

RESOURCES TO IMPROVE OFFICER SAFETY

POLICE 1

OFFICER

Survival Guide

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INSIDE

04
Preventing
officer
killings

12
The
importance of
radio discipline

16
Strategies
to enhance
situational
awareness

20
Developing a
respect-based
police survival
attitude

24
Will your
call for help
be heard?

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Editor's Note

According to preliminary data from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, firearms-related fatalities claimed the lives of 33 officers in the first half of 2022, an 18% increase compared to the 28 officers killed in firearms-related incidents in the first half of 2021. The Fraternal Order of Police reports that as of June, there had been 27 ambush-style attacks on law enforcement officers this year, which resulted in 42 officers shot, 6 of whom were killed.

With law enforcement staffing at crisis levels and violent crime spiking nationwide, there may never have been a more dangerous time to be a police officer. "Violence against law enforcement in this country is one of the biggest phenomena that I think doesn't get enough attention," FBI Director

Christopher Wray recently told CBS News' 60 Minutes.

This special edition outlines the training required to prepare officers to avoid potentially deadly scenarios, while also providing them with the life-saving muscle memory to effectively respond to emergencies. Authors share lessons identified from officer LODDs, discuss the critical need for radio discipline during an officer-down incident, and review essential strategies for field training officers to improve situational awareness among rookie cops.

Plus, access additional LEO safety resources online at our [officer survival resource page](#).

Stay safe,

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Contents

- 04 Tactics to prevent officer killings**
By Charles Moorman and Richard Wemmer
- 12 The importance of radio discipline on "officer down" calls**
By Tim Dees
- 16 3 strategies to help field training officers teach situational awareness and improve officer safety**
By Sergeant Dan Greene
- 20 Developing a respect-based police survival attitude**
By Lt. Dan Marcou
- 24 Will your call for help be heard?**
By Courtney Levin, Police1 BrandFocus Staff

A dramatic, low-angle shot of a police car at night. The car's windows are shattered with multiple bullet holes, and the interior is visible. The car's emergency lights are flashing in red, yellow, and blue. The scene is dark, with the car's lights providing the primary illumination.

TACTICS TO PREVENT **OFFICER KILLINGS**

IDENTIFYING LESSONS LEARNED WITH
THE LIFE-SAVING GOAL OF PREVENTING
FUTURE LEO DEATHS

By Charles Moorman and Richard Wemmer

Thorough evaluation of critical policing incidents enables continuous improvement of police operations and response, which is essential to enhance the safety of both the public and officers.

This article analyzes the deaths of [eight California law enforcement officers](#) from felonious assaults in 2020 and 2021 to identify lessons learned with the life-saving goal of preventing future officer killings.

The FBI’s [Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted \(LEOKA\) Program](#) defines “feloniously killed” as: “Incident type in which an officer, while engaged in or on account of the performance of their official duties, was fatally injured as a direct result of a willful and intentional act by an offender.” The officer deaths reviewed do not include accidents (aircraft or automobile), duty-related illnesses, fires, cardiac incidents, or other physical causes.

LODD DATA

In 2020, 46 officers were feloniously killed nationwide, which was a decrease of two from the 48 killed in 2019. In 2021, the intentional killing of

law enforcement officers spiked by an alarming 59% [according to the FBI](#) with 73 officers killed, the most nationwide officer deaths since 1995.

In 2020, two California officers died from a felonious assault, which was a decrease from six California officers killed in 2019. In 2021, six California officers died from [felonious assaults](#).

The officers murdered in 2020 and 2021 were engaged in various law enforcement activities that escalated into armed responses and refusals to cooperate culminating in shots fired. Based on the circumstances described, supervisors and trainers should consider their current tactical options and response practices to the following to optimize officer safety:

- **Ambush**
- **Barricaded person inside a vehicle**
- **Building entry and search**
- **Domestic violence**
- **Operations at a law enforcement facility**
- **Shots fired**
- **Vehicle pullovers and pursuits**

CALIFORNIA OFFICER DEATHS FROM FELONIOUS ASSAULTS IN 2020 & 2021

Incident Date	Thursday, April 23, 2020
Location	San Diego

Incident Details

Officer Daniel Walters died of complications from a gunshot wound that occurred on Wednesday, November 12, 2003. Officer Walters and his partner had backed another officer on a car parked in a travel lane. Upon their arrival, the parked vehicle’s driver was standing nearby on the sidewalk. When the officers approached, the assailant shot Officer Walters once in the neck at zero to five feet. Officer Walters was 36 years old and had been a police officer for five years. After being shot, Officer Walters fell into a traffic lane and a passing vehicle struck him. The attacker had been previously involved in a domestic incident and was shot and killed by the Officer Walter’s partner.

Incident Date	Saturday, June 6, 2020
Location	Santa Cruz
Incident Details	<p>Around 1:30 p.m., Santa Cruz sheriff’s deputies responded to a service call of a suspicious vehicle (van) parked off-road in the Santa Cruz mountains. The person reporting said he saw bomb-making materials and firearms in the van. The van’s driver left the area, was later observed and followed to a driveway in the Ben Lomond area. Shortly thereafter, deputies and a California Highway Patrol (CHP) officer were assaulted with gunfire and an improvised explosive device (IED). Santa Cruz Sheriff Sergeant Damon Gutzwiller, age 38 years, with 14 years at the Sheriff’s Office, was struck by gunfire and killed. Two other officers were also injured. After the assault and murder, the assailant, Steven Carrillo, age 32 years, an off-duty Air Force sergeant who was assigned to an elite Air Force security team, fled on foot and carjacked a vehicle. When located, he was shot and captured in a subsequent encounter with officers.</p> <p>Carrillo was the rifle shooter from the same van in the drive-by killing of a uniformed federal security officer in Oakland, on Friday, May 29, 2020, at a Black Lives Matter rally. Carrillo was affiliated with the extremist boogaloo movement, a loose network of anti-government and militia-style extremists.</p>

Incident Date	Tuesday, January 19, 2021
Location	Sacramento
Incident Details	<p>Around 10 p.m., Sacramento County Sheriff’s deputies attempted a traffic stop that escalated into a vehicle pursuit ending in a crash at the CAL Expo and State Fairgrounds. Despite verbal police commands, the driver refused to exit his vehicle and his rear window was broken out with non-lethal force. A K-9 was sent into the vehicle, resulting in the K-9 being shot to death. Additional shots were fired and a second K-9 handler, Deputy Adam Gibson, age 31 years with six years of law enforcement experience, was killed. The assailant, a 40-year-old man with a record of crime, drug abuse and mental illness was shot and killed at the scene.</p>

