

Organization Snapshot

Palm Springs Police Citizens Patrol

Year Started: 1995

Number of Members: 35

Town Population: 46,000

Website:

www.nacop.org/palmsprings

A discussion with Police Chief Gary Jeandron, Citizen Patrol Volunteer and Reserve Officer, Ms. Barbara Peebles and Unit Coordinator, Officer Walter Combs. *By Arthur Femister*

I met with the sworn and volunteer staff of the Palm Springs Citizens On Patrol unit in December 2003 and asked a series of questions about their group along with their experiences. Their responses are as follows:

Provide an overview of your community where the Citizens Patrol group operates:

Palm Springs is a retirement/tourist town located in Riverside County, California about 90 miles east of Los Angeles. Its population varies from summer to winter. The average population of 46,000 people can double in the winter.

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

Sergeant Reggie Bennett, Captain Gary Broswell, Chief Kulander, Nate Israelson were all instigators of our COP program. There was a need for volunteers to promote Community Policing and the department had a need for help.

How many people were initially involved.

There were nine people who started the C.O.P. unit in 1995. We wore yellow polo shirts and black pants. We had an old police car which was on patrol every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night and day for the first two to three years. Our patrol hours were 1200 to 1800 and 1800 to 2400 hours. We were also available for call-outs, special details, code 5 stakeouts and as SWAT training participants.

What were your initial goals?

We were the eyes and ears of the department. We assisted in community policing by speaking at organizations. We conducted vacation checks, accident scenes, crime scenes and stakeouts. We assisted in the crime lab, the records department and anywhere else we were needed. We asked for as much training as the department would give us. We were pepper sprayed, taught to put out fires, and learned how not to burn ourselves while lighting flares as well as when not to use flares.

What type of challenges did you face initially



and what are they now?

Acceptance by the officers as being adequate on the radio, at accident scenes, and in our personal conduct. We now wish to be of further service to our department. The officers have accepted us and now request our assistance. Our challenge now is to carry all the equipment in our units that an officer might need. We seek further training in new areas to be of better service. We want the public to recognize our unit as a service to them, a helpful arm of the law. Our challenge is to promote our city as one of the safest cities, a city where its people work together.

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

Our first patrol car was a fun Crown Victoria that rode like a tank. We had trouble with the spotlights; and, for a short time, we carried a hand-held spotlight. That didn't last long because it burnt a hole in the floorboards. At times when we went to put on the high headlights, all the lights in the car went out.

What does your Citizens Patrol car fleet look

like now, how many cars, what type, etc.?

We have two new Crown Victoria patrol cars which we are very proud of. One was given to us by the department, the other donated by our local Indian Tribe (Aqua Caliente). The cars are identical to our regular police units; however, we have no sirens, back-seat cage, or audio bull-horn.

What type of uniforms do you have?

In the beginning we had yellow Polo shirts. We now have the white police short sleeve shirt, black pants, shoes and socks. A police ball cap can be worn. When we wear shorts, we wear tennis shoes with white socks. We have the regulation police jacket with a C.O.P. patch along with the department patch and the "POLICE" wording. An identification plastic badge is clipped to the pocket with a metal first name tag. We also wear a small American flag over our heart and small PD pin. On a gold chain is our whistle. A pen is required in the pocket and no other equipment is to be worn other than the radios, flashlight, and a personal cell phone. We have a cell phone in our cars. We each have ear pieces

for our radios.

How many Citizen Patrol volunteers do you actively have now?

We have 35 members of which 24 are certified for Airport Patrols.

What type of equipment do your members carry?

Every C.O.P. carries a radio (H.T.) with an ear piece. We carry a flashlight, a personal cell phone, if desired, pen, paper, and a whistle attached to a gold chain. Our cars carry extra radio batteries, car cell phone, seat belt cutter, cones, flares, reflective vests, cone flashlights that can show red or green, evidence kit, camera, com-along for animals, starter cables, a counter for accident scene measurements, crime tape, body bags for dead animals, blankets, toy bears for children, water, first aid kit, face mask for CPR, emergency foil blankets, water and ice when needed.

