



## SPD SPECIAL REPORT

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# Service Quality Update: Feedback From the People We Serve

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This report briefly summarizes the feedback being received by the Seattle Police Department from 9-1-1 callers who have an officer dispatched to assist them and are later surveyed. To date, the Department has conducted seven such surveys, beginning in 2006 and continuing in 2008.

Among the findings from these surveys are the following:

- Overall satisfaction with the services provided by the Department has remained around 4.00 on a scale of one to five, where five means “extremely satisfied” and one means “not at all satisfied.” Over the course of the seven surveys, the average rating in overall satisfaction with the Department’s services is 4.06.
- The 9-1-1 callers were asked their level of agreement with a series statements about the officers who first responded to their calls. On average over the course of the seven surveys, the callers agreed that officers were professional and courteous, at a rate of 4.41 out of five points; provided the information they needed, at a rate of 4.15 out of five points; clearly explained procedures and requirements, 4.01 rating; and told them what would happen next, 3.89 rating.
- Service quality ratings tend to be higher for Department personnel with whom survey respondents have direct contact.
- People who had called 9-1-1 were understandably affected by the incidents that led to their calls, with an average of 26% saying the incident had made them feel “less safe” than before. After receiving services from the Department, however, only 10% of the survey respondents reported feeling “less safe” and 32% felt “more safe” than before.

## *9-1-1 Caller Surveys: Feedback from Those We Serve*

What follows is a brief summary of feedback being received by the Seattle Police Department (SPD) from 9-1-1 callers who have an officer dispatched to assist them and are later surveyed.

*Survey Purpose.* The purpose of the caller surveys is to ascertain how community members view the services provided by the Department and to determine where improvements can be made. In addition, the surveys have been developed to serve as a baseline on community satisfaction and expectations prior to full implementation of the Department's Neighborhood Policing Project.

*Survey Methodology.* A professional survey firm contacts respondents by telephone within two weeks of their having called 9-1-1 and having an officer dispatched to assist them. Callers are selected from among those who call 9-1-1 on randomly selected dates. Certain types of calls to 9-1-1 are excluded, such as hang-ups or persons who may object to being contacted by third parties as a result of their victimization, for example, sexual assault victims. Callers are contacted until a total of 200 interviews are completed. To date seven surveys have been conducted, two in 2006, three in 2007 and two in 2008. One more survey is planned in 2008.

*Survey Instrument.* Topics covered in the survey include the respondents' overall satisfaction with the Department and with the various personnel with whom they interacted, opinions about the Department and its personnel on a variety of quality dimensions, and queries about participants' feelings of safety in general and in the context of the incident that led to their 9-1-1 calls. The interview also solicits suggestions from participants on how Department services can be improved.

*Survey Results Highlights.* In September 2007, the Department issued a report on the results of the first three surveys conducted. A copy of this report is posted on the SPD website at [www.seattle.gov/police/publications](http://www.seattle.gov/police/publications). What follows here are updates on several items repeated in at least five of the surveys or where changes in results over time are statistically significant. Ratings are on a five-point scale unless otherwise noted.

In terms of *overall satisfaction*, the Department has received ratings just under or just over 4.0 on a consistent basis. The results have been so consistent, in fact, that the variations over time have not been significant statistically. Across the seven surveys the average rating has been 4.06.

*Perceptions of Department Services* – five survey items relating to perceptions of SPD services overall have been used in all seven surveys and have shown statistically significant improvement over time. Ratings are of level of agreement with each statement on a five-point scale.

- *Department personnel are professional and courteous* – mean agreement rating of 4.20 over six surveys, with a range of 3.85 to 4.36.
- *The Department is available when you need them* – mean agreement rating of 3.90, with a range of 3.64 to 4.04.
- *The Department is a good resource for dealing with crimes/problems in your neighborhood* – mean agreement rating of 3.81, with a range of 3.33 to 3.93.
- *The Department focuses on the public safety issues that concern you* – mean agreement rating of 3.68, with a range of 3.08 to 3.86.

- *The Department clearly explains its procedures and requirements* – mean agreement rating of 3.68, with a range of 3.43 to 3.81.

Chart A below depicts the average level of agreement that 911 callers had with statements about the Department’s services across the seven surveys. As can be seen, those surveyed were most apt to agree on the level of courtesy and professionalism of SPD personnel and about the Department being available when needed.

