



Risk-Based Policing in Atlantic City 2017 Report

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Atlantic City Police Department Risk-Based Policing Initiative: Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2017

Overview

Risk-based policing is the operational mindset and practice of reducing and managing crime *risks* in order to prevent crime incidents. It emphasizes problem solving, evidence-based decision-making, and sustainability. Risk-based policing with Risk Terrain Modeling (RTM) is used in Atlantic City.

Background

The Chief of Police and command staff spearheaded risk-based policing in Atlantic City. A researcher-practitioner partnership between the Rutgers University Center on Public Security (RCPS) and the Atlantic City Police Department (ACPD), with the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office¹ and the City of Atlantic City, was initiated on October 15, 2015 with a 1-year pilot project that began January 1, 2016¹. The pilot project sought to establish multi-stakeholder buy-in, collect data, and test the predictive validity of RTM in Atlantic City, as well as to optimize the protocols and methods for data management, data access, and information communication within the police department. At the time, ACPD did not have a dedicated crime analyst, and was in the process of upgrading and transitioning to new computer aided dispatch (CAD) and record management (RMS) systems, while also building a new state-of-the-art real-time crime and intelligence command center.

Full implementation of risk-based policing began in 2017. Rollout occurred in two phases. In Phase 1, RCPS worked the most closely with ACPD commanders to run risk terrain models, to communicate analytical results, to facilitate taskforce meetings, and to help develop operational strategies for crime prevention and risk reduction. Phase 1 began January 1, 2017 and continued through May 2017. In Phase 2, ACPD assumed most of the responsibility for disseminating analytical results and developing risk reduction strategies. Phase 2 began in June and continued through December 2017.

Crime Types

The focus was on violent and property crimes -- specifically, shootings, aggravated assaults, robberies, and burglaries (residential and commercial). Risk terrain models were produced for these crime categories using ACPD crime records obtained from the CAD and RMS, city administrative data, and InfoGroup² business address data. Risk terrain models were updated monthly. The RTMDx software, developed by RCPS³, was used for this task.



¹ For pilot project details, see http://www.rutgerscps.org/uploads/2/7/3/7/27370595/acpd_rbppilot_2016reportbrief.pdf

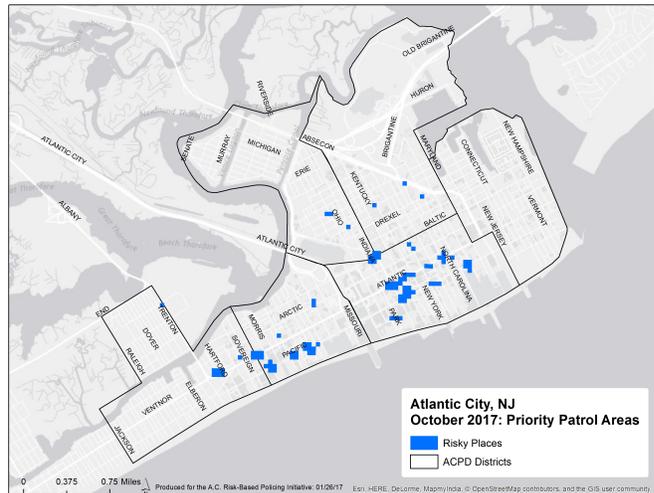


Analytical and Operational Processes

RTM was used to forecast risky places for crime every month. Risk terrain maps visually communicated spatial vulnerabilities to crime. Highest risk places became the target areas for police patrols. Police officers received maps showing the priority patrol areas specific to their district. They also received instructions on what risky features to focus on, and what risk reduction actions to take at high-risk places. These decisions were made by ACPD commanders and may have changed monthly based on the most current risk terrain models and other intel.



Police patrolled all parts of Atlantic City, investigated crimes and cleared cases. They gave extra priority attention to the risky places. Priority areas were selected among the highest risk places for all crimes types (by their overlap). These priority areas were approximately 1% or less of the city's land area, making resource allocations manageable and efficient.



