

# How to Start a Citizen Patrol Organization

A Guide for Law Enforcement Agencies and Community Organizations Implementing a C.O.P. Program

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION CITIZENS ON PATROL



**BE SEEN. BE HEARD.  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome and congratulations on your decision to start a Citizen Patrol group! Today, now more than ever, the need for citizen involvement to help combat crime and terrorism is greater than ever. The purpose of this document is to assist law enforcement agencies, community organizations and concerned citizens with the basic information required to implement an effective Citizen Patrol program. The information contained in this document is based on “best practices” used by a number of long term successful Citizen Patrol groups across the nation. Having said that, we caution the reader to take note that the information in this document should in no way suggest that this is the only way to develop your Citizen Patrol organization. Each agency and geographic region has its own unique needs and goals. We hope the information contained in this document will provide you with a good starting point to implement your own Citizen Patrol group.

Throughout this document you will note references made to “law enforcement agency citizen patrol coordinators”. It is common practice for C.O.P. groups who are either directly part of their local Police or Sheriff’s departments or separate yet interface with them via their city, town or county, to have a “coordinator” assigned to them. This position is usually staffed by a full time member of your local law enforcement department such as a sworn Officer, Deputy or a civilian volunteer coordinator. However, not all Citizen Patrol groups operate in this manner. Some start off separate and operate independently as a non-profit community group or simply as a group of concerned citizens who want to help take a stand against crime. While most successful groups who begin in this manner eventually interface directly with law enforcement, this is not always the case. The readers of this document should take note of this and if your intention is to start an independent citizen patrol group, simply ignore the reference to “coordinators”.

Finally, we want to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped in the development of this manual. Their thoughts and feedback have helped to make this a great resources for people like you, the reader, who want to join the thousands of others across our great nation to assist law enforcement as “Eyes and Ears”.

We wish you the best with your new organization and applaud your efforts to help keep your community safe. Please do not hesitate to call, write or e-mail us with your thoughts and suggestions of how we may improve this manual to better serve the citizens of our nation.

Best Wishes for Success,

Arthur J. Femister  
President and Founder  
National Association Citizens On Patrol

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## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF CITIZENS ON PATROL**

During World War II the nation's police forces lost many Officers to the armed forces as human resources were in great demand to support the war effort. In response to the loss, men and women volunteered to help the regular police with non-enforcement duties like traffic control and high visibility patrol acting as "Eyes and Ears" for law enforcement. Individuals who performed these functions were known as Auxiliary Police. Others were called Veterans Patrols because they were staffed by returning men and woman from World War II. When the war ended, so did many of the Auxiliary Police programs; however some remained and are still in use today such as the New York Police Departments 4,500 strong Auxiliary Police organization.

As crime began to rise again in the 1970's, law enforcement departments began to re-establish this once used community asset which today is commonly known as Citizens On Patrol. Today there are various names used to describe C.O.P.'s such as, Citizen Observer Patrols, Citizen Action Patrols, Citizen Action Teams, Citizen Support Teams, Retired Senior Volunteer Patrols, Volunteers On Patrol, Volunteers in Police Service, etc. However, regardless of the name, the mission continues to be the same for all, to provide extra "Eyes and Ears" for law enforcement while supporting agencies with non-enforcement duties such as traffic control, residential vacation checks and many more vital duties. Today there are an estimated 100,000 dedicated Citizen Patrol Volunteers throughout the United States and Canada serving in approximately 5,000 separate groups. We salute them all for their service!

## **WHAT ARE CITIZENS ON PATROL?**

Citizens on Patrol are trained volunteers who donate their time and work together within a Citizen Patrol organization in their community. They assist and support law enforcement in the reduction of crime and improve overall quality of life by increasing the effectiveness of Police and Sheriffs. They accomplish this by acting as additional "Eyes and Ears" while on patrol, usually in marked patrol vehicles, looking for suspicious activity or crimes in progress at which time they will notify their police or sheriff's department. Citizen Patrol volunteers take no enforcement action and are unarmed. Additionally, they assist their law enforcement agency with basic functions or functions they may not normally be able to provide such as Traffic Control, Vacation Checks, Welfare Checks on Senior or Disabled Persons, Extra Patrol for areas experiencing Vandalism, Graffiti, Loitering, Car Theft, other crimes, as well as offer additional manpower for special events such as parades, fairs, and school or community functions. Many communities who have implemented a Citizen Patrol group see on average a reduction in crime of 20% and can save hundreds of thousands of dollars in their law enforcement budget. These cost savings can be used to hire additional officers, purchase new equipment, or be redirected to social or community projects.

