

TRURO POLICE DEPARTMENT

OPERATIONAL READINESS EFFORT

WHITE PAPER ON THE FEASIBILITY OF
THE TRURO POLICE DEPARTMENT
OPERATIONAL READINESS EFFORT AND
STATUS OF POLICE CRUISERS



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OPERATIONAL READINESS EFFORT

WHITE PAPER ON THE TRURO POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONAL READINESS EFFORT AND STATUS OF POLICE CRUISERS

BACKGROUND

When Chief Thomas first took office in 1993, the Truro Police Department state of operational readiness was for the most part, non-existent. Operational readiness in small municipal police settings was virtually unheard of, and long term management planning was not deemed a critical management function in Truro. At that time, the Truro Police Department had 10 officers, 4 civilian dispatchers and 1 clerk. Of those personnel, most of the police officers and dispatchers lived in Truro or close to Truro. ¹ This has changed.

Truro, so geographically isolated from the rest of Cape Cod, is typical to island communities in terms of requesting services from other local, county, state or federal agencies. Understanding this, Chief Thomas addressed a critical problem no one has addressed before in Truro – Operational readiness.

The Truro Police Department did not experience initial capital outlay costs. Instead, the effort was designed to be implemented incrementally over a long period of time.

Since the implementation of this effort, and over the objections of some, the Chief has been able to increase the fleet of fully equipped police cruisers in our community with negligible cost, and increase the availability of off duty officers. Through FY 2006, costs for cruiser services have averaged the same over a five year period, indicating that these costs have actually been reduced over time considering the increase in size of the fleet and equipment. Gasoline costs associated with the larger fleet are negligible, but of course have increased due to pricing. The life span of cruisers has increased almost 1000%. Two of our older cruisers in service are a 1995 Ford Crown Victoria and has over 150,000 miles and a 1997 Ford Crown Victoria with over 250,000 miles. ¹

The basic underpinning of the effort is that all of our officers and command staff that live locally are those who are mobilized the fastest and easiest. Common sense being the prevalent factor, officers are now equipped with a police cruiser in which they can respond directly to an emergency without delay. Currently, we are fortunate that all of our sergeants, the sergeant investigator, the lieutenant and the Chief live in Truro.

Ancillary benefits, such as care of police cruisers and related assigned equipment, pride in issued equipment and a general increase in morale have a value-added affect on the program.

¹ Truro Police Department Cruiser Roster (2007)

Berkshire Advisors Inc. conducted a study of the Kansas City Police Department take home cruiser policy and found that not only was it a cost savings in the long term, but the effects on community policing and improved response to emergencies for the city were extremely beneficial. ²

It is clearly understood that the average Citizen has little or no contact with the police. This lack of contact understandably makes Citizens question what police do, and why we need to prepare. In an effort to provide stakeholders with information concerning police cruisers, the Chief has undertaken this project to illustrate why the program was initiated, and how the program benefits the Citizens of Truro.

OPERATIONAL READINESS FACTS

OVERVIEW

In the 1990's Chief Thomas recognized that as inflation of home prices continued on the Outer Cape, hiring and retaining officers who live locally would become a significant problem in the future. It is worthy to note that this problem already exists in Provincetown and both Islands, and is starting to reflect onto Truro. It's feared that as personnel retire, immediate responses for emergencies will become a major concern. The lack of officers who are live in the area is a serious detriment on immediate responses to critical incidents.

To date, when the Truro Police contact an outside resource for assistance, it can take hours for that resource to arrive in Truro. This is obviously due to our geographical location that we all enjoy. Having been a patrolman and sergeant, Chief Thomas knew first hand how long resources to incident took to get to Truro.

Operational readiness is more than simply having a take home car policy. It is making sure staff can be called or re-called and ready at a moments notice. A typical officer who is assigned a take home cruiser has the following physical resources immediately available.

