

PARK CITY MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY NEWS INTERVIEW



EVIDENCE-BASED POLICING  
HELPS KEEP PARK CITY SAFE & PROTECT CIVIL LIBERTIES

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF OF POLICE WADE CARPENTER

**Park City Municipal Corporation:** Your department practices community-based and evidence-based policing. Explain how these two programs collectively help keep our city safe.

**Wade Carpenter:** The two programs can be described as a mix of high-touch and high-tech, and they work together to keep police informed and allow them to better respond to situations. Community-based policing puts our officers out in the community in low-stress environments so that residents can get to know them on a personal level. For example, we had a cub scout troop visit our station last month. The boys connected with the officers and staff on a human level. We conduct a great deal of proactive outreach—especially with children—so that our citizens can get to know the men and women behind the badges.

Evidence-based policing is the high-tech side of the equation: it is a data-driven approach to analyzing crime patterns. For example, if we map a rash of recent burglaries in real-time and overlay other data points such as time of day, items taken, and neighborhoods, we can develop a profile of the perpetrator and possibly predict future incidents. We also share this information across shifts: every watch commander provides a briefing at the beginning of his or her shift, and the information is available via each officer's computer dashboard. This reduces information siloes and allows us to respond more immediately. This analytical approach also removes some of the human element from the detective work, reducing biases and hunch work.

**PCMC:** Technology-rich solutions are great at identifying patterns in a sea of data. What about the officers themselves—how do you identify and train the best possible candidates?

**WC:** Rigorous recruitment and training are two cornerstones of our success. Our officers are here by choice, so we expect more out of them and they expect more out of us. We evaluate candidates based on eleven different criteria, including social competence, assertive communications, impulse control, decision-making, cultural competence, and integrity and ethics. We avoid hiring officers who are antisocial or authoritarian, and we conduct a panel of psychiatric evaluations to make sure they have a compatible profile. Through this screening process, we feel confident that we are bringing the most qualified and appropriate candidates into our ranks.

Another key component of our training is the research project required of each officer. Each candidate identifies an area for further research, perhaps a need that is not being met in an underserved population, for example. The project requirements include the following:

*“(OUR APPROACH) CAN BE DESCRIBED AS HIGH-TOUCH & HIGH-TECH.”*

- Present project outline
- Determine project vision
- Identify stakeholders
- Develop implementation plan
- Identify resources needed
- Analyze financial impact

Completing this project helps each officer further understand our community before they have even graduated. It also helps us reinforce that they are partners in their—and our—continued success.

**PCMC:** Over the past year, especially, police violence has become an issue in the media. Besides your recruitment and training standards, as well as the strong foundation established by your community-based and evidence-based policing policies, what else are you doing to ensure that your officers are responding with the appropriate amount of force in each incident?



**WC:** One statistic that helps put this issue in perspective is that less than one percent of police encounters result in the use of force; in Utah, the statistic drops to .5 percent or less. This tells me our officers are being trained properly. But there is always more we can do to ensure the appropriate response. For example, we provide specific training on responding to incidents involving someone with emotional or intellectual disabilities.

This issue is also directly tied to the use of body cameras. I am proud to say that our police department was using body cams long before they became part of the national conversation. We employ them because they reduce he-said/she-said accounts and often, in most cases, support the officer's initial report. In fact, they can reduce altercations by up to 70 percent. My concerns with body cams involve those related to privacy: we need to develop clear regulations and retention policies that comply with HIPAA (health-privacy laws), GRAMA (Freedom of Information requests), and other privacy protections.

As with many things, it's important to realize that law enforcement isn't broken. The industry has its issues, but with the right leadership these can be mitigated and resolved. The vast majority of police interactions are positive or appropriately conducted.

Another trend emerging nationally is that of attacks on officers, which is quite frightening but a potential part of any officer's job. Our training helps officers de-escalate responses from "deadly force" to "hands-on" whenever possible. We employ active-shooter and other simulations, so that officers have an idea in their mind of how to respond.

**PCMC:** Special events—including the Sundance Film Festival, Arts Fest, and Tour of Utah—have become a huge part of Park City's identity. How do you police during these events, which involve large crowds and lots of out-of-towners?

**WC:** Special-events policing has been identified as one of our key initiatives, and we have started training officers to see these occasions through a different lens. We coordinate closely with our partners at federal agencies to monitor chatter on social media and other channels. Our greatest challenge is developing policing protocols that make people feel safe without them feeling like they are also in a police state because we want to retain our small-town feel. We evaluate staffing needs for each event and also determine—based on traffic flow and crowd control—the choke points and other spots in which officers need to be placed.

The crowds are also getting bigger, so—in collaboration with the school district, the Summit County Sheriff's office, the Park City Fire District, and the hospital—we are developing training for the triage and treatment of mass casualties. A large-scale attack or disaster is something we hope never happens but we need to prepare for all the same.

**PCMC:** What other initiatives have you identified for 2016?

**WC:** We are placing increased emphasis on the officers' physical fitness because we recognize this is a crucial part of them being able to do their job well.

**PCMC:** You also are or have been involved with a number of state boards and commissions.

**WC:** Yes, I'm the immediate past president of the Utah Chiefs' Association, and I also sit on the Police Officers' Standards & Training (POST) Council, which deals with law enforcement violations. I serve on the joint terrorism task force executive board. Lastly, I am a police liaison for the state's legislature, which means I help review all pending bills related to law enforcement. In the past year alone, eighty law-enforcement bills were presented to the state, at least twenty of which directly affect us at the precinct level. I personally feel that many of these are knee-jerk reactions to sensationalized topics, and I wish that everyone would take a more thoughtful and fact-based approach toward crafting this type of legislation.

**PCMC:** How do you spend your time when you are not at the station or walking the beat?

**WC:** I spend time with my wife, who works in the Accounting Department for Basin Recreation. Our 23-year-old son returned in December from an LDS mission in Stockholm, and it is nice to have him home again. He now works for Jaybird Bluetooth Headphones in Salt Lake City as a social media specialist. Our daughter just graduated from Park City High School. She works for Nuzzles & Co. (the pet adoption nonprofit) and wants to attend veterinary school. She also competes as a rodeo barrel racer, so we spend a lot of time traveling to shows and tournaments with her. She loves anything related to horses and animals.

**PCMC:** Well, thank you for helping make Park City a place where we can all feel safe spending time with our families or doing what we love.

Visit the [Park City Police Department webpage](#) for more information.