

Deadly Calls and Fatal Encounters

Analysis of U. S. law enforcement line of duty deaths when officers responded to dispatched calls for service and conducted enforcement (2010-2014)

By Nick Breul
and Mike Keith



COPS

Community Oriented Policing Services
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National Law Enforcement Officers
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Disclaimer

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Program Development

This project was developed in partnership with the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF), and was designed to enhance the safety of law enforcement officers across the United States by providing them with the most up-to-date analysis of fatality trends in law enforcement as it relates to officers responding to calls for service or conducting self-initiated activities, such as traffic stops. The analysis conducted through this project will increase awareness of the dangers posed by certain types of incidents and provide insight into the commonalities among law enforcement fatalities. This information can then be shared with the wider law enforcement community to alter training and reduce the number of fatalities and injuries in the profession.

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Ronald L. Davis – Director, Office of Community Policing Services (COPS Office)

Vonda Matthews – Senior Social Scientist, COPS Office

John Kim, Ph.D. – Social Science Analyst, COPS Office

Peggy van Wunnik – Assistant to the Director, Community Safety Institute

Steve Groeninger – Senior Director of Communications, NLEOMF

Jaclyn Barrientes – Communications and Digital Media Manager, NLEOMF

Primary Research Advisory Panel

Chief Chris Tutko (Ret.) – Manassas (VA) Police Department

Chief Patrick Burke – Metropolitan (DC) Police Department

Sheriff Dallas Pope (Ret.) – Talbot County (MD) Sheriff's Office

Chief Maggie DeBoard – Herndon (VA) Police Department

Sheriff Lenny Millholland – Fredrick County (MD) Sheriff's Office

Brian McAllister – Federal Bureau of Investigations (LEOKA)

Craig Floyd – President & CEO, NLEOMF

Executive Summary

In 2015, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) entered into a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice COPS office to study officer line-of-duty deaths.

This report is a five-year study analyzing line-of-duty deaths in which a total of 684 cases were reviewed. Specifically, the analysis focused on cases that involved a dispatched call for service which required a police response and what information was made available to responding officers in the deadliest calls for service. Armed with this information, researchers were then tasked with determining if any commonalities existed that could be utilized as learning tools to prevent future deadly calls or fatal encounters.

Some key findings from this report reveal that calls related to domestic disputes and domestic-related incidents represented the highest number of fatal types of calls for service and were also the underlying cause of law enforcement fatalities for several other calls for service. In addition, researchers discovered that officers were slain with handguns in 71% of all cases studied and that in 45% of all the cases in which officers were responding to a dispatched call

for service that ended in a fatality, the officers had been advised the suspect(s) might be armed, or had made prior threats.

Based on the results of the analysis of these fatal incidents, it is clear that agencies must strive to improve the information sharing between dispatchers and all responding officers. Better information regarding the location and its call history, as well as any other details of the call, must be made readily available. Information sharing between officers via Mobile Digital Computers, tablets, smart phones or simply relaying pertinent information over the radio is a critical component of safety as it enhances the officer's awareness and may guide their approach to the call.

This report also recommends that agencies responding to each other's calls under an inter-jurisdictional MOU or other agreement, conduct shared dispatcher and supervisory training to better coordinate responses to high priority calls such as Officer Needs Assistance, Robbery in Progress, and Shots Fired. Agency personnel should also ensure that domestic violence/disturbance cases are monitored closely and that dispatchers inquire about an officer's welfare regularly when they are on the scene of a high priority call.

Additionally, first line supervisors must correct dangerous behaviors such as complacency, speeding, not wearing seatbelts, not wearing issued body armor and failing to wait for backup before taking action.

Methodology

Researchers from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, and specifically from its Officer Safety, Wellness and Research Department, examined five years of NLEOMF primary research fatality data and accompanying case files in an effort to determine what information was made available to responding officers when handling calls for service that involved an officer death. Research included determining how fatal self-initiated actions evolve and what, if any, commonalities were discovered that could be utilized as learning tools to prevent future deadly calls or fatal encounters.

This research project began with a preliminary examination of all the approved line-of-duty death cases from 2010 to 2014 in the National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial Fund's database. This review included 684 total cases.

The 684 cases were then reviewed and coded to identify those that involved an identifiable call for service. This review process involved reading the narratives of all the cases and looking for a reference to officers responding to a call for service or an indication that the officer was handling an assignment that came through the dispatcher. All of the narratives, along with the

manner in which cases were initially coded when entered into the NLEOMF database, provided researchers the immediate information necessary to determine if the officer fatality involved a call for service and the resulting fatality type. In instances of question, the case was flagged and additional research was conducted by further reviewing the case file materials.

Those cases that involved an identified call for service where the fatality involved the officer's handling of the call were then placed into a group that was further segmented into specific types of calls for service. Each case was then categorized by type of call such as *Burglary*, *Robbery*, *Domestic Abuse*, *Disturbance*, etc. The cases were then analyzed, drawing out key data points with regard to the response to the call. Data—such as dispatch information provided to the responding officer(s), number of officers responding and subsequent actions taken by officers on the call—was then further inspected.

The cases with a call for service where the death of the officer was not tied specifically to the call were excluded from the study. An example of such a call would be where an officer was responding to a domestic dispute but became involved in a fatal vehicle crash while en-route; never reaching the scene.

It is important to note that the 684 cases examined also included officers from Corrections departments, Federal agencies, and other regulatory commissions that do not routinely respond to calls for service or engage in independent enforcement or investigative activity.

In a second phase of study, the research team also examined actions that were initiated by officers as they enforced the law, or reacted to suspicious behavior they observed. Instances of self-initiated action that resulted in a law enforcement death were separately analyzed using a similar method, as with the examination of calls for service. Researchers looked at these cases with a similar eye towards examining how the fatal assaults unfolded; reviewing the information officers had at the time of the stop, and if there were any shared elements throughout these cases. These cases were drawn from the initial 684 cases that were culled through when examining calls for service.

The research team also reviewed fatal vehicle crashes in response to a dispatched call for service; to identify any patterns in the types of crashes and the types of calls for service. The researchers again segmented those cases where an officer crashed en route to a call for service and coded the crashes by call type in order to see if there was a significant trend in certain types of calls resulting in vehicle crashes.

In a few instances, researchers discovered insufficient or incomplete information had been provided in the initial data collection, so researchers spent a considerable amount of time making personal contact with representatives from various agencies in an effort to collect additional information or gain clarity regarding individual cases. While some agencies provided

the requested information, others did not. However the data that was available was useful in the analysis conducted.

The study also identified some key issues that emerged among the reviewed cases that were not captured in the two larger analytical segments, but were important factors to highlight as they related to officers' safety. These issues, such as failing to adequately search a prisoner or not wearing body armor, are factors that were contributing attributes in some of the studied cases. Those factors and additional data points are summarized along with all of the major findings at the end of the report.

The report also contains a preliminary analysis of the 2015 line-of-duty death cases by providing a statistical breakdown of the approved NLEOMF cases, coupled with a basic analysis of the primary reason or type of fatality and circumstances involved.

Throughout the analysis, as researchers identified various calls for service, they selected a series of case studies that were particularly illustrative or representative of key elements within that specific category of call type or type of self-initiated activity. These case studies are sanitized versions of actual cases included in the study and provided opportunities for learning without directly identifying an agency or officer. These examples, which are not intended to second guess nor judge an officer's actions, provide a vivid illustration of how some of these fatal incidents occur and provide the reader with a stronger context from which to understand the analysis and case circumstances being referenced.

In the conclusion segment of each call type analysis and self-initiated action type analysis, the researchers identified areas of concern, and provided concrete action steps, which are labeled as "Red Flags and Recommendations." This section highlights the salient points drawn from the research and delivers recommendations for alleviating the identified concerns and improving safety.

Once development of the draft report was complete the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund convened a Primary Research Advisory Panel which consisted of Subject Matter Experts from the public safety community representing municipal, county, state and federal law enforcement agencies. The advisory panel reviewed the draft report, attended a private briefing in Washington, DC facilitated by NLEOMF staff, and provided valuable input on the practical implications and pragmatic implementations of this report.

Background

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) is responsible for maintaining the nation's monument in Washington, DC, etched with the names of more than 20,000 law

enforcement officers who have died in the line-of-duty. A committee of the organization's Board of Directors reviews each law enforcement officer fatality to determine if it meets the established criteria for inclusion on the Memorial walls as an in the line of duty death. This review requires that agencies submit specific documents and forms to provide the Names Committee with the necessary information to evaluate each case. Thus, the NLEOMF has a wealth of data on the circumstances surrounding law enforcement deaths, dating back to 1791.

As a repository for detailed information on the circumstances surrounding each fatality, the NLEOMF is an untapped resource of information regarding law enforcement deaths in the United States. There is a great deal that can be learned by leveraging that data and analyzing the details of specific cases in an attempt to identify risk factors and behaviors that may have contributed to that fatality.

This report content is different from other studies as it focuses on responses to calls for service and self-initiated activity over a five-year period. The report is not an in-depth analysis of one specific case, but a broad look at incidents that occurred during the study period. While the report highlights anonymous cases to illustrate an identified trend, it is sweeping in nature and provides analysis of trends on a macro level.

Statement of Purpose

It is part of the mission of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund to “make it safer for those who serve.” This organization is engaged in several projects that highlight safety and work towards reducing injuries and deaths. It is our goal to drive down the number of officer fatalities by using organizational resources to identify areas where changes can be made to improve officer safety.

This project is the result of a cooperative effort between the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund and the Department of Justice's COPS Office to support law enforcement by providing an in-depth analysis of cases involving line-of-duty deaths and, through those research efforts, make policing safer. The key findings from this detailed analysis will hopefully augment current policies, improve training curricula, and increase awareness of the current trends contributing to law enforcement deaths and injuries.

The intent of this report is to examine law enforcement line-of-duty death cases over a five-year period and determine what commonalities exist amongst the responses to dispatched calls for service that resulted in a line-of-duty death, as well as identify problem areas to provide recommendations to law enforcement to avoid similar reoccurrences when handling similar assignments.

The research examines not only those fatalities resulting from responding to a call for service such as a robbery or disturbance, but also looks into fatal cases where officers took self-initiated enforcement action. It also seeks to identify any commonalities in those fatal self-initiated contacts, to provide greater insight into such instances and instill a greater understanding of the nature of those fatal encounters.

This project's ultimate goal is to provide meaningful and actionable analysis of situations that lead to such deaths and apply those lessons learned to training environments, policy and response recommendations, and to be a catalyst for change in law enforcement. Hundreds of agencies provided information for this report to help prevent reoccurrences of these fatal events and to mitigate risk. This report is intended to ensure that law enforcement may learn from these tragic events and enact change.

"Those that do not know their history, are doomed to repeat it."

-Winston Churchill

Project Scope

The research team, consisting of staff from the NLEOMF's Officer Safety, Wellness and Research Department, conducted an analysis of the relevant line-of-duty death cases in a five-year period from 2010-2014 and includes preliminary analysis of the 2015 cases. This date range was chosen to gain a broad understanding of the issues and considers the most recent cases for making relevant conclusions.

While every line-of-duty death during the study period was screened, the cases selected for further study were those that involved an identifiable call for service, or an instance of self-initiated activity that drew the suspect and the officer together.

The research project began by focusing on deaths related to calls for service, but once that data was gathered, the team began to look at cases that involved officers who were killed while engaged in a self-initiated enforcement activity.

Calls for service were considered to be incidents where a complaint was received by a 911 dispatch center or police barracks and subsequently dispatched to officers in the field to investigate. The cases involving a call for service were examined to find those in which the officer's death was directly related to the call for service and was not the result of an indirect action or unforeseen physical ailment, such as a heart attack.

Considered in the analysis was the type of call dispatched, the information made available to the responding officers, and the subsequent response. The research team also conducted an

analysis of calls for service that resulted in vehicle crashes while the officers were responding to the scene of the call. While these crashes were separated from the cases where officers were killed on the scene by a suspect, there was important crash-related analysis completed as it relates to responses to calls for service.

The research team also studied cases of self-initiated activity over the five-year period. This is an independent enforcement or investigative action taken by the officer and not the result of a dispatched assignment. This type of self-initiated activity includes traffic stops, stopping suspicious persons, and investigating disabled or crashed vehicles.

The analysis of these independent actions includes an examination of the type of activity involved, the information known to the officers at the time they made contact, and an analysis of the number of officers on the scene compared to the number of suspects during each encounter.

Finally, the research team, through its review of hundreds of fatal cases, also found other data points and important elements from fatal cases that were notable. These important data points are summarized in the final portion of this report.

Analysis

In the initial review of all 684 cases, the research team identified 91 cases that met the criteria for an officer responding to dispatched call for service. Each of these cases had an identifiable call for service in which the circumstances of the officer's death were attributable to the nature of the call, the information that was available at the time of the call, and the subsequent handling of the call.

After the initial review of the 684 cases it was determined that self-initiated activity should also be included in this research study as interaction, or lack thereof, between the officer and dispatcher which may yield vital officer safety information. The research team then identified 41 separate cases of self-initiated activity within the initial 684 cases considered, in which an officer was killed as they conducted enforcement or made an investigatory stop. Thus the research team analyzed a total of 132 cases that involved a response to a call for service or a case of self-initiated activity.

Additionally, because of the large number of traffic-related fatalities which were identified during the initial survey of 684 cases and the interaction between officers and dispatchers during these events, the NLEOMF research team decided to examine cases involving crashes of officers responding to calls for service. This supplemental analysis provided 78 cases where officers were involved in collisions or single-vehicle crashes while driving to the scene.

The breakdown of all the cases reviewed is illustrated in Figure 1 below, with the two main focus categories of this study in darker blues:

Summary of Line of Duty Deaths Analyzed in Report

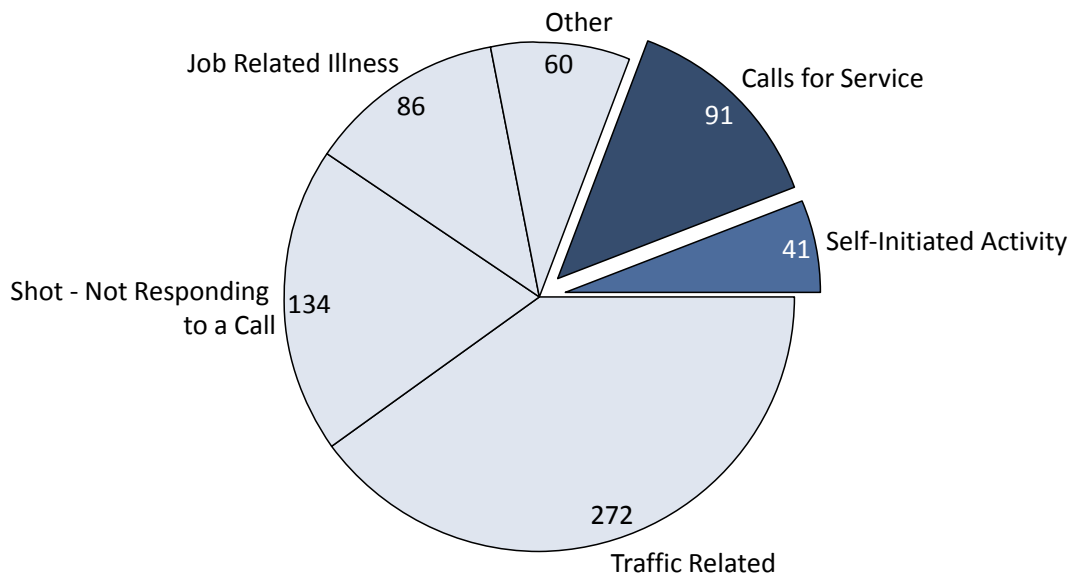


Figure 1

The largest category of excluded cases was *Traffic-related*, with 272. These include officers killed in automobile crashes, motorcycle crashes, and struck-by incidents. Although an analysis of officers crashing en route to a call for service was conducted, a large number of the crashes investigated were not related to either a call for service or a case of self-initiated activity.

