

2012 COPS Conference Recap: Need a Way to Increase Police Efficiency and Enhance Officer Safety with a Limited Budget? There's an App for That!

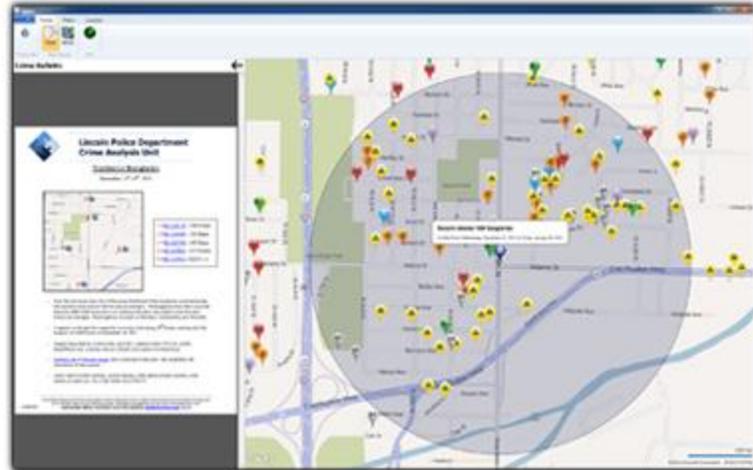
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This year's COPS conference focused on *The Evolution of Public Safety in America*. Many agencies and jurisdictions around the country are facing new challenges caused by shrinking budgets. In an effort to adapt to these new fiscal realities facing law enforcement communities, many are exploring innovative ways in which to leverage existing resources to more effectively and efficiently enhance public safety.

When listing the ways in which society has evolved over the last decade, technology is likely to be at the top of that list. Cell phones, tablets, and other mobile technology devices have created a culture in which almost any question can be answered with a click. Have a craving for Chinese food, but don't know where the closest restaurant is? There's an app for that. Want to know how long it will take you to get home with real-time traffic data factored into your estimated travel time? There's an app for that. Need to find the closest hotel, hospital, police station, or Starbucks? There're apps for those too. In the world of mobile technology, there is an app for almost everything. And finally, there is an app that can improve police operational intelligence, enhance officer safety, increase situational awareness, and improve community policing in local police agencies.



At this year's conference, the COPS Office held a session entitled "Making the Most of New Technology." The session explored some of the ways in which law enforcement agencies can utilize digital-age tools as force-multipliers, helping police provide improved public safety at reduced costs. Leading the session was Tom Casady, Public Safety Director and former Police Chief in Lincoln, Nebraska. Casady was the driving force in development of



the mobile application called P3i (Proactive Police Patrol information), which is now available as "CrimeView NEARme," offered commercially by the Omega Group. During the session, Casady shared with the audience how he came to have his "ah-ha" moment that led to the advent of P3i. While traveling for work and tired after a long day, he decided he felt like grabbing a bite to eat at a nearby microbrewery. Unfamiliar with his surroundings, Casady did what most of us have become accustomed to doing in similar situations. He pulled out his Smartphone, opened the Google Maps application, and performed a simple search for local microbreweries in his immediate area.

It was at this moment that Casady had an epiphany. What if law enforcement agencies were able to use a similar tool to access crime and safety information about their current surroundings? And thus, the creation of CrimeView NEARme was underway.

Casady walked the audience through the innovative application, and highlighted all of the different functions that would prove of immense value to police on patrol. The application works much like the standard Google Maps, allowing police officers to access location-based crime data on the go. The app utilizes the GPS embedded in each mobile device to present an officer-centered interactive map, marking "police points of interest" in the areas directly surrounding the officer's location. By opening the application, the officer is able to access relevant information about their surroundings such as; the locations of calls for service, crimes, warrants, citations, parolees, probationers, gang members, and sex offenders—all in proximity to their current location.

The app also allows the officer to filter the information based on the type of data they are looking for. Additional information can also be linked to the location data. Tapping on a point within a map layer allows the officer to view data from field interview forms, crime incidents, arrest reports, and even mug shots of known offenders. These multiple map layers—or points-of-interest—all play a part in increasing an officers' situational awareness and in turn enhancing officer safety. Currently, Casady is working with researchers at the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center to evaluate the software's implications for the criminal justice community as well as assessing the potential "return on investment" for jurisdictions hoping to bring the tool to their agencies.

In a time when police agencies are desperately seeking ways to leverage resources and information, the CrimeView NEARme application is a groundbreaking tool. One that will likely change the way law enforcement agencies do business in the years to come.

To learn more about CrimeView NEARme please visit www.theomegagroup.com.