



Oceanside PD Leverages Technology, Builds Trust with Transparency



Software portal keeps residents informed and increases police transparency

Background

Oceanside is a beach community located 39 miles north of San Diego with a population of more than 175,000. Oceanside Police Department (OPD) has 219 sworn officers and handles approximately 110,000 calls a year that are dispatched through the Police Department Communications Center.

The Need

Law enforcement has faced a great deal of public scrutiny in recent years. As a result, many departments are making a conscious effort to increase transparency and open the lines of communications with the community. OPD has made great strides in this area including hiring a full-time public information officer, holding community meetings, implementing a neighborhood policing team, broadcasting on local media, and engaging with citizens on social media.

“Now more than ever, it’s so important that we find creative ways to share information and help keep our residents more informed,” says Jennifer A. Atenza, Public Information Officer, Oceanside Police Department. “Our department is really proactive about engaging with the community.”



Jennifer A. Atenza

As part of the department’s ongoing effort to provide the public with much-needed information, they sought a creative way to leverage technology to reach residents.

“You have a lot of information, but there’s a need and a desire to get that out to the public because of so many misconceptions about what police do, where we are, how much crime is taking place, and the call types coming in,” explains OPD’s Steve Walter, Crime Analysis and Intelligence Supervisor. Walter notes that, in an effort to find policing information, the public and the media often refer to crime statistics, which can sometimes be manipulated, miscommunicated, or used out of context.

“With so much negative media coverage toward law enforcement across the country, there was suddenly an urgency to get people accurate information about what is happening in the city, so they understand what it is we do and what type of crime is occurring,” he says.



Steve Walter

Walter acknowledges that the department had not previously embraced technology, but with the amount of scrutiny on law enforcement nationwide, it was the right time to evaluate cutting-edge data solutions.

Solution

OPD took a huge step forward in providing transparency and awareness with the launch of a FirstWatch public-facing online crime-mapping tool. This technology now makes it possible for Oceanside citizens to easily access information about crimes that have been reported throughout the city. FirstWatch uses technology and custom solutions to capture data to improve safety, clinical performance, communications, and operations in public safety and healthcare.

OPD uses the FirstWatch crime-mapping tool to identify where and when a crime has been reported to dispatch, categorize the activity through a color-coded system, and also identify the type of incident (traffic, disturbance, suspicious activity, welfare checks) that was reported. This customized utility then serves up the data in the easy-to-use online portal that anyone can view.

The highly intuitive tool serves many functions for OPD, including what Police Chief Fred Armijo, calls, “creating more windows of opportunity to give people a chance to see in.” The department acknowledges that FirstWatch is helping Oceanside residents arm themselves with information so they can be more aware of their surroundings and vigilant about crime prevention. Most importantly, it helps to open up the lines of communication.

By improving communication and instilling trust within the community, the technology has far-reaching effects. The hope is that this transparency with law enforcement will encourage citizens to come forward with

details that could help with solving crimes. Says Chief Armijo, “It can increase trust, which in turn can have an impact on someone’s willingness to call us when they see something that is not right or is out of place, ultimately preventing a crime or helping us solve a crime.”



Police Chief Fred Armijo
(recently retired)

OPD also looks forward to growing the platform, with potential future iterations allowing for more community engagement and the opportunity for greater public interaction.

Supervisor Walter shares that the technology innovations started with sincere desire by FirstWatch to solve public safety issues and the solutions followed that lead. “That’s been the key to success. It really has not been a typical vendor/customer relationship. It’s been a true problem-solving approach between the department and FirstWatch, being innovative and coming up with ways to make a difference,” he notes. “If you ever have the chance to encourage that kind of a relationship with a technology vendor, go after it because it really pays dividends.”

Conclusion

For more information on how FirstWatch could help your organization, go to firstwatch.net/demo to schedule a demonstration.

Oceanside Police Crime Mapping Tool



The public facing dashboard can help answer the community’s questions about why there’s a lot of police activity in the area. To view the dashboard, scan the QR.



To view other case studies and watch related interviews, visit: firstwatch.net/case-studies

FirstWatch is proud to partner with innovative agencies like Oceanside Police Department to help their team and the communities they serve.

For more information, visit firstwatch.net



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