

OH Watch Crime Report November 2009 to 30 June 2010 (7 month period)

Compiled by Peter Stenslunde

We are able to compile statistics of incidents in our area based on our attendance at the weekly Community Policing Forum (CPF) meetings held every Thursday at SAPS Cape Town Central, as well as from reports from residents, ADT and CBAR. SAPS have not held CPF meetings for the duration of the World Cup and the stats below may therefore be slightly lower than what transpired in reality.

There were 243 reported incidents during this period. These are summarized below:

Type of Crime		3 or more incidents		
Theft of vehicle	16	Belvedere	6	2.47%
Theft out of vehicle	115	Belmont	6	2.47%
Break in Residential	79	Bellevue	3	1.23%
Break in Business	2	Breda	8	3.29%
Drug Related	7	Bridle	3	1.23%
Robbery	24	Camp	12	4.94%
	243	Culver	4	1.65%
		Flower	4	1.65%
Time of Incident		Glen Crescent	3	1.23%
6am to 6pm	122	Hiddingh	7	2.88%
6pm to 12 midnight	82	Higgo	7	2.88%
12 midnight to 6am	39	Hof	13	5.35%
	243	Jagersfontein	4	1.65%
		Kloof Street	16	6.58%
		Kloof Nek Rd	8	3.29%
		Krynauw	5	2.06%
		Mill	12	4.94%
		Molteno	9	3.70%
		Oranje	8	3.29%
		Rosemead	11	4.53%
		Schoonder	4	1.65%
		Sir George Grey	6	2.47%
		St Quintons	3	1.23%
		Union	11	4.53%
		Upper Orange	8	3.29%
		Upper Wandel	5	2.06%
		Vriende	4	1.65%
		Others	53	21.81%
		243		100.00%

Broadly speaking crime hotspots are anywhere within the vicinity of Gardens Centre/Mill Street where we have the

majority of robberies/muggings and theft out of motor vehicles. Residential areas in close proximity to high traffic access roads are more vulnerable. Belmont and Belvedere are easily accessed by Upper Orange and Molteno – the latter two also being hot spots. Buxton and Rosemead are easily accessed by Hof – as is Glen Crescent. The number of residential break-ins occurring is extremely concerning, over 11 every month.

Please do yourself a favour and make sure that all useful numbers are in your phones – see the OH Watch website, www.ohwatch.co.za/important-contacts for a list of numbers. In particular, the SAPS control room on 021 467 8002.

Vagrants

As reported previously, the issue of vagrants is a difficult and complex one. Within the OH Watch area, we have two opinions on vagrants. Some residents are of the opinion that they are helping the vagrants by providing them with assistance, in whatever form, be it with the odd meal, spare clothing, shelter for the night and so on. We also have residents who believe that they want nothing to do with vagrants, that they are a health and crime hazard and should be removed by the Police. Within our area, vagrancy is an issue in Moray Place, Homestead Park, De Waal Park, Upper Buitenkant Street, Prince Street and Vriende Street.

OH Watch has met with various organizations (Police, OK CID and various organizations that provide assistance to vagrants), to assess what can be done. Perhaps the most pertinent advice is that provided by the Social Development Department of the CCID (Cape Town City Improvement District) in its "Give Responsibly" Campaign. It mentions: "It is natural and commendable that you would want to help to uplift the lives of our City's most vulnerable, but have you considered that by offering a handout you are condemning that person to a perpetual life on the street".

Our advice is as follows:

Please do not give handouts – give responsibly by donating to the various organizations.

See <http://www.ohwatch.co.za/vagrants>.

Should Oranjezicht Higgovale agree to become a Special Rating Area (SRA), we would have a fully qualified Social Support Officer who would assist us in managing vagrancy in the most humane way.

Bins Bins Bins

We try to encourage members to leave bins out on the day of collection and ideally just before collection. This is to try and stem the flow of vagrants into our area and bearing in

mind criminal elements use vagrants as “cover”. OH Watch really needs everyone’s co-operation here and hopes that this advice is taken up in the spirit that it is offered.

Streetlights

We are in weekly contact with the City with regards to streetlights in our area that are not working. We encourage members to do the same and to report any lights not working. Residents will be amazed at how efficient the City is once they know about the problem. Faulty Lights can be reported to FaultReporting.Centre@capetown.gov.za or by calling 0800 220 440. Our streetlights are in desperate need of repair and maintenance – you will no doubt have seen some rusty poles within our area. We are in communication with the City about this. Sometimes we hear that there is no budget/resources. An SRA would have a streetlight maintenance budget and would include close liaison with the City on implementing the renewal programme they have promised, and are slowly implementing.