Incident Date	Monday, May 10, 2021
Location	San Luis Obispo County
Incident Details	<p>At 5:20 p.m., a regional Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT) in San Luis Obispo County was serving a stolen property search warrant at a second-story, corner residential apartment. After various verbal attempts directing the occupant to open the locked door, a forced entry was made. The first SWAT team member into the apartment, San Luis Obispo Police Department Detective Luca Benedetti, age 37 years with 12 years of law enforcement experience, was shot fatally at close range with a round of birdshot in the head. The assailant, a 37-year-old man with a record of mental illness, retrieved the fallen detective’s shoulder firearm and continued firing at team members. He subsequently took his own life with the fallen officer’s weapon.</p>

Incident Date	Tuesday, May 11, 2021
Location	Stockton
Incident Details	At 10:07 a.m., Stockton police officer Jimmy Inn, age 30 years with six years of law enforcement experience, responded to a domestic violence service call at a private residence. As he approached the front door, the assailant exited and killed the officer with a handgun. Subsequent shots were fired by responding officers with the assailant, age 30 years, being shot and killed while attempting to strangle his 8-year-old son in the front yard.
Incident Date	Monday, May 31, 2021
Location	San Bernardino County
Incident Details	At 12:40 p.m. on Memorial Day, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Motorcycle Patrol Sergeant Domenic Vaca, age 43 years with 17 years of law enforcement experience, attempted a traffic stop. The vehicle involved was a street motorcycle being operated without a license plate, riding off-street in the desert near Yucca Valley. Following a vehicle pursuit, the driver stopped, waited for the deputies, and fatally shot the sergeant. The 29-year-old assailant was shot and killed by other deputies in an exchange of gunfire. He was a parolee with a felony criminal record.
Incident Date	Sunday, July 25, 2021
Location	Kern County
Incident Details	At 3 p.m., Kern County Sheriff's SWAT team member Deputy Phillip Campas, age 35 years with 10 years of law enforcement experience, was shot and killed while deployed at the scene of a Wasco residential house, shots-fired incident. Three hours later, the assailant exited onto the roof and was shot to death by other team members. The 41-year-old assailant had a criminal record of domestic violence, was under a current court restraining order, and earlier had killed his wife and two sons inside the private residence.
Incident Date	Tuesday, October 12, 2021
Location	Fresno County
Incident Details	Fresno County Sheriff's Deputy Toamalama Scanlan, age 46 years with 18 years of law enforcement experience, succumbed to complications from a gunshot wound to the head suffered on Tuesday, September 4, 2016, while assigned to jail duties. Deputy Scanlan and another deputy were armed with only TASERS. The deputies were shot in the jail lobby by a male assailant, Thong Vang, age 37 years, who was attempting to jump the visitation line. The assailant, high on methadone, was a convicted child molester on parole. He was sentenced in 2018 to 112 years in prison for the deadly assault. The other deputy eventually recovered.

Now we have reviewed the circumstances of the California officers murdered in 2020 and 2021, we will identify how law enforcement agencies can

reduce risk factors for personnel through training, policies and procedures.

COMBATTING COMPLACENCY

Complacency is law enforcement's deadliest enemy. It can lead to civil litigation, community unrest, serious bodily injury and death. Complacency can occur in both experienced and inexperienced officers despite their ages. Field training officers and front-line supervisors, especially at the sergeant rank, must consistently monitor complacency and duty performance, including their own.

The average policing experience of the California officers killed in 2020 and 2021 was 12 service years with a range from six to 18 years. The average age was 37 years, ranging from 30 to 46 years. The assailants' average age was 35 years, varying from 29 to 41 years. Continuous training is essential despite officers' ages and tenure. [1]

The FBI's "The Assailant Study: Mindsets and Behaviors" report provides important information to incorporate into police training. Assailant commonalities in 53 incidents where 64 officers lost their lives include the desire to kill for political or social reasons and to remain free from jail or prison. Additionally, the killers of officers in this study had the following common characteristics: [5]

- **Prior criminal histories – 86%**
- **History of drug abuse – 60%**
- **Known to local police or sheriff departments – 56%**
- **History of domestic violence – 44%**
- **Mental health identified as a contributing factor – 40%**
- **Under the influence – 32%**
- **On probation or parole – 32%**
- **Presence of warrants – 26%**
- **Known gang affiliations – 24%**
- **Diagnosed mental health issues – 18%**

LAW ENFORCEMENT STATION SECURITY

Police station security procedures, restricted access areas and site-hardening construction have improved in recent years. However, police stations continue to be an area of high-risk activity for personnel.

Nationwide, police facilities, unoccupied marked and unmarked police vehicles, and officers in and around their police stations have been attacked with explosives, firebombs and gunfire. This trend has been accompanied by anti-policing demonstrations at and near police buildings where destruction, injuries, vandalism and violence occurred. These incidents deserve further study to determine the lessons learned and steps to improve facility, public and officer safety.

Policing agencies should assess operational plans, policies and procedures involving law enforcement station security.

VEHICLE PULLOVERS, PURSUITS

Due to the vehicle pursuits preceding the actual vehicle stops, the danger signs, red flags and risk signals were heightened in the Sacramento and San Bernardino incidents in 2021 described earlier. The question arises as to why the driver/occupant(s) is fleeing? Is there a criminal motive that exceeds the initial observation? Could there be contraband, drugs, a stolen vehicle, a vehicle carjacking, or a parolee with a concealed or disguised weapon, i.e., blunt object, edged weapon, explosive device, firearm, and or a personal weapon, who does not want to return to prison?



Cutting corners
has no place
in personnel
staffing or
law enforcement
officer safety
and field
tactics training.

Officers must use caution when dealing with people inside a vehicle when a traffic, investigative, or high-risk stop is initiated. Officers should plan physical and verbal tactical options before starting an approach, exercise caution due to concealed hands, and consider hidden occupant(s) or vehicle areas not visible, such as a tinted window hatchback door, or trunk.

