



castro community on patrol

www.castropatrol.org

The Patroller

“Creating a Visible Safety Presence”

April 2008

Answering Questions from the Public When on Patrol

While patrolling, we often receive random questions from the public about our purpose and the scope of our work. It's helpful to have an “elevator speech” ready.

Being prepared with answers serves two purposes: 1) It lets you provide a coherent answer in the brief time the person is willing to listen, and 2) It provides consistent information about the group as everyone gives similar answers. Since we don't immediately know who is asking, this prevents us from giving the wrong information to detractors of the organization or to potential perpetrators. If the questioner turns out to be a potential volunteer, it's an easy way to open the conversation.

We are not asking you to “parrot” the exact wording of these sample answers. It is much better to answer in your own words. It helps if you think about your responses in advance so you are ready for the next person who wants an answer.

[The part in brackets below gives some of logic used to prepare the suggested answer.]

NOTE: You are never to act as a spokesperson for CCOP unless authorized by the board.

Questions and Answers

Q: What is CCOP?

We are a group of volunteers who patrol the Castro. We are just normal folks who happen to know how to work with the SFPD to make the Castro safer.

[Longer answers probably do not help. Most people are just curious about the people in the orange jackets.]

Q: How do I join?

Attend a training session. Check the website for the next session.

[Give them a whistle so they have a way to remember the web address.]

Q: What do I do on patrol?

You walk around the Castro with two or three other volunteers and call the police if you see trouble. We only ask you to commit 3 hour per month of your time.

[It's important that they know that this is a team process.]

Q: Can anyone do it?

You only need to walk, watch, and call. CCOP works with the local authorities. We avoid contact and let the police handle things.

[It's good to remind the public that we are not vigilantes, and that potential volunteers do not need to be “fighter” types.]

Q: Is the Castro really that dangerous?

<or> I have always felt safe in the Castro...

The Castro is part of a large city, and all cities have crime. We want to make the Castro safer than other neighborhoods.

[This type of question is usually a challenge of the need for the patrol, and does not call for statistics or “war stories”.

Using a “fear” approach can be counter-productive or lead to a debate.]

Weeknight Patrol



The first weeknight patrol was held on 25-MAR with patrollers Andrew Axelrod, Gregggy Carey, Nadine Greiner, and Erik Leve. Two weeknight patrols are scheduled for April and May.

Q: Have there been more incidents?

The area surrounding 18th and Castro averages 12 assaults every month. While most of these are minor, we would like to see a reduction.

[The use of a provable statistic is better than trying to remember some spectacular story. Most stories are based on rumors or embellishments, and may end up being challenged or mis-quoted which can cause confusion in the long run.]

Q: When do you patrol? <or> How many of you patrol? <or> How many teams are out tonight?

We do random patrols throughout the week with a higher concentration on weekends.

[Unless you personally know the questioner, this one should raise suspicion. It's better to give the idea that we are around more often or in higher numbers than telling a potential criminal the best time to strike.]

Q: Why didn't you show up when I blew my whistle?

The whistles are to help everyone look out for each other. If you hear a whistle or see someone in trouble, call 911 right away.

[Some people think we are like the “marshal” who is always on duty.]

Q: I didn't know you people were still around...

Yes, we will celebrate our second anniversary in November. We still have a very dedicated group of volunteers and are adding more all the time.

[Yup. CCOP volunteers are still doing great work!]

Then punctuate the conversation by handing them some literature and inviting them to the next training.



Castro Crimes

In order to understand the ongoing need for the Castro Patrol, we have taken a monthly look at the various metrics available about crime.

The following chart shows a 10-month average of crimes. The values show a 1/2 mile radius from the intersection of Castro and 18th Street as reported by the SFPD Website:
http://www.sfgov.org/site/police_index.asp?id=23813 This is approximately the area we patrol.

Monthly Average: May '07 – Mar '08

Arson	0.1
Assault	12.0
Burglary	8.5
Larceny, Theft	15.1
Theft from Auto	17.0
Rape	0.1
Robbery	6.4
Stolen Auto	10.5

During the past two months, the number of assaults were down by 33%. There were a total of 8 in both February and March of 2008. The highest month was December, with 18 reported assaults.