Oranjezicht Higgovale gets new Energy Efficient Street Lighting

It started out because the City needed to save costs and conserve electricity, ensuring that during any further ‘load-shedding’ (rolling black-outs), the safety of residents was not compromised by dark, gloomy sidewalks. It’s simple, says Brinley van der Schyff, manager for public lighting, City of Cape Town. In replacing 80-watt mercury vapour bulbs with 70-watt high-pressure sodium bulbs, those 10 watts or 12,5 % add up, there are more than 200 000 streetlights in the city, which would give more than a two megawatt saving. The first 40 000 lights (Oranjezicht and Higgovale included) have already been replaced giving a saving of 400 Kilowatts. The new, brighter, yellow/orange lights will eventually be visible across the city – giving off 6300 lumens each (compared to the 3 700 lumens of each white-light mercury vapour bulb) a 41% increase in light output with a 12,5% reduction in power consumption. Now that’s smart living.

Roads

We compile a quarterly report for the roads department of the City and have had numerous potholes fixed – we have even managed to get Higgs Road resurfaced – well, the bits of it that were in dire need or repair anyway. We are the eyes of the Roads Department who have welcomed our contribution in identifying problems and who are very pushed themselves in terms of resources (funding and personnel). The Hof Street hole of horror was fixed in a day and the manhole problem on Breda Street was eventually repaired

through OH Watch nagging. The next quarterly report is due now and will be submitted to Roads before month end – please report potholes or road repair required to support@ohwatch.co.za

OH Watch is pleased to report that two speed humps are to be installed on Montrose Avenue to keep the speedsters under control!

An SRA would include an additional budget over and above what the City can provide to for resealing of roads, pothole maintenance, correct and clear road markings and traffic control measures.

A pat on the back for OH Watch Patrollers

Key to patrols working effectively is that they must be consistent (every day) and visible, which in turn depends heavily on membership numbers and membership participation. OH Watch is proud of the 66 members who volunteer each month for a two-hour patrol. Our next patrol training session is on Thursday 25 August July from 6-8pm. RSVP patrols@ohwatch.co.za. Help us make this 100-registered patrollers by the end of the year.

www.ohwatch.co.za/neighbourhood-patrols

Patrol Co-ordinator Position filled and still looking for Security Observer

OH Watch has a new patrol co-ordinator working half days. Francis Richter is responsible for communicating with patrollers, rostering patrollers for patrols, reminding them of their patrols by email and SMS, keeping the patrol kit in good condition and motivating more members to attend patrol-training sessions.

OH Watch is still looking to appoint a “security observer”. The job would entail patrolling the area during daylight hours, looking out for suspicious individuals, as well as monitoring the visibility and performance of ADT and CBAR. At no stage would the observer be expected to confront individuals themselves. Equipped with a radio, the observer would report suspicious activities via radio to ADT, CBAR, and SAPS, where appropriate. It would suit a retired person, or persons. It is possible that more than one person will share the position. OH Watch needs a loaned car for the observer to patrol in. The car could be a valuable marketing tool for a sponsoring company or individual, as it could carry company logos, etc. OH Watch would pay for the running costs of the car, but the ownership of the car would remain with the sponsor.

Contact info@ohwatch.co.za.

Two-Way Radios

Thus far, OH Watch has 96 two-way radios that have been purchased by members, two more radios in each of the SAPS patrol vehicles that work our area (Sectors 2 and 5), one in the City Bowl Armed Response (CBAR) Control Room and One in the ADT Patrol Vehicle. We conduct radio checks every morning and evening at seven. The communication on our dedicated OH WATCH frequency is an invaluable tool in the prevention of crime and apprehension of criminals and OH WATCH encourages you to purchase a radio. See www.ohwatch.co.za/radio-network

As Billy Rauch, (Rugby 11) says, "By being concerned about the other members' safety and thus assuring that they are concerned about your safety, is what it is all about. The end result is a neighbourhood of caring members. The radio is a lifeline that could save a life or prevent a crime."

Are we ready to become a Special Ratings Area?

