



SANTA CRUZ POLICE DEPARTMENT
155 Center Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

MEDIA RELEASE



DATE/TIME: December 5, 2016

TOPIC: Pioneering Use of Technology Supports Community Policing Policies

INFORMATION:

Santa Cruz Police Department's Pioneering Use of Technology Supports Community Policing Policies

SANTA CRUZ, CA — *The Santa Cruz Police Department today releases the fifth in a series of articles about Santa Cruz Police Department's longstanding commitment to Community-Oriented Policing. Read the other articles at www.santacruzpolice.blogspot.com.*

Decades ago, the Santa Cruz Police Department (SCPD) equipped patrol cars with dashboard cameras and installed VCRs in the trunks to record officer interactions during calls. While it sounds archaic now, at the time, this was cutting-edge technology.

Fast forward 20 years and SCPD remains a leader in adopting new technology, in large part because use of technology and social media is a key element of the department's Community-Oriented Policing. Implementing new technologies gives SCPD the opportunity to engage with residents about their expectations for transparency, accountability and privacy. It also builds community trust and offers police officers additional communication channels to educate residents.

"We've made a lot of different technological advances over the years, starting with our mobile app, social media and predictive policing," SCPD Chief Kevin Vogel said. "Anytime you can find a better way to engage it puts you at an advantage with serving your community."

SCPD was the first law enforcement agency in the United States to develop its own branded community engagement mobile app. Launched in March 2011, the app provides access to the police department's live scanner feed, interactive online crime maps, videos, photos, social media and the police department's blog.

"Really, their goal was 'How can we take all of our services and make them available in the way our community wants to access them?'" said Jamieson Johnson, a UC Santa Cruz graduate and Vice President of Business Development at MobilePD, the app developer. "What the application does is centralizes a lot of different important services for the community to access."

[VIDEO message from the app developer, Jamieson Johnson, a UC Santa Cruz graduate and Vice President of Business Development at MobilePD.](#)

<https://youtu.be/UICUX6WHWwA>

Since SCPD launched its app, hundreds of law enforcement agencies have created their own mobile platforms.

“But at that time it was unheard of and they were the first ones to do it,” Johnson said.

The department also was the first law enforcement agency in the county to utilize [Nixle](#), an open communication forum that connects the police department with businesses and residents through text, email, a mobile app and more.

SCPD was an early adopter of social media, engaging with residents through multiple platforms to increase community awareness and access to department activities. The department’s current social media platforms include:

- [Facebook](#) – used to distribute press releases, request the public’s help in solving a case and share other items of community interest.
- [Twitter](#) – used for real-time updates during urgent situations and to share day-to-day activity with the public. Earlier this year, SCPD tweeted a “virtual ride-along” during a Friday shift to exhibit the scope and pace of a regular workday.
- [Instagram](#) and [Pinterest](#) – used to connect crime victims with their missing property. SCPD posts photos of lost, found and recovered property; proof of ownership is required to claim items.
- [YouTube](#) – used to share messages about safety with the public and help identify suspects in open cases where video surveillance is available.

SCPD also posts [police logs online](#) and shares updates about cases via its blog. Residents appreciate the access to information

“The [Santa Cruz Police Blog](#) has been awesome,” said Deb Elston, co-founder of the community networking organization Santa Cruz Neighbors. “People love the blog, especially because neighbors do want to help find the bad guys.”

When crimes occur, [SCPD’s online crime reporting portal](#) allows residents to report minor incidents, like car break-ins, online. This saves officer time for more serious incidents and also gives a crime victim the option to file the report when he or she has time to do it and from the comfort of their own home. The SCPD website also accepts public comments and acclamations about officers.

A recent — and well-received — addition to SCPD’s wide range of tech advances has been the development of the [online bike registry](#). This program encourages cyclists to register their bicycles online and tags each registered bike with a blue and white California bike license. The registry, the first in the county, is free and never expires.

Since the online bike registry program began in July 2016, more than 1,200 bicycles have been licensed through SCPD. Many are registered when they are sold at local bike shops, all of which have partnered with the police department to grow the program.

“It’s going great,” said Linda Robinson, a SCPD records technician who leads the program. “It’s nice to see the enthusiasm.”

The hope is the license deters bike thieves. But in creating a record of the bike, which includes the serial number, a registered bike that is stolen and recovered by law enforcement can be returned to its owner.

“Bike theft is just rampant. It’s not just here; it’s all over,” Robinson said. “We have hundreds of bikes out back and we don’t know who they belong to.”

ABOUT SCPD

The Santa Cruz Police Department (SCPD) is committed to working in partnership with the community to enhance public safety, prevent crime, enforce laws and protect the rights of all people through innovative problem-solving approaches. A progressive, professional organization, SCPD officers are dedicated to conducting themselves with the highest ethical standards and the department is accountable to the community. SCPD has 94 sworn officers and 29 civilian staff to protect and serve Santa Cruz’s 64,000 residents and millions of annual visitors. Learn more at www.santacruzpolice.com, <http://santacruzpolice.blogspot.com>, or via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Pinterest](#).

###

For additional information, contact: Joyce Blaschke

Phone: (831) 420-5844

Anonymous tips can also be sent to the police department through our Tip Line (831) 420-5995, or from our Website; www.santacruzpolice.com. Tipsters can also submit an anonymous tip via our smartphone app or from an SMS text. Visit our Website for instructions.