BIAS BASED PROFILING

Criminal profiling, which involves the derivation of behavioral characteristics and personality features from crime scene evidence, can be a useful implement in criminal investigations. Bias based profiling; however, is the selection of individuals based solely on a common trait of a group. This includes, but is not limited to, race, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation religion, economic status, age or culture.

It is the policy of the Altamonte Springs Police Department to patrol in a proactive manner, to investigate suspicious persons and/or circumstances, and to enforce motor vehicle laws. We are here to protect the community. Law enforcement officers are required to use skills developed through observation, training and experience in order to identify suspicious circumstances, unusual occurrences and violations of law, and to act according to the situation. Therefore, officers focus on a person's conduct or other specific suspect information, and will have reasonable suspicion (supported by articulable facts) that the person contacted has been, is or is about to commit a violation of the law.

We want to do the right thing. Discriminatory enforcement practices can alienate our citizens, foster distrust of police in the community, invite media scrutiny, legislative action and judicial intervention, and potentially lead to allegations of constitutional and civil rights violations. As we perform our duties, it is imperative that we afford all citizens the Constitutional and fundamental right to equal protection under the law. We use accepted investigative tools. Criminal profiling is one of many accepted and necessary law enforcement investigative practices. However, it differs from and should not be confused with bias-based profiling. One is an investigative tool; the other, a discriminatory practice.

Criminal profiling can assist us by narrowing the field of potential suspects in major criminal investigations. Based on current and historical investigative knowledge and experience we scrutinize a set of facts and factors common to specific (e.g. serial murder with a certain 'signature') or general (e.g. narcotics trafficking) criminal activity. From these facts and factors, we may be able to identify a type of person or group of people by gender, age, race and/or by personality, social, and/or other characteristics that are most likely to be involved. This can result in fewer suspects to consider and a quicker resolution to the case.

How does criminal profiling differ from bias-based profiling? While criminal profiling does add elements (such as gender, race or ethnicity) to a list of factors scrutinized to identify a suspect, these elements are only parts of several pieces of the puzzle that police must put together to solve crime.