



Advocacy

Featured

Want to Build Ties with Police? Let Them Turn a K-9 Loose in Your Facility

By Hannah Zuckerman | July 5, 2022

Want to Build Ties with Police? Let Them Turn a K-9 Loose in Your Facility

Six years ago, [Texas Recycling Inc.](#) moved from an industrial area to a residential neighborhood in Dallas. President and co-owner Joel Litman began getting the metals and paper company involved with the local community. Those efforts included collaborating with local law enforcement. The company had little contact with police at its old facility, but Litman soon found that there are many ways to get engaged.

Proactively meeting with law enforcement has been rewarding for Texas Recycling. The neighborhood police officers often stop by to check on the business. “They know the neighborhood, they know the people, and if we have questions, they can help us a lot,” Litman says. “We don’t typically have reason to call on the police, but if we need them, we know they’re there.”

He recommends other recyclers get to know their local police or sheriff's department for many reasons.

A Good Neighbor

Moving into a residential area initially drew some concerns from neighbors, Litman recalls. That's why having buy-in early from local leaders, like the police, is important for recyclers. "We're part of the community, and we keep our eyes and ears open for what's going on in the neighborhood," he explains. "[The police] can show the neighbors that we're here for the long term, and that we want to be players in the community."

This collaboration helps recyclers become trusted members of the community and gives law enforcement a better understanding of the industry.

Building Trust

Atlanta-based [Pull-A-Part](#), a chain of U.S. automotive recycling facilities where customers bring in tools to remove parts from vehicles, has a long history of working with law enforcement. Collaboration helps dispel some of the myths about the industry, says Steve Levetan, executive vice president.

"We need to educate one another," he says. "We've done presentations with law enforcement to help them understand us, and help us understand their perspective, and what they're going through to enforce the laws that protect us and our customers."

Though Derick Corbett, Pull-A-Part's senior vice president of external affairs has been with the company only about 18 months, he's already learned about ways to engage. "Work with law enforcement proactively," he recommends. "Law enforcement want to stop criminals; they want to help us be successful, so start conversations from a place of believing [police] want to do good."

While members of law enforcement want to help, they may not understand how recyclers operate, challenges recyclers face, or local laws governing them. "Once you realize what [police] don't know and start from a place of trust, that helps us get to a place of education," Corbett explains.

"Law enforcement isn't trying to find something wrong," he adds. "They want to know how your business runs. Give them a boots-on-the-ground experience. Show them that they're interfacing with legitimate operators. It's like inviting someone into your home for dinner; it creates a next-level relationship."

Large-scale recycling facilities provide an ideal space for law enforcement to conduct cadet training for future officers. "Recycling facilities are big and varied, so they make great training grounds," Litman says.

K-9- training, for example, lends itself well to a recycling facility. After hours, a "suspect" hides inside and a police dog is let loose to find them. "If you can open your facility during off-hours [for police to use for training], then do it. Making that kind of offer is a great opportunity to strengthen your partnership," Litman says.

Once trust is established, recyclers can start showing police the ins and outs of the business. "Law enforcement may have some



preconceived notions about how we operate, but once you've got that trust you can demonstrate that those notions are not always correct," Corbett says.

Stopping Metals Theft

Corbett and Levetan have given presentations to law enforcement training sessions and conferences around the country. Their efforts relate to metals theft and catalytic converter theft, and how police can best combat the problem.

"[Metals theft laws] are not in the criminal codes," Corbett explains. "In Georgia, for example, they're in the occupational codes. The [police] academy typically focuses on criminal codes, so the laws that regulate precious metals purchases and secondary metals recyclers are in a section that officers may never have learned about."

Levetan and Corbett have met with the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, the Georgia Auto Theft Intelligence Council, and the South Carolina Sheriffs' Association. They are working to schedule training in Alabama, North Carolina, and Tennessee. In June, they presented at the southeast chapter of the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators (IAATI) Vehicle Crimes Conference in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

"We've talked about metals theft laws and policy improvements that we, as an industry, think would help make law enforcement more successful, and [IAATI] found those conversations valuable," Corbett says. "They help strengthen the trust between law enforcement and our industry."

Collaboration allows recyclers to step into the shoes of law enforcement. "Knowing their concerns can help us shape effective laws," Levetan says. "We don't know all the issues out there any more than they do but working together gets us all a lot closer."

Getting Involved



Historically, recyclers kept a low profile on the local, state, and national levels, Litman says. But in today's world, it's vital to get involved. "If you have a business you want to be proactive with local law enforcement, there's no reason not to be," he says. "A time will come when they'll need you or you'll need them. If you already have a partnership, then it will be much easier to handle whatever comes."

By participating in [National Night Out](#), open houses, and fundraisers, Litman has become well-known to local police. Litman's friends in the industry know of his fondness for Oreo cookies. After the local police sergeant learned about it, the department made Litman and Texas Recycling a porcelain cookie jar shaped like a Dallas police car. "It meant so much to me," Litman says. "It was more than I ever expected; it was amazing."

Whether your relationship leads to a cookie jar or not, proactive engagement with law enforcement is important. "We're working together to build a better community," Litman says. "It's about getting to know your neighbors the way you'd get to know your customers or vendors. They're part of your community and there's no reason not to start building a relationship with them."

ISRI can help build those relationships. Contact Todd Foreman, ISRI's director of law enforcement outreach, at (202) 662-8526 or [email](#).

Featured image and body image 1 courtesy of GAPD. Caption: Steve Levetan and Derick Corbett presentation to the Georgia Auto Theft Intelligence Council in May 2022. Body image 2 courtesy of Courtesy of Texas Recycling. Caption: The Dallas Police Department (DPD) presented Texas Recycling with this “patrol car” cookie jar as a “thank you” for the company’s partnership with the DPD officers in the community.