

Cellular On Patrol

Sponsored by the Bexar County Sheriff's Office, is a unique and exciting program that gives residents an opportunity to work closely with law enforcement to make their neighborhoods safer places to live.

BACKGROUND

The Cellular on Patrol (COP) concept was created in 1992 by Southwestern Bell Mobile Systems in San Antonio as an informal service for cellular phone subscribers. Southwestern Bell Mobile Systems provided free air time for callers who called emergency numbers (911) and non-emergency numbers who were in need of assistance. SWBT subscribers were encouraged to seek assistance and to report accidents or crimes observed while on the road.

In May 1997, the Bexar County Sheriff Office and the County of Bexar joined together with SBMS and SAPD to create a more structure COP program that involves three unique features:

Members of neighborhood groups receive free training from the Bexar County Sheriff's Office.

Graduates patrol their own neighborhoods using their cell phones for quick emergency and non-emergency assistance.

Funds to support the program (ID cards, logo shirts, etc.) are donated by local businesses and non-profit organizations.

The first class of COP trainees graduated from the East Side SAPD Substation on October 30, 1993. As of March 1996, there were more than 2,000 COP graduates throughout the city of San Antonio who represent more than 200 neighborhoods. We are now excited to offer this program to the citizens who reside within the unincorporated areas of Bexar County.



BEXAR COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

JAVIER SALAZAR, SHERIFF

CELLULAR ON PATROL

For more information on the COP program, please contact COP Program Coordinator

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COMMUNITIES & SHERIFF'S OFFICE WORKING TOGETHER

COP PATROLS & COP on WATCH

Training for the COP programs are administered by the BCSO, but the program's foundation is based within the neighborhoods that are served by the Bexar County Sheriff's Office. Before training starts, a COP application must be submitted to the program coordinator. A criminal background history will be conducted on all applicants. This process is conducted for the protection of the neighborhoods.

SETTING UP COP PATROLS

After volunteers complete COP training, the community will set up patrols within their neighborhood. Each neighborhood group is responsible for establishing their own patrol schedules and procedures within the guidelines of the COP "Code of Conduct" presented during the training.

COP members are to function as the "Eyes and Ears" for the Bexar County Sheriff's Office. For this reason, COP volunteers are given **specific** instructions not to patrol alone, not to carry any type of weapons, not to confront any suspicious activities.

Depending on group preferences, COP volunteers can elect to walk or drive, patrol in short or lengthy shifts, patrol in pairs or larger groups, patrol at night or during the day or modify their patrol format to best fit their neighborhood.

THE COP TRAINING PROGRAM

The purpose of the COP Program is to prepare COP Members to be the "eyes and ears" of the Bexar County Sheriff's Office, to promote closer cooperation between residents and the BCSO that exist to serve them. The training program consists of four hours of classroom training and the opportunity for 8 hours of ride-along with an experienced district patrol officer in a patrol vehicle.

During the classroom training sessions, volunteers are trained by Bexar County Deputy Sheriff's to recognize suspicious activities that may lead to crime in their neighborhoods.

The ride-along experience provides COP volunteers with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with patrol procedures and to establish working relationships with officers who patrol their neighborhoods. Most COP volunteers have found the ride-along experience to be one of the most educational and valuable parts of the COP training. Upon completion of the training, COP graduates are presented with a photo ID card.



COP PROGRAM RESULTS

The results of the program vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, depending on the crime problems in each area, the strength of the COP community and the length of time each COP group has been active. COP success stories are numerous. In some neighborhoods, statistics have shown an immediate decrease in reported suspicious activities. Whereas in other neighborhoods, the numbers of reported activities increased, not because of crime, but because COP Patrol volunteers were reporting suspicious activities that previously would have gone unreported. In all neighborhoods with active an COP, neighbors experience greater interaction with each other, COP members get to know their deputies better, and residents who are not involved in COP voice their appreciation for the neighborhood safety that the COP produces.

The COP program is now available to all residents of Bexar County and COP training conferences are offered in the four regional areas of unincorporated areas of Bexar County by the BCSO. Please call the COP coordinator for the conference dates and the location nearest to you.