Where is your Citizen Patrol office located?

Our vehicles have two designated parking places along with the regular police cars. We have our own office or cubical in the Detective Bureau with our own direct phone line. We have access to the computers and office equipment.

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

Each C.O.P. has a radio that goes directly to our Dispatch. We also have a cell phone in the car. Each C.O.P. has an assigned 900 number which is his/her own number. When we go 10-8, the individual number of the C.O.P. is given plus the number of the car we are using. We use the same 10 codes as the officers and a laminated sheet listing the codes is kept in each car.

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

While on patrol, Dispatch will call directly to the unit (C.O.P. 1 or C.O.P. 2 if both units are out). We also can advise that we are on the way if it is an 1181 or 1182 with blockage. If there is a major problem, a pager is assigned to a staff

member each month and that staff person calls for support.



Pictured Above: Left to Right, PS Citizen Patrol Volunteer and Reserve Officer, Ms. Barbara Peebles with Palm Springs Police Chief Gary Jeandron

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

Training is an ongoing requirement at each meeting such as traffic control, flare usage, animal handling, fire control crime scene management, updating on gang activities, jail processing, dispatch and personal management at stressful times. Certain aspects of the law are also taught. To become a C.O.P., a 13 week course of the Citizens Police Academy is required. A background check is performed by the department and a meeting with the Chief is conducted. Our Staff Training person will do several six-hour patrols as well as several hours in dispatch. All aspects of a patrolling C.O.P. are gone over with the new "Provisional". The "P" will not be dropped from the person's name until Staff passes them as being OK to patrol. In addition, a "Provisional" cannot sign up to patrol with another member until he/she becomes a regular.

Airport patrol is different. A member cannot patrol at the airport as a Provisional. The regular C.O.P. must complete an orientation at the airport, another background check, and receive airport approval. An airport badge with picture will then be issued for use only at the airport. An F.T.O. (C.O.P. airport staff) must complete an airport patrol with the applicant before being approved. The C.O.P. airport patroller

then becomes not only a C.O.P. working with the police department but a part of Homeland Security. Reports are turned in and continual checks are made on the patrols. The airport patrol does not use C.O.P. or police cars or radios. The airport furnishes the radios and flashlights. We learn their radio signage and are schooled in what we are to look for. The airport patroller does not divulge information about airport security. This is a walking patrol. The patrol minimum is three hours, however, longer patrols are OK. No more than three C.O.P. are to patrol the airport at one time. If an airport C.O.P.s has not patrolled for two months, he cannot go out on his own patrol. An F.T.O. patrol must be made for re-qualification.



Pictured above, Citizen Patrol Volunteer turning in a "Open Garage Door" Crime Prevention report to the unit's administrative support Volunteer. A letter to the homeowner will be mailed suggesting they may want to keep their garage door closed to avoid any potential theft.



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?

Traffic control is one of our primary functions, We also do crime scene control and vacation checks. While on patrol, if we see open garage doors, we complete a form which is turned into our office. The Secretary staff member then sends a letter explaining the problems of an open door. We also take a patrol car to a neighborhood that is having problems and park it. It is moved several times while the C.O.P. is on patrol and returned to the station at the end of the patrol. This has been a big deterrent to crime. When a car has been impounded, we have C.O.P. "Judges" that interview the individuals and determine whether or not the car is to be returned to them. C.O.P.'s also work in the crime lab not just filing but also "super-gluing" for fingerprints and maintaining the lab. The C.O.P.'s help with the evidence tech. We are asked to help the S.W.A.T. in their training. When there is a Code 5 situation, we have been called to participate. We had a hooded bandit at one time and C.O.P.'s were placed on roof tops and stakeout points for several days. We assist any motorist or individual in stress by calling for taxis, tow trucks, calling relatives or friends and giving out directions. We will even escort them to a place they are having difficulty locating.

Citizen Patrol member and what type of background check do applicants go through?