Officers shot while not responding to a call was the second largest category of excluded cases, totaling 134. These cases consisted of instances where officers were ambushed in unprovoked attacks, performing tactical operations, serving warrants, and conducting follow-up investigative work.

Officers who suffered fatal *Job-Related Illnesses* were also excluded. An example is an officer suffering a heart attack in a police station after having struggled with a prisoner or when an officer collapses while directing traffic. These were cases where the death of the officer was the result of something internal rather than external and not the result of a suspect's direct action. Although the stress of a particular call or activity may have been a contributing factor, there are too many variables to draw any conclusions regarding job-related illnesses and specific calls for service.

The cases in the *Other* category, include officers who died during weather-related events, industrial accidents, aircraft accidents, training mishaps, and in various unpredictable circumstances.

As each of the 132 remaining cases that were culled from the larger pool was reviewed, the research team inspected the documents associated with each case file. This analysis required the research team to examine news articles, the NLEOMF data form submitted by each agency for their officer's inclusion on the national memorial, the incident or investigation report, the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) information or call sheet, the death certificate, as well as the autopsy report, if available. In addition to reviewing the submitted documentation, the research team conducted follow-up open source research for any recent additional details on a case that were not part of the NLEOMF file. The significant facts and data points of the reviewed material were then extracted and recorded on a case management document.

Fatal Calls for Service as Dispatched: The Big Picture

Once the analysis of the cases with identifiable calls for service was complete, the cases were categorized by type of call for service to determine the type of call with the most fatalities.

There were 91 cases identified that involved a call for service. Researchers divided those cases into categories according to the classification or nature of the call. For example, the *Burglary* and *Robbery* calls were divided into separate categories, as were the *Domestic Dispute* calls, *Disturbance* calls, and so on.

Figure 2 illustrates a breakdown of the 91 cases as a percentage of the differing call types that comprise the fatal calls for service.

Breakdown of 91 Line of Duty Deaths by Dispatched Call Types

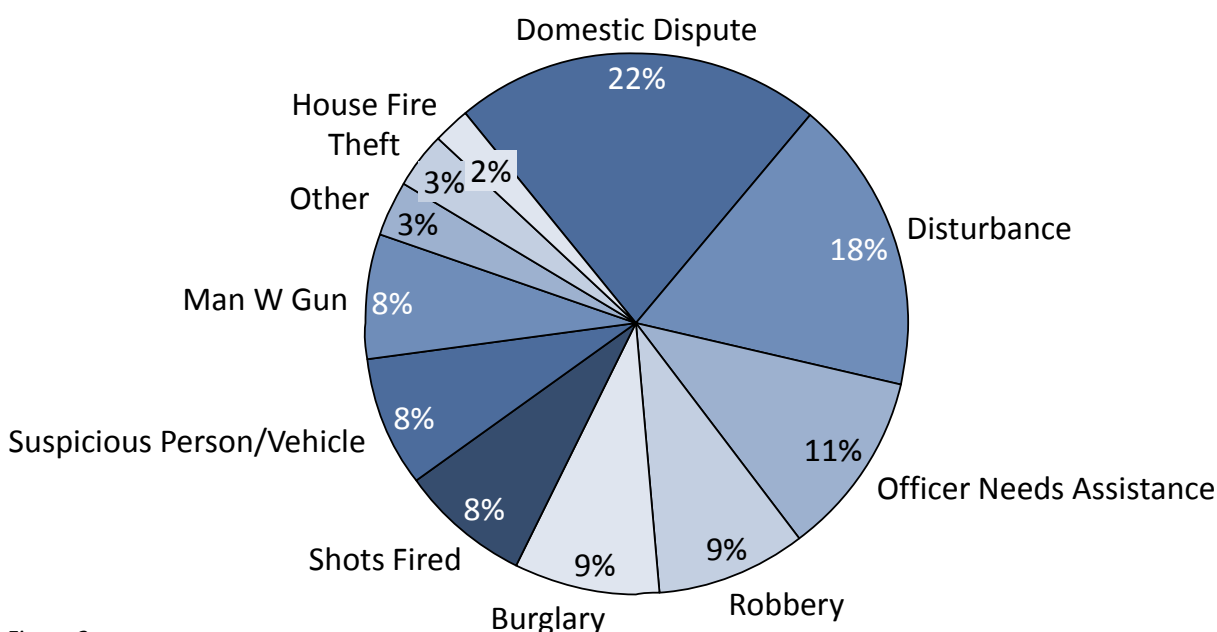


Figure 2

Calls that fell under the *Disturbance* category involved many different types of activity.

Eighteen percent of calls classified as *Disturbance* were deemed non-violent, nuisance crimes, or complaints such as drinking in public, indecent exposure, disorderly conduct, or trespassing. These calls were placed in the *Disturbance* category by the submitting agency when it originally submitted case documentation to the NLEOMF.

The category of *Other* contains calls for service that were not *Disturbances*, but a more specific type of offense or request for assistance. These call types were varied in nature, as they dealt with a range of circumstances such as “assisting a probation officer,” “investigating an open line,” and a “wanted person sighting.”

Calls for officers to respond to a complaint of a *Domestic Dispute* or domestic-related incident represented the largest single group. The details from the study of these 20 cases highlight the potential areas of concern where responding officers had been placed or placed themselves in dangerous situations. These points will be described fully as each type of call for service, and their findings are explored in detail.

Disturbance calls were the next largest category, representing 18 percent of the calls identified in the study. *Officer Needs Assistance* calls were the third largest category and accounted for 11 percent of the calls identified in the study. *Officer Needs Assistance* calls were comprised entirely of priority (emergency) responses to assist fellow officers with rapidly-evolving threats or incidents that required additional manpower to handle the situation. Some of these were responses to radio broadcasts from officers requesting assistance rather than from a 911 dispatcher.

Calls for service involving *Robbery*, *Burglary* and *Suspicious Persons or Vehicles* represented 9 percent, 9 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Calls for *Shots Fired*, *Theft*, *House Fire* and *Other*, rounded out the list of calls for service types examined and each represented a smaller percentage as shown in Figure 2. What follows is an in-depth look at the findings in the analysis of the individual types of calls for service, presented with a case study to further illustrate the findings and recommendations. Each case study was selected from that call group to better illustrate how these incidents evolve and to highlight the key issues identified with that call type.

Some of the case studies presented are examples of how fast situations can turn deadly, and despite receiving the best information and deploying the correct approach, tragedy can still occur.

As the final analysis sections of the calls for service and self-initiated activity are presented, detailed information on additional data points will be provided. Important facts and analysis on body armor usage, firearms, the number of officers on scene, and information known to officers at the time of their response will be summarized.

Because *Domestic Disputes* and *Disturbance* calls account for 40 percent of the cases reviewed, the research team provided a more detailed analysis of those case types, as there was more data to relate. The subsequent call for service categories, presented in order of their percentage, will have a similar but less robust analysis as there was a limited amount of data to consider due to the decreasing number of cases.

Domestic Dispute Calls: A Closer Look

As most law enforcement officers have been informed during their training or know intuitively from working the streets, and as this data supports, *Domestic Dispute* calls, or intra-family offenses, were the most dangerous type of call for the responding officers.

The analysis of calls for service that were classified as *Domestic Dispute* accounted for 20 of the 91 calls for service, or 22 percent, that resulted in an officer fatality. In all but one of the cases studied, the responding officers were killed with a firearm.

Analysis of these cases were conducted for any common themes to better understand the officer response and to identify cues to increase awareness among officers about the dangers posed in handling *Domestic Dispute* calls. In seven, or 35 percent, of the *Domestic Dispute* cases examined, there was only one officer on the scene of the call at the time of the shooting, which is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Number of Officers on Scene at Time of Line of Duty Death

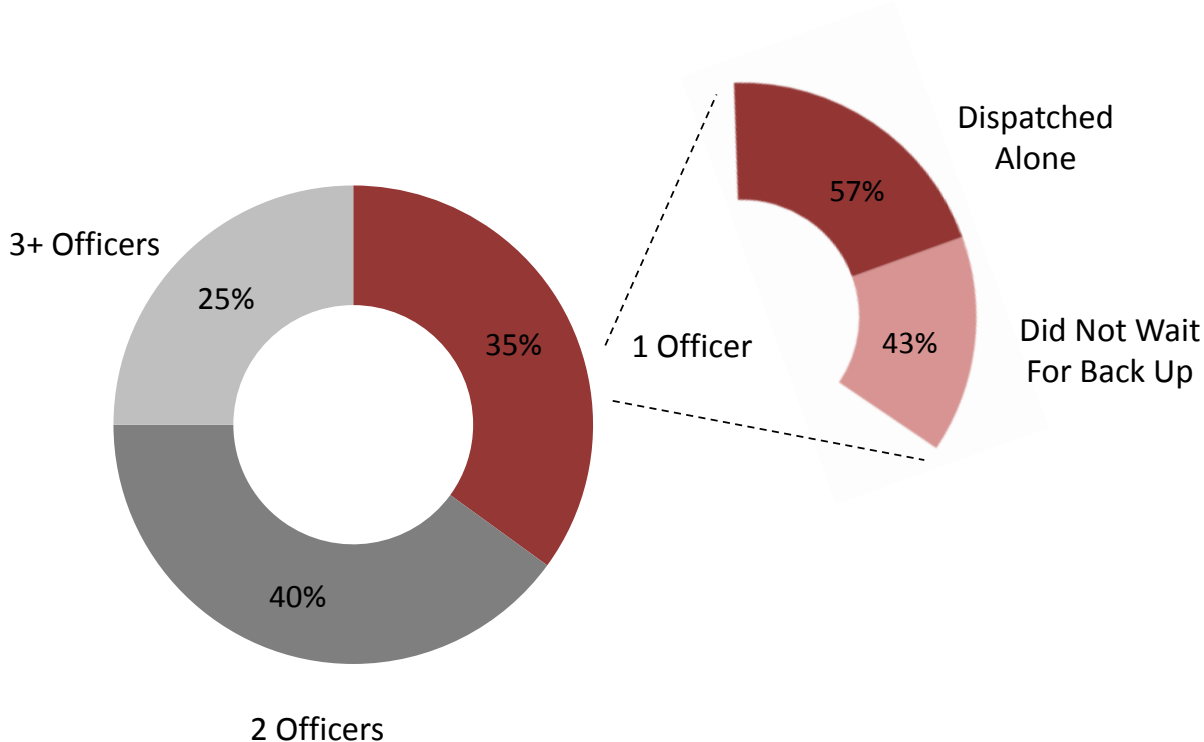


Figure 3

Of the seven *Domestic Dispute* cases where officers were on-scene alone, four of the cases involved a single officer being dispatched. In three of the cases, multiple officers were

dispatched to the call, but the first officer on scene did not wait for a backup unit to arrive before contacting subjects.

In two instances, officers requested additional assistance, but entered the suspect's home without waiting and with no apparent exigency. In one specific instance, the officer knew the suspect to be violent and potentially armed when he entered the suspect's apartment ahead of his assisting officer. The initial officer was shot and killed and his backup officer was shot and wounded but able to return fire and kill the suspect.

The research team clearly understands the necessity in some circumstances for officers to act independently in order to immediately address a threat or to aid a person in imminent danger. These cases of exigency are understood but were not represented in any of the cases that were part of the study.

It should be noted that the research team is aware of the limited resources and manpower available to many law enforcement agencies, and often agencies depend on mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions. In four of the fatal domestic-related cases the team reviewed, officers from different agencies were involved in the initial response to the call.

However, in all but one of the cases reviewed where an officer was dispatched to a domestic-related call alone, or initiated the investigation alone, the subsequent review revealed that backup or swift mutual aid was available.

The topic of officers handling calls for service alone is a major theme throughout our analysis of all the calls for service. As illustrated in Figure 3, 35 percent of the officers killed while responding to *Domestic Dispute* calls were alone. The necessity of having three or more officers at a domestic situation to adequately separate parties, monitor family members and, if necessary, physically restrain and arrest a suspect, is apparent. As this study found, even in the situations where two officers were present, domestic violence calls had the potential of turning deadly.

In situations where officers were alone, they were without the immediate support that could be provided by a second officer, including possible life-saving measures. In two of the studied cases, the deceased officers were discovered by citizens or other responding officers who did not know the primary officer had been shot.

A further finding from the domestic-related calls was the number of cases in which officers knew the suspect had made threats to kill others, was known to be armed, or the responding officers had knowledge of past violent acts committed by the suspect.

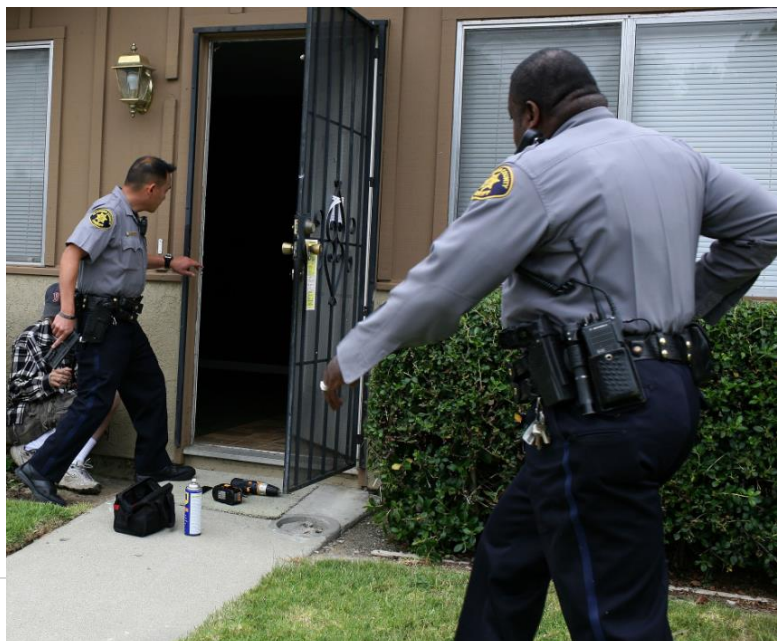
In eight of the studied cases, two or more officers responded to a *Domestic Dispute* call and were provided information from the dispatcher or complainants claiming the suspect was armed, had a history of violence, or had threatened to kill persons. In five of these cases, officers were shot and killed by these suspects as they approached the residence or were shot by the suspect when investigating the complaint.

The need and use of coordinated information before handling a domestic-related call is critical. Sharing information and discussing a plan of approach is important so that officers act together with the same set of facts.

The importance of call history, accurate information, and suspect descriptions cannot be overstated, as in two of the cases examined researchers found that misinformation led to an officer being unaware they were stopping an armed suspect. The crucial nature of obtaining, relaying, and taking action on call information as safely as possible is a key finding from the data analyzed.

This notion ties directly to the current trend towards providing patrol officers enhanced information, direct access to call details, and providing criminal databases at their fingertips. The move towards intelligence-led policing and the use of technology and social media are components of a safer and more methodical approach to handling volatile domestic-related cases.

The research team found that even in agencies that did not have access to an enhanced Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems, cruiser mounted computers or similar devices, officers were still able to provide additional information to responding officers via the dispatcher, or messages relayed via police radio from other officers regarding their knowledge of the call history of the location and family parties involved.



Case Study: A multi-jurisdictional domestic violence response

In a medium-sized city police department of 60 officers during a late winter evening shift, a patrol officer was dispatched to assist an officer from a different agency to investigate a domestic violence complaint that had occurred in the requesting officer's town. The officer who requested the assistance had previously interviewed the complainant, who informed him that the suspect, who resided in the city limits, had made violent threats, left threatening messages, and was in possession of a firearm.

The officer from the town agency requested through the dispatcher that a city police officer respond to assist at a location within the jurisdiction of the city, where he was going to speak to the suspect. It is unclear if he intended to arrest the suspect for threats or just ask the suspect's version of events.

