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MAKING IT SAFER:

A Study of Law Enforcement Fatalities Between 2010-2016

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Making It Safer:

A Study of Law Enforcement Fatalities Between 2010-2016

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December 2017

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Disclaimer

This project was supported by Award Number 2015CKWX0029 provided by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), U.S. Department of Justice.The opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. References to specific agencies, companies, products, or services should not be considered an endorsement by the author(s) or the U.S. Department of Justice. Rather, the references are illustrations to supplement the discussion of the issues.

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 the most up-to-date analysis of fatality trends in law enforcement as it relates to officers responding to calls for service and conducting self-initiated activities such as traffic stops. This report delivers an analysis of ambush deaths over a seven-year period and offers statistical details on the use of soft body armor and seatbelts by law enforcement in the United States.

The report also provides insight into the historic and ongoing problem of *Police-on-Police* shootings, where an officer is inadvertently or mistakenly shot and killed by a fellow officer.

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 be shared with the wider law enforcement community to enact change, alter training and reduce the number of fatalities and injuries in the profession.

Anticipated Outcomes

It is the hope of the researchers that law enforcement executives and governmental leaders will review this report and their departmental policies and procedures to ensure officers, supervisors and command staff remained focused on safety as a top organizational priority.

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Acknowledgment

This project was supported by Award Number 2015CKWX0029 provided by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), U.S. Department of Justice. We would like to acknowledge the following group of dedicated individuals who have contributed their subject matter expertise to develop this project.

John Kim, Ph.D. – Social Science Analyst, COPS Office
John Matthews – Director of Federal Partnerships– National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund
Peggy van Wunnik – Assistant to the Director, Community Safety Institute

2017 NLEOMF/COPS Advisory Panel

Chief Joseph Costa - DeSoto (TX) Police Department
Chief Edgardo Garcia - San Jose (CA) Police Department
Sheriff Leon Lott - Richland County (SC) Sheriff's Office
Associate Deputy Director Roger Miller - FBI/Terrorist Screening Center
Sheriff Lenny Millholland - Fredrick County (VA) Sheriff's Office
Chief Chris Tutko (Ret) - Manassas (VA) Police Department
Chief Jeri Williams - Phoenix (AZ) Police Department

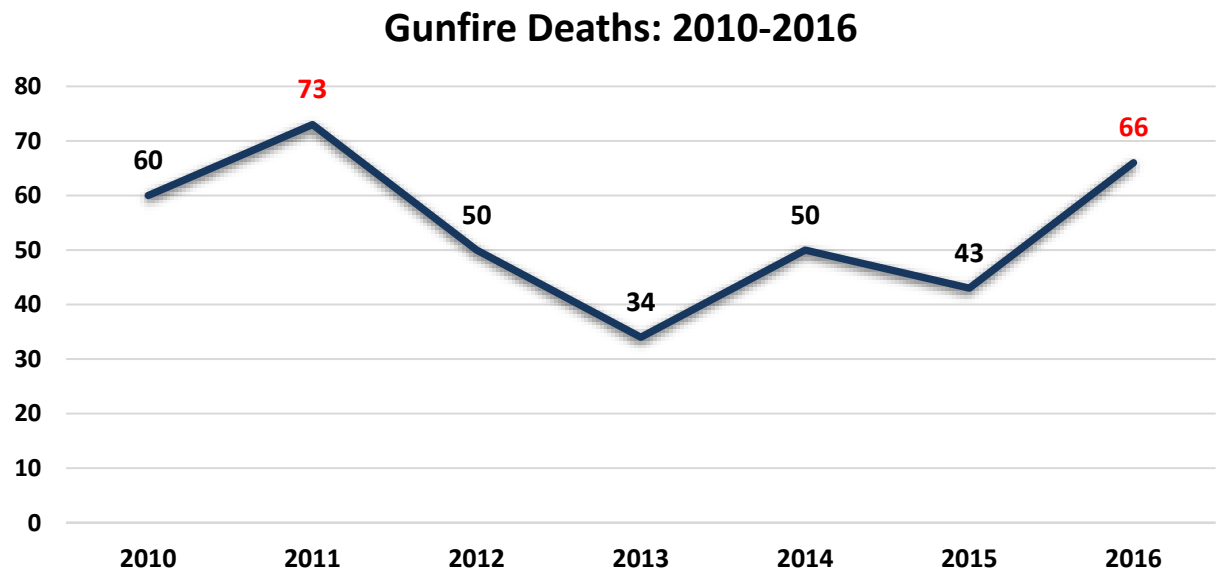
The 2017 NLEOMF/COPS Advisory Panel was comprised of Subject Matter Experts (SME's) representing federal, county and municipal law enforcement agencies from across the United States. These distinguished individuals were asked to review the research presented in the report, provide feedback and give input into the implementation of report recommendations, specifically as it concerns the distribution of information to increase officer safety.

Overview

In 2015, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) was supported by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), U.S. Department of Justice to study line-of-duty deaths and provide immediate and life-saving information and to improve officer safety in the future. Through that continuing agreement, the NLEOMF research team has completed additional analysis and study of 2015 and 2016 line-of-duty deaths and added the new data to the analysis completed in the "Deadly Calls and Fatal Encounters" report issued in July 2016.

Although the scope of the original project was generally defined as line-of-duty deaths with an emphasis on deaths where the use of seatbelts or body armor may have played a factor, the designer of this project intentionally built-in flexibility to allow for the identification of specific trends that could possibly affect officer safety.

This pre-planning and built-in report flexibility became crucial in 2016 when the United States experienced one of the worst years in our nation's history for ambush attacks on police officers. The brutal attacks peaked during a 10-day period in July when five Dallas, Texas, police officers and three Baton Rouge, Louisiana, officers were ambushed and killed.



Per NLEOMF data, 2016 experienced a 53-percent increase in firearms-related fatalities over the previous year. NLEOMF researchers continually adjusted and refined their research to meet these changing conditions to provide accurate and timely officer safety information to the field. Additionally, through this report, researchers identified other emerging patterns that required further research and analysis, including the rash of ambush attacks on police officers while

seated in their patrol vehicles and a disconcerting trend of preventable *Police-on-Police* deaths that occurred during training.

When these emerging trends were identified and confirmed through further analysis, NLEOMF staff immediately developed easy-to-understand and actionable info-graphs which were distributed to law enforcement agencies nationwide.

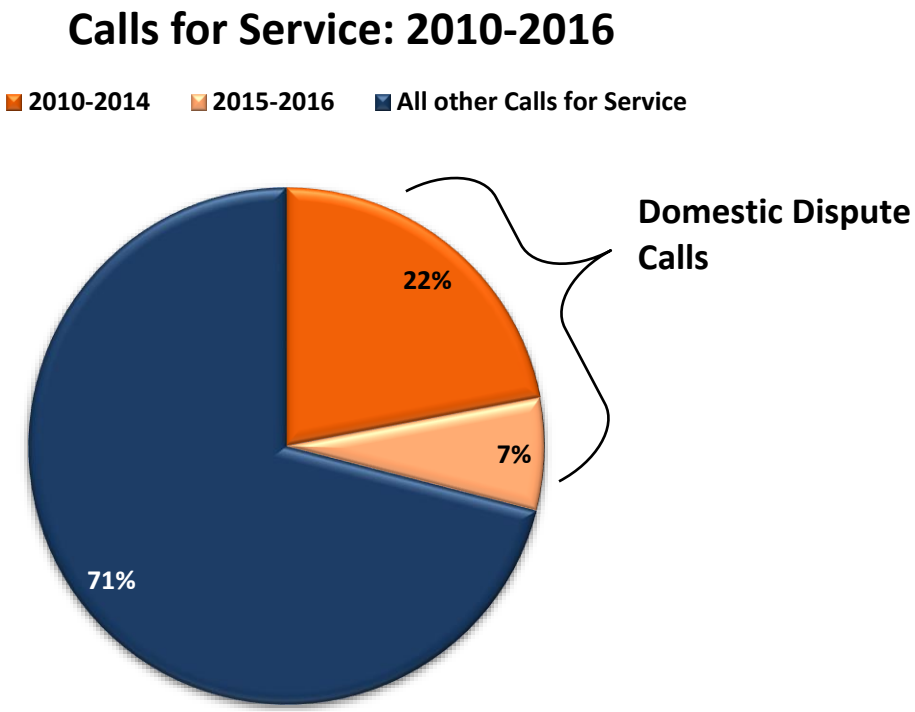
Throughout the past year, numerous infographics on timely and important topics, such as response to domestic violence attacks, rifle attacks on police, ambush attacks and police assassinations, were distributed throughout NLEOMF's law enforcement and stakeholder network and social media outlets to dispense this life-saving information as quickly as possible.

Executive Summary

This report encompasses a seven-year study from 2010-2016 that analyzed 1,016 line-of-duty deaths. Specifically, the analysis focused on cases that involved a dispatched call for service and the common circumstances in those fatal incidents. Armed with this information, researchers were tasked with determining if any commonalities existed that could be utilized as learning tools to prevent future deadly calls or fatal encounters.

The research team continued their previous analysis of fatal encounters that were the result of officers taking self-initiated action, such as making a traffic stop or stopping a suspicious person. The research team analyzed those encounters and provided two more years of case data to enhance the information gathered in the 2016 report. The report offers an analysis of soft body armor usage and seatbelt usage in automobile crashes across seven years.

Identifying contemporary issues, NLEOMF researchers studied cases that were deemed to be an ambush or ambush-style shooting on officers and have furnished an analysis of those cases with a statistical breakdown by year.



The key findings from this report revealed 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 fact, the percentage of calls for service related to a *Domestic Dispute* increased by seven percent, as

the total percentage increased to 29 percent of all the fatal calls for service and remained the largest group that resulted in an officer fatality as reported in the previous finding. Several call types increased significantly.

Disturbance calls remained the next largest group, but its overall percentage fell from 18 percent to 13 percent. The category of *Man with a Gun*, rose to third place, displacing the previous category of *Officer Needs Assistance. Man with a Gun* calls doubled to represent 10 percent of all the fatal calls for service.

The next largest category of call for service was *Shots Fired.* This category of call also increased dramatically over the earlier study and accounted for nine percent of the fatal calls for service. This is the second call type that involves a firearm and has grown quickly over a short period of time from the original study.

In addition, researchers discovered that officers were slain with handguns in 71 percent of all cases studied and that 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 were advised the suspect(s) might be armed, or had made prior threats.

In 2016, the number of officers shot and killed increased by 53 percent over the previous year and by 94 percent from the total in 2013. It was one of the few years where firearms-related deaths surpassed traffic-related deaths as the leading cause of law enforcement fatalities.

The research team examined cases of ambush-style shootings and reviewed 81 cases that met NLEOMF's definition of an ambush. Many of these cases, such as Dallas and Baton Rouge, were the result of a single incident in which multiple officers were killed. One important fact gleaned from the research showed that 20 percent of officers who were ambushed were seated in their patrol vehicles. While several officers were shot in ambush attacks while answering calls for service, 56 percent were not on a call or engaged in any enforcement activity. Many of these officers were simply eating, sitting on post, or in five cases, targeted and killed while at their home or on their way home.

Five of the cases reviewed showed premeditation, where the suspects laid traps or created a ruse to place the officer in vulnerable position. In 2016, ambushes of law enforcement officers spiked dramatically. In addition to the 81 officers killed in ambush shootings between 2010 and 2016, 20 other officers were also shot and wounded during those instances.

The use of rifles was almost equal to the use of handguns in ambush-style shootings and the overall analysis of all the shootings studied, particularly in 2015 and 2016, and showed an increasing distance at which officers were shot and killed.

The research of body armor use indicated that 30 percent of officers who were killed in situations where body armor may have provided enhanced protection, were not wearing a ballistic vest. The researchers also found 25 cases where the body armor worn was penetrated by the gunfire directed at the officer.

The research team found that in 47 percent of fatal automobile crashes from 2010-2016, officers were not wearing their seatbelt. In one year alone, 55 percent of the officers killed in automobile crashes were not wearing their seatbelt.

Finally, for this report the NLEOMF research team reviewed 550 cases that were originally classified as *Accidental,* meaning the death was result of an unintentional shooting of an officer by another officer or a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Researchers created new categories to clarify the circumstances of these tragic deaths. That review yielded a historic perspective on what have been referred to as "blue-on-blue" or "*Police-on-Police*" incidents that continue to occur every year in the United States. The total number of these tragic and preventable deaths represents three percent of all the line-of-duty deaths and five percent of all the shooting deaths.

Background

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) is responsible for maintaining the nation's monument to law enforcement in Washington, DC, etched with the names of more than 21,000 officers who have died in the line of duty.

A committee of the organization's Board of Directors reviews every law enforcement officer fatality submitted to the Memorial to determine if it meets the established criteria for inclusion on the Memorial wall. This review process requires agencies to submit specific documentation to the Names Committee as well as an NLEOMF Data Form (Appendix A). The NLEOMF has a wealth of data on the circumstances surrounding law enforcement deaths, going back to 1791, which is maintained in a fallen officer database.

National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund Photo Archive

As a repository for detailed information on the circumstances surrounding each fatality, the NLEOMF is the nation's primary resource of information regarding law enforcement deaths in the United States. The fallen officer database provides vital primary research information which can be analyzed to identify risk factors and behaviors that may have contributed to officer fatalities and can yield life-saving information to assist officers now and in the future.

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The content of this report is different from other studies as it focuses on specific types of circumstances and scenarios to provide a broad view of key elements within these events and what types of actions lead to their occurrence. The report examines actions such as responses to calls for service, self-initiated activities and how ambush attacks occurred. The report is not an in-depth analysis of one specific case, but a wide look at these incidents to provide useful information about them. While the report highlights a few sanitized cases to illustrate a point or to provide an example, each case is representative in nature and provides analysis of trends on a macro level.

This report adds two years of data to the previous report's pool of data. It offers fresh analysis to the *Calls for Service* and *Self-Initiated Activity* sections of the prior report, and offers three new topics which are timely and important including fatalities and their correlation to seatbelt usage, ballistic vest usage and *Police-on-Police* training incidents.

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 officer safety and work towards reducing injuries and deaths. It is our goal to drive down the number of officer fatalities by using our resources to identify those areas where changes can be made for the job to become safer.

This project is the result of a cooperative effort between the NLEOMF and the U.S. 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 that research make policing safer. The information developed through this detailed analysis is meant to enact change, augment current policies, improve training curricula, and increase awareness of current trends contributing to law enforcement deaths and injuries.

The intent of this report is to provide law enforcement officers life-saving recommendations through examination of circumstances surrounding line-of-duty deaths.

National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund Photo Archive

"The best way to honor the fallen, is to stop the falling."

-Former Attorney General John Ashcroft
Chairman, National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund

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Project Scope

The research team, consisting of staff from the NLEOMF's Officer Safety, Wellness and Research Division, conducted an analysis of the relevant line-of-duty death cases over a seven-year period from 2010-2016 and includes preliminary analysis of present year (2017) cases. This time frame was chosen to gain a broad understanding of the issues and have the most up-to-date case information for making relevant conclusions.

The research team analyzed fatalities involving responses to calls for service and self-initiated activity. The research team also analyzed cases of ambush over the seven-year period (2010-2016) to gain a better understanding of the situations that occurred in those cases. This is part of the scope of the research as the frequency and brazenness of this type of assault is a problem that is drawing more attention.

The NLEOMF researchers reviewed the use of body armor in all relevant circumstances of death and also examined the use of seatbelts in vehicle crashes.

Finally, the research team explored a pool of cases that have important implications in terms of officer safety. The team reviewed the entire database and re-categorized 411 historic and recent cases that involved the accidental shooting of an officer, otherwise known as "*Police-on-Police* shootings". There are many lessons to be learned from this analysis as many of these tragic cases were preventable, but continue to occur.

Methodology

Researchers from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, and specifically from the Officer Safety, Wellness and Research Division, examined seven years (2010-2016) of NLEOMF data, where officers were killed as they responded to a call for service or engaged in self-initiated activity.

Calls for Service

This report added analysis for 2015 and 2016 cases to research completed for the previous report published in 2016, "Fatal Calls and Deadly Encounters".

In the previous report for the *Calls for Service* section, the 2015 and 2016 cases were reviewed and coded to identify those line-of-duty deaths that involved an officer responding to an identifiable call for service. This review process for the new cases was different than before, as the NLEOMF team created new sections to capture calls for service and the nature of the initial contact between an officer and the suspect.

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The way the 2015 and 2016 cases were initially coded when entered into the database provided the researchers information to determine if the officer fatality involved a call for service, the type of fatality and nature of the call, this was different than the previous report, where each case had to be reviewed to determine if it involved a call for service, as the NLEOMF's database had not yet created the new fields to capture that information If there was a question, the case was highlighted and additional research was conducted by reviewing the case file materials submitted to the NLEOMF by a law enforcement agency for consideration for inclusion to the Memorial. NLEOMF researchers also consulted open media sources such as news reports and, in some cases, released car or body camera footage of the incident.

Cases that involved an identified call for service, where the fatality involved the officer's handling of the call, were placed into a group where they were further separated into specific types of calls for service. Each case was categorized by type of call such as *Burglary, Robbery, Domestic Dispute, Disturbance*, etc. These cases were analyzed by reading each case file thoroughly and drawing out key data points regarding their response to the call. Items such as dispatch information provided to the responding officer(s), number of officers responding, and subsequent actions taken by officers on the call were examined.

While every line-of-duty death during the study period was screened, the cases selected for *Calls for Service* section of the report involved incidents where a complaint was received at a 911 dispatch center or police barracks and subsequently dispatched to officers in the field to investigate. These cases 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.

The cases with a call for service where the death of the officer was not tied specifically to the call itself 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 traffic crash while in route, never reaching the scene.

Self-Initiated Activity

In a second phase of study, also adding to the previous research with data from 2015 and 2016, the team again examined actions that were initiated by officers as they enforced the law, or reacted to some deviant behavior that they observed. An example would be actions such as stopping a suspicious person or conducting a traffic stop for a violation.

Instances of self-initiated action that resulted in a law enforcement death were separately coded and analyzed using a similar method as with the examination of calls for service.

The analysis of these independent actions included 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. The research team examined the circumstances of each case and could provide insight into the frequency and commonalties of each type of self-initiated action.

The research team extracted the new case data from 286 cases that were approved between 2015 and 2016. That group included six cases that occurred within the years 2010-2014 that were not part of the first report but were later reviewed and approved for inclusion.

Ambush Shootings

In 2014, NLEOMF researchers identified and reported on the increasing trend of ambush shootings of police officers, and with the events of 2016, researchers decided that a more in-depth analysis of this deadly issue should be conducted. The team began a with a thorough examination of those cases it deemed *Ambushes* within the entire seven-year period (2010-2016). Researchers then extracted from the database all cases where the circumstance attached was an ambush.

Although there are numerous definitions of an ambush shooting, for the purposes of this report the following definition developed by the NLEOMF was used: "An ambush is a method of assault used to suddenly and unexpectedly attack officers from a concealed position or in a calculated manner designed to catch them off guard and place them at a tactical disadvantage."

