

Organization Snapshot

Year Started: 1950
 Number of Members: 4,000 plus
 City Population: Largest City in the Nation!
 Website: www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/nypd/home.html
 Coordinator: Officer Tony Cruz

**A discussion with Officer Tony Cruz, NYPD
 NYPD Auxiliary Police Coordinator**

By: Arthur Femister

I had the pleasure of meeting with Officer Cruz last summer, June 2002, along with Auxiliary Police Captains Reyes and Pollina, to develop a profile of the NYPD Auxiliary Police force. Their responses to our interview questions are as follows.



Pictured above from left to right: Auxiliary Captain Hector Reyes, Auxiliary Captain Pollina and NYPD Staff Coordinator for the Auxiliary Police unit, Officer Tony Cruz.

Who started the C.O.P organization and why?

The NYPD Auxiliary Police Officer program came about as part of the Civil Defense program back in the 1950's.

How many people were initially involved and what did the organization look like then?

The Civil Defense program had about 17,000 civilian volunteers as part of the program which evolved into the Auxiliary Police program.

What were your initial goals (crime reduction only, assist law enforcement with traffic, etc.)?

The program originated from the Civil Defense program that was very popular during the height of the Cold War when the threat of nuclear war being very high.

If you have patrol cars, what was your first patrol car, (make, model, condition, etc)?

The Auxiliary Police program began with Bike Patrols, which today still exist. We have over 90 cars assigned to the Auxiliary Police program in addition to specialized vehicles such as the ESU vans. The patrol vehicles are retired sworn officers patrol cars. The vehicles are repainted all dark blue with white lettering and the red light bar as seen in the picture within this profile.

What type of uniforms do you have?

The Auxiliary Police Officers wear the same uniforms as sworn patrol officers and wear seven-point star badges. The shoulder patches are the same as sworn officers except they have a rocker on top stating, "Auxiliary Police". Volunteers are also issued merit badges for a variety of reasons and are authorized to wear them on their uniform.

How many Citizen Patrol volunteers do you actively have now?

As of the date of this profile, we have over 4,000 active civilian Auxiliary Police volunteers in over 70 units in addition to specialized units such as our harbor patrol and ESU. Some of our active members have been

volunteering for over 35 years!

What type of equipment do your members carry?

Auxiliary Police Officers carry Flashlights, HT's (portable radios), hand cuffs, should they need to make a citizen arrest, and short batons.

Where is your Citizen Patrol office located?

Each NYPD Precinct has an Auxiliary Police unit attached to it which today numbers about 70 Precincts in the city.

How do you communicate between cars, volunteers and Law Enforcement? Cell phones, radios?

Our Auxiliary Police Officers use the

same portable radios as patrol officers.

How do you dispatch Citizen Patrol volunteers to accident scenes or calls for Law Enforcement assistance?

Many times our Auxiliary Police are assigned to assist with specific events for crowd control as well as other duties; however, while on patrol acting as "Eyes and Ears" they can be dispatched to conduct traffic control at accident scenes and/or other events.

What type of initial training do Citizen Patrol volunteers get and is there any ongoing training?

The training program is 18 weeks long and covers topics such as; patrol function, types and techniques of patrol, victimology, citizen contacts, Penal law, criminal procedure law, Laws of arrest, self defense, first aid, communications, field training and the transit system

Do you offer any Special Services to the public or Law Enforcement such as fingerprinting, vacation checks, Traffic control, crime scene control, stolen car checks, etc?

Yes to all the above and more. The NYPD Auxiliary Police program has several additional specialized units such as Harbor Patrol, Bike Patrols and an Emergency Services Unit which responds to traffic accidents to render aid which can include First Aid, extraction from the vehicle and other calls for service that in many areas of the country the fire department would



Pictured above, NYPD Auxiliary Police Patrol Vehicle

respond.

What are the qualifications to become Citizen Patrol members and what type of background check do applicants go through?

Auxiliary Police applicants must be age 17 through 60 (persons over 60 may apply for limited duties), live or work in New York City, be in good health, never have been convicted of a felony or have had a previous arrest record that would prevent acceptance, be of good character and be a U.S. Citizen or a have a valid visa issued by the INS.

What were your most current year's statistics such as number of miles patrolled, total hours volunteered by all members, drop in crime rate due to C.O.P., specific crimes stopped in progress or caught?

On average, our Auxiliary Police Officers donate a combined One Million Hours per year!

What is your number one ongoing challenge, assuming you have one?

Our biggest challenge is providing the proper recognition to our volunteers. We appreciate the great contribution they make and are always looking for way to recognize their efforts.

How do you recruit new members and what is your average turnover of members?

We advertise for new members in a number of ways such as ad's on Radio

Pictured below, display showing a variety of awards used for recognition.



and Cable TV, posters in the city and as part of our NYPD Recruitment drives. Our turnover is relatively low as compared to other volunteer programs due in part to our up front selection process to bring in the right people.

How do you rate the overall acceptance of your C.P. group with the public and LE department?

I think the overall acceptance is excellent. Our sworn officers view our Auxiliary Police Officers as part of the family and treat them with respect.

If you could wave a "magic wand" and get whatever you wanted for your Citizen Patrol group, what one thing would you ask for? (tough question but an interesting one)

New or newer patrol cars and bikes for our bike patrols would always be welcomed by our volunteers.

What is your annual operating budget in dollars, assuming you have one?

The annual budget for our Auxiliary Police program is in the millions of dollars.

What special events do you provide support for such as High School football games, Fairs, Graduations, traffic control for Marathon's and clean up days, etc?

All of the above and more. New York City is known for lots of parades and events and this is one area where we really rely on our Auxiliary Police.

Has any Citizen Patrol member ever been injured while performing their duties?

Sadly enough, three Auxiliary Police Officers have lost their lives in the duty of their service over the 50 year history of the department. While we are proud to say New York City is one of the safest cities in the nation, it is still the largest city in the nation and has many diverse areas, some rougher than others.

How do you motivate, recognize and reward your Citizen Patrol Volunteers

The NYPD works hard to recognize the efforts of our Auxiliary Police Officers. Some of the medals we offer are for various Merit, Years of Service and others such as a Medal of Valor for putting oneself in great risk while saving the life of another in addition to more common Commendations for a variety of worthy efforts.

Another form of recognition is the rank structure within the Auxiliary Police unit. Each unit has its own Captain; however, before being promoted, the individual must first complete a department course on leadership, dealing with the public along with other topics related to leadership and command functions. Once completed, the individual must then go before a review board for an oral interview. The review board has the final say in determining if the person is qualified to hold the position of Auxiliary Police Captain. This process is unique within the Law Enforcement Volunteer community and to our knowledge, it may be the only one of its kind.

We would like to thank Officer Tony Cruz and Auxiliary Police Captains Reyes and Pollina for taking the time to share this information with our readers and for their entire staff's hospitality during our visit with them.



Pictured above is the NYPD's Auxiliary Police Harbor Patrol boat that is fully staffed by volunteer members of the Auxiliary Police Unit.

Most Significant Event

On September 11, 2001, the world was shocked by the events that took place at the World Trade Center in New York City. During that event, hundreds of thousands of people were attempting to flee the city while others were rushing to get in to try and find loved ones. This created the worst traffic jam in New York history. The NYPD's Auxiliary Police members responded in force to assist with traffic control by shutting down various tunnels and bridges, re-directing traffic to alternate routes, etc. All 4,000 plus members of the Auxiliary Police force were issued the "9/11" medal to recognize their tremendous efforts on this very memorable day in history.