- First air kit
- Manual resuscitator
- Oxygen kit
- Evidence and property recovery equipment
- Flares, tape and crime scene equipment
- Firearms
- Less than lethal weapon solutions

² Report Says KC Police Should Take Patrol Cars Home. Policedriving.com. Article 200. Tony Rizzo and Christine Vendel., The Kansas City Star. (September 2006)

Along with some of the more general physical resources listed, the knowledge, specialized training and experience an officer with an assigned vehicle has is extremely valuable. For example, officers with a take home cruiser have the following additional resources depending on their specialty.

- Traffic collision reconstruction equipment
- Incident command equipment
- Hostage and barricaded subject equipment
- Various electronic and computer equipment
- Various weaponry and ballistic equipment

The Truro Police, like any other police department, experience difficult, violent and confrontational calls for services, such as barricaded subjects, problems at the school, major traffic collisions involving serious injuries and deaths, robberies, major assaults and the like. We must be mindful that Truro is likely the only community on Cape Cod that still allows for one officer shifts. Naturally, it makes sense that on duty officers need additional resources to safely and efficiently address a particular incident.

When cruisers commute to and from a detail, they avail themselves to the Truro Police Department during the hours when the school and the bank are open. In March 2007, a reported missing child was called in to the Truro Police. Had we not located him as soon as we did, we fortunately would have had 11 police officers around the perimeter of the school within fifteen minutes.

The concern again is not the fact the officers who are local to the police department have take home cruisers. The concern is maintaining a state of operational readiness to respond to Truro's immediate and emergency needs now, and for the foreseeable future.

As discussed earlier and in other venues, the department's operational readiness will surely be tested in the coming years, as many of the officers and command staff now assigned to take home a vehicle as part of the plan start retiring. The question is who will take their place, who will be immediately available to respond to critical incidents, requests for back-up?

We must be mindful that Truro is likely the only community on Cape Cod that still allows for one officer shifts.

Currently, the cruisers that are assigned to officers that live locally can go home with the officer with limited uses and a great deal of responsibility. The Truro Police Department does not pay officers extra compensation for taking a cruiser home, and do not compensate for the extra responsibility that comes with having a cruiser at the residence of an officer's home. The department feels that this plan is an added benefit not only for the department, but for the officers who are on duty.

Recapping what was already addressed – assigning take home cruisers is more than just officers having a car – it's an operational readiness necessity designed to address emergency and special circumstances.

The Chief has placed strict limitations to the patrol division with the assignment of the cruisers and equipment as part of the effort. Officers may not use the cruisers for personnel use, and may only be on duty while using the cruiser. While using the cruiser, they must monitor the radio, and must notify the station when they are in the cruiser, for example, enroute to Court, or a training class. The officer must be armed, and must be available to respond to the needs of the department.

Truro embraced operational readiness before many departments did. Before 2001, the Chief and the Lieutenant attended and became instructors in Weapons of Mass Destruction Recognition (WMD), a class taught by U.S. Department of Justice Office of State and Local Preparedness here on Cape Cod. The Truro Police Department has always been on the forefront of the latest training, from legal updates, to uses of less than lethal weapons uses, to community based policing, and investigation techniques. A report conducted by RW Kaiser and Associates commented in their study of the department that the members of the Truro Police Department were amongst the best trained they have seen.³

Unlike many communities adopting an operational readiness plan, Truro Police did not need to fund a major capital campaign in purchasing extra equipment or cruisers to enact the program. Chief Thomas decided it was better to adopt the effort over the long term due to the following circumstances:

- Funding a capital campaign would be highly unlikely to pass in Truro.
- Despite public awareness and increased preparation, Truro Citizens would unlikely see the benefit of operational readiness due to their comfort level and way of life they enjoy in the community.
- Purchasing the needed equipment and cruisers at once would be cost-prohibitive.
- The average residual trade in allowance for any traded cruisers upon purchase of a new cruiser was very low in relationship to average trade in values on consumer vehicles.
- Adopting a long term approach would allow the Chief and command staff to evaluate the feasibility of the effort over the implementation timeline.

