OSW GROUP ANNUAL SUMMARY

Issues and recommendations discussed for improving the wellbeing of police officers

2011–2012

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LEARNING FROM THE PAST

AWARENESS FOR THE FUTURE

COPS
COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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Bureau of Justice Assistance
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MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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Dear Colleagues,

This is a time of many challenges for law enforcement in America. We have spoken extensively about how agencies are working to manage shrinking budgets and personnel losses and the effects those changes have on public safety, but we must also recognize that these changes also impact our officers—with larger patrol areas to cover, fewer backup officers, reductions in training, and increasing job stress.

When these challenges combine with the daily work of serving our communities, we risk overlooking the needs of our internal community. Prioritizing the health and wellbeing of officers is difficult when we are faced with so many other external pressures and challenges, even though we all may understand on a personal level that we may be less effective at serving others if we are struggling ourselves. And when officer health and wellness declines, the risks to officer safety increase and can lead to a growing number of officer injuries and deaths in the line of duty.

The U.S. Department of Justice is committed to helping the law enforcement community protect those who serve and reduce the risks to health and safety that officers face every day. In 2011, Attorney General Eric Holder, Jr. requested that staff here at the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Bureau of Justice Assistance to form a national Officer Safety and Wellness Group. The OSW Group brings together law enforcement thought leaders, criminal justice practitioners, and colleagues to share their perspectives on improving officer safety and wellness. The group comprises representatives from law enforcement agencies and associations, federal agencies, and the research community who can impact public safety and officer health and wellness.

This first annual summary brings together some of what we have learned from the work of the OSW Group thus far. It summarizes the research we have gathered on officer shootings and vehicle safety and presents recommendations the OSW Group has developed in the areas of research, policies, training, and practices in response to the risks presented by gunfire and vehicle operations. While not all-encompassing, this report provides a starting point for a national discussion on officer safety and sets the groundwork for the OSW Group's efforts in 2013 and beyond.

An agency's most important resource is its people. Together we can work to develop model policies, guidelines, tools, and other resources to enhance the safety, health, and wellness of officers so they might be better able to serve our communities.

Sincerely,

Bernard K. Melekian

Bernard K. Melekian, Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Sincerely,

Denise E. O'Donnell

Denise E. O'Donnell, Director
Bureau of Justice Assistance

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all of the law enforcement agencies, associations, and the research community for their contributions to the Officer Safety and Wellness Group.

In particular, we would like to thank those from the Bureau of Justice Assistance and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services who worked to bring the meetings together and this first annual report to fruition:

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Thank you to Bascom "Dit" Talley for facilitating the OSW Groups. We'd also like to thank the Major Cities Chiefs Association for managing the OSW Group initiative—your knowledge and expertise in the field have contributed significantly to the group.

"The unfortunate reality is that—despite measured improvements in the overall crime rate—incidents of violence against law enforcement officers are approaching the highest levels we've seen in nearly two decades."

— Eric H. Holder, Jr., Attorney General of the United States (2012)

Introduction

In 2011, U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr. identified that the number of officers shot and killed in the line of duty had significantly increased over the past several years. In fact, in 2011 this number was the highest it had been in the past decade.

From 2002 through 2011, the number of officers killed in the line of duty due to gunfire reached its lowest in 2008 with 40 officers shot and killed (see ODMP 2008); from 2008, this number steadily increased until reaching an all time high of 67 officers in 2011 (see ODMP 2011).

Despite the fact that violent crime rates were down in 2009 (see FBI 2010b), showing a steady decline since 2006, the number of officers fatally shot in the line of duty has been increasing (see ODMP 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011). Analysis of the 2006 through 2010 Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) data (see FBI 2003–2010) reveals that brazen and senseless attacks on officers that have resulted in death have been primarily through ambushed or unprovoked incidents. Ambushes have attributed to nearly 40 percent of the officers feloniously killed in 2011 (see ODMP 2011), an increase of 41 percent from the previous year according to the 2010 LEOKA data (see FBI 2003–2011).

Figure 1. 2006–2011 Rate of Change in Violent Crime of Officers Fatally Shot
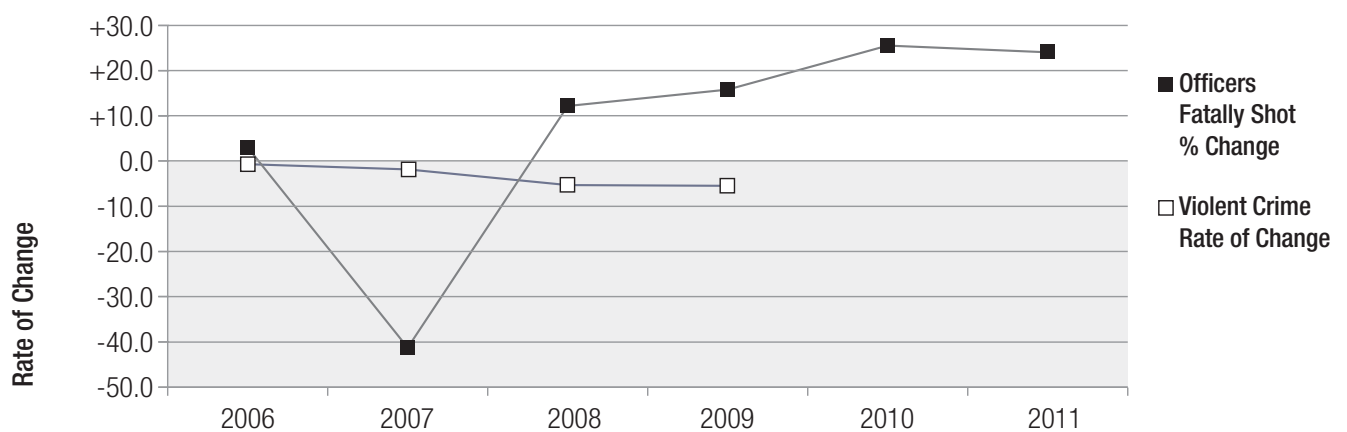
Source: Data adapted from FBI 2010b; ODMP 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011.

The 2003 LEOKA data reported that 100 officers were feloniously killed from 1994 to 2003 by ambush—a decade of violence in unprovoked incidents; as for the next seven years, LEOKA data from 2004 to 2010 show that 82 officers were feloniously killed by ambush (see FBI 2003–2011). As for 2011, analysis of the Officer Down Memorial Page reveals that 37 officers were killed in ambush situations (see ODMP 2011). An eight-year temporal comparison of 2003 through 2010 LEOKA data and 2011 ODMP data shows that 78 officers were feloniously killed by ambush from 1996 to 2003, compared to 119 from 2004 to 2011 (see FBI 2003–2011; ODMP 2011). This is a 53% increase of officers killed in the most recent eight years.

Considering these statistics, General Holder requested the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to advance the protection of those in the law enforcement field. In response, the COPS Office and BJA formed the national Officer Safety and Wellness (OSW) Group. Comprising representatives from law enforcement agencies and associations, federal agencies, and the research community, the purpose of the OSW Group is to bring law enforcement thought leaders, criminal justice practitioners, and other colleagues together to share their broad perspectives on improving officer safety and wellness. Participants contribute information and ideas with the goal of enhancing subject-related products, tools, resources, and services available to the field. In addition, the group encourages the nation's law enforcement agencies to adopt cultures of safety and wellness.

Over the past year, the COPS Office and BJA have held four OSW Group meetings. During the initial kick-off meeting in July 2011, the group identified the 16 focus areas that would guide future meetings as well as the overall mission of the OSW Group (see sidebar on page 3 and Appendix A). These 16 areas were further defined and prioritized in the subsequent September meeting, also considered the first official meeting, after which the COPS Office produced a summary report (see Fiedler 2011).

The third meeting, held in January 2012, focused on the first three areas but grouped them under the general heading of officer deaths and injuries from gunfire (see COPS Office 2012b). During the fourth, April 2012 meeting, the OSW Group concentrated its efforts on emergency vehicle operation, education, and training (a meeting summary report is forthcoming). At the next meeting, scheduled for September 20, 2012, the group will discuss the importance of leadership in creating a culture of safety. All meeting summary reports as well as information about future meeting topics are available on the COPS Office OSW Group website: www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=2603.

Each meeting's agenda includes subject matter experts who review current research on the selected topic and practitioners who report on case studies and programs that promote promising or best practices to reduce officer injuries and deaths. Prior to the meeting, group participants are provided with topical background material to help them prepare for the meeting.

The agenda also includes time for smaller group discussions and then a full group review of everyone's recommendations and observations, which are aimed at both improving policies, practices, and training in law enforcement agencies and encouraging further research to address gaps in knowledge regarding safety and wellness issues. Participants are asked to provide

these observations and recommendations by answering the following questions as they relate to the current meeting's focus area:

- **Research:** What does the research tell us about the topic under discussion? What does the research contribute to the development of policy, training, practice, and programs? What are the gaps in current research?

- **Policy:** What policies should agencies have in place to improve officer safety?

- **Training:** What type of training do officers need to safely handle the responsibilities of their job?

- **Practice/Programs:** What specific practices or programs should departments consider adopting to help reduce deaths and injuries?

