

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

The training of law enforcement officers is as different across the country as accents and dialects. Most states have a dedicated agency responsible for overseeing continuing education and training; however, the programs and requirements vary. Additionally, many of these organizations only recommend topics for law enforcement training, do not mandate a specified number of continuing education hours, and do not conduct audits to verify adherence to recommended or mandatory training for each law enforcement officer.

It is critical that law enforcement executives, municipal managers, and chiefs are aware of agency training requirements and recommendations. Moreover, it is imperative that those responsible for law enforcement agencies and officers are aware of the training areas that may best serve their municipal police department. The following areas should be considered for law-enforcement training programs.



shows a 24 percent increase in traffic-related fatalities among line-of-duty officers from 2016 to 2017. The leading circumstance to these fatalities was single-vehicle crashes, in which an officer crashed without making impact with another vehicle (NLEOMF, 2017). When was the last time your law enforcement officers received emergency vehicle driver training? In many cases, it was during police academy training.

Criminal Laws and Legal Updates

Law enforcement officers take an oath to uphold and enforce state laws and the Constitution of the United States. Accomplishing this task without training on relevant legal changes is difficult. Certain states require that law enforcement officers receive four to eight hours of annual training on legal updates.

Use of Force Training

Consider incorporating use of force training into firearms training, even if not required or not currently

doing so. Combat training places officers in realistic scenarios where each must appropriately handle a predetermined situation, which may or may not include use of force options.

De-escalation Training

In addition to firearms, driver training, and legal updates, it is important to be aware of current issues affecting law enforcement agencies and their officers. Over the past several years, law enforcement officers have been accused of excessive force, failing to de-escalate their use of force appropriately, inadequately handling incidents involving mentally disabled individuals and juveniles, and failing to speak to individuals appropriately and de-escalate incidents verbally.

¹ Visit the Officer Down Memorial Page at www.odmp.org to search causes of line-of duty fatalities by year.

TRAINING TOPICS TO COVER

Driver Training

Motor vehicle accidents are a leading cause of line of duty deaths almost every year. ¹ Data from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF)

WITH THESE TOPICS IN MIND, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING TRAINING TOPICS:

- De-escalation training (classroom and practical exercises)
- Dealing with mentally disabled individuals
- Dealing with juveniles and juvenile laws
- Verbal judo, or a similar course
- Legal updates
- Firearms training
- Emergency vehicle driver training

Take advantage of local resources and specialists to assist in facilitating training. For instance, you may reach out to mental health professionals, juvenile service professionals, and legal experts in or around the municipality. If your law enforcement agency needs training in their area of expertise, these individuals may be eager to assist. As an alternative, you may assign an officer to research the topic and present the training. You may also contact any law enforcement agencies in the surrounding area that conduct or have conducted the training. These agencies may be willing to share information. Additionally, several law-enforcement training organizations will offer free training to your department or a certain number of officers if you host the organization's training.

Although the above topics are a good starting point, the list is not all-inclusive. Several states have certifications that officers must maintain, such as radar, standardized field sobriety testing, breath analysis operator and instruments, etc. Certain manufacturers require routine training, such as Axon (Taser). Does

the law enforcement agency require officers to be CPR certified? Many agencies require this certification since law enforcement officers are often the first emergency service personnel at a medical emergency or wherever an emergency may transpire. Further, implicit bias training has become popular over the past couple of years as it aims to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and minority communities. Is this training beneficial to your officers and those they police?

The training topics an agency chooses to cover should include the agency's accompanying policy, if applicable. Each officer should review the agency's use of force policy, pursuit policy, sexual harassment and discrimination policies, and other pertinent policies annually. Regardless of the training, whether it is policy review, practical exercises or classroom, documentation that the officer received the training is imperative and must be archived. Additionally, if an officer's training is ever called into question, it would be highly beneficial to have a course outline that indicates what training the

officer received. The course outline accompanies the class roster, or other proof that the officer attended the training. Maintain training records of each officer at the agency, regardless if a state agency or local community college may also serve this purpose.

Law enforcement executives and municipal managers must consider that police academy training provides the fundamentals of the job to recruits. Academy training covers multiple topics that are often well prepared and taught. However, many of the training topics are instructed for only a few hours and may be out of date a few years later. It seems impractical that a few hours of training will last a law enforcement officer 20 -30 years. The increasing demand on law enforcement agencies by the public and the municipality they work for creates a potential liability issue if an officer is confronted and expected to handle a situation on which they have not been trained. As such, it would be in the best interest of municipal managers and their law enforcement executives to take this topic seriously and evaluate their current training needs.

REFERENCES

- NLEOMF. (2017). 2017 Mid-year law enforcement officer fatalities report. Retrieved February 1, 2018, from: <https://nleomf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2017-EOY-NHTSA-Fatalities-Report.pdf>