BENEFITS OF THE EFFORT

The overall implementation of the Truro Police Department Operational Readiness Effort benefits the department, the officer and the community:

BENEFITS FOR THE TRURO POLICE DEPARTMENT

- Rapid response to emergency call outs and recalls. This is due to the fact that the officer is equipped with the gear and accoutrements to respond directly from home to a scene without the need to respond to the police station first to gather needed equipment.
- Our supervisor cruisers have mobile command centers that can be utilized increasing our ability to function in the mandated incident command environment. ⁱⁱ

³ RW Kaiser and Associates Inc. Management Study of the Truro Police Department (1996)

- Officer Visibility is substantially increased. The police department benefits in having increased officer and cruiser visibility within the community.
- The department's community policing initiative is increased due to the fact that an increased perception neighbors have a police officer living in the area that they can call on and feel comfortable with.
- The amount of time a vehicle is unavailable for patrol due to maintenance activities is reduced due to the fact that there is one driver. In fact, a study conducted by the Oxford Ohio Police Department found that agencies with like programs experience a reduced down time of police cruisers by as much as 60%. Officers report problems immediately and have them corrected immediately. ⁴One driver vehicles tend to last longer and have preventative maintenance performed at appropriate times. ⁵
- An increased level of enforcement is realized because officers who take home cruisers can observe and subsequently act upon serious violations to laws, and be available to back up another officer at a call for service.
- A reduction in opportunist crime is substantially realized in neighborhoods that have an officer with a take home police cruiser. Police cruisers create an impression of a heightened security and neighborhood awareness.
- The longevity of the cruiser and equipment are greatly extended due to the fact that one driver is utilizing the vehicle during normal operations. In fact, as earlier indicated our oldest vehicle in our fleet is 12 years old and has about 150,000 miles. This vehicle is still in good condition.
- Although difficult to measure, productivity is increased. The effort increases the back-up opportunities and availability for officers on duty. Officers with issued police cruisers are more apt and available to check on officer's welfare while in passing or while monitoring radio traffic. This situation regularly occurs in Truro due to the fact that officers at times work alone an entire shift.
- Officers issued cruisers and related equipment take pride and ownership in their issued equipment. Officers maintain a professional appearance and treat the vehicle and their equipment as if it were there own. This is another good reason why our vehicles and equipment last as long as long as it does.
- Officers who leave their residences for their shift sign on and are immediately ready to respond to calls or provide patrol coverage. Previous shift officers can finish work from the shift while the on coming shift can handle incoming activity. Lag time responses and stacked calls during shift changes are virtually non-existent.

⁴ Oxford Ohio Fleet Management and Take Home Car Program Assessment.: Performance Review by the Office of the Ohio State Auditor, Columbus, Ohio (1998)

⁵ Research Center Directorate Perspectives. Take Home Cruisers: Issues for Consideration. International Association of Chiefs of Police. (2006)

BENEFITS FOR THE POLICE OFFICER

- Officers have a positive attitude and outlook towards their profession and directly relate to their identity with their position within the Truro Police Department.
- Although negligible, officers assigned take home cruisers save time and the hassle of transporting job related equipment in their personnel vehicles.
- The effort allows officers to keep equipment in one place without having to move it from cruiser to cruiser.
- The program allows officers to become familiar and confident with the vehicle they are assigned.
- Officers are more likely to have a better comfort level of working alone with the knowledge that other officers are ready to respond if summoned for assistance.

BENEFITS FOR THE COMMUNITY

- Perceptions of increased police presence when the cruiser is parked at an officers place of residence.
- Increase in serviceability in various aspects of public safety, including crime prevention, first aid and life saving incidents.
- Neighborhood presence is a deterrent to criminal opportunists, while providing a feeling of more security.
- Officers traveling to and from the police station, court, or training are available to respond to the needs of the community in a moments notice.

CONCERNS OF THE EFFORT

There are a number of concerns the department has addressed and continues to deal with as a result of the implementation

- An in depth overall policy and procedural update needed to be accomplished to ensure proper use, and to ensure maximum control of the equipment by the department. For example, items addressed included firearms, uniforms, inventory, restrictions, allowed uses and care of the equipment while in the officers possession. This was accomplished meeting Massachusetts accreditation standards.
- Officer safety was of concern. It was mandated that anytime an officer use a marked cruiser, he/she be armed and “ready for duty”.
- It was felt that the officer would be too visible in the community while off duty. When a cruiser is issued or re-issued to an officer, they are asked if they want the added responsibility of a take home cruiser and the related equipment. To date, each eligible officer has accepted the extra responsibility and is aware of his/her role in making the program a success.