The OSW Group continues working toward recommendations that will help address the alarming statistics and practices that impact officer safety. For example, gunfire deaths and automobile accidents were the leading causes of officer deaths over the past decade (see ODMP 2000-2010). More than half of the officers shot and killed in 2011 (see ODMP 2011) were involved in ambush or unprovoked incidents, and USA Today reported that 42 percent of the officers killed in vehicle crashes over the past three decades were not wearing seat belts (Johnson 2011).

The next two sections summarize the discussions of the OSW Group on officer deaths and injuries from gunfire and vehicle safety operations. Considering the numerous facets regarding gunfire and vehicle safety operations, the group concentrated its September 2011 and January and April 2012 meeting efforts on specific aspects of the issues, with more discussions planned for the future. Furthermore, each of the following sections identify key points and recommendations for research, policy, training, best practices, and programs.

The COPS Office and BJA would like to thank all the local, state, tribal, and federal partners whose contributions to the meetings are reflected in this annual report.

The Officer Safety & Wellness Group

Mission

The OSW Group will contribute to the improvement of officer safety and wellness in the United States by convening a forum for thoughtful, proactive discussion and debate around relevant programs and policies within the law enforcement field. Information and insight gained and shared will help enhance programs, policies, and initiatives related to officer safety and wellness.

Goals

- To create an opportunity and environment for law enforcement organizations and researchers to collaborate on improving officer safety and wellness

- To bring law enforcement organizations and researchers together quarterly to share knowledge and information about officer safety and wellness initiatives

- To disseminate information and best practices to the field through the government and law enforcement organizational communications mechanisms

Issue Priorities

1. Injuries and death due to gunfire
2. Premeditated and unprovoked ambush situations
3. Rifle/long-gun threats/assault weapons
4. Education and training
5. Leadership and safety practices
6. Emergency vehicle operation and safety
7. Physical health (e.g., fatigue, alcohol, weight, and nutrition)
8. Psychological health
9. Foot pursuit safety
10. Task force operations (federal and local)
11. Offenders (behavior during incident and history)
12. Court security
13. Deployment strategies and communications technologies
14. Maintaining good health
15. Equipment
16. Former military in law enforcement

Officer Deaths and Injuries from Gunfire

For the first time in over a decade, the number of officers killed in the line of duty from firearms increased for the third consecutive year in 2011 (NLEOMF 2011a; see Table 1). The intentional killing of a police officer has enormous impacts on the community, agency, and families. While any loss of life to violence is tragic, officers who lose their lives while protecting and serving their community is particularly devastating. It is a stark reminder to all officers of their vulnerability.

Table 1. Law Enforcement Officer Fatalities

	2009	2010	2011	Percentage of Rage of Change: 2009–2011
Total Fatalities	122	152	173	+42%
Gunfire	49	59	68	+39%
Traffic Incidents	52	70	64	+23%
Other Causes	21	23	41	+95%

Source: National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF 2011a)

The Research

During the January 2012 meeting, the OSW Group engaged in a day of intense discussions on gunfire deaths and injuries. For the meeting, the group asked Dr. Robert Kaminski, associate professor from the University of South Carolina, to provide both an overview of the current state of research in this area and his perspective on the research gaps. Kaminski's research is based on the data collected by the Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) program as well as information from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF).

The felonious death of a law enforcement officer is most certainly a tragic event. However, such deaths are rare events—given the number of officers and encounters an officer has each day—which makes it difficult to analyze the circumstances and identify approaches to reverse this trend and reduce deaths. Kaminski recommended that non-fatal officer shootings be tracked and analyzed to fully understand officer gunfire death and injury situations.

Case Studies

One of the most effective ways of gaining insight into officer deaths from gunfire is to look at actual cases. The OSW Group heard presentations on officer deaths in Tampa, Florida, and Oakland, California. For the first case study, Tampa Police Chief Jane Castor shared her experiences in the shooting and deaths of two officers performing a traffic stop and the ensuing four-day search for the suspect. Deputy Chief Benson Fairow, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and formerly with the Oakland Police Department, also described the events surrounding two Oakland officers killed by a lone gunman during a traffic stop and two other officers killed when searching an apartment for the suspect.

James "Chips" Stewart, director of public safety for CNA's Safety and Security team, had conducted independent reviews of the incidents in Tampa and Oakland as well as another in the city of Baltimore (see sidebar on page 5). He shared the lessons learned from these three cases at the OSW Group meeting.

Three Situations, Seven Officers Killed

Tampa, Florida. On June 29, 2010, at 2:15 AM, the Tampa Police Department (TPD) suffered a tragic loss when Officers David Curtis and Jeffrey Kocab were shot and killed during a traffic stop. The suspect—convicted felon Dontae Morris—fled the scene on foot and evaded immediate arrest. The subsequent law enforcement response and multi-jurisdictional manhunt involved 22 law enforcement agencies and more than 1,000 personnel during a 96-hour deployment that culminated in the arrest of Morris. TPD established a multi-agency unified command using the Incident Command System (ICS) to plan, coordinate, and manage the complex response, which included volunteers and donations from the community. (Stewart, King, and Lafond 2011)

Oakland, California. On March 21, 2009, at 1:00 PM, Oakland Police Sergeant Mark Dunakin stopped a vehicle for a stop sign violation, backed up by Officer John Hege. The driver—convicted felon Lovelle Mixon—was alone in the vehicle. As the officers approached the vehicle, Mixon leaned out of the driver's side window and shot both officers twice. He got out of the car and shot both officers in the back as they were lying on the street. Mixon fled on foot. Less than 2 hours after the officers were shot, an ad hoc SWAT team entered an apartment about a block from the traffic stop location. Within two minutes after entry, Sergeant Ervin Romans and Sergeant Daniel Sakai were killed, as was Mixon. (Stewart 2009)

Baltimore, Maryland. On January 9, 2011, at 1:13 AM, a police officer called for help in dispersing a large disorderly crowd at the Select Lounge in Baltimore's Central District. That call was repeated at 1:17 AM by the on-duty commander. More than 30 officers from various units responded to assist in maintaining control and disperse the crowd following the police-ordered closure of the lounge, which included non-uniformed officers. Officer William Tolbert, Jr., a plain clothes officer, came upon the scene not wearing his police vest, which would have identified him as an officer. Torbit entered the crowd alone to break up an altercation, and civilian Sean Gambles subsequently knocked Torbit to the ground and assaulted him. Torbit pulled his gun and fired, killing Sean Gambles. Four officers witnessing this event then shot and killed Torbit, unaware he was a fellow officer. The shots fired from the five officers resulted in wounding an additional officer and 3 civilians. (Independent Review Board 2011)

Meeting Summary

The presentations from the January OSW Group meeting highlighted what we know from the research, gaps in our knowledge, and the reality of dealing with the deaths of officers in the line of duty. The meeting resulted in a number of recommendations for departments to consider in helping to advance the research on, improve the response to, and prevent the occurrence of officer shootings:

- Ensure officers have the equipment needed to operate safely (e.g., gun lights, ballistic shields, vests, rescue vehicles, and thermal imaging).
- Investigate gunfire deaths and injuries through an independent party, similar to the processes the fire service uses or those of the National Transportation Safety Board.
- Increase research on all aspects of officer safety and wellness.
- Improve understanding of mental health laws. Better information needs to be provided to officers responding to calls to enhance their ability to recognize and assist the mentally ill as well as to recognize the signs of stress or mental health issues in themselves and their colleagues.
- Enhance education and training. All of the groups focused particularly on the need to conduct threat assessments, more situational firearms training, mental preparedness, and use of technology.
- Create a clearinghouse for data and information on officer deaths and injuries, and develop relationships with the medical community for research.
- Clarify vest policies and explore types of vests. Some departments are looking into external vest carriers as an option.
- Create a culture of safety in policing—one in which safety is a way of doing business and officers reinforce sound safety practices with peers.
- Ensure support services are available for officers and their families.

Key Points

From the Research Presentation

The presentations from the January OSW Group meeting highlighted what we know from the research, gaps in our **Key Points** knowledge, and the reality of dealing with the deaths of officers in the line of duty.

- Non-fatal assaults of law enforcement officers have been declining since the mid-1990s, but there was an increase of 3.5 percent non-fatal assaults from 2009 to 2010, according to LEOKA.

- Fatal ambush shootings have increased since the mid-1980s, especially in unprovoked attacks. However, the increase may be due, in part, to changes in reporting practices by law enforcement agencies (Barnett-Ryan 2011). Thus, the data should be interpreted with caution.

- Leftwing extremist groups (e.g., Black Nationalists, Black Liberation Army, and Weather Underground) attacks on officers have subsided since the 1970s, but there has been an increase in fatal attacks on officers (31 murders) by rightwing extremists, such as skinheads, militias, and patriot groups, between 1990 and 2009 (Suttmoeller, Gruenwald, Chermak, and Freilich 2011). These attacks were unplanned and about one-fifth occurred during traffic stops.

- A national survey of several hundred law enforcement agencies employing 100 or more sworn officers in 2011 indicated that 87 percent did not have written policies governing foot pursuits. While 79 percent of responding agencies required officers to radio in pursuit-related information early on or before engaging in a foot pursuit, only 23 percent required officers to cease a pursuit if communication was lost—a concern because of officer-involved shootings. (Kaminski, Rojek, and Cooney 2011)

- According to the Treatment Advocacy Center (2007), mentally ill persons killed police at a rate 5.5 times greater than the general population in 1998.

- Handguns are the most frequently used weapon in officer deaths; the percentage of murders committed with semiautomatic handguns has been increasing dramatically since 1987, reaching a peak of 69 percent in 2006, according to LEOKA.