The officer from the town agency arrived at the suspect's address ahead of the assisting city officer and entered the suspect's home before the arrival of the city officer. The town officer began to interview the suspect about the reported complaint made by his estranged wife, and the suspect was becoming increasingly agitated. As the city officer arrived to assist, he entered the residence as the suspect was becoming combative and was resisting being placed in handcuffs.

The suspect, who was previously seated on a sofa, began wrestling with the two officers and was able to retrieve a concealed handgun as he fought to get free. The suspect shot and killed the officer from the city agency and wounded the town officer before being shot and killed.

The record of the case, which is quite thorough, does not indicate that there was any additional information passed to the assisting city officer about the nature of the call, other than it was a "follow-up."

Other city police units monitoring the dispatched run heard the call dispatched as an "assist with a follow-up." It is unclear whether the violent threats made by the suspect, as well as the possibility that the suspect was in possession of a weapon and intoxicated, was ever relayed to the city officer responding as backup.

This case illustrates the problems posed when there is a multi-jurisdictional response and where officers do not act in concert or share information before handling a call together. The initial officer may have placed himself in danger when he decided to make contact without waiting for his requested backup and seemingly underestimated the threat posed by the suspect.



Red Flags and Recommendations

- Officers responding alone to a domestic-related call:
 - Dispatchers and supervisors must be cognizant of the inherent dangers posed by domestic-related calls for service and ensure that officers are not sent alone, even for a report or a call where the “suspect is no longer on the scene.” In one of the cases examined, an officer dispatched alone was shot and killed when the suspect returned.
 - This recommendation applies to the seemingly routine calls for service such as “Assist with Clothing,” “Assist in Serving a Protection Order,” or “Child Custody Disputes.”
 - There must be regular checks by the dispatcher on the welfare of the officers on scene.
- Officers not waiting for their backup and entering before assessing the situation:
 - Fellow officers, supervisors and dispatchers who become aware of officers handling calls without waiting for their assistance must address these actions. Supervisors must counsel their subordinates, take proactive steps, and reinforce training and adherence to policy. They must also monitor and, if necessary, document such instances and take corrective action.
- Not providing responding officers with accurate information or full information:
 - Officers should be made aware of all the call information and, when possible, get a call history and any suspect information prior to making contact. Further, officers should discuss any pertinent information such as threats, prior weapons charges or mention of weapons before handling the call.
 - Special emphasis should be placed on dispatchers and call takers to obtain accurate information. Officers who are provided the wrong lookout or a poor suspect description are at a disadvantage when handling such calls.
 - Not properly sharing relevant information regarding the call to assisting officers is problematic, especially when officers are responding from different

jurisdictions and they may not be working from the same call information or history of the location and occupants.

Disturbance Calls: A Closer Look

The second largest category of fatal calls for service was *Disturbance* calls. These calls ranged from disorderly conduct to noise complaints. There were 16 calls for service grouped under the *Disturbance* category. These were largely breach of the peace violations, nuisance complaints, and other calls that are usually a lower priority.

The “disorderly” call type within the *Disturbance* category represented the largest portion of call type for this category, with 5 (31 percent) of the calls being classified as a “disorderly person(s).” This classification was contained in the case, the dispatch report or the narrative of the investigative report. Very often there was no further information about the specific nature of the behavior that was deemed disorderly. Two cases whose initial call for service was classified as a “disorderly” incident mentioned arguing or fighting in the dispatch notes, but nothing that elevated the level of the response.

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of the 16 *Disturbance* cases by sub-type, as they were dispatched.

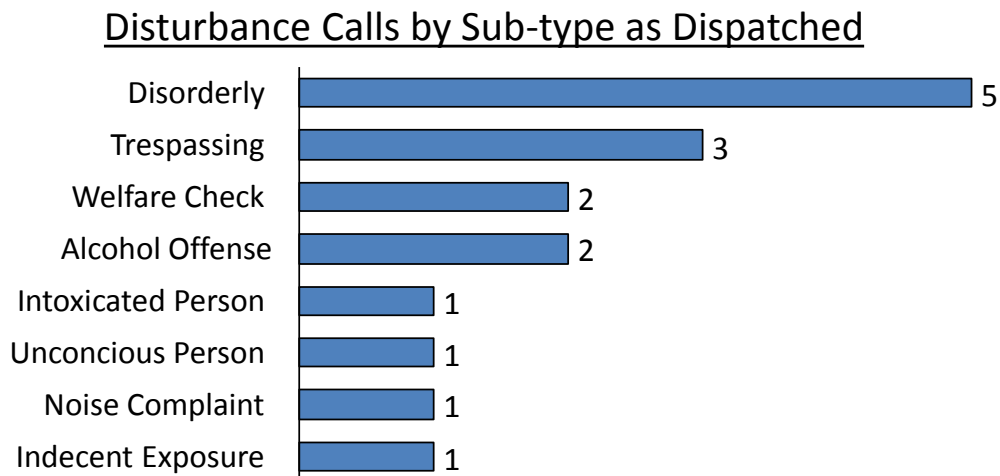


Figure 4

In other portions of the *Disturbance* category, the research team found that officers were dispatched for disturbance-type complaints that were more specific in their classification. In three cases the calls were for “trespassing” or “unlawful entry,” two cases were for an “alcohol offense,” and two other cases were “check on the welfare” calls. The four remaining cases were for a “noise complaint,” an “intoxicated person,” an “unconscious person,” and an “indecent exposure.” These cases were similar in their initial stature and overall level of importance and subsequently grouped under the *Disturbance* category.

Similar to *Domestic Dispute* calls, the team found there was only one officer dispatched to investigate the complaint in five of the *Disturbance* cases. While given the initial stature of the call for service, having one officer respond is more easily understood.

Figure 5 illustrates the large percentage of officers who were on scene of a *Disturbance* call alone when killed. Nine of the 16 *Disturbance* cases involved officers who were on scene alone and were killed, representing 56 percent of all *Disturbance* cases. Of the nine who were on scene alone, five (56 percent) were dispatched alone.

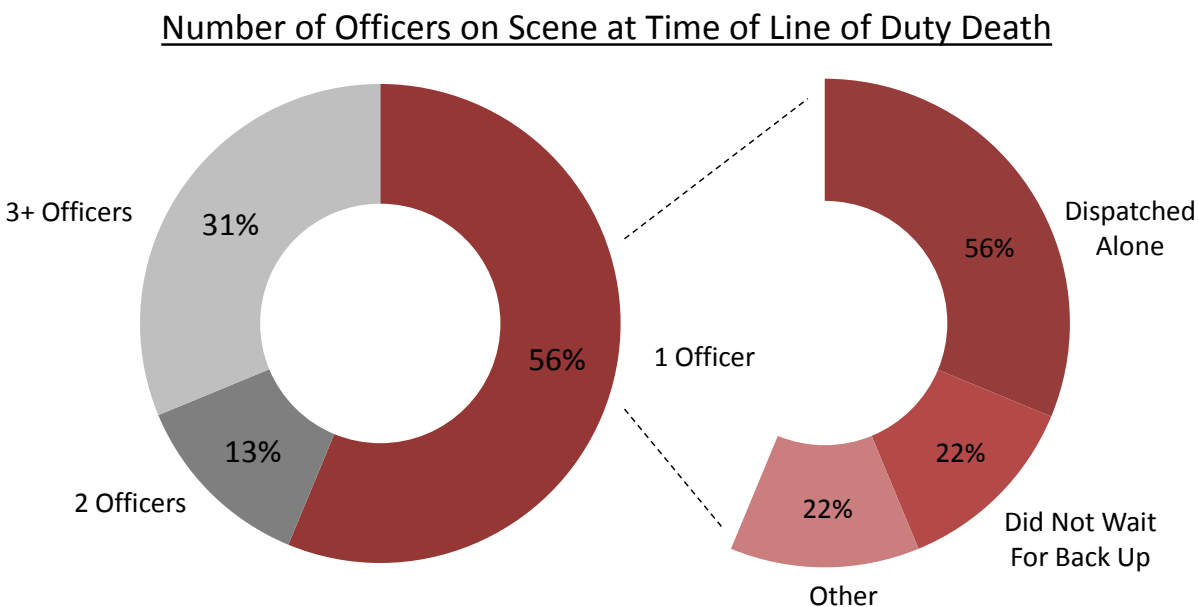


Figure 5

Three of the cases studied were ambushes of the responding officers that were unrelated to the initial call for service. The calls were not ruses to lure an unsuspecting officer; suspects made tactical decisions to shoot the unsuspecting officers while they were summoned to handle an unrelated matter. One of these cases was a call for “check on the welfare” and when the dispatched officer arrived on the scene, they were shot from a concealed position by an unrelated suspect.

There are several remarkable cases within this category in which tragedy erupted from what is normally a common call for service; such as calls where officers are breaking up noisy groups, checking on a family member or assisting emergency medical personnel. The following case study is an example of how seemingly minor disputes can become dangerous situations in which accurate information and threat assessment by the responding officer are critical components to handling the call in a safer manner.



CASE STUDY: A single officer handles a reported “neighbor dispute”

Two officers from a medium-sized city police department of 100 sworn officers were dispatched to a “Neighbor Disturbance” in which a complaint of indecent exposure was made. The initial officer took the call and informed the backup officer that he would handle the call.

The officer arrived at the location and interviewed the complainant, who indicated that their next door neighbor (separated single-family homes) had come to their house complaining about their daughter damaging his property and that the neighbor had exposed himself to their child when he came over to complain.

The complainants advised the investigating officer that they wanted the police to speak with the disgruntled neighbor, but they did not want him arrested. The investigating officer updated the dispatcher with the information regarding the complaint and was asked if he was “OK?” by a fellow officer via the police radio. The officer handling the complaint

replied he was OK, and he further advised that he was going to speak with the suspect.

One officer who was at the police station advised that due to the mention of the suspect being nude or having exposed himself, he was heading to the location of the call to serve as backup. The officer who was handling the complaint, walked the short distance to the suspect's residence, knocked on the door and was invited in by the suspect. Upon entering the home, witnesses reported hearing gunshots.

The officer who made contact with the suspect then shouted over his police radio, "I've been shot!" All city police units, as well as county sheriff units, were dispatched to the scene. Numerous police units converged on the street from where the call originated but no one knew precisely where the wounded officer was located.

As officers arrived they cautiously entered the block, for fear of an ambush as they did not know the location of the gunman. Two officers who were making their way towards the location of the original complaint encountered the suspect in a yard. He was partially clad and covered in blood. The two officers ultimately shot and killed the suspect as he aggressively approached them with his hands concealed and ignored commands to stop and lie down. The officer was found in the suspect's house; shot and bludgeoned to death following a struggle.

The subsequent investigation into this line-of-duty death revealed that vital facts about the interaction between the suspect and the complainants were omitted by the complainants when they spoke to the lone responding officer. The complainants, who wanted only to have the officer talk to the suspect, intentionally concealed the fact that the suspect was irrational, made death threats, had assaulted the male complainant, and damaged their property.

The call seemed minor in nature, as the call taker undoubtedly received scant facts and nothing reporting the death threats, assault, and damaged property. In fact, it was revealed that as the confrontation that prompted the call to police went on in the street, several witnesses could have immediately called the police but did not.

In addition to a substantial delay in the complainants calling to report the incident, when they did call they were not forthcoming regarding the circumstances surrounding the disturbance. The officer who responded did so at a great disadvantage as he went to speak to the suspect

about what he thought to be a relatively minor matter and instead confronted a violent and agitated suspect who shot and beat him to death.

The responding officer did attempt to get historical information on the house and the named suspect but, unfortunately, did not have the correct first name. If he had the correct name, he should have been informed by the dispatcher that the suspect had recently been arrested for domestic battery and had a firearm when last arrested.

This case study points out the danger officers face when responding to reports of problems that appear to be minor incidences. Officers must constantly evaluate the information they are being given and work to get as much information on the call location and suspect before making contact. It is unclear why the initial officer felt comfortable handling the call alone beyond the lower level classification of the call. What is clear is that he was hindered from properly assessing the situation due to the lack of clear and accurate information.

The complainants, for whatever reason, provided the officer with misleading information. Nor is it known why he had the wrong name for the suspect. An address check for the suspect's residence should have revealed the recent arrest and committal of a resident there.

As in the previous category of *Domestic Dispute* calls, the issue of being dispatched alone, or making contact with a suspect before a secondary officer arrives to assist, is an important safety element to consider.

Having two officers conducting separate field interviews of the complainants, rather than one listening to both at the same time, may have yielded conflicting information that could have raised concerns. Also, the presence of a second officer when making contact with the suspect may have changed the final outcome.

Even if the suspect opened fire, there would have been two officers for the suspect to simultaneously confront and the fatal bludgeoning that occurred in this case may have been prevented. Further, resources could have been more rapidly directed to the scene, and the rescue of injured or incapacitated officers affected more swiftly. As in the previous case study, no one can say what the results of this call would have been had two officers responded. However, there is sufficient information to conclude that the presence of a backup officer as a second set of eyes, ears and hands could have made it safer.

This notion that two officers are better than one, was echoed in a recent article by David Griffith, titled "The Buddy System" in *Police: The Law Enforcement Magazine* (1), that espoused some of the virtues of two-man patrol cars. The report found benefits to the presence of at least two officers when handling calls for service and making stops of persons and vehicles. Even in those instances where a suspect engaged two or more officers, the presence of two

officers, in most cases, allowed for the threat posed by the suspect to be thwarted. Further, immediate medical assistance was able to be summoned, to say nothing of the life-saving measures a second officer can take while awaiting emergency medical assistance.

In a second case study, the research team found another startling example of the initial call for service being relatively mild in its classification and nature, but ended with the responding officer being shot and killed.

CASE STUDY: Officer responds to call for impaired shoplifter

In a large urban police department of more than 2,300 sworn officers, a senior police officer was dispatched as a backup to a complaint of a disturbance at a large chain department/grocery store where an intoxicated male was reported to be wandering the store.

While the two officers were en route, the call was changed from a disturbance to a shoplifting, as the store employees had called back to inform the dispatcher that the suspect may be trying to steal merchandise. The senior officer arrived on scene first and entered the store to investigate the complaint. He quickly spotted the suspect, and as he approached, the suspect ran up an aisle away from the officer.

The officer gave chase and was able to tackle the suspect near the front of the store and a struggle ensued. During the struggle, the suspect pulled a handgun from his jacket and shot the officer twice. The suspect was quickly disarmed and subdued by store employees who were already rushing to assist the officer as he struggled with the suspect. The officer died at the scene and the suspect, who was impaired on Xanax and liquor, was arrested.

The chief of the police department later said, "This was a routine call. What makes our job deadly is that there is no routine call."

The case illustrates how a call for service is often not what it appears and that even minor infractions of the law or ordinances can involve armed criminals or persons with mental disorders.

In many cases the call classification and initial complaint are typically considered nuisance calls which may lull officers into a false sense of security. Often, disorderly calls are dispatched as

routine and something that, based on the initial information, would not necessarily result in an arrest.

The examples of officers who were dispatched to handle what, at first, were complaints about non-violent nuisance violations or minor offenses that resulted in an officer fatality, are evident in each of the 16 cases that were disturbance type calls.



Red Flags and Recommendations

- Officers must avoid being lulled into a false sense of security by a call classification:
 - Assume things are not going to be as they were originally reported.
 - Dispatchers and call takers are critical components in the chain of information provided to officers, and they must use every resource to get the best information possible.
 - Officers responding to calls, particularly at private residences, should make every effort to get a call history on the location and any suspects who reside there.
- Officers must act together and not assume that it is a routine matter:
 - Supervisors and fellow officers should always ensure that officers wait for their backup and challenge officers who regularly handle matters by themselves with little communication.
 - Dispatchers should constantly check on officers' welfare even when they are handling seemingly routine matters.

- Any call that mentions possible erratic behavior or mental disorders must be handled with the utmost caution:
 - Crisis Intervention Team officers specially trained to cope with persons suffering from a mental illness should be dispatched to these calls.
 - Academy and in-service training that recognizes the many signs of mental illness should be conducted, as at least four of these fatal cases involved persons with mental illness.