OH Watch recently concluded a survey amongst members to gather feedback on issues regarding safety and security, social problems, urban management and the marketing of the area. The results of the survey are available and can be downloaded (see homepage www.ohwatch.co.za). Many thanks to those folk who took time to complete them.

One of the survey questions related to the creation of a Special Rating Area (SRA) in Oranjezicht and Higgovale. Participants were asked to indicate their willingness to pay a small top-up levy in which property owners contribute additional rates to fund "top up" services for the area as per an approved Business Plan. Here are some of the comments that we received:

"It must be a small amount - we are paying income tax and rates and any additional levy is really a charge for something which should be covered"

"General street cleaning is poor particularly in the little park in Rosemount Ave. The residents try - The pedestrian lane and steps between Sir George Grey and Rosemount are often fairly disgusting"

"We need to make sure that we have better control of the resources that we pay the City i.e. rates and taxes. At present I feel that not enough of this is spent in the area I live in, especially as it relates to safety and security. We need more dedicated police presence and more initiatives designed to get rid of unwelcome elements, especially drug dealers and vagrants"

"Provided the SRA is well run and focused. I sometimes feel guilty that I strive for a neighbourhood that is perfectly safe and clean, and full of trees, and nice street furniture, in

a country where homelessness and poverty is so prevalent. How can I complain about a streetlight not working, when some areas have no running water? But then I think that if I am paying rates, should I not expect the highest level of service as I would do from any service provider that I am paying to do a job. And the answer is a resounding yes. I feel that an SRA is the only way forward as it seems that affluent neighbourhoods will need to look after their own interests more and more and importantly keep the council accountable for the minimum service that they agree to provide"

"Concerned about rising rates and ADT monthly fee – Suggest a level for voluntary donations or six-monthly"

"If can do stuff as a community will be happy to contribute - Direct line of sight into the collection & spend - call centre for logging issues - website more interactive. But it must be said that we already pay big levies and the city must not be left off the service providing hook"

"250-350 per month. Depends on how much. But only if there is direct expenditure on our area and proper accountability. But on condition that if the delivery of promised services falters consistently, there is redress and the levy can be revoked. Otherwise the levy is simply another form of extortion. . . just like the car attendant."

Some really good comments from members.

In response to members comments, OH Watch has compiled an extensive Q&A, which can be accessed on www.ohwatch.co.za Under the Blog Entitled, "Are we ready to become a Special Ratings Area?" Here are two examples:

Q: Does the formation of an SRA mean that the City can reduce the level and quality of its services?

A: No. The City is obligated to sustain existing service levels. It has to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with each SRA indicating the level of service to be provided by the municipality. This enables the SRA to decide on the "top-up" services that are required.

Q: What are the benefits for SRA members?

A: By pooling their resources in an SRA, individual property owners can enjoy the collective benefits of a well managed area, a shared sense of communal pride, safety and social responsibility, and access to joint initiatives such as waste recycling, energy-efficiency programmes, etc. In the end, these all translate into a tangible boost in property values and capital investments.

We hope that you will join us for our first public meeting to discuss the possible formation of the OH SRA? It will be held in October 2010. Further details to follow.

ADT and CBAR

**Compiled by OH Watch Exco Member,
Butch Rice**

False Alarms

OH Watch has gathered some statistics about the number false alarms triggered in the OH Watch area. Every month ADT and CBAR receive hundreds of false alarm signals from residents. The number of false alarms in our area exceeds 500 per week, which is 2 000 per month.

What are the implications of this?

Apart from disturbing your neighbours, false alarms mean that the response of security companies is not what it should be. Currently, more than 99% of alarms are false, with the result that response times can sometimes be tardy, due to the security company thinking it is just another false alarm. In addition, the Response Officer responding to a false alarm is not in a position to respond timeously to a genuine emergency, as they are needlessly investigating a non-existent crime.

CBAR makes a significant distinction between panic signals and burglary signals. This was to the detriment of an Oranjezicht resident recently, who experienced a break-in in the early hours of the morning. As her alarm system is quite old, it does not distinguish between panic and burglary signals when communicating with the security company. Although she activated the panic button, the company did not respond as swiftly, or with as much force, as if they had received a panic signal, which would have received a very high priority. They received the signal as a burglary signal, and hence unlikely to be genuine. For your own safety, please make sure that your alarm system can deliver both burglary and panic signals, and that your security provider can distinguish between these, when next you test your alarm system.

