-caller obtained the number from the telephone company operator (80 cases, 15.3 percent).

A separate test call experiment yielded data measuring the average length of time required to reach the dispatcher using the three telephone numbers available. The total time to reach the dispatcher was shortest for calls placed through the Crime Alert number (X=19.91 seconds). Calls placed through the police switchboard operator (X=30.39 seconds) reached the dispatcher more quickly than those made through the telephone company operator (X=38.19 seconds).

### Conclusions

For that proportion of crimes that can be influenced by response time, the time taken to report the incident largely predetermines the effect of police response time. Consistent among the findings was the importance of the time taken to report the crime as a determinant of its on-scene outcome. Since the act of reporting precedes dispatching and officer travel time, the potential impact of police response time can be largely predetermined by the speed of citizen reporting. Yet, half of the involvement crimes were not reported within 5 minutes following the occurrence of the crime.

To increase on-scene arrests attributable to response time, involvement crimes would have to be reported in less than 5 minutes. If such a

reduction could be realized, a modest increase in involvement arrests in general, and a substantial increase in arrests for involvement burglary in particular, could be expected. Holding reporting time to less than 2 minutes could increase arrests due to police response time by nearly 10 percent, if dispatching and travel times were unchanged, At present, however, the probability of arrest due to rapid response is virtually nill in more than one-half of the involvement crimes because of the length of citizen reporting delays.

The probability of locating a witness on scene is also related to the time taken by the citizen to report an involvement incident. Police response to an involvement crime which is reported within 1 minute has nearly a 10 percent greater chance of producing a witness than the same incident reported at 5 minutes. The likelihood of contacting a witness continues to drop slightly with increased reporting time, so the probability of locating a witness after a reporting delay of 30 minutes is about 15 percent less than the probability at 5 minutes. This general relationship holds for each type of involvement crime.

The delay in reporting a Part I crime to the police can be traced primarily to the voluntary actions (patterns) of citizens prior to their telephoning the police and their attitudes about the personal importance of the incident and the need for police assistance.

Emphasis on technology to reduce response time has inspired a variety of innovations. One of the most notable and among the more costly has been the implementation of 911 telecommunication systems in several large cities. Although 911 may be valuable for administrative, managerial, or psychological purposes, its relative merits in reducing response time are suspect for the following reasons: a) The time required to phone the police is of miniscule significance compared to the time citizens take in reaching a

decision to call; b) some citizens are incapable of reporting crimes promptly following their involvement because of injury, emotional trauma, or physical restraint; and c) fewer calls to report violent crimes were placed through the department's "Crime Alert" emergency number than through the telephone operator and the department's administrative number.

It is not the potential benefits of such innovations which are in question but their relative effectiveness, given citizen delays in crime reporting.

Procedures developed to discriminate accurately between emergency and non-emergency calls will achieve more productive outcomes if coordinated with patrol resource allocation.

If effective screening procedures can be developed, response to calls could be made according to established priorities.

Goldstein pointed out in his recent book, Policing a Free Society:

Whatever the police do in attempting to control serious crime, they must recognize just how much their efforts depend upon the citizen cooperation and participation... Police efforts to achieve a higher degree of citizen involvement may be the single most important means the police have available to them for coping with crime. A 5 or 10 percent increase in the involvement of all citizens in a community could possibly prove of much greater value in combatting crime than a 50 or 60 percent increase in the number of police officers or an equally large investment in technical equipment. (Goldstein, 1977, p. 62).

Until citizens begin to report crimes more expeditiously when they are capable and when prompt reporting could influence police performance, delays on the part of citizens will continue to hamper police effectiveness. Alternative reporting methods including technological innovations warrant serious examination to improve the time required to report a crime.



We believe it is fair and logical to assume that if a majority (38.7%) of all callers used the 7-digit "Crime Alert" number that a substantial increased percentage of callers would use a simpler, shorter 3-digit number in its place.

This study lists the "Crime Alert" number as the 2:1 time saver in total time needed to successfully reach a dispatcher. Having the simpler 911 number available should reduce that overall time even further.

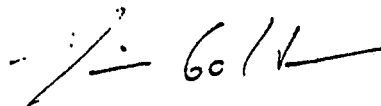
This study suggests that 911 is "among the more costly" of the available technological innovations. This is highly a speculative judgement demonstrating the need to prepare local 911 plans to identify what these costs actually are.

The time required in reaching a decision to call the police by citizens would possibly be reduced provided an established 911 system were in operation. Where citizens were restrained, either physically or emotionally, a 911 number would provide an easier option to access help in an emergency situation.

911 has been reserved for emergency calls only. The fact that violent crimes were reported less frequently over a "Crime Alert" number says nothing about the emergency nature of those calls.

We agree that technological innovations do warrant serious examination in light of their potential for influencing citizen participation in reporting of crimes.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dennis Goldman", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dennis Goldman