Those cases were subdivided into classifications that **only** involved officers who were shot and killed. It should be noted that excluded from this report were cases from the database that did not meet the specific criteria of the study, such as ambushes involving military police officers by means of explosive or the stabbing or beating deaths of corrections officers.

Body Armor

This report also reviewed the use of body armor by officers. The research team leveraged the numerous data points within the database, and looked at the use of soft body armor by officers between 2010 and 2016.

When submitting a case for consideration to the NLEOMF for inclusion on the Memorial, agencies are required to complete a case Data Form (*Appendix A)*, which asks for specific information regarding the line-of-duty death.

That form is the basis for the information entered into the database, which is then augmented by review of the submitted reports and documents. The NLEOMF researchers used the information entered into the database to conduct a thorough analysis of the use of body armor

in all instances of line-of-duty deaths, excluding off-duty incidents and training incidents for the entire period of 2010-2016.

Seatbelts

Similarly, the NLEOMF research team conducted an analysis of seatbelt use by officers involved in vehicle crashes for the same period. In instances where the information was left blank, or was unknown, the research team endeavored to find out. This was done by contacting the agency and reviewing the details of submitted reports, which included autopsy reports and crash reconstruction reports. If the team could not determine whether the officer was wearing body armor or a seatbelt, it was left as "unknown."

Police-on-Police Shootings

This report also encompasses a historic study of cases where officers were shot and killed accidentally, and further refined the data on those cases by re-classifying them into more precise categories to better illustrate the continuing problem of officers fatally shooting one another inadvertently or by mistaking one another for an armed suspect.

There are 411 cases in the category that was specifically created for incidents where officers were unintentionally or mistakenly shot by other officers and, in some cases, civilians.

These cases, along with 39 additional cases that were originally classified as *Accidental (training)* were individually researched and placed into more appropriate categories. The NLEOMF transitioned away from the term "accident" as most of the shootings involved mistaken identity or some form of negligence. Researchers felt it necessary to conduct this extensive review of these *Police-on-Police* shootings, as they are largely preventable and continue to occur. Since 2014, there have been at least two officers shot and killed each year by a fellow officer.

To clarify the problem and provide not only historic context to the issue, but to highlight the continuing problem, the research team re-categorized these cases to more accurately reflect the nature of the event and what occurred.

The NLEOMF research team created six new categories in the database to better understand the problem of officers being accidentally or mistakenly shot. These categories include: *Inadvertent, Inadvertent (training), Crossfire, Mistaken by Officer, Mistaken by Civilian* and *Accidental*. In many cases these unfortunate incidents were preventable.

Finally, the report also contains a preliminary analysis of the 2017 line-of-duty death cases by providing a statistical breakdown of the pending cases, coupled with a basic analysis of the primary reason or type of fatality and circumstances involved.

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Case Studies

As the researchers analyzed each individual case, they selected specific cases to serve as case studies based on the elements contained within those cases. The case studies are provided in the *Calls for Service*, *Self-initiated Activity* and *Ambush* sections of the report. 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 occurred and provide the reader with a stronger context from which to understand the analysis and case circumstances being referenced.

Make It Safer

In the conclusion portion of each segment, the researchers discuss identified areas of concern, and provided concrete action steps, which are labeled as *Make It Safer*. This section highlights the salient points drawn from the research and delivers recommendations for alleviating the identified concerns and improving safety.

Once a draft of the 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.

Analysis

In the first report, the research team identified 91 cases that met the criteria of an officer responding to a dispatched call for service. Upon further review of the original 91 cases, it was determined that two cases be removed from the study; one because the officer was not responding to a call for service, and the second because the officer was off-duty when the incident that ended his life occurred. With the additional cases from 2015 and 2016, the total number of cases that involved an identifiable call for service rose to 133. 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.

As each of the 44 new cases from 2015 and 2016 were reviewed, the research team examined the documents associated with each case file. This analysis required the research team to look at the NLEOMF Data Form (Appendix A) submitted by each agency for their member's inclusion on the 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 reviewed news articles and conducted follow-up open source research for any additional details on the case that were not part of the NLEOMF file. The significant facts and data points of the reviewed material were then extracted and recorded in a case management document. That document recorded multiple factors for each of the cases analyzed.

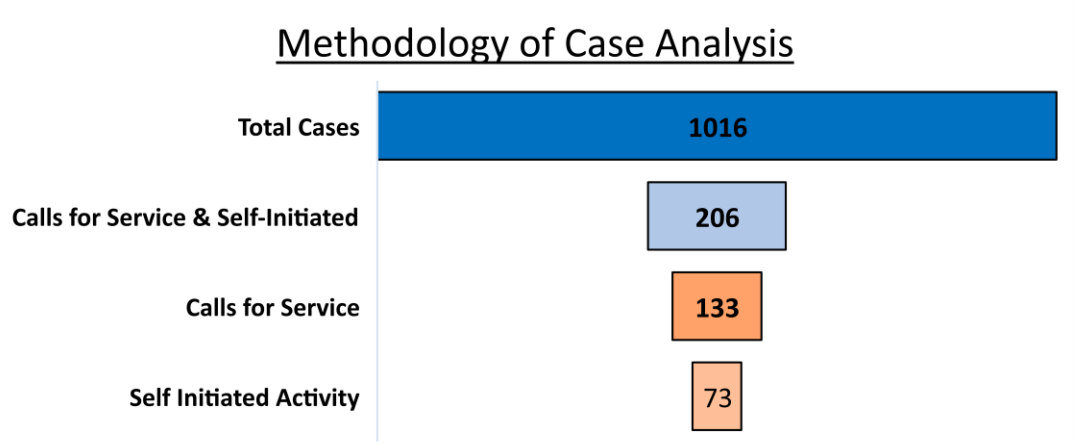

Figure 1

Similarly, the number of cases that fell into the *Self-Initiated* category grew from the original 41, as the team added cases from 2015 and 2016 approved cases. After further review of the original data, it was determined that five cases that were not included in the previous study did in fact meet the criteria established and were added to the study. In addition, four additional cases had been added to the original data that had been submitted by departments after the report was published. The research team identified an additional 22 cases of *Self-Initiated Activity* in which an officer was killed as they conducted enforcement or made an investigatory stop. With the addition of the new cases, the total number of cases within the *Self-Initiated Activity* category rose to 72.

Cases that were studied for the *Ambush* portion of this report were excerpted from the 1,016 cases that are the entire body of cases between 2010 and 2016 *(Appendix B)*. The *Ambush* cases were drawn from many different categories and groups. For example, officers shot and killed while simply seated in their patrol car would be pulled from the category *Shot-Not Responding to a Call*, while other ambush cases arose out of a response to call for service and from officers taking independent enforcement action.

It was this same group of 1016 cases that the analysis of body armor and seat belt usage was conducted. Body armor use was examined in every type and circumstance of death except training and off-duty incidents. The use and protection by body armor goes beyond ballistic

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protection. Body armor protects the officer from blunt force trauma and crush injuries, and can mitigate a weapon attack. It can help shield an officer's vital organs in a crash, when struck by a car, from a fall or when physically attacked. The following circumstances of death were excluded from this analysis: *Aircraft Crash, Helicopter Crash, Boating Crash, Drowning, Electrocution* and *Physical (illness).*

The breakdown of all the cases reviewed is illustrated in *Figure 2* below, with the two focus categories of this study in orange:

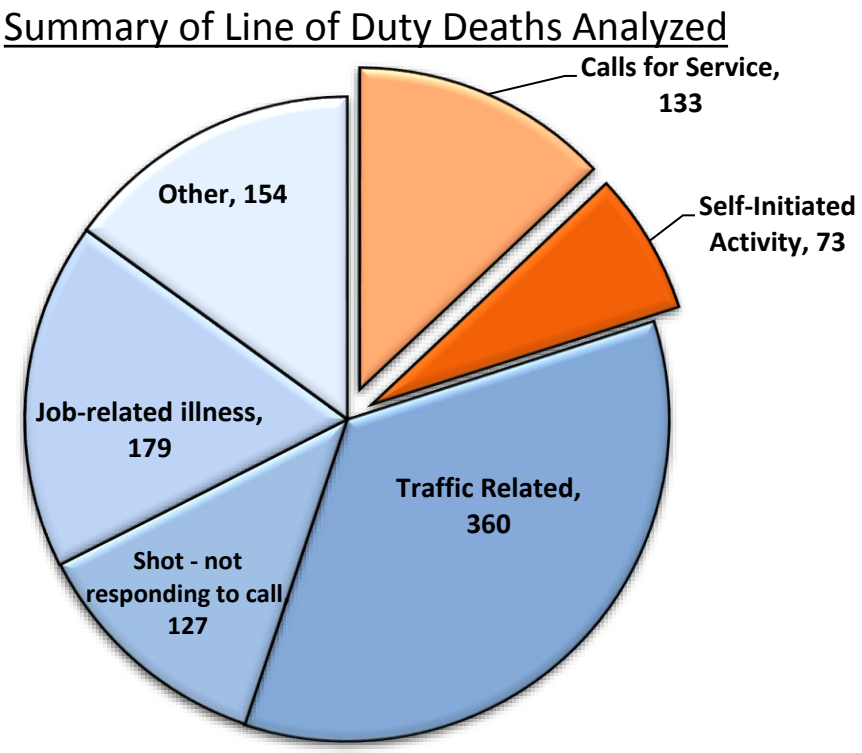

Figure 2

As for seatbelt data, the research team analyzed the last five years of data from 2012-2016, only looking at traffic-related cases in which an officer was killed in a crash while operating a motor vehicle. Within that time frame there were 152 fatal crashes, in which 71 of the officers killed were not wearing a seatbelt. This represents 47% of all the officers killed in an automobile crash.

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.

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Calls for Service

Once the analysis of the additional cases with identifiable calls for service from 2015 and 2016 was complete, those cases were categorized by type of call for service and added to the previously created table of call types from 2010-2014. This is not intended to be a repeat of the exhaustive calls for service review completed in the first report, but an update as to what is occurring within the category, and an exploration of the important changes that the researchers observed in the new data.

There are 11 call categories that the researchers found when examining the different types of calls for police service. These additional 44 cases provided stronger data from which to draw conclusions and begin to see emerging trends. Some categories grew, while others remained near the same levels that were formerly measured. Figure 3 illustrates a breakdown of the entire pool of 133 cases from 2010-2016, that involved officers responding to a call for service.

The analysis of the new data did not change the previous finding in terms of the most prevalent call type that resulted in a line-of-duty death, however, several calls types did increase while others significantly decreased. Calls for officers to respond to a complaint of a *Domestic Dispute* or domestic-related incident remained the largest group that resulted in an officer fatality.

Calls that fell under the *Disturbance* category involved many types of activity. The calls that were 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 agency when they originally submitted documentation to the NLEOMF. In analysis of 2015 and 2016 cases, two deaths from the same incident were attributed to a response to a *Disturbance* call.

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 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.” In the most recent data, two call types were placed into the *Other* category; one call involved a response to a report of an “erratic driver”, and the other case was a call to “investigate an alarm”.

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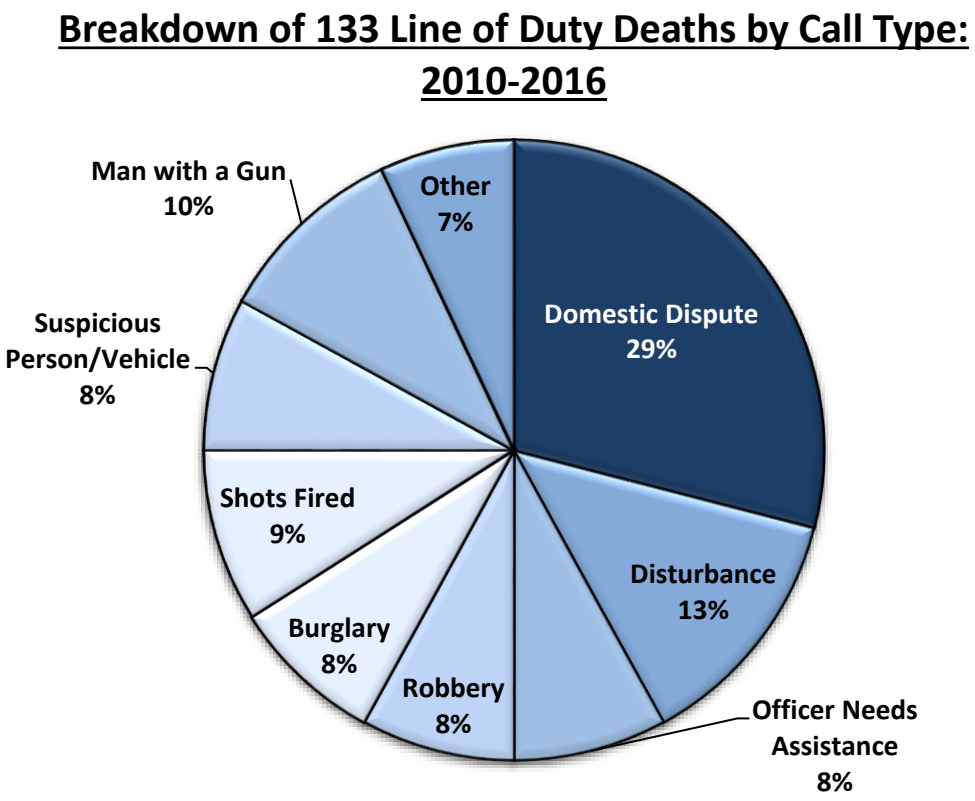

Figure 3

In fact, the percentage of calls for service related to a *Domestic Dispute* call increased by seven percent, as the total percentage increased to 29 percent of all the fatal calls for service. Eighteen of the 44 new cases were *Domestic Dispute* calls, representing 41 percent of the fatal calls for service in 2015 and 2016. This brings the total number of officers killed responding to *Domestic Dispute* calls over the seven-year period examined to 38.

Disturbance calls remained the next largest group, but its overall percentage fell from 18 percent to 13 percent as the category of *Man with a Gun*, rose to the third place. The category of *Man with a Gun* displaced the previous third place category, *Officer Needs Assistance. Man with a Gun* calls doubled from their original number to represent 10 percent of all the fatal calls for service.

Domestic Dispute calls represented 41 percent of fatal calls for service from 2015-2016.

The next largest category of call for service was *Shots Fired.* This category of call also increased dramatically over the earlier study and accounted for nine percent of the fatal calls for service. This is the second call type that involves the presence of a firearm and has risen quickly over a short period of time from the original study.

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Calls for service involving *Burglary*, *Officer Needs Assistance, Suspicious Persons* and *Robbery* each represented eight percent of the total calls for service analyzed by the research team.

The remaining category, *Other*, represented seven percent of the fatalities and changed little with the addition of the 2015 and 2016 cases.

What follows is a review of the findings from the analysis of the added *Domestic Dispute* calls for service and from the examination of the newest cases added to the *Man with a Gun* category. These two categories will be discussed in depth as they both increased significantly with the new data and are representative of an increase in violence towards law enforcement that is evident in this report.

***Man with a Gun* calls doubled from their original number to represent ten percent of all fatal calls for service.**

In the analysis segments, a few are highlighted with a current 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 point out the key issues identified with that call type.

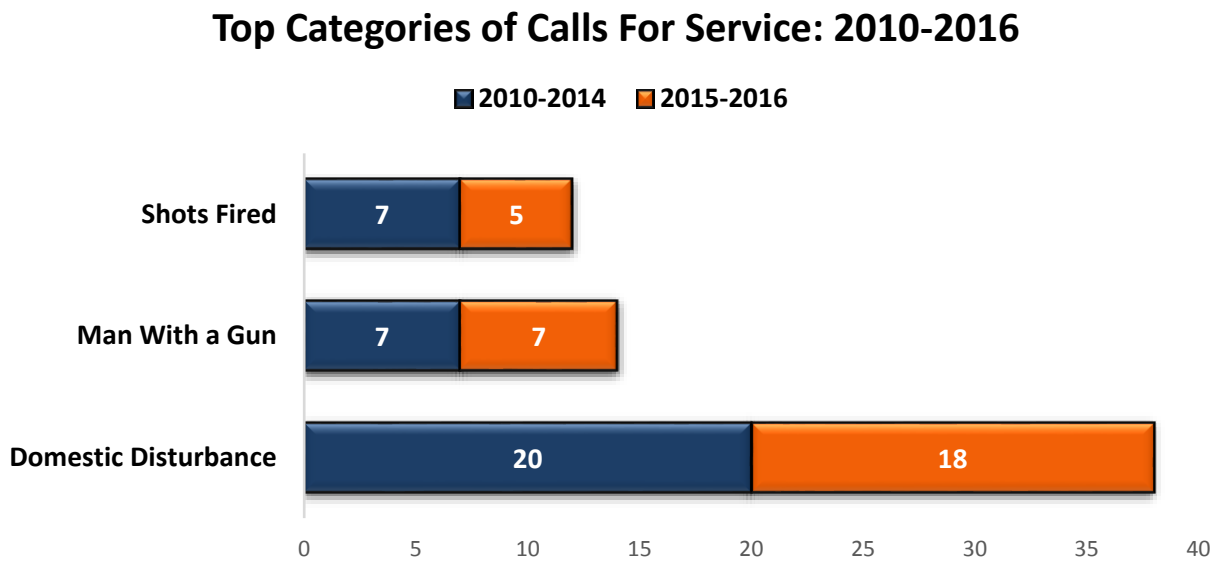

Figure 4

Domestic Dispute Calls: The Most Dangerous Circumstance

The strong connection between law enforcement deaths and *Domestic Dispute*, or domestic-related call for service, is undeniable. In fact, the data examined from 2015 and 2016, shows a marked increase in the percentage of domestic-related calls for service that resulted in a law enforcement death. Within those two years, 18, or 41 percent of the fatal calls for service were domestic-related. The danger of domestic-related cases is not just represented in the study of calls for service, but it appears in the ambush analysis and self-initiated analysis as well. Domestic issues are the main factor or undercurrent that runs through the fatal encounters that were analyzed.

In our analysis of domestic dispute calls, NLEOMF researchers found that more officers were shot while outside having not entered the residence and a number were shot from a distance. The analysis also discovered that several of the officers killed were alone when they responded to the call, having been dispatched alone or not waited for their backup.

In the former analysis, when looking at response to *Domestic Dispute* cases, the research team focused on key areas of safety. The team reviewed the information officers were given by the call taker/dispatcher, the number of officers dispatched and the situation when the officer(s) arrived. Poor information sharing, a lack of coordination between responding officers and officers dispatched alone were areas of concern to researchers.

In this latest analysis of responses to *Domestic Dispute* calls, researchers found that in two of the 18 cases, officers were dispatched alone. Five of the responding officers were alone when killed.

In one instance where an officer was dispatched alone to a domestic-related call and subsequently killed, a fellow officer was quoted by the local newspaper saying, "Unless there's some reason to think that backup is necessary, it's very common to go alone." He added, "It's pretty standard." (1)

It is this perception and approach that the NLEOMF wishes to address. Whenever possible, agencies should ensure that calls for service involving a domestic-related matter, such as "Civil Protection orders, Protection from Abuse orders" or "Assist with Clothing" calls not be handled by a single officer. In these instances, officers are called to manage a volatile situation that may be deeply personal and emotional for the involved parties.

