

Crime Mapping and Analysis

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Information technology poses unique challenges to individual law enforcement agencies and their leaders depending on agency size as well as the types and levels of crime encountered. Although law enforcement executives speak a common language when discussing far-ranging strategies on such topics as fighting crime, preventing crime, improving relations with their communities, and working more effectively with government officials, their level of fluency diverges widely when the topic turns to information technology. Some agencies and their executives have made their reputation on cutting-edge information technology, while others struggle with acquiring basic computer capabilities and the equipment and the personnel to run them. There still may be chiefs and sheriffs in small jurisdictions with low levels of crime who feel they can get by without computers. However, as the profession moves in a direction that some are now identifying as the "information-led policing era," calls for data sharing escalate, and fusion centers are developed to address terrorism and cross-jurisdictional crime concerns, raising public expectations. All agencies are expected to meet the challenge of the information age and its global environment. Crime analysis, crime mapping, and the ability to operate in an information-sharing environment are becoming critical functions for 21st-century law enforcement.

This month, the *Police Chief* focuses on these very topics. In the first article, Carl Peed, director of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and a former sheriff in Fairfax County, Virginia, collaborates with Ronald E. Wilson, program manager for the Mapping and Analysis for Public Safety Program at the National Institute of Justice, and COPS research analyst Nicole J. Scalisi on how law enforcement executives can use crime analysts to make more informed decisions and to work more effectively with municipal and county officials. In the second article, public safety analyst Christopher Bruce and Chief Neil F. Ouellette of the Danvers, Massachusetts, Police Department discuss closing the gap between analysis and response. They stress why crime analysis and intelligence must be actionable and grounded on the practical experiences of street officers to be effective. In the third article, Chief Kevin Paletta and crime analyst Stacy Belledin of the Lakewood, Colorado, Police Department provide practical advice on how chiefs can use their crime analysts to make better-informed decisions and make themselves look better in the process. Finally, Chief Tom Casady of the Lincoln, Nebraska, Police Department underscores the important messages in the other articles and, recognizing that an agency cannot arrest its way out of every problem, stresses the importance of using crime analysis and mapping for prevention purposes.

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