- The potential for vandalism exists when an officer is assigned a cruiser. This item was discussed and debated. It was acknowledged that cruisers and personal vehicles have the same vulnerability both at home and at the police station, however, no cruiser has been vandalized at an officers home.

OPERATIONAL READINESS EFFORT RELATED COSTS

Many agencies that develop an operational readiness plan experience high start up costs associated with equipment, including cruisers, but experience an overall realized reduction in total program expenses over the long term. Maintenance costs drop almost 50% which help reduce any capital outlay. ⁶

Through FY 2006, costs for cruiser services have averaged the same over a five year period, indicating that these costs have actually been reduced over time considering the increase in size of the fleet and equipment.

The Truro Police Department did not experience initial capital outlay costs. Instead, the program was implemented over a long period of time. Part of our success in keeping costs down was to conduct an assessment of the value of a cruiser if it would be traded in for a new cruiser and if it was worth the trade money or the serviceability. ⁱⁱⁱ

In most every case, we did not trade a serviceable cruiser towards the purchase of a new cruiser. There were cases where we gave the Town Hall, the Fire Department a cruiser. Also, the Town has found that after the full life of a cruiser under our program has been realized, it was better to auction off the cruiser to the highest bidder. This is coordinated by the Town Administrator.

Chart illustrates current real value of in service cruisers utilized by the Truro Police Department. ⁷



Figure 1 Illustrates the value of a 2007 Ford Crown Victoria and its depreciated values over the period of four years as based upon available research from Municipal Headquarters Vehicles Inc.

A new police package Ford Crown Victoria costs approximately \$30,000.00.⁸ Over the first several years, the vehicle loses a substantial amount of value, yet remains a solid police vehicle.

⁶ Oxford Ohio Fleet Management and Take Home Car Program Assessment.: Performance Review by the Office of the Ohio State Auditor, Columbus, Ohio (1998)

⁷ Trade Allowance Sheet. MHQ Vehicles. Paul Leon, (July 2007)

⁸ Plymouth County Cooperative Procurement Program, (2006)

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS EXPLORED

It is worthwhile to examine the cost savings and benefits of the Truro Police Department Operational Readiness Effort with other options the department could engage. Both of these programs in varied forms were actually used by the department.

Pool Cruiser Program

In a pool cruiser program, the town would own only enough cruisers needed to perform basic police functions. In 1989, there were four cruisers consisting of one unmarked and three marked cruisers.

At that time, cruisers were generally assigned; however, if one went to maintenance, then others were used even more. In reality, officers would regularly drive any available cruiser negating any effort to have a regular rotation of police cruisers. This system was impractical because officers had to frequently move equipment and supplies from one cruiser to another, sometimes more than once a day. This was obviously wasteful use of duty time.

When an officer had court, the officer would drive his/her own vehicle, charging overtime and mileage for the use of his/her vehicle. Even back as far as 1998 and before, this was a costly item in the department's budget.

In 1998, when a police officer worked a paid detail, he/she would take his/her own vehicle. This meant that the officer was on duty, and could assist police operations if needed, however, they were limited in how they could respond or when they could respond due to the fact that officers were in their private car. Concerns also surfaced about the officers' liability with on duty use of their personal vehicles in the performance of their duties.

Assigned Cruiser Program

In this program, the Town would own enough cruisers to ensure that two officers would share a cruiser. This would vary due to scheduling issues and duties assigned, and at any one particular time, a cruiser would be down for maintenance or be re-assigned due to the duties and responsibilities of the officer.