To handle any call involving a domestic-related issue, one officer will never be adequate to administer the call appropriately. At least two officers are necessary to separate witnesses, control suspects, manage the scene and monitor affected family members who often attack officers as they make arrests or escort parties out of the residence.

These are not only the most dangerous calls for service officers respond to, they are also the most difficult, as officers are often asked to interpret legal decisions, verify court orders or enforce "Stay Away" orders and protection orders that have specific provisions in them.

Even in the case of what is considered a routine matter, no one can predict how someone will react when dealing with an intense matter. These calls are a recipe for disaster and present a great threat to the safety of the officers who must answer them.

Domestic Dispute calls are the most difficult, as officers are often asked to interpret legal decisions, verify court orders or enforce "Stay Away" orders that have specific provisions.

The researchers understand cases of exigency exist when officers need to respond swiftly to bring a violent situation under control. That urgency was present in two of the cases examined, when a responding officer arriving first was killed prior to the arrival of assistance as they attempted to intervene and control a violent suspect.

In another case, the officer responded to a complaint of a suspect having stabbed multiple family members in a rage. When the officer arrived, he attempted to arrest the suspect but was attacked and killed with his own service weapon.

Is backup always available? The answer is no. There may be only one village officer, or township officer or deputy available to respond to the call. However, in many situations there is a mutual aid agreement between departments or state police agencies to assist handling calls for service. If a mutual aid agreement does not exist, agencies need to secure one.

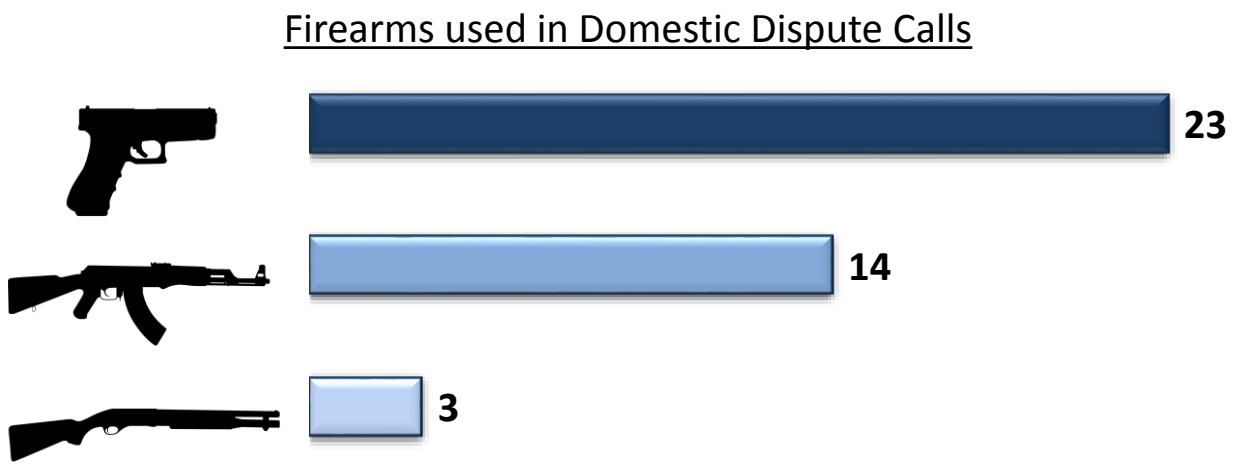

Figure 5

Additionally, all the officers were shot and killed in the 18 cases that were examined in this category, and 17 of those shooting fatalities occurred outside. In six of the cases, the reported distance from which the officer was shot was over 50 feet. In reviewing the 18 cases, there were also a total of four surviving officers who were shot and wounded during these incidents.

As mentioned, some *Domestic Dispute* calls were also part of the calls that were examined in the ambush study in this report, as officers were shot from a distance, before ever contacting the suspect, or getting near the residence from which the call emanated.

This represents a change from the former report, in which 65 percent of incidents occurred in the premises and there were no indications of officers being shot from a distance.

In fact, handguns were used in 75 percent of cases studied in the last report. In the new group of cases 2015-2016, rifles were the predominant weapon used in the fatal shootings, allowing the suspect to accurately shoot approaching officers from a greater distance.

As emphasized in the earlier report, when officers handled a scene alone, they were without the immediate support that could be provided by a second officer, including possible life-saving

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measures. In all the cases where there were multiple officers, the threat was immediately neutralized by the additional officer and suspect was contained, shot or taken into custody. Further the scene could be better managed and medical care was immediately summoned.

In one case from 2015, an officer responded to a domestic call but did not wait for his backup and approached the residence to speak to the suspect. That officer was shot multiple times, but ultimately bled to death because he was shot in the thigh. It is not known if quick application of a tourniquet would have made a difference.

In another case from 2016, responding officers were shot through the front door from inside the home as they approached. The suspect, unbeknownst to the officer, had just shot and killed his wife who had called 911 to report domestic abuse, fired an AR-15 rifle from inside the home, killing one officer and wounding two others. The officer who was killed on her first day on the job.

Case Study: Anger, alcohol, drugs and guns: a bad combination

> ***In a small town in the eastern portion of the country, on a late fall evening, a county 911 call center received a call from a woman who reported that her boyfriend has assaulted her and was armed with a rifle. The woman reported to the call taker that the man, who was intoxicated, had threatened to kill her and may have started a fire, as the house was filling with smoke.***
>
> ***One officer from the local town was dispatched to the call along with an officer from a neighboring jurisdiction. The town officer, who was provided a description of the boyfriend, arrived on the scene to find him emerging from the house with a rifle.***
>
> ***The town officer drew his service pistol and challenged the armed man, ordering him to "put the gun down!" The man ignored the officer's commands, and the officer fired at the armed man, who fired back. The officer and the suspect exchanged shots and despite being wounded, the suspect was able to shoot and kill the officer. The officer was struck in the chest, but his vest was penetrated by the round from the rifle.***
>
> ***The suspect fled as the backup officer arrived and fired at him. The suspect was subsequently captured after an extensive search. It was later revealed that the suspect was high on drugs, as well as intoxicated.***

This case is an example of the often-toxic nature of these calls, as impairment is frequently part of the concoction that has led to the dispute. Based on information collected, alcohol or drugs were a factor noted in six of the 18 calls in the *Domestic Dispute* category.

The town officer responded swiftly and moved to contain a man who posed a threat to the woman and the public. It is also an example found in several of the recently studied cases, where officers have confronted or been confronted by armed suspects as they arrived outside the home. In many of those cases the suspects were armed with rifles.

The need for coordinated information before handling a *Domestic Dispute* call is critical.

The danger presented by these calls cannot be overstated, and agencies must make handling them as safely as possible a priority. 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.

In a recent article highlighting the dangers of domestic violence calls, the writer, a SWAT lieutenant and trainer, recommended that officers "…not announce your arrival with your siren. Come in silent as if you are arriving at an alarm. Arrive at the spot out of the direct line of sight of the residence on every domestic violence call. Approach cautiously on foot, using cover and to be the surprise-er and not the surprise-ee, upon arriving. Do not proceed directly to make contact on the approach. Pause short, from a position of advantage, scan the area. Watch. Listen." (2)

The importance of call history, accurate information and suspect descriptions cannot be overstated, as in several of the cases; officers arrived to find the suspect outside of the location the call originated from. The crucial nature of obtaining, relaying and acting on call information as safely as possible is a key take away from the data analyzed. We noted that there were exigent circumstances in two of the cases where officers confronted a suspect alone and were killed. However, there were three other cases where officers were dispatched alone, or did not wait for their backup to address the call.

Every resource and tool available should be employed to safely handle these calls. 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 intelligence gathering takes just a matter of seconds, but failing to do so and rushing in blind has proven to be a fatal error." (2)

Make it Safer

- 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 some cases, the suspects returned to the scene, shooting a lone officer.

- This recommendation applies to the seemingly routine calls such as "Assist with Clothing," "Assist in Serving a Protection Order," or "Child Custody Disputes."

- Officers must approach the scene cautiously, assess what is going on and await their back up.

- There must be regular checks by the dispatcher on the welfare of the officers on scene and officers should clear the call together. No lone officers should remain on the scene.

- Fellow officers, supervisors and dispatchers who become aware of officers handling calls without waiting for their assistance must address this. 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.

- 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. Dispatchers must ascertain if drugs or alcohol are a factor. Further, officers should discuss any pertinent information such as threats, prior weapons charges or mention of weapons before handling the call.

- 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.

Man with a Gun Calls

Calls reporting a person in possession of a firearm, or *Man with a Gun* calls, doubled from the initial 7 cases to a total of14. This is part of a jump seen in fatal calls for service that were

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associated with firearms, as there was also a significant increase in calls reporting gunshots or *Shots fired*.

The *Man with a Gun* category entails seven new cases added from 2015-2016. It should be noted that three of these cases stemmed from one ambush incident in which a gunman deliberately shot and killed officers responding to the call. Two additional cases that involved a response to an armed person also resulted in the ambush of the responding officers. These cases are part of the analysis of ambushes that is to be presented later in this report.

In the initial *Man with a Gun* calls, that occurred in the 2010-2014 study, two resulted in an ambush of an officer. In the 2015-2016 data, three of the officers who were shot and killed were the only officers on the scene with the suspect. and in one of those instances, the officer was not aware that the person was the suspect. All seven of the officers added to this category were killed outside.

Four officers were killed by suspects wielding rifles and three were shot and killed by handguns. In two cases, the suspects were impaired by alcohol and in two cases the suspect was experiencing a mental health crisis and attempting suicide by coaxing law enforcement into shooting him.

Case Study: Deputy stops a juvenile reported to have a pistol

On a February morning in the western portion of the country, with snow-covered ground, the county sheriff's office received a report of a man walking along a busy street with what appeared to be a handgun. A description of the suspect and direction of travel were broadcast as deputies were dispatched to investigate the report. A short time later, a deputy notified the dispatcher that he had contacted an individual matching the description provided.

The deputy encountered the young suspect as he crossed the street and stopped him to question him. The suspect asked if he was being detained and when the deputy informed him that he was, the teenage suspect attempted to flee and the deputy deployed his Taser, causing the suspect to fall to the ground. Once the Electronic Control Device had completed delivering its energy, the deputy moved to handcuff the suspect. The suspect resisted and pulled a pistol from his waistband and shot the deputy who was standing over him. The deputy was struck three times.

The teenage suspect then ran away and hid from the responding officers who reported the wounded deputy. The suspect was later captured and subsequently admitted to shooting the deputy. The suspect indicated that he knew the deputy was going to arrest him and he did not want to go to jail. He also indicated that he tried to shoot himself after the deputy had "tazed" him but then he shot the deputy and ran away. A K-9 team tracked the suspect to a nearby location where he was found behind a home and the pistol was recovered.

Make it Safer

- Calls reporting armed individuals are dangerous to respond to, 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.
- Responding officers who locate the suspect, absent exigent circumstances, should await backup and coordinate the approach.
- Consider the use of trained Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) when dealing with a suspected mentally ill person or person in crisis.

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- The use and maintaining positions of cover when challenging armed persons must be reinforced and trained. The use of one officer to contact the suspect while another provides cover can be used in this and other situations when dealing with potentially armed persons.
- Officers in states, or areas where it is legal to carry a firearm openly, must avoid becoming complacent if such calls are common.

Shots Fired Calls

The category *Shots Fired*, when officers were called to investigate the "sound of gunshots", also increased in a short period. This call type grew from seven in the 2010-2014 study, to 12 when five cases from 2015-2016 were added. The increase is significant for officer safety, as it is tied to an apparent increase in firearms-related calls for service.

According to NLEOMF data, in 2016 the number of officers shot and killed increased by 53 percent over 2015 and by 94 percent over 2013. Firearms-related deaths surpassed traffic-related deaths as the leading cause of death in law enforcement in 2016.

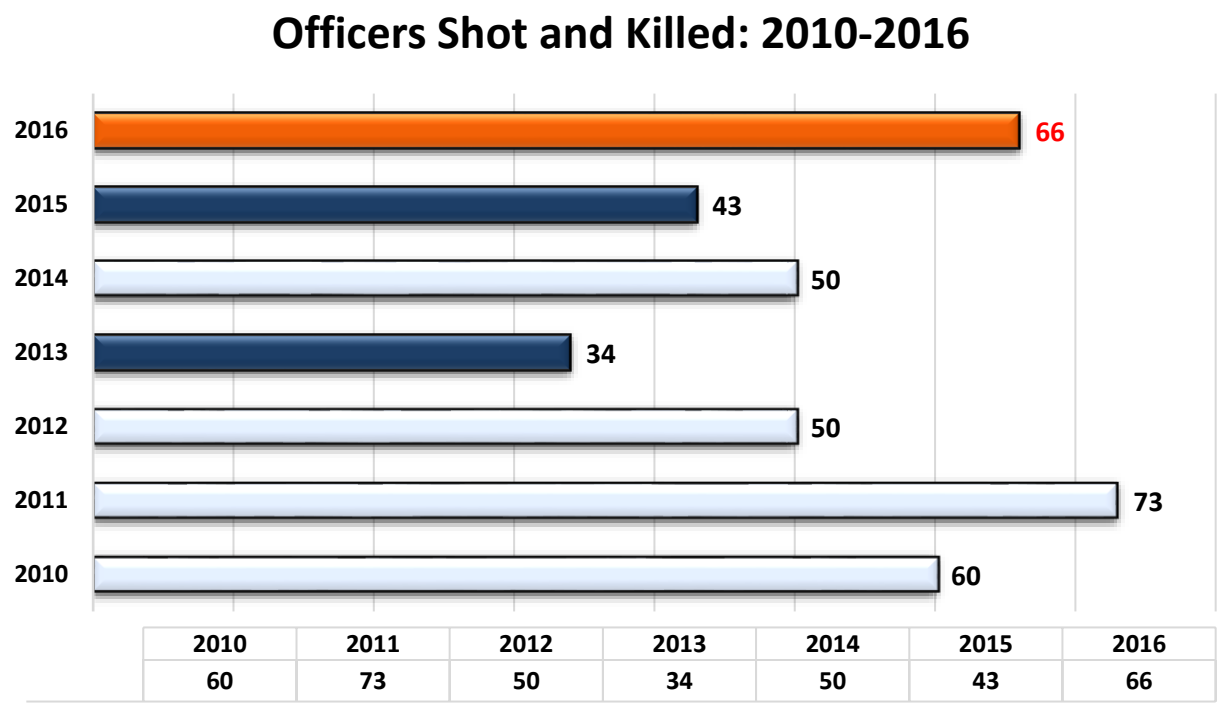

Figure 6

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Researchers found that officers were alone when confronting the suspect when handling *Shots Fired* calls in 40 percent of the cases from 2015-2016. In one case, which stemmed from a domestic-related incident where an irate husband discharged a rifle in his home and left the residence as police were summoned. Officers responded and began to look for the husband who was moving through the subdivision, firing his rifle. The suspect subsequently shot an officer in the back of the head as the officer was searching for the husband.

All the officers were outside searching for suspects or canvassing the area when they were shot. Three officers were shot with handguns and two were shot with rifles. In only one of these five cases was there an indication that the suspect was impaired.

Case Study: Is he the suspect or a witness?

> ***On a late October night, in a small western city, a call came into the 911 call center reporting the sound of gunshots emanating from an area near a downtown hotel. Local city police officers were dispatched to investigate the complaint and the first officer reached the general location within two minutes of the call.***
>
> ***A few moments later, as the officer was driving through the area, he observed a man walking on the street. The officer later indicated that he did not know if the man was possibly a witness or a suspect. The officer slowed his patrol car to observe the man and the man abruptly crossed the street and walked up to the driver's side of the patrol car. As the man got closer he drew a handgun began firing at the officer who quickly got out of his car and moved away.***
>
> ***The suspect shot the officer as he moved to the back of the car. The officer was able to return fire, but collapsed suffering from multiple gunshot wounds. The suspect then went over to the downed officer, took his weapon and tried to remove ammunition from his magazine pouch. He then began stomping on the officer's head. The suspect left the wounded officer and stole his patrol car as he escaped.***
>
> ***The officer initially survived the assault and could speak to investigators before he succumbed to his wounds. The suspect, a convicted felon, was later captured and stated that he shot the officer for revenge. He was taking revenge for all of his friends that police had killed. In a sober moment of regret, the suspect penned a letter to the officer, apologizing and urging the officer to "choose a safer line of work."***

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This case is but one example of the vulnerability of officers handling *Shots Fired* calls, as they usually are not specifically located, and there is usually little suspect information. The officer in the case study above was canvassing a downtown area to investigate the report, but with no idea who he was looking for or from where the shots were fired, despite there being several independent calls reporting the shots. Thus the suspect could quickly set upon the officer and in a revenge-fueled attack, savagely assault him and leave him for dead.

In 2016, the number of officers shot and killed increased by 53 percent over 2015 and by 94 percent over 2013.

When handling these calls, officers are almost always at a disadvantage as they blindly search for an unknown suspect and attempt to locate a scene where they might recover evidence.

Additional Data Points from Calls for Service Analysis: 2015-2016

Manner of Death

Of the 44 most recent calls for service cases reviewed, 43 officers died as a result of gunfire. One officer fell as he was pursuing a robbery suspect and severly injured himself. He later died from an infection that resulted from that injury.

Years of Service

Officers killed after having responded to a call had an average of 13.5 years of service. It is important to note the average experience officers had at the time of their death to dispel any notions that only younger and more inexperienced officers are killed in the line of duty.

When handling *Shots Fired* calls, officers are almost always at a disadvantage as they blindly search for an unknown suspect.

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 sub-divided the 44 calls for service cases from 2015 and 2016, 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.

The team found that in 13 of the cases, there was only one officer on the scene when the fatal encounter unfolded. This represents 30 percent of the cases and is just 4 percent lower than the number of lone officers killed 2010-2014 calls for service data analysis.

In 14 of the cases, there were two officers on scene and there were 17 cases with three or more officers on the scene.

