

Ready or Not Here they Come

By

Captain Stan L. Van Horn
Claremont Police Department

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This Command College Independent Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future--creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

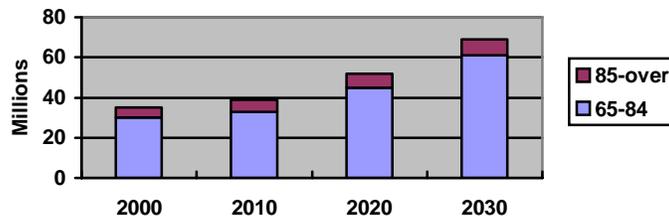
Ready or Not Here they Come

It cannot be denied the people of the United States are growing older. As the famous humorist Andy Rooney recently stated, “I didn’t get old on purpose, it just happened, if you’re lucky it could happen to you”.

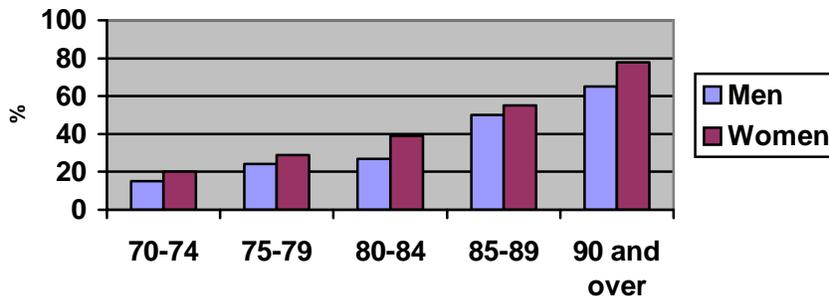
An Aging Population

In a 2005 report by the Department of Health and Human Resources, persons 65 years of age or older made up approximately 12.4% of the population of the United States. They numbered 36.6 million Americans. The same report stated that by the year 2030, the population of persons 65 years or older will be about 71.5 million or 20% of the population of the United States. Certainly, as the numbers of seniors grow, they will require a considerable amount of services and resources. (U.S Department of Health and Human Resources, Administration on Aging: A profile of Older Americans 2005, available www.hhs.gov/aging)

**The Elderly Population in the US will
Double by 2030**



Senior's Need for Assistance Rises Dramatically with Age



By 2010, the most striking increase is the 85+ age group, which will expand over 30 percent to 5.8 million. As seniors grow older, and many seniors are living much longer than former generations, their need for assistance increases. The public sector can expect an increased need for services, for a longer period of time, with a larger elderly population.

Where will our aging population live, when they grow older?

Between now and 2025, California, Texas and Florida can expect to see the greatest increases in the population of those 65 and older. About 29% of each state's population will consist of seniors. Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina, Utah, Washington and Wyoming will also substantially outpace the national rate. Seniors will be living in assisted communities, unassisted communities, shared housing, supported housing and conventional communities. (Housing America's Seniors, Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University, 2000) Cities and

counties throughout the United States can expect to see a greater senior population and more of these facilities moving into their jurisdictions.

As the senior population continues to increase in the United States and throughout the world, law enforcement leaders and managers are faced with new challenges. Amongst the most pressing will be:

- ❖ What types of specific services will law enforcement need to provide to these communities?
- ❖ What type of training will law enforcement officers and managers need to address these specific needs?
- ❖ How will this increased need for services affect our ability to provide services to the rest of the community?
- ❖ Will the crime rate in a jurisdiction rise or fall as a result of an increase number of retirement communities?
- ❖ What existing or future technologies can law enforcement utilize to provide the best service to senior citizens living in retirement communities?

How will law enforcement leaders and managers face these new challenges? What does the future of law enforcement's interaction with a growing senior population look like? What types of specific services and future technologies could law enforcement use to provide the best possible services to the senior populations in their community? In order to best answer these questions, law

enforcement leaders must understand and appreciate how seniors perceive their world and what influence seniors will exercise in their communities in the future.

What is important to our growing senior population?

Melanie ter Brugg of Simon University noted that older adults face far lower risks of being victims than any other age group, yet they consider fear of crime as one of their predominant concerns. (Statistics Canada, 2001, Pain, 1997, Ferraro and La Grange, 1988, Sharp and Dodder, 1985, Laurakas, 1982) Podnieks (1992) These studies found that 20% of elderly people report being afraid of going out alone in their neighborhood. Studies looking into the phenomenon of fear of crime reveal that feelings of vulnerability among older persons typically originate from their perception of safety within their own communities. (Ibid p.13) This fear can undermine a sense of control and present a powerful disincentive to an older person to leave their home.