Analysis

What has been learned is that increasing the number of vehicles by not trading in a good solid police vehicle would reduce the amount of maintenance, and reduce the amount of cruisers requested per year. It would increase the service life of cruisers in use, and decrease the amount of down time experienced for maintenance. Successful implementation would ultimately reduce and literally phased out any payments for mileage to sworn officers for use of personal vehicles. A reduced amount of time is spent shuttling cars to maintenance, and switching equipment from one car to another.

Subsequently, Chief Thomas felt that with the trade in values for police cruisers as low as they are, that the pool program was a detriment to the operational readiness and overall efficiency of the department. He decided that the Town would be better served by having officers who live in our area have cruiser in case we need to mobilize officers with short notice.

CRUISER PLACEMENT AND READINESS POINTS

As part of the Truro Police Department Operational Readiness Effort, Police officers who are issued police cruisers and equipment live locally and can respond to a critical incident in Truro within a matter of minutes.

Currently Assigned Take Home Cruisers as part of the Operational Readiness Effort

<i>Cruiser</i>	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Mileage⁹</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Purchase Price/new</i>	<i>Value¹⁰</i>
702	Investigation Supervisor	2000	97000	North Truro	\$19,968.00	500.00
705	Patrol	1997	250,000	North Truro	\$22,470.00	\$100.00
706	Patrol	1995	171,000	Provincetown	\$19,895.00	\$100.00
707	Patrol	2001	140,000	Eastham	\$24,783.00	\$300.00
711	Patrol Supervisor	2003	70,000	South Truro	\$24,234.00	\$500.00
713	Administration - Chief	2004	55,000	North Truro	\$26,080.00	Unavailable
714	Patrol Supervisor 4x4 cruiser	2004 -	30,000	North Truro	\$34,171.00	Unavailable
715	Patrol Supervisor	2005	20,400	North Truro	\$21,653.00	\$3800.00
717	Administration - Lieutenant	2007	10000	Truro	\$14,966.00	\$10,000.00

⁹ Mileages as taken on July 7, 2007

¹⁰ Value as quoted trade in value from MHQ Vehicles, Marlborough, MA. (2007)

ANALYSIS OF OTHER ENTITIES

The Truro Police Department is at the forefront of operational readiness thanks to pre-planning, common sense and deep commitment to community. However, there are other entities, both public and private, that have had plans for operational readiness to increase their service and response to their constituents and customers.

After hurricane Katrina, The President of the United States directed a study concerning the government's response, and what it could do better. One of the many findings was that if emergency vehicles were issued to responders in those cities and counties affected by Hurricane Katrina, more emergency workers could have responded to the needs of their community sooner. The study in part found that a major reduction in damage could have been realized by not having the fleet of emergency vehicles parked in the same area, such as police stations, sheriffs departments, fire and rescue departments. As such, it was a major deterrent to city services to not have these vehicles issued and available for immediate response. ¹¹

Public Entities with Operational Readiness Type Plans^{iv}

- Massachusetts State Police – The MSP has issued cruisers and equipment to some 5,000 troopers state wide. This is done so that they can respond to the emergency needs of the commonwealth in an immediate fashion.
- Massachusetts Highway Department – Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) – Mass Highway has issued trucks and various equipment to employees in order to facilitate the direct and quick response.
- Truro Department of Pubic Works – The Director of the Truro DPW has a take home truck with radios and various equipment to facilitate the direct and immediate response needs of Truro.
- Truro Fire Department – The Fire Chief, the only full time employee of the Truro Fire Department, has a take home care equipped with turn out and rescue gear. He is able to respond directly to an incident, much like the Truro Police.
- Provincetown Fire Department – The Chief has a take home care equipped with turn out and rescue gear.
- Barnstable Sheriffs Office – Specialty units and administrative officers take vehicles home in order to respond to various incidents and emergencies.

Private Entities in our area

- Comcast – Comcast issues service and trouble trucks to employees in strategic location in order to facilitate immediate service to customers.

¹¹ The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina – Lessons Learned (2006) The White House, Washington DC.