BUILDING ENTRIES AND SEARCHES

Two felonious assaults involving county sheriff's deputies occurred despite the advance knowledge of a firearm, and the potential for

deadly force being involved. Both law enforcement officers were SWAT team members with advanced tactical training who were exposed to deadly gunfire. Team debriefing and supervisor review process are essential practices in enforcing safe and effective tactics.

A third county regional SWAT team member was shot while executing a stolen property search warrant during an announced forced entry. The use of a tactical analysis or a risk assessment matrix, including arrest and search warrant service and eviction operations, is essential to creating an applicable and safe operational plan, including location history and neighborhood review.

This is particularly true when assessing the person of interest's background, i.e., criminal or mental health history potential for associates, friends, or relatives being present or nearby, and prior police contacts. When time permits, consider the use of a surveillance camera for recording a person's ingress and egress. The possibility of contact outside a structure rather than an entry into an unknown environment provides tactical advantages. The use of electronic detection and entry devices should be reviewed and explored in arrest/warrant entry situations.

Powerful detection and entry tools are available to law enforcement to preclude personnel from placing themselves unnecessarily into a hazardous position. Such technology includes infrared heat signature-seeking devices and cameras mounted on armored mobile robotics. Financial costs can be lowered by sharing the resources on a county or regional basis.

Find valuable building entry and search information in two LEOKA reports, "[The Eviction Murders](#)" and "[The Minkler Incident](#)."

INITIATED ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE CALLS

One deadly assault occurred in response to a domestic disturbance. The possibility of physical violence and the potential for the use of weapons is always present when responding to a private

residence, especially where alcohol or drug abuse, arguments and child custody disputes are present.

Except for what a dispatcher can glean from the initial call and the location's incident history, the responding field officer will have limited information when approaching an unknown environment. When the circumstances permit in these incidents, a single officer should wait for backup, use cover ideally away from the police vehicle, and gather intelligence at a safe distance from available sources before making entry or physical contact with the person(s) involved.

Communications personnel must receive training on gathering additional information to provide field personnel with tactical intelligence. Such details may dictate greater caution and the implementation of additional/different field tactics or resources. This training must include checking any available local, state, or federal databases or records systems.

Whenever there is a service call involving a subject with a background of mental illness, the responding officers must recognize that there is an increased risk of violent behavior and the potential to escalate use of force options. In these known cases, mental health or social services specialists can be invaluable.

Unless there is an imminent need to save lives, the time-honored practice of slowing down and not rushing in should be followed.

REALITY-BASED TRAINING

While the use of virtual training, videos and desk-top simulations of dangerous service calls are valuable and economical training tools, trainers should continue using reality-based training scenarios with noisemaking or paint marking cartridges with safety-modified firearms. Officers involved in actual incidents where public and police lives were saved frequently acknowledge that their scenario training was likely the reason they survived.

Training costs of on-site field exercises can be lowered by offering such events on a regional basis with integrated multi-agency training sessions, particularly for smaller law enforcement departments, at fairgrounds, parks, or in less densely populated industrial areas. The feasibility of federal or state training grants for such training should be explored.

Law enforcement administrators and elected officials may be concerned about the costs of reenactments and field exercises. However, the cost of an agency losing an officer to a felonious assault that may have been prevented by training is in the millions of dollars to duplicate the application process, physically train and replace that valuable person, and make up the future years of service that the victim would have provided. A fallen officer's agency may be understaffed for months until a replacement can be trained and put in the field, often incurring expensive overtime costs. Consider the additional cost to the law enforcement agency, the community, and the family of the fallen officer, not only in dollars, but emotionally and psychologically. Cutting corners has no place in officer safety and field tactics training.

CONCLUSION

The greatest loss to our community and profession is a severe injury or death among those who protect and serve. Law enforcement leaders must continually examine current policing actions and determine areas of training and agency policies and procedures needing improvement. **P1**)

About the authors

Richard Wemmer and Charles Moorman have accumulated over 95 years of California law enforcement experience. Starting in 1970, they pioneered research and studies of officers feloniously killed in California, beginning with the killings of four young California Highway Patrol Officers in Newhall, California on April 6, 1970. They have continued these studies to extrapolate lessons learned to improve decision-making skills, field tactics, officer safety, and training. Their research has covered over 400 murders of California officers, dating back to 1960, and resulted in dozens of studies published in law enforcement journals.

AMBUSH

PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Due to what seems to be an increasing number of officer ambushes, agencies must assess training practices. The simple response of exiting the kill zone must be supplemented with contemporary information and realistic firearm and scenario exercises. The following are areas for consideration:

- **Pros and cons of driving through or toward, engaging with lethal force, or exiting the police vehicle.**
- **Use of a police vehicle against an immediate and lethal threat.**
- **Best police vehicle locations to use as cover.**
- **Result of a ricochet on bullet behavior.**
- **Gunfire outcome when fired through a police vehicle's glass – back, front, or side.**
- **Firearm draw and exhibit from a seated position inside the vehicle.**
- **Firearm techniques when shooting from inside a police vehicle.**
- **Use all available ballistic protection including vests, helmets, shields and wraparound eye protection**
- **Movement that might cause less body armor protection.**

When conducting firearm training from inside a police vehicle, loaded firearms and live fire present significant safety challenges. This training can be replaced with noise or paint marking cartridges from firearms that do not fire live ammunition.

Since 1970, the assaults and killings of hundreds of California law enforcement personnel have reinforced that field and safety tactics must be regularly addressed with all law enforcement personnel. Essential concepts include:

- **Criminal behavior distraction techniques and control of the hands, fists and feet.**
- **Positions of advantage and disadvantage, remember cover plus distance equals a position of advantage.**
- **Benefits of cover versus concealment.**
- **Importance of communication, both verbal and non-verbal.**
- **Utilization of backup, air, K-9, supervisor, or specialized resources**
- **Reading the scene by taking the time to assess and analyze the situation, especially the behavior of people in and around the area.**
- **Directing the criminal(s) to a position of disadvantage, reducing the officers' need to approach.**

There is no substitute for using common sense and reacting to an officer's intuitive knowledge. Following critical incidents, officers have cited the recognition of something unusual that caused them to react quickly and save a life.

