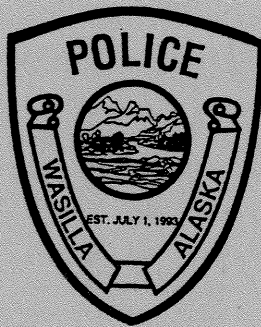


IM. No. 94-03

Wasilla Business Community
**CRIME PREVENTION
SURVEY**

Sponsored by:



December 1993

Irl Stambaugh, Chief
Wasilla Police Department

Laura Chase, Executive Director
Wasilla Chamber of Commerce

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks is extended to Laura Chase, Executive Director of the Greater Wasilla Chamber of Commerce, for her enthusiastic support and continuing assistance to me in all aspects of the crime survey, as well as the assistance of several Chamber volunteers who helped in the tasks associated with mailing the survey.

Special thanks to two Anchorage consultants who assisted me in developing the survey - Statewide Crime Prevention Specialist Bill Farber of the Alaska State Troopers and Joe Young, a consultant in business security. A copy of the survey form is included at the back of this report.

Questions and comments about the survey should be directed to the Wasilla Police Department.

M. James Messick
Crime Prevention Coordinator

I. BACKGROUND

In late fall 1993 the Crime Prevention Unit of the Wasilla Police Department and the Greater Wasilla Chamber of Commerce developed the idea of surveying Wasilla merchants to ascertain their perception of business-related crime. The need for such a survey was due to the lack of any empirical data about the types and extent of crime experienced by the Wasilla business community. With information from the survey, the Chamber and the Police Department could then develop and jointly sponsor crime prevention seminars that will reduce business-related crime in the Wasilla area.

II. METHODOLOGY

Meetings to discuss how the survey instrument would be structured included Laura Chase - Executive Director of the Wasilla Chamber, Bill Farber - the statewide Crime Prevention Coordinator for the State Troopers, Jim Messick - Wasilla Police Department Crime Prevention Coordinator and Joseph Young - a 21 year veteran of the Anchorage Police Department with extensive crime prevention experience and now business security consultant in Anchorage. A copy of the survey is included at the end of this report.

The survey was designed to determine several things:

The first question pertained to the merchant's perception regarding their concern for various types of crimes. This data would serve as the basis for developing later crime prevention seminars. To assure reasonable facility in tabulating results, five specific crime types thought to be of greatest concern, were listed. A sixth, but blank, option was included as a "write-in". The respondents were free to mark any, all, or none of the boxes on the form.

The five specific crime types listed were:

- * Shoplifting
- * Internal Theft
- * Bad Checks & Credit Cards
- * Business Fraud
- * Robbery

The second part of the question was to prioritize the crimes that were marked. The respondents were asked to place a number (#1-very important, #2-important, #3-not so important) in the space to the left of the boxes they marked to indicate the priorities they placed on the crime types. The same number could be used as often as desired.

The second question asked whether the seminars should be held during the normal work day or during the evening. The answers to this question would assist in developing the seminars to accommodate the greatest number of company representatives.

The third question asked if the preferred length of the seminars should be one, two or three hours in duration.

The last question asked the merchant how many people their firm would likely have attend the seminars. A blank space was provided for them to enter the appropriate number.

Finally, an optional question asked the merchant to mark the box if he desired the Wasilla Police Department to contact him because of any special concerns, ways the merchant could assist, or to discuss issues with the merchant.

The reverse side included space for the merchant's name, the business name and address.

When completed, the merchant was asked to fold the survey, affix postage, and mail it to the Wasilla Police Department.

III. LIMITATIONS

This survey is not scientifically structured. As the result, the information obtained, the tabulation process, and the conclusions reached contain certain limitations.

The wide variety of businesses involved in this survey meant that each would be viewing the problem of crime from their own perspective as it relates to their own business. For example, a 24-hour convenience store is far more concerned with shoplifting and robbery than a real estate or CPA office, which may be more concerned with business fraud.

In addition the respondent actually completing the survey may not always have been the most appropriate person to do so. For example, the existence of internal theft may be better known by employees than a supervisor or store manager who may attribute "shrinkage" to shoplifting or other cause. Similarly, business fraud may occur without anyone knowing it is happening, unlike robbery which is well known every time it occurs.

Not all responses were complete, nor was there evidence that all respondents had read and understood the directions. Some, for example, marked the crime(s) of concern, but skipped over prioritizing them. Some left other questions blank.

IV. DISTRIBUTION

Distribution to Wasilla business license holders was made in several ways. Greater Wasilla Chamber of Commerce members received the survey in their newsletters and during the normally scheduled Chamber luncheon in early November.

Address labels for all business licensees were obtained from the Wasilla sales tax office. This set of labels proved to be a quick, complete and inexpensive way to reach all Wasilla businesses. The Chamber used its bulk-mailing stamp and volunteers at the Chamber sorted, bundled and mailed 614 surveys in addition

to the 242 sent to Chamber members. During this process, it became apparent that some firms doing business in Wasilla are headquartered outside the city, and in some cases, outside the state. Recognizing that the home offices might not complete the survey, some of these were hand delivered to the local outlet. In all, 856 surveys were distributed.

COST

The costs associated with the crime survey were kept to a minimum by reproducing the survey form and the survey results on a copy machine.

Rather than using envelopes for mailing, a single blank sheet was placed on top of the survey form, and then both were folded in half, stapled, addressed and mailed.

