

## **A Unique Approach to an Old Problem**

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Brea PD

Two of the biggest concerns facing law enforcement in this new decade are a drive to cut the budget and an ever-diminishing labor pool. Agencies are constantly being mandated to increase services without a corresponding increase in the budget. The lack of qualified candidates has caused a number of agencies to embrace a variety of unique deployment plans.

In the 1960's, common deployment plans utilized an eight-hour day, five days per week. In the 1970's, a large number of departments created a new scheduling plan that deployed personnel ten hours per day, four days per week.

In the 1980's and 1990's, the three day twelve hour plan was introduced and has become very popular and somewhat of a standard. The three twelve-deployment plan utilizes three twelve hour days per week. This plan has spread across the country in a variety of configurations, most of which include some type of "make-up day" to accommodate for the thirty-six hour weeks.

Now as the new century begins, the need to effectively deploy limited numbers of qualified personnel is paramount. The public does not consider how long an officer has to work, how much time he or she spends with his or her family, how much it might cost in overtime, or the lack of personnel in the labor pool.

However, what the public does want is an immediate response to calls for service. Like the water that flows into our houses for cooking, showers, and cleaning, we only consider it when it does not work.

As an example, a department that utilizes a four day, ten hour deployment plan and requires minimum field strengths of eight to nine officers twenty four hours per day, will need forty officers to achieve that goal. That same department, if it employs a twelve hour workday, can also expect to field eight officers twenty four hours a day. However, if that same department utilizes some creativity, those forty officers can be deployed with field strength of ten officers per shift.

Recently the Brea Police Department, in Orange County, California, overcame the problem of too few officers, too many shifts to fill, and a mandate to reduce the budget. The Brea Police Department is in the unique and favorable situation of providing police services to the neighboring city of Yorba Linda. This requires a minimum deployment to meet the needs of that contract. In the early 1970's in order to meet those contractual needs, the Brea Police Department chose to deploy patrol officers on a four- ten work schedule. The four-ten schedule

provided for an economical utilization of resources. Deploying five separate shifts with only one and one half hours of overlap mitigated the problem of a significant overlap. However, this streamlined deployment plan had a number of inherent problems. One problem was leave time being difficult to grant without creating overtime.

The dilemma was how to increase staffing levels and provide for the ability to grant more leave time without increasing overtime. Returning to a five eight plan was briefly considered but rejected on a number of issues not the least of which was the perceived difficulty involving recruitment and retention. A twelve-hour workday was considered but also rejected based on insufficient numbers of personnel assigned to the patrol division.

The solution is an innovative deployment plan called the twelve-eleven. Officers are divided into four teams of ten officers each. Either teams work days or nights with staggered start times. Teams of officers work twelve hour shifts on week number one of a two week cycle, and then work four eleven hour shifts on the second week, for a total of eighty hours, eliminating the need for a payback day later in the month.

Other departments employ a similar plan that has patrol officers divided up into three shifts, a morning, evening and cover shift. The Brea Police Department does not have the luxury of a large patrol force to allow deploying three shifts per day. The solution is to stagger the start times.

Starting at 0600, three team members from team one (day shift) arrive for duty. At 0630, two more arrive, with two to three members arriving every half hour until 0800 when the whole team is on duty in the field. The first two members of team 3 (nights) arrive at 1700. Two more arrive at 1730, with two to three members arriving every half hour until 2000 when the whole team is on duty in the field. These staggered start times allow for a natural overlap of officers.

The team concept and team definition are critical department priorities. All officers on a team have the same days off every week and work the majority of the shift together, along with their team sergeants. This allows for group activities outside of the work environment as well as group training on mutual days off. The team concept creates a familiarity among the officers by working together to solve problems and calls for service. An added benefit of the team concept is the sergeant who is writing the officer's annual performance evaluation is now working with that officer every day.

With a compressed workweek, the number of days off per year change.

On a normal four-ten work schedule, the officers will receive twelve days off every four weeks. On a three-twelve plan those same officers will receive fifteen

days off per four week cycle. However, the officers who work the twelve-eleven plan receive fourteen days off every four weeks or twenty-four additional days off every year.

With the staggered start times, the traditional pre-deployment briefings became impossible. This was a major obstacle to overcome. A way to share information and inform officers of events had to be developed. An additional innovation employed in Brea, as a direct result of technology, allows officers to view e-mail on the mobile data computer in the police units. The ability to view and send information has eliminated the need to reread briefing information at the beginning of each shift. The computers in the units allow briefing information to be saved and retrieved as needed. For those officers who do not have access to a computer in their unit, "briefing bulletins" were developed. A bulletin is developed on a daily basis and made available to the officers. The bulletin contains pertinent information the officer would normally receive at a briefing, and this bulletin is carried out into the field with the officer. With the bulletin, the inherent problem of officers incorrectly writing down important information is no longer an issue.

The team members coming to work must meet up with a supervisor before going on duty. During the course of the week, it is incumbent upon the supervisor to meet with his team members to discuss a wide variety of issues normally covered in a pre-deployment briefing (personnel issues, training, etc.). Most of the teams have started having weekly meetings to gain back some of the information and interaction that was lost without pre-deployment briefings. The information covered in the weekly briefings along with the e-mail system and the bulletins allow officers to be more informed and up to date.

This new and innovative plan offers a benefit to the officers, the City, and ultimately the citizens we serve. The officers work in a team environment and enjoy additional time off. The City realizes a reduction for overtime used to meet minimum staffing to cover leave time. Prior to the implementation of the twelve-eleven plan, the patrol division used one thousand sixty (1060) hours of leave time during the month of June (2001). Of those hours, five hundred thirty six hours of overtime were necessary to maintain minimum staffing. Following the implementation of the twelve- eleven plan in June of 2002, the patrol division used one thousand eighty nine (1089) hours of leave time. Of that, only two hundred seventy nine hours of overtime was necessary to maintain minimum staffing. The implementation of the twelve-eleven plan resulted in a forty eight percent reduction in overtime usage during that one-month. Similar reductions have occurred during the remainder of the year. In addition, the twelve-eleven plan has become a valuable recruitment tool, with higher morale among employees.

The greatest benefit is to the citizens because there are more officers in the field due to a more effective deployment of resources.