In a similar study in Polk County, Florida in 1993, research showed that for the elderly, “Law enforcement must understand that the fear of crime often reduces the quality of life more than the actual crime itself. Fear of crime in extreme cases can immobilize the elderly who may shut themselves in their residences and shun all outside contacts with people. (Crimes Against the Elderly, M. Cross, 1993)

The Voice of an Older Generation! A national and local perspective

The AARP has a membership of approximately 35,000,000 and is growing every year. In 2006, 52% of those who cast ballots in the mid term election was over the age of 50 and one in every four voters was an AARP member. (AARP Annual Report, 2006) As the retired population continues to grow and age, the wise and prudent law enforcement leader will learn to listen and give serious weight to the cares and concerns of the older members of their communities.

In communities like Claremont, California, a City of approximately 35,000, 35 miles east of Los Angeles, those 65 and older have a large voice. One of the most influential voices speaking to the City Council on a regular basis is the City's Committee on Aging. This group is comprised of residents from retirement communities, (the City currently has ten retirement communities within its jurisdiction) churches, senior citizen programs, the Claremont Colleges and various volunteer agencies.

The City has recognized the influence, importance and value of the current and growing retirement communities and has created liaison positions to the Committee on Aging. Staff member positions made up of staff members from the Police Department, Human Services Department and City Council work closely with the Committee on Aging to assess their needs and provide information and assistance. The Claremont Police Department also has a very close working relationship with the committee. As a result, the Department and Committee have

developed educational programs on personal safety, Internet safety, fraud and scam educational programs and elder abuse prevention programs that are conducted regularly throughout the community. These relationships and programs have created a very close bond between seniors and law enforcement in the community and helped to create a greater feeling of safety amongst seniors within the community.

How will this increase in retirement communities affect law enforcement services?

Law enforcement leaders and managers need to realize that it is time to create a vision and plan, for the future of providing law enforcement services to older citizens who are living within their communities. The Claremont Police Department has developed a strategic plan to successfully address the growing number of senior communities within the City. This strategic plan was a result of extensive collaboration between the senior community and the Claremont Police Department.

Strategic Plan and Vision

The Claremont Police Department through innovative, creative and service oriented planning will find the necessary resources to carry out educational programs, training programs and technology to increase the level of services to retirement communities while maintaining or increasing the level of services to the remainder of the Claremont community.

Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

- Provide the best possible service to retirement communities in the City of Claremont through the use of communication, education, technology and crime prevention.
- Maintain the best possible service to the non-retirement community in the City of Claremont.
- Work closely with, and provide support to, allied social services agencies that provide service and assistance to retirement communities in the City of Claremont.
- Locate local, county, state and federal funding sources to continue to provide the best possible service to all the citizens of the City of Claremont in light of the increasing demands for service from retirement communities and the community at large.

The Claremont Police Department is currently involved in a variety of programs and is looking to new programs to carry out the goals and objectives stated in the Strategic Plan.

One program that has been quite successful is the Senior Watch program. The Claremont Police Department has partnered with the U.S. Postal Service locally to keep watch over seniors who have chosen to live alone. The Department has trained postal service delivery personnel how to recognize signs at a residence that the senior resident may be in distress. Once the training was completed, a

registration form was created and distributed to seniors in the community. This form provided emergency response information in the event that the resident needed assistance. The postal service delivery person acts as a “watchdog”. If there are any signs at the residence, such as mail piling up, lights left on, or doors or windows left open, that might indicate that the resident is in need of assistance, the Police Department is notified and responds to check on the well being of the resident. This program is very effective in that it increases the safety of our seniors without significantly impacting the manpower or budget of the Department.

In an effort to secure funding sources to continue to provide services to the senior community, the Department applied for and received a federal grant based on the National and Community Services Trust Act of 1993. This grant for retired and senior service programs (RSVP) allows for federal funds to engage persons 55 years and older in volunteer service to meet critical community needs and to provide a high quality experience that will enrich the lives of volunteers. This grant enabled the Department to launch its Community Patrol program.

The Community Patrol program is comprised of volunteers 55 year of age and older who wear distinctive uniforms and provide services such as preventative patrol, vacation house checks, live scan fingerprinting for community members and a variety of other services that are of great assistance to the Department. This program builds a stronger rapport between the senior community and the

Police Department and enriches the lives of the volunteers. The Claremont Police Department has utilized federal grant money as an excellent starting point to build community programs; many communities throughout the United States are using these federal grant funds to start innovative programs to build a greater bond between seniors and the community.

The Department has recently adopted two relatively new technologies to assist in providing information to seniors regarding crimes targeted towards seniors. The first is the Neighborhood E-Watch program for seniors. This program launched through the Senior Computer Club in Claremont notifies seniors via e-mail alerts when crimes targeting seniors are occurring in the City. The second is the Code Red Alert system. This is a system similar to a reverse 911 system. This system allows the user, in the case the Police Department to create list of persons within the City based on a variety of demographics. A list of seniors has been created and they can be contacted with a pre-recorded message when emergency situations occur within the city that are particularly sensitive to the senior population.