- In general, the trend in multiple officer murders has been increasing since the mid-1990s, according to LEOKA.

- From 1980 to 2010, 46 percent of the officers killed by gunfire were shot in the head, according to LEOKA.

From the Case Study Presentations

- **Incident Command.** This is an essential element of managing the complexity of an officer death in the line of duty. The Tampa Police Department (TPD) had previous experience working with partner agencies in the implementation of incident command, which was initiated immediately after the officers were shot. The Oakland Police Department (OPD), however, did not implement incident command practices, resulting in confusion and poor use of outside and OPD resources responding to the scene. Although the responding lieutenants divided the responsi-

bility (i.e., scene, perimeter, and search for the suspect), there was no overall operational control, and no command post.

- **Search and Investigations.** For TPD, these functions of the Incident Command System operated under separate commands to ensure that both proceeded as expeditiously and thoroughly as possible. They maintained close contact throughout the search to ensure appropriate information updates and exchange.

- **Communications.** The communications process—both internally and externally—is critical in ensuring everyone is informed of what he or she needs to know and when. Rumor control is an important aspect of the communication process, as rumors can have a negative impact on the community and officers. There is a huge demand for information on the progress of the investigation, the search, the suspect, the officers that lost their lives, and how family, friends, and colleagues are coping. That requires thoughtful and regular communication processes through the news media and internal mechanisms. Poor communication can lead to critical information not being available to the officers engaged in the investigation and search.

- **Funeral Preparations.** Preparations for the officer's funeral must go on as the investigation and search for the suspect continue. This requires officers dedicated to working with the families to make the preparations. Officers assigned this responsibility must be well trained, possess a high level of sensitivity, and understanding that the funeral is of great importance to the families, the officers, and the community.

- **Stress Debriefings.** These briefings must be made available for officers. Consideration should be given to making such briefings mandatory to improve officer awareness and increase their ability to stay safe should they encounter a similar incident in the future.

- **SWAT Teams.** TPD regularly trained with other agency SWAT teams, resulting in a high level of familiarity in personnel and practices. However, one aspect the department would handle differently in the future would be to deploy SWAT teams in the field to assist in the search. During the 2010 incident, they had been staged at the command center to respond to locations where the suspect was located. By deploying the SWAT teams from one location, the media followed them to possible search locations and watched SWAT's every move. For OPD, the officers formed an ad hoc team to make a dynamic entry into the apartment to search for the suspect. The full complement of regular team members, hostage negotiators, and equipment were not available to support an entry of this type. Although the initial SWAT team call out was delayed by 45 minutes, there was no reason for the ad hoc team to not wait for these resources before entering the apartment.

- **Vehicle Stops.** Two of the three case studies involved vehicle stops. Although thousands of these stops occur every day, four of the six officers discussed in those two case studies were killed during vehicle stops. Learning from the past, TPD modified its traffic arrest policy: as one officer approaches the vehicle, the suspect is required to extend his or her hands and arms outside the vehicle window.

- **Independent Review.** In all three cases, the police departments asked for an outside review of the incidents. Departments should give serious consideration to adopting this practice. External analysis not only helps de-conflict varying perspectives but also helps overcome the tendency to overlook errors surrounding line-of-duty deaths. Findings and recommendations ought to be collected and shared to save lives and avoid future tragedies.

Vehicle Operation, Risk Management, and Problem-Based Learning

The OSW Group planned its fourth meeting for April 2012 with a focus on emergency vehicle operation, education, and training. Regarding the first topic, the group, however, chose to concentrate on vehicle operation in general, as the majority of officer deaths and injuries occur in non-emergency driving situations. For education and training, the group examined risk management and problem-based learning, respectively. Risk management enables law enforcement agencies to understand the source of injuries and deaths, guide appropriate mitigation efforts, and monitor outcomes. An emerging approach to training, problem-based learning differs from traditional classroom learning in that it has officers examine real problems and develop problem-solving skills that can contribute to improvements in officer safety and wellness issues. During the meeting, subject matter experts in each area shared their knowledge of the research, practical experience, and ideas for improving officer safety.

Vehicle Operations

Officer deaths and injuries from traffic crashes have been a problem for many years. Officers must drive in all kinds of conditions and are expected to perform many tasks while their vehicles are in motion. Officers must be mindful of the radio, computers, telephones, license plate readers, and radar as they simultaneously observe their surroundings while on patrol. At times they are called on to drive under stressful emergency conditions, in heavy traffic, with drivers distracted by cell phones and radios impairing their ability to hear the sirens. Officers also take risks at times by driving at higher speeds in response to calls from the community or other officers in need of help. The conditions under which they drive are less than ideal, and one can expect crashes will occur. Even under these conditions, some officers are never involved in crashes while others seem to have more difficulty avoiding them.

Decreased Traffic-Related Fatalities

For the first time in 14 years, traffic-related fatalities were less than firearms-related fatalities. In 2011, 64 officers were killed on the roadway—a 10 percent decrease from the 71 officers killed the previous year. In addition, 2011 tied with 2005 for the second-lowest number of officer traffic-related fatalities in the last 15 years.

Source: National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF 2011a)

The OSW Group's vehicle operations session focused on trying to understand the circumstances under which crashes occur and identify steps that police agencies can take to reduce injuries and deaths emanating from the necessity to multi-task while driving a police vehicle. The group heard from a panel of experts on three different aspects of vehicle operations: a research initiative, crash reduction, and driver distraction.

Research Initiative

For the first presentation, Geoffrey Alpert and Jeff Rojek, professors from the University of South Carolina, discussed the Situation Appropriate Focused and Educated (SAFE) Driving Campaign, established in 2010 by the California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) with the goal of reducing fatalities and injuries that result from officer-involved vehicle collisions in California and across the nation.

SAFE incorporates a collective strategy of research, education, policy development, and training. It also includes a research team to investigate collision causes and identify interventions. In the study the SAFE team is currently conducting, a number of initial questions were of interest, including:

- Why are the rates of crashes and injuries so different from agency to agency?
- What contributes to changes in a department's crash rate (e.g., department culture, policy, training)?
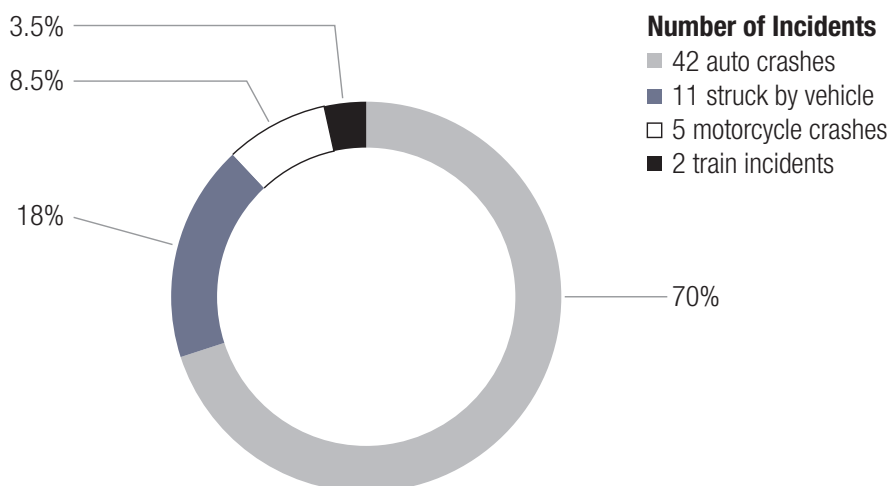
Research initiatives such as SAFE are much needed. Officer deaths from motor vehicle crashes increased over a 30-year period from 1980 to 2008 while deaths for other reasons declined (Young Noh 2011). According to Alpert and Rojek, the majority of vehicle crash-related deaths are due to automobiles, although some occur with motorcycles and others are the result of officers being struck on the side of the road. The impact of vehicle crashes is far reaching. The loss of life has an enormous affect on the organization, the officer's family, and the community. Non-fatal injury crashes leave officers with physical and psychological trauma as well as possible long-term disabilities.

POST (2009) reports that the number of California peace officer injury collisions increased at an average annual rate of more than 11 percent between 1997 and 2007. There are also financial impacts: BJA's Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program provides a benefit of $323,035 to survivors of officers killed in the line of duty or to officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty (BJA 2012), and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that the cost of a fatal crash is $977,208, which includes medical care, legal assistance, emergency service, and property damage (Blincoe et al. 2002).

> "Officer collisions have received little attention from policing scholars."
>
> – Jeff Rojek, University of South Carolina

Figure 2. 2011 Traffic-Related Fatalities

Number of Incidents
- 42 auto crashes
- 11 struck by vehicle
- 5 motorcycle crashes
- 2 train incidents

3.5%
8.5%
18%
70%

Source: National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF 2011a)

"We had a problem as an agency; it was agency culture that officers felt they didn't have to wear a seat belt."

– Deputy Chief Marc Joseph, Las Vegas (NV) Metropolitan Police Department

Crash Reduction Policy and Training

Deputy Chief Marc Joseph presented next about steps the Las Vegas Metropolitan (NV) Police Department (LVMPD) took to reduce crashes following the tragic loss of three officers due to vehicle crashes within a six-month period. Two were not wearing safety belts—one of whom was thrown from the car. In two cases, lights and sirens were not in operation despite the vehicles traveling well above the speed limit. One officer was responding to a call; however, LVMPD's investigators do not know what the other officers were doing when the collision occurred. The officers were 28, 30, and 45 years old with 2, 6, and 25 years of experience, respectively. It was a terrible wake up call for the department, which recognized it had a problem that needed to be corrected.

