

Below 100 – An Overview

Mission and purpose: Reduce the line-of-duty deaths of police officers to less than 100 per year.

Background: The last time the number of line-of-duty officer deaths was below 100 was 1944. Since that time, they reached a high of 278 in 1974 and for the last five years have fluctuated between 116 and 185. The deaths for 2010 totaled more than 160. Over the course of the last ten years, more than 150 officers (on average) have died each year in the line of duty

Although the number of deaths is significantly lower than it was in the seventies, line-of-duty deaths attributable to accidents and/or preventable events have remained unacceptably high. Every year, more officers are killed by accidents than by gunfire and some years the number exceeds the total of officer homicides regardless of method. Of note is the fact that the number of deaths attributable to traffic incidents is more than 40% higher than they were last year – at a time when civilian traffic deaths are trending toward new lows.

A review of data indicates that many deaths are due to officer negligence or carelessness including speed too fast for conditions, inattention and/or not wearing a seat belt. A recently released NHTSA report revealed that nearly half of the officers killed in 733 fatal crashes were not wearing their seat belts. Some officers balk at seat belts, believing they will be unable to quickly engage if needed.

In spite of significant body armor improvements and availability many officers work in uniform patrol assignments or engage in potentially hazardous duty without body armor. Estimates from body armor experts estimate that 40% of uniformed officers in the US do not wear body armor.

Finally, there is a more general and less objective category of deaths which, on close analysis, indicate some degree of recklessness, complacency or lack of preparedness.

The Message:

- Wear your belt.
- Wear your vest.
- Watch your speed.
- WIN! – What’s Important Now?
- Remember – Complacency Kills!



Why: These are areas where change can be effected and, to a limited degree, required. If they can become the cultural norm, there will be a corresponding benefit.

How: Multi-faceted to include but not be limited to -

- Published articles that emphasize or integrate the above areas, both individually and as a whole.
- Posters for briefing and locker rooms.
- Sample agency policies for vest wear, seat belt use and speed consideration.
- Integration with existing training (e.g. a training shoot that starts with the officer wearing a seat belt).
- Concentrate on key change agents: FTOs and Supervisors.
- Incorporate in academy, FTO training and supervisory training.
- Encourage the sharing of ‘near-miss’ information