A person applying for membership must be 18 years old or older. A valid California driver's license is required, and they must complete the Palm Springs Police "Citizens Police Academy". A background check is made by our Department. They must be agreeable to our non-confrontational requirement. We explain our duties, which at times might not be the nicest such as a dead animal or an accident scene, and we ask if they can give us our hourly requirements. We pay for a shirt but they are responsible for their pants and belt. The department furnishes the patches and the C.O.P. furnish the name tag and pins (American flag and department pin).

What were your most current year's statistics such as number of total hours volunteered by all members.

Our C.O.P.'s donated over 10,000 hours to the department, which saved the city and taxpayers over \$200,000.

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

To be more effective and to maintain a high visibility while on the street.

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

We get members from the graduates of the Citizens Police Academy. Word of mouth has also been a valuable tool.

How do you rate the overall acceptance of your Citizen Patrol group with the public and Law Enforcement department?

Excellent with the public and our police department has said that they now depend on us.

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)

A mobile unit that carries supplies (food, water, equipment) to support the S.W.A.T. teams and crime scenes. Also, for special events to bring in funds for the C.O.P.'s.

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

We have no budget.

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?

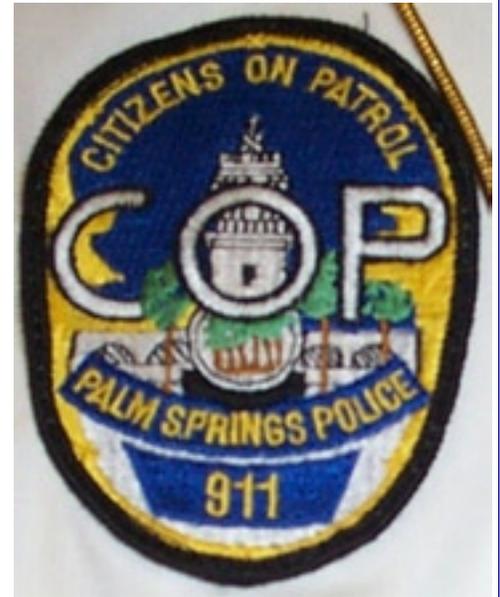
We provide traffic control for marathons, parades, and emergency road blockage for special events.

Has any Citizen Patrol member ever been injured while performing his/her duties?

While trying to secure an injured cat, a C.O.P. was severely bitten. In another instance, while controlling traffic at an accident scene, the C.O.P. was sideswiped by a vehicle.

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

All of the Coachella Valley Chambers of Commerce awarded our unit for two years the Valley Wide Chamber of Commerce Volunteer Group of the Year. The airport awarded our airport patrol group a commendation as well as two individual commendations. Also, our monthly newsletter advises of special efforts of the C.O.P.'s



Most Significant Event

One "event" that has taken us two years to accomplish is the airport patrol. Since 9-11, our airport patrols were not allowed past the checkpoint. But now, with the added security, C.O.P.'s record for good work, reliability, and integrity has convinced the "Homeland Security", the airport, the city and our department that we are an asset to the country's defense. It is with much pride that our C.O.P.'s report for duty at the airport. The passengers and visitors have accepted us and quite often they praise us and the city for being a step ahead of other cities.

Members of the Palm Springs, California, Police, Citizen Patrol Unit participate in Homeland Security efforts while patrolling the Palm Springs Airport, one of the few Volunteer Patrol units in the nation working with the TSA.



Pictured Above: Volunteer members of the Palm Springs Police Citizens Patrol in front of the Palm Springs Airport preparing to begin their foot patrol inside the facility.

Pictured Below: Palm Springs Citizen Patrol Volunteers talk with airline passengers inside the airport providing them with information as part of their foot patrol duties and acting as good ambassadors for the city.



Pictured Above: Palm Springs Police Citizen Patrol Volunteer (left) along side a member of the Transportation Security Administration, inside the airport TSA office.

Pictured Below: Palm Springs Police Citizen Patrol Volunteer checking open spaces and access areas for any suspicious packages or activity.