As of March 2003, we estimate there are between 75,000 to 100,000 active COP volunteers across the nation representing over 5,000 Citizen Patrol organizations. In Southern California alone, we have identified at least 5,000 Citizen Patrol volunteers representing just 8 major countywide Citizen Patrol groups in a state with 59 counties. One major county Sheriff's department in Florida, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's

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Department, has over 5,000 active Citizen Patrol members alone! A recent inquiry utilizing a popular internet search engine, when queried for “Citizen Patrol Organizations”, resulted in a response of over one million hits. Citizen Patrol organizations have been in use for over 50 years and are one of the best-kept secrets in Law Enforcement today.

Citizens on Patrol are also known as CAP’s, Citizens Action Patrols, COP’s, Citizen Observer Patrols, CVP’s, Citizen Volunteer Patrols, VIP’s, Volunteers in Policing or Partnership, RSVP’s, Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol, SPOT, Seniors Patrolling Out Town and others names. The key theme with all Citizen Patrol groups is that the volunteers are average citizens from a variety of backgrounds, ages and locations who have come together to make a difference by helping to make law enforcement more effective and productive.

Citizen Patrol Volunteers initially receive a background check and training from their local law enforcement department which may include topics such as: First aid, CPR, Introduction to Law, Patrol Procedures, Traffic Control, Crime Prevention, Use of Two-Way Radios, Defensive Driver Training in addition to other topics. The Citizen Patrol organization may or may not be directly associated with the city’s law enforcement department. Most Citizen Patrol organizations are affiliated with their law enforcement department or their city. However, there are a small percentage of Citizen Patrol groups who are independent from their local government. Generally speaking, these groups were created in this manner due to lack of support for a Citizen Patrol group by their local government or law enforcement agency at the time of their formation. However, the majority of these groups, once implemented and in use, end up receiving the support of local law enforcement and become a valuable resource for the agency.

## CITIZENS ON PATROL SUCCESS STORIES

**California** - In 1999 Citizen Patrol volunteers, while on patrol, observed a “245 ADW”, assault with a deadly weapon, in progress. They followed the suspect and called sheriff’s dispatch with the license plate number of the vehicle. They continued to follow the suspect vehicle until Deputies arrived and made the arrest of the two felony suspects without incident.

**Florida** - This most significant event lead to the capture of a murder suspect in the getaway vehicle that had just killed a woman during a robbery. The Citizens On Patrol spotted the vehicle and followed it until police arrived and arrested the suspect.

**California** - During a major fire that occurred in the city about 5 years ago, the Citizens Patrol group worked for 48 hours nonstop with the Fire Department and law enforcement to help evacuate horses and livestock while also conducting traffic control around the fire area. Today there are many happy horses who are still alive thanks to the efforts of these Citizen Patrol Volunteers.

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**California** - Two Citizen Patrol Volunteers were on patrol and narrowly avoided being hit by a drunk driver. They looked behind them and observed the drunk driver hit another car head on. They radioed dispatch notifying them of the accident, and requesting an ambulance. The drunk driver got out of his vehicle and started to walk away while the volunteers followed the drunk driver at a safe distance. The accident occurred less than a block away from the Citizen Patrol office and both the dispatchers were also able to keep an eye on the driver while relaying the information to the sheriff's dispatcher. Within a minute, three deputies had the driver in custody. He was later found to have an outstanding "No Bail Warrant" for his arrest for a parole violation and was sent back to state prison.

**Florida** - A young girl was reported missing by her mother after not returning home from school. Police responded to the area along with Citizen Patrol volunteers to help in the search. Two C.O.P. members located the missing girl and returned her to a very grateful mother.

**California** - There have been several incidents over the years, one of them was when two Citizen Patrol Volunteers found a car, which had been involved in a fatal hit and run accident a few hours earlier, enabling the Deputies to identify and arrest the driver. The other involved an "off duty" Citizen Patrol Volunteer who observed a vehicle he remembered from a previous briefing as being stolen. After calling in the location to his station, a Deputy was able to recover the vehicle and arrest a suspect for Grand Theft Auto.

**Canada** - Citizens on Patrol were credited with rescuing and saving a young man's life after they found him lying face down and unconscious in a puddle on a construction site during the evening.