Officer Needs Assistance Calls

Officer Needs Assistance calls represented 11 percent or 10 cases of the 91 total fatal calls for service during the period. The calls represented in this category were all high priority requiring emergency response. They were dispatched to officers in the field to respond to assist a fellow officer who was in danger or in pursuit of an armed suspect.

These types of calls can create an increased sense of urgency within officers as they respond to assist and protect their colleague. They are designated in many different ways across the country. Some refer to them by a numeric code classification such as “10-33,” “999,” “10-24,” “10-99,” or “Signal-13.” No matter what the code, officers responding to these calls do so with an intense desire to get there and help their fellow officer.

As previously mentioned, the research team separately analyzed crashes that occurred as officers responded to calls for service. It was discovered that *Officer Needs Assistance* calls accounted for 51 percent of the call type in which officers crashed while responding. This percentage is a significant metric and one that clearly identifies a problem to address through training and awareness.

The 10 calls for assistance that comprise this category were split evenly between officers being summoned to back up an officer at a scene and officers being called to assist a fellow officer in apprehending a suspect.

In all of the cases, officers were shot as they manned perimeters when a suspect barricaded themselves, as they assisted in the search for an armed fleeing suspect, or as they attempted to rescue a wounded officer. Suspects were wielding rifles in seven cases, and of those, four were ambush-style attacks. Three of the cases involved multiple officers being shot and killed.

The *Officer Needs Assistance* calls reviewed in this report were all the result of an initial call for service in which the responding officers requested additional assistance to handle a situation or where officers were injured by a suspect while handling the initial call and required immediate medical assistance as well as support in apprehending the suspect. The following case study

exemplifies the dangers that officers confront and demonstrates why an *Officer Needs Assistance* call is an indicator of a highly charged and potentially deadly situation developing.

CASE STUDY: Deputies respond to report of a theft

In a rural sheriff's office consisting of just over 30 sworn deputies, a call was received by the county 911 center reporting a theft in progress at a scrap yard. Two deputies responded to the scene as well as two state police officers who had also monitored the call over their police radio. The assisting state police officers soon left the scene as it appeared that the suspect had already fled on foot, and they were dispatched to another call.

As the two deputies were investigating the scene of the attempted theft, they observed a man in the woods lying down. One of the deputies began to approach the suspect, but as he did so the suspect rose up with a rifle in his hands and began firing at the deputies. The suspect shot and wounded both of the deputies, who then managed to take cover.

The wounded deputies summoned assistance, reporting that shots had been fired and that they were pinned down and in need of medical assistance. Additional units responded and established a perimeter as they attempted to rescue the two wounded deputies. Two of the deputies who responded as backup to the call for assistance were shot and killed by the gunman.

One deputy was shot while helping rescue the two wounded deputies and the other deputy was shot while behind cover and shooting at the suspect with a patrol rifle. The gunman was later confronted away from the shooting scene and shot by officers as he drew a pistol.

This case again reinforces the notion that no call is routine and violence can erupt at any time. The initial call was someone stealing scrap metal, but it ended up being an ambush of officers by a skilled and motivated shooter. As in the *Disturbance* call section, the starting point for this case that resulted in the *Officer Needs Assistance* call was not the type of call in which officers would anticipate an armed assault.

There is little to be done when an assailant opens fire on unsuspecting officers, and there is no indication that anything else could have been done in this case given the manner in which it

developed. The manner in which multiple officers quickly responded, established a perimeter and were armed with rifles was appropriate. The responding deputies, who likely had a strong motivation to rescue their comrades, faced the most dangerous situation as they sought to extricate the two wounded deputies and stop the gunman.

This call category is different than the preceding call types, as the responding officers knew they are facing a dangerous situation. They must arrive quickly to bring the situation under control and, when possible, coordinate their response. Dispatchers work to coordinate the response and provide the best-possible information while trying to manage all police communications including both radio and computer-based messaging.

The radio traffic in response to a scene like the one described above is chaotic, and supervisors and dispatchers must work to maintain radio discipline to properly coordinate how and where responding police units are going.

As previously mentioned, in seven of these ten cases, officers were shot by suspects with rifles. And many times officers were shot from a distance with a high-powered rifle. Standard soft body armor such as Level III-A, worn by most patrol officers, will not stop a rifle round. The increasing use of assault-style rifles against police has given rise to the issuance of AR-style patrol rifles, body armor with hard armor plates, and ballistic helmets, to be deployed during high threat responses.





Red Flags and Recommendations

- Calls for service dispatched for *Officer Needs Assistance* are often highly charged and dangerous for the responding officers:
 - Training and emphasis must be placed on making it to the scene safely and avoiding collisions with other responding police units.
 - The arrival and assignment of responding units must be coordinated to avoid crossfire and ensure responding officers know where the danger area is. Supervisory control beginning with the senior officer on scene must be maintained to avoid confusion.
 - The use of cover, even if on an outer perimeter or when on the scene of a barricade, must be emphasized. Concealment is good, but a solid piece of cover between officers and suspects armed with high-powered weapons is essential.
 - The use of a designated incident safety officer to manage the safety of personnel on complex, ongoing scenes is encouraged. More agencies are taking this approach to barricades, major crash scenes and large-scale events.

Robbery Calls

Calls involving robberies accounted for 9 percent of the 91 fatal calls for service that were examined. These calls for service were dispatched as priority calls for officers to respond to a “Robbery in Progress” or “Robbery Just Occurred.” In this study, of the eight cases examined, all but one of the dispatched calls for service was for the robbery of an establishment, such as a convenience store, department store, or bank. In five of those cases, responding officers were shot and killed as they arrived on the scene and encountered the armed suspects.

In the remaining four cases, the officers were shot and killed as they pursued fleeing suspects from the scene or stopped suspects near the scene. In placing these calls for service in this category, the research team relied on the classification as submitted by the agency and through the review of the overall circumstances of the case. There are other police fatalities that occurred during the study period that involved robbery suspects, but they were not the result of a direct call for service sending officers to the scene of the crime.

In the cases studied, officers were aware that an armed robbery was occurring or had just occurred as they responded. In one case, officers were provided updated information by the dispatcher as they were en route to the scene, providing them a possible number of suspects and their description.

There were instances where officers were dispatched alone or were alone when killed in this call category. In the below case study, the officer was by himself when he confronted an armed suspect, but this was as other officers were on the scene and confronting two other suspects.

CASE STUDY: Officers respond to the robbery of a retail establishment

In a town police department of 100 sworn officers, during an intense snow storm, units were dispatched to a robbery in progress at a department store. The call information indicated that two armed men wearing ski masks entered the store, and began stealing jewelry at gunpoint. They entered just as the store was preparing to close. There was a getaway driver/lookout posted in the parking lot near the front of the store.

Three patrol units were close by and responded to the call. As units arrived on the scene, one of the officers, a 34-year veteran, was the second car to arrive and observed one of the suspects fleeing the scene on foot. The officer drove his police car to get ahead of the fleeing suspect and then stopped and got out to confront the armed suspect.

The suspect and the officer exchanged gunfire at close range and despite being struck multiple times, the officer was able to shoot the suspect. The suspect died at the scene, and the officer died later at the hospital. The other suspect and the getaway driver were all arrested on the scene.

The suspect confronted by the veteran officer was a parolee who had sworn he would not go back to prison.

This case was the first line-of-duty death experienced by this agency in its 160-year history. The swift dispatch and quick response prevented the suspects from escaping but then had individual officers chasing or containing the multiple fleeing suspects.

The response to reports of armed hold-ups at establishments must be coordinated and strategies should be discussed in training and among squads in a proactive manner.



Red Flags and Recommendations

- Armed robbery calls are dangerous and unpredictable:
 - Responding officers must be tactical in their approach to the scene and be prepared to confront armed suspects.
 - A coordinated response to block escape routes, and limit the possibilities of a wide-scale active shooter, or hostage situation, should be paramount in the minds of officers. Supervisors and senior officers who are first on the scene must take control of the response and assignment of other officers.
 - Reviewing the basics with patrol officers, such as never pulling-up directly in front of the establishment, turning their siren off several blocks away so as not to announce their arrival, and finding adequate cover, should regularly be performed. Training and policies should be reviewed to ensure that officers are prepared and thinking tactically when responding to such calls.

Robberies of banks and establishments often become violent encounters, as clerks are assaulted, employees are shot, and civilians are taken hostage. One need only be reminded of two spectacular incidents involving heavily armed bank robbers wearing ballistic vests who were cornered by responding officers. The 1997 North Hollywood and 2013 Stockton, California, shootouts created a multitude of safety concerns when officers arrived in time to thwart well-armed and desperate criminals' escape. In these two highly-publicized incidents,

many officers and civilians were wounded in protracted gun battles and, in one case, hostages were taken.

In a November 2015 article in *Police: The Law Enforcement Magazine*, Lieutenant Amaury Murgado of the Osceola County (FL) Sheriff's Office **(2)** said it best, before you respond to a likely robbery of an establishment "Think it Through." Meaning there has to be some preparation and coordination as you engage the suspects.

The data for these robbery cases indicated that none of the suspects were reported to be mentally ill; they were simply intent on escape by any means necessary. The 2015 Department of Justice's COPS Office report on "Ambushes of Police," **(3)** which recounts the findings in a study of New York City Police Department line-of-duty deaths, indicated that "...most assailants were rational robbers, fleeing the scene of a crime, who routinely used potentially lethal weapons as 'tools of the trade.'" In the *Robbery* calls for service cases analyzed, researchers found that the perpetrators were all armed with handguns.

Burglary Calls

A similar call type to the *Robbery* call is the *Burglary* call, also representing 9 percent of the fatal calls for service that were analyzed. The research team examined eight cases that involved a response to a reported burglary. These cases were for the most part forced entry cases or witness reporting a suspect entering a building. One of the cases involved a response to an alarm, where forced entry was discovered.

As demonstrated in previous call categories, the research team found that in these eight cases, five of the responding officers were alone when they were assaulted and killed. All of the eight cases identified for this category of call involved an officer being shot with a firearm.

Seven of the officers were shot with handguns, one of which was a stolen police handgun, and one of the officers was shot and killed by a suspect armed with an AR-15.

In all of the cases, officers had responded to a report of a break-in and were in the process of investigating the crime when they made contact with a suspect and were subsequently shot. Only one of the cases involved a suspect diagnosed with a mental illness.

In three of the cases, the suspects were concealed within the location entered or very nearby as they attempted to elude the responding officers. In seven of the cases, backup officers were en route or nearby when the suspects were confronted by a single officer and shot. In one of the cases where an officer was alone when killed, the officer was processing the scene of the burglary for evidence as the complainant, a retired police officer, was standing nearby. The complainant was also shot and killed by the suspect, who had returned to retrieve the stolen items he had left behind.

In another case, three officers who were canvassing the scene of a burglary for stolen items that may have been set aside, dropped or hidden to be picked-up later, and encountered a well-armed burglar who engaged them in a shootout.



CASE STUDY: Scene canvass leads to shootout with suspect

In a large-sized sheriff's office of over 900 sworn deputies, an early morning burglar alarm from a medical facility was dispatched for sheriff deputies to investigate. Within minutes of the alarm, deputies were on scene and discovered that entry had been forced into the building. Four deputies began a methodical search of the building for any suspects and, finding none, cleared the building as one deputy spoke with the business manager who had arrived on the scene.

Two of the deputies began a sweep of the immediate vicinity for any signs of a suspect or any stolen items that may have been set aside or discarded. As one deputy made his way through an adjacent parking lot, he came upon a parked van with out-of-state license plates. The deputy ran a license check on the van which came back as not stolen and the dispatcher provided the deputy with the registered owner's name and address.

The deputy then peered into the van and observed a man lying down on a mattress in the back of the van. The deputy summoned a second deputy to his location and the second deputy drove his cruiser to the parking lot where the vehicle was located. The backup deputy turned on his overhead

emergency lights and used his spotlight to better illuminate the inside of the van.

The deputy who had discovered the van began to try and speak to the man inside, who sat upright when the deputy knocked on the sliding door of the van. The deputies gave the suspect several commands to show his hands and exit the van. The suspect then forcefully flung open the side door and immediately began firing an AR-15 rifle at the deputy near the sliding door. His first rounds struck that deputy twice, incapacitating and ultimately killing him.

The second deputy, positioned near the rear of the van, drew his firearm and began to exchange gunfire with the suspect, who was still inside the van. Despite being struck numerous times by the deputy's gunfire, the suspect continued to fire his rifle, falling out of the van still holding his weapon. Additional deputies who were at the scene of the burglary ran to the shooting scene and also fired at the suspect until he dropped the rifle.

The suspect was pronounced dead at the scene and was subsequently linked to a double murder committed two days earlier with the same rifle. The shooting lasted less than a minute, but 70 rounds were fired between the suspect and the three deputies.

This case is an extreme example of what officers may encounter when they are on the scene of a burglary that has just occurred or in progress and locate a suspect. Unlike other case examples, there is no evidence in this case to indicate that the officers were complacent or used poor judgement in how they tactically handled this incident. It is an example of how responding officers can do everything correctly and still have it end badly.

These deputies waited for backup, showed good intuition, acted in concert, and sought further information as they worked to determine whether or not this suspicious person in the van was related to the burglary. There was no way for the deputies to know who he was, as there was no additional information available on the van, and they also could not see his hidden rifle.

No other deputies were struck by the suspect's gunfire as they maintained positions of cover, and the deputy, positioned at the rear of the van, was immediately able to shoot the suspect once he began his assault. Although he did not instantly incapacitate the armed suspect, he was in a position to continue to deliver what the investigative report described as "...devastating and accurate fire."



Red Flags and Recommendations

- Officers responding to burglary and burglar alarm calls should not be dispatched alone and must wait for their backup:
 - In five of the cases studied, officers were on the scene and made contact ahead of their backup or separated from their partner and encountered the suspect alone. In one case, responding backup officers had to search the house to find the wounded officer who was surprised by the burglar after entering to investigate the room where the complainant reported hearing glass break.
- Officers must avoid the false alarm monotony that leads to complacency when assigned burglar alarms and burglary reports:
 - Officers can become complacent when faced with the high number of false alarms that regularly emanate from residences and businesses. As mentioned, one of these cases involved a suspect returning to retrieve items left behind, who shot and killed the officer processing the scene.
- None of the cases reported deploying a K-9 or K-9 teams to search for suspects:
 - While not applicable to each case, K-9 teams are the best way to search for a secreted suspect and to clear a location or track a suspect. Not all agencies have K-9s, but most have the ability to access them through mutual aid, Memorandums of Understanding, and shared jurisdiction authority with adjoining agencies.

Shots Fired Calls

The research team examined seven *Shots Fired* calls, which represented 8 percent of the call type that resulted in a law enforcement fatality over the course of the study. These calls are ones in which the responding officers are on a heightened alert as they arrive in the vicinity of the call and anticipate encountering armed people. *Shots Fired* calls often direct officers to a general area where gunshots were heard while other times they are reported as emanating from a specific location. Responding officers are at a great disadvantage when responding to these calls, as they may not know the source location or the underlying cause of the gunfire.

The dispatched information on many of these calls was too vague to provide the responding officers a suspect description or precise location of the gunfire.

Three of the calls dispatched for *Shots Fired* were cases of domestic violence in which a suspect had shot or fired shots at a domestic partner during a dispute. This fact further highlights the danger posed by domestic-related violence. The underlying cause of the violence was domestic-

related, but the call for service dispatched was for someone firing a weapon from a complainant who called the police to report the “Sounds of Gunshots.”

Two of the calls resulted in ambushes of the responding officers who were shot while investigating the original call, but not actively confronting a suspect. One officer was shot from a trailer while photographing evidence related to the original shots fired call but with no idea who or where the shooter was.

In each of the studied cases, there was a minimum of two officers dispatched to the scene, and very often three or more had responded. In four of the eight cases, the suspects were armed with rifles that fired high-velocity rounds, capable of penetrating the responding officer’s soft body armor.