The LVMPD began its work with a view toward developing a better understanding of the problem. The department partnered with an advertising agency that participated in ride-alongs and surveyed the officers in the department to gain insight into their habits and concerns. The department also looked to the private sector with a visit to the United Parcel Service where employees receive a safe driving message every day. These reviews led to the development of an educational campaign and several policy changes that were launched during a meeting of all of the department's command-level personnel.

The department believes its efforts are resulting in success: officer-involved crashes declined by 15 percent in 2011, compared to 2010. Also, Accident Review Board cases have declined by 25 percent in the same time frame. Although exact statistics are not available, Joseph reports that more officers are wearing seat belts.

Driver Distraction Research

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ 2011) supports several projects aimed at understanding the circumstances under which officers drive and become involved in vehicle crashes. Likewise, the Rand Corporation is studying the causes of injuries and deaths. University of South Carolina researchers are working on evidence-based solutions to officer-involved crashes, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is looking at mitigating and warning of traffic threats to police stopped along the roadside.

For this third presentation, the OSW Group heard from Dr. Teena Garrison, an assistant research professor with Mississippi State University, who is studying the impact of in-car communications devices on patrol officer performance.

Police officers must process and respond effectively and safely to a variety of visual and auditory stimuli in the patrol environment. These demands on attention, such as radio calls from dispatch, are a necessary part of the officer's job expectations. Garrison's project evaluated officers' driving, visual attention, and situation awareness during patrol while driving under varying cognitive loads to determine the impact on officers' ability to execute patrols. How the growing number of in-vehicle technologies may be able to provide additional support to the officer and reduce the impact of cognitive load was of key interest.

The results for Garrison's project indicate that when the use of coded language is paired with the use of a display echoing communication with

dispatch, or when natural language is used without such a display, accuracy of situation awareness was similar to a control condition without distraction (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Percentage of Situation Awareness Misses
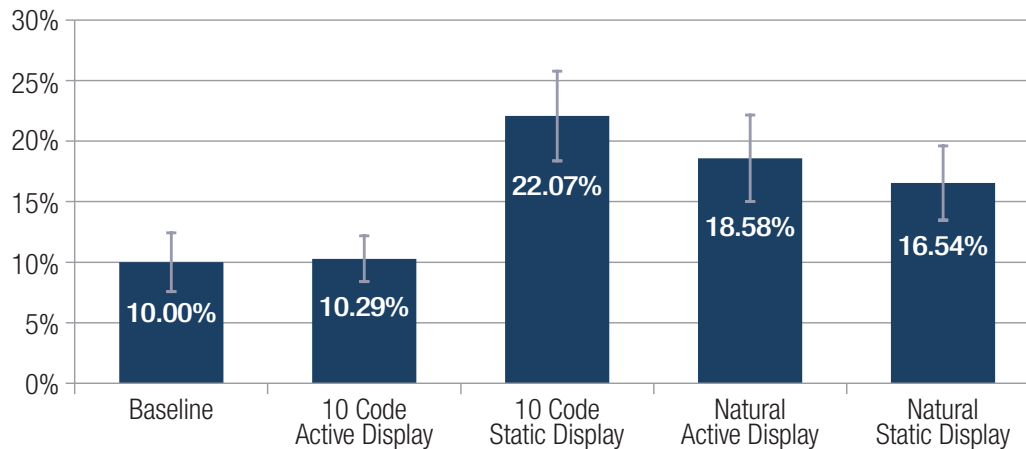
Source: Dr. Teena Garrison, Mississippi State University

Risk Management

Risk management programs have been a part of public and private sector organizations for many years. Their purpose is to minimize an organization's exposure to risk, including employee injuries. Although local governments generally have risk management programs that work with police, relatively few large police agencies have their own. A 2005 telephone survey of police agencies revealed that only 14 of 354 agencies identified risk management as a tool to control liability within their organizations (Archbold 2005). An Internet search identified a few police agencies—e.g., Los Angeles and Austin—with risk management functions.

Case Study: Municipal Pooling Authority, Walnut Creek, CA

Situation: The Municipal Pooling Authority, located in Walnut Creek, CA, provides risk management services to 14 police departments and 20 municipalities mostly located in Contra Costa County. Prior to working with Future Industrial Technologies, Inc. (FIT), the police departments were experiencing a rising number of injuries resulting in a substantial trend of increasing workers' compensation costs.

Solution: FIT recommended the Backsafe® program customized for law enforcement, with both classroom training and an obstacle course involving the use of an actual police car in a police station setting.

Results: In the two complete fiscal years subsequent to the Backsafe program, a reduction in the lift, push, and pull type of injuries by 60 percent has been documented and a reduction in the cost of those injuries by approximately 90 percent. The Municipal Pooling Authority believes the effort to address police injuries has produced some synergistic benefits, with respect to the entire police workers' compensation program. The overall cost of police injuries after the implementation of the Backsafe program was reduced from $3.5 million per year to $1 million per year over a two-year period, representing a 70 percent decrease.

Source: Future Industrial Technologies, Inc.

Superintendent Hugh Ferguson of the Toronto (ON, Canada) Police Service was invited to the April meeting to share his experience on the operation of the agency's risk management unit, which is a part of the professional standards function within the agency's command structure. The mission of the unit is to look at risk management from three perspectives:

- Risk of officer
- Risk of the public/to the public
- Risk to the organization, which includes damage to it and prevention of civil suits

The Risk Management Unit has a mandate to:

- Provide an effective and efficient support service to the department to ensure its standards are maintained in police practice, conduct, appearance, ethics, and integrity
- Strengthen the public's confidence and cooperation by:
  — Proactively analyzing and reviewing high-risk behavioral trends and patterns
  — Monitoring compliance with service standards, policies, and procedures

Focusing on supervision is an important aspect of the unit's risk management approach, and supervisors are held accountable for officers' behavior on the streets. The Risk Management Unit holds mandatory debriefing sessions following incidents, leaving rank at the door, so candid conversations can be held with the intent of improving policy and practice. The unit has a senior officer on duty 24 hours a day who is trained in incident command procedures. These duty officers respond to all high-risk incidents to help manage at-risk issues.

Like other police agencies, one area of significant risk for the Toronto Police Service lies in vehicle operation. The majority of its vehicle crashes involve officers with less than seven years of service. The police service has taken a number of steps to help reduce officer-involved collisions:

- Cameras automatically activated by a crash sensor were installed in all vehicles, resulting in improved driving habits.
- The Toronto Police Service instituted a policy where officers pay the traffic fine if they run red lights and are not on an emergency call. However, policy does allow officers the authority to go through red lights after coming to a stop to make sure the intersection is clear.
- The unit has developed a policy where officers involved in crashes attend remedial training—not for punishment but to assess their driving. Officers coming back to the uniform division also are required to retrain in vehicle operations.

Toronto also has an inspections unit that is a part of their risk management function. They have mandatory reporting for any use of force and an early warning system to help identify officers that might need departmental assistance.

Problem-Based Learning

Training is an indispensable part of the challenge to reduce deaths and injuries of police officers. Police officers engage in an enormous amount of training, from entry-level academies that for many agencies last more than six months to a wide range of in-service training. Most of this training is conducted in a traditional training environment involving lectures, assigned reading, question and answer interaction, and memorization. Officers are then expected to demonstrate their knowledge on periodic written examinations.

This teacher-centered training has been critiqued on its narrow focus and failure "to promote the critical thinking and problem-solving skills police require in their operational roles" (Shipton 2009). As a result, a number of police departments have been exploring the benefits of a problem-based learning (PBL) strategy.

Beginning in the 1960s at the McMaster Medical School, PBL was developed because of a "perceived need to produce graduates who were prepared to deal with the information explosion, and who could think critically and solve complex problems. This institution developed its entire curriculum around problem-based learning" (Major and Palmer 2001).

PBL is defined as "both a curriculum and a process. The curriculum consists of carefully selected and designed problems that demand from the learner acquisition of critical knowledge, problem-solving proficiency, self-directed learning strategies, and team participation skills. The process replicates the commonly used systemic approach to resolving problems or meeting challenges that are encountered in life and career" (Barrows and Kelson 1995).

Since its introduction, PBL has been widely adopted in medicine and education. In fact, the Reno (NV) Police Department began experimenting with it in 2001 for officer field training and tested the idea in five additional agencies. The OSW Group had the opportunity to hear from Reno's chief of police, Steven Pitts, about the application of PBL in a police context. One of the original people involved with introducing PBL into policing, Pitts described this approach in the context of six points:

1. The classroom instructor develops learning objectives and guiding questions based on real, relevant problems encountered by officers.

2. The learner examines a variety of factors, resources, and responses to analyze and problem-solve a situation as a team. In solving the problem, the learners are asked to:

   — Identify their initial ideas.

   — List and discuss with the learning group members the known facts.

   — Identify the learning issues ("What do I need to know") and the resources available to them.

   — Develop an initial course of action.

   — Evaluate the response and outcomes to learn from success and failure.

3. PBL is a self-directed learning process that is supported by trainers and facilitators.

4. Cohort learning groups provide diverse perspectives, skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Idaho POST

Staff at Idaho Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) developed a 70-hour problem-based learning exercise (PBLE) and integrated this program into the existing Basic Patrol Officer Academy.