## **Citizens on Patrol in Action**



**CITIZEN PATROL VOLUNTEERS CONDUCT REGULARLY SCHEDULED PATROLS WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES TO WATCH OUT FOR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES AND CRIMES IN PROGRESS, AID STRANDED MOTORISTS AND GENERALLY PROVIDE AN INCREASED LEVEL OF COMFORT FOR THOSE WHO SEE THE EXTRA PATROL ON THE STREETS.**

**A MAJOR FUNCTION OF MOST CITIZEN PATROL GROUPS IS TO PROVIDE AND ASSIST WITH TRAFFIC CONTROL AT THE SCENE OF AUTO ACCIDENTS OR OTHER INCIDENTS THAT OBSTRUCT THE ROAD AND CREATE A HAZARD. THIS ALLOWS LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL TO GO BACK ON PATROL AND FOCUS ON THEIR PRIMARY PURPOSE WHICH IS TO PREVENT AND STOP CRIME.**



**CITIZEN PATROL VOLUNTEERS CONDUCT ROUTINE CHECKS OF BUSINESSES BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER HOURS TO ENSURE ALL IS WELL AND REPORT ANY ACTIVITY THAT IS SUSPICIOUS IN NATURE OR TO FOCUS ON AREAS WHERE THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN CRIME.**



## Citizens on Patrol in Action

**CITIZEN PATROL GROUPS OFFER ROUTINE CHECKS FOR HOMEOWNERS THAT ARE AWAY ON VACATION OR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME. IN THE EVENT OF A NOTICEABLE PROBLEM, C.O.P.S CAN NOTIFY AN EMERGENCY CONTACT LEFT BY THE HOMEOWNER SO THEY MAY ADDRESS THE PROBLEM.**



**CITIZEN PATROL GROUPS AND VOLUNTEERS ALSO OFFER ROUTINE OR ON DEMAND SAFETY CHECKS OF SENIORS LIVING ALONE OR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE UNABLE TO MOVE ABOUT SUCH AS THE HANDICAP IN THEIR HOMES. THIS SERVICE IS VERY WELL RECEIVED BY THE COMMUNITY AND MOST PEOPLE REALLY APPRECIATE KNOWING SOMEONE WILL CHECK ON THEIR LOVED ONE AND OFFER ASSISTANCE IF NEEDED.**

**CITIZEN PATROL GROUPS PARTICIPATE IN MANY SPECIAL EVENTS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. IN THIS PHOTO, A C.O.P. IS HELPING TO FINERPRINT YOUNG CHILDREN AND TEENS AT THE REQUEST OF THEIR PARENTS DURING A LOCAL SAFETY FAIR. MANY CITIZEN PATROL VOLUNTEERS ARE TRAINED TO PROVIDE THIS TYPE OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT.**







## **LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSPECTIVE**

### **Citizens' Patrol. Are They Worth the Effort?**

*by Officer Tom Carney*

After 25 years in law enforcement I decided to try my luck at supervising a Crime Prevention/Community Relations Unit. Having experienced what I have throughout my law enforcement career, I felt I could share my knowledge and training with members of the community in an effort to help prevent some of the types of crimes I have investigated.

It wasn't until starting my new job in crime prevention that I realized just how integral and important volunteers can be to a successful community policing strategy. For the last 3 years my involvement with volunteers has greatly expanded, especially in the realm of our Citizens Patrol program. Working with our Citizens Patrol has proven to not only to be a rewarding experience, but an educational one as well. What I have learned is that a small group of dedicated men and women can be the catalyst for a growing trend that focuses on improving the communities' overall perception and fear of crime in their neighborhoods and business areas.

Crime prevention programs usually target a specific crime and as we all know, analyzing the program's effectiveness can be difficult, if not impossible. Regardless of the crime rate and the police departments efforts to control or lower it, having a community that perceives or fears that crime is taking over their neighborhoods and businesses, creates an obstacle for the police that can be difficult for them to overcome. However, creating a program that allows direct interaction with the community like the Citizens Patrol brings the obstacle into perspective and allows change to take place if the commitment from both sides is genuine.

From a law enforcement standpoint, by encouraging and supporting a Citizens Patrol, the police create a conduit that can be used to form a bond with the community it serves. Conversely, from a community standpoint, having a proactive and highly visible Citizens Patrol gives the community the ability to get involved in their police department's overall efforts to improve the local quality of life.

Not only should a Citizens Patrol be the "eyes and ears" of the police department, but it should take a stake in improving their community's future by encouraging their friends, neighbors and colleagues to get involved in any way they can. With the realization that "they" can be replaced with "we", the process of change can begin.



*Officer Tom Carney is a veteran Police Officer with over 25 years experience in the field of Law Enforcement. His most recent assignment is with the City of North Miami Beach, Florida's Crime Prevention Unit as its Supervisor.*

*Officer Carney oversees the department's Citizen Patrol group and works with its volunteers to help reduce crime.*

The article above is a reprint from the NACOP Winter 2001 Newsletter.

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## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

**Keys to Success:** Proper Recruitment, Proper Training and “buy in” from the supporting agency management, commanders and officers.

