

I wrote an article last January about a new program we were starting for burglary victims. Our code enforcement staff and volunteers would be holding classes titled, "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design." This class would be open to all residents and business owners in Concord. The genesis for this new program was a suggestion made by our City Council to conduct a safety follow up with our burglary victims, to help reduce our recidivism rate.

These classes focus on making our properties less appealing to thieves. Residents learn about lighting, landscaping ideas, and numerous other security options that are beneficial to the community members. They have become so popular that the classes are now being held at Centre Concord. And the majority of the attendees are not theft victims but people interested in making their property safer. Several hundred people have attended these classes in 2015.

Police chiefs try not to attribute rise and decrease in crime to one program or another. We will sometimes point to a new law or court decision that makes providing public safety more challenging. Proposition 47 is the one that has a lot of criminal justice leaders shaking their heads, asking what we were thinking writing, and much less, passing that law. There are often too many variables to point to one change that impacts crime.

But I may have to rethink my reluctance to attribute cause and effect due to a crime prevention program. In 2014, Concord experienced 832 burglaries. For the past ten years, the average burglaries per year in Concord have been 888 cases. A high in 2005 of 1114 cases, to the low in 2008 of 802 cases.

And for 2015? We have recorded 548 cases through November. That is a 25% reduction from the same time period for last year. Amazing.

I searched Uniform Crime Reporting statistics all the way back to 1985. There were 1428 burglary cases in 1985 (so much for the good old days). The closest year to the low numbers we are experiencing this year was in 2000. There were 695 burglary cases that year.

I have to believe the empowerment of the community members to tighten their security at their residence is playing a role in these low numbers. We will know for sure next year, as the training is gaining more momentum.

Congratulations Concord. Let's beat the 2015 numbers!