Following PBLE, students completed an in-depth survey prompting feedback on the ability of the program to develop various skills known to be important to policing.

Results indicate that the pilot PBLE is significant in helping students develop new policing skills, demonstrating how information learned in class applies to field work, aiding in recall of class material, developing problem-solving skills, and learning skills needed to work in groups in the law enforcement field ($p < 0.01$). (Werth 2009)

5. Learning and understanding the importance and effectiveness of emotional intelligence and adult learning principles applied to real-life situations are key factors and outcomes to successful PBL strategies.

6. Course evaluation and student assessment methods must be completed to understand if the PBL approach to solving problems was effective and to determine what could be improved.

Pitts also presented the key differences between traditional teaching approaches and problem-based learning (see Table 2).

The PBL style of teaching recognizes that police officers are adult learners that bring to the classroom professional knowledge and experience. Many have college degrees. Most have worked in some other profession before joining law enforcement, and some come into the field with a military background. When looking at officer safety and wellness issues, an agency may find that the PBL approach is a more effective way to examine problems and find solutions.

Table 2. Why Change the Way We Teach

Traditional Teaching	Problem-Based Learning
Teacher is expert	Teacher facilitates and guides
Students often work alone	Students work in teams
Content driven	Problem-solving first, content second
Emphasizes memorization	Emphasizes analytical skills and problem framing and solving
Didactic instruction may reinforce naive view of learning (passive)	Interactive learning process that encourages critical thinking, teamwork, resource identification, and network development
Learning capacity oriented around passing test	Capacity-oriented: e.g., developing lifelong learning and leadership skills

Source: Chief Steven Pitts, Reno (NV) Police Department

The use of PBL has experienced slow but steady growth since its introduction to policing in 2001. The Police Society for Problem-Based Learning, established in 2007, contains a list of more than 50 featured agencies in the United States and Canada that have adopted its Police Training Officer model as of late-2007 (PSBPL 2012). The list also includes four PBL police academies.

Meeting Summary

The April 2012 meeting focused on crash reduction and driver distraction, the benefits of risk management, and an innovative learning approach called problem-based learning, which dissects incidents to address and minimize repeating, potentially serious errors.

There is still a lot to understand in vehicle operations and the different aspects of driver safety, but agencies can take immediate steps to minimize driving errors by collecting crash data and analyzing trends to identify repeat problems and create solutions. In addition, agencies can partner with the research community and volunteer to participate in studies. Information regarding how technology in the cruiser affects an officer's driving performance will not only inform future agency practices but also influence the technology and automobile industries in their designs for officer safety.

While police-involved crashes will continue to occur, an agency that proactively engages in risk management can mitigate ongoing driver safety issues based on the information collected and analyzed. By reviewing officer driver safety practices, agencies can hone their education, training, and policy practices. It is the responsibility of all police officers to be safe and ensure they drive responsibly.

Key Points

From the Vehicle Operations Presentations

- The primary victims of traffic-related deaths are males in their mid-20s through mid-30s (Young Noh 2011). These statistics refer to all males, including police officers.
- Speeding, running red lights, and running stop signs as well as doing improper turns contribute to poor driving habits that are practiced both on and off the job; such driving behavior contributes to crashes (Young Noh 2011).
- Driver training—either behind the wheel or using a simulator—contributes to lower crash rates. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates the cost of a fatal crash to be $977,208 (Blincoe et al. 2002).
- Failure to wear safety belts contributes to greater injury.
- Officer driving behavior can be influenced by appropriate policy, supervision, and training.
- Accountability (through supervision, crash review boards, etc.) is key to officer-involved crash reduction.
- Ten-code static displays contribute to distraction in situational awareness of officers while driving.

From the Risk Management Presentation

- Risk management can contribute to reduced injuries, deaths and organizational liability.
- Sergeants ride along with line officers for remedial training a couple times per year to observe how the officers respond to calls and deal with the public. This is a strong step forward to reducing risk and injury.
- Pursuit driving is risky business and as such needs to be highly managed by an agency. Empowering any officer, not just the supervisor, to cancel a pursuit goes a long way to reducing risk and ensuring officer safety.
- Dispatchers also take pursuit driving class; they don't drive, but sit in the vehicle with officers.

From the Problem-Based Learning Presentation

- PBL is an effective learning method for adult learners, as they retain the information longer because of their experiential background.
- The supportive nature of PBL fosters teamwork and develops critical thinking skills for all who participate.
- PBL has been adopted by more than 50 police agencies in the United States and Canada.

Recommendations for Research, Policies, Training, and Practices

A continuous challenge for law enforcement agencies is making decisions and implementing programs or policies based on empirical evidence. While there is more information about officer safety issues today, knowledge gaps contribute to both a reluctance and inability to provide clear recommendations on what steps agencies should be taking. Nevertheless, law enforcement should be implementing best practices, policies, and training where evidence (even if limited) supports such changes and should both support and participate in the research that will fill those gaps.

The recommendations developed from the OSW Group's meetings on officer gunfire deaths and injuries as well as vehicle operation, risk management, and problem-based learning are grouped into four areas: research, policy, training, and practice/programs.

Officer Gunfire Deaths and Injuries

The OSW Group's overall recommendation regarding officer gunfire deaths is that an independent review mechanism be created that is similar to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health that investigates firefighter deaths. While the OSW Group unanimously believes in the need for such a commission, the group provided many other recommendations as well:

Research

■ Although the FBI LEOKA and NLEOMF data bases are helpful in understanding the trends and characteristics of officers killed and injured, there are many concerns about what is not included. A broader, more encompassing database should be developed that includes:

— Line-of-duty deaths and assaults

— Demographics on offenders and officers

— The kinds of calls that conclude with deaths and assaults

— Lessons learned from the incidents

— Information on "near misses"

■ The precursor events that might contribute to deaths and assaults should be recorded. There may be lessons to learn by dissecting the events leading up to the confrontation. For example, did the officer notify dispatch that he or she was going to make a vehicle stop? Did the officer miss the release of a BOLO (see COPS Office 2012a) that might have saved his or her life? Do the agency's officers fail to read updated policies and procedures that might have saved a life?

■ The safety products officers' use should be evaluated for effectiveness. For example, agencies could work with industries to develop stronger materials used in body armor gear and ensure proper fitting to maximum coverage. Smart phone technology can be used for reaching out to the community for help, and agencies can capitalize on military-released technology, such as the backpack radar Prism 200C System that can see through walls to determine how many and where suspects are located in the adjacent room. Also, license plate readers could be made available to identify known suspects.

- There are gaps in data on officers dealing with the mentally ill—specifically on guns used by the mentally ill. More research in this area is needed. For example, there is no screening process for selling guns to people with mental illness. While some states may require a background check for felons, a mentally ill person may not have a felony record but may still be a danger. The extent of the problem and recommendations for resolving this issue need to be addressed through better data collection and research.

- Research should examine whether officers' interpersonal skill-levels contribute to officer-involved shootings. Officers' verbal judo is a highly valued skill and often not utilized in confrontational situations. Often an officer elects to use the ECW (electronic control weapon) to control a situation when verbal techniques could have brought the situation under control.

- Departments should evaluate if they have the necessary technology to provide suspect information more quickly: e.g., license plate readers, the capability to relay confidential information that the agency does not want aired through radio communication, and Closed Circuit Television (CCTV).

Policy

- The following are examples of policies that a department should not only already have but also review for ongoing updates and have internally audited to ensure they are being implemented properly:
  - Incident command
  - Officer deaths (e.g., notifications, a family liaison, and funeral planning)
  - Critical incident stress debriefing
  - Safety equipment (e.g., vests and seatbelts)
  - Clear use of force and reporting directives
  - Communications (external and internal)
  - Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with neighboring jurisdictions

- Most departments have written policies that address issues related to officer gunfire deaths and injuries. While these events are rare, commanders and supervisors must pay close attention to these policies and ensure officers operate within their framework.

- Policies should be updated on a scheduled basis, and both updates and policy development should include a review of the research and best practices.

Training

- Realistic tactical training must be incorporated into the ongoing in-service training regimen.

- Interpersonal skills and cultural training for situational awareness should be a part of entry-level and in-service training programs.

- Training in critical thinking and decision making should be provided to improve officers' abilities to work through the steps that should be taken—and what to anticipate at each decision point—during a violent or potentially violent situation.

Practice/Programs

- Officers across the country should be routinely informed of the circumstances of officer gunfire deaths and injuries and any lessons learned through video or a power point presentation. A video is available on the secure VALOR for Blue website (see Resources on page 27) that describes a foot pursuit situation in which the officer survived and includes safety guidelines.

- Vehicle stops are a regular part of a street officer's daily work and are conducted without incident most of the time. They are also a high-risk activity, and officers need to be regularly reminded of safe practices.

- Departments should consider alternatives to the way traffic stops are conducted. For example, the Maryland State Police Troopers often approach a vehicle they have stopped on the passenger side—the driver does not expect it, the trooper is taken out of the stream of traffic, and this approach provides a better view of the driver.

- Effective communications is always a challenge for police agencies—it is even more difficult during high-stress and high-profile events. Roles, responsibilities, and tactics can and should be defined in advance with a clear communications strategy.

- Departments should develop a process for objective after-action reviews of these incidents and take steps to correct any problems identified to help save future lives.