Recruitment and Retention go hand in hand. If you recruit the right people, you’ll retain the right people. If you hire the wrong people, you’ll continue to suffer from high turnover and low output from your volunteers and waste time and money training and outfitting individuals.

Having said that, recruitment is an ongoing process; and therefore, time, thought and proper resources should be devoted to the recruitment of new volunteers. Every organization will have some level of turnover which will require volunteer replacements to fill the gaps. Do not make the mistake of thinking only retired people will want to volunteer! People of all ages are interested in giving their time to a worthwhile cause if they feel good about what they are doing. Your job as the Citizen Patrol Coordinator is to insure the proper expectations are set up front so there is no misunderstanding down the road and to insure your volunteers receive the support and recognition they need and deserve.

Remember, Citizen Patrol Volunteers can and should be given the same respect and recognition as other paid/non-paid part time employees, i.e. Military Reserves, Reserve Police Officers, Search and Rescue teams, etc. Think about it for a moment, Military reserves, the same ones that are being called upon to fight side by side with full time forces are required to drill 16 hours a month, in addition to two full time weeks a year, after attending basic training. Citizen Patrol Volunteers on average patrol at least 16 hours a month, and many devoting much more time than that, after completing their initial “basic” training. If the brave men and women of our U.S. Military Reserves are deemed competent enough to go to war and risk their lives to defend our freedoms with only 16 hours a month of in-service training and drills, then why would anyone think Citizen Patrol volunteers are not as equally qualified to help protect our communities from crime and terrorism with the same amount of monthly hours?

Citizen Patrol volunteers play a vital role in helping to reduce crime in our communities by acting as “Eyes and Ears” and “First Preventers” and should be looked upon with the same level of respect as our military reserve forces and other “Professional” volunteers.

Some thoughts on ways to recruit include using existing monthly mailings within your community such as city or county controlled water, electric and utility bills that are mailed out regularly. You can easily print a small recruitment flyer to be included with the bills. Many communities also mail or offer “Community Newsletters” providing residents with updates on the area. This is an excellent way to post your message. Of course, posting large signs in front of your law enforcement agency and/or City Hall is also an inexpensive way to get your request out. Placing temporary magnetic signs on your police cars and/or Citizen Patrol cars is another great way to advertise your needs. Something as simple as “Volunteers wanted, to join us call xxx-xxxx” would work. Contacting police applicants is also a great way to attract people already interested in law enforcement as the hiring process can take up to two years. Young men and women who are leaving

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Police Explorer programs due to maximum age requirements are also good potential volunteers as they are well-qualified individuals who have already received excellent law enforcement training and experience. The same applies to young men who are leaving the Boy Scouts of America due to maximum age requirements. If your program age requirement will allow 18-year-old individuals, this is another potential source for wonderful citizens who have already exhibited a call to service towards their community. Again, please keep in mind that the minimum age requirement to join the Military is 18 years of age. If an individual is qualified enough to serve and defend our country at the age of 18, why not give this individual the chance to serve his community.

Finally, a key factor to the success of your C.O.P. organization will be the support you receive from your agency's leaders such as the Chief of Police, County Sheriff and their command staff. If your agency's leadership is committed to the success of your C.O.P.'s, others will follow in line and support you. If your command staff is not committed, support from the rank and file members of your agency could be less than expected. It is imperative that your command staff communicates their support for the C.O.P.'s to all members of your department.

## **HIRING PROCESS**

As part of the hiring process, Citizen Patrol volunteers must undergo some form of a background check to insure the individuals are qualified to conduct themselves as representatives of your agency or organization. Unless the individuals will have direct access to local and/or national criminal databases such as NCIC, most agencies conduct a basic background check. These checks are usually non-invasive in nature meaning they do not require the same depth as would be needed for a sworn officer. A basic background check will include checking an individual's driving record for excessive moving violations and/or history of accidents, a criminal records check, and a fingerprint submittal for a national check. Some agencies may require several reference checks with a current employer and/or the individual's neighbors and family.

Along with the individual's completion of a form containing basic information to conduct the background check, the prospective C.O.P. volunteer should also undergo an oral interview prior to beginning his/her training. The oral interview should be conducted by a panel of at least three, if possible, consisting of the Citizen Patrol Coordinator, a current member of the C.O.P. group, and a senior sworn member of the department, such as a watch commander or command staff.

The purpose of the oral interview is to meet prospective volunteers face to face and understand their reasons for wanting to volunteer and get a sense for their ability to interact with the public. While the primary purpose of C.O.P.'s is to act as "Eyes and Ears" and to report suspicious activity, by the nature of their actions, being on patrol in marked vehicles and in uniform, C.O.P.'s will be in contact with the public. When doing so, they will be representing your agency or organization and, as such, you have the right to make sure this individual is a suitable representative.