OH Watch would like to start a campaign amongst residents to reduce the number of false alarms, which are unacceptably high. By supporting this effort, you will make a very real difference to our security in times of genuine emergencies.

Building work on Sundays

In terms of current legislation, builders are only allowed to build up to 6pm at night, and never on Sundays, unless they have a special permit. It is part of the duties of SAPS

to enforce this. If your peace is being disturbed outside permissible hours, point out to the transgressors that what they are doing is illegal, and that they can be reported. If you receive a negative response, phone SAPS on 021 467 8002 to report the incident, and ask for feedback from the police investigating it. We are going to liaise with our sector managers at SAPS, to ensure that these transgressions are taken seriously, and nipped in the bud.

Recruitment of new members

To date we have 633 members. It has been encouraging to see membership steadily rise and to see OH Watch gain momentum. Please encourage your neighbours to register if they have not already done so on www.ohwatch.co.za/membership



Managing your risk at home:

- Remain alert and aware at all times.
- Be suspicious of people
 - standing near your driveway
 - approaching your driveway
 - asking for food at the gate.
- Swop cellphone numbers with your neighbours.
- Ensure that the area around your house is well lit, especially the driveway.
- Ask your neighbours to look out for anything suspicious happening on or near your property.
- Ensure that any shrubs on your pavement are well maintained and can't be used as hiding places.
- When you go out visiting, give your family or friends your estimated time of arrival.
- Ask your visitors to phone you when they get home.
- Stay alert while opening your gate. If you don't have an electronic gate, ask a passenger to open the gate so that you can observe what is going on around you.
- Close – or manually close and lock – the gate behind you as soon as possible.
- Install a sensor that enables the gate to open just far enough to allow your car to pass through. This will help to prevent someone entering the property behind you.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Our Patrol Trainer, Jonny Levin



OH Watch: What drives you to volunteer to train patrollers?

Jonny: To increase the awareness amongst residents in our area so that they can be more vigilant and effective in playing their part to reduce crime. Plus, I really enjoy meeting new people.

OH Watch: Why do you think neighbourhood watches can make a difference?

Jonny: Because they serve as the eyes and ears for SAPS and Armed Response Companies, and its amazing how helpful a simple thing such as getting to know your neighbours can be when trying to reduce incidents.

OH Watch: What message do you have for members of OH Watch?

Jonny: Be alert at all times and do more patrols. If you haven't attended one of our patrol training sessions, you haven't lived.

OH Watch: In closing do you have something else to share with us concerning the neighbourhood watch?

Jonny: Yes, everyone should be part of OH Watch. Get your neighbour to join, empower yourself by reading the information on www.ohwatch.co.za and get involved. This is as important as locking your door when you go out.

Finance

Membership of OH Watch is free but all donations will be acknowledged and used to further the safety of our community. Donations can be made into the following account:

Bank: First National Bank
Branch: Gardens
Branch code: 201511
Account number: 62212483680
Name of account: OH Watch
Ref: Company name/Home address/Donor's name (voluntary)

Write to Us:

OH Watch would really like to hear from residents about safety and security in the area. We want to make this newsletter topical and relevant and we want to include your contributions.

Send your news to: info@ohwatch.co.za

And finally ... a feather in the cap of CBAR

Here's a wonderfully heartwarming story, sent to OH Watch by one of our members: *"On Friday afternoon I was walking down Molteno Road, when I came across an older man sitting on the side of the pavement, clutching his side in pain. He asked me for help, and it was clear that it was some sort of medical problem that was not trivial. He told me he worked for a family in Montrose Avenue, and asked if I could contact them. I said I would, but first phoned CBAR. They answered immediately, and I told them what the problem was. They didn't ask if I was a CBAR client, but concentrated on ascertaining the exact whereabouts of the man. I walked up to the address given to me and alerted the man's employers. By the time I returned, a couple of minutes later, there was a CBAR vehicle on the scene with a paramedic attending to the man. Within seconds two more CBAR vehicles arrived. Most impressive. I feel this sort of dedication to helping the community is really something, and a feather in CBAR's cap. It is most reassuring to know that we can count on this sort of response in times of need."*

Please regularly look at our website: www.ohwatch.co.za

The site is updated daily and lists all incidents that occur in our area.

Please also go to www.ohwatch.co.za/important-contacts for a list of important contacts.

Print out a copy and keep in an easy accessible place.