—Richard Wemmer and Charles Moorman



THE IMPORTANCE OF RADIO DISCIPLINE ON “OFFICER DOWN” CALLS

TAKE THAT TACTICAL PAUSE BEFORE PRESSING THE MIC BUTTON

By Tim Dees

Most police officers who have been working when an “officer down” or similar emergency pops up have heard the radio traffic go wild. Cops are racing one another to grab their radio mics and report they are on their way. Meanwhile, the poor soul who is in jeopardy can’t get on the air to update the responders because their

transmissions are being squelched. Is there a good solution to this problem?

The problem – or the solution, depending on your point of view – is radio discipline. Taking a deep breath and thinking for a second or two before grabbing the mic might make the difference by allowing the officer under the gun to transmit a critical piece of information.

David Pearson is an interim commander for a Colorado law enforcement agency and the principal of Rocky Mountain Blue Line Consulting, a police training firm. He has over 30 years of police experience and is a long-time member and instructor with the National Tactical Officers Association. Radio discipline is just one of the topics he covers in his “Top 20” class in tactical decision-making.

“I have been involved in and have debriefed calls where somebody will yell on the radio ‘Officer down, officer down,’ and that’s about all they get out,” Pearson said. “And now you have officers screaming to that event and they are going into an unknown. And, because everyone wants to help and go on the call everyone is saying, ‘I’ll go, I’ll go, I’ll go,’ and there’s a lot of radio traffic that’s taken up with people that are trying to get there, as opposed to saying what do they are going to do when they arrive.”

In some cases, the first officer to arrive feels the need to take some immediate action and falls victim to the same threat the initial officer did.

“Unless there is a need to immediately get into a gunfight, they probably should do more evaluating, planning and communicating than taking any action,” Pearson said. “Oftentimes the probability

of success will go up if they take a few seconds (a ‘tactical pause’) to breathe, evaluate and communicate with other officers and say, ‘Here’s what I got, here’s what needs to occur.’ If they took a little time, there would be a better chance of success in resolving the incident in the best way possible.”



The biggest thing is to just take that tactical pause where you're breathing, thinking and then communicating the needs that you have.

RESPONDING TO AN OFFICER DOWN

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Evaluate, plan and communicate before acting
- ✓ Clearly state here’s what I have, here’s what I need
- ✓ Handle similar to any other critical incident
- ✓ Understand your mission and safety priorities
- ✓ Talk on the radio only when you have something everyone needs to know
- ✓ Take a tactical breath so you think, then communicate



Noble cause mentality

The cops who fall into the trap of action without thought have what Pearson calls a “noble cause mentality.” Their intentions are nothing but good, but their zeal for getting to the incident and rendering assistance at all costs limits their usefulness and purpose. Instead of helping to resolve the situation with a good outcome, they can be a liability.

“I would never second guess somebody’s bravery, but in some cases, I think officers feel like they need to go do something without thinking through it. That noble cause mentality can get you or others hurt if you’re not thinking through that,” Pearson said. “I listened through a difficult debrief where an officer was shot. The next officer said ‘officer down’ then immediately went to assist and was also shot. The third officer just arriving on scene immediately saw two officers down and moved up and was also hit. I could not help but think if the officers would have taken a few seconds to communicate the situation it might have made a difference. I know these are difficult situations and it is easy to arm-chair quarterback an event, but it was something I was left thinking.”

Understand the safety priorities

To assist with processing these events it is important to understand that an officer down incident is a critical incident and should be handled like other critical incidents.

“When we single that out as ‘special’ I think officers are thrown off their game. I think sometimes when officers hear ‘officer down,’ emotions kick in and making emotional decisions can be dangerous. It is important to have a consistent decision-making model to work through all critical incidents. It is important to gather facts and intel, understand the environment and terrain, and then pick the correct tools and tactics to resolve a problem. When officers do that, emotions are suppressed and good training kicks in,” Pearson said.

Another important aspect is understanding the mission and the relevant safety priorities: hostages, innocent civilians, officers and suspects.

“If officers are on an active shooter or hostage incident, they might step over a downed officer to perform a rescue or address an active threat,” Pearson notes. “An officer down on a patrol response to a robbery, domestic, traffic stop, or shooting might be different.”

If you are unclear about the mission, trying to work things out in the moment might create lag time that can lead to bad consequences.

Agency policies

Agencies can also review their policies regarding radio procedures. Do they require an officer to report over the radio when they are running code (emergency lights and sirens)? If so, consider modifying that policy to reduce radio traffic.

In addition, some agencies advocate moving extraneous traffic regarding the incident to a secondary channel.

Pearson favors keeping all radio traffic on the main radio channel: “If you turn to a different channel to address the perimeter or something and then switch back and somebody’s halfway talking about the plan, you’re like, ‘Oh, what did they say?’ So, clear the channel, listen, communicate when needed, and go help.”

When responding to hot calls, some officers find the need to get on the radio and notify everyone that they’re responding. This is often unnecessary. Pearson noted how this was handled at his agency.

David Pearson is an interim commander for a Colorado law enforcement agency and the principal of Rocky Mountain Blue Line Consulting, a police training firm. recently retired as a lieutenant with the Fort Collins Police Services in Fort Collins, Colorado. He has been a law enforcement instructor since 1996 and has taught a variety of topics to include officer safety, SWAT tactics, active shooter and incident command. Since 2005, David has been an instructor for the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) and is the main instructor for the NTOA’s Less Lethal Instructor course.



“If you were the third person on the radio saying you were going to a call, you got my attention. We must develop a culture that says if we have an emergency and you feel the need to respnd, and it’s the right thing to do, then go. When you get out of the car, call on scene. But, normally, in these crisis events, whether it be a robbery, an officer down or shooting or whatever, most dispatchers will send at least two cars, and the first two cars should say, ‘Yep, got it.’ Everyone else just go.”

The importance of mental rehearsal

Inexperienced officers can be the worst violators of radio discipline.

“You can tell the people who have thought through this before when it’s not their first rodeo,” Pearson said. “The people who have never thought about being in that circumstance are yelling and screaming. What ends up happening is they yell, and the dispatcher can’t understand them. So, of course, they’re going to have to ask, ‘Last unit, say again,’ and you just wasted that time.

“There is a great saying, ‘You will not rise to the occasion, you will fall to the level of your training.’ I had a friend who was involved in a shooting. His radio traffic was like he was ordering coffee. This was his first shooting in real life but not his first shooting in his mind. He had practiced and thought through what he needed to do and what he needed to say and attended scenario-based training events. It is amazing what a little mental practice and prep can do for performance.”