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Another tool that can be used, prior to the oral interview, is to have the prospective C.O.P. volunteer hand write a short, one page or less, essay as to why he/she wants to become a volunteer and what he/she expects to gain from the experience. There may be times when your C.O.P. Volunteers will be required to write an incident report or other forms of department communications, once hired. In addition to learning more about the individual and their desires, this will also provide an opportunity to see how the individual communicates in writing. Finally, depending on your operations, C.O.P. volunteers may be assisting with traffic control, special events and other functions that will require them to stand or walk for long periods of time and/or will require them to lift objects such as stacks of traffic cones, traffic barricades, etc. If this is the case for your organization, you may want to consider having the perspective volunteer provide a medical waiver form from his or her doctor. At a minimum, the individual should sign a waiver form stating they understand the requirements and they believe they are capable of performing the tasks. However, if at any time your agency feels the individual is not capable of performing these tasks, you may require them to visit a doctor and obtain a medical release form stating they are capable.

## **RECOGNITION**

As with ongoing recruitment, the need for continual recognition of your Citizen Patrol Volunteers is critical to the overall success of your program. It is well known within the “volunteer community” that nobody works for free. “Paid” employees, those earning a wage, and “unpaid” volunteers both work for compensation. The paid person earns a paycheck and also earns various forms of psychological income such as a sense of accomplishment, a sense of contributing to the greater good of mankind, and a sense of making a difference in other peoples’ lives. In most cases, if the psychological income factor is taken away, it will be only a matter of time before that person is seeking employment elsewhere to recover that lost psychological income.

The unpaid volunteer is no different except that his or her only source of income is psychological income. Remove that special compensation and that volunteer will look elsewhere to replace it. Volunteers gravitate to places where they are appreciated and cared for. As a Coordinator and/or Commander of the Citizen Patrol group, one of your greatest challenges will be to provide ways to recognize the efforts of your volunteers in a meaningful way. Amazingly enough, one of the most simple, yet effective ways to recognize your C.O.P. volunteers is to have your sworn Officers acknowledge their presence and efforts by thanking them for their time and treating them as one of their own. One of the most common complaints by C.O.P. volunteers is that they do not feel they are part of the organization and are looked upon as outsiders. Unfortunately, this is one of the most challenging situations you will have to overcome. The good news is that, over time, as your Officers become more familiar with the new volunteers and begin to see the results of their efforts, this situation will take care of itself. However, as a Coordinator, you should be aware of this and work with both sides to help bring the two together. Allowing your Citizen Patrol volunteers to attend shift briefings and other department events can help bridge the gap on both sides.

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Other traditional forms of recognition include quarterly and yearly awards, annual dinners, certificates of recognition for special efforts, and newspaper articles about your C.O.P.'s efforts, picnics, etc. Additional methods of recognition to consider involve the use of merit ribbons such as those used in the military and law enforcement departments. These ribbons can be issued and worn on the C.O.P. volunteer's uniform to provide special recognition for actions such as Life Saving, Stolen Car Recovery, Major Crime Prevention, Years of Service, etc. You should also look to the outside for ways to provide recognition to your volunteers. Most local, state, and federal elected officials are happy to provide Certificates of Recognition to your volunteers for their special efforts. Be sure to contact your local Congressperson and State officials' offices to learn how they may be able to assist you with recognition. National membership organizations such as the National Association Citizens On Patrol also offer methods to recognize your volunteers' efforts.



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## **SUGGESTED CITIZEN PATROL TRAINING OUTLINE**

The following is a suggested introductory training program designed to provide a solid base of knowledge for Citizen Patrol volunteers to begin their patrol functions safely and effectively. The basic program is broken into five sessions, each of which can be completed in four hours. First Aid and CPR training should also be included in the program. The suggested training is not meant to be the only training implemented and it may not be necessary to cover all the topics listed. Each organization has its own special needs and requirements. Further, training should not be a one-time effort. It should be an ongoing function of a Citizen Patrol organization to insure the volunteers are kept current on methods and procedures required to perform their duties. Other training courses to consider should include hands-on Driver Training at your agency's EVOC, Emergency Vehicle Operations Center, if one is available, and site visits to your agency's functional departments such as communications and dispatch center. One of the primary functions the volunteers will perform is that of "Eyes and Ears" and thus communicating with your department is critical. We strongly suggest that, if at all possible, your volunteers take the time to visit your dispatch center to see first hand how they operate and what information they require when interacting with the volunteers.

