

## Safe Residence Programme 2012

by David Thomas, Founder of Safe Communities Algarve who can be contacted on: 913 045 093 or email: info@safecommunitiesalgarve.com.

Since its implementation two-and-a-half years ago the GNR-run Safe Residence Programme (*Programa Residência Segura*) has significantly helped slash emergency response times for people living in rural areas across the Algarve as well as reducing the fear of crime in areas where it has been adopted. It is the success of this programme which has resulted recently in the announcement that the SRP will now be developed through the whole of the country.

The Safe Residence Programme was launched in Alfeição (Loulé) in January 2010 following a number of violent indoor residential robberies targeting mainly foreign householders in that area.

Its introduction has facilitated a closer communication between the GNR and residents through the passing of information about crime and has improved the dissemination of security advice to residents.

The idea arose from discussions held between village residents and the GNR on how best

to respond to the rise in crime though closer engagement between the community and the GNR.

Following these discussions the GNR in Loulé took the initiative to form a dedicated team with English-speaking personnel exclusively to develop the programme. Despite limited resources this was accorded a high priority with officers specially selected for this role. One of the first actions taken by the team was to visit residents in the area in order to promote closer engagement and provide a direct contact number in case assistance was required.

The aim of the programme was initially, and still is, to provide a faster means of response to emergencies by the GNR through using maps, GPS coordinates and through the numbering of households in the villages concerned.

Residents in other villages also volunteered their services, and within the first few months of operation, other villages including Vale de Telheiro, Poço Geraldo, Cruz Do Assumada and Alfentes had joined the scheme.

This involved a considerable amount of hard work by those concerned, in drawing maps, downloading GPS coordinates, and other work in support of the GNR. Those involved in the initial stages of the programme subsequently developed a forum aimed at exchanging information and best practices between the various villages which had joined the Programme in Loulé. The coming together of 'villagers' and 'villages' to help one another through crime prevention was one of the most positive outcomes of this programme.

A milestone in 2010 was the development of a 'Guide to Establishing the SRP', which was produced by SRP village representatives for use by the GNR and communities in developing the programme within the Loulé area.

Yet a further milestone that year was the SRP being selected as part of Portugal's entry into the European Crime Prevention Awards where it achieved commendable results.

As of June 2012 the programme had grown to some 18

villages in the Loulé area covering over 1,100 households.

The outcome of the Loulé 'experiment' proved very positive, resulting in a greater sense of security among residents, much faster response times to emergencies and a decrease in household crime in the areas concerned.

### Setting up the Programme:

Given its success the programme has been further developed and now operates throughout all six GNR divisions in the Algarve namely: Portimão, Albufeira, Silves, Loulé, Faro and Tavira under the coordination of the regional GNR headquarters in Faro. Currently there are some 3,000 households registered with the programme and this is growing daily.

Due to the difference in demographics of various areas the approach adopted by the GNR in establishing the programme has had to be tailored to the areas concerned.

In Faro and Loulé the programme relies on a significant input from various villages in the initial stages and works on a village-by-village basis, whereas for instance in Albufeira the GNR proactively select areas to be covered. Another difference is that launch of the programme in Loulé takes place at local gatherings held between the GNR and the community, whereas in some other areas residents become registered when the GNR visit their home or upon contacting the GNR individually.

Regardless of which method is adopted, residents are invited by the GNR to complete a simple pro-forma in order that they have more details of the household concerned. This is important in helping them respond quickly and effectively to emergencies and provide greater attention when the property is empty. All property locations are based on GPS referencing.

### How the Programme operates in an Emergency:

In terms of the operation of the programme in emergencies the process is standardised. In case of an emergency the householder concerned simply dials an emergency number, provides their name, that of the village and number of the house (only if it has been allocated a house number by the GNR) and states it is an emergency. As the GNR know the location of each property through Geo-referencing their emergency services can locate the property far quicker than before. Each team has at least one English speaking officer, and some also have German and French speaking officers.

### The work of Safe Communities Algarve in supporting the GNR Safe Residence Programme:

Safe Communities Algarve was formed by David Thomas in October 2011 following discussion with the GNR Faro District Command to help, amongst other things, support the GNR in its efforts to reduce crime by providing dedicated crime prevention information and help promote the Safe Residence Programme. It provides a free service to the whole community and has nearly 40 downloads at present, covering a wide range of crime prevention advice ranging from motorist crime, tourists, villa security etc. As an independent

body it also provides guidance on selecting alarm companies etc. It is professionally run, supported by the British and Dutch Ambassadors to Portugal, and provides advice based on the founder's 38 years experience in policing.

More details can be found at [www.safecommunitiesalgarve.com](http://www.safecommunitiesalgarve.com).

In supporting the Safe Residence Programme it has provided guidance and initial help to some ten villages throughout the Algarve as well as the many residents who contact Safe Communities Algarve for specific advice. Its website has full up to date information about the SRP and a complete list of contact details for those who wish to register with the GNR.

The SRP is still expanding throughout the Algarve commensurate with GNR priorities and off course available resources. Some areas are further advanced than others in the implementation process. If you are a resident in the Algarve and would like further details of the scheme and whether it currently covers your particular location (or will in the future), the best way is to contact the following teams which are shown by GNR Police area which corresponds to your postal area.

It is recommended that for speed of operation in an emergency the above number appropriate for your area is entered in your landline and mobile phones as a speed dial number. If you have any difficulty in contacting the various teams directly, please contact your nearest GNR station.

Safe Communities Algarve maintains close contact with the GNR regarding the future development of the SRP. Updates will become available from time to time.

This article is downloadable from 'Safe Communities Algarve'. Click 'Safe Residence Programme'. Future updates will also be available for download from the same page and communicated through the media.

### Telephone numbers and emails:

Albufeira:	961 193 349	ct.far.dabf.npe@gnr.pt
Faro:	962 093 131	ct.far.dfar.npe@gnr.pt
Loulé:	962 093 196	ct.far.dlle.npe@gnr.pt
Silves:	961 193 348	ct.far.dslv.npe@gnr.pt
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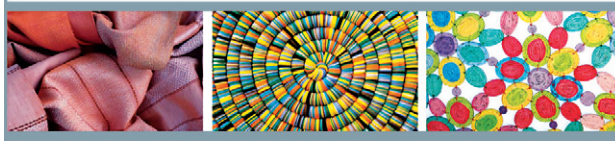
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