Take a tactical pause

Supervisors can play a huge role in setting the tone at a critical incident by remaining calm, directing the traffic to information and planning, and ensuring actions are followed through. Before an event, supervisors can also set up a scenario or tabletop to have officers work through what to say, when to be on the radio and other expectations. These quick sessions can be safely accomplished after shift briefing in the parking lot.

“The biggest thing is to just take that tactical pause where you’re breathing, thinking and then communicating the needs that you have. It helps you focus on getting back to your training and your tactics and understanding the concept,” Pearson said. **P1**)

About the author

Tim Dees is a writer, editor, trainer and former law enforcement officer. After 15 years as a police officer with the Reno Police Department and elsewhere in northern Nevada, Tim taught criminal justice as a full-time professor and instructor at colleges in Wisconsin, West Virginia, Georgia and Oregon. He was also a regional training coordinator for the Oregon Dept. of Public Safety Standards & Training, providing in-service training to 65 criminal justice agencies in central and eastern Oregon.



3 STRATEGIES

TO HELP FIELD TRAINING
OFFICERS TEACH SITUATIONAL
AWARENESS AND IMPROVE
OFFICER SAFETY

WHAT CAN THE FTO DO TO HELP PROPERLY ACCELERATE THIS PROCESS?

By Sergeant Dan Greene

Situational awareness is a common and complicated term in law enforcement.

Historically, situational awareness is seen as a skill learned over time through repetition and experience. Trainers often leave it to fate and the maturation process to teach a junior officer situational awareness.

The risk of leaving this up to fate and experience is the damage that can be caused in the learning process. Both academic and physical scars can be the result of experiential learning. These risks are magnified while training in the field where “life lessons” are the primary educational delivery system.

Field training officer (FTO) is another common and complicated term in law enforcement.

The FTO carries a large responsibility: Teach situational awareness without leaving scars. Teach it properly so that your young officer is safe on the

job and can act as a reliable backup to their peers one day. No small task for sure.

The question is, what can the FTO do to help properly accelerate this process? The answer is that it’s complicated.

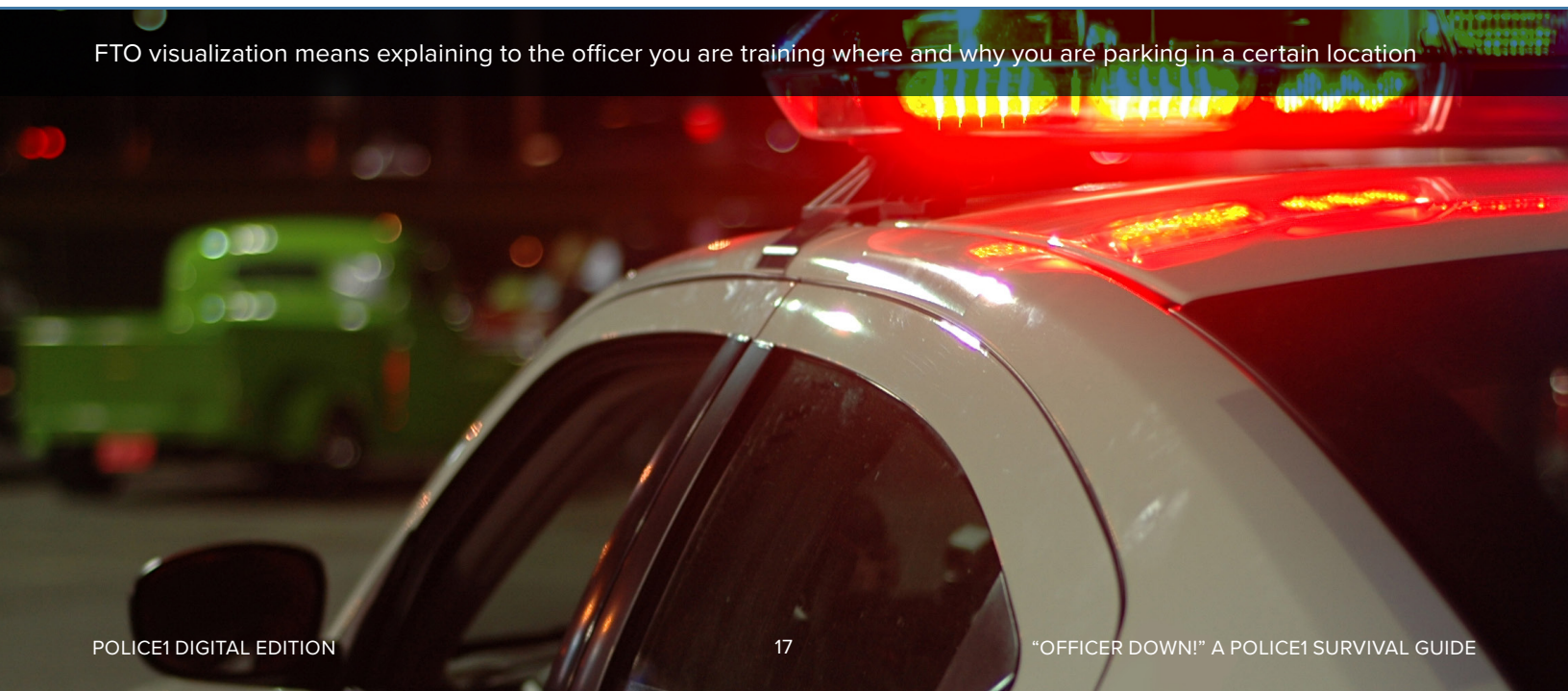
Here are three strategies every FTO should use to effectively train this life-saving skill.

1. Situational awareness is in the mind

Think of your understanding of the world around you. How you perceive potential threats is all in your mind. For anyone else to understand how you perceive the environment you’re working in, you need to communicate it. The same is true for your student officers. As a trainer, you need to get into the mind of your student. Since most of us are not mind readers, this can be difficult. Here are two tips:

FTO visualization: This training technique is specifically useful in the student’s early phases. This is where the FTO nearly continuously speaks out loud to the student about what the FTO sees, hears, smells and most importantly, how they perceive those observations. This allows the student to listen and begin to absorb and translate the environment in the same way their FTO does. This is a combination of experiential learning with an existential lesson. It may sound

FTO visualization means explaining to the officer you are training where and why you are parking in a certain location





A man with a knife threatening suicide as he walks away from an officer poses a different risk than a man with a knife in a wheelchair.

like this, “I’m going to park about 10 houses down from the target house and avoid parking under this streetlight. That way we can approach on foot in the shadows. This is a safer approach and helps us in case of an ambush. By the way, don’t slam your door shut!”