### **START OF TRAINING, SESSION ONE, FOUR HOURS**

#### **ORIENTATION**

1. Welcome speech from agency commander
2. Station Organization
3. City or County organization
4. Citizen patrol organizational overview
5. Chain of command
6. Obligations of C.O.P.'s
7. Appearance
8. Professional face / ethics
9. Patrol forms location
10. Vehicle operation



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11. Station Tour
  12. Telephone operation
  13. Fax operation
  14. Executive contact
  15. Patrol procedures
  16. Business checks
  17. Vacation checks
  18. Extra patrols

## **SESSION TWO, FOUR HOURS**

### **BASIC LAW REVIEW**

1. U.S. Constitution
2. Criminal Law vs. Civil Law
3. Courtroom Testimony
4. Elements of a crime

### **RADIO PROCEDURES**

1. Radio codes (10 and 11 codes, etc.)
2. Unit call sign
3. Going "In Service"
4. Going "Out of Service"



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5. Vacation checks
  6. Business checks
  7. Asking for assistance
  8. Emergency help request (999, 11-99, etc.)
  9. Importance of listening to the radio

### **FIELD PAPERWORK**

1. Patrol reports
2. Vacation checks
3. Parking citations (if applicable)
4. Vehicle checkout form
5. Extra patrols
6. Business checks

## **SESSION THREE, FOUR HOURS**

### **TRAFFIC CONTROL**

1. Responding to scene
2. Checking for injuries
3. Update dispatch
4. Traffic flow
5. Flares / cones
6. Vehicle placement





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7. Vests / flashlights
  8. Hazardous spills
  9. Officer safety
  10. Directing traffic
  11. Know alternate routes

**KNOWLEDGE OF AREA**

1. Parks
2. Elementary schools
3. Jr. High Schools
4. High Schools
5. City Hall
6. Fire Stations
7. Fire Headquarters
8. Churches
9. City Yard
10. Gas stations
11. Freeway locations
12. Hospital locations
13. Animal hospital
14. Gate codes



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## **SESSION FOUR, FOUR HOURS**

### **PUBLIC CONTACT**

1. Purpose of C.O.P.'s
2. Confrontation avoidance
3. How to issue citations (if applicable)
4. Helpfulness
5. Spirit vs letter of the law
6. Verbal judo
7. Media relations

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

1. Support station
2. Support city / county / township, etc.
3. Support other station units
4. Support unit
5. Support other community Groups / organizations

### **EMERGENCY INCIDENTS**

1. Contact persons
2. Fatal accidents
3. Major crimes
4. Natural disasters
5. Lost / missing person



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## **SESSION FIVE, FOUR HOURS**

### **STATION / OTHER DUTIES**

1. Fingerprinting
2. Station tours
3. Bicycle registration
4. Assist records
5. Assist filing
6. Neighborhood Watch

## **SESSION SIX, FOUR HOURS (OPTIONAL)**

### **HOMELAND SECURITY, TERRORISM PREVENTION, FIRST PREVENTERS**

### **END OF DEPARTMENT PROVIDED ACADEMY**

1. Test review
2. Written final exam

### **ADDITIONAL TRAINING (May be provided by outside agencies such as your Fire Department)**

1. First Aid (8 - 16 hours)
2. CPR (4 - 8 hours)



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## FUNDING AND STAFFING YOUR CITIZEN PATROL ORGANIZATION

As with any new venture, funding will be required to implement your Citizen Patrol organization. The amount of funding needed will depend on your equipment plans and access to used or surplus items.

The basic equipment and staffing needs of a Citizen Patrol group are as follows but is not limited to:

**1) Uniforms:** Uniforms can vary from basic silk screened Polo Shirts to fully outfitted uniforms with pants, shirts, patches, hats and jackets. Depending on your budget, these options can range from \$25.00 per person for basic Polo Shirts only up to \$125.00 to \$200.00 per person for fully outfitted uniforms. To help control cost, be sure to utilize, when possible, your department's existing contracts with local uniform suppliers to take advantage of volume discounts. Having said that, other cost-effective suppliers should be considered such as major law enforcement catalog's like Galls or others who may offer discounts to volunteer groups.

**2) Personnel Equipment:** Generally speaking, personnel equipment for Citizen Patrol volunteers is limited to a Maglite type Flashlight, flashlight belt ring, and radio or cell phone holder to carry the either item, or both. Maglite or Streamlight type flashlights can range from \$25.00 each to \$100.00 each depending upon whether they are the rechargeable type or standard battery operated. Note: The amount of flashlights purchased should be based on the average number of C.O.P. Volunteers on patrol at one time as there is no need to provide a flashlight for each volunteer when only a small percentage will be on patrol at any given time.