**Chart A. Perception of SPD Services by 911 Callers, 2006-2008**



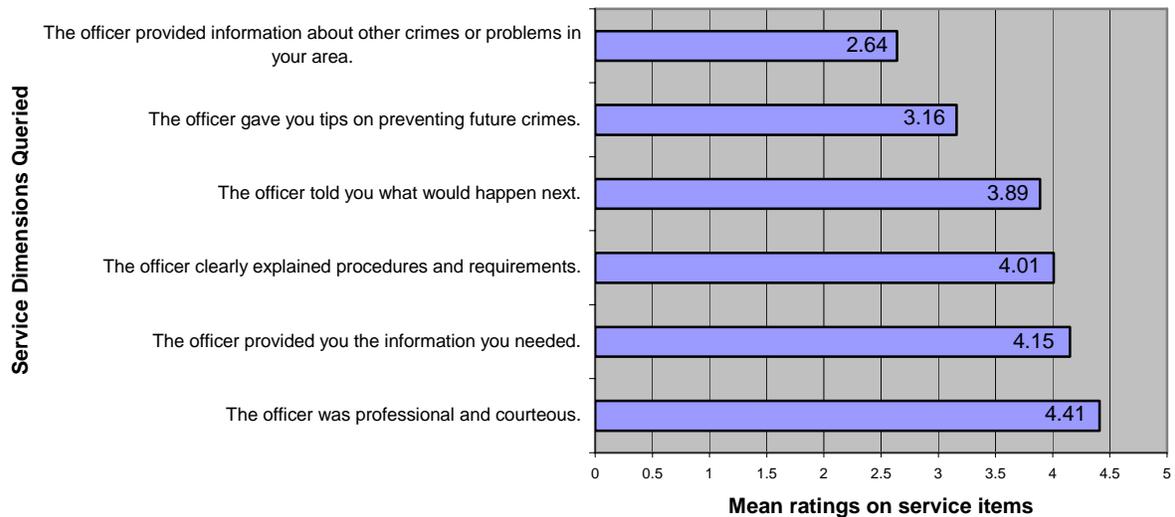
Services provided by officer(s) responding to the call – six items have focused on the level of service provided by the officer(s) responding to the 9-1-1 call. These items have been used in all seven surveys and have shown statistically significant improvement over time. Ratings are of level of agreement with each statement on a five-point scale.

- *Officer was professional and courteous* – mean rating over six surveys of 4.41, with a range of 4.0 to 4.57.
- *Officer provided the information you needed* – mean rating of 4.15, with a range of 3.88 to 4.32.
- *Officer clearly explained procedures and requirements* – mean rating of 4.01, with a range of 3.74 to 4.28.
- *Officer told you what would happen next* – mean rating of 3.89, with a range of 3.28 to 4.23.
- *Officer gave you tips on preventing crimes* – mean rating of 3.14, with a range of 2.82 to 3.43.
- *Officer provided information about other crimes/problems in your area* – mean rating of 2.62 with a range of 2.35 to 3.06.

The mean level of agreement with statements about services provided by officers responding to 9-1-1 calls, are depicted in Chart B below. As can be seen, 9-1-1 callers who had interacted directly with officers tended to rate their level of courtesy and professionalism slightly higher

than they did that of the Department as a whole. The level of agreement about clearly explaining procedures and requirements was also higher when callers had direct contact with officers as opposed to their overall impressions of the Department. Thus, service quality ratings improve when the public has direct contact with Department personnel.

**Chart B. Mean Ratings of Services Provided by Officers Dispatched to Assist 911 Callers, 2006-2008**



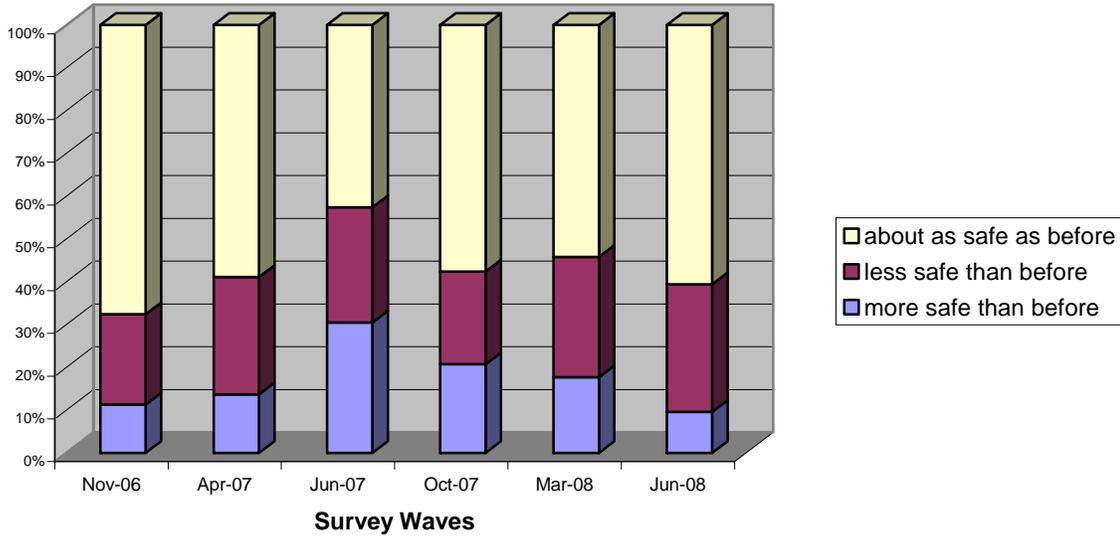
*Perception of Neighborhood Officers* - A similar trend has been observed over the last five surveys, beginning in April 2007, when survey respondents were asked about the services provided by officers in their neighborhood. Police in the neighborhood were rated higher than the Department overall on “being a good resource for dealing with crimes or other local problems,” 3.94 on a five-point scale versus 3.81; and on focusing on “the public safety issues that concern you,” where neighborhood officers rated 3.79 compared with a 3.68 rating for the Department as a whole. From the perspective of 9-1-1 callers, then, neighborhood officers are clearly seen as responsive and in sync with the communities they serve.