Student visualization: This is the reverse of FTO visualization and is especially useful in the later stages of training after the FTO has helped develop a foundation of situational awareness. It’s important here that the FTO not omit the existential part of the lesson. You might hear the student speak out loud about the shadows, the streetlights and the car door, but you may not hear them explain the “why.” Be sure to ask them why they are doing what they are doing and how their observations help improve their officer safety.

2. Situational awareness is both environment AND behavior

An FTO needs to train a new officer to be acutely aware of both the environment and people’s behavior. On top of that, the FTO needs to train how the two of them are related to one another.

A man with a knife threatening suicide as he walks away from an officer into a busy retail box store is a serious threat that gives officers little to no discretionary time. The combination of behavior

and environment creates a volatile scene and requires officers to act quickly, possibly with a high level of force.



The FTO carries a large responsibility: teach situational awareness without leaving scars.

Consider the same behavior in the same store, but with a man in a motorized wheelchair. Change one element about the situation we are in, and we have a drastically different response. The level of force required to eliminate this threat is likely much lower. Maybe jam the wheels on the chair? Maybe topple the chair over? Maybe clear the store and close doors?

The discretionary time we gain by changing the environment (wheelchair) is beneficial. However,

if we didn't train our new officers to think through the relationship that the environment and behavior have on each other, they might not react appropriately.



Training situational awareness is critical and complicated. The trainer needs to be part tactician and part mind reader.

3. Inverted training scenarios

FTOs are not limited to training exclusively in the field. When possible, use your department's DT room or classroom, and run some reality-based scenarios. Remember, keep them simple! There is no need to run 10-minute scenarios to train situational awareness. Most of the time, you can make a big difference in performance with multiple, short scenarios that run 30-60 seconds. Here are two things to keep in mind while designing and acting out scenarios:

Intentional design: Be sure to specifically set the environment and spell out to your role players what kind of behavior you want them to exhibit. The combination of environment and behavior is what will lead your student officer to the desired response.

Inverted scenarios: Set a specific environment and keep it in place for multiple runs through the scenario. With each run through that environment, change the role player's behavior. The behavior change should elicit a different response from

the student. Then, invert the scenario. Ask your role player to act out the same behavior within each run of the scenario while you change the environment. The change in the environment should elicit a different response. It might look like this:

Scenario: Misdemeanor crime with probable cause, nighttime call for service, empty parking lot at a retail box store. Begin scenario. The role player suspect is armed and threatening others. Next run, armed and threatening self. Next, run, not armed and aggressive. Next run, not armed and compliant.

Inverted scenario: Role player suspect is armed and threatening others. The environment is a misdemeanor with probable cause, daylight hours, busy parking lot at a retail box store. Next run, daylight and clear backstop behind the suspect. Next run, daylight and the suspect is in a vehicle.

In summary, training situational awareness is critical and complicated. The topic is involved and includes an introduction to tangible tactics and intangible cognitive abilities. The trainer needs to be part tactician and part mind reader. A single article with three bits of advice merely skims the surface of what we need to know to train the topic properly. Fortunately, our field training officers are talented officers ready to pass along what they know about the art and science of situational awareness. **P1**)

About the author

Dan Greene is a 25-year veteran and sergeant with the Chandler Police Department in Chandler, Arizona. Dan spent over 14 years involved in the FTO program at the Chandler Police Department. As an FTO and an FTO Sergeant, Dan has played a role in training over 250 new officers and nearly 30 newly promoted sergeants in the Chandler Police Department. Dan is currently the executive director of the National Association of Field Training Officers (NAFTO) and helped NAFTO build the nation's first and currently only IADLEST-certified Basic FTO Certification Course. In 2017, Dan was honored to be recognized by the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association (ILEETA) as the ILEETA Trainer of the Year.



DEVELOPING A RESPECT-BASED POLICE SURVIVAL ATTITUDE

RESPECT MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT CONTRIBUTES TO AN OFFICER'S SAFETY—HERE'S WHY

By Lt. Dan Marcou

What is the most important thing that contributes to an officer's safety and completing their career? My answer: "Possessing a respect-based police survival attitude!"

This involves having:

1. Respect for the public you serve.

Treating people with respect gets better results than the opposite approach.

2. Respect for the danger of the profession.

Respecting the danger of the profession during every contact will inspire you to use solid tactics that will become good habits, keeping you constantly in a defensible position of advantage.

3. Respect for law and order.

To enforce the law with respect for and knowledge of the law will lead others to respect you. Officers of the law who follow the law on duty and off do not compromise themselves and others, while securing their own legal and emotional survival.

4. Respect for the physicality of the profession.

An officer one moment might be thinking, “It’s sure quiet tonight,” and the next struggling with a suspect who outweighs them by 100 pounds, or in a foot pursuit with a college-level athlete. Respecting the physicality of the profession will lead an officer to maintain a high degree of physical fitness. This will not mean they will catch the college athlete, but it might mean they won’t suffer an on-duty cardiac arrest during the pursuit.

5. Respect for the deceptive abilities of suspects.

An essential officer skill set is being able to read a suspect who is trying to cover up a crime, or fake kindness to cover an impending assault. A few indicators of deception are hesitation in giving a simple answer, steepling fingers and sweating. Since officers have no lie detector, they need to be lie detectors.

Officers especially need to be able to read indicators of an imminent assault when suspects are feigning cooperation. This body language may be as subtle as a glance toward an exit or toward your weapon, or the tightening of facial muscles and the clenching of teeth, or as obvious as shaking a fist coupled with a threat.

6. Respect for the fact that it is difficult controlling a resisting person.

Respecting the difficulty of overcoming resistance inspired me to train extensively on my own time on my dime. This training outside my agency not only made me effective at physically controlling suspects, but also led me to train others to become proficient in the art of controlling resistive suspects. Without this training on my own time on my dime I would not have survived my career.

Respecting my trainers and the value of training made me a sponge, trying to soak up as much knowledge and as many skills as I could.



