



Center on Quality Policing

A RAND INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY, AND ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Police Recruitment and Retention in New Orleans: Crisis as Catalyst

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Hurricane Katrina Created Serious Recruitment and Retention Issues for the NOPD

- After Katrina, budget for officers has shrunk . . .

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- Since Katrina, NOPD has lost officers at an annualize rate of 17%
 - Compared to 5% before
- Even worse, losses concentrated disproportionately among junior ranks

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RAND Agreed to Support “Quick Look” at NOPD Recruiting and Retention Problems

- **Visited New Orleans during August/September 2006**
 - **Conducted interviews with all ranks of NOPD, the Police Foundation, FEMA, and Louisiana Recovery Authority**
- **Drew on extensive relevant experience working with large personnel systems**
 - **DoD and several large municipal police departments**

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- **Drew on extensive relevant experience working with large personnel systems**
 - **DoD and several large municipal police departments**
- **Identified initiatives that could be implemented in today’s environment**
 - **Public policy informed by cost-benefit analysis**
 - ***BUT***
 - **In New Orleans, little ability to take on any cost regardless of benefit derived**

Today's Briefing Focuses on Initiatives in Five Areas

- **Compensation**
- **Career management—the promotion process**
- **Recruiting**
- **Mix of officers and civilians**
- **Morale**

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NOPD Salaries Are Not Competitive

- **Relative to comparable cities like Houston, New Orleans underpays its police force**
 - **Police salaries in Houston are substantially higher at all levels, except for police recruits**
 - **Many NOPD officers relocated there, so New Orleans will need to compete with Houston**
- **Also notable, NOPD has failed to pay increases to grades of PO 2, 3, and 4 after officers pass exams qualifying for promotions**
 - **Hinders retention and ability to attract new recruits and motivate current officers**

Position	New Orleans	Houston	
		Min	Max
Police Recruit	30,732	29,164	
PO 1	33,111	36,033	50,039
PO 2	34,797		
PO 3	36,570		55,235
PO 4	38,433	51,114	
Police Sergeant	42,449	61,784	67,362
Police Lieutenant	45,734	69,354	75,606
Police Captain	53,750	79,421	86,613
Police Major	58,633		

Some Options Can Help Address Compensation Problems

- **Cost-neutral reduction in pension program and increase in more-immediate compensation**
 - **Pensions are very generous**
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- **Using housing as component of compensation**
 - City likely to have stock of relatively good housing
 - Might be made available to police/other first responders as non-cash payment for committing to years of service

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Infrequent Promotion Process Has Led to Career Progression and Promotion Problems

- **Promotion exams supposed to be held every three years, but as many as five years pass between exams**
- **Officers promoted based on exams, with NOPD moving down list of qualified candidates over time as need arises**
- **But many not promoted to fill immediate need leave rather than wait five years**
- **As a result, NOPD is often left with those at bottom of the list**

Increasing Frequency of Exam and Promotion Boards Can Help Address the Problem

- **NOPD should convene promotion boards every 12–18 months**
 - **Qualify (pass) only enough officers to fill expected vacancies between newly reduced periods between exams**
- **Doing so would allow most talented officers to progress rapidly**
- **Also would foster climate of continuous learning**
 - **Those who do not pass will be motivated to try again as they see highly qualified officers advance**

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Current Efforts to Recruit New Officers Appear to Be Rather Passive

- **Head of recruiting selects recruiters for NOPD**
 - **No specific selection criteria for choosing best recruiters**
- **Uniformed officers assigned to recruiting mostly spend time recruiting those who have already volunteered**
 - **Use Internet and other research tools to conduct background checks on potential candidates**
 - **Could be done just as well by civilian specialists**

Taking a More Proactive Approach Would Improve Recruiting

- **Examine Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC)-type or school-based program**
 - **One district that tried it reported less costly than traditional methods**
- **Potentially include:**
 - **After-school employment in school year**
 - **Summer employment between grades**
 - **Post-high school employment as civilian NOPD employees**
- **Potentially consider programs providing up-front support for college in exchange for employment**

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As NOPD Shrinks, It Will Be Necessary to Reassess Assignment of Officers

- **Now, some uniformed officers “permanently” assigned to duties civilians could do**
 - **Searching Internet as part of recruiting process**
- **Some assignment of officers to “civilian-type” jobs may be needed because of “special” situations, but assignments should be:**
 - **Temporary, of limited duration**
 - **Tied to a physical limitation**

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Improving Morale Is Critical in Improving Recruiting and Retention

- Make the NOPD whole as soon as possible
 - Repair criminal justice system and NOPD infrastructure
- Make serving officers feel good about accomplishments
 - Work with press to get story out about NOPD
- Increase support for the police
 - **Institutional**—Provide 10 percent pay increase
 - **Personal**—Provide psychological services as needed
 - **Community**—Organize police recognition events



Cost and Immediacy of Impact of Initiatives Are Not Well-Correlated in Every Case

Initiative	Relative Ranking by Goal	
	Cost	Timing of Impact
Shift compensation balance from retirement to salaries	None	Near-term
Convert appropriate jobs from officer to civilian	Low	Mid-term
Develop proactive recruiting program	Low	Mid-term
Use housing stock to benefit officers	Uncertain	Long-term
Increase frequency of promotion boards	Medium	Near-term
Eliminate backlog of PO1–PO4 promotions	Medium	Near-term
Focus compensation on recruiting and retention problems	High	Long-term
Establish police-oriented charter school	High	Long-term
Rebuild police infrastructure	High	Near-term

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RAND *City must make trade-offs between two objectives*

City Has Already Begun the Process

- **Mayor Nagin and RAND released study at press conference in March 2007**
- **Mayor noted that city had already acted upon several of the initiatives**
 - **Increasing pay of junior patrolmen**
 - **Moving to increase the frequency of promotion exams (with the New Orleans Civil Service Commission)**



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