



For Immediate Release

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New Predictive Policing Strategies in Reading Reducing Crime & Increasing Community Engagement

Double Digit Reductions in Burglaries Since Last October

READING, PENNSYLVANIA – New policing strategies implemented by the Reading Police Department over the last year has contributed to a 23% drop in burglaries, despite reductions in the force.

The Department has been using a combination of predictive policing data with their existing crime mapping system in an effort to reduce crime - shifting their efforts from places that had experienced crime to the areas where the next crime was predicted to occur. With fewer patrol officers and detectives on staff, the use of predictive analytics is helping to maximize resources and focus on the most prevalent types of crime, particularly property theft and burglaries.

“With almost 100,000 residents, we need to be doing everything we can to keep Reading residents safer, said Chief William Heim. “We’ve lost over 45 officer positions due to financial constraints but have gained this invaluable tool.”

The Department began using predictive policing software, called PredPol, in October 2013 to help it identify where to strategically deploy officers in the places and at the times crime is most likely to occur.

PredPol provides Reading crime analysts and officers with customized “PredPol boxes” on maps of the city identifying the 500 x 500 foot areas where there is the highest probability of a crime occurring. The boxes are automatically generated for each shift of each day.

The boxes are developed using a unique algorithm based on three simple data points: Place, time and date of past crimes. It does not include any information about individuals or demographic groups.

Some of the boxes are places that officers routinely cover, but many others are places that might not otherwise receive attention. They give Reading officers an opportunity to be in the area *before* a criminal strikes instead of just responding to crime after the fact.

“We’ve been tracking the number of times our officers patrol inside the PredPol boxes. Their presence really helps deter crime,” said Chief William Heim. “It’s shown itself to be a real force-multiplier in crime prevention.”

“We know the Reading Police Department has been focused on maximizing their resources and we are excited that our technology is one of the key tools they are using to do so,” said Dr. Jeff Brantingham, co-founder of PredPol and UCLA Professor. “While no single strategy can eliminate crime altogether, dozens of communities in the U.S. and overseas are harnessing the power of predictive analytics to reduce it and improve safety. We’re pleased, but not surprised with the results as they are mirroring what we are seeing in other communities across the nation.”

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