Both systems assist the Police Department and the City to notify the senior population of circumstances or events that affect their safety and security.

The Police Department is also exploring further technologies such as equipment available from the Senior Technology division of the Stanley Tool Company. This equipment monitor seniors' movements and safety, the equipment could be used

to assist in locating Alzheimer's or dementia patients who wander from their care facilities. Honeywell technologies provides security and video monitoring systems for retirement communities, when connected to the police department these monitoring systems could relieve the need for an officer to respond when video observation could provide a disposition. Two resources for further information on security technology for seniors are the monthly newsletter Future of Senior Housing, this is available on-line at www.futureofseniorhousing.blogspot.com and the www.careguide.com.

Triad

One program that is working well in many communities is the TRIAD program. In 1998 the AARP partnered with many state and local law enforcement agencies to develop partnerships between law enforcement and local retired leadership. These representatives, law enforcement and the elderly serve on an advisory council called seniors and law enforcement officers together (SALT). Once established, SALT councils usually meet monthly. The council's primary strategies focus on crime prevention and victim assistance. Triad provides the opportunity for the exchange of information between law enforcement and senior citizens. It focuses on reducing unwarranted fear of crime and improving the quality of life for seniors. Triad is tailored to meet the needs of each town/city/county. Forming a Triad in a community has many benefits, among them are:

- Opens communications between public safety personnel and the elderly

- Allows seniors to voice their concerns about crime and safety
- Provides an avenue for active senior volunteers to help others
- Reduces senior isolation, a contributing factor to senior victimization
- Expands law enforcement personnel capabilities within the community

According to the National Triad Organization there are approximately 492 Triads in existence throughout the United States. One excellent source of information on the program is available on-line at www.nationaltriad.org

Agencies wishing to strengthen their bonds with seniors may also wish to seek funding in a number of related areas. The federal government currently has more than 50 active grants to provide funding and services to senior citizens. Two examples in possible interest areas are the Senior Companion Program and the Telemarketing Fraud Against Senior Citizens Program. (Information on the grants listed in this article is available at www.federalgrantswire.com.)

The Future - Implementation

Although not a new concept, the way to provide the best possible services to our growing senior communities is drawing together the social, economic, educational and human resources available and having them work as a team. This will provide the most economic and robust services to meet the needs of seniors without depriving the rest of the community of the services that they

need. This is not unlike the Community Oriented Policing Services, (COPS) which became so popular in the late 1980 and early 1990's.

The philosophy behind the COPS is a combination of traditional law enforcement, prevention, problem solving, community engagement and partnerships to address specific needs within the community. One example of this process was a concern in Claremont regarding speeding vehicles in and around a major senior community. Major north/south streets bordering the senior community were two lanes in each direction and 40 mile per hour zones. Seniors were afraid to cross the streets and were experiencing a lessening of their mobility throughout the community.

The Claremont Committee on Aging, working with city staff, brought their concerns to the City's Traffic and Transportation Commission, the Chief of Police, the City Manager and the Engineering Department. Based on traffic studies, review of existing State and local law, and a series of community meetings the City was able to create a "Senior Zone", lowering the speed limit to 25 miles per hour and reduce the busy north/south streets to one lane in each direction. The resulting "traffic calming" created a much safer and less threatening situation for seniors who were once again able to cross the streets without fear of injury.

Evaluating the Progress of the Program

Once you have formed relationships with the senior community and are working together with other local, state and federal resources you will want to take the time to evaluate the progress of your efforts. Factors to consider are:

- Budget; is there enough money to continue on with the programs and is the goal of containing budget expenses being met?
- Have new relationships been formed with both public and private service providers to provide enhanced services for seniors?
- Have new technologies been developed and utilized to provide the best possible safety and security to seniors?
- Have new educational and training services been provided to seniors?
- Are local, county, state and federal officials supporting and encouraging the growth of programs for seniors and maintaining funding for the programs.

The failure of any one of these steps will jeopardize the success of the senior safety and security programs in your community, it is very important to monitor the programs and take the time to evaluate the progress and value of the programs in your community.

Looking to the Future

Andrew Carnegie was quoted as saying, "Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." Law Enforcement leaders and managers must stay in close contact with their senior communities to understand their needs and be able to provide the best services possible. By working with local agencies such as Claremont's Committee on Aging, meeting with retirement community administrators and meetings with community members who are seniors, law enforcement leaders and administrator will be able to meet the service challenges they will face with the increase of senior communities. By forming strong coalitions, looking to the future and thinking ahead they will be able to be prepared for the changes as they occur. By practicing this futures thinking, they will be successful in providing the best services possible to all members of their communities.

This is a lofty goal to be sure, however, the reality is that agencies large and small throughout the United States and the world will be facing increasing numbers of older persons, and they had better be prepared for their arrival.

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