

TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS: SOLVING GUN CRIMES

THE PROBLEM

Guns give criminals the ability to attack from afar, which often results in fewer witnesses and less crime-scene evidence than other types of crimes.

Additionally, the threat of gun violence often instills fear of retaliation and discourages potential witnesses from coming forward to report crimes. Clearance rates for homicides committed with a firearm are low and law enforcement officers need all the tools available to help solve gun crimes and get violent criminals off the streets.

THE SOLUTIONS

Microstamping Technology

Microstamping makes it possible to link cartridge cases recovered at crime scenes to the gun that fired them. Microstamping is an innovative technology that utilizes lasers to make precise, microscopic engravings on the internal mechanisms of a semiautomatic pistol, such as the breechface and firing pin. When the gun is fired, a unique alphanumeric code identifying the gun's make, model, and serial number is stamped onto the cartridge case. This gives law enforcement a significant investigative tool to solve gun-related crimes.

With the 2007 passage of AB 1471, sponsored by then-Assemblymember Mike Feuer, California became the first state to require the use of microstamping technology. In recent years, similar legislation has been considered in New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maryland, Wisconsin, and Illinois.

SUPPORT FOR MICROSTAMPING

- A 2008 national poll by Mayors Against Illegal Guns found that **77% of Americans favor requiring all guns sold in the United States to have a ballistic fingerprint**, which allows police to determine what gun fired a bullet.
- The International Association of Chiefs of Police issued a resolution in 2008 supporting microstamping technology, concluding it would provide “leads that would allow for substantial evidentiary information that will help identify, apprehend, and arrest criminals.”
- In 2010, the American Bar Association recommended that federal, state, and territorial governments enact microstamping laws that would enable law enforcement to identify the weapon used in a crime and the purchaser of that firearm.

“ShotSpotter” Technology

Gunshot detection systems, the most prominent of which is SST’s “ShotSpotter,” utilize acoustic sensors and geographic and municipal maps to identify and pinpoint the source of gunfire. These systems are a useful tool for law enforcement because they:

- Quickly and accurately pinpoint the origin of gunfire, thereby improving response time
- Result in the reporting of gunfire in areas where it might otherwise go unreported
- Help investigators locate spent cartridges, determine the time of a shooting, and identify possible witnesses

South Bend, Indiana, Police Chief Ron Teachman has stated that combining ShotSpotter detection with reports from citizens has helped deter crime in the city. He reported that local police collect illegally used guns in 50% of cases detected by ShotSpotter. That figure is just 6% when there is only a citizen’s report. Moreover, about 75% of the shots fired detected by ShotSpotter are not called into dispatch by private citizens and would not otherwise be investigated.

Cities across the country, including in Arizona, California, Illinois, New York, Ohio, and South Carolina, have installed gunshot detection systems.

ABOUT THE LAW CENTER TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (formerly known as the Legal Community Against Violence) was founded after the 1993 shooting in San Francisco that left eight dead. Today, it is a prominent national law center focused on providing comprehensive legal expertise in support of gun violence prevention. As a nonprofit organization, the Law Center is dedicated to preventing the loss of lives caused by gun violence by providing trusted, in-depth legal expertise and information on America’s gun laws. The Law Center partners with state legislators, advocates, community groups, and others to advance its mission to prevent gun violence in America.

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