

Houston Heights Constable Patrol Program

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A new program is in place for Heights residents and businesses interested in reducing crime and vandalism in the area. Residents have a contract with the Precinct I Constable's Office **Contract Deputy Program**. This patrol program's main objectives are crime prevention and providing immediate police services to citizens in need. The Constables on patrol are Harris County deputies, who are in uniform, armed and driving distinctively marked law enforcement vehicles. In addition to the benefits of a law enforcement presence on our streets, subscribing property owners are eligible for special services such as vacation watches, home security surveys, and direct access to the Precinct I dispatcher.

Subscribing property owners in the designated patrol area pay an annual fee for patrol service that can range from eight hours, five days per week to 24x7 service. The cost per subscriber depends on the number of paid participants and the level of service desired. Harris County covers 20% of the cost of the service.

HOW DOES THIS PROGRAM HELP OUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

1. Highly visible marked Constable vehicles patrolling the neighborhood. This greatly reduces the criminal's opportunity to violate the law and acts as a deterrent to those committing crimes.
2. Daily patrolling by dedicated deputies enables them to become familiar with the neighborhood, thereby alerting them to "out of the ordinary" situations such as suspicious persons or vehicles.
3. Familiarity with the neighborhood will enable the deputies to minimize response time on calls. A deputy's response time to calls within the assigned contract area will average two to five minutes.
4. Increased feeling of security and confidence knowing the deputies are only a phone call and minutes away.
5. The program is designed so that whenever a deputy is not on duty, paid subscribers can still call the Precinct I dispatcher who will dispatch the nearest available deputy. In an emergency, 911 should still be called in addition to the Precinct I dispatcher.



Special points of interest:

- All premises within the patrol area benefit from the program, but only paid subscribers are eligible for enhanced services such as vacation watches, special watches, home alarm inspections, and direct access to the Precinct I dispatcher.
- The goal is to have a high participation rate such that the cost per subscriber is minimal with a high service level (ideally, 24x7).
- Questions or comments? Want to be a volunteer? Simply e-mail heightspatrol@houstonheights.org.

WHY PAY TO SUBSCRIBE?

In addition to funding additional law enforcement to reduce crime in our neighborhood, the program offers paid subscribers direct phone contact with the Precinct I dispatcher for quick response time to calls for help or for reports of suspicious activities. Subscribers can call the Precinct I dispatcher even when a deputy is not on patrol. Paid subscription also allows the privileges of vacation watch services and special watches for unusual circumstances, as well as home security inspections. Residents with home alarm systems may also designate the Constable as the first responder to an activated alarm.

WHO CAN SUBSCRIBE?

All residents, property owners, and business owners in a patrol area are eligible and strongly encouraged to participate in the patrol program by being a paid subscriber. You do not have to be a member of the Houston Heights Association to be a paid subscriber in the patrol program. To express interest in subscribing, please email heightspatrol@houstonheights.org.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The cost of the program (and possible future expansion) is dependent on two main factors: the number of paid subscribers in a geographic area and the level of service. Our cost for one deputy for 8 hours a day 5 days per week is approximately \$71,000 which includes the deputy's salary, vehicle, gas and county administrative fees. Each deputy can patrol approximately 1,000 to 1,200 premises. Cost per service address for 2010 is \$255/year.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS PROGRAM?

The entire neighborhood benefits from the street patrolling which raises the level of security in our neighborhood. All services provided by the Constable Patrol — street patrolling, special watches, vacation watches, personal help, home security inspections, etc., are paid for by the paid subscribers. Consequently, only paid subscribers can call upon the deputies for special services other than the street patrolling — vacation watch services, special watches, home security inspections and direct access to the Precinct I dispatcher.

A testimonial from one of our subscribers:

Karen,

I wanted to report to you of a successful use of the Constable Program. Last Wednesday evening I arrived home from work and my wife informed me that a strange man had been harassing a worker at our house that afternoon. Shortly after we spotted this man in the back yard of the property next door which we happen to own. I went over to talk to him and noticed that he had parked his green minivan in front of the house next door and had pulled an enormous pile of junk out the back and dumped on the street. Apparently he was trying to change a tire. I went around to talk to him but noticed he was passed or sleeping in the back yard. I decided at that moment to call the authorities. I remembered hearing that the constable program had started but not having any contact phone numbers I used the internet to get to Precinct I dispatch. At first the deputy was unsure whether they covered the neighborhood but then found the information. I gave him the details and within 2 minutes a constable responded to house.

I was extremely impressed by the speed of the response. I subsequently talked to the deputy who told me that that the individual had had a flat earlier in the day and had been trying to change it. He appeared intoxicated and was uncooperative in cleaning up his junk, subsequently he was arrested and his vehicle towed.

I am grateful to you for organizing this program.

Thanks and regards.