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Captain Joseph Engler's Message

April 20, 2019 | 3:13 AM

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Residents, Merchants, and Visitors:

When problem-solving, a critical initial step is the identification of the nature of the problem.

As the Captain of the Northern Police district of San Francisco, I am constantly looking for answers and approaches that will improve upon the quality of life and the safety of our residents and visitors. In seeking to address an extremely complex homeless problem, I am determined to continue the mission to find sustainable and realistic answers that can be applied by the officers under my command. While embracing a city-wide approach by stakeholders in the Healthy Streets Operation Center, Northern Station is taking ownership of the issues through a tailored, district-specific approach.

Identification of the people is our current mission in the Northern district.

People living in poverty, suffering from mental illness as well as those suffering from drug addiction comprise the majority of our current homeless population. Our greatest challenge as police officers is staying current on the names and the faces of this vulnerable population that travel around our neighborhoods.

Identification of the vulnerable people upon the Northern district streets is our number one priority. Police reports and field identification cards are our vehicles for capturing this information which is critical in determining whether these persons should be taken to a hospital, a shelter, or when breaking the law, to jail.

As citizens, I encourage you to use the 911 and (415) 553-0123 phone numbers whenever you see evidence of a crime afoot. Open-air drug use, possession of stolen property, loitering about playgrounds while intoxicated and around children is worthy of such a call. We realize that the problems described have been prevalent in certain neighborhoods for too long and that you are frustrated. Your local police officers assigned to Northern Station are committed to the struggle and ask that you join us in finding the solutions. Triaging complex problems begin with a call, a police stop and the gathering of information. As police officers, we have no control over the laws on the books or the decisions made in the court room. We can, however, make a good record memorializing the problems through police reports.

Thank you for your help. At Northern Station, we believe that the homeless should never be nameless. Through meaningful contacts with these subjects, we want to assist them in finding a better place.

Have a safe and happy weekend!

-JE

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