Case Study: Officers ambushed as they investigate shots fired call

On a summer evening in a large city police department of over 1,500 sworn officers, two patrol units were dispatched to investigate the “sounds of gunshots” coming from an intersection. There were no further details or descriptions available from the 911 call reporting the gunfire. The two dispatched officers responded, and the first officer on the scene was flagged down by a male who was near an alleyway.

The male was acting suspiciously, and when asked to show his hands he refused and kept them hidden from the officer’s view. The second officer arrived, and the two officers faced the non-compliant suspect as they sought cover.

As the second officer moved from cover to get a better position, the suspect produced an AK-47 assault rifle and began firing at the two officers. His shots struck the second officer, and both officers returned fire striking the suspect.

The second officer died as a result of his wounds, and the wounded suspect was taken into custody. One of the rounds fired by the suspect penetrated the officer’s vest. The suspect is undergoing trial for murder. He had a lengthy criminal background and an apparent grudge against the law enforcement.

The suspect had fired off his weapon to generate the initial call for service. The responding officers were only given an intersection to respond to, and when the first officer arrived, the suspect flagged him down as though he were a witness or complainant.

Often the lack of information that dispatchers can provide to responding officers creates a hindrance for officers attempting to handle the call and protect themselves. They may drive to the location where the shooting is still occurring or unknowingly place themselves in close proximity of the armed suspect.

Shots Fired calls can also become routine in many jurisdictions where they are a nightly occurrence, and many times the sounds are quickly dismissed as fireworks. Such dismissals can lead to a complacent approach, similar to burglar alarms, and should be guarded against. As several of the previous case studies have shown, violence can erupt at any moment and on any type of call.



Red Flags and Recommendations

- Calls reporting shots fired create challenges in response, as the information about the location and suspect descriptions are often vague:
 - Officers must approach the area with extreme caution and receive constant updates from the dispatcher when information becomes available.
 - Responding officers must avoid becoming complacent if such calls are common within their jurisdiction, or arrive with the understanding that they will be responding only to locate a victim with the shooter gone.

- Agencies that experience a large number of shootings and calls for shots fired should consider acoustic systems that can pinpoint where the gun fire originated from to more accurately guide the response and make locating suspects and evidence easier.

Suspicious Person and Vehicle Calls

There are seven cases that involved officers responding to a *Suspicious Person or Vehicle* call which led to an in the line-of-duty death, as the responding officer(s) attempted to question the subject or occupant(s) of the vehicle. These seven cases represent 8 percent of the total calls for service analyzed. Four of the cases involved the report of a suspicious vehicle and two of these cases involved two officers being killed in the same incident as they investigated a suspicious vehicle.

The three remaining cases all involved officers responding to investigate a report of a suspicious person. In each case, the responding officers had very little information other than a suspect or vehicle description. In the cases involving a suspicious vehicle, there was no information indicating that call takers or dispatchers had anything other than a location and vehicle description to relay to the responding officers.

Similar to the *Shots Fired* call category, officers responding to *Suspicious Persons and Vehicle Calls* are handicapped by a lack of clear information provided by witnesses and reporting persons as they make contact with the person described or approach the vehicle in question. In six of the cases examined in this call type, the persons being contacted by the responding officers were committing or had recently committed other crimes.

All of the officers in this call category were killed by gunfire. In an unfortunate case of mistaken identity, an officer responding to assist on a suspicious person call, where officers had just shot a knife-wielding suspect, was shot by another officer who did not recognize him as law enforcement.

One of the officers killed was investigating a suspicious automobile in a park and was alone when shot as she approached the car in question.

In only one of the cases was the suspect who was encountered by the responding officers reported to be mentally disturbed.

CASE STUDY: Two officers slain as they investigate the occupants of a reported suspicious vehicle

At 6:00 pm on a winter evening, in a city police agency of just under 1,000 sworn officers, a call was dispatched to patrol units to investigate a suspicious vehicle in the parking lot of a grocery store. A description of the vehicle was provided, and the information indicated that the occupants of the suspicious car may be involved in drug activity.

Two officers arrived, followed shortly by a third, and the officers asked all three occupants to get out of the vehicle to be interviewed. As the three suspects began to get out of the four-door car, the rear driver's side passenger emerged and immediately fired a handgun at the officer closest to him, striking him in the head.

The suspect then turned and fired at the second officer who was positioned close by, striking him in the head and exchanged shots with the third officer before fleeing in the vehicle. Both officers died as a result of the shooting.

There was no apparent warning of the swift and accurate assault perpetrated by the male suspect, who had a lengthy criminal history. The suspect vehicle, fled the scene, and was discovered abandoned. A subsequent investigation led to a standoff with the armed suspect at a nearby residence. The suspect was eventually shot and killed by tactical team members as he emerged from the residence and fired at officers.

This case further illustrates the dangers of *Suspicious Person* or *Suspicious Vehicle* calls. The officers responded to investigate an unknown situation and in the very early moments of investigating the suspicious activity, were quickly and unexpectedly shot by the suspect. It should be noted that in this case, despite the assertion that more officers make it safer to respond to deadly threats, control suspects, and provide security, the three officers on the scene did not deter the suspect from carrying out his assault and escaping.



Red Flags and Recommendations

- Calls for suspicious persons and vehicles should be screened for as much information as possible. These calls present unknowns that place responding officers in jeopardy as they must approach and make contact with the persons described with little or no additional information.
 - Agencies must use all their resources to provide responding officers the best information possible on the suspect, and any relevant information on the suspect vehicle.
 - Responding officers should run the tag of the vehicle and ensure they have a backup officer before approaching. The tactical approach of contact and cover, with officers stationed on opposite sides of the vehicle, is recommended.
- Officers responding to any call for service who are in plain clothes, especially when there is more than one jurisdiction involved, must use extreme caution. A plain clothes officer, approaching a scene carrying a rifle or other displayed firearm, may be taken as a threat and shot, which occurred in one of the cases studied under this call type.
 - Scenes must be de-conflicted, and plain clothes officers must be identifiable.

Man with Gun Calls

Man with Gun calls also accounted for 8 percent of the calls for service cases. Unlike *Shots Fired* calls, these calls often provide the responding officers' with a description of the suspect, the type of firearm the suspect is carrying and the suspect's last known location.

This information is important to the responding officers so they are not blindly entering into an area, but are looking for a specific person and can plan their approach in the safest manner possible. In three of the cases, responding officers received information about the suspect and were aware that he may have been impaired or mentally ill before making contact.

Five out of the seven *Man with Gun* cases resulted in officers shot with a rifle or a shotgun. All but one of the cases had two or more officers dispatched and on scene. Three of the cases involved a suspect suffering from mental illness.

In one of the calls that involved a report of a man carrying a firearm, a senior level officer within the small department, responded alone. He did not request a backup until he had already encountered the suspect. The suspect shot the officer with a shotgun as he tried to speak with the armed man.

In another case, two officers responded to reports of a man who had brandished a firearm in a village, and the investigating officers attempted to take the suspect into custody. As the two officers were wrestling with the suspect, a family member then exited the house with a rifle and shot and killed both officers.

Case Study: Officers respond to home for a report of a mentally unstable man armed with a handgun

In a medium-sized sheriff's office with roughly 100 deputies, a call was received reporting an armed suicidal man at a residence. Two deputies were dispatched to the home and when they arrived, they were met by a family member who advised the deputies that the man was inside the home, and that the suspect suffered from mental illness and he had made threats to commit suicide.

The two deputies then walked to the front door of the home, which was open, and were able to see inside the residence and observed the suspect who was seated in a chair, facing away from them.

As the deputies prepared to speak with him, the suspect stood up and began firing a handgun at the deputies. Both deputies were shot, but were able to return fire, striking the suspect.

One deputy was fatally shot in the head, and the surviving officer was struck three times, twice in the extremities and once in his lower chest area, which was protected by his body armor. The wounded suspect surrendered and was taken into custody.



Red Flags and Recommendations

- Calls reporting armed individuals are dangerous, as the information about the suspect is often limited to just a physical description.
 - Officers must approach the area with extreme caution and receive constant updates from the dispatcher when information becomes available, especially if the individual has a history of violence or is making threats.
 - Consider the use of trained Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) when dealing with a suspected mentally ill person or person in crisis.
 - The use and maintaining positions of cover when challenging armed persons must be reinforced and trained.
 - Officers in rural areas, or areas where it is legal to carry a firearm openly, must avoid becoming complacent if such calls are common.

Other Calls

The *Other* category of calls for service accounts for three cases that were all different in type of calls, and the specific nature of these calls for service precluded them from being placed in one of the aforementioned categories.

These three cases will be outlined in order for the reader to understand the differing nature of the calls and their outcomes.

Other Calls Case Study: Officers respond to report of a wanted suspect

The first case was a dispatched call regarding the location of a wanted person who was reported to be at a local fast food restaurant. The dispatcher informed the responding officers that the wanted suspect was in a specific vehicle parked in front of the restaurant. The responding officers were aware that the suspect had outstanding felony warrants for attempted murder and had recently threatened law enforcement.

While more than one unit was dispatched to the call, the first responding officer on scene positioned his police car directly behind the vehicle in which the suspect was reported to be in, blocking his escape. As the officer

approached the vehicle, the suspect shot the officer, killing him. One report indicated that the suspect shot at the officer through the glass windows of the vehicle where he was seated.

The suspect then got out the vehicle and exchanged shots with other arriving officers who chased him behind the restaurant where he became trapped. Responding officers shot the suspect, but he may have ultimately taken his own life with a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Other Calls Case Study: Officer dispatched to assist a probation officer

The second case examined involved an officer who was dispatched to assist a probation officer, who was meeting a subject on probation at his apartment. The probation officer was contacting the subject regarding him possibly being in possession of a firearm. The dispatched officer arrived, and while speaking to the suspect in front of the apartment complex with the probation officer, the suspect suddenly drew a handgun and shot the officer. The suspect then stole the wounded officer's weapon and fled the scene in his police vehicle.

The wounded officer was able to radio for assistance but later died as a result of his wounds. The suspect was pursued by other officers and critically wounded in a shootout with other officers.

Other Calls Case Study: Open line from 911 call leads to shooting of responding officers

The third case involved the investigation of an open line 911 call. There was no additional information other than the location of the residence where the phone was listed. Two officers were dispatched to the mobile home park to investigate the call.

As officers approached the mobile home, a woman spoke with the officers and informed them that the suspect had been drinking. The suspect then appeared holding what appeared to be a handgun. The officers ordered

him to drop it, which he did, but he then went back into the trailer and retrieved a shotgun. The suspect emerged from the trailer and began shooting at the officers. The suspect's gunfire fatally struck one of the officers and the second officer returned fire, killing the suspect. The open line 911 call was the result of a domestic dispute.

The three cases examined under this category, presented here in the above synopsis all reinforce the importance of coordination, information sharing, and the benefit of having two officers. While the presence of a second officer does not always prevent a fatal assault, they are usually instrumental in bringing the assault under control and apprehending the suspect. Officers taking action before adequate manpower is on the scene place themselves in jeopardy and may be taking an unnecessary risk, especially if there is information that indicates the suspect is armed and dangerous.

Information about the nature of the call or the specifics of the requested assistance must be evaluated to determine if additional officers are needed. As different agencies interact, they must share case or suspect information before approaching a suspect.

Summary of Important Data Points from Calls for Service Analysis

Calls involving a domestic disturbance or domestic-related assault were not only the most dangerous type of call for service, but they were also the underlying cause in other fatal calls for service analyzed in this report. Calls for *Shots Fired*, *Man with a Gun*, and *Suspicious Person* were the result of a previous or ongoing domestic disturbance, where family members had been assaulted or threatened by the suspect.

The raw emotions that are part of domestic relationships present a constant danger to officers who are summoned to investigate a dispute or assault. The case analysis has shown that these emotions are also often fueled by substance abuse, and the police quickly became the focal point of a suspect's anger, particularly when they attempt to take family members into custody.

Manner of Death

Of the 91 calls for service cases reviewed, 88 officers died as a result of gunfire. One officer was pushed and fell to his death, another officer was stabbed, and one officer was intentionally struck by a vehicle.

Years of Service

Officers killed after having responded to a call had an average of 12 years of service. Although this fact does not correlate to other data contained in this report, it is important to note the average experience officers had at the time of their death and dispel any notions that only younger and more inexperienced officers are killed in the line of duty.

Number of Officers on Scene

The number of officers on the scene of a call at the time of an officer fatality was analyzed. The research team then segmented the cases into groups where one officer was on scene, two officers were on scene, or three or more officers were on scene when the line of duty death occurred. Mentioned in the analysis of several of the calls for service types is the fact that 34 percent of the officers killed when handling a call for service were alone.

The reason officers encountered a subject alone fell into several categories with the most frequent reason being that the officer was dispatched to a call alone. As identified in the analysis of calls for service, there were instances of officers being dispatched to *Domestic Violence* calls alone and to the seemingly more innocuous *Disturbance* calls. The second most frequent reason was the officer was dispatched with backup, but did not wait for that backup to arrive before contacting the subject or entering a dwelling.

Officers who are killed by the subject during foot pursuits and officers who encounter subjects alone while canvassing are the next two most frequent reasons an officer is killed while they are alone. Other reasons include circumstances such as an officer shot while processing a crime scene alone when the subject returns.

Circumstances Where an Officer was Alone at Time of Death

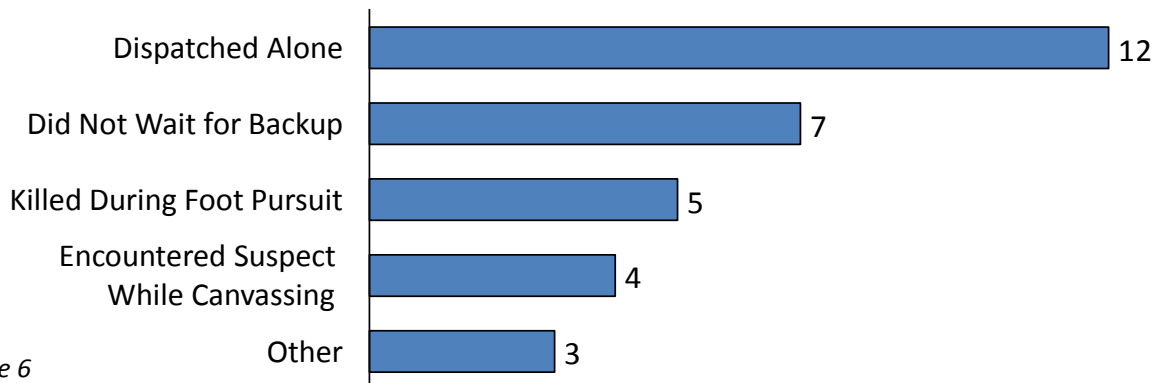


Figure 6

Officers Dispatched Alone

Officers dispatched alone to a call accounts for 13 percent, or 12 of the 91 cases that were analyzed. Four of those cases involved officers being dispatched alone to a *Domestic Dispute*. One officer was dispatched alone to a *Man with a Gun* call.

It should be noted that the research team is aware of the limited resources and manpower available to many law enforcement agencies across the country. Very often, rural areas have to depend on mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions, which may have to travel a significant distance in order to respond to the call. Agencies should recognize the need to dispatch at least two officers to specifically-identified calls for service and officers should understand that it is imperative that the initial responding officer wait for back-up if at all possible.

This report is not meant to infer that two officers will solve the issue. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that in some circumstances officers in pairs are attacked at a higher rate than those who are alone and that the feeling of safety in numbers makes an officer more at ease than an officer would be if they responded alone. This notion is examined by Chief of Police Joel F. Shults, Ed D., who recently listed “5 reasons Back-up Calls Don’t Guarantee Safety.” (4)

Chief Shults points out that backup is not a cure-all, and that an officer who summons backup but fails to coordinate with the assisting officer “...plows into the call before help arrives,” placing themselves and the backup officer in danger.