Auto Break-ins on Rise

In the first three months of 2008, the number of auto break-ins has averaged 21 per month compared to the average of 17. The public wants the Patrol to reduce these, as most people know someone who has found little pieces of broken glass when returning to their car. While we will call the police if we witness a break-in, the odds of catching someone in the act are very small. The crime happens quickly, and usually involves 2 or more suspects who work as a team.

Educating drivers can reduce the chances of being victimized. Keep all items out of sight of the criminal. Even a sweater or a small package in the back seat may tempt someone to shatter a window with the associated inconvenience and costs needed to replace the damaged glass.

The media also reports a recent tendency to steal GPS receivers. The window mount often invites a break-in, even if the receiver itself has been moved to the glove compartment. Remove the bracket when possible. Even the mark left on the windshield by the suction cup is said to be enough to tempt a crook, so cleaning the window may help in some instances.

Upcoming Training Opportunities



By Ken Craig
CCOP Training Coordinator

While the Patrol's focus is on non-engagement and observe/report/bear witness activity, knowing some basics of self-defense and how to react to a physical confrontation in the most suitable manner possible is an important and valuable additional training tool for every patrol volunteer. There is no substitute for regular training, such as with Triangle Martial Arts Association which will offer all active CCOP Volunteers or support staff members a 25% discount on regular tuition fees. In response to many requests from the volunteer corps, TMAA will establish a CCOP Self-Defense seminar just for the active patrol volunteers.

This added training is something the CCOP board strongly recommends for all Patrol volunteers.

These seminars are open to any participants of 18 years or older and are suitable for anyone to attend. They are low impact, fun, and energetic seminars that will encourage you to think in a different way about self-defense.

Reporting Infrastructure Issues; The Magic of 311

The Patrol reports a variety of infrastructure conditions that affect the health or safety of the neighborhood. San Francisco has now implemented the 311 system, allowing a direct link to city services by all citizens. Patrollers should dial 311 to report issues directly while out on patrol.

When calling 311, the operator will need to know the exact location, such as street address, intersection, direction from a reference point (such as the "northwest corner of the intersection") and description of the defect. When a condition is related to a utility pole, they will also want the serial number of the pole, which is usually on the side of the pole facing the street.

Typical conditions that should be reported are:

Send an e-mail to: info@TriangleMAA.org with your name, e-mail address, and telephone number in order to reserve a spot in one of the seminars. The cost is \$40 per person suggested donation (Sliding scale for low income and assisted living.)

Other seminars will be posted on our web site as they are scheduled at www.TriangleMAA.org under the Self-Defense Training and Seminar Schedule sections.

TMAA will host our acclaimed beginners community self-defense seminar (SD1) on these dates at the listed locations.

MAY 2008

10-MAY-08 - 1PM - 3:30PM
The LGBT Community Center, 1800 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.

AUGUST 2008

15-AUG-08 - 7PM - 9:30PM
Eureka Valley Recreation Center, 100 Collingwood Street, San Francisco, CA 94114 in the auditorium.

NOVEMBER 2008

08-NOV-08 - 1PM - 3:30PM
The LGBT Community Center, 1800 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.

CCOP Volunteer Training

With regard to Patrol Volunteer Training Classes (PVTC) we have the following on the books at the moment :

PVTC-11 on Saturday 14-JUN-08 @ 2pm at the LGBT Community Center

PVTC-12 on Tuesday 09-SEP-08 @ 7pm at the LGBT Community Center.

- Street lights that are out or intermittent
- "Toe Stubber" sidewalks (usually caused by tree roots)
- City-owned garbage containers that are full or overflowing
- Clogged storm drains
- Dead animals
- Traffic signals that are not working correctly
- Downed telephone or cable TV utility wires (although 911 is needed if it involves power wires)

The city has been responsive to these calls. For example 3 intermittent street lights near Church and 16th Streets were recently repaired. All 311 calls should be added to the patrol log and part of the end-of-shift report.