



ATLANTIC COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

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James P. McClain
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NEWS RELEASE

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ATLANTIC CITY – A partnership among the Atlantic City Police Department, the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, and Rutgers University is implementing a sophisticated software system to assist police with predicting high-crime and high-risk locations, so that police can intervene efficiently to mitigate and prevent incidents of crime in Atlantic City, announced Atlantic County Prosecutor Jim McClain.

The Risk Terrain Modeling (RTM) crime and forecasting tool, developed by Rutgers University, produces intelligence information that helps police deploy resources and develop risk reduction strategies, with the goal of sustainable crime suppression," said Dr. Joel M. Caplan, who developed the software with Rutgers colleague Dr. Leslie Kennedy. The system analyzes geographically-related data from various sources to identify places where crime is statistically most likely to occur, allowing police management to better allocate manpower where and when it is needed, not only to stop crime, but to prevent it.

"RTM is an innovative and practical approach to mitigating hotspots by addressing the underlying causes that attract criminal activity to these locations," said Atlantic City Police Detective Lieutenant James A. Sarkos. "It will allow the Atlantic City Police Department to integrate Spatial Crime Analysis techniques, allowing us to prioritize risk factors for intervention efforts." Researchers and practitioners are now using the software in Australia, Canada, France, Italy, and the United States by municipalities, border security, and police departments—including Newark, NJ—to help law enforcement do a better job in a more cost efficient way.

RTM is a way to quantify "high-crime" areas that respects constitutional protections for citizens. Because the underlying algorithms of RTM draw from geographical characteristics—what attracts illegal behavior to high-crime areas and why crimes cluster there over time?—rather than upon individual and human demographics, it reduces the hazard to good police-community relations, unlike earlier incarnations of heavy-enforcement-oriented crime analysis software.

Atlantic City Police Chief Henry White Jr. said, "Risk Terrain Modeling has all the benefits of Compstat without the reputation of an aggressive policing system causing concern within the community. This is primarily because, unlike Compstat, RTM is geographically-based, as opposed to being people based. In other words, RTM focuses on the geographical characteristics that attract criminals to hotspots, rather than the people who happen to be inside a hotspot."

The RTM diagnostic tool is a part of the Atlantic City Police Department's intended "ACTION" policing strategy—an acronym for "Assessment, Corrections, Tasks, Outcomes, and Notifications." The software provides forecasts of potential crime and risk in geographical areas that will be used by police and other key community stakeholders to work together in partnership to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in neighborhoods.

The Atlantic County Prosecutor's Intelligence Unit will provide assistance to the Atlantic City Police Department during the implementation.

Results from a recent 6-city study of the use of RTM, performed by Dr. Caplan and his staff, found that the software identified locations that were 58 times more likely to experience crime than other areas, that 5% of the study area accounted for nearly 30% of the crime, and that a police intervention strategy based on RTM results yielded a 35% reduction of crime in the target areas (compared to control areas that did not use the directed strategy). The study found greatest reductions in robberies, shootings, and motor vehicle thefts.

Atlantic County Prosecutor Jim McClain applauds the proactive work of Chief White and the Atlantic City Police Department in employing new tools and scientific methodology upon which to drive police deployment decisions, and notes that, "The implementation of RTM to diagnose geographic crime vulnerabilities to better zero-in on the problems will not impact the budgets of Atlantic City or Atlantic County. "The cost for the program will be paid from the criminal forfeiture fund; that is, assets and cash seized from criminals will be used to more effectively and efficiently reduce crime."

Anyone with information involving serious crimes is asked to call the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office at 609-909-7800 or go to the Prosecutor's Office Web site at <http://www.acpo.org/tips.html> and provide information by filling out the form anonymously on the Submit a Tip page. People can also call Crime Stoppers at 609-652-1234 or 1-800-658-8477 (TIPS) or visit the Crime Stoppers Website at <http://www.crimestoppersatlantic.com/>. Crime Stoppers offers cash rewards for information leading to the arrest and indictment of those who commit crimes in Atlantic County.