Officers Not Waiting for Backup

In 8 percent, or seven of the cases reviewed, officers dispatched to calls did not wait for backup to arrive before contacting the suspect or entering a dwelling. Three of those officers were killed while responding to *Domestic Dispute* calls. Two of those officers had entered the suspect’s house before their backup arrived. In one *Burglary* call case, an officer was shot and killed as he entered a residence in which the complainant had reported forced entry.

Subjects Known to be Armed or Prior Threats to Law Enforcement

The vital role of information being gathered and forwarded to the responding officer cannot be overstated, as the more information an officer has the better decisions they can make. As one of the subject matter experts stated during the review of this report, dispatchers and officers must use the “When in doubt, give it out!” approach to providing responding officers all the available information.

Nearly half, or 45 percent, of the cases reviewed involved subjects reported to be armed or who had made threats. This information was provided to the responding officers via the dispatcher or came through information shared by other officers who had previous knowledge regarding the suspect. These include *Man with Gun* calls, *Shots Fired* calls, and many of the *Officer Needs Assistance* and *Robbery* calls. While some calls had elements of prior threats or a subject known to be armed, several cases had elements of both. The first case study in the previous section discussing the *Other* calls category involving the wanted felon who had made threats to law enforcement is an example of such prior knowledge.

When responding to a call involving someone who has made threats and/or is known to be armed, having adequate resources available to respond is critical. Officers responding to these calls must coordinate their response with one another and use sound tactics. In almost all of these types of cases, multiple officers were dispatched. There were two cases where an officer had been made aware of the suspect’s threats and did not wait for backup. In almost 20 percent of these cases, the subjects had either a rifle or shotgun. Officers need to be mindful of their approach to calls with armed subjects, especially ones involving long guns. Several cases involved officers driving right up to the scene and immediately being fired upon.

Subjects Suffering from Mental Illness

At least 19 percent of the cases involved officers responding to a call that involved a subject with a reported mental illness. Close to half of those reportedly mentally ill suspects were either known to be armed or had previously made threats. While the NLEOMF does not collect data on a suspect’s mental health, extensive open source research was performed on each of the 91 cases to determine whether or not the subject had a mental illness, and whether or not the responding officers were aware of it.

This area requires further study as the research team was careful not to simply take the mention of a mental illness as a confirmation that the suspect was suffering from a diagnosed disorder. Other sources and evidence were examined to make the determination that 17 cases involved a person who was mentally ill.

Self-Initiated Activity

Once the analysis of calls for service was complete, the researchers then examined the identified cases that involved so called, self-initiated activity. This analysis is the second major portion of the research team study and focused on cases where officers were killed while taking action on their own volition—actions such as conducting traffic stops for speeding, engaging in enforcement of ordinances, or investigating suspicious activity. These are patrol related duties where officers are proactively enforcing the law, as they observed a violation and stopped a vehicle or saw something suspicious and approached the person to investigate further. These actions were not the result of a dispatched call for service but were originated by the officer as they patrolled their assigned areas.

For the period studied, the team identified 41 cases of self-initiated activity that resulted in a line-of-duty death. The most common type of self-initiated activity found in the study was when officers conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle for a routine violation such as speeding or an equipment violation. This form of contact represented 63 percent of the overall self-initiated activity examined in the study.

Nature of Self-Initiated Activity in the 41 Cases Examined

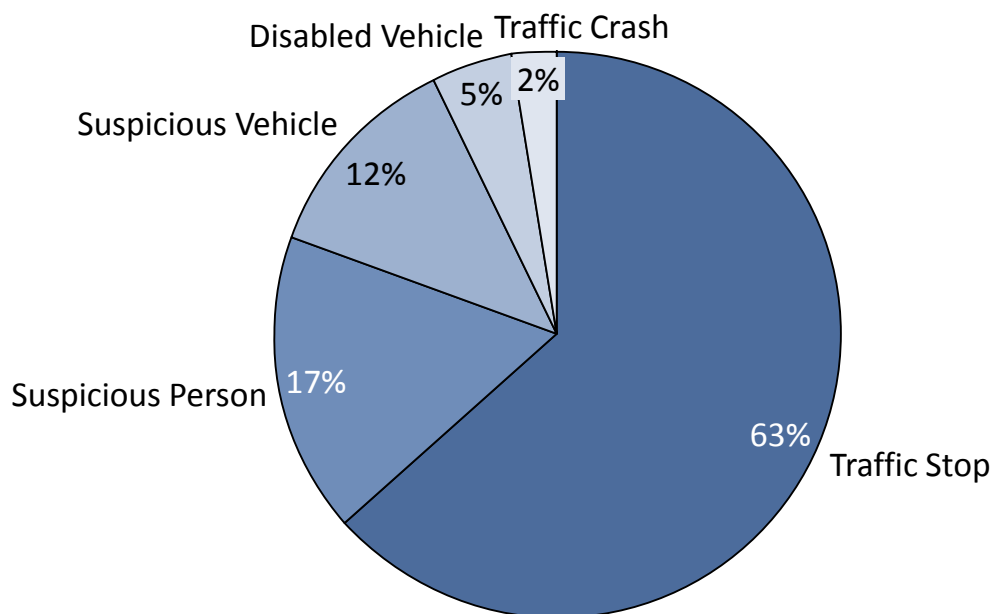


Figure 7

As seen in Figure 7, officers investigating suspicious persons and suspicious vehicles represent the next two largest types of instigated contacts. Although a vital aspect of policing, traffic stops and investigatory stops of persons and vehicles can be some of the most dangerous work a police officer performs.

The remaining cases of officers killed while engaged in self-initiated activity involved officers stopping to assist a disabled vehicle or to investigate an apparent traffic crash. In these instances, officers were reacting to an incident they came across while on patrol. These were not the result of a dispatched call for service or a request from another police unit for assistance.



Traffic Stops: A Closer Look

Traffic Stops accounted for 26 (63 percent) of the 41 self-initiated cases that lead to line of duty fatalities. Enforcing traffic regulations represent the most common form of contact the public has with law enforcement.

These cases provide valuable training points and lessons learned for law enforcement through dashboard camera footage that also includes an audio recording of the incident. Though painful and disturbing to watch, the research team reviewed those available videos to gain a full understanding of what happened during the fatal encounter.

The research team analyzed the cases involving vehicle stops to try and discover how each fatal encounter unfolded. The research team looked at the circumstances of each case and tried to glean what vehicle information the officer obtained prior to making contact with the driver, whether they notified the dispatcher of their location, and at what point during the stop was the officer killed.

Figure 8 below illustrates whether the officer died before making contact with the driver, while the officer was conducting an interview with the driver, while the officer is affecting their arrest, or after the suspect has been taken into custody.

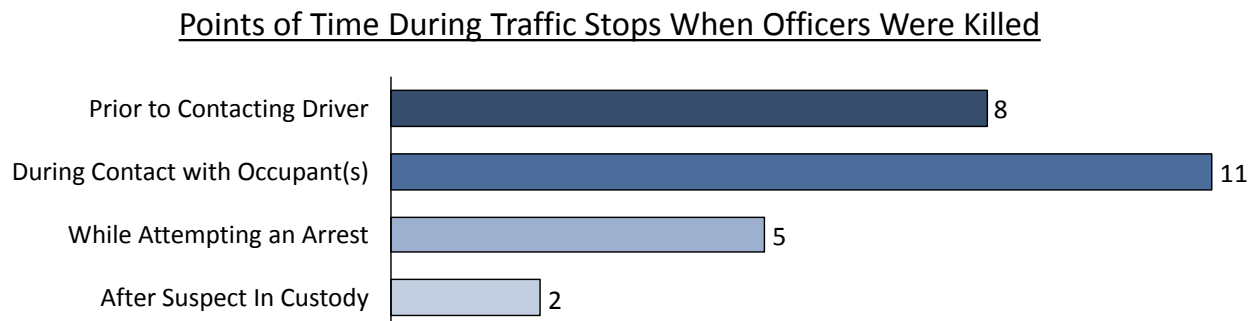


Figure 8

Officers that were killed before initial contact account for 8 (31 percent) of the 26 *Traffic Stop* cases. These cases involved officers who were shot while still in their patrol vehicles, having just exited their vehicles, or while approaching the window of the suspect's vehicle.

The most frequent time an officer was killed was during their contact and interview of the occupant(s)—accounted for 11 cases (42 percent). The circumstances with these cases vary, ranging from situations where it was one officer and one subject outside of the vehicle, to multiple officers performing a pat down on a driver while the unattended passenger exited the vehicle and shot at officers. There is also no pattern of officers being outnumbered.

In examining the 26 *Traffic Stop* cases, it was found that 69 percent of the officers were shot after contacting the driver or passengers. Officers were in the process of running records checks or verifying information when they were assaulted. In one case, an officer who was alone requested backup believing the passenger in the vehicle he had stopped was giving him a false name. The officer then informed the dispatcher that he was going to get the suspect passenger out of the car. He was shot by the passenger, who was wanted, as he asked him to get out of the car. The officer still had the driver's license on his person when the backup officer found him.

In 22 of the 26 cases, officers had notified the dispatcher of their location, the nature of the stop, and provided some vehicle information. In one instance, it was reported by the suspect who was later arrested that he could hear the officer running his name for warrants on the police radio and overheard the reply information verifying that he was wanted. This information was an important factor in the suspect's decision to assault the officer.

In three cases, officers were found by passing citizens who called 911 to report the wounded officer. Three of the deceased officers were still in possession of suspect and vehicle identification and documentation when they were shot.

Officers killed while placing a suspect under arrest, or after the subject was in custody, following a traffic stop, represent the smallest number of cases, with five and two, respectively.

The cases where officers were killed while making an arrest involved shootings that occurred as the officer went to place the subject in handcuffs. In one of those cases, two officers were shot and killed when they asked an individual with an outstanding arrest warrant, to exit the vehicle.

One case that accounted for two deaths was the result of a suspect who was in custody following a traffic stop and arrest for impaired driving. The two officers, who were seated in the front of the patrol car, were shot by the suspect who had been put into the rear seat of the vehicle with his hands cuffed in front of him. The suspect retrieved a pistol that was hidden on his person and shot both officers. This tragic case is one of those whose circumstances, though rare, was notable and re-emphasizes the necessity of thorough searches and handcuffing prisoners behind their back.

Number of Occupants

The research team also looked at the number of vehicle occupants involved in fatal cases. This was examined to provide a perspective on what the breakdown was for officers being assaulted when stopping a vehicle occupied by just a driver or when stopping a vehicle with multiple occupants. Figure 9 details this information.

Number of Occupants in Traffic Stops that Ended in a Line of Duty Death

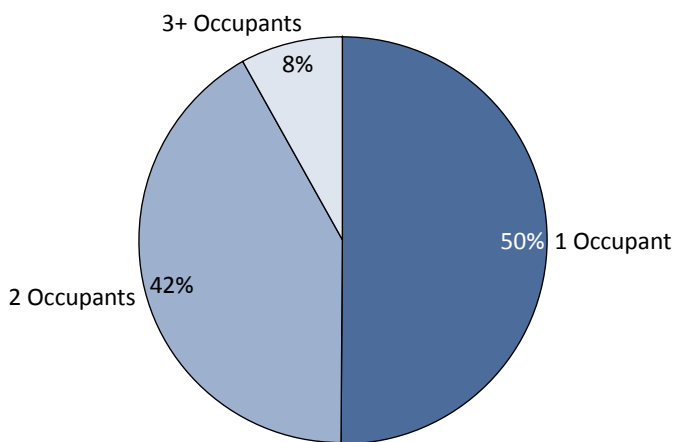


Figure 9

It is a general practice in law enforcement that officers stopping a vehicle will notify the dispatcher how many people are in the car. This information alerts the dispatcher and other officers monitoring the radio that the officer conducting the stop is outnumbered. This usually prompts swift backup assistance and will guide how the stop is conducted as there are now multiple people to monitor. This is tied to the assumption that the presence of multiple officers can present a greater threat than a lone driver. However, of the 26 *Traffic Stops* cases, 13, or

50 percent, involved a traffic stop on a vehicle that was occupied by only one person. Two occupants were present during 42 percent of the traffic stop cases, and 8 percent of the cases involved three or more occupants. Statistically the stop conducted upon a vehicle containing more than just the driver is no more dangerous than the stop of the single occupant vehicle.

Shooter

The research team also looked at who was doing the shooting during these stops. Clearly the shooter in the single-vehicle stops was the driver, but in looking at stops where there was more than one occupant, it was determined that there was a slight preponderance for the passenger to be the shooter. Figure 10 details this information.

Shooter in Traffic Stops that Ended in a Line of Duty Death

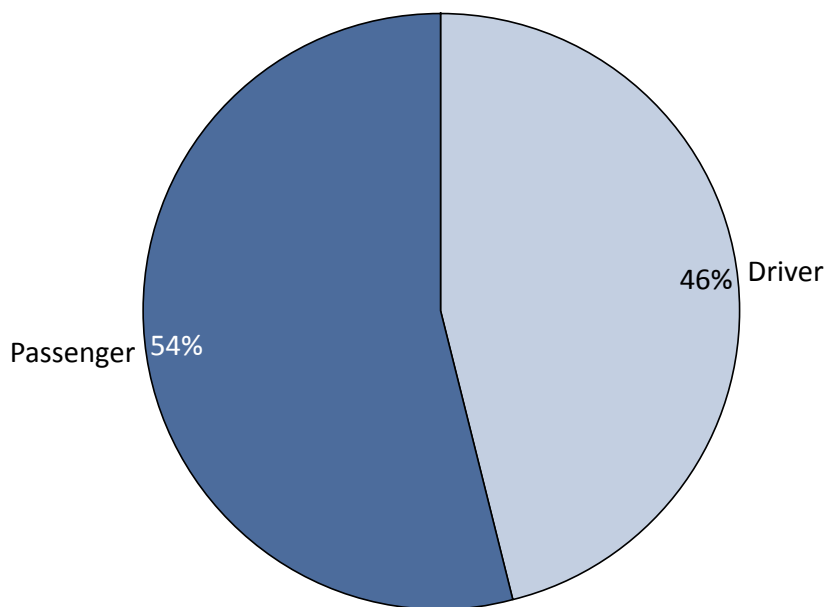


Figure 10

Half of the 13 *Traffic Stops* involved vehicles with multiple occupants. In those cases, it was nearly equal as to whether the driver or passenger was the suspected shooter in the officer's death. Passengers were responsible for shooting the officer in seven (54 percent) of the 13 cases.

Case Study: Traffic stop on a rural road

On a winter night along a rural stretch of road, a State Trooper conducted a traffic stop on a pickup truck for an unknown violation. The trooper radioed in his position and the license number of the pickup before

approaching the vehicle. The trooper made a passenger-side approach and made contact with a male driver and female passenger.

The trooper asked the driver for his license, registration and proof of insurance, and as the driver pretended to reach for his glovebox with his left hand, he drew a handgun in front of the female passenger's face and fired at the trooper. His shot struck the trooper in the head, killing him.

The suspect then fled the scene in the pickup. Assistance was sent to the location of the trooper's stop because the dispatcher could not raise him on the radio. A local sheriff was the first to respond and found the trooper in a ditch by the side of the road. The subsequent investigation, which was initiated off of the vehicle license information the trooper had provided the dispatcher, resulted in the shooter killing himself before being taken into custody.

The trooper, in this case, had no way of knowing that he had stopped an agitated and paranoid drug user who simply decided to kill him. By the trooper reporting the location of the stop and providing a description of the pickup and license number, he left an investigative trail to follow.

The passenger-side approach can be safer than the driver-side approach and can catch suspects off guard. It can protect officers who may be struck by passing traffic and depending on the type of vehicle, offers more protection to the approaching officer.



Red Flags and Recommendations

- Officers making traffic stops are at risk from an unexpected assault as they do not always know who they have stopped and how someone may react.
 - Officers must notify the dispatcher of their location and vehicle description, including license plate number and the number of occupants.
 - Officers with Mobile Digital Computers should run the vehicle's license plate before making contact with the driver and, if not, await the dispatcher's response information on the vehicle.
- Dispatchers must continually check on the welfare of officers who have marked out on a traffic stop and send backup to the officer's location upon verifying a wanted status on a vehicle or suspect.

