



For Immediate Release: December 7, 2009

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Police departments join forces to fight crime across municipal boundaries

The Police Departments of Forest Park, Oak Park, River Forest and Elmwood Park have joined forces to create a regional law enforcement group to prevent and solve crimes by sharing timely intelligence, combining resources and providing multi-community public safety messages.

Called the *FOREcast Regional Crime Analysis and Intelligence Sharing Initiative*, law enforcement officials from the founding communities say they hope other contiguous police departments will join in on this regional approach to fighting crime. The acronym FOREcast is an incorporation of the first letter of each of the four founding communities.

"Law enforcement's first responsibility is to make every attempt to prevent crime before it occurs. FOREcast was developed by Oak Park, River Forest, Forest Park and Elmwood Park for the purpose of creating a synergistic effect to accomplish this goal," said Elmwood Park Police Chief Tom Braglia.

Forest Park Police Chief James Ryan stated, "The prompt sharing of criminal activity on a regional basis will make all four of the communities more effective combating crime as it occurs. These four communities have a history of cooperation and sharing of information, this advanced technology will provide our agencies the ability to work even closer in a timelier manner."

According to River Forest Police Chief Frank Limon, "FOREcast forges a commitment between four agencies to collaborate and share information and intelligence, to coordinate a proven crime-reduction strategy of targeting career criminals directly responsible for large volumes of crime. FOREcast is a means to achieving a regional impact on public safety in enjoining villages."

"Municipal boundaries mean nothing to criminals, so crime in one community has an impact on its neighbors," said Oak Park Police Chief Rick C. Tanksley. "By working together at both the strategic and tactical levels, we will be able to spot trends, organize broader geographic responses to shared criminal activity and alert citizens with a unified message, all activities that can help reduce crime across the entire area."

Such a regional response also could be a money saver for all involved, officials say, an important consideration in times of shrinking revenues and increased demands for law enforcement to do more with less, a situation that can be especially difficult for smaller police departments.

The *FOREcast Regional Crime Analysis and Intelligence Sharing Initiative* will rely on the FBI Law Enforcement On-Line (LEO) web site currently used by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to compile and share information.

Participating police departments say the new FOREcast initiative will create a framework for working together to turn the raw LEO crime information into meaningful intelligence that can help them better plan and respond to crime activity, and more effectively prosecute criminals. Collecting, analyzing and disseminating information from a broader database, police say, will help identify crime patterns, connect suspects and forecast the potential for particular criminal activity.

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