



**Glendale Police Department**



**THEFT REDUCTION AUTO PROGRAM  
(T.R.A.P.)**

# 1. ABSTRACT

## PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

**SCANNING** - Assistant Chief Paul Felice of the Glendale, Arizona Police Department initiated a problem-solving project with the department's Community Action Team (CAT) after a car, which was stolen from a new car dealership, was used in a bank robbery. After this incident, it was learned that several car dealerships were experiencing numerous thefts of automobiles.

**ANALYSIS** - The CAT members interviewed auto theft detectives, car dealership owners and employees, reviewed police reports, reviewed dealership policies and procedures, analyzed crime statistics and contacted insurance companies about this problem. As part of the researching and identifying the problem, Officers observed and monitored the safety procedures used by the business and employees.

**RESPONSE** - As a result of the problem-solving analysis, the CAT members created the Theft Reduction Auto Program (T.R.A.P.) to pro-actively address the problem. Working with the dealerships, the Police Department trained employees on crime prevention, conducted a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) analysis of the properties, and helped the dealership owners and managers establish numerous procedures to aid them in such security related matters ranging from hiring to test-driving procedures to inventory control.

**ASSESSMENT** - Since the implementation of T.R.A.P., participating dealerships have seen a sharp decline in the number of auto thefts. In 1995, 44 cars stolen from the dealerships. In 1996, the number of stolen vehicles declined to 35 and as of July 1997, only 11 vehicles have been reported stolen.

## 2. DESCRIPTION

### A. SCANNING

During the summer of 1995, an incident occurred in where a vehicle was stolen from a car dealership in Glendale, Arizona. The vehicle was then used in an armed bank robbery. During the investigation of this crime, it was discovered the reporting procedures for stolen vehicles from the dealership were inadequate. The Assistant Chief of the Glendale Police Department contacted one of the department's three Community Action Teams (CAT) and asked the team members to develop a pro-active program to effectively address the problem areas at Glendale dealerships.

Glendale Police Chief David Dobrotka created the proactive problem-solving CAT unit in 1994. The teams comprised of a police officer and a civilian crime prevention specialist. The teams work on a variety of neighborhood and business problems in their assigned geographic sectors within the city.

As the CAT members began to investigate and research the project more fully, it became apparent that the problem of stolen vehicles from the car dealerships was one of several problems that needed to be addressed. Upon checking with detectives and the car dealerships, there was not only substantial financial losses to the businesses and community, but employees were also at risk due to inadequate employee safety measures.

Due to the scope of this problem (financial loss, calls for police service, increased insurance rates due to the high dollar amount in losses, and risk to employees), the CAT

members put together a pro-active problem solving program called the Theft Reduction Auto Program (T.R. A.P.).

## B. ANALYSIS

The City of Glendale has an auto dealership section in the city which runs for approximately one mile on Glendale's name sake street, near downtown Glendale. There are eight new automobile dealerships and many used-car dealerships. This strip of dealerships has been in existence in Glendale for more than thirty years and provides a large tax base for the city.

The car theft problem was analyzed using several procedures. First, research was conducted regarding Arizona auto theft statistics. In 1995, Arizona had one of the highest auto theft rates per capita in the country. According to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, auto dealerships nationwide are the victims of organized auto-theft and auto-parts rings. In Glendale, there were more than 45 new cars stolen from auto dealerships in 1995. This represents a large problem for our community of 182,000 people.

Also in 1995, an auto parts theft ring that included employees from two dealerships was broken up and the suspects arrested. The cost to the community was more than \$250,000 paid out by the auto dealers as thousands of work hours were being spent by Glendale Police and Arizona Department of Motor Vehicle personnel.

### Dealership Security and Reporting Procedures

The reporting procedures utilized by the car dealerships were thoroughly researched by the CAT personnel. It was determined during this analysis phase that the dealerships did not have sufficient inventory control for the vehicles on their lots. In

addition, there did not appear to be any security measures in place to deter auto thefts. Dressed as civilians, the CAT personnel tested two different dealerships for vehicle and office security. The officers were able to gain access to the business offices, tamper with the computer system and remove personal property. In addition, the officers had little problem removing six vehicles from the lots without checking with any employees or having any record of them missing. They also wandered unquestioned through private offices in the buildings.

After talking with employees, sales managers and business owners, it was determined that there were no uniform policies or procedures in place for the automotive industry addressing security issues. Sales personnel at some dealerships would allow potential customers to test drive vehicles without requiring adequate identification and vehicles while other dealerships loaned out cars without necessary controls. It was discovered that reporting procedures for stolen vehicles was neither timely nor efficient. The Police Department only received calls from the dealerships when they conducted their annual inventory and filed police reports for numerous stolen vehicles—of course, the dealerships had no idea when or how the thefts took place. The vehicles may have been missing for several months before the dealership was aware of the crime.

