

# Clark County Sheriff's Office uses data to combat crime

**Agency adopts information-driven approach, targets specific areas for prevention after discovering link between traffic accidents and property crime**



Photo by [Steven Lane](#)

Photos by Steven Lane/The Columbian Clark County Sheriff's Deputy Kevin Gadaire patrols the area around Highway 99 near Minnehaha Street.

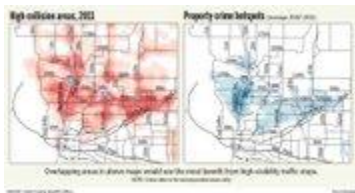
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Sunday, January 27, 2013



By Steven Lane

A computer screen in Clark County Sheriff's Deputy Kevin Gadaire's patrol car highlights the classification for the agency data-driven approach to crime and traffic safety.



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The Clark County Sheriff's Office has implemented a new strategy to reduce crime by looking at data from two types of incidents not typically thought related: traffic accidents and property crime.

When each type of incident is mapped out, there are noticeable "hot spots" of density — where frequent traffic crashes occur and high amounts of property crimes are reported.

"There are huge intersections with a lot of traffic moving through them that have a lot of collisions," Cmdr. Rusty Warren said. "But when you overlay that with a (map of) your crimes such as vehicle prowls, auto thefts, burglaries ... those two things line up."

To sum up, the areas that have a lot of crashes are also areas that see a lot of theft.

Although Warren said it is hard to say the two are directly related, he does venture that "it is not illogical to jump to conclude that while (criminals) are driving, they're also involved in high-risk behavior that leads to traffic crashes."

Whether criminals are entirely to blame or not, the agency has adopted an approach to tackle both problems at once by making more highly visible traffic stops in those areas.

By doing that, police intend not only to educate more drivers about the high-risk area, but also to curb criminal activity by making their presence known to criminals.

The new approach, called Data Driven Approach to Crime and Traffic Safety (DDACTS for short), directs deputies to increase patrols in these hot spot areas when they're not responding to emergency calls.

While the areas may be familiar to patrol deputies, the new approach shifts their goal from making arrests to preventing crime.

Instead of sneaking up on criminals and catching them in the act of a crime, the goal of DDACTS is to suppress criminal activity in a preventative way.

The data-driven approach is promoted by the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Warren attended a class on the approach in Gresham in April, and soon after began on plans to implement the strategy in Clark County. Deputies began increasing patrols in the established DDACTS areas at the beginning of the year.

Other agencies across the country that have implemented DDACTS have noticed crime reduction.

Boston County Police Department in Maryland reports that within a five-month period of switching to the approach, it saw a 29 percent decrease in robbery, a 35 percent decrease in auto theft and a 2.5 percent decrease in traffic crashes.

"We're shooting for 10 percent reduction over the course of a year," Warren said. The four crimes that the agency is focusing on reducing are vehicle prowls and thefts and both residential and commercial burglaries.

Warren recognizes, however, that increasing patrols in certain parts of the county could simply push the criminals to commit crimes in other areas.

"We're hoping that we disrupt (criminals) enough even beyond them moving. We hope that they just change their patterns altogether," he said. But, he said, "We will assess it as we go."