*Impact of the Incident that Led to the 9-1-1 Call* – in six of the seven surveys, respondents have been asked two questions about the incident that caused them to call 9-1-1. Specifically they are asked how that incident affected their sense of personal safety and how they feel about their safety having received the Department’s services. Across all six surveys, the following has been found:

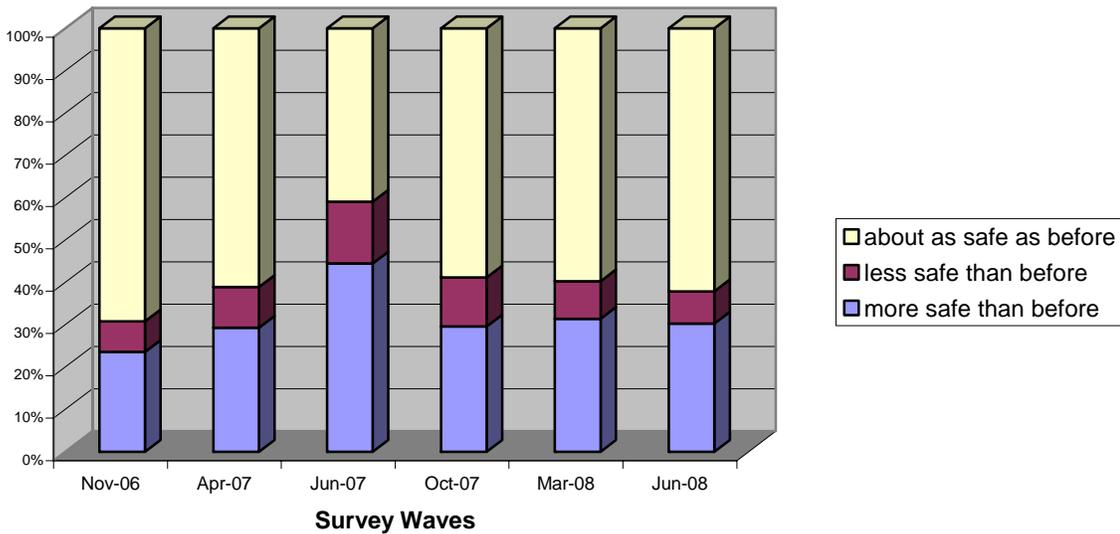
- About 26% of respondents indicate that the incident that led them to call 9-1-1, made them feel “less safe” than they had before. This ranged from 21.1% to 29.8%.
- After receiving SPD services, the proportion of respondents feeling “less safe” than before was reduced on average to 10%. In addition, the proportion of respondents feeling “more safe” went from 17% on average to 32% after receiving SPD services.

In spite of the incident that necessitated a call to 9-1-1, a large number of survey respondents had their feelings of personal safety bolstered and felt reassured after the Department's response. This finding has been consistent over time as depicted in Charts C and D below.

**Chart C. Impact of Incident on Feelings of Safety**



**Chart D. Impact of SPD Services on Feelings of Safety**



Several aspects of Charts C and D are interesting to note. To begin with, a large number of 9-1-1 callers (depicted in light yellow) do not appear to have their feelings of personal safety adversely affected by the incidents that led to their calls for service. Next, a significant number of survey respondents were negatively impacted by their incidents (the red portion of each bar in Chart C).

Finally, it is notable how many fewer persons report negative impacts after receiving the Department's services. In Chart D, then, the red portions of each bar have been reduced and the blue portions, those reportedly feeling "more safe," have increased. This trend has continued across all six surveys in which these questions have been posed.

### *Feedback from Those We Serve: A Summary*

Through periodic surveys of 9-1-1 callers, the Department is able to chart the quality and efficacy of its services from the perspective of those receiving them. Several findings from these surveys are of particular interest:

- Overall, the Department receives relatively high ratings for service quality, averaging about 4.1 on a five-point scale. This suggests that, in general, the Department is achieving its mission of delivering "respectful, professional and dependable police services."
- As solid as these ratings are, those surveyed tend to rate the service quality of Department personnel who are most visible to them (their neighborhood officers) even more highly. This confirms that command and line personnel in the Precincts are in touch with and responsive to the needs and concerns of the communities they serve.
- Officers responding to 9-1-1 calls typically receive high marks for their courtesy and professionalism and for the services they provide in direct response to the dispatched incident. In fact, over 60% of those whose personal safety was most threatened by these incidents (averaging about 26% of callers), report that their feelings of safety were restored as a result of the officers' assistance.
- Service dimensions not related directly to the dispatched incidents - for example, giving general crime prevention tips, or providing information about other crimes in the area - have shown improvement over time, but generally receive lower ratings. These findings indicate that the community is seeking both breadth and depth in the Department's services. They also serve to underscore the importance of the Neighborhood Policing Project, which is designed to give officers geographic ownership and familiarity within service areas and to increase the amount of proactive time available to officers to engage the public.