Upon talking with the managers about how the thefts were occurring, employee hiring practices were reviewed. It was discovered that there was a correlation between employment screening of applicants and auto theft. The Dealerships that utilized screening procedures (background, credit, and drug screening) had less auto and parts thefts than those that did not.

The problems identified through T.R.A.P. are found throughout the automotive sales industry nationwide. The team attempted to locate any previous Community Policing Projects that addressed a similar problem with car dealerships, but no material could be found on the matter. T.R.A.P. required that the Police Department and private businesses pro-actively work together to find solutions.

### C. RESPONSE

After analyzing the problem and discovering that the problem at dealerships was much larger than just reporting procedures, a plan was developed to address several security-related issues. A T.R. A.P. plan was written and a plan of action worked out.

The goals of T.R. A.P. were:

1. Reduce auto and part thefts at the dealerships
2. Increase property recovery rate
3. Decrease time delay from crime to discovery
4. Implement crime prevention systems at dealerships
5. Ensure the safety of employees

During the analysis phase of the project, the managers at the dealerships had been contacted and they agreed to work together with the Police Department. The managers invited the CAT personnel to conduct a security survey of the business. To follow-up, the CAT personnel sent a letter to the manager advising them that an on-site survey of the dealership was going to be conducted and defined the parameters of the survey (see attachment 1). The CAT members also put together a T.R.A.P. Security Survey (see attachment 2). This form was used by officers surveying of the dealership. The form included questions such as:

1. Are the keys left in the cars in the service area?

2. Are background checks used for new employees?
3. Do the salesmen require a driver's license verification on customers prior to test drives?

As the surveys were completed at participating dealerships, CAT members met with the management, identifying the problems and recommending changes. The CAT members developed a three-tiered approach to effectively address the security problem:

Phase One - Auto dealer employees attend a two-hour training program in theft prevention and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), such as appropriate lighting, securing access points, and internal procedures.

Phase Two - Business Security Survey including a CPTED analysis of the property. Dealerships must meet the minimum requirements.

Phase Three - Implementation:

- a) Practice employee screening procedures (reference checks, criminal background checks, credit checks, drug screening).
- b) Report auto thefts immediately to the Glendale Police Department.
- c) Utilize uniform "test drive" procedures.
- d) Utilize secure key policies such as lock boxes, starter interrupt systems, or key vending machines.
- e) Minimum bi-weekly inventory of cars.

The following is a list of recommendations developed for one dealership in Glendale after two Business Security Surveys were completed at their business:

- 1) Prospective clients should be observed as soon as they enter the lot and contacted in the first few minutes.
- 2) Do not leave the keys in the cars in the service area.
- 3) The security guard at the gate should require written authorization to remove a car.
- 4) Utilize a locking key board for the front lot.
- 5) Move the keyboard to a location that is away from customers access area.
- 6) Utilize a key access to external doors that are marked "employees only."
- 7) Maintain a photograph and set of fingerprints of employees.
- 8) Conduct criminal background checks on all employees.
- 9) Add "employees only beyond this point" sign in the service area parking lot.
- 10) Utilize photo-identification cards that must be worn by employees.
- 11) Require driver's license verification of all drivers before going on a test drive.
- 12) Add security patrol at night (perhaps a cooperative effort with other neighboring auto dealerships).
- 13) Join Glendale's Crime Free Auto Dealership Program.

