

## SAPD SURVEY: Burglaries top worry for District 31

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SAN ANGELO, Texas — A ransacked beauty parlor was the most visual — and personal — crime that business owner Alma Reyes has experienced in San Angelo.

An iPod Touch was taken from the backroom and a TV was wrenched and left dangling from a wall, said Reyes, who was grateful nothing else was taken.

Reyes, who knew about the San Angelo Police Department's satisfaction survey, didn't fill one out. She liked the idea of the department listening to citizens, but had nothing to contribute on her own.

"We think it's no big deal until we're affected," she said Thursday. "I'll be doing it next year."

The survey, conducted by the department in conjunction with Angelo State University's Community Wellness, Engagement and Development program, received nearly 1,100 responses from the city's six districts. Responses were broken down into six categories measuring citizens' concerns, fears, their satisfaction with officers, the department, crime prevention techniques and what services they see as essential.

In District 31, where Reyes has a business and her home, residents were more concerned with burglary than any other district in San Angelo. Overall the city showed little fear, ranking it lowest of the six, but within that District 31 ranked higher than the citywide average.

Patrol Officer Brian Byslma agrees burglaries are an issue for District 31, but more so with vehicle burglaries rather than home and business.

"The biggest problems that we're seeing is there's a wide range of regular thefts," Byslma said.

When that happens, he said he offers suggestions to protect future property — purchasing an engraver, writing down serial numbers and keep watching your neighborhood.

Also shown in the survey was residents in District 31, which encompasses an area in the northern/central west side of San Angelo, reported their fear of crime increased in the past five years more than the other beats. A fear of getting attacked in the home ranked the highest out of the fear index.

Police Lt. David Howard, with Community Services, said one reason for that fear could be because of well publicized crimes. In May 2010, a man accused of shooting a police officer was involved in a five-hour standoff in the unit block of N. Monroe Street. A second-standoff in December 2010 on East 8th Street involved four men — one allegedly shooting at officers.

Both instances, which took place in the suspect's house or a friend's residence, occurred in District 31.

According to the survey, respondents were not satisfied with police contacts or with the department as a whole.

Reyes said in her few interactions with police officers that they weren't rude, nor courteous either.

Assistant Chief Jeff Fant said those types of complaints are the most common ones the department hears — officers doing their jobs correctly, but not always showing empathy or compassion.

Relationships between officers and the public, one that stresses professionalism and courteousness, is something the department is working on, he said.

Until the salon burglary, Reyes said she had little to report other than loud neighbors and a tire-slashing incident. Several weeks before the break-in Reyes said she and her business neighbors had been calling in reports of suspicious people meeting in the area at odd hours.

"No disrespect to (police), but I don't feel like they're following through," she said.

Police administrators understand where that perception comes from.

As part of its community-based and intelligence-led policing effort officers are taking those "suspicious people" reports seriously, but in a way that's not obvious to the public, Fant said.

All information that's gained by citizens calls, Crime Stoppers, detectives and beat patrol officers is entered into a database that looks for trends in specific areas. Fant said individual reports "are developed much further" than the public realizes. To share all information with the public could be harmful to investigations, he said.

Fant described the system as a delicate balance that police have to follow to prevent infringing on personal rights — appearing suspicious is not a crime. However by gathering information from "suspicious" people, officers may be able to use that in their investigation.

Despite her criticisms, Reyes said she understands the department can't see everything that goes on in every neighborhood. She knows the importance of neighbors sticking together, such as the time when someone called about a strange car in front of her shop. Reyes said the car was one she rarely drove, but was glad someone had noticed the change and called police, who showed up to check on it.

"That makes me feel at ease," she said. "It makes me feel better we're working as a

team."



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