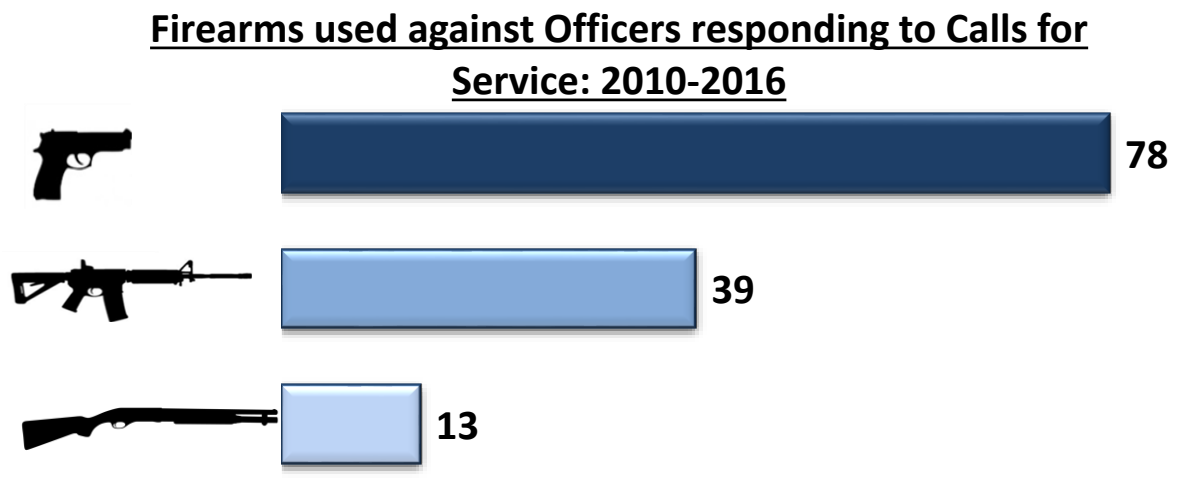


Figure 7

While this breakdown shows more officers may not make it statistically safer from a fatal assault when handling a call for service, the presence of multiple officers provided the necessary manpower to control the scene, provide first aid to wounded officers, contain or neutralize the shooter and bring the situation to an end.

Information Provided to Officers Dispatched

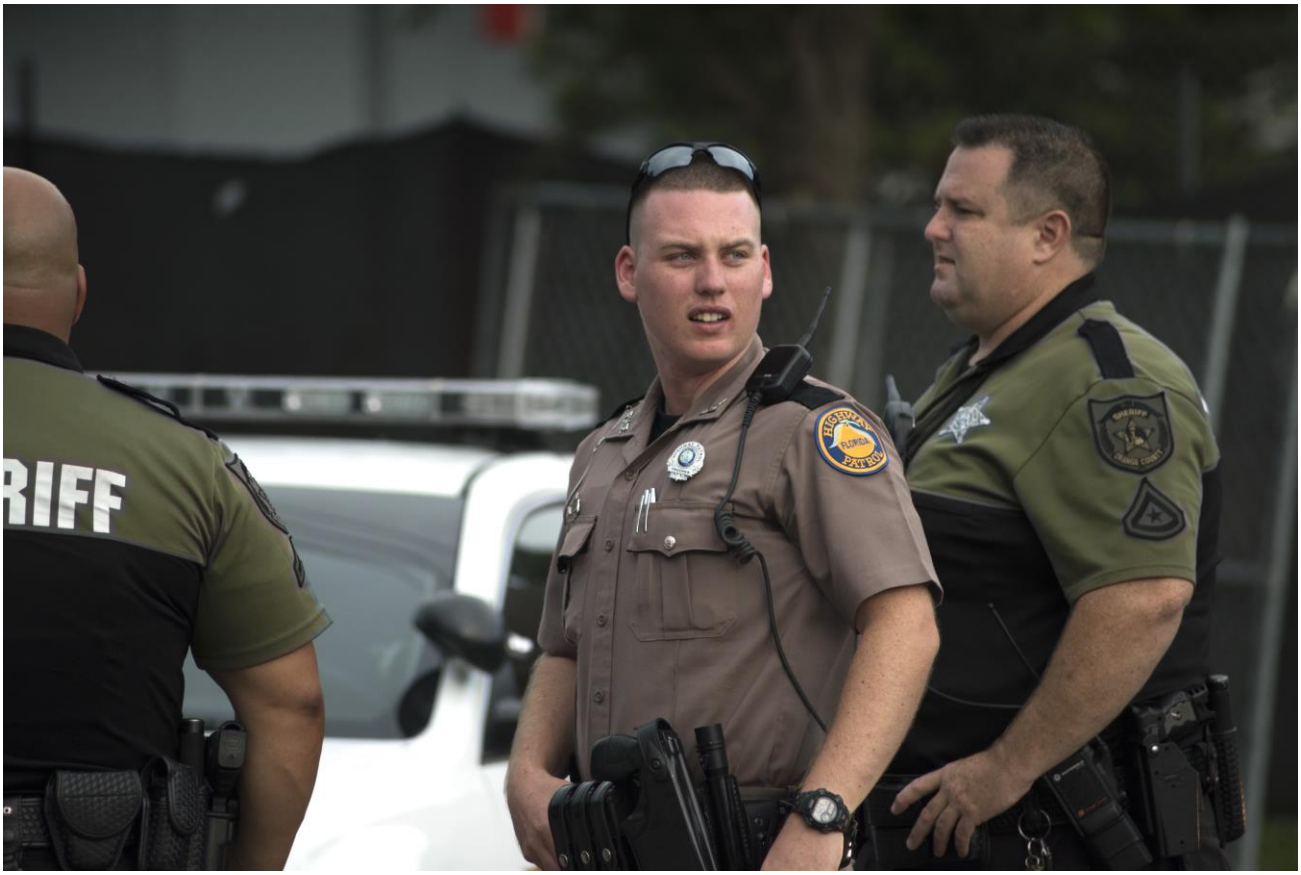
As highlighted in *Make It Safer*, accurate information is emphasized as it will better assist the officers in evaluating the call and what type of response is necessary. Officers must keep an open mind as they respond to a call, as what may initially appear to be one thing may in fact be different. Officers should be wary when they are interviewing complainants, as they may neglect or intentionally omit the entire chain of events that led to the request for police assistance.

In one particularly egregious example of this, in 2015, a deputy was called to investigate a burglary. Once on the scene he was advised that the suspect had fled and left some of the stolen items behind along the roadway. As deputies began to track the burglar through the woods, the suspect, armed with a rifle, shot and killed one of the pursuing deputies. However, it was later learned that the initial complainant left out key portions of the reported burglary and provided inaccurate information to the investigating deputies. His deliberate omission set in motion a chain of events that contributed to the deputy being shot and killed.

The complainant later provided a statement about his deception by stating to investigators, "…that he had been a nervous wreck all day and night because he did not know this was going to cause someone to lose their life;" referring to the deputy who was shot by the suspect who the complainant knew to be armed. (3)

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.

In 19 of the 44 cases reviewed, officers were provided with information that the suspect was armed and in six of the cases that the suspect had made threats.



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Additional facts and analysis:

In 25 of these 44 cases the suspect was taken into custody. In 15 cases, the suspect was shot and killed by officers, and in three cases the suspect committed suicide. In one case, the officer fatality was the result of inadvertent gunfire by another officer.

Five of the calls for service incidents resulted in multiple officer deaths. In four of those calls for service, two officers were slain by the same suspect, and in one instance three officers were killed by a single suspect.

The average time of day when these fatal assaults occurred was between 1:00 and 2:00 PM in their respective locales; however, the times for the calls for service occurred during all hours of the day and night.

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Self-Initiated Activity

The research team also continued its examination of *Self-Initiated Activity*, those actions independently taken by officers as they addressed traffic violation and observed suspicious activity. As with the *Calls for Service* section, the team has added data from officer fatalities that resulted from *Self-Initiated Activity* that occurred during 2015 and 2016. As stated in the previous report, self-initiated incidents are incidents in which the officer initiates contact with the suspect, whether through a traffic stop or a pedestrian stop. Incidents that met this criterion and were not the result of a dispatched call for service were added to the data set and analyzed.

Within the 2015-2016 period studied, the research team identified 22 additional cases of *Self-Initiated Activity* that resulted in a line-of-duty death, bringing the total data set to 73 (42 in 2010-2014 and 22 in 2015-2016). As before, the 73 cases of *Self-Initiated Activity* were divided based on the type of situation that brought the officer and suspect together.

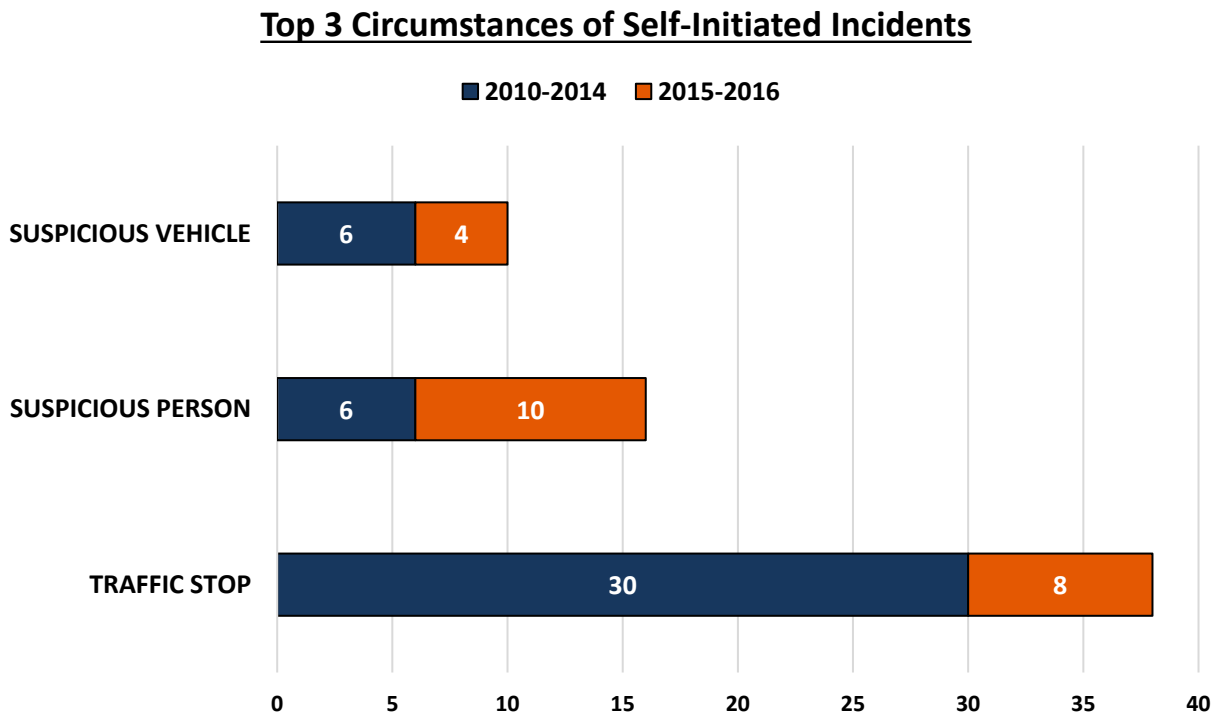

Figure 8

As noted in *Figure 7,* the added data reinforces the fact that the most common type of *Self-Initiated Activity* involved in a fatality was when an officer initiated a traffic stop. This remained true even though the data from 2015-2016 saw an increase in fatalities as officers initiated a stop on a suspicious person. The *Suspicious Person/Vehicle* category of *Self-Initiated Activity* more than doubled from the five years of data in 2010-2014. There were 10 cases where

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officers were shot and killed while conducting stops of suspicious persons in 2015-2016, compared to six recorded in the preceding five years. There were four officers shot and killed while investigating suspicious vehicles, two less than in all the previous five years.

Traffic Stops: A Closer Look

Traffic Stops continued to be the most common self-initiated incident that led to officer fatalities, accounting for 38, or 52 percent, of all 73 *Self-Initiated Activity* cases examined. The public encounters law enforcement officers most often during these stops for traffic violations; therefore, it makes sense that these stops are the independent enforcement action with the highest number of law enforcement fatalities.

The research team also examined at what point during the officer and offender interaction the shooting occurred.

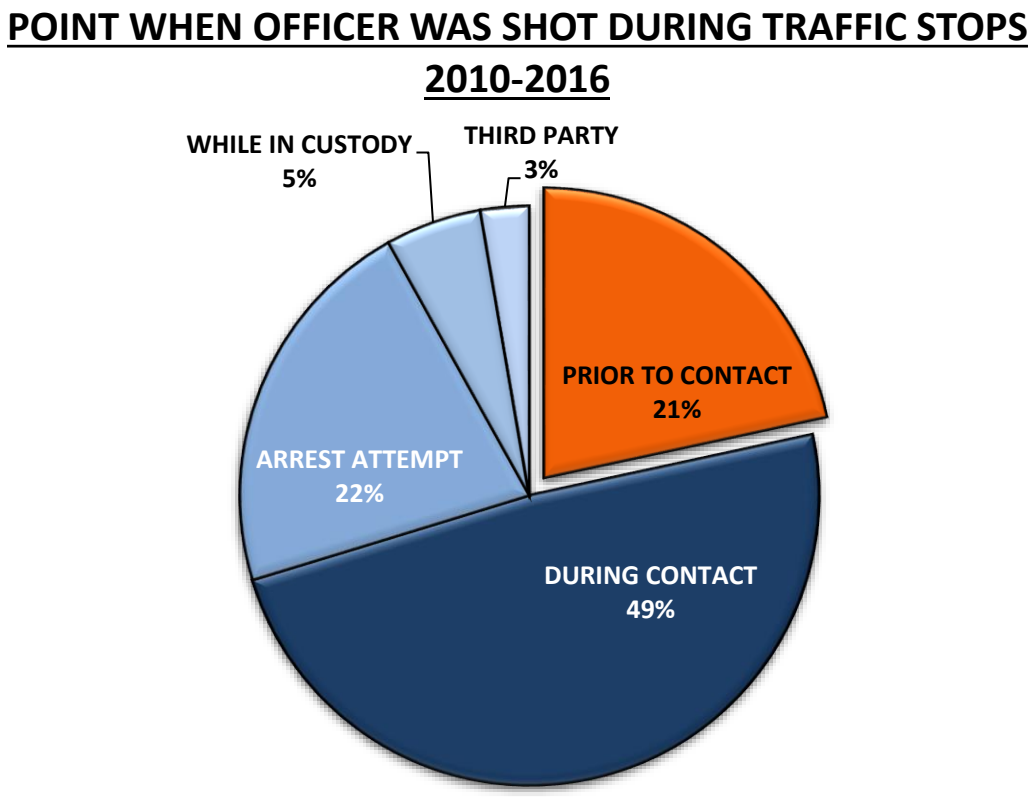

Figure 9

Researchers found that in 21 percent of officer fatalities during a traffic stop, the officer was killed prior to making contact with the occupants of the vehicle. In these cases the officer was shot as they exited their patrol vehicle, approached the stopped car, or in one case, they had not yet exited their patrol car to make contact with the driver.

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When adding the data from 2015 and 2016, however, it was dicovered that in all of the eight new cases involving a *Traffic Stop* death, all of the officers were shot and killed after contacting the driver of the stopped vehicle. In 49 percent of the cases studied, officers were shot once they began to interact with the stopped vehicle's operator. This period of initial contact with the potential offender prior to any indication that an arrest is imminent has remained consistent with it being the most prevalent point at which the shooting occurs.

The number of parties involved when an officer is killed while making a traffic stop was also of interest. As the researchers read through the incident reports, it was noted that in 13 cases, or 34 percent, of traffic stop-related fatalities, officers were operating as a single unit while conducting a stop on a vehicle with multiple occupants.

While an argument can be made that the number of officers cannot determine the likelihood of an officer fatality, NLEOMF researchers encourage departments to dispatch at least one additional officer to back up an officer making the stop. The second vehicle can provide enhanced visibility and protection from a crash but more importantly give the contact officer the chance to run the necessary checks without having to keep an eye on the vehicle and its occupants.

As stated in the prior report, the postulation that two officers are better than one, particularly as it relates to making stops, was succinctly described by retired Scottsdale (AZ) Police Detective Jim Hill, who was quoted in David Griffith's article (4) 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."

Officers were operating as a single unit while conducting a traffic stop on a vehicle with multiple occupants in 34 percent of the traffic stop-related fatalities.

The researchers understand the constraints that many departments are working under and that it may not be possible to have a second officer provide backup. This fact makes notifying the dispatcher of the location, nature of the stop, and the description of the vehicle being stopped, so important. In the earlier analysis of cases, the research team found that three officers were discovered deceased by citizens driving by and observing the officer on the ground.

Case Study: Passenger provides false information

On a spring evening, an officer from a municipal police department of 135 officers initiated a traffic stop on a vehicle for an unknown traffic violation. The vehicle was occupied with a female driver and a male passenger in the front seat. The officer approached the vehicle and requested the driver's license and the passenger's identifying information.

The officer ran criminal warrant checks on both individuals. The query into the female's status returned with no warrants, but the male's information returned as false or inaccurate. In an attempt to clarify the male passenger's information, the officer made a passenger side approach to further interview the male. It is not known what was said, but a physical altercation is believed to have taken place between the suspect and the officer. During this altercation, the suspect produced a semiautomatic handgun and shot the officer multiple times. During this incident the female driver was shot in the foot and was left at the scene by the suspect.

Overhearing the gunfire, civilians in the area responded to the scene to render aid to the officer. One citizen used the officer's shoulder microphone to radio for assistance. The officer was transported to the hospital where he died a short time later.

The officer was not aware that the suspect was wanted for a string of armed robberies and parole violation. The suspect was apprehended the following day.

This case study highlights the need for an additional officer to provide cover and assistance and shows how dangerous making these stops can be, particularly when the officer is unknowingly dealing with a desperate felon. It is essential that officers use every resource to their advantage when making a traffic stop. The officer should control where the stop occurs, how they approach the car and pay attention to cues from the driver and occupants.

There is a need for an additional officer for traffic stops to provide cover and assistance to the initiating officer.

The FBI's Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) 2006 study provided the following advice for officers stopping armed suspects or person they reasonably believe may be armed: "Officers should effect the stop of a pedestrian or vehicle in a manner that affords the officer the maximum tactical advantage and the maximum opportunity to have sufficient backup assistance present."(5)

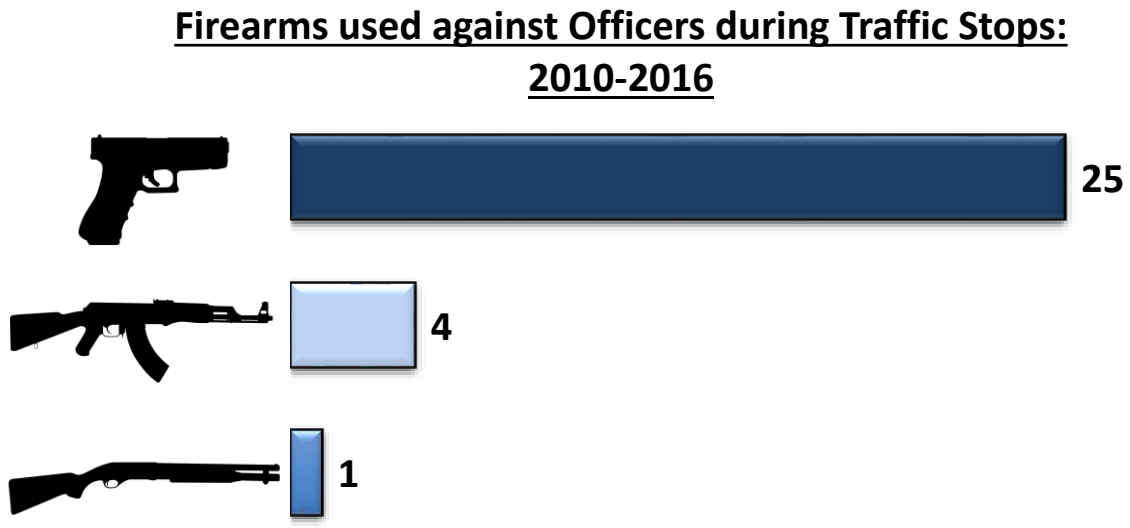

Figure 10

Make it Safer

- Traffic stops are an unknown as officers are usually unfamiliar with who they have stopped or how the driver or occupant of the vehicle will react.