ACTION Meetings and Community Engagement

ACTION Meetings were scheduled regularly throughout 2017 to focus on Assessments, Connections, Tasks, Interventions, Outcomes and Notifications related to a variety of existing and emerging crime problems and threats in Atlantic City, and to discuss the risk-based policing initiative and related risk terrain models. Two types of ACTION Meetings occurred: 1) Police ACTION Meetings, and 2) Community ACTION Meetings.

Police ACTION Meetings were comprised of ACPD officers and other policing partners who could be privy to sensitive intelligence for law-enforcement eyes only. This “police taskforce” met monthly to assess the risk terrain model's forecasts to-date and to propose ways to manage crime risks from law enforcement and policing perspectives.

Community ACTION Meetings were multi-stakeholder events, and comprised members of the police taskforce as well as city officials and other community leaders. Community ACTION Meetings were not open town hall style meetings where grievances are aired. They were invitation-only working meetings where risk assessments were shared and groundtruthed, data were managed, and initiatives to reduce risks were proposed and committed to by multiple community stakeholders.

Five police-only ACTION meetings and 1 community ACTION meeting occurred during Phase 1. Three police-only taskforce/ACTION meetings and 2 community ACTION meetings occurred during



Phase 2. Twelve monthly risk terrain models and ‘spatial intel’ reports were produced for ACPD and delivered to commanders for review and operational decision-making during 2017.

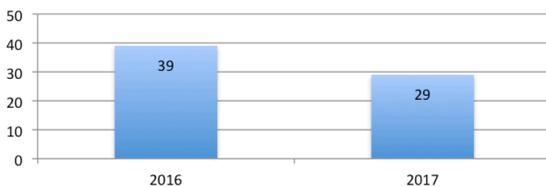
Results

The predictive accuracy of RTM exceeded expectations (based on empirical testing using the Predictive Accuracy Index, or PAI, methodology). When crimes displaced, they emerged at high-risk places, as expected, even if crimes had never historically occurred there before.

Police patrols of priority areas occurred regularly, and over 1,000 business checks were made by ACPD at high-risk places. In addition to the ACPD, the City Planning Department, the Housing Authority, the Mayor’s Office, Neighborhood Associations, Mercantile Associations, and utility authorities engaged in risk reduction efforts. Security improvements were made to risky facilities, dimmer halogen streetlights were replaced with LEDs, and at least 17 abandoned properties located in high-risk areas were demolished or mitigated.

Case clearance rates for 2017 improved by 10%, compared to 2016. The risk-based policing strategy focused primarily on places, not people, so arrests did not increase. Violent crimes and burglaries decreased in 2017 compared to 2016. In the first 5 months of 2017, during Phase 1, violent crimes went down over 20% compared to the same time period in 2016. By year’s end, violent crimes reduced 36%. This represents a potential cost savings⁴ to the local criminal justice system of over \$1.6 million.

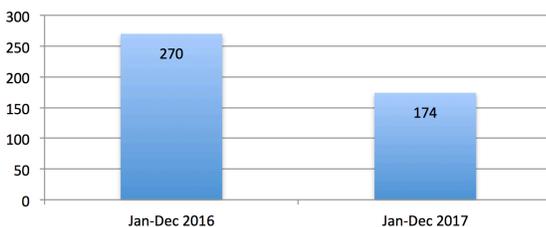
2017 Homicides and Shooting Injuries are Down in Atlantic City: 26% Reduction Overall vs. 2016
Excludes June: No Data



2017 Robberies Are Down in Atlantic City: 37% Reduction Overall vs. 2016
Excludes June & July: No Data



2017 Violent Crimes Are Down in Atlantic City: 36% Reduction Overall vs. 2016
Excludes June & July: No Data



Conclusion

Risk-based policing with RTM and ACTION proved to be a transparent and effective form of policing that helped police reduced crime. Protocols and resources are now in place to sustain risk-based policing in Atlantic City.

Endnotes

¹ The original press release can be viewed at www.rutgerscps.org/uploads/2/7/3/7/27370595/news_release_acpd_rtm_action_implementation.pdf

² InfoGroup is a data and marketing services company that provides information about public entities, such as businesses/retail stores.

³ www.rutgerscps.org/software.html

⁴ see <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2835847>

