



NEW YORK

N.Y.P.D. Vehicle Forfeiture Initiative

► AT-A-GLANCE

► Project Characteristics

Innovative
Self Sufficient

► Program Areas

Alcohol and Other Drugs

► Targeted Populations

Adults

► Type of Jurisdiction

New York City
Five Counties (NY, Bronx,
Queens, Kings, Richmond)

► Jurisdiction Size

9 million

► Funding

None

► Contact

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Problem Identification

Prior to implementing the New York City Police Department (N.Y.P.D.) Vehicle Forfeiture Initiative, one third of motor vehicle fatalities in New York City were alcohol-related. Often, the threat of arrest and imprisonment was not enough of a deterrent. In addition, those arrested for drinking and driving had no incentive to participate in alcohol or substance abuse counseling. Offenders were allowed to continue to drive, giving them the opportunity to repeatedly commit the same offense.

Goals and Objectives

The *N.Y.P.D. Vehicle Forfeiture Initiative's* goal is to prevent injuries, reduce property damage, and ultimately save lives.

The project's objectives are to:

- Decrease the number of alcohol-related fatalities in New York City;
- Decrease the number of Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) incidents using this program as a deterrent; and
- Remove drunk drivers from the highway.

Strategies and Activities

The N.Y.P.D. Vehicle Forfeiture Initiative is based on a long-standing provision of the New York City Administrative Code (local law) that provides for forfeiture of the proceeds from and instruments used to commit a crime. The N.Y.P.D. put a new twist on this existing law and developed the DWI Vehicle Forfeiture Initiative. Prior to DWI offenses, the N.Y.P.D. successfully used vehicle forfeiture actions to address diverse crimes and quality of life problems such as drugs, prostitution, and stolen property.

The Initiative requires that if you are arrested for drunk driving, your vehicle will be seized. The rationale is that, since the vehicle helped commit the crime, seizing an impaired driver's vehicle is like taking away a burglar's tools or a bank robber's gun. The impaired driver can't commit a drinking and driving offense if he or she is not behind the wheel.

Results

The *N.Y.P.D. Vehicle Forfeiture Initiative* has saved many lives by encouraging people to refrain from drinking and driving. As a result of this policy, more people think about the consequences of drinking excessively and getting behind the wheel. Loss of a personal vehicle has proven to be a powerful deterrent that



has accomplished more than the threat of arrest and imprisonment. The hardship and inconvenience suffered when the family car is taken has changed behavior in exactly the ways that the program intended. Furthermore, the Civil Enforcement Unit of the N.Y.P.D. uses settlement of such matters in lieu of litigation as an incentive for defendants to enroll in alcoholism or substance abuse counseling. The *N.Y.P.D. Vehicle Forfeiture Initiative* has proven to be an effective and innovative way to prevent injury and property damage and, most importantly, to save lives.

The historic drop in overall crime in New York City has greatly increased both the actual safety and the perception of order and security of the community. The success of the vehicle forfeiture program has contributed significantly to this achievement. Since the inception of the program, the initiative has:

- Seized over 6,500 vehicles from motorists who chose to continue drinking and driving
- Survived numerous legal challenges such as providing retention hearings to defendants from whom a vehicle was seized
- Expanded the range of options available to the N.Y.P.D. in addressing crime and quality of life problems
- Altered the way the community perceives drinking and driving
- Increased the number of defendants enrolled in alcoholism or substance abuse counseling
- Decreased the percentage of DWI operator-related fatalities to less than six percent