- Officers, prior to contacting the driver, 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 contacting the driver and, if not, await the dispatcher's response information on the vehicle.

- A 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 afforded by the vehicle's door frames.

- 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.

Suspicious Persons and Vehicles

The next largest category of *Self-Initiated Activity* was when an officer(s) conducted an investigative stop on a suspicious person or vehicle. These activities represent 26 of the 73 cases examined, accounting for 36 percent of all the *Self-Initiated Activity* fatalities examined.

Between 2010-2014, 12 instances of an officer conducting a stop of a suspicious person or vehicle resulted in an officer fatality. The last two years of data (2015-2016) saw that number increase by 14 cases. That is a significant increase in the average number of occurrences each year, from roughly two per year to seven per year.

Twenty 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.

In each case, the suspects were armed and shot the officer at close range as they were talking to the officer or during a foot pursuit with the officer. In 13 of the recent cases, the officer conducting the stop had notified the dispatcher of their location and indicated that they were stopping a suspect. In one instance, the officer did not notify the dispatcher, as he was on training in a public transit depot with other officers. He was alone when he approached a suspicious person and was shot immediately upon making contact with him. Unbeknownst to the officer, the suspect had earlier committed a murder.

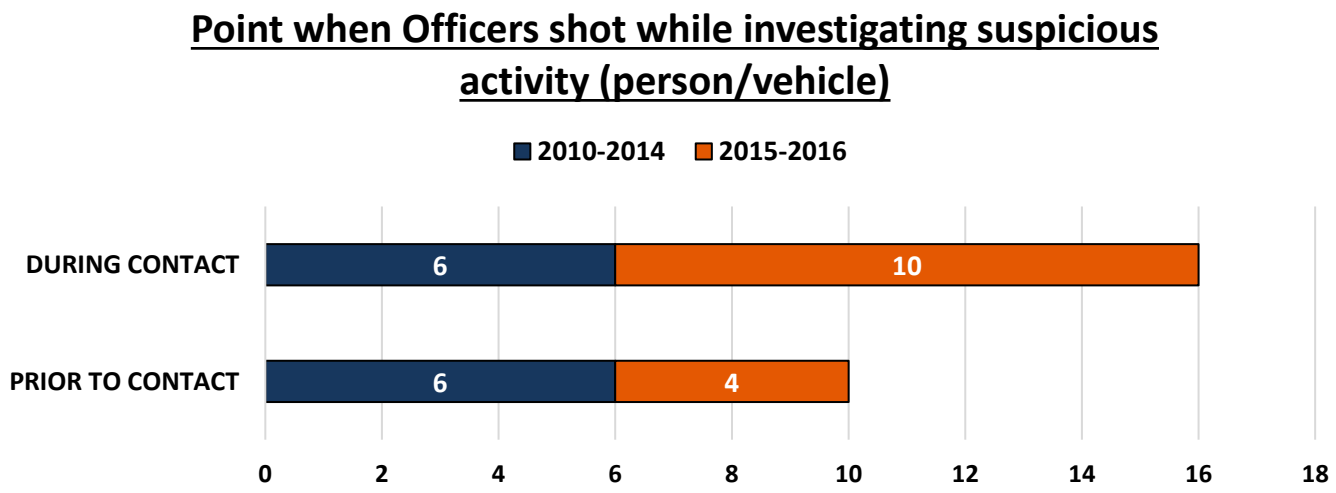

Figure 11

As with traffic stops, officers conducting a stop regarding suspicious behavior are equally vulnerable, as they do not know who they are stopping and whether they are armed. Officers must be aware of their surroundings and the context of what they observed, all while being cautious. Officers must at the same time keep an open mind when evaluating the circumstances of the witnessed behavior. If they reasonably believe the individual is armed, they must alter their approach to maximize their ability to react and protect themselves. As noted in *Figure 10,* in ten of the cases, or 71 percent, officers were shot by the suspect during contact.

Case Study: Plain clothes officers observe a suspicious person

> ***On an early spring evening, in a large city police department, two officers working a plainclothes anti-crime detail in an unmarked department vehicle, observed a suspicious male walking along the street. The officers noticed the man adjusting the waistband of his pants as if he were adjusting a firearm.***
>
> ***The officers pulled their vehicle up next to the suspect. The officer in the driver seat asked the suspect if he had anything in his waistband. The suspect replied that he did, produced a handgun, and shot into the vehicle, striking the driver in the head. The officer in the passenger seat was uninjured and called in for additional units and EMS services. The suspect fled on foot and was captured shortly after the shooting.***

The suspect in this case study was armed and his fear of that discovery, and the fact that he was wanted, may have driven him to use deadly force against the officers and then attempt to flee. The officers were at a tactical disadvantage by approaching the suspect while still in their vehicle; there was no opportunity to react to the threat. They could not immediately return fire or find cover when the suspect opened fire. The suspect had the upper hand in this situation because the officers were below the suspect who was on the sidewalk. Their movement and ability to draw their weapons were restricted in the confines of their vehicle.

Figure 12

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These encounters turn deadly in a matter of seconds, with officers never having a chance to respond. In all but one of the 14 cases from 2015 and 2016, the officers were killed with handguns; one officer was shot and killed with a rifle.

Make it Safer

- Officers must ensure that the dispatcher and other officers are aware of their location and the investigative actions they are about to take.

- 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 who are investigating vehicles should note the vehicle's tag number and description before approaching. Then if the vehicle flees or is part of an assault on the officer, the information is readily available.

- 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 have their agencies policy in mind. Is the potential crime being investigated worthy of a pursuit and forcible stop?

- Agencies should consider providing training in recognizing the signs of an individual carrying a concealed firearm.

Ambushes: A persistent threat

In 2016, the United States law enforcement community saw a dramatic spike in the number of ambushes against officers who were targeted specifically because they were uniformed police officers or deputies. All told, 81 officers were killed in these horrific assaults between 2010-2016, with the most extreme example occurring in Dallas, Texas, when five officers escorting a demonstration were murdered by a gunman intent on killing police officers. A few days later, a man similarly predisposed, killed three law enforcement officers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The assassination of peace officers has been a concern for several years, but it has been over two decades since the number of ambushes of police officers exceeded 20 such killings in one year and never have we seen the aberration that occurred in Dallas.

This increase and the high-profile nature of these cases spurned NLEOMF researchers to examine the most recent cases and provide an overview as to how ambushes have been carried out and under what circumstances they have occurred. As covered in the preceding section on *Calls for Service,* researchers found that ambushes played a significant role in ten, or 23 percent, of the line-of-duty deaths associated with a response to a call for service from 2015-2016. The NLEOMF's definition of an ambush states, "An ambush is a method of assault used to suddenly and unexpectedly attack officers from a concealed position or in a calculated manner designed to catch them off guard and place them at a tactical disadvantage."

An ambush is a method of assault used to suddenly and unexpectedly attack officers from a concealed position or in a calculated manner designed to catch them off-guard and place them at a tactical disadvantage.

These newly-applied definition, which like so many others, is open to interpretation but strives to encompass all those scenarios where officers have been assassinated in an unprovoked and deliberate manner.

This definition excludes traffic stops, unless specific information is developed that indicates the traffic stop was an intentional ruse to lure and kill a law enforcement officer.

The definition does include situations such as the case of a Deputy Sheriff, who responded to a disturbance call at a restaurant and was callously executed as he sat down to calmly talk to the subject of the complaint. This case fits into NLEOMF's definition of an ambush, as the suspect waited until the officer was close to him and seated before shooting him. The Deputy was unexpectedly shot because he was placed at calculated disadvantage.

Scenarios where officers are shot and killed while seated in a patrol car, eating in a restaurant or simply walking to the address where a complaint originated would all be considered an ambush.

An officer who is shot and killed while approaching a person to interview during an initial investigation into a complaint, may be considered an ambush, since the officer has not determined that a crime has been committed, and has not had an opportunity to place the person in jeopardy or fear of arrest. In other words, the officer was preemptively shot by the person before the officer contacted them. This example of an unprovoked attack is captured in the definition, as the officer is unprepared for a sudden attack because they have not yet determined who and what he or she is dealing with. Hairs can be split over these scenarios and the intricacies of each individual case. The researchers realize this and do their best to understand all the circumstances before calling a case an ambush.

A scenario where a member of a tactical arrest team is shot and killed as they made entry into a residence to execute a high-risk arrest warrant, would not be considered an ambush. Similarly, in a scenario where law enforcement officers have responded to a complaint and been told the suspect is armed, and are able to contact that suspect, who after conversing with the officers abruptly shoots them, would not be considered an ambush. The assault is not unexpected, and the officers should be on guard, utilizing cover and/or concealment.

Responding to a call for service was the most common circumstance in ambush cases, accounting for 25 out of the 81 cases examined. The call types varied widely but *Domestic Dispute* was the call or underlying cause in six of the responses that culminated with an officer(s) being ambushed.

Ambush	Not an Ambush
Officer(s) shot from a concealed position in a pre-planned trap or ruse to lure them into a location where they are easy targets	Officer(s) shot when they conduct a traffic stop (unless the violation was a ruse created by the perpetrators to shoot officers once they made the stop)
Officer(s) are essentially assassinated as they sit in a patrol car or in a restaurant or other location where they are not engaged in any enforcement action	Officers executing a search or arrest warrant, particularly when they are confronting suspects known or reasonably suspected of being armed.
Officers shot as they approach a location or a suspect but have not yet established an intent to arrest or established that a crime has been committed. They were unexpectedly shot prior to contact and/or once they were vulnerable	Officers conducting stops or investigations of persons or calls for service where they suspect or have been informed that the suspect is armed.
Officer(s) shot by an unrelated third party, as their attention is diverted by focusing on enforcement actions. They are at a disadvantage as they concentrate on the person(s) they have stopped, or on the investigation they are conducting.	Officers handling tactical situations such as barricades or other stand-off situations with armed suspects.
Cases where information is developed and evaluated by the NLEOMF research team and is found to meet the NLEOMF definition of an ambush.	Cases where an officer is placing a suspect under arrest or actively pursuing a suspect to arrest them, absent any special circumstances.

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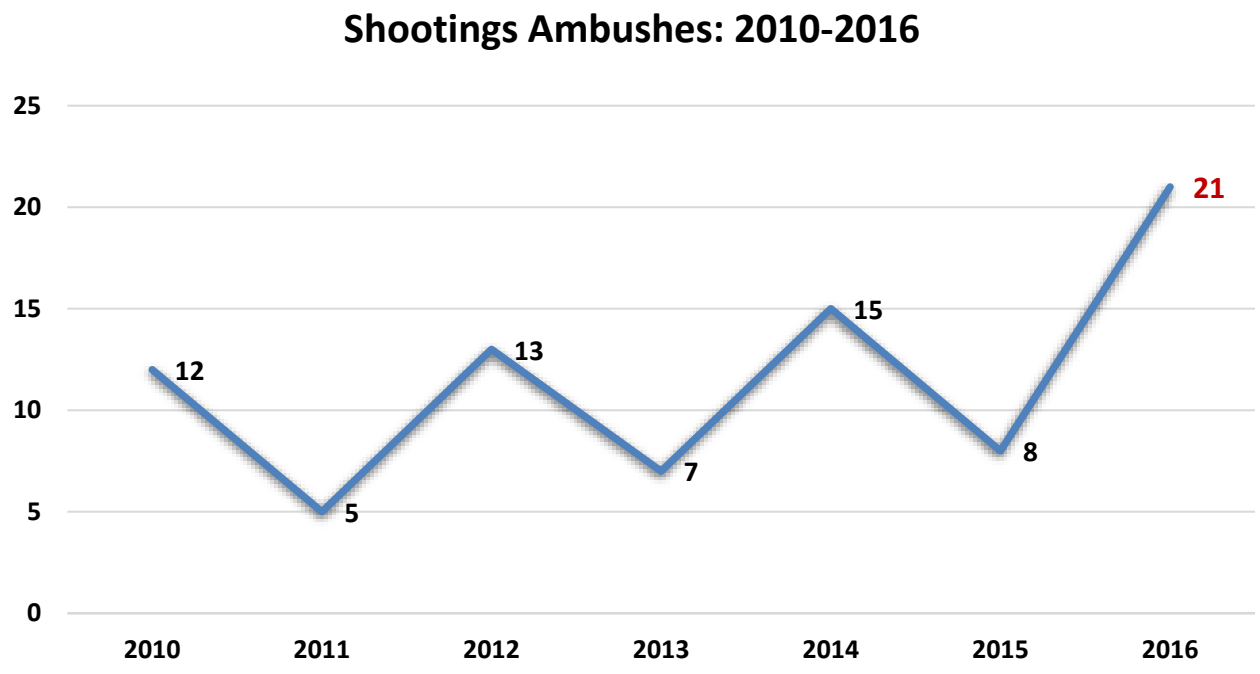

Figure 13

In 47 cases, officers were not on a call or engaged in any enforcement action. They were either off-duty, sitting down eating, on patrol or at the station when they were executed. Twelve officers were shot while seated in their patrol car, stopped at a light, on patrol or sitting at a fixed post for high visibility.

Fourteen officers were ambushed while off-duty, and many while at their home or on their way home. They were essentially stalked by suspects with a grudge or criminals wanting to disrupt an investigation. Nine cases involved retaliation against agents or officers because they were involved in investigations, or had arrested the suspect.

The remaining cases consisted of court officers standing guard, officers serving process, escorting demonstrations, or conducting investigations when the ambush assaults occurred.

The review of these cases indicated that at least eight officers were shot from over 20 feet, and 12 were shot from a concealed position by gunmen using rifles.

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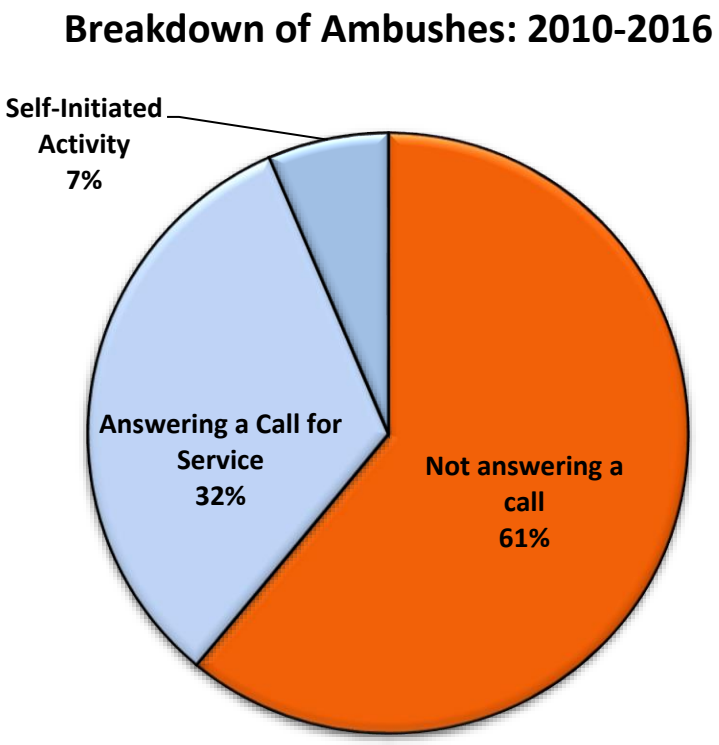

Figure 14

In five cases, the suspect shot at responding officers from inside the home. In three of those cases, the suspect shot through the front door at approaching officers.

Five cases involved suspects deliberately setting a trap or creating a ruse that would leave officers vulnerable as they responded to the call or reacted to the ruse. In one case, a police officer on his way home, still in uniform and driving a marked police car, was shot from the darkness as he stopped to remove intentionally placed debris from the roadway. The case remains open.

Between 2010 and 2016, there were nine ambushes in which more than one officer was shot and killed by a single suspect. In those nine incidents, a total of 21 officers were killed, and another eight officers were shot and wounded.

In the 81 cases where an officer was shot and killed in an ambush attack, 20 surviving officers also shot and wounded.

Between 2010-2016, there were nine ambushes when more than one officer was shot and killed in by a single suspect.

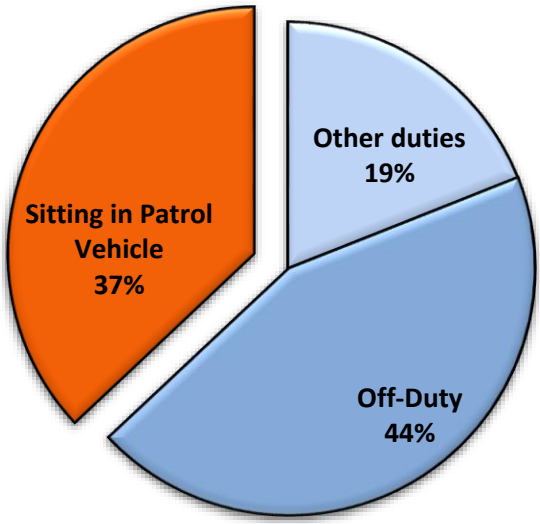

Figure 15

Case Study: Sitting in the block

> ***On an early July morning in a Midwest city agency, an officer having completed a call for service that may have involved a domestic altercation, was parked near the curb on a residential street as he decided to remain in the area where the call originated from.***
>
> ***The officer was in his patrol car, sitting with spotlight on and the engine running when a suspect approached the driver's side of the car and shot the officer multiple times, killing him. There were no calls to 911 reporting the sound of gunshots and the officer made no transmissions as to his location or that he was contacting someone. He was not discovered until a citizen driving past observed that something was wrong and called police.***
>
> ***Officers were originally sent to investigate the report of a man down, but additional information was relayed via the police radio as they were enroute that it was a police officer down.***
>
> ***Officers arrived to find their colleague seated behind the wheel of his marked patrol car suffering from a gunshot wound to the head and several shell casings outside the driver's side door of the patrol car.***

Following several leads that came into police, it was determined that he was shot by the man who may have been the subject of the original call for service.

Out of 81 officers ambushed between 2010-2016, 12 were sitting in their patrol vehicles.

As indicated in the analysis portion of this report, 12 of the 81 officers ambushed were in their patrol cars. One officer was gunned down as he was writing a ticket to another driver he had stopped, but the rest were not conducting any type of enforcement or taking any overt action. They were easy targets and at a disadvantage as they sat in their cars. It is difficult to react and draw your firearm while seated in a car. There are some private entities working on providing enhanced ballistic protection for patrol vehicles in terms of panels for doors, and strong laminates that better protect windows. One company has developed a window insert that shields the driver, however, items like this may be difficult to deploy rapidly.

How Law Enforcement Can Mitigate Ambushes

Although very little can be done to prevent an impulsive attack initiated without warning, more must be offered to law enforcement other than the stale admonishments, “Be vigilant!” and “Constantly be aware of your surroundings.”