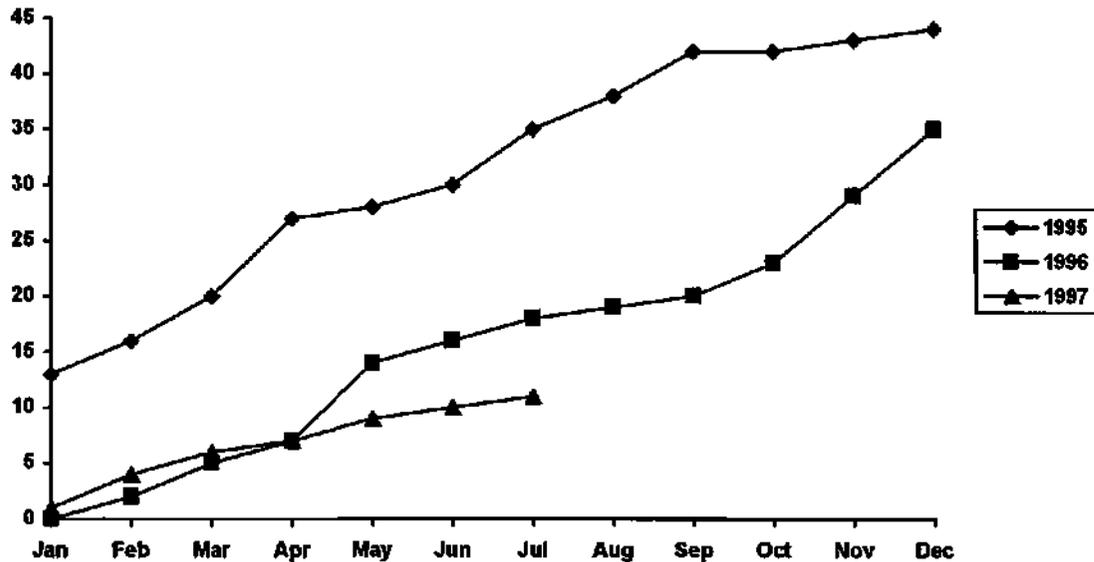
The CAT members truly created a partnership with the auto dealers in Glendale through the team's problem solving efforts. The participating dealerships worked as a

team to reduce the auto theft problem. The Police Department's auto theft detectives were part of the T.R. A.P. and assisted with putting together a pro-active plan. The auto theft detectives also worked with the county attorney and the dealership managers which resulted in new reporting forms and procedures.

This program could have been more effective had all dealerships had been involved. The program is voluntary and the dealerships with the biggest problems participated. Because these dealerships had the biggest problems, the number of auto thefts declined significantly from 1995 to 1997. The number of dealerships that participated 4 out of the 8 new car dealerships in the city. After discussing the program with General Managers and Owners of the auto dealerships, it was hoped that insurance companies would see the benefits of the program and endorse T.R. A.P.

#### D. ASSESSMENT

Since implementation of T.R.A.P., participating dealerships have seen a sharp decline in the number of auto thefts. One dealer who had 15 cars stolen from February to May 1996, had the problem stop after implementing the program. To date, no car has been stolen from that dealership since T.R.A.P. implementation. The statistics for stolen vehicles from the dealerships before the T.R.A.P. and since it was implemented are as follows:



**Chart 1: The number of vehicles stolen from new car dealerships in Glendale, Arizona by year.**

Chart #1 indicates a 21% reduction from 1995 to 1996 in the number of new cars stolen from auto dealerships in Glendale. To date, there has been a 67% reduction in the

number of cars stolen from July 1997 compared to those in July 1995. These statistics clearly show that auto thefts from new car dealerships are declining from previous years due to the Police Department's problem solving approach.

The traditional approach would have been the police and the dealerships working on the problems independently. The cooperation and teamwork would not exist and the problems would probably continue. However, T.R.A.P. has changed how the police department and auto dealers view one another. Now there is a feeling of cooperation between the two groups. In addition, the auto dealers have specific contacts at the Police Department when they need special attention. Comments from owners and managers have been very favorable.

The quality of life will not only have an effect on Glendale due to T.R.A.P., but dealerships that utilize the program have less cars stolen. The insurance companies will charge less to cover the dealerships. This savings is passed on to the consumer who gets a car at a better price. Since the implementation of T.R.A.P., other police agencies throughout the country have inquired about Glendale's innovative program. T.R.A.P. is beginning to be used in other communities with auto dealerships.

### 3. AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

This problem-solving project was adopted and supported by the administration of the Police Department, patrol officers and auto theft detectives. The Community Action Team was the focus point and project leader, however, all areas of the department worked together to solve this problem, particularly with the Auto Theft Detectives.

The Glendale Police Department has conducted Community Policing training with all officers and the SARA model is part of this training. All officers are encouraged and assisted in conducting Problem Oriented Policing projects of their own, therefore, when planning and conducting the T.R. A.P. project, all parties involved were previously trained in problem solving.

Patrol supervisors complete bi-monthly evaluations/reviews of the officers. During this review, a form is completed which documents job performance and any projects being worked. In addition, information on projects should be mentioned in the bi-annual performance evaluation.

The CAT team researched nationwide, any similar projects regarding dealerships. No prior projects had been documented or located, although the problems identified in this project are experienced by dealerships nationwide. Regarding monetary commitments to this project, no funds were expended beyond the already allocated budget and all personnel worked this project during regular work hours.

#### Project Contact Persons:

Bruce Wall, Crime Prevention Specialist  
Sergeant Johnny Arevalo

Glendale Police Department  
6835 N. 57 Drive  
Glendale, AZ 85301

Office: (602) 930-3275  
Fax: (602)931-2157  
E-Mail: Wall@ci.glendale.az.us