- Every department should have a safety education program that includes frequent reminders and tips.

- Departments must work to create a culture where safety is an integral part of everything the department does. An agency that consistently practices safety will be more inclined to implement training and procedures more effectively in crisis situations.

Vehicle Operation, Risk Management, and Problem-Based Learning

Research

- The National Institute of Justice and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conduct research and collect statistics on officer-involved vehicle crashes, providing important information sources about police vehicle operations, but more work needs to be done.

- In regard to vehicle operations, officers are challenged with many internal and external driving conditions and distractions, yet little research is available on how these conditions/distractions affect officers' performance and ability to maintain safe driving practices. Areas that need further research include:

  — Reaction times: Research on an officer's ability to respond quickly, for example, to careless drivers and road conditions either through vehicle maneuvers or braking could inform best driving policies and practices as well as improved vehicle training.

  — Glare: The risk from driving with glare could be minimized though methods such as sunglasses or enhancements to the vehicle or street lighting. Research could also examine what situations present glare problems, how an officer could minimize glare when in a vehicle pursuit, etc.

  — Dusk (and other low-light situations): Objects in the roadway and other traffic hazards are less visible when outdoor lighting is low. Research to improve road markings, signage, street lighting, and pedestrian walkways are some examples of areas to consider.

— Officer "struck by" incidents: Each year officers are killed by a passing vehicle while executing a traffic stop, directing traffic, or assisting a motorist. In 2010, 72 officers were accidently killed in the line of duty, 11 of whom were struck by a vehicle (FBI 2011). It is time to revisit the issue of officer safety while standing in or near traffic and further develop products, policies, practices, and training to reduce or eliminate officers being struck, injured, or killed by another vehicle.

— Aggressive driving behavior: Research on such behavior could help determine best practices in identifying and arresting motorists engaged in aggressive driving. The enforcement tactics being employed and their effectiveness in reducing aggressive driving behavior should also be examined. Conversely, officers driving aggressively with or without lights and sirens can also be hazardous for all on the road.

— The effects of "multi-tasking" while on patrol: Today's patrol cars are loaded with information systems that are sources of distraction: e.g., mobile digital computers, cell phones, radio traffic, license plate readers, and silent dispatch. This multi-tasking could distract officers from noticing criminal activity and contribute to officer stress, which in and of itself can impact an officer's temperament and ability to think clearly and react quickly to serious situations.

— The impact of vehicle equipment on officer safety: An ongoing point of debate, some officers argue that wearing a seat belt is unsafe because it impedes their ability to exit the vehicle quickly; others argue that releasing a seatbelt does not require that much time and therefore it should be worn at all times.

— Two officers in a cruiser: Best practices need to be defined for a two-officer cruiser. In addition, research should also examine whether a one- versus two-officer occupied cruiser enhances officer safety.

■ There is little information on the characteristics and thought patterns of an officer who engages in high-risk or unsafe driving practices. Research, however, could reveal common elements among officers' backgrounds, gender, or age that affect their ability to operate a cruiser safely, and such information could lead to better policies and practices. Questions should include:

— Could police psychologists identify thought patterns that contribute to an officer's willingness to engage in undue or high-risk vehicle maneuvers? If so, then screening officers for these patterns would allow an agency to take proactive steps through officer selection practices, training, policies, and procedures.

— Could police psychologists develop a personality profile to identify thought patterns associated with hazardous driving behavior? If so, then those officers could be further evaluated for patrol competency, ensuring they drive safely. Knowing an officer's propensity toward risky driving behavior may also flag a need for increased supervisory monitoring.

— What are the differences between officers involved in crashes and those who are rarely or never involved? Understanding the driving practices of these two groups of officers, for example, by examining their crash records, would inform best practices in training and policies. Researchers could also look at various factors that may increase the odds of an officer crashing a vehicle, such as shift time, fatigue, or stress.

— What can be learned from military, fire, and trucking research regarding crashes, sleep deprivation, and other factors that can be used to study law enforcement crashes? A lot could be learned from other professions confronted with driver safety; their lessons learned, best practices, policies, and training should be translated into the police profession.

— Why are more males involved in crashes than females? Even insurance companies place a higher premium on male drivers. Understanding why a greater number of crashes involve men could help develop in-service driving training geared for male officers. Perhaps female officers approach driving differently, and these lessons learned could be applied to male officers to reduce crashes.

— What are the driving habits of returning military veterans? There is no research that identifies whether military veterans returning from war engage in riskier driving practices, have more police vehicle crashes, or are safer drivers. With the number of returning veterans, it is important to understand how serving in the war may affect their driving habits and possible Post Traumatic Stress Disorder triggers that may occur while driving on police duty. All this information further informs best practices in introducing returning veteran into the police culture.

— Why are older officers prone to accidents? Further research could help an agency determine if special approaches are needed to address this, such as developing different driver safety training for older officers. Research should also examine whether specific circumstances contribute to increase accidents, such as vision, time of day, and fatigue, which an agency could consider and monitor when assigning shifts to older officers.

— Are agencies collecting the data that will help in understanding the problem? The type of data described above may be collected by agencies, but how many agencies do so and what their findings are remain unclear because there is neither a standard for what should be collected nor a central repository for this information.

▪ Data on officer deaths and injuries is typically not available from one agency to the other—steps should be taken to collect and share data that agencies could use to benchmark their own programs.

Policy

▪ The following are examples of vehicle operation and risk management policies police agencies must have currently in place and periodically review to ensure they are up to date:

— Emergency vehicle response (e.g., guidance on the speed at which officers may drive in these conditions)

— Pursuits (i.e., vehicle and foot)

— Response to officer-assistance calls

— Traffic direction (e.g., wearing reflective vests)

— Safety belts

— Non-emergency patrol driving

▪ Agencies that do not have their own risk management programs should explore creating one, working with the city program, or collaborating with other agencies, such as the Municipal Pooling Authority in Walnut Creek, CA (see Risk Management on page 11). An agency's diligence in monitoring physical risks and addressing them through improved equipment, clothing, training, etc., helps prevent officer injuries, which cost cities and agencies a considerable amount of money each year. Furthermore, an injured officer is off the street, resulting in other risk factors such as less officer strength, which jeopardizes the safety of other street officers.

Training

▪ Training should be based on research findings; however, that is not what occurs in most law enforcement agencies. Although there are gaps in the research, many law enforcement agencies still invest significant resources in both entry-level and in-service training. Furthermore, determining the effectiveness of this non-research-based training continues to be a challenge for law enforcement, as few national studies examine its effectiveness and how it improves officer skills when out on the street. This is unacceptable, as ensuring agencies invest in state-of-the-art training that improves safety practices is imperative.

- Officers should receive recruit and regular in-service training to enhance driving skills. The training should be both skill- and knowledge-based to help reinforce the purpose of the vehicle operations policy.

- Supervisors play a critical role in the overall safety practices of their officers, including those applicable to vehicle operations, and thus should receive training in the following areas:
  — Coaching, mentoring, and accountability
  — Decision-making and judgment process
  — A "model of thinking" (i.e., a standard for sergeants to think about safety practices that will help them supervise more effectively)

- The risk management field has training in identifying and analyzing at-risk safety issues, which enable the implementation of training, policies, and procedures that reduce or eliminate injury or loss of life, as well as the costs associated with such injuries or tragedies. For these reasons, law enforcement agencies are strongly encouraged to adopt these practices.

Practice/Programs

- Agencies should develop and implement education programs aimed at reinforcing good driving behavior, such as wearing safety belts. Daily safety tips are a part of many agencies' educational programs.

- Agencies should consider assigning mentors or driving coaches to assist officers that have experienced problems driving in a patrol environment.

Summary

The purpose of the OSW Group discussions focused on research, training, policies, and best practices/programs is to provide recommendations, such as those listed above, so that law enforcement agencies, researchers, subject matter experts, and other affiliated professional groups can contribute to change by filling in the knowledge gaps that inform agency best practices.

The OSW Group is a platform to raise awareness, and these recommendations are meant first and foremost to help improve officer safety and wellness. Agencies can work toward this same goal by seriously considering implementing these recommendations for the sake of their officers' well-being. Furthermore, if agencies work toward collaborating with researchers, answering these questions, and sharing their findings, the research gaps will begin to shrink, and the field will benefit from tangible solutions that increase officer safety and wellness.

Conclusion

While the OSW Group has identified certain areas to address in terms of research, policies, trainings, and best practices/programs, officer safety and wellness issues cannot be resolved in just a few meetings. There is a lot yet to address regarding topics such as officers killed from gunfire and vehicle operation safety, as this annual report does not contain a comprehensive examination.

However, the meetings and the results of their findings provide a starting point for bringing to the national forefront the importance of officer safety and wellness and the necessity of finding and implementing the best approaches to keeping officers safe.

Although gaps remain in current officer safety research, law enforcement agencies should both support and participate in the research that will fill those gaps. Furthermore, debriefing incidents can also identify steps agencies can take to improve policies and training, thus saving lives in the future.

As this annual report highlights, there are other steps agencies can take right now to help reduce deaths and injuries. For example, to reduce the frequency of car crashes, departments should also implement policies that require officers to wear seat belts at all times and provide guidance regarding speeding during emergency situations.

Police agencies can also utilize a risk management program to monitor and analyze trends and develop mitigation steps. Agencies have become adept at using crime statistics to address specific problems—the same could be done with data on injuries, sick time, and vehicle crashes.