**3) Communications:** A key component to your Citizen Patrol group is how they will communicate with your agency. The preferred method is to allow your volunteers to either operate on the same radio system as your Officers' so requests for assistance are instant or to allow them to operate on a secondary frequency on the same radio system to allow direct contact with your dispatch center. However if this is not possible, then an alternate communications method should be established to allow the most direct route available to your dispatch center. Many agencies achieve this by providing a special dedicated telephone number for C.O.P.'s to call that bypasses 911 and allows for direct contact to dispatch. A growing number of groups are equipping themselves with Nextel cell phones which offer direct two way radio communications between other C.O.P.'s on duty and/or Officers while also providing a cell phone to call dispatch. The cost of the above options can vary widely depending on your needs, budget and the current market for used radio equipment if this is being considered.

**4) Vehicles:** Another major component of your Citizen Patrol group is vehicles. This option can range from C.O.P.'s using their own vehicles, (least desired) to your agency or city/county providing vehicles, which is the most desired for a number of reasons. Ideally, dedicated agency or city/county provided vehicles are the most preferred form of vehicles for C.O.P. groups. If agency budgets do not allow for new vehicles dedicated to the C.O.P. group, second hand agency vehicles which are being taken out of service or other used vehicles from a city or county fleet should be considered. Another option is to look at the general used car market. In

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most areas of the country, moderately used Ford Crown Victoria's, or similar sized four door vehicles can be purchased in the range of \$5,000. If new vehicles are not available, one advantage of utilizing police cars coming out of service is that they are already equipped with spot lights, radio consoles, overhead light bars, etc. Most light bars can be refitted with new amber or green lenses replacing the traditional red/blue or all blue lenses designated for law enforcement. Another option to consider is allowing C.O.P. volunteers to use patrol vehicles in the fleet. When doing so, police and sheriff's department have stick on magnetic signs made up stating, "CITIZEN PATROL", which are placed on the vehicle over the words "POLICE or SHERIFF". Light bar covers can be used to cover the traditional red and blue lenses only to be removed during a time of need when assisting for example with traffic control or other stationary situations.

Pictured to the right is an example of a Sheriff's patrol car with temporary "CITIZEN PATROL" magnetic signs on the side of the vehicle and a temporary black vinyl light bar cover. The vehicle is now ready for C.O.P. patrol use.



As Citizen Patrol groups become more commonplace within our communities and recognized by the public, new avenues for acquiring vehicles are becoming available. Local businesses within your community should be contacted regarding the possibility of providing a portion of the funding for a C.O.P. vehicle, as their presence will help to deter crime and make their businesses safer. Be sure to emphasize to the business owners and managers the fact that this is an "All Volunteer Force" and people are giving their time to help protect their community. New and Used Automobile dealers should be given high priority for potential vehicle donations. Be open to offering something in return such as a sign or lettering on the vehicle stating "This vehicle was donated by XXXXXX" or something to that affect. Many businesses view this as excellent "Good Will" towards the community and are happy to help. Other resources to consider are local utility companies who have vehicle fleets such as water, power, electrical and/or private firms with large vehicle fleets. All of these organizations should be contacted as potential sources of donated vehicle(s).

Another option to consider is a new breed of marketing and advertising companies who are offering free vehicles to police and sheriff's departments in return for displaying a company's advertisement or logo on it. A quick search on the Internet using a popular search engine such as Google.com will uncover these companies. One such company is Government Acquisitions on the web at [www.governmentacquisitions.com](http://www.governmentacquisitions.com), and can be reached by phone at 704-777-2424.

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**5) Vehicle Personal Equipment:** Another budget item to plan for when first outfitting your Citizen Patrol group is the cost of equipment traditionally found in the trunk. Items to consider include brightly colored safety vests to be worn during traffic control, a First Aid kit, personal rain gear, fire extinguisher, bottles of water, blanket, shovel, and flares. With regards to the use of flares, we highly recommend groups consider the use of newer technology products such as the “Turbo-Flare” which replaces the traditional fuse-lit type of burning flares. Products such as the Turbo-Flare are battery operated and provide the same level of visibility at night, and day when used with stick-in flags. They eliminate the risk of starting a fire when used near leaking gas, oil, or other hazardous materials. Over time, the cost of a product like the Turbo-Flare will pay for itself while providing a safer and friendlier work environment for Citizen Patrol volunteers.

**6) Training Courses/Materials:** The cost, if any, of training material and courses such as First Aid and CPR will depend on the size and staffing of your agency. All internal and local resources should be considered. Most local Fire Departments, that have qualified instructors on staff, are willing to provide First Aid and CPR training at their cost or free.