Officers cannot remain on high alert throughout an entire shift, nor is it reasonable or practical for them to approach every situation, call or contact as though they are going to be assaulted.

Officers can carry a heightened awareness and a take a stronger tactical approach when handling *Domestic Dispute* and *Man with a Gun* calls. While parked on a fixed post, completing a report, or monitoring traffic officers should park their vehicle in a position that affords them the most visibility.

To assist law enforcement in situational awareness, some vehicle manufacturers have installed sensors in the rear of police vehicles that alert to someone approaching from the rear when the vehicle is parked.

Fifty-three percent of officers wearing body armor survived an ambush attack.

Many law enforcement departments have responded to such incidents by enhancing training, altering deployments, and by purchasing equipment. (6)

Enhanced body armor protection against high-powered weapons is something that has been looked at in the wake of several shootings such as the Pulse Night Club shooting in Orlando, Florida. More agencies are providing their officers with hard-plated body armor and helmets that can be donned when the situation calls for it.

Preparing for the unexpected is difficult and even if officers do everything right, the situation can still end badly.

Case Study:

> ***In 2015, officers from a large municipal department were called to an apartment to investigate the report of a distraught father armed with a gun. The call taker did an excellent job of gathering as much information as possible, and continued to relay important details to the responding officers, who, prior to trying to contact the man, established a perimeter, and summoned a Crisis Intervention Trained officer.***
>
> ***Officers on the scene got more intelligence on the suspect from family members such as his state of mind and access to weapons, and they preemptively had an ambulance stage nearby. Officers assessing the situation were concerned for other residents and as they were clearing the vicinity, the suspect, who was hidden by a portion of the balcony of the apartment, began shooting at the officers. He shot and killed one officer before being shot and killed himself.***

Despite the precautions to manage the scene and negotiate with the suspect, an officer was shot and killed. This case study is an example of how difficult it can be to prevent such attacks even as officers on the ground take proper precautions and follow protocols.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), in their Ambush Fact Sheet, broke down ambush attacks into two classifications: *Spontaneous* and *Entrapment*. (7) The fact sheet

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indicated that 68 percent of the attacks were spontaneous compared to those that were premeditated and planned. Anticipating and reacting to a spontaneous ambush attack is challenging, particularly when the attack is swift and designed to catch the officer at a vulnerable moment.

Contained within the fact sheet is the survival rate when officers are wearing their body armor compared to those who do not. This analysis was not just for firearm assaults against officers but counted physical and edged weapon ambush attacks as well. As recounted in a recent article, retired officer Duane Wolfe reported that 53 percent of officers wearing body armor survived an ambush attack, compared to 30 percent who were not wearing body armor. (8)

Mr. Wolfe further related the four strategies to increase your chances of surviving an ambush attack: environmental awareness, proper use of cover and concealment, movement and shooting on the move. These items work to increase an officer's chance of surviving an assault and should be part of on-going training to better prepare officers to respond to these deadly threats.

Unfortunately, three of those strategies help once you are aware of the attack and have presumably survived the initial assault and are able to respond. However, as demonstrated in the analysis of many cases, there may be little that can be done to prevent an officer being shot by a sniper or killed by an individual who unpredictably walks up to an officer and shoots them.

In a recent case of a *Domestic Dispute* call, a deputy wore night vision goggles as he approached the residence. He immediately spotted a man with a rifle, attempting to ambush the officers. The deputy and fellow responding officers were able to challenge the suspect before he could open fire on them. The suspect was wounded, but all the deputies came away unharmed.

Although expensive and not a common piece of issued equipment, agencies should consider the use of night vision equipment when responding to and evaluating inherently dangerous calls for service.

As mentioned, the use of body armor and the addition of hard armor plating can better protect officers. What follows next is an analysis of body armor usage over the seven-year period.

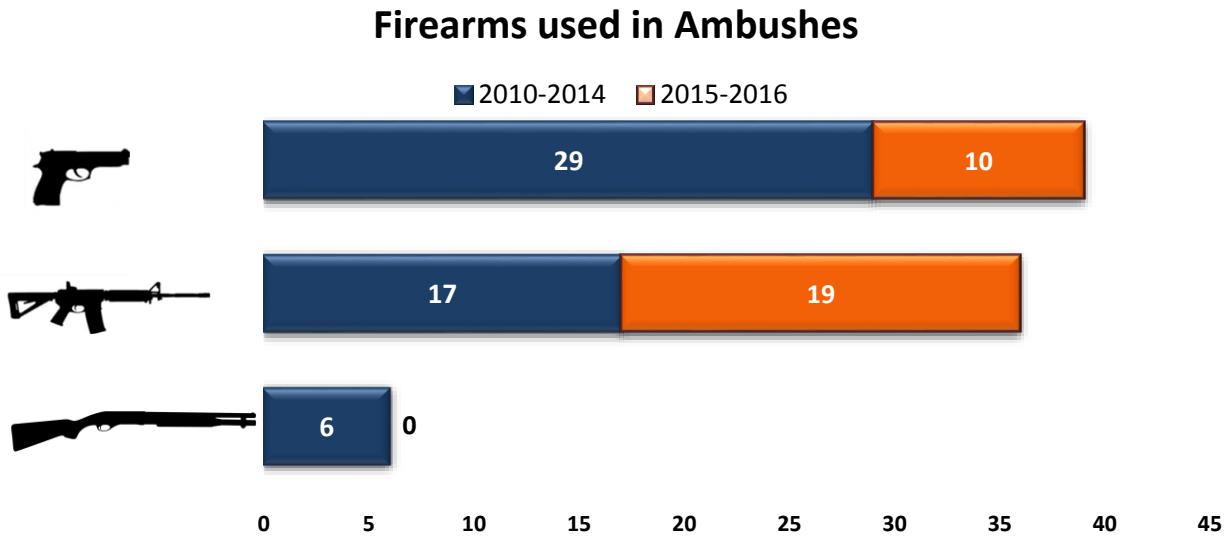
Firearms used in Ambushes
2010-2014
2015-2016
29
10
17
19
6
0
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45

Figure 16

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Body Armor Usage

When NLEOMF researchers began reviewing case data, they extracted key pieces of information from the reports and the submitted Officer Data Forms to formulate a picture of how prevalent the use of soft body armor is within the context of, not only shooting fatalities, but other types of fatalities where the use of a vest may mitigate the severity of an injury.

The team analyzed vest usage across the seven years for the following manners of law enforcement deaths: *Shot, Stabbed, Automobile Crash, Motorcycle Crash* and *Struck-by Automobile Crashes* (Struck-by crashes are those cases where an officer was struck and killed by a vehicle while on the roadside). In all the cases counted, the team excluded ones in which the officer was off duty or engaged in training, where an officer would not normally wear their issued soft body armor.

From 2010-2016, this group accounted for 715 cases in which the team determined if the officers were wearing their body armor. In some of the submitted data forms, the box is left blank or marked unknown. In the case of body armor and in seatbelts, sometimes agencies will leave the box for "yes" or "no" blank in the belief that a "no" will negate benefits provided by the Public Safety Officer' Benefits (PSOB) program of the federal government or may affect them being added to the Memorial. A report of an officer not wearing their vest or their seatbelt will not be used adversely against them when the NLEOMF or the PSOB makes their independent determinations.

If left blank, the team endeavored to obtain an answer on the case in question or conducted an examination of those cases to see if the provided case information, such as autopsy report and incident reports, would help decide.

Analysis showed that 30 percent of officers who died in those five categories were not wearing body armor. Two percent, or 17 of the cases, the use of body armor was unknown.

In examining the use of body armor for the *Calls for Service* section, researchers found that from 2010-2016, 20 percent of officers were not wearing body armor. In a similar analysis of officers who were shot and killed while engaged in *Self-Initiated Activity*, the data indicated that 16 percent of those officers were not wearing their body armor. There were three cases in which it could not be determined if the officers were wearing body armor.

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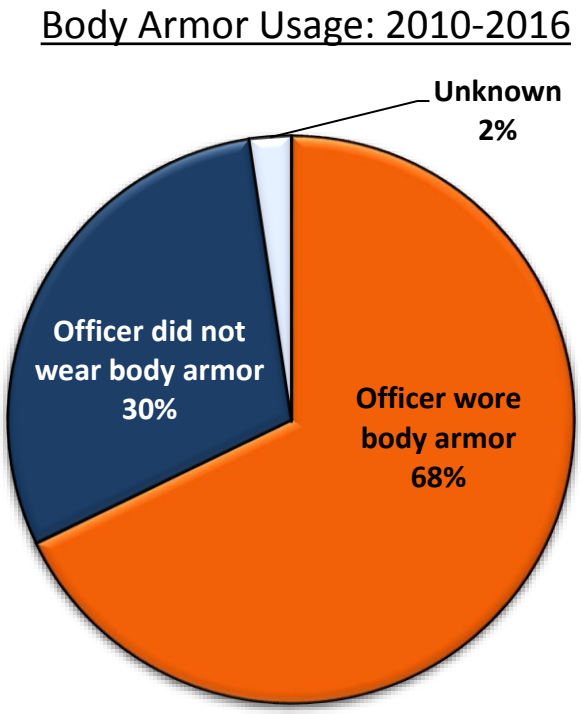

Figure 17

The team also looked at cases where an officer's vest was penetrated. The team could confirm that in at least 25 cases, an officer's body armor was penetrated and in 10 of those cases, the chest or torso wound was the only location the officer was shot. This analysis was done to address the use of rifles and weapons that can defeat the standard issued soft body armor and to account for the possibility that bullets passed between protective panels. In addition to documenting the cases where the officer's vest was penetrated, the team also looked at cases where an officer not wearing a vest was shot in the chest and may have survived had they been wearing body armor.

Make it Safer

- Wearing body armor may protect officers from more than gunshots
- Agencies should have a mandatory vest policy for all those in uniform. Even if they are working the front counter of the police station or transporting prisoners.

- Command officials and supervisors must set the example and hold officers accountable.

- Vests must fit properly and be replaced at regular intervals.

- There are programs, such as the VALOR Initiative, that can assist an agency with providing body armor.

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Seatbelt Usage

As part of looking at the steps that officers can take to improve their safety, the team addressed the use of seatbelts. The team has conducted research over five years of data (2012-2016), where they reconciled information that was incomplete or unknown. This was done through reviewing crash reports and other associated documentation to determine if the officer who died in an automobile crash was belted, or not. In many of the cases that were originally unknown, the researchers could quickly determine the operator was not belted, as the autopsy report reflected "unbelted operator" or the crash report indicated that the driver was ejected from the vehicle. In cases where a confident determination could not be made and the agency was not forthcoming, the cases were left as an "unknown".

From 2012-2016, it was determined that out of 152 fatal crashes, an average of 47 percent of officers killed were not wearing their seatbelt. Officers in municipal agencies represent the highest number of officer not wearing their seatbelts where roughly half of their fatal crashes involved an unbelted officer. Similarly, sheriff's agencies followed closely behind with nearly half of their fatal crashes involving an unbelted deputy. State law enforcement agencies had the highest compliance rate with only one quarter of their fatal crashes involving an unbelted trooper, highway patrolman or other state officer.

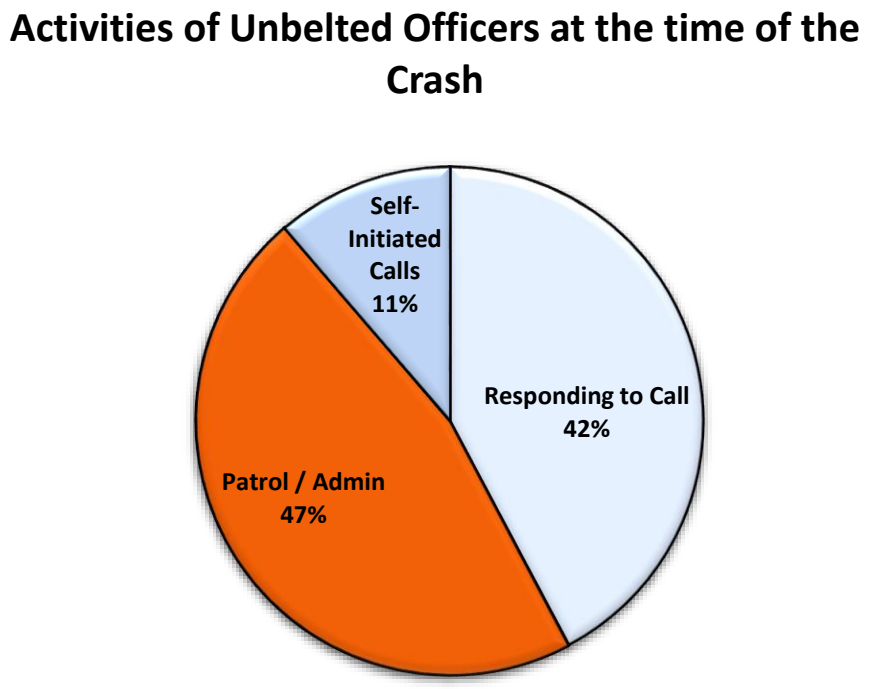

Figure 18

The most startling and concerning statistic that came out of our analysis of this data was that one region accounted for 34 percent of these crashes involving unbelted operator. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has broken the nation into 10 NHTSA regions and the NLEOMF provides analysis of law enforcements deaths within those established state groups. Region Six, which is made up of Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas, accounted for more unbelted law enforcement fatalities than any other of the 10 regions.

Many agencies are making the use of seatbelts mandatory. While it is the law, many states or agencies have exemptions for law enforcement officers. Those exemptions and the often-cited need to quickly get out of the car are used as an excuse by some officers to not wear their seatbelt. While concerns about getting caught in the seatbelt can be legitimate in very few scenarios, they are unfounded when balanced against the data. Except for just a few years, traffic-related fatalities have been leading cause of death among law enforcement officers for twenty years.

In a Washington Post article addressing the issue of seat belts and law enforcement the reporter quoted a local police official on the subject. "He calls the three reasons most officers give for eschewing the seat belt-it gets tangled with their gun belt, it delays their exit from the car and it hampers their ability to dodge a bullet-Absolutely Absurd." (9)

Circumstances of Single-Vehicle Crashes

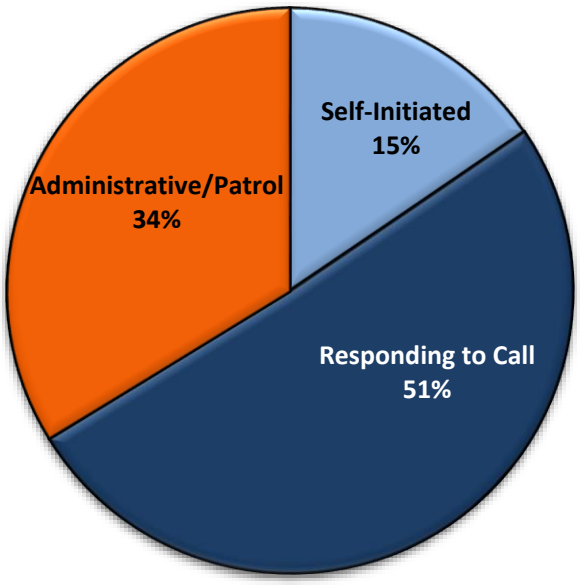

Figure 19

The research team found that single vehicle crashes were 46 percent of all fatal automobile crashes. In these crashes, an officer lost control on a curve or inexplicably left the roadway and crashed into a fixed object, such as a tree. While speed is often a factor in these crashes, they do not explain all of them, particularly since in 49 percent of these crashes, the officer was not expediting to a call, on a call or in a pursuit.

Make it Safer

- Officers **must** wear their seatbelts when driving.
- It sets the example for the citizens upon whom they are enforcing the use of seatbelts.
- Agencies should enact and enforce seat belt policies.
- Below-100 offers free training and pushes the use of seatbelts.
- Supervisors and field training officers must enforce the use of seatbelts and set the example.
- Some municipalities are holding police agencies accountable if officers do not wear their seat belts in government owned vehicles.

The Worst Mistake: *Police-on-Police* Shootings

As the research team continued to improve and refine NLEOMF data, one of the categories that needed attention were the shooting cases that were originally classified as *Accidental*. There were three categories for what were reported as accidental shootings of officers by other officers and one category of officers who fatally shot themselves. The original categories were: *Accidental (crossfire, mistaken for offender, mishap), Accidental (self, cleaning, not suicide), Accidental (training mishap) and Accidental (unknown)*. These cases totaled 550 cases.

This number represents three percent of all the line-of-duty deaths and five percent of all shooting deaths. The research team examined those cases to clarify the circumstances and see what information emerged historically and more recently. These tragedies seem to occur each year, and many are preventable as they are the result of carelessness or, in a few cases, recklessness.

The team dispensed with the term "accidental" except to describe a handful of cases that could not be considered to have resulted from carelessness or negligence. The new categories created were *Inadvertent (shot unintentionally, negligent discharge or other mishap), Mistaken by Police (intentionally shot, mistaken for a suspect by fellow officer), Inadvertent/Training (shot while engaged in training activity), Mistaken by Civilian (mistakenly shot by civilian for robber, burglar, thief, etc.), Crossfire,* and *Accidental (malfunction, dropped, etc.)*.

Police-on-Police shootings account for five percent of all shooting deaths of law enforcement officers.

Researchers left the *Accidental (self, cleaning, not suicide)* cases alone except to eliminate cases that did needed to be re-categorized. In all, the research team found 139 cases where officers died because of shooting themselves. Most of these cases involve a service pistol, usually a revolver, being dropped on the floor or hitting some other hard surface as it fell out of a pocket or holster and discharged, striking the officer. Others occurred as officers or deputies were drawing their firearm from a coat pocket and pulled the trigger as the weapon snagged as they attempted to draw it out.

In 1904, the data indicates that six officers across the United States died because of accidentally shooting themselves with their own firearm. The oldest case was recorded in 1856, when a night watchman, accidentally shot himself while trying to keep the peace during an Election Day riot.