7. Respect for trainers.

Respecting my trainers and the value of training made me a sponge, trying to soak up as much knowledge and as many skills as I could that would help me say after surviving an encounter, “...and then my training kicked in.”



By being a good backup, you will get good backup, which is essential for survival.

8. Respect for my commanders.

I was lucky to have many great commanders. Early in my career, when facing something for the first time, I was amazed at the ease with which some commanders could answer my questions. I found that even when a commander would recommend a different course than I might have taken, theirs was an acceptable option.

9. Respect for the importance of effective communication in all aspects of law enforcement.

Some people's job requires that they must be able to build bridges. Police officers need to know how to talk other people down off them. Whether you are communicating with a hostage taker over a phone or a dispatcher over the radio in a high-speed pursuit, you must develop the ability to listen and speak effectively.

If we are talking effectively with a dangerous person, we are not having to shoot accurately.

10. Respect for the importance of a thorough, accurate, well-written report.

Report writing is an extension of the previously mentions “effective communication.” It is as much

a survival skill as defensive tactics and firearms. You will use the skill of report writing every day and especially after a use of force incident, as you will need to be able to put down on paper the justification for the force you used.

11. Respect for your peers and partners.

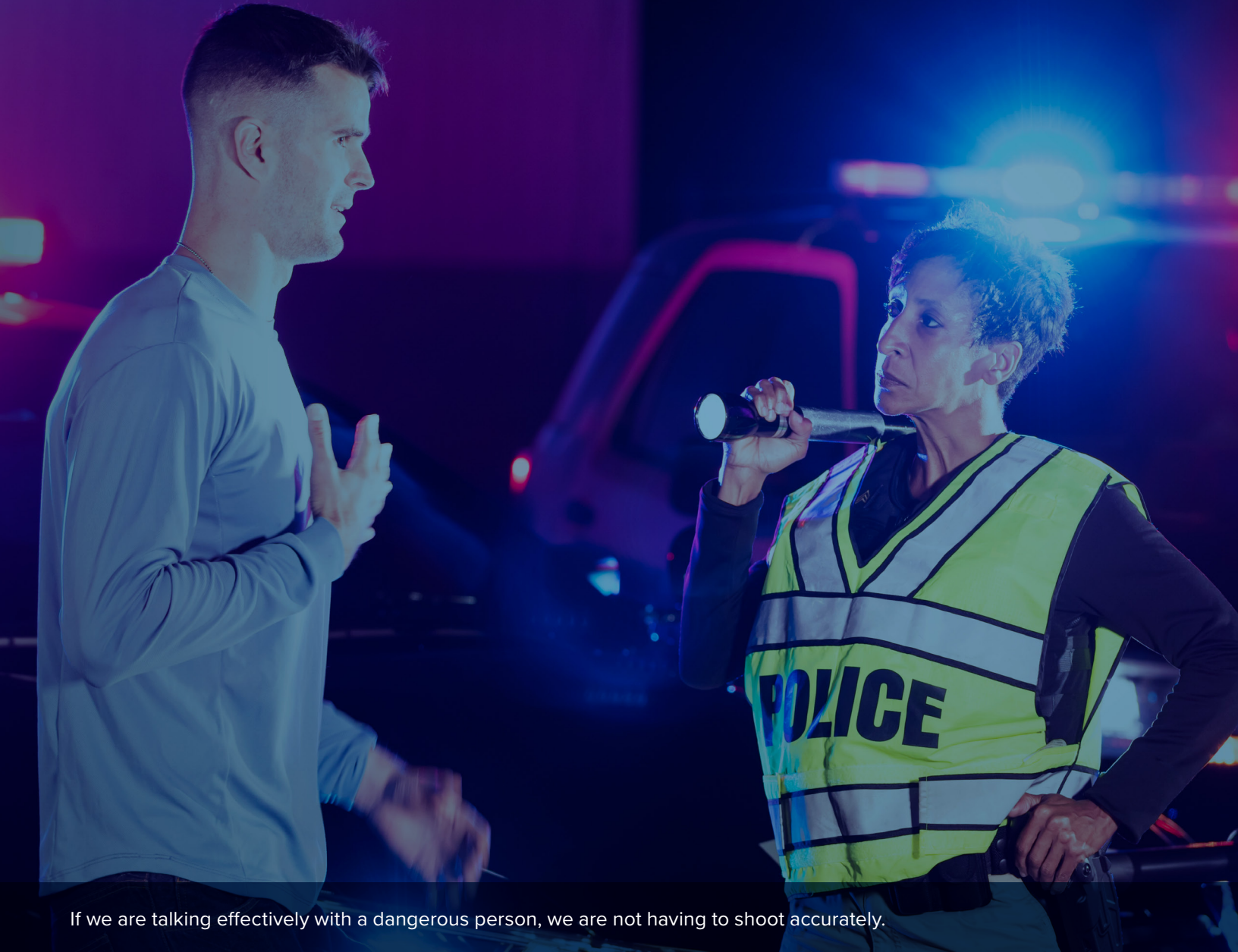
Law enforcement is not a profession you can do alone. You have to rely on your fellow officers, dispatchers, corrections officers, and state and federal officers, as well as prosecutors. By being a good backup, you will get good backup, which is essential for survival.

Also, developing a good working relationship with your dispatchers, prosecutors and corrections officers by showing them mutual respect pays off in dividends in many ways. When people know you and respect you, they unconsciously listen a little harder on the radio when they hear your voice, rush a little faster to the elevator when you are on it and they hear a scuffle, or prosecute a case a little harder when it is yours, because they know the quality of your character and your work.

12. Respect for the fact that change is inevitable.

The only thing constant in law enforcement is change. Since I began in law enforcement, these changes occurred:

- Pepper spray
- TASERs
- Expandable batons
- Semi-automatic handguns
- A systems approach to training
- Patrol rifles
- Impact munitions
- Computers in squads
- Cameras in squads and on bodies
- Ballistic vests, helmets and shields
- SWAT
- Night vision
- Security holsters
- Calibre Press Street Survival books
- Police1



If we are talking effectively with a dangerous person, we are not having to shoot accurately.

Some of these changes were resisted by officers and commanders when initially proposed. All of them have since been accepted as valuable tools that have saved the lives of officers and even suspects. Consider becoming a facilitator of positive change rather than a resister of inevitable change. There is less emotional drag.