The problem-based learning strategy is another way in which law enforcement agencies can help improve officer safety. While law enforcement agencies have become better with incorporating possible scenarios into their training, reminding officers of the reality that waits them, problem-based learning recognizes that adults bring professional knowledge and experience into the classroom and thus emphasizes enhancing officers' analytical and problem-solving skills.

While these individual recommendations can play a part in addressing officer safety and wellness issues, the most important step a law enforcement agency can take is to place officer safety among the top goals of the agency and continuously engage in efforts to monitor progress toward creating an environment where everyone in the organization accepts responsibility for operating in a safe manner.

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Resources

Officer Safety and Wellness Group

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) established the national Officer Safety and Wellness (OSW) Group to bring law enforcement thought leaders, criminal justice practitioners, and other colleagues together to share their perspectives on improving officer safety and wellness. The group encourages the nation's law enforcement agencies to adopt cultures of safety and wellness. www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=2603

International Association of Chiefs of Police

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is the oldest and largest nonprofit membership organization of police executives, with more than 20,000 members in more than 100 different countries. IACP's leadership consists of the operating chief executives of international, federal, state, and local agencies of all sizes. www.theiacp.org

Safe Shield

The IACP Division of State Associations of Chiefs of Police (SACOP) created the Safe Shield initiative in 2002. Safe Shield's organizing philosophy is that law enforcement leaders cannot accept the proposition that accidents or injuries are a reality of their profession. The goals are:

1. Identify and document the cause and magnitude of officer injuries.

2. Develop practical resources to assist law enforcement agencies to identify and respond to officer injury vulnerabilities.

3. Disseminate resources widely to the law enforcement community. www.theiacp.org/PublicationsGuides/Projects/ViolenceAgainstthePolice/IACPSafetyInitiatives/tabid/994/Default.aspx

Officer Safety Corner

This monthly column within the *Police Chief* magazine builds on the work of SafeShield, the IACP's portfolio of officer safety initiatives. The column focuses on lessons learned, overall wellness, training, and statistical analysis from the IACP's National Center for the Prevention of Violence Against the Police. www.policechiefmagazine.org

National Center for the Prevention of Violence Against the Police

The center was established by the IACP to respond to the need for critical information on felonious assaults directed at law enforcement, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. The center's operations focus on conducting research and analysis, translating the findings into actionable information, and disseminating recommendations to the field. The center also serves as a channel through which the field can be connected to existing resources (e.g., training, sample policies, guidebooks, and reports).

www.theiacp.org/PublicationsGuides/Projects/ViolenceAgainstthePolice/tabid/939/Default.aspx

National Occupational Research Agenda

The National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) is a partnership program of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) that stimulates innovative research and improved workplace practices. NIOSH and its partners have formed 10 NORA Sector Councils that include participants from academia, industry, labor, and government. Of those 10 councils, the Public Safety Sector has established 16 research goals. Two of the on-going research projects focus on law enforcement: "Cops and Cars: Reducing Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) Deaths in Motor Vehicle Crashes" and "Analysis of Cardiovascular Effects of Stress in Police."

www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora

The VALOR Initiative

The BJA's Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement Officers and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR) initiative is a resource for law enforcement training and officer safety information. Officers can register and access a wide range of information and online training via its website, which has received 1.7 million visits to date. The program goals are to:

- Reduce violence against law enforcement
- Improve officer survivability
- Identify emerging criminal threats
- Develop and deliver knowledge and skills-based training to address threats effectively
- Recognize emerging threats
- Establish a culture of attentive vigilance among law enforcement

VALOR offers a two-day line officer training course designed to increase officer safety and help prevent injuries and death. It promotes situational awareness about threats and helps officers to identify concealed weapons and armed gunmen. The course also expands mental and physical skills required for high-risk tactical situations. This training has been provided to more than 1,700 officers in 10 regions across the country.

www.valorforblue.org

Appendix A: The 16 OSW Group Priorities

The 16 priorities are grouped into four themes: Operational and Emergency Responses, Leadership and Management, Mental and Physical Health and Wellness, and Training:

Operational and Emergency Responses

The first three were established as top priorities by the Attorney General, the COPS Office, and BJA.

1. **Injuries and death due to gunfire.** Sixty-nine officers were killed in the line of duty by gunfire in 2011, which is a 17% increase from 2010 (see ODMP 2010–2011). Training in safety precautions when handling weapons and ongoing shooting qualifications are imperative; however, understanding where law enforcement training and protection can be strengthened is critical. The increasing incidents involving the unprovoked shootings of officers should be considered in determining appropriate training strategies and approaches.

2. **Premeditated and unprovoked ambush situations.** Ambushes have attributed to nearly 40% of the officers feloniously killed in 2011 (see ODMP 2011), an increase from 31.25% of 2009 (see FBI 2010a). Furthermore, 21.5% of the law enforcement officers feloniously killed from 2000 through 2009 were victims of an ambush.[1] With these troubling numbers, law enforcement agencies have to prepare for ambushes while patrolling, serving warrants, investigating domestic disturbances, or even conducting routine traffic stops. Developing approaches to counter these ambush-style attacks is crucial to maintaining the safety of officers.

3. **Rifle/long-gun threats/assault weapons.** Officers are being injured and killed by rifles, long-guns, and assault weapons. The availability of adapted militarized assault weaponry on the street provides challenges in the tactical approaches officers use (e.g., Colt AR-15, TEC-9, non-automatic AK-47s, and Uzis). From 2000–2009, a staggering 490 officers were feloniously killed with a firearm, out of which a rifle was used 94 times and a shotgun 38 times (FBI 2010c). It is a constant struggle for law enforcement officers to continue to stay ahead of the weapons that are available on the streets. Developing strategies to better equip local law enforcement to address the increasing threats from rifle, long-gun, and assault weapon attacks is imperative.

4. **Task force operations (federal and local).** Warrant and task force operations are especially dangerous activities, and a number of officers have been killed or injured performing these duties. Many agencies participate in task forces for a variety of issues, but, in particular, those responsible for fugitive apprehension frequently face dangerous situations, which often involve apprehending violent offenders with prior criminal records. There are techniques for conducting task force operations to mitigate these risks, but more needs to be done to protect officers as they go about bringing offenders to justice.

5. **Offenders (behavior during incident and history).** Providing officers with protective equipment and training is obviously critical; however, supplying them with timely information about the criminal history of potentially violent offenders and helping officers to understand behavior triggers prior to contact to make encounters safer is just as important. Analysts, dispatchers, and police trainers all play an important role in this.

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1   See "Uniform Crime Reports: Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted," years 2000 through 2009, www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr.

6. **Court security.** Providing security can involve some of the most dangerous environments for sheriff's deputies. Developing strategies to improve safety during prisoner transportation and within the court facility are critical and involves issues such as emergency preparedness, bomb threat responses, hostage situation control, crowd control, high-risk trial procedures, and defensive tactics.

Leadership and Management

7. **Leadership and safety practices.** Law enforcement and management need to sharpen their focus on safety issues and hold all levels within the organization accountable for following safety, health, and wellness practices. Leadership means leading by example; demonstrating the importance of safety, health, and wellness through training; enforcing safety practices; and providing resources to ensure ongoing compliance. Command staff, management, and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that policies and procedures are followed and equipment is maintained and deployed properly. Leadership and management are also responsible for ensuring the health and well-being of officers, so officers can think and perform in a manner that safeguards not only them but also their fellow officers.

8. **Equipment.** Ensuring officers are equipped, with state of the art equipment, body armor, and weapons, is crucial to improving officer safety. Equipment runs across the spectrum. Keeping the street officer safe by using better reflective markings on cruisers, upgrading to LED lighting, and implementing more effective seat belt mechanisms are some successful strategies. Police belts and uniforms that accommodate weaponry and ensure safe and easy access are crucial. Wearing body armor is one of the most proactive measures officers can take to improve the odds of not being fatally shot. However, due to varying body sizes, they do not always fit properly. The OSW Group recognizes the need to establish an industry standard for measuring and fitting vests to ensure maximum protection. Maintaining weaponry, building police arsenals with arms having sufficient firing capacity to counter the weapons currently used by criminals, and providing readily available weapons from less than lethal to lethal will also lessen an officer's risk.

9. **Deployment strategies and communication technologies.** Many factors are taken into consideration when developing deployment schedules, but some factors may compromise an officer's safety, thereby placing him or her in dangerous situations without backup, or could contribute to sleep deprivation: e.g., the number of officers assigned per car in a high-crime area; long distances between backup; and nightshift officers who have to appear in court the next day yet still report to their detail at their regular time that evening. Another strategy for improving officer safety on the street is enhancing communication technologies, such as real-time reporting systems for officers to query or obtain information quickly about a suspect while in the field and ensuring interoperability capability.

Mental and Physical Health and Wellness

10. **Physical health (e.g., fatigue, alcohol, weight, and nutrition).** An officer's health can greatly impact his or her ability to deliver policing services effectively and can jeopardize not only his or her safety but also the safety of fellow officers and the community they serve. For example, given the current economy, officers may work secondary jobs for additional income. Consideration must be given regarding the total number of hours these officers work to avoid fatigue and related results: e.g., car crashes and potential irritability when interacting with the community. The mid-year 2011 report attributed 16 fatalities to physical health-related job injuries, yet it did not

highlight the staggering number of injuries each year due to physical health (NLEOMF 2011b, 4). Officers work in a team setting even when they patrol alone; ensuring that each member of the team is comprehensively fit is crucial. Allowing officers access to gym, nutritional, and wellness programs while on-duty encourages physical health and fitness.