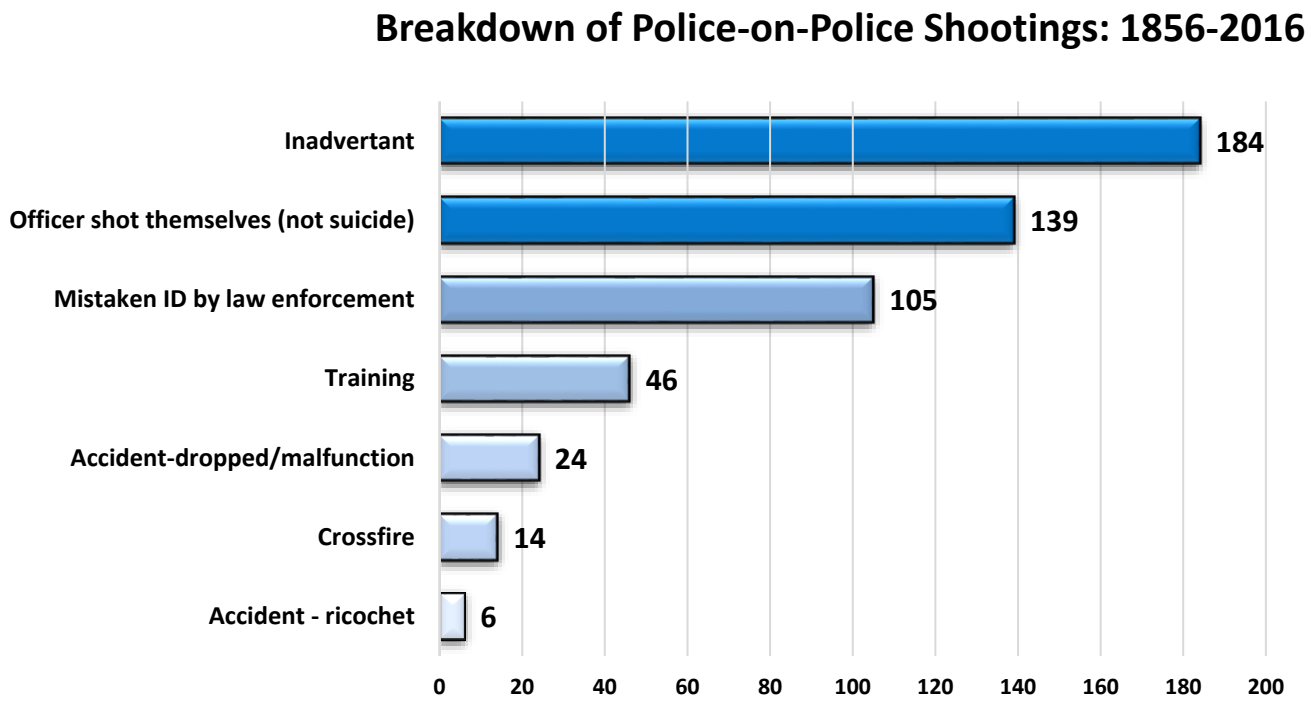

Figure 20

Many of the wounds suffered by these officers were lower extremity wounds that caused the officer to bleed to death or resulted in a deadly infection. It is likely that more standardized training and the use of issued holsters help to reduce the number of these preventable discharges.

Under the new classifications of cases that involved officers being shot by other officers, the research team broke out those cases into two categories, as they found in many of the cases, the shooting was not an inadvertent act, such as a weapon going off during a struggle, or an officer tripping and discharging their firearm. It was a case of mistaking an officer for an armed suspect.

The research team spent significant time reviewing and researching these cases. In many of the older cases, information was scarce, but pains were taken to parse out each case into its more appropriate category.

The category *Mistaken Identity Police* was created and cases where officers were intentionally shooting at a person they believed to be a suspect and turned out to be another officer were placed in it. This is one of the most heart wrenching categories, with 105 cases of officers shot by fellow officers who mistook them for being an armed suspect.

In these cases of *Police-on-Police* shootings, many times it is the result of officers who were in plain-clothes shot by uniformed officers who did not recognize them as officers and believed them to be suspects.

LOC

Fifty-three of the cases occurred between 1876 and 1949. It is evident that many of these cases were the result of different agencies, most of whom had no standard uniform, encountering each other in dark railroad yards or on liquor raids during Prohibition, and shooting each other believing the targets to be armed criminals. Interestingly, from 1950 – 1960, there are no cases in the database of officers mistakenly shooting each other. This could be the result of policies around standard uniforms and improved communication ushered in during the modern era of policing.

During the Prohibition era from 1918 through 1933, there were 24 cases of officers shooting another law enforcement officer, believing them to be an armed suspect. Some cases are

seemingly inexplicable in their reported chain of events, but this occurred with some regularity as darkness or lighting conditions played a role in obscuring vision.

Seventeen of the cases involved officers who were off-duty when they took police action, or were attempting to assist and were shot by responding uniform police officers. This tragic circumstance has played out in one large metropolitan agency seven times over the years as off-duty officers have been shot and killed by fellow officers.

The most recent tragedy occurred under a very confused and intense situation, as a police station was being shot at by a suspect standing outside. A plain-clothes officer who arrived at a scene to help was mistakenly shot by an officer believing him to be another shooter that was part of the ambush attack on the station.

Officers shot and killed when mistaken for Offender: 1856-2016

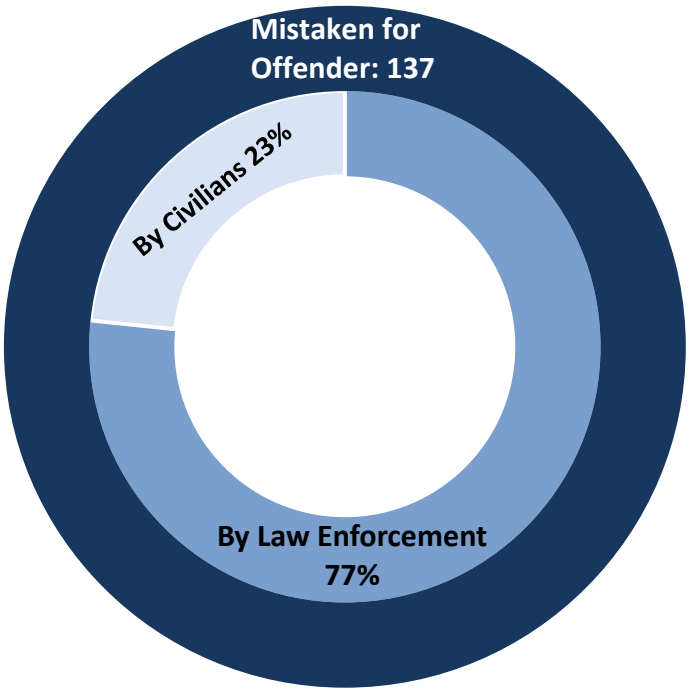

Figure 21

Put into a separate category were the 32 cases of officers mistakenly shot by civilians. These cases were originally all included in the *Accidental (mistaken for offender, crossfire, mishap)* category from which most of these cases was re-classified. The research team found it

necessary to isolate these cases, unfortunate though they are, as they were not part of the overall examination into the problem of *Police-on-Police* shootings.

The common theme to the *Mistaken by Civilian* cases was business owners shooting officers believing them to be robbers or burglars or farmers shooting deputies, believing them to be robbers or thieves. The predominant numbers of these cases occurred between 1902 and 1941, and then became rarer as the years progress. This may be a result of deputies and officers wearing a standard uniform with a recognizable hat, and conspicuously driving marked police vehicles. The most recent case occurred in 1986, when a plain-clothes policeman who was shot by a civilian believing the officer was breaking into his car. The civilian was charged and convicted of manslaughter.

Eleven officers were shot and killed by fellow officers as they displayed "quick-draw" techniques, engaged in impromptu re-enactments of situations, or demonstrated weapon retention techniques with loaded firearms.

Tied to the category of *Mistaken by Police,* but different in its nature, is the category *Inadvertent.* This category captures incidents where an officer shot a fellow officer, but did not do so intentionally. These cases were the result of many different factors and are unintentional in their character. Sadly, they are often the result of negligence or not following protocols when handling weapons. This is a large category with 184 officers having been inadvertently or unintentionally shot and killed by fellow officers.

The scenarios differed and many of the older cases offered few details, but several common themes emerged when reviewing these cases. The most prevalent circumstance in which an officer was inadvertently shot involved officers with drawn pistols struggling with suspects. In these cases, the handgun discharged during the struggle with the suspect and the bullet hit a fellow officer. There were 24 cases identified where an officer was shot by a fellow officer as they struggled to control a suspect. In one case, an officer struck a suspect with his revolver and as he did, it discharged, striking his partner and killing him.

The most prevalent circumstance when an officer was inadvertently shot involved officers with drawn pistols struggling with suspects.

At least 18 officers were shot and killed by fellow officers as they were engaged in shootouts with suspects and an officer was struck by police bullets. Other scenarios involved officers shooting at a fleeing prisoner or escaping convicts and striking fellow officers. Some occurred while suspects were pursued, and an officer fired at them, hitting a fellow officer.

In one of the more disturbing circumstances, 11 officers were shot and killed by fellow officers as they displayed "quick-draw" techniques or engaged in impromptu re-enactments of situations, or demonstrated weapon retention techniques with loaded firearms. These

appalling cases are completely preventable, as are the numerous other cases involving officers mishandling their firearms.

The predominant weapon in this category is the officer's service pistol, or handgun, accounting for 85 of the cases. There were 47 cases in which the firearm type was unknown, and the remaining cases were ten shotguns and three rifles.

Part of the *Inadvertent* category is a sub-category designed to capture those instances when officers shot each other in a *Crossfire.* There were 14 cases in which officers were caught in a crossfire between officers and suspects. Most of the circumstances involved an officer being shot by a fellow officer during a gunfight where an officer got caught in the middle as the violence erupted.

In one case, two deputy sheriffs and marshal died in a shootout with burglary suspects who were part of a homeless encampment. One deputy and the marshal were shot and killed in the shootout with the suspects, and one deputy was struck by a police bullet when he was caught between the two factions. This is a small category of cases but is an important one as this is always a danger when multiple officers are involved in situations that can turn into shootouts. The latest case in the database is from 2013 and involved an officer being shot in crossfire as other officers exchanged shots with a murder suspect.

Inadvertent shootings have averaged one per year, with 184 deaths spanning 145 years (1871-2016).

The *Inadvertent* cases have not diminished over time as they continue to occur and with some regularity. The 184 cases in this category span 145 years from 1871-2016, averaging one a year. Similarly, the cases that are captured in the *Training* category continue, despite the advent of certified firearms instructors and range safety rules and policies.

The *Training* group consists of 46 cases where officers were conducting live fire training exercises at outdoor or indoor range facilities. If the fatality occurred at sanctioned firearms training, it was counted in this category to develop a clearer picture of how many officers have died while at firearms training.

A handful of these cases involved officers loading and unloading their firearms while at training, but the largest circumstance that emerged was officers shot while engaging in scenario-based training in which one officer posed as a suspect. Based on the information available, the research team found 12 cases when an officer was shot participating in training that involved officers interacting with other officers or instructors acting as suspects. In three cases, an officer was shot and killed with a weapon that was thought to be unloaded, or loaded with blanks. There were two instances where a firearms range instructor was indicted and convicted due to their gross negligence.

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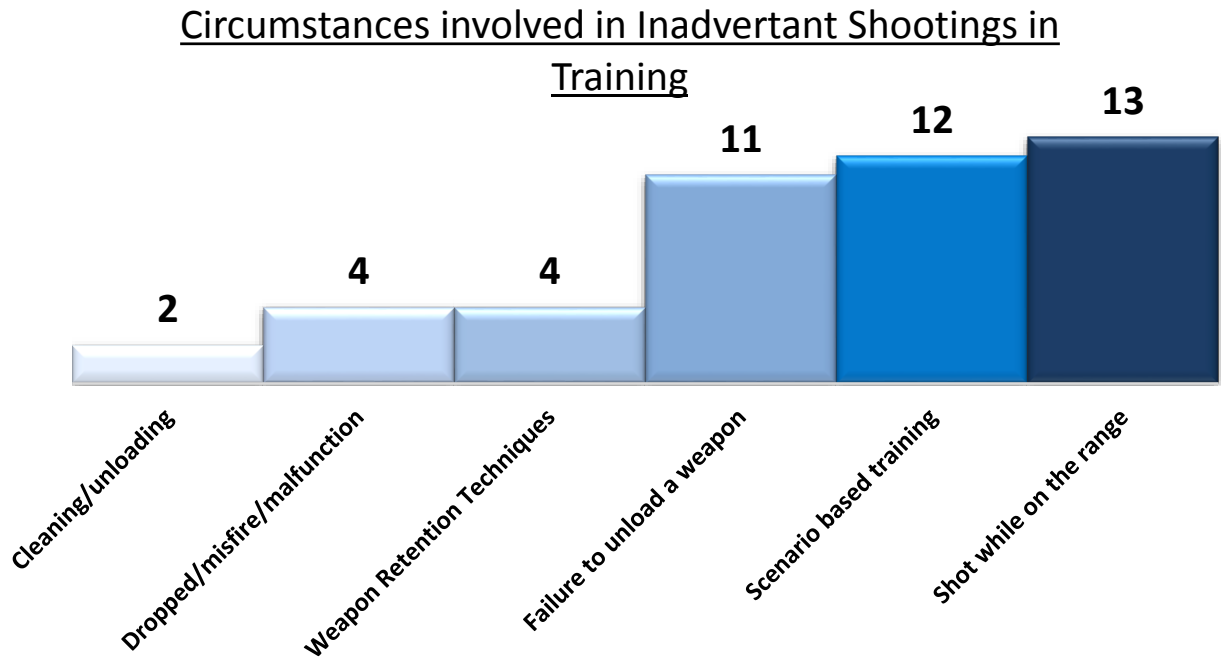

Figure 22

Violations of basic safety principles are the key element in these cases. Live ammunition was introduced into weapons that were supposed to be unloaded or contain blanks or "dummy" rounds. Officers were shot as other officers on the firing line attempted to clear malfunctions and range instructors failed to unload demonstration weapons.

Two additional categories the research team drew out were *Accidental (Ricochet*) and *Accidental (malfunction, dropped).* These categories entail circumstances that were not the result of overt recklessness but were more benign in their character and out of an officer's control. There were 24 cases that the researchers placed into the *Accidental (malfunction, dropped)* category and six cases that involved the ricochet of a bullet fired at a suspect that managed to strike an officer nearby. These categories capture the cases of officers who were shot in an accidental situation where a weapon malfunctioned or fell to the ground and discharged striking an officer nearby.

An example is when an officer was having a vehicle towed after a crash and as the smashed vehicle was being moved, a rifle inside the vehicle discharged, striking the officer standing on the side of the road. In another example, a deputy was struck and killed by a bullet that ricocheted out of an animal that a fellow deputy had shot to put down.

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The cases that encompass the death of officers not at the hands of suspects, but at the hands of their comrades is significant and should be paid attention, as there are lessons in each one. In examining all these cases across the years, it appears 1923 was a particularly bad year as 10 officers where shot and killed under one of the categories. Five officers shot themselves, two officers were shot mistakenly by other officers, two officers were inadvertently shot by fellow officers and one officer died because of an accident. These are lives lost under circumstances that better training, policies and communication could have likely averted. In fact, things have progressed since 1923 and the cases seemed to have tapered off, but they still occur with regularity. From 2010-2016, there were two officers killed in each of those years under one of these categories.

The NLEOMF research team continues to analyze and categorize *Police-on-Police* shootings, as many of the older cases need further research.

Case Study: Wrong place, wrong time

In a large county law enforcement agency on a spring evening, officers were called to investigate a suspicious person who was reported to be armed. Officers from two different agencies responded and were able to contain the suspect in a residence. Additional officers continued to respond to the location as it appeared that the situation was shaping into a barricade situation.

The suspect emerged from his hiding place and threatened the officers present with a weapon and he was subsequently shot and killed.

As this situation was ending, an officer from a specialized unit, who was in plain clothes, arrived and was carrying his issued patrol rifle as he approached the location of the incident.

He was observed by an officer who was not from his agency and who did not recognize the armed man as an officer and shot and killed him.

In a 2011 report on *Police-on-Police* shootings, the task force studying the subject indicated that "Most *Police-on-Police* shootings are preventable, but only if supervisors, trainers and officers themselves understand how they have happened in the past." (10) The report covers many aspects of these encounters but clearly recognizes the importance of studying the issue to prevent further recurrence.

Most *Police-on-Police* shootings are preventable, but only if supervisors, trainers and officers understand how they have happened in the past.

Make It Safer

- The death of an officer due to training errors, weapon mishandling and misidentification is unacceptable and can be prevented.

- Training is the most important element to make it safer for officers to protect each other as they do their jobs.

- Deconflicting arrests and investigations is critical as several of these scenarios unfolded as officers and agents from different jurisdiction unknowingly came together not know who the other was.

- Policies to better protect officers who must take action while off duty and/or in plain-clothes assignments:
  - Recognition signals or code words
  - Training on standard commands and practicing challenging armed persons.
  - Ensuring on-duty uniform patrol officers know who is operating in plain clothes and where.

A Look at 2017 Year Fatality Data

In 2017, 129 law enforcement officers had been killed in the line of duty. This number represents a ten percent decrease over 2016 when 143 officers died in the line of duty.

Firearms Related Fatalities

Forty-six law enforcement officers were shot and killed in 2017, a thirty-one percent decrease from the year before. Eight of them appear to have been killed in circumstances that the NLEOMF would consider an ambush.

The preliminary information indicates that the weapons used were 33 handguns, ten rifles, and two shotguns. In three of the handgun cases, it was the officer's issued service pistol that was used by the suspect.

Traffic-Related Fatalities

There were 46 traffic-related fatalities in 2017. There have been 31 automobile crashes, of which 14 were single-vehicle crashes. There have been ten officers struck and killed and five officers who died in motorcycle crashes.

The preliminary information indicates that in at least seven of the automobile crashes, officers were not wearing their seatbelt.

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Conclusion

This report provides important insight into how law enforcement officers are being killed and offers solid recommendations on how to make it safer for them; particularly for those who are on patrol.

The analysis in the report was done to give law enforcement a window into how these fatal encounters occurred over a seven-year period, and what were the most common themes in the types of scenarios that brought the offender and the officer(s) together. The analysis, coupled with the real cases studies, is designed to highlight the dangers faced by officers when they respond to a call for service or take independent action to enforce the law.

The report also gives the reader an understanding of the phenomena of ambushes and the consistent and increasing threat they pose to officers. Examining cases deemed ambushes and the circumstances under which they occurred offer a wider understanding of the problem and increase awareness about some of the more common themes among those cases.

To further raise awareness and make the job safer for officers, the report delivers eye-opening data on the use of body armor and seatbelts among law enforcement. The research team looked at the use of those two safety items across seven years of relevant fatalities and showed that there is room for improvement. The use of body armor was examined not only in shootings but in crashes and assaults as it provides protection against trauma and penetrating injuries to the torso.

The researchers addressed a continuing area of concern for law enforcement by providing a breakdown of cases where officers shot other officers through mistaken identity, mishap, or through an inadvertent action. Readers should be stunned by the number of cases and by the specifics brought to light that are still occurring despite much-improved training policies and safety measures. The continuing problem of *Police-on-Police* shootings in the field and on the range must be addressed by practitioners.

The information and analysis supplied offers law enforcement greater awareness and actionable steps to take to improve the safety of those who serve. The infographics and the brief case studies clearly demonstrate where the dangers can lie and at the minimum promote a clear understanding of what poses a deadly threat to officers in the field.

Each of the sections of analysis is followed by a series of bullet points titled *Make it Safer.* These cautions and recommendations were the results of not only the previous report, and the researchers own knowledge but from the listed group of highly experienced and diverse law enforcement executives who reviewed and edited the report. This distinguished group all met

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and over the course of a full day, reviewed the draft report and added their insight and experience to the recommendations.

The analysis conducted is part of the continuing work of the NLEOMF and its staff who are constantly working to reduce fatalities and injuries by creating greater awareness and understanding of how officers are dying and focusing on those areas where improvements can be made.