**7) Staffing:** Generally speaking, most C.O.P. groups only require the resources of one member of the department to act as their primary coordinator to interface between the volunteers and the agency and offer advice, assistance, and coordinate and/or conduct training. The most preferred person for this position would be a sworn member of your department as they have the most clout and understanding of patrol procedures. A key factor to the success of your Citizen Patrol group is to have a coordinator who wants this position versus someone who is put there with no choice of their own. Remember that this person will be the primary point of contact between your C.O.P. volunteers and your department and his or her demeanor will have a direct impact on your C.O.P. group. If possible, a backup or secondary coordinator should also be in place to help the primary and fill in when he/she is not available.

## **METHODS TO ASSESS THE SUCCESS OF YOUR CITIZEN PATROL ORGANIZATION**

As time goes by and your Citizen Patrol group is up and running, the question will certainly be asked, “How effective are our C.O.P.’s?”. This question may be asked by a number of people from department commanders, City Council members, the media and others. The success of your C.O.P. group can be measured in a number of ways. One method is to document your area crime statistics utilizing standard reporting tools such as the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports and/or state statistics. Tracking these statistics just prior to when your C.O.P. group is started and then each year after can provide a fair measure of success as seen by drops in crime rates, all things being equal. It is not uncommon for agencies tracking these numbers to see a 20% drop in crime during the first two years in which a new C.O.P. group is formed.

Other yearly and monthly statistics to measure are the number of hours donated by your volunteers, number of miles driven/patrolled, number of calls for service to assist with traffic control, check points, special events, residential vacation checks, business checks, etc. Another method of assessing our C.O.P.’s effectiveness is to take a poll from your community asking them how they feel about your C.O.P. group. Do

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they feel safer since they started? Have they noticed a decrease in suspicious activity? What is their overall feeling towards the C.O.P. program? Simple one-page polls can be inserted in your community water or utility bills asking for residents to mail them back or respond via the Internet on a web site and/or e-mail.

## **CITIZENS ON PATROL ROLE IN HOMELAND SECURITY**

History repeats itself. Over 50 years ago during and after World War II, citizens were called to action not only to fight overseas but to also serve in our homeland as Civil Defense, Veteran Patrol, and Auxiliary Police Volunteers. Veteran Patrols were made up of everyday citizens whose mission it was to help monitor our sea ports and other points of entry looking for any potential signs of invasion by our enemy. Auxiliary Police were again, everyday citizens, who's mission it was to assist police departments with non-enforcement duties such as traffic control, etc. Their presence was required because so many law enforcement officers were called to duty to fight overseas.

After September 11, 2001, we face the same type threats as we did fifty years earlier, but worse. Today we're learning of terrorist plots to shoot down large commercial airplanes as they take off fully loaded with passengers from U.S. airports using Stinger type shoulder fired missiles. We're learning of plots to poison our water and natural food sources and the list goes on. Local law enforcement agencies are being asked to take the front line in the war against domestic terrorism, to watch out for any suspicious activity, yet they are already short handed. Today, more than ever, the need for the public's assistance to help stop the threat of terrorism is greater than ever. Citizens On Patrol are well positioned to provide this much-needed assistance. By definition, the role of C.O.P. volunteers is to act as additional "Eyes and Ears" for law enforcement and to report any suspicious activity or crimes in progress. The ability to step into the role as "First Preventers" in the war against terrorism is a natural fit. The only thing needed is additional training or briefings on what they should be looking for as it relates to terrorism. At a recent regional Citizen Patrol conference held on September 21, 2002, sponsored by the NACOP, an FBI Assistant Special Agent In Charge, spoke to a group of over 400 C.O.P. volunteers for one hour and provided them with a briefing of what to look for in the fight against terrorism. Armed with this information, our nation now has 400 additional "Eyes and Ears" helping to protect our nation while also serving their local communities.

One law enforcement agency in particular, the Delray Beach, Florida, Police Department has gone as far as forming a separate group just to focus on "Homeland Security". The new separate organization is known as "Homefront Security" and is staffed with citizen volunteers, just as Citizens On Patrol are. This group has received national recognition from media outlets such as CNN, Time Magazine and the Wall Street Journal. The group was formed after it was learned that several of the 9/11 terrorist hijackers had lived in Delray Beach prior to their final crash into the World Trade Center. The focus of this group is to again act as "Eyes and Ears" for law enforcement however their focus is on suspicious items and activity common to terrorist activity. They regularly patrol local government buildings by car and walk through them looking for anything out of place. While it may not be necessary to form a separate group, the need for such patrols is great and Citizens On Patrol are ready to answer the call to duty.