13. Respect for the most important and ever-present backup a police officer can have: your family.

Nuff said about that!

Conclusion

Maintaining a respect-based police survival attitude is a way to make all your police contacts in today's world defensive without being offensive. It worked for me! **P1**

About the author

Lt. Dan Marcou is an internationally recognized police trainer who was a highly decorated police officer with 33 years of full-time law enforcement experience. Marcou's awards include Police Officer of the Year, SWAT Officer of the Year, Humanitarian of the Year and Domestic Violence Officer of the Year. Upon retiring, Lt. Marcou began writing. He is a co-author of "[Street Survival II, Tactics for Deadly Encounters](#)," which is now available

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FAST. FORWARD.

WILL YOUR CALL FOR HELP BE HEARD?

ENSURE YOU'LL GET THE
ASSISTANCE YOU NEED WITH
RELIABLE RADIO TECHNOLOGY

By Courtney Levin, Police1 BrandFocus Staff

Working in law enforcement has always included an element of danger, even when departments were fully staffed and the rate of violent crime in any given city was lower. Now, more than ever, the risk of a serious incident occurring while on duty is a threat that likely never leaves a cop's mind.

Officers who put their lives on the line every day shouldn't have to rely on older communication networks or dated equipment that may not operate correctly during an urgent situation. Should the unthinkable happen and an officer is injured in the line of duty, it's critical that calls for help – and answers to those calls – are heard.



TRouBLING TECHNOLOGY

Police communication via land mobile radio has been used since long before anyone reading this joined the force. While radio networks' efficacy has improved decade after decade, it wasn't until after 9/11 that agencies could use LMR to communicate outside of their department.

Even with interoperability now at the fingertips of every agency in the nation, officers can still find themselves in frustrating communication situations, leaving them vulnerable in an emergency.

"For an officer, your radio is really your lifeline," said Jeremy Elder, director of product management at [L3Harris](#).

As advanced as they might seem, radios relying on LMR can't always guarantee clear communication. Think about how often you try to make a call only to find someone else is doing so at the same time.

Or consider the instances it's been difficult to hear a response due to the voice encryption used to prevent citizens from listening to your transmission. If your frustration in these situations is real, imagine trying to make an officer down call and encountering the same problems.

CATCHING UP TO CONSUMER OPTIONS

Communication technology has progressed in the civilian marketplace far more quickly than for those in public safety. Most cellphones now take higher-quality images than cameras, and we can use Wi-Fi and a range of apps to communicate even if we don't have phone service.

"Consumer communications technology provides a range of options and features to suit different budgets and feature needs," Elder said. "We are now seeing that kind of technology working its way into public safety communications."

While LMR is certainly still an option for law enforcement, many departments are choosing to use devices that are compatible with LTE, 5G and Wi-Fi. These networks provide more reliable connectivity and offer a wider coverage radius than LMR communication.

"New converged technology solutions that support the best of both worlds (LMR and broadband wireless) are entering the marketplace to provide new options to keep our first responders safe," Elder said. "We have to make sure everyone's coming home at the end of their shift and make sure that call for help is heard."



TODAY'S UPDATED EQUIPMENT

While it's helpful for departments to have access to advanced communication networks, using LTE or 5G is only half the equation. Radios with older technology may seem to function adequately enough, but when a call for help comes through, officers need dependability.

[XL series radios by L3Harris](#) are made for reliable connectivity using LTE, 5G or Wi-Fi networks in addition to running on LMR technology. These devices, often called hybrid or converged radios, allow officers to call for help during critical situations.

Several portable radio options are available in the XL series, as well as a vehicle-mounted device, and all feature voice and data encryption, ergonomic designs and long battery life.

Additional capabilities are available based on your agency's needs, including GPS, Bluetooth and hotspot technology. All L3Harris radios are P25-compliant to enable interoperability no matter what situation is unfolding.

Even if you're in the field without a radio, the [L3Harris BeOn app](#) is available with push-to-talk functionality. It can be used on a laptop, tablet or smartphone and provides officers greater situational awareness during emergencies by being able to listen to radio transmissions.

AVAILABILITY FOR ALL

While modern communication networks give officers flexibility, investing in new radio technology sometimes comes with a glaring limiting factor. Many equipment manufacturers

partner with specific carriers, similar to locking in a contract with one provider when you purchase a personal cellphone.



While all calls are important, communicating when an officer is down is possibly the most important transmission your equipment will ever make.

[L3Harris](#) radios, however, provide departments the freedom to use the carrier that works best for their needs. Whether an agency already has a robust cellphone plan with a specific carrier or they rely on networks like FirstNet, it makes no difference in their ability to use L3Harris equipment, says Elder.

While all calls are important, communicating when an officer is down is possibly the most important transmission your equipment will ever make. As communication technology continues to advance, officers who put their lives on the line can rest assured that their calls for help will be heard when they use L3Harris radios. **P1**

ABOUT THE SPONSOR

L3Harris Public Safety and Professional Communications is a leading supplier of communications systems and equipment for public safety, federal, utility, commercial and transportation markets. The business has more than 80 years of experience in public safety and professional communications and supports more

than 500 systems around the world. L3Harris has approximately \$17 billion in annual revenue and 50,000 employees, with customers in 130 countries. Learn more at L3Harris.com.



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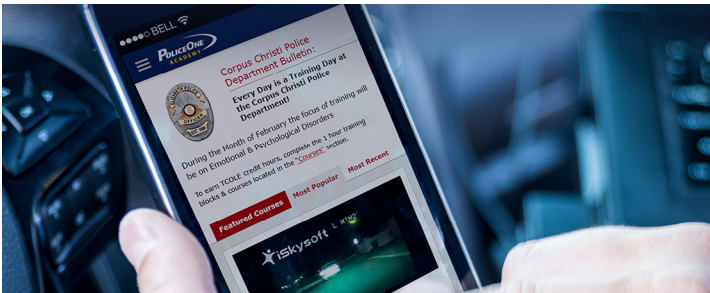
Building searches: A resource and geometry problem

We must provide patrol officers with the knowledge, techniques and tactics to make building searches as safe as possible



Research: Rural cops absorb a disproportionately high rate of damage from felonious gunfire

By quantifying what is happening in rural places, there can be no excuse for failure to train, equip and staff rural police to modern, professional standards



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