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Summary of Findings

The information contained within this report 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 continue to represent 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, including some ambushes.

- In an important change from prior years, 17 of the newly examined 18 cases involving a *Domestic Disputes* call, involved officers being fired from outside the residence or location they were dispatched to. Six of those cases involved officers being engaged by gunfire from over 50 feet.

- *A Man with a Gun* and *Shots Fired* call types both increased dramatically over the numbers found in the first analysis (Fatal Calls and Deadly Encounters). Those two firearm related calls for service nearly doubled and in a shorter time span than that covered in the initial report.

- The average length of service for officers killed while answering a call for service was 13.5 years.

- In 43 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 the categories.

- In a significant number of cases, 30 percent, officers were alone when they were shot and killed answering a call for service.

Self-Initiated Enforcement Activity

- Fifty-two percent of officers who were killed while engaged in Self-Initiated Activity were conducting a traffic stop for vehicle enforcement. This percentage dropped from the previous study, but remains the most common enforcement action that results in an officer fatality.

- In 49 percent of the cases involving an officer initiating a stop on a vehicle, they were shot and killed as the interaction with the driver and passengers began. In 21 percent, the officer was shot and killed before contacting the driver.

- Officers are at a disadvantage as they contact 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.

Ambushes

- The year 2016 saw a significant increase in ambush attacks on unsuspecting officers, as 21 were shot and killed. In two significant cases, Dallas and Baton Rouge, multiple officers were killed by suspects intentionally targeting law enforcement.

- Eighty-one officers have been shot and killed in ambushes over the seven-year period form 2010-2016 that was studied.

- Sixty-one percent of the officers shot and killed by means of an ambush attack, were not answering a call for service or engaged in enforcement action or performing official duties. Twelve of the officers were assassinated as they sat in their patrol cars.

- Nearly half of the fatal assaults were carried out by suspects armed with rifles.

- *Domestic Dispute* calls were the predominant calls for service that resulted in an ambush shooting of responding officers.

- Fourteen officers were shot and killed while off-duty. Several of those officers were attacked on their way home or at their homes by irate defendants or targets of criminal investigations.

- The use of body armor and the availability of additional hard armor and helmets can help increase an officer's chance of surviving an ambush attack.

Body Armor Use from 2010-2016

- Body armor can protect against several types of injuries, not just firearms.

- Thirty percent of officers killed in the line of duty was not wearing body armor that could mitigate penetrating injury as well as, blunt force trauma.

- Twenty percent of the officers killed while answering a call for service, meaning that they were assigned to a patrol function, were not wearing body armor.

- The research team discovered 25 cases in which the body armor that was worn was penetrated by rounds fired by suspects and in 10 of those cases, it was established that the bullet that pierced the body armor was the fatal wound.

Seatbelt Use 2010-2016

- Researchers looked at seatbelt use in fatal automobile crashes over a five-year period from 2012-2016. Forty-seven percent of officers, in the 152 fatal crashes examined, were **not** wearing their seatbelt.

- In 2016, 52% of officers involved in fatal auto crashes were not wearing their seatbelt.

- The researchers found that of the single-vehicle crashes analyzed, 47 percent of the unbelted officers were not on a call for service. They were on patrol or an administrative assignment.

Police-on-Police Shootings

- An historical analysis of cases where officers inadvertently or unintentionally shot a fellow officer, found a total of 550 law enforcement deaths that were the result of mistaken identity, accident, negligence, or where an officer fatally shot themselves.

- One hundred and eighty-four officers have died as a result of being inadvertently shot by fellow officers or agents.

- One hundred and five officers have been shot and killed because of officers mistaking them for armed suspects.

- A total of 46 officers have been killed while engaged in training at a range or at a training facility.

- There were 17 officers who were shot and killed by uniformed officers who mistook them for suspects as they took police action off-duty and in plain clothes.

- Eleven officers were shot and killed by a fellow officer as they demonstrated “Quick-draw” techniques with their issued firearm.

- Things have improved as the profession has increased training and provided better equipment such as holsters. In one particularly bad year in 1923, 10 officers were fatally shot and killed by a fellow law enforcement officer.

Recommendations

- Continued emphasis must be placed on handling *Domestic Dispute* calls for service and on the need for two officers to respond to calls for service.

- 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 O*fficer Needs Assistance*, *Robbery in Progress*, and *Shots Fired*. Ensure that *Domestic Dispute* cases are monitored closely and that dispatchers challenge officers for their welfare regularly when they are on the scene of a high priority call.

- Multijurisdictional and wide-scale interagency responses to calls and dynamic scenes must de-conflicted to prevent friendly fire incidents and officers in squads should be trained together.

- Officers must be empowered to lead at all levels to better handle rapidly evolving dynamic situations.

- Make hard plate armor and helmets that can protect officers from rifle fire available to patrol officers.

- Consider the use of ear pieces with hand-held radios to prevent suspects from hearing returns on name checks and license checks, and prevent suspects from locating approaching or concealed officers in tactical situations.

- Seek out available free training such as 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 acting. 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.

- **Annual** inspection of issued body armor for fit and wear must be done to ensure that the vests fit properly and are not past their service date.

- Policies and training to reduce the chances of plain clothes personnel or off-duty officers taking police action and being mistaken for an armed offender by responding officers.

National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund

Founded in 1984, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund is dedicated to telling the story of American Law Enforcement and making it safer for those who serve.

A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Washington, DC, the Memorial Fund built and continues to maintain the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial—the nation's monument to law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. The Memorial Fund is a principal organizer of the National Police Week observance each May and hosts a Candlelight Vigil each May 13th to honor all fallen officers. In addition, the Fund maintains the largest, most comprehensive database of line-of-duty officer deaths, conducts research into officer fatality trends and issues, and serves as an information clearinghouse.

More recently, the Memorial Fund is building the National Law Enforcement Museum, currently under construction adjacent to the Memorial in Washington, DC. The Museum will tell the story of American law enforcement through exhibits, collections, research, and education.

The Memorial Fund is governed by a Board of Directors representing 16 of the most prestigious law enforcement organizations in the country. In addition, three major corporate partners serve on the Board of Directors including DuPont, Motorola, and Verizon. Led by President and Chief Executive Officer Craig W. Floyd, Memorial Fund staff members bring diverse backgrounds and skills to the organization's mission. The Memorial Fund does not receive taxpayer dollars for its day-to-day operations but relies on the generous contributions of the public.

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Project Director and Researchers' Information

John Matthews

John Matthews is the Director of Federal Partnerships for the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) and a former chief of police. Mr. 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 was created by two members of the NLEOMF who served or currently serve in law enforcement.

Nicholas Breul

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 him 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 then went on to supervise the Traffic Safety Branch, which included the Major Crash investigative unit.

Mr. Breul then retired in 2013 and went onto be the Director of Security Operations for the Washington National Cathedral. There he oversaw a thirteen-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.

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Desiree Luongo

Desiree Luongo is the Senior Project Manager for the Officer Safety and Wellness Division at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF). Ms. Luongo joined the Memorial Fund in 2015 as a member of the research team, examining current year law enforcement fatalities for inclusion on the Memorial.

Prior to the Memorial Fund, Ms. Luongo proudly served in the United States Secret Service Uniformed Division as both an Officer and a Sergeant. Ms. Luongo served most of her career in the Uniformed Division at the White House Branch, working in a variety of administrative and operational assignments. Ms. Luongo also traveled in support of Presidential, Vice Presidential and First Family protection details.

APPENDIX A

National Law Enforcement Officers
MEMORIAL FUND
RESPECT. HONOR. REMEMBER.

OFFICER DATA FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

NAME of AGENCY HEAD: _____

SUBMITTING AGENCY: _____

OFFICER AGENCY: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____City: _____State _____ Zip_____

PHONE _____FAX _____CONTACT PERSON_____

CONTACT PERSON PHONE & E-MAIL ADDRESS_____

PERSONAL DATA ON DECEDENT OFFICER

FIRST NAME:	MIDDLE NAME:	SURNAME (INCLUDING SUFFIX, IF APPLICABLE):

RANK OR TITLE: _____

WAS DECEDENT A DULY SWORN OFFICER WITH FULL ARREST POWERS?
☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ OTHER EXPLAIN: _____

DATE OF INCIDENT:	TIME OF INCIDENT: (MILITARY)	DATE OF DEATH:	AGE:	SEX:

WAS OFFICER CERTIFIED/LICENSED BY STATE, BY P.O.S.T. (Police Officer Standards Training), OR BY A FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING ACADEMY? ☐ YES ☐ NO

LENGTH OF LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE: _____

MARITAL STATUS: ☐ SINGLE ☐ MARRIED ☐ DIVORCED ☐ WIDOWED ☐ UNKNOWN # OF CHILDREN: _____

RACE: ☐ ASIAN ☐ AFRICAN-AMERICAN ☐ CAUCASIAN ☐ HISPANIC ☐ NATIVE AMERICAN ☐ OTHER ☐ UNKNOWN

CIRCUMSTANCES OF OFFICER'S DEATH

WAS OFFICER ON DUTY AT THE TIME OF INCIDENT? ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ UNKNOWN

THE CAUSE OF DEATH WAS: ☐ FELONIOUS ASSAULT ☐ ACCIDENTAL SITUATION

WAS OFFENDER UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF: ☐ ALCOHOL ☐ NARCOTICS ☐ BOTH ☐ UNKNOWN ☐ NOT APPLICABLE

WAS THIS A TASK FORCE OPERATION? ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ UNKNOWN ☐ NOT APPLICABLE

NLEOMF MEMORIAL RESEARCH

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www.nleomf.org website | research@nleomf.org email

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Please check the scenario that best describes the action that initiated the fatal incident:

- ☐ Officer was dispatched following a call to 911, an emergency communications call center or police station ***If so, include a complete copy of the CAD sheet, Call Sheet, or Dispatch Data Sheet showing all the call information.***
- ☐ Officer was responding to a call for assistance from another officer
- ☐ Officer was on a self-initiated activity, such as a vehicle stop or pedestrian stop
- ☐ Officer was responding to a cell phone call from a citizen or confidential source
- ☐ Officer was engaged in a tactical operation (search warrant, buy/bust, barricade)
- ☐ Officer was flagged down or otherwise spontaneously contacted by a citizen
- ☐ Officer was on an administrative assignment (in transit to event or training)
- ☐ Other, please describe_____

(A) Check the type of call or activity that the officer was responding to:

- ☐ Assault call (fights, threats, or assaults with weapons)
- ☐ Burglary in progress call or pursuing burglary suspect
- ☐ Disturbance calls (disorderly persons, loud noise, traffic complaint, etc.)
- ☐ Domestic disturbance/violence calls (family fights, custody dispute, stalking, etc.)
- ☐ Drug related (possession, transporting, distribution, production)
- ☐ Emergency call/Search and rescue
- ☐ Investigate the trouble or suspicious person call
- ☐ Mentally ill or emotionally disturbed person call
- ☐ Officer in trouble call
- ☐ Robbery in progress call or pursuing robbery suspect
- ☐ Shots fired call
- ☐ Theft or fraud call (Shoplifting, theft of property, credit card fraud)
- ☐ Traffic enforcement (Stop, Check Point, running radar)
- ☐ Traffic crash (vehicle crash or pedestrian struck)

(B) Check the box that best describes the circumstances involved in the death:

- ☐ Ambush **(premeditated, unexpected assault while concealed or by calculated advantage)**
- ☐ Attempting to place under arrest (foot chase or searching for suspect)
- ☐ Civil disorder (mass demonstration or riot, etc.)
- ☐ Handling, transporting, custody of prisoners.
- ☐ Investigative activity (questioning suspects, taking report, interviewing witnesses)
- ☐ Tactical situation (felony stop, barricade, executing search warrant, hostage)
- ☐ Vehicular pursuit (collision, intentionally struck, placing stop sticks)
- ☐ Inadvertent shooting (crossfire, mistaken for offender, training mishap, etc.)
- ☐ Automobile crash (collision with another motor vehicle)
- ☐ Single automobile crash (vehicle left roadway or struck fixed object)
- ☐ Motorcycle crash (collision with another motor vehicle)
- ☐ Single motorcycle crash (motorcycle left roadway, skidded or struck fixed object)
- ☐ Struck by vehicle
- ☐ Aircraft accident
- ☐ Training
- ☐ Other cause (Fall, drowning, fire, etc. (specify)_____
- ☐ 9-11 related illness
- ☐ Job related illness, (e.g. stress induced heart attack) _____

What was the approximate distance between the decedent officer and the offender(s)?

☐ 0-5 feet ☐ 6-10 feet ☐ 11-20 feet ☐ 21-50 feet ☐ Greater than 50 feet ☐ N/A

If this case involved a traffic collision, was it a violation of the "Move Over" law? ☐ Yes ☐ No

PAGE 2

Weapon used against the Officer:

☐ Firearm (check one): ☐ Handgun ☐ Rifle ☐ Shotgun ☐ Officer's own weapon
☐ Armor-piercing ammunition
☐ Bomb
☐ Vehicle
☐ Personal weapons (hands, fists, feet, etc.)
☐ Knife or other cutting instrument
☐ Blunt instrument (club, brick, etc.)
(specify):_____
☐ Other
(specify):

Involvement of other Officers:

☐ DECEASED (officer(s) killed in same incident) ☐ WOUNDED (officer(s) wounded in same incident)

_____ [identify officer(s)]

SPECIAL SQUAD

1. Drug: Drug Team Member ___
2. ERT: Emergency Response Team ___
3. GTF: Gang Task Force ___
4. K-9: K-9 Officer ___
5. SWAT: SWAT Team Member ___

Was Decedent wearing body armor? ☐ No ☐ Yes: __ hard body armor __ soft body armor
Was body armor penetrated? ☐ No ☐ Yes
Was Decedent wearing a seatbelt? ☐ No ☐ Yes
Was Decedent in uniform? ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Plainclothes
Was Decedent driving/riding in a department vehicle? ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ N/A

PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES:

This information is critical and must be completed. A note of "See Attached Document" is not acceptable.

_____

_____

_____

INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTATION:

1. Incident report (with narrative)
2. CAD sheet/Dispatch data
3. Death certificate
4. Autopsy Report (if available)
5. News articles regarding incident/death
6. Copy of officer's sworn certificate
7. High quality Officer photograph (pg. 4)

☐ **OUR AGENCY HAS CONDUCTED A DILIGENT SEARCH AND EXERCISED A GOOD FAITH EFFORT TO VERIFY THAT THE INFORMATION PROVIDED AND ATTACHED HERETO IS TRUE AND CORRECT, AND THAT THIS OFFICER HAS DIED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF DUTY.**

☐ **OUR AGENCY HAS CONCLUDED THAT THIS OFFICER'S DEATH IS NOT CONSIDERED LINE OF DUTY.**

_____

(Signature of Agency Head) ***(Date)***

The criteria for including an officer's name on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial are separate and distinct from the line-of-duty-death criteria used by other entities or programs, including state and local law enforcement memorials and the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program, U.S. Department of Justice. Acceptance for inclusion on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in no way impacts decisions made by the federal government regarding the awarding of PSOB benefits. For more information about PSOB, visit www.psob.gov or call 1-888-744-6513.

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PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH A LIST OF SURVIVING FAMILY MEMBERS.

***We require the name and address of at least one surviving family member for verification of information provided by the department, particularly, the spelling of the officer's name, as it will appear on the Memorial wall. Survivor information is for internal use only and will not be released to the media or others without the expressed consent of the individual. Survivors will receive invitations to Memorial sponsored events, newsletters and other Memorial-related mailings.**

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone: _____
Relationship to officer: _____
Email: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone: _____
Relationship to officer: _____
Email: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone: _____
Relationship to officer: _____
Email: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone: _____
Relationship to officer: _____
Email: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone: _____
Relationship to officer: _____
Email: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Telephone: _____
Relationship to officer: _____
Email: _____

PHOTOGRAPH REQUIREMENTS

The Memorial Fund requires a high quality photograph of the victim officer. **Do not send a photocopy.** Send a high resolution image no smaller than 4" x 6" and no larger than 8" x 11".

If you are sending a digital photo electronically, use an original photo that is at least 4" x 6" and scan the photo at a resolution of 600 ppi (pixels per inch). Save the digital photo on a formatted CD or USB flash drive. NLEOMF will not be able to return the CD or the flash drive.
You may email the photo to research@nleomf.org

***The NLEOMF Officer Data Form should be submitted, with documentation, even if survivors and or the officer's picture cannot be located.** [2016]

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING THIS FORM IS DECEMBER 31ST.

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APPENDIX B

Primary Reason Report

Code	*Description*	*Number of Officers*
AIRC	Aircraft crashs	7
AUTO	Automobile crash	247
BEAT	Main cause of death was a beating	8
BIKE	Officer killed in a bicycle crash	1
BOAT	Officers main cause of death was Boating incident	2
BOMB	Bomb related incidents	8
DROW	Officer drowned	15
ELEC	Main cause of death was electrocution	3
FALL	Officer fell to his/her death	18
HELI	Officer was killed in a Helicopter crash	4
HORSE	Primary cause of officer's death involved a horse	2
KNIFE	Officers whose primary cause of death was a stabbing	10
MOTO	Motorcycle crash	45
PHYS	Physical related incident i.e. heart attack, TB, heat stroke	179
SHOT	Officers who were shot, regardless of call answering	376
STRA	Officer was strangled	4
STRU	Officers killed when they were struck by a vehicle	84
TERRO	Officers killed by terrorist attack	1
TRAIN	Officer or Officers vehicle was hit by a train	2

Report Totals:

Total Number of records: 19

Total Number of Officer Deaths from Records 1016

Monday, December 18, 2017 *Page 1 of 1*

ENDNOTES

1. NLEOMF, Digital Officer Database, News article printed from Pennsylvania Real Time News, January 2, 2017
2. "The 2 Most Dangerous Moments of Domestic Violence Calls" by Lt. Dan Marcou, *PoliceOne.com news*, August 25, 2017
3. NLEOMF, Digital Officer Database, Investigative Report, November 6, 2016.
4. "The Buddy System" by David Griffith *Police: The Law Enforcement Magazine,* October 2015, Volume 39, Number 10, Page 76
5. "Violent Encounters, A Study of Felonious Assaults on Our Nation's Law Enforcement Officers" by Anthony Pinizzotto, Ph.D., Edward F. Davis and Charles Miller III, Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Publication number 0383, 2006
6. "Ambushes of Police: environment, incident Dynamics, and the Aftermath of Surprise Attacks against Law Enforcement" by Fachner, George, and Zoe Thorkildsen. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015.
7. "IACP Ambush Fact Sheet," CAN Analysis Solutions and the Community Oriented Policing Services 2011
8. "Police Ambush Attacks: 4 strategies for Survival," by Duane Wolfe, *Policeone.com News*, March 1, 2017
9. "For police, not wearing a seat belt can be a fatal mistake," by Ashley Halsey III, *Washington Post*, October 14, 2012
10. "Reducing Inherent Danger: Report of the Task Force on Police-on-Police Shootings," by Christopher Stone, Et Al., *New York State Task Force on Police-on-Police Shootings*, 2011

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