- Officers must constantly monitor the behavior and language of drivers and suspects on traffic stops. Remember that any unusual delay in providing requested documentation or excessive repetition of requests or explanations can be a precursor to an assault.
- Officers should wear radio ear pieces so that driver's and wanted suspects cannot hear the information that may tip them to the fact that they are about to be arrested and give them time to prepare.
- Right side approach is the safest to protect against struck-by crashes and may tactically put the driver at a disadvantage as the approaching officer has some limited protection from the vehicle's door frames (pillars).
- Officers must thoroughly search their suspects before securing them in the rear of a patrol car, and must ensure they handcuff suspects with their hands behind their backs and the handcuffs must be double locked.



Suspicious Persons and Vehicles

The second largest category of self-initiated activity or contact was when an officer(s) observed a suspicious person or suspicious vehicle and conducted a stop of that person or approached that vehicle to investigate it and the occupants. These types of activities represent 12 of the 41 cases examined, accounting for 29 percent of all the self-initiated actions.

All of the cases under the suspicious person/vehicle category involved a single officer approaching a parked vehicle or stopping a suspect who was on foot to determine if they were engaged in criminal activity.

Seven of the 12 cases involved the stop of a suspicious person; where the officer engaged a suspicious person who was walking or in one instance on a bicycle, and effected or attempted to conduct a stop of that person.

In each of those seven cases, the suspects were armed and shot the officer at close range as they were talking to the officer or being pursued. In all the cases, the officer conducting the stop had notified the dispatcher of their location and indicated that they were stopping a suspect, or in one case, multiple suspects.

In one of those cases, the officer was shot as he sat in his police vehicle after pulling up alongside a suspect who was walking on the sidewalk. The officer had him under observation and knew the suspect's name. The suspect then began to walk away from the officer as the officer was awaiting confirmation of an outstanding warrant via the dispatcher. The suspect shot the officer as he drove up next to the suspect to initiate contact and conduct a stop.

In another case, an officer, who had requested backup, confronted three suspects who were in a park afterhours. The officer was shot by one of the suspects as he was preparing to conduct a pat-down search for weapons.

All of the officers killed while making self-initiated stops for suspicious activity or investigating a suspicious vehicle were shot and killed.

In most of these cases officers were shot by the suspect as they attempted to stop them or during the initial contact. However, three of the officers killed under the suspicious person/vehicle category were shot from a concealed position or from the suspect vehicle before making contact with its occupants. These officers were essentially ambushed as they approached to make contact.

In one situation, an officer encountered what appeared to be a crash on the side of the road and was killed as he approached what in reality was a domestic-related incident.

Part of the dangers officers face when approaching a suspicious person or vehicle are the unknowns: Is this person armed? Are they wanted? Is what the officer observed a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the situation? Officers are at a disadvantage in these cases, as they do not know what is in the mind of the suspect, or what criminal activity they may have interrupted. In some of the cases, it appears that the officer's mere presence prompted the suspect to react violently, feeling they were in jeopardy.

Here again the postulation that two officers are better than one, particularly as it relates to making stops, is further supported by retired Scottsdale (AZ) Police Detective Jim Hill, who was quoted in the David Griffith article **(1)** saying, “Until you get up on the driver and start asking questions, you don’t have any idea what you are getting into and things can escalate very quickly. And when you leave the car to go back to your car to do a reference check, you don’t know what is happening in that car. That’s why you need another officer to watch the driver and the passengers.”



Case Study: Officers attempt to stop a suspicious man

On a late summer evening, in a city police department of just under 850 employees, two uniformed tactical officers patrolling in a marked police car observed a suspicious male who they had just earlier observed in a vehicle. The suspect was now walking along the sidewalk, and as the

officers stopped and got out to approach him, the suspect fled with one officer chasing behind him on foot. The second officer got into the police car and informed the dispatcher that they were involved in a foot pursuit, as he maneuvered the police car in the direction of the chase.

As the officer who was pursuing the suspect on foot got close to the suspect, the suspect turned and fired a round into the officer's face, causing him to fall forward, tripping the fleeing suspect. As the suspect was getting to his feet, the second officer in the police car pulled up, and the suspect began to flee again.

The second officer then pursued the suspect on foot, and as the suspect pointed the firearm at him, the officer fired his service pistol, striking the suspect who then fell to the ground. The officer maintained cover on the wounded suspect as additional police units arrived on the scene.

The officer who was shot in the face was transported to a hospital where he later died. The suspect, wanted on an outstanding warrant, was treated for his wounds and later charged with the murder of the officer.

The suspect in this case was armed, and his fear of that discovery, and the fact that he was wanted drove him to flee and use deadly force against his pursuers. As in previously recounted instances, when two officers were present, the second officer was able to shoot the armed suspect, maintain custody over him until additional assistance arrived, and summon medical assistance for his wounded partner.

This report also looked at cases where officers were conducting stops or approaching parked suspicious vehicles. The research team looked at five cases where officers were shot and killed as they investigated suspicious vehicles that they observed or happened upon while on patrol.

In those five cases, three officers were shot as they approached the vehicle before any contact or conversation was initiated with the driver or passengers of the vehicle. In examining those three cases, it appears that in two of them, officers did not call in their location or a description of the vehicle they were about to approach. It may have appeared to the investigating officer that the motorist(s) may have been having trouble or may have been in need of assistance.

These encounters turn deadly in a matter of seconds, with officers never having a chance to respond. Many of these situations can set in motion large-scale manhunts and subsequent crime sprees by the fleeing suspects who are determined to escape.

Case Study: Investigation of a suspicious couple in a car sets off a chain of events that leads to the death of two deputies and a prolonged chase

On an October morning on the outskirts of a busy city, two sheriff's deputies from a large agency of over 900 sworn personnel approached a suspicious vehicle parked in the rear of a motel. The deputies got out of their cruiser, approached the vehicle, and observed a female standing at the rear of the vehicle by an open trunk. Upon seeing the approaching deputies, the female closed the trunk and got back inside the front passenger seat of the vehicle.

As one deputy approached the passenger side to speak with the female, the second deputy approached the driver's side. As the deputy approached the driver's side, the driver began firing at the deputy, striking him in the head and killing him. The driver then fired rounds at the second deputy who was on the passenger side of the car, missing him.

The second deputy drew his service weapon and began firing at the car as it sped off. The second deputy immediately radioed that there was an "officer down" and requested medical assistance. The deputy also provided responding units with a description of the fleeing suspects, the vehicle, and their last known direction.

The suspects traveled a short distance and attempted to carjack another vehicle and ended up shooting that driver before successfully carjacking a second vehicle.

The pair then fled using that vehicle to carjack yet another vehicle, a pick-up truck, and were observed transferring a long rifle into the pickup from the first carjacked vehicle.

As police units from across the county began to converge on the area, the pair was spotted by deputies in an adjacent county, where there was another exchange of gunfire as the two suspects abandoned the pickup truck. The male suspect then shot and killed another deputy and wounded a second as the two suspects were able to steal a marked patrol car and

continued to flee. Officers pursued the suspects until they crashed the patrol car into a ravine and began to again exchange gunfire with deputies.

It was later revealed the suspects were a married couple and were eventually taken into custody after they had barricaded themselves in a house and surrendered after officers gassed the home. It was still unclear as to their motive and what prompted them to open fire.

Officers who are investigating suspicious vehicles are at an even greater disadvantage when making an approach to the vehicle. Dark tinted windows, door pillars, and glare can all help to conceal occupants within the vehicle. The officer is exposed when approaching and can only react if gunfire should erupt. As illustrated in the above case study, extreme caution must be used when approaching unknown situations.

In another case examined, a deputy on his way home, stopped to investigate a car on the side of the road. Before he could approach the vehicle, he was gunned down by a distraught military veteran involved in a domestic dispute. The military veteran then took his own life.



Red Flags and Recommendations

- Officers are vulnerable as they approach and make contact with suspicious persons:
 - Officers must ensure that the dispatcher and other officers are aware of their location and the investigative actions they are about to take.
 - Whenever feasible, the initiating officers should request an additional unit and wait for back up to arrive before making contact. These actions may not always be possible as suspects must be kept under surveillance until the secondary officer can arrive.
 - Officers must tactically approach the suspect and remain on guard, even if they feel they know the suspect or have dealt with them before.
 - Officers must anticipate a foot pursuit and be prepared to coordinate the chase to prevent ambush situations by subjects lying in wait. Evaluate the efficacy of engaging in a foot chase. Many agencies are now adopting foot pursuit policies.
 - Agencies should consider providing training in recognizing the signs of an individual carrying a concealed firearm. This training provides officers with key observational skills in recognizing the characteristics of armed persons and helps promote safe, tactical approaches to handling such persons.

When looking specifically at suspicious vehicle stops or investigations within the overall self-initiated category, there were three cases where officers were killed as they approached the suspicious vehicle before having any contact with the occupants.

As previously mentioned and a consistent theme throughout this report is that all may not be as it appears. In one case an officer stopped to investigate what appeared to be a crash and was shot as he approached a suspect engaged in a domestic dispute. Once again, we see that domestic-related incidents and crimes are an underlying cause of many of the line of duty death cases studied.

Additional Data on Calls for Service and Self-Initiated Activity

Types of Weapons Used

In an analysis of both calls for service and self-initiated activity, which totals **132** cases, officers died as a result of gunfire in 129 cases. One officer was stabbed, one officer was pushed and fell from an elevated area, and one officer was intentionally run over by a vehicle.

Of the 129 officers who were shot and killed, 92 cases (71 percent) involved suspects armed with a handgun. In 27 cases (21 percent), suspects used a rifle against the officer(s). A shotgun was used in 10 cases (8 percent).

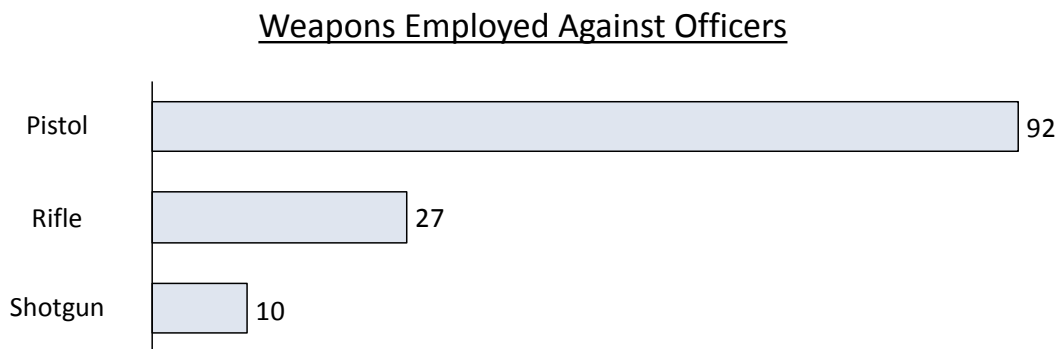


Figure 11

Although the use of handguns is the clear majority in cases where an officer was killed with a firearm, it should be noted that more than 20 percent of the officers were killed by suspects with rifles. The majority of those rifles were semiautomatic, magazine fed weapons, such as an AR-15 or AK-47 style weapon, not a hunting rifle or bolt action rifle. Most officers are not equipped with body armor that can defend against rifle rounds. Although many cases involved officers shot in the head, where having body armor would not have prevented their death, there are several cases where data provided to us specifically calls out that a rifle round penetrated the officer's vest.

Body Armor Usage

Of the 132 cases, 14 percent of officers were not wearing any body armor at the time of their death.

Body Armor Usage Amongst Officers Killed in the Line of Duty

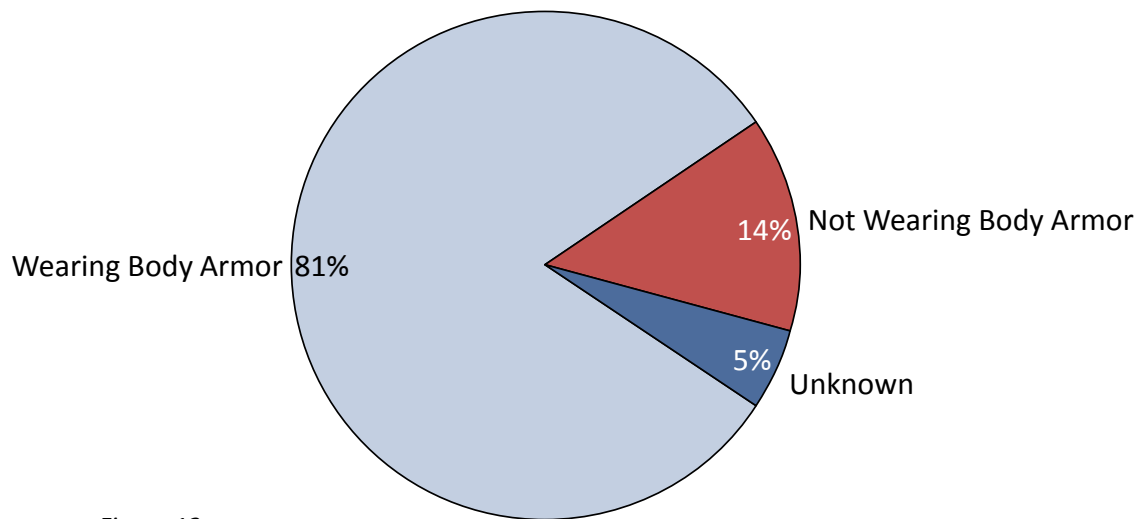


Figure 12

Fatal Traffic Crashes

Although traffic crash data is not the core focus of this report, the research team identified 78 cases during the period in which an officer was dispatched to an identifiable call for service and crashed while en route. More than half, or 53 percent, of the officers who died in fatal traffic crashes while responding to a call, were en route to assist a fellow officer that requested help. Two cases involved officers responding to assist EMS personnel that needed help. The second most frequent call type where officers crashed while responding was for traffic crashes. The full breakdown of types of calls for service is highlighted in Figure 13 below:

Type of Call for Service in the 78 Cases Where an Officers Crashed While Responding

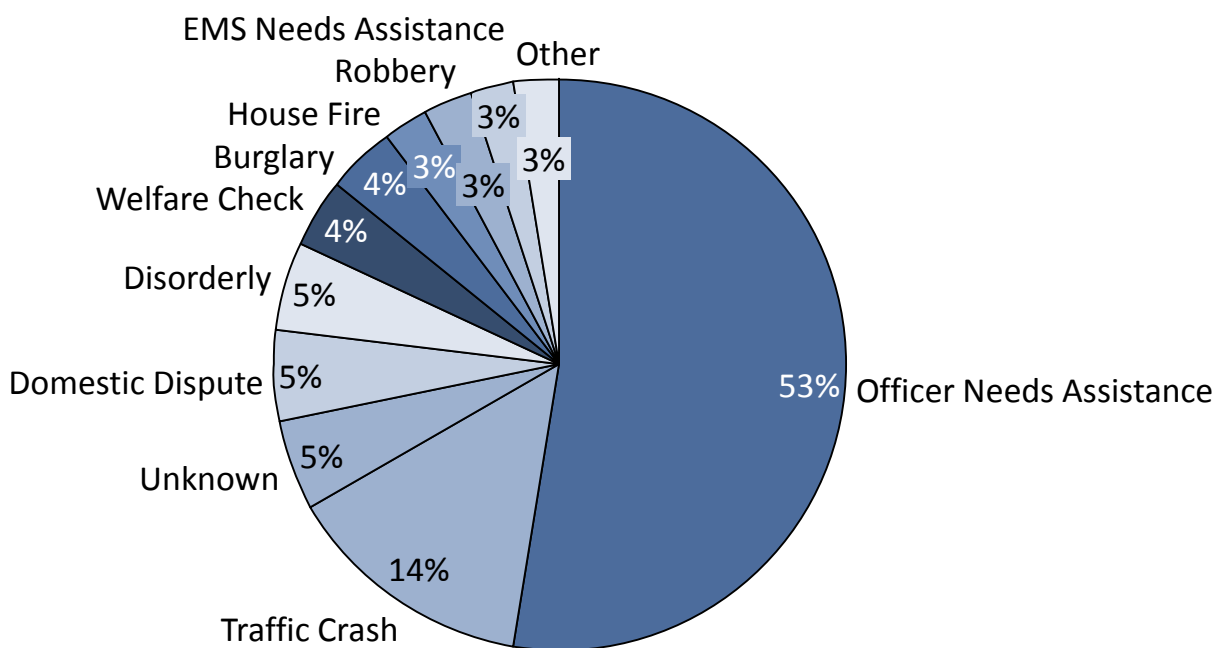


Figure 13

Single Vehicle Crashes

It is also important to note that 45 of the 78 fatal traffic crashes were single vehicle crashes, representing nearly 58 percent of the crashes. Four of the crashes involved officers colliding with each another while en route to a call.

