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Bike Patrol Enhances Community Relations



Improved community relations, cost savings and environmental benefits are just some of the reasons Police Departments are putting their officers on bikes. Although the Romeoville Police Department has had a bike patrol unit since 2011, not many residents realize that such a unit exists.

The main responsibilities of the unit is to patrol special events like RomeoFest, concerts and parades, but they also patrol neighborhoods, parks and trails checking for the safety of residents and even park

equipment. “We answer calls like regular patrol cars, we still write tickets and even apprehend criminals,” said Commander Rob Fetzer, who is in charge of overseeing the bike patrol unit.

One of the biggest advantages to bicycle patrol is its ability to navigate around swiftly, avoiding obstacles and hazards that would stop a patrol vehicle in its tracks. At events, bicycle police have the unmatched ability to be in the center of crowds with the means to get to other areas quickly. “Bikes can go where cars can’t and officers can move quicker than they could on foot,” said Commander Fetzer.

Another advantage of the bike patrol is that individuals who break the law normally are not looking for bicycle officers and that the bikes are nearly silent in operation. "For instance, car burglars won't hear the bike approaching like they would a vehicle," said Commander Fetzer.

The consensus from the department is that residents are more likely to approach an officer on a bike versus an officer in a patrol car. "We have more contact with residents when we ride around rather than only making contact when we get out of our patrol cars. This approachability can help in building new contacts and trust from the citizens so we can be proactive in fighting crime rather than reactive," said Commander Fetzer. He added that officers get flagged down by residents all the time for one question or another. "Overall residents are very receptive to the bike patrol officers out and about doing our jobs," he said.

Romeoville's bike patrol unit now has 11 officers. The unit started out with four officers in 2011 and it was increased over the years due to budgeting for the bikes and necessary training.

Officers are required to complete a rigorous training course and be certified by the International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA). "The required training is intense and we quickly learned it's more than just riding a bike. The course taught us how to ride up and down the stairs, bike safety and maintenance, how to control the bikes in different situations and how to ride and maintain a bike at walking speeds in and amongst crowds," said Sergeant Chris Burne.

Police Chief Mark Turvey said that the bike unit has proven to be a great addition to the Department. "Police bicycle patrol promotes community relations, and it is an effective tool in deterring crime and apprehending offenders. Police officers also enjoy riding their bicycles and it helps improve their level of physical fitness," said Chief Turvey.