11. **Psychological health.** Law enforcement officers view the best and the worst of society and have to present a professional, stoic exterior to assist the victims and the community. However, trauma can result from these horrendous events and heinous crimes. Thus, providing mental health resources for the officers is important. Post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide are very real issues in policing. In 2009, 143 law enforcement officers took their own lives in 2009 (Badge of Life 2011). Overcoming the stigma of using mental health services and providing more effective resources are crucial for officer safety and wellness.

12. **Maintaining good health.** Comprehensive factors that impact law enforcement officers need to be considered to ensure officer safety and wellness. Personal habits, emotional intelligence, and the proportion of on- and off-duty time can all affect the delivery of job- and non-job-related services. For example, officers may welcome overtime—and even shorten their off-duty rest—for the financial benefit; however, this can affect the officers' concentration and awareness. Although officers have to present an unemotional façade to the community, creating an emotionally intelligent agency is important.

13. **Former military in law enforcement.** With the influx of returning military turning to local law enforcement jobs, accommodations also need to be made for the unique needs of these officers. Many former military officers suffer from war-related trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder. These unique law enforcement officers also deal with trauma from being on the streets. Appropriate services must be provided to ensure that injury and stress from previous military service do not interfere with their ability to provide effective policing services.

Training

14. **Education and training.** Training is essential in preparing officers to respond to the rigorous demands of their jobs. While training in the academy prepares the officer for the basics of what to expect, providing consistent and innovative education throughout an officer's career is critical. Utilizing in-service training sustains an effective and engaged law enforcement agency. Developing innovative education resources that can be delivered during in-service training sessions is important.

15. **Emergency vehicle operation and safety.** Whether operating under routine, urgent, or emergency mode, law enforcement must take appropriate measures to ensure the safe operation of automobiles, motorcycles, or even bicycles. Officers face hazards in performing routine patrol, as well as in responding to calls for service and engaging in pursuits. While some accidents may be unavoidable, others can be prevented. These hazards can be minimized through training and education, policy development, the use of existing equipment, and new technology.

16. **Foot pursuit safety.** Chases involving fleeing suspects, whether in a vehicle or on foot, represents one of the more dangerous situations that a law enforcement officer can be in. A large number of officers have been killed and harmed in vehicular and foot pursuits of suspects. Better procedures, tactics, and techniques can improve officer safety during these inherently hazardous situations. Police policies and training can also help increase officer safety and should be further explored.

Appendix B: OSW Group Meeting Attendees

Geoffrey Alpert, Ph.D.
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    University of South Carolina

Karen L. Amendola, Ph.D.
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    Police Foundation

Michael N. Becar
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Chief Executive Officer
    International Association of
    Directors of Law Enforce-
    ment Standards and Training

Pamela J. Cammarata
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    Bureau of Justice Assistance

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    Tampa (FL) Police
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Lieutenant and Deputy
Medical Director
    Dallas (TX) Police
    Department

Joshua A. Ederheimer
Principal Deputy Director
    Office of Community
    Oriented Policing Services

Gary L. Edwards
Chief Executive Officer
    National Native American
    Law Enforcement Association

Benson H. Fairow
Deputy Chief of Police
    Bay Area Rapid Transit
    (BART) (CA) Police
    Department

Chris Feather
Assistant Director
    Prince William County (VA)
    Criminal Justice Academy

Hugh Ferguson
Superintendent
    Toronto (Ontario) Police
    Services

Craig W. Floyd
Chairman and Chief
Executive Officer
    National Law Enforcement
    Officers Memorial Fund

Craig Frasier, Ph.D.
Director of Management
Services
    Police Executive Research
    Forum

Stephanie A. Garbarczuk
Law Enforcement
Coordination Manager
    United States Attorney's
    Office—D.C. .

Joel Garner, Ph.D.
Chief of Law Enforcement
Statistics Unit
    Bureau of Justice Statistics

Teena Garrison, Ph.D.
Assistant Research Professor
    Center for Advanced
    Vehicular Systems
    Mississippi State University

Herbert V. Giobbi, J.D.
Chief Operating Officer
    National Law Enforcement
    Officers Memorial Fund

William Glynn
Commander
Advanced Officer Training/
Career Development
    Prince George's County (MD)
    Police Department

Katherine Goodwin
Commander
    Anne Arundel County (MD)
    Police Department

Elliott E. Grollman
Commander
    Federal Protective Service

David L. Harlow
Deputy Assistant Director
    U.S. Marshals Service

William Haskell
Public Safety Sector
Coordinator
    National Institute for Occupa-
    tional Safety and Health

Rachel Hedge
Director of Government Affairs
    National Association of Police
    Organizations

Dennis Hyater
Program Manager
    Commission on Accreditation
    for Law Enforcement
    Agencies

Marc Joseph
Deputy Chief of Police
Special Operations Division
    Las Vegas Metropolitan (NV)
    Police Department

Nola Joyce
Deputy Commissioner and Chief
Administrative Officer
    Philadelphia (PA) Police
    Department

Robert Kaminski, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
    University of South Carolina

John Kenny, Ph.D.
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    Defense Technologies
    Applied Research Laboratory
    The Pennsylvania State
    University

John King
Director of Education and
Training Division
    Baltimore (MD) Police
    Department

Matthew Klein
Commander
    Metropolitan (DC) Police
    Department

David A. Klinger, Ph.D.
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    University of Missouri—
    St. Louis

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Tactical Teams Program
Manager
    Law Enforcement Plans
    Division
    Office of the Provost Marshal
    Joint Forces Headquarters
    NCR

Albert L. Liebno, Jr.
Deputy Director of Training
and Certification
    Maryland Police and
    Correctional Training
    Commissions

**Baaswewe Frederick
D. Maulson**
Chief Warden
    Great Lakes Indian Fish and
    Wildlife Commission

Leonard Matarese
Director of Research and
Project Development
    International City/County
    Management Association

Bernard K. Melekian, D.PP.
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    Oriented Policing Services

Dan Merkle
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Michael Robbs
Chief of Basic Driving Branch
    Federal Law Enforcement
    Training Center

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    National Fraternal
    Order of Police

Daniel Rodriguez
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About the COPS Office

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.

Rather than simply responding to crimes once they have been committed, community policing concentrates on preventing crime and eliminating the atmosphere of fear it creates. Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office has produced and compiled a broad range of information resources that can help law enforcement better address specific crime and operational issues, and help community leaders better understand how to work cooperatively with their law enforcement agency to reduce crime.

- Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested nearly $14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.

- By the end of FY2011, the COPS Office has funded approximately 123,000 additional officers to more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country in small and large jurisdictions alike.

- Nearly 600,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.

- As of 2011, the COPS Office has distributed more than 6.6 million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.

COPS Office resources, covering a wide breadth of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—are available, at no cost, through its online Resource Information Center at www.cops.usdoj.gov. This easy-to-navigate website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.

About BJA

The Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) mission is to provide leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal justice strategies to achieve safer communities.

BJA has four primary components: the Policy Office, Programs Office, Planning Office, and Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Office. The Policy Office provides national leadership in criminal justice policy, training, and technical assistance to further the administration of justice. It also acts as a liaison to national organizations that partner with BJA to drive policy and help disseminate information on promising practices. The Programs Office coordinates and administers state and local grant programs and acts as BJA's direct line of communication to state, local, territorial, and tribal governments by providing assistance and coordinating resources. The Planning Office coordinates the planning, communications, and budget formulation and execution; provides overall BJA-wide coordination; and supports streamlining efforts. The Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Office provides death and education benefits to survivors of fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders and disability benefits to officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty.

BJA's overall goals are to (1) reduce and prevent crime, violence, and drug abuse and (2) improve the functioning of the criminal justice system. To achieve these goals, BJA programs emphasize enhanced coordination and cooperation of federal, state, and local efforts. BJA's objectives in support of these goals are to:

- Encourage the development and implementation of comprehensive strategies to reduce and prevent crime and violence

- Encourage the active participation of community organizations and citizens in efforts to prevent crime, drug abuse, and violence

- Provide training and technical assistance in support of efforts to prevent crime, drug abuse, and violence at the national, state, and local levels

- Reduce the availability of illegal weapons and develop strategies to address violence in our communities

- Enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies to reduce crime

- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of the adjudication process, including indigent defense services

- Assist states in freeing prison space for serious and violent offenders through the design and implementation of effective correctional options for nonviolent offenders

- Enhance the ability of criminal justice agencies to access and use new information technologies

- Encourage and support evaluation of the effectiveness of funded programs and dissemination of program results

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice formed a national group of experts and stakeholders to focus on the research, policies, and practices of officer safety and wellness issues. While the work of the OSW Group remains on-going, this annual summary brings together highlights from its first year of work. The report highlights the steps law enforcement agencies can take now to help reduce deaths and injuries. Even though gaps remain in current officer safety research, agencies should both support and participate in the research that will fill those gaps.

While these individual recommendations can play a part in addressing officer safety and wellness issues, the most important step a law enforcement agency can take is to place officer safety among the top goals of the agency and continuously engage in efforts to monitor progress toward creating an environment where everyone in the organization accepts responsibility for operating in a safe manner.