Seat Belt Usage

Roughly 20 percent of the officers that died in fatal traffic crashes en route to a call were not wearing seat belts.

A Look at 2015 Year Fatality Data

The NLEOMF recorded 123 law enforcement officers who lost their lives in the line-of-duty in 2015. While the final number of cases has been determined, not all of the documents for these fatal incidents have been received, and the details of the specific type of call for service or type of activity the officers were engaged in when killed are currently incomplete.

Of those 123 cases, 48 died in traffic-related incidents, 41 officers were shot, and 28 died as a result of other circumstances such as heart attacks, falls, or job-related illnesses as a result of the 9/11 rescue and recovery operations. Six were killed in a bomb explosion while conducting counter-terrorism operations abroad.

Firearms-related Fatalities

In looking at the 41 officers shot, 39 were intentionally shot by suspects while two officers were inadvertently shot during training. The most common type of activity involved in those fatal encounters was the self-initiated traffic stop. Seven of the 39 officers feloniously shot were killed while conducting traffic stops.

Six officers were shot and killed in ambush-style attacks in a variety of calls for service and circumstances. Of those ambush-style attacks, four appear to have been perpetrated against unsuspecting officers as they were seated in their cars, or engaged in non-enforcement activity. An example of these ambush attacks occurred when an unsuspecting deputy sheriff was shot while filling his patrol car with gas.

In eight of the incidents in which officers were shot and killed, domestic violence or domestic-related disputes were the overt or underlying cause of the encounter between law enforcement and the suspect.

Five of these fatal cases stemmed from officers responding to a domestic disturbance call, while one case involved an officer serving a “domestic injunction,” another officer was killed as he responded to a domestic-related *Shots Fired* call and a detective was shot while guarding an injured prisoner charged with a domestic-related offense at a hospital.

Five officers were shot and killed while investigating suspicious persons. Four officers were killed while attempting to arrest suspects for a variety of crimes, such as robbery or serving an arrest warrant.

In a tragic situation at the end of the year, three officers were shot and killed by a fellow police officer following the announcement of an internal investigation.

One officer was shot and killed while transporting an already processed prisoner who was apparently armed with two handguns. This case is still under investigation.

In three of the 39 felonious shootings of officers, the officer was shot with his own weapon after being disarmed by a suspect.

Traffic-related Fatalities

There were 48 traffic-related fatalities in 2015. Officers died in 34 automobile crashes across the country, of which 16 were single-vehicle crashes. Ten officers were struck and killed by vehicles and four officers died in motorcycle crashes.

Further analysis of body armor usage, seatbelt usage, and the specific type of call for service they were responding to, and the actual circumstances of their death will be conducted once the 2015 cases have been finalized, and all case material has been submitted.

The 123 law enforcement deaths in 2015, which includes Federal agents, correctional officers, and territorial and tribal agencies, represented a 1 percent increase over 2014 and a 9 percent increase over 2013.

Conclusion

As this report was being finalized, the nation is reeling from the ambush shooting deaths of five Dallas, TX police officers, followed days later by a similar attack on uniformed officers in Baton Rouge, LA in which three officers were killed. These ambushes of uniformed police officers have led police departments from New York to Los Angeles to deploy patrol officers in pairs for greater safety.

This report has concluded that having two or more officers on the scene of a call for service is safer and provides the additional support needed if a fatal encounter occurs. The researchers are not emphasizing two-man patrols but believe there is inherent safety of having multiple officers on the scene of those calls for service that are potentially dangerous and violent.

Publications such as the *“One Man, Two-Man Debate” Criminal Justice Publications* in 1978 **(6)**, reported that it was safer and more fiscally sound for single officer patrols when compared to two-man patrols and this debate seems to be a constant discussion in law enforcement with varying opinions. This study, despite there being no statistical demonstration that two officers on a scene are less likely to sustain fatal assaults compared to just one, demonstrates that when there are multiple officers on the scene, particularly on domestic-related calls, the number of fatal assaults drops. The researchers also concluded that two officers handling a call, regardless of call type, are better than one because in almost all the fatal calls and deadly encounters examined, the secondary officer was able to stop the deadly assault by the perpetrator, request assistance, provide immediate first aid, and control the scene.

There have also been studies that, contrary to this report’s findings, indicated that officers are more likely to be killed or injured while responding to robberies and burglaries compared to domestic violence calls. In a study of 771 law enforcement deaths from 1996-2009, *“When Officers Die: Understanding Deadly Domestic Violence Call for Service,” The Police Chief* magazine, by Shannon Meyer, PhD, and Randall H. Carroll **(7)**, the researchers concluded that there was a myth regarding the greater danger posed by domestic violence calls and their research actually supports a different set of call types being more dangerous.

Analysis of the NELOMF fatality data shows that domestic-related calls for service resulted in 22 percent of officer fatalities within the five year study period; more than any other type of call. The research further found that domestic-related disputes were the underlying cause in other calls for service not initially dispatched as domestic-related. In one of those fatal encounters, an officer was investigating a seemingly unrelated traffic complaint.

In a 2005 article by Gerald W. Garner, titled *“Fatal Errors: Surviving Domestic Violence Calls, Police,” The Law Enforcement Magazine*, **(8)** the author echoes the findings of this report by emphasizing the importance of waiting for backup officers, avoiding complacency, using team

work, and mentions the importance officer weapon retention. These fundamental steps apply to all calls for service; not just domestic violence calls.

Leadership, solid training, and clear policy are the foundation on which many of the outlined recommendations can be achieved and future repetition of these cases be prevented.

The path has to be set from the top and filter its way down to the officers answering the radio and out enforcing the law. All the facets of law enforcement must be involved in making the job safer; from the call taker to the dispatcher to the field supervisor to the officer answering the call. They are all part of a chain of information and communication that should make responding to these deadly calls for service safer.

Accurate information, good communications, and the proper exchange of information between call takers, dispatchers, responding officers, and supervisors is critical to the safety of officers and citizens alike. And dispatchers must continually check on the welfare of officers handling calls, especially on priority high risk assignments.

Accurate information on the type of call, the parties involved and any background knowledge regarding the person, place, or vehicle involved can have a dramatic impact on the eventual outcome of the incident. In many of these deadly incidents, officers were dispatched alone or failed to wait and coordinate with their assisting officers. Information sharing is vital and once a call for service comes into a 911 center, barracks, or station, the dispatcher should be working diligently to provide those responding to the call as much information as possible to enhance safety and allow for a more educated approach.

Equally important is the exchange of information between officers and between the officer and dispatcher once they have arrived at the call location. The many scenarios and case studies that were described in the report reinforce the patience and diligence required by officers when investigating complaints or making investigatory stops, to provide their precise location and a description of the vehicle or persons being stopped. This fact is highlighted by the cases studied in which a single officer was on a call, or on a stop, or investigating a suspicious vehicle, and was found deceased by another officer or civilian. The report also identified instances when officers did not wait for the assisting dispatched unit before making contact. Similarly, researchers identified cases of officers requesting assistance, but instead entered homes, or moved to arrest a suspect, before the assistance arrived.

Another key takeaway in the variety of cases studied was that first line supervisors must address and correct bad habits of their officers, such as not calling in their stops or not waiting for backup before entering a location. Supervisors must also take charge of coordinating responses to potentially deadly scenes such as *Officer Needs Assistance*, *Shots Fired*, *Burglary in Progress*, and *Robbery in Progress* calls.

This report emphasizes the idea that no call is routine and that dispatchers and officers must not become complacent and fall into a false sense of security when answering seemingly minor calls such as noise complaints, or alarms. Dispatchers and supervisors must also ensure that there is coordination and communication between jurisdictions when there is a multi-agency response. All officers responding to a call for service must be fully aware of the circumstances, background, and any other relevant information before arriving at the scene. They must know who their backup is, their distance from the scene and what the officer is wearing if they are not in uniform or in a marked patrol vehicle.

This report also revealed the need for continuing training in traffic stops and tactical approaches to vehicles. The right-side approach can be the safest approach from a tactical standpoint as well as a roadway safety standpoint.

As indicated by an analysis of weapons used against officers, and the fact that 21 percent of officers were shot by suspects using high powered rifles, there is a need to evaluate the issuance of hard body armor, helmets, and ballistic shields that can be quickly-deployed in high-risk incidents. Additionally, the use of ballistic panels for vehicle doors should be evaluated.

Finally, the report and its findings identify three steps that can be immediately addressed by supervisors and peers in every law enforcement agency: encourage officers to slow down when responding to calls (specifically, *Officer Needs Assistance* calls), wear seatbelts, and wear issued body armor.

Summary of Findings

This analysis of law enforcement deaths yielded the following summary of findings for law enforcement chief executives and practitioners:

Calls for Service

- Calls related to domestic disputes and domestic-related incidents represented the highest number of fatal types of calls for service and were also the underlying cause of several other calls for service that resulted in law enforcement fatalities.
- Calls that were classified as disturbances, such as disorderly persons, noise complaints, or nuisance violations were the next largest category of call type in which responding officers were killed, accounting for 18 percent of the total call type analyzed.
- Thirty-four percent of the officers killed in the study of calls for service were alone when they were assaulted. In 12 of those cases, officers had been dispatched alone.
- In 45 percent of all the cases in which officers were responding to a dispatched call for service that ended in a fatality, the officers had been advised the suspect(s) might be armed, or they had made prior threats. This number represents calls from all of the categories.
- A small but significant number (8 percent) of officers arriving first on the scene of a call took action by themselves, rather than coordinate with the backup officers they had requested or the additional units already en-route.
- At least nineteen percent of the suspects in the cases examined were reportedly suffering from a mental illness.

Self-Initiated Enforcement Activity

- Sixty-three percent of officers who were killed while engaged in self-initiated action were conducting a traffic stop for vehicle enforcement.
- The next largest categories of activity were officers stopping suspicious persons or suspicious vehicles representing 17 percent and 12 percent, respectively.
- Fifty percent of the fatal cases involving traffic stops involved only one occupant in the stopped vehicle.
- In 42 percent of the fatal traffic stop cases, the officers were assaulted while speaking to the occupants of the car.
- Officers had notified the dispatcher of their location and provided vehicle information in 22 of the 26 traffic stop cases examined.
- Officers are at a disadvantage as they make contact with suspicious persons and drivers because they cannot predict how the suspect(s) will react, or fully understand the situation to which they are responding.

- Officers were slain with handguns in 71 percent of all the cases studied and with a rifle in 21 percent of the cases. Shotguns were used in 8 percent of the cases.

Traffic-related Fatalities

- Crashes accounted for a high number of police fatalities over the five-year period totaling 211 deaths, of which 78 of those were responding to a dispatched call for service.
- Of those 78, 53 percent were responding to an *Officer Needs Assistance* call or a radio request for emergency assistance from a fellow officer.

Summary of Recommendations:

- Greater emphasis should be placed on the need for two officers to respond to calls for service and that officers should wait for the secondary unit or the backup assistance they requested before acting.
- Improve communications and information-sharing for officers on the street who are responding to calls for service. Call history, warrants and arrest history for the location and any previously identified mental health issues should be readily available.
- Conduct dispatcher and supervisory training to better coordinate responses to high priority calls such as *Officer Needs Assistance*, *Robbery in Progress*, and *Shots Fired*. Ensure that domestic violence cases are monitored closely and that dispatchers challenge officers for their welfare regularly when they are on the scene of a high priority call.
- Multi-jurisdictional and wide-scale interagency responses to calls and dynamic scenes must de-conflicted to prevent friendly fire incidents and officers who are assigned together should be trained together.
- Officers must be empowered to lead at all levels in order to better handle rapidly evolving dynamic situations.
- Consider the use of ear pieces with radios to prevent suspects from hearing returns on name checks and license checks, which could prompt them to assault officers or flee.
- Seek out available free training such as the DOJ's VALOR's curriculum entitled *Recognizing the Characteristics of an Armed Suspect*, Below 100, FBI LEOKA, as well as Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) to better identify and assist those with mental illness.
- Consider training officers on passenger-side approaches during traffic stops to increase the officer's tactical advantage and reduce the likelihood of being struck by a passing vehicle.
- Policies must be examined and put in place to reinforce the training and further create a culture of safety among officers and agencies.
- Agencies should consider equipping all patrol officers with electronic control devices and incorporate them into their use of force training curriculum.

- First-line supervisors must correct dangerous behaviors such as complacency, speeding, not wearing seatbelts, not wearing issued body armor and failing to wait for backup before taking action. *

*The researchers recognize that waiting for backup is not always possible as situations can evolve rapidly and officers may have to act unilaterally to save a life.

Project Director and Researchers' Information

John Matthews is the Director of Federal Partnerships for the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) and a former chief of police. Matthews has been in law enforcement for more than 30 years, and has Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Administrative Management and an Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate.

Mr. Matthews has developed over 100 law enforcement and public safety initiatives for federal agencies including the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Transportation, Department of Defense and the Department of Education and is nationally recognized for his work in officer safety and wellness, community policing, and his expertise in mass shootings.

Mr. Matthews is an award-winning writer and the author of seven books including: *The Eyeball Killer*, a firsthand account of his capture of Dallas' only serial killer; *Police Perspective: Life on the Beat* an anthology of policing stories and *Mass Shootings: Six Steps to Survival* which examines four decades of these deadly crimes.

The research, analysis and preparation of this report were created by two staff members of the NLEOMF who served or currently serve in law enforcement.

Nicholas Breul is a retired lieutenant with the Metropolitan Police of the District of Columbia and served actively in law enforcement for more than 27 years. Mr. Breul's extensive career included serving as a detective, a patrol sergeant, a detective sergeant in homicide, and as an agent conducting investigations into fatal police use of force.

Mr. Breul was a member of a highly professional group of experienced investigators who formed the Fore Investigation Team (FIT) and earned a Weber Seavey award for their thorough and impartial investigations into police use of force.

He was later promoted to lieutenant and served as the Public Information Officer for the police department and went on to supervise the Traffic Safety Branch, which included the Major Crash investigative unit.

Mr. Breul retired in 2013 and became the Director of Security Operations for the Washington National Cathedral. There he oversaw a 13-person Special Police Officer corps and was responsible coordinating security for many high-profile events such as the inaugural prayer service and state funerals.

In 2014, Mr. Breul joined the NLEOMF bringing his passion for law enforcement and history with him as he became the Director of Officer Safety and Wellness.

Working with him is Michael Keith, the Senior Project Manager for Officer Safety and Wellness. Mr. Keith is currently a fully-sworn Reserve Officer with the Metropolitan Police of the District of Columbia and volunteers weekly handling patrol duties.

Previously, Mr. Keith spent three years with BAE Systems, Inc., an international defense and aerospace company, where he worked in the corporate strategy and planning group. He also worked on corporate initiatives such as mergers and acquisitions and strategic planning. This work included the divestitures of several law enforcement focused companies, and the acquisition of a full-motion video analytics software company that serves the intelligence and federal law community.

Prior to that, he spent three years as an analyst with The McLean Group, where he provided advisory services to government contractors who supported defense and intelligence agencies. This included the acquisition of a classified communications software and hardware provider.

ENDNOTES

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