- Cape Cod Oil Co. – Issues vehicles to some employees so that they can respond to calls for service after hours or in emergencies.
- Long Point Electric - Issues vehicles to some employees so that they can respond to calls for service after hours or in emergencies.
- Marcey Oil Co - Issues vehicles to some employees so that they can respond to calls for service after hours or in emergencies.
- Quahog Electric - Issues vehicles to some employees so that they can respond to calls for service after hours or in emergencies.
- NStar/Key Span – Some trouble and special service vehicles are issued to employees in order to facilitate immediate response for trouble and emergency calls.

Many Massachusetts police and fire departments assigned specialty divisions, such as detectives, crime scene technicians, administration, incident commanders, tactical teams and tactical rescue teams are assigned take home vehicles as part of a readiness plan in order to facilitate immediate response. As such, private companies everywhere have, as part of incentive programs and/or readiness plans, a take home vehicle plan in order to service its customer base in the most efficient manner possible.

On a wider geographical scale, the following police agencies have operational readiness plans that include take home vehicles

Miami – Metro Dade Police Department (FL)

Miami Gardens Police Department (FL)

Palm Beach County Sheriffs Office (FL)

Orange County Sheriffs Office (FL)

Charlotte County Sheriffs Office (FL)

Kansas City Police Department (KS)

Jackson County Sheriffs Office (MO)

Salt Lake City Police Department (UT)

Galloway Township Police (NJ)

Tulsa Police Department (OK)

Oxford Police Department (OH)

Lexington Police Department (KY)

CONCLUSIONS

Research alone cannot justify the importance of public safety, however, it can compliment the basic common sense knowledge we already have. The Truro Police Department Operational Readiness Effort makes sense for a variety of reasons.

- Long response times for outside assistance – As earlier stated, the Truro Police could and have waited hours for outside assistance for incidents. Having personnel ready to respond locally can help officers at the scene of an incident quickly.
- Public Safety – There are major incidents that occur in Truro. Truro is still a community that at times has one officer working per shift. If an officer needs back-up, sometimes they have to rely on a neighboring agency or our own personnel at home. Having an operational readiness effort provides some comfort to our police officers with the feeling that they have a better and quicker chance of back up if needed.

Also, in an emergency, whether natural, man made or accidental, officer can respond immediately to the scene or be directed to area without the extra time needed to stop at the police station to pick up a cruiser and equipment. The emergency and life saving equipment located within the police cruisers can be utilized as needed, whether in their own neighborhoods, across town, or regionally as part of a major county wide incident.

- Geographical location of Truro – The reason many people settle and retire in Truro is its natural beauty and geographical location. Truro is literally located out to sea. While this is a unique place to live and play, we need to be mindful that our location serves as a major barrier to outside assistance and adds a tremendous amount of travel time for resources. A little known fact is that the Citizens of the Outer Cape have some of the longest travel times to a hospital in the commonwealth due to our geographical location and road distance.
- Financial considerations – As earlier stated, trading in perfectly good and serviceable police cruisers for a very small sum of money does not make sense when they can be fully utilized in the operational readiness effort. Even at auction, police cruisers always get less than trade value due to their functions in service. They are not an ordinary car. Also, maintenance costs have not been affected, and could be argued that these costs were reduced by the increase in fleet size. Insurance costs are negligible, as the Town of Truro is self insured. The Town does not pay fees or taxes to any state entity to keep these cars on the road. Gasoline costs have increased only because the price has increased. Gasoline usage has been approximately the same for several years even with an increase in fleet size. This is due to the fact as cruisers are fueled the same, but each one less often with the usage involved.

The Truro Police Department Operational Readiness Effort is focused on protecting and service the citizens and visitors of Truro. It is a valiant effort to prepare for those unfortunate situations we will experience. People in Truro enjoy their way of life. The Truro Police Department is well trained, well equipped, well prepared and stands ready to serve you.

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- ⁱ Truro Police Department Roster and Employee Census (1993)
 - ⁱⁱ Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5
 - ⁱⁱⁱ The Truro Police Department participates in the Plymouth County Cooperative Procurement Program
 - ^{iv} Telephone survey conducted of take home vehicle policies of both private and public entities (2007)

REFERENCES

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