Addresses of merchants were provided by obtaining labels from the City of Wasilla and postage was provided on a shared basis with the Chamber.

Return postage was provided by respondents on the theory that those merchants interested enough to respond would provide their own postage.

The labor to fold, label and sort the surveys for bulk-rate mailing, was provided at no cost by Chamber of Commerce staff and volunteers.

Actual costs, excluding labor, are estimated as follows:

1.	Reproducing Survey forms	\$ 21.00 (est.)
2.	Blank front sheet	7.00 (est.)
3.	Gummed address labels	15.00
4.	Bulk-rate postage (total)	102.14
5.	Reproducing survey report	25.00 (est.)

Total: \$170.14

V. RESULTS

The following are the responses to each of the questions asked in the survey. Sixty responses were received.

Question one

"The following Crime Prevention Topics would be of interest to me." Prioritize your response using 1,2,3.

	<u>Priority #1 Responses</u>	<u>Priority #2 Responses</u>	<u>Priority #3 Responses</u>
<u>Shoplifting:</u>	15	8	6
<u>Internal Theft:</u>	11	13	11
<u>Robbery:</u>	22	14	9
<u>Bad Checks/ Credit Cards:</u>	26	12	8
<u>Business Fraud:</u>	14	7	9

Clearly, bad checks/credit cards and robbery are of greatest concern, followed by shoplifting, business fraud and internal theft.

The "write-in" space for other type(s) of crime was used by only 17 respondents, or about 28% of the total returns. Of those 17, five noted vandalism, two asked about employee safety. The balance were all single comments ranging from government fraud to handling drunks to personal self defense.

Question two

"To enable employees to attend, I think these seminars should be held"

During the normal work day - 30 (50%)
During the evening - 25 (42%)
(Five were incomplete)

Although most favored daytime seminars, an almost equal number desired evening sessions.

Questions three

"I support these seminars being":

One hour in duration 32 (53%)
Two hours in duration 27 (45%)
Three hours in duration 1 (2%)

Although most favor one hour sessions, an almost equal number think a two hour session is desirable.

Of those preferring the seminars during the normal work day, 16 asked for one-hour sessions, and 14 for two-hour sessions. For evening seminars, 14 asked for one-hour sessions, and 12 asked for two-hour sessions.

Question four

"I will probably be interested in having ___ personnel attend these sessions" (number)

Responses ranged from one to eight persons, with most responses showing two persons.

Respondents indicated a total of 121 persons would probably attend the seminars.

The last (optional) question asked the respondents to check the box if they wished the Wasilla Police Department to contact them to discuss "special concerns". Fourteen respondents (23%) asked to be contacted or wrote in comments. When contacted practically all respondents had some complimentary comment for the department. There were no comments of a substantive nature.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

1. Surveys by mail are usually considered a success if they generate a response rate of 2% - 3%. The Crime Prevention Survey generated 60 responses to 856 surveys mailed or a response rate of 7%, which is above the normal rate of return for a mail survey. The survey itself is therefore considered successful, and notwithstanding the previously described limitations, is viewed as the first definitive indication of crime as perceived by the business community of Wasilla.

2. The use of the five specific crime types on the survey apparently was accurate. Only 17 respondents elected to use the "write-in" space, and of those, five noted vandalism as a problem, which would rank as a distant sixth concern.

3. An almost equal number of respondents asked for daytime sessions as those who asked for evening sessions. The almost equal preference for daytime as well as evening sessions lends feasibility to the idea of daytime and evening sessions for the same topics.

4. There is no statistically significant correlation between those asking for daytime sessions and the length of one or two hours, nor is there any similar correlation between those asking for evening sessions and the length of one or two hours.

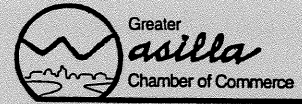
5. The Wasilla Police Department and the Wasilla Chamber of Commerce should proceed to jointly sponsor crime prevention seminars dealing with bad checks and credit cards, robbery, and shoplifting. Ideally these sessions should be two hours in length and be held during the day with another session in the evening.

6. To ensure the greatest value of these seminars, merchants from neighboring communities and those outside these communities should also be invited, since they likely perceive the same types of crime, and would probably appreciate the opportunity to attend.

7. Recognizing the mail survey as a successful means of determining crime issues, a follow-up survey is desirable in early 1995, so that continuing crime prevention efforts can be tailored to any changes in crime trends perceived by the Wasilla business community.



CRIME PREVENTION SEMINARS



The Wasilla Police Department in cooperation with the Wasilla Chamber of Commerce is developing a series of crime prevention seminars for business owners, managers, and employees, which reflect the needs of the business community.

To help us determine the extent of interest in developing such seminars and the topics to be included, please check the appropriate boxes. When completed, please fold into thirds, staple, and place in the mail.

The following crime prevention topics would be of interest to me.

- Shoplifting
- Internal Theft
- Robbery
- Bad Checks/Credit Cards
- Business Fraud (telemarketing, scams, etc.)
- Other _____

Now, please prioritize these concerns by placing a number in the space to the left of each box. (# 1 - Very Important, 2 - Important, 3 - Not Too Important. Use the same number as often as you wish).

To enable company representatives to attend, I think these seminars should be held:

- During the normal work day
- During the evening

I support these seminars being:

- One hour in duration
- Two hours
- Three hours

I will probably be interested in having _____ personnel attend these session(s).
(number)

- Please have the Wasilla Police Department contact me because of special concerns I have, special ways I can assist, or other issues I'd like to discuss personally.

