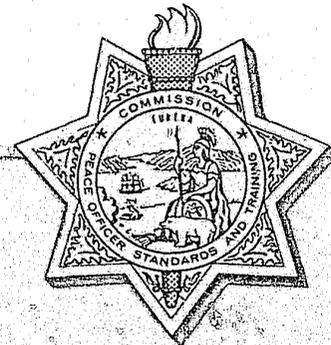


GUIDELINES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SAFETY

Resulting from the Study of
California Peace Officers Killed in the Line of Duty

113671



THE COMMISSION
ON PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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California Peace Officers Killed in the Line of Duty

NCJRS

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FOREWORD

Assembly Bill 1911 (Stirling), Chapter 885, 1985 authorized a study of incidents in which peace officers were killed in the line of duty and required the development of guidelines establishing optional standard procedures along with changes in peace officer basic training. Responsibility for the study was assigned to the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. To provide a wider frame of reference, the study was expanded and analyzed 530 assaults with firearms as well as 40 deaths from gunshot wounds of California peace officers. The study covered the period between January 1, 1980 and November 1, 1986. Fatal traffic collisions and other causes of death were also noted in the study.

Analysis of the data identified specific activities and situations that pose extraordinary hazards to the life of a peace officer. Details of the survey findings are described in the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training report, "CALIFORNIA PEACE OFFICERS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY," December, 1986. The survey is the basis for the guidelines that are described herein, and suggests changes that may be required to the basic training curriculum. The guidelines identify the issues, situations and concerns from which agency-specific procedures and tactics should be developed.

The service priorities, policies and procedures of each agency in California should reflect the environment and community in which the agency functions. Accordingly, guidelines developed as a part of this study were drafted with the view that specific standard procedures and tactics are best articulated and implemented by each local agency. These guidelines, based on the findings of the statewide study, identify the issues, concerns and hazards that are common to most agencies and officers. It is anticipated by the Commission that the specific issues described in the guidelines will be used by agency administrators to improve operating policy, tactics and procedures to reduce the risk of serious injury or death to peace officers.

The study carries to a higher level the Commission's historic commitment to improved procedures and training for officer safety. It represents the first comprehensive, statewide study of circumstances relating to peace officer killings. The study supports refinements and improvements in basic training. The guidelines also suggest a more detailed and specific focus for in-service procedures and training.

As a result of the study, it became clear that an ongoing review and research process would be an invaluable service to law enforcement. Beginning in 1987-88, the Legislature and Governor approved the resources necessary for the continuing study of assaults on peace officers. A research center at the Commission will extend the study just completed to the continuing review of assaults and deaths as they occur, and expand the base of knowledge with contemporary data. Procedural guidelines and training information resulting from this on-going analysis will be provided to local agencies and trainers to update tactics and curricula.

In addition, regional skill training centers proposed by the Commission, if approved and funded, will provide specialized training in hazardous

situations, field tactics, and the use of force. These and other efforts represent a continuing commitment which sustains the purpose and spirit of the legislation into the future.

The guidelines which follow were developed with the assistance of the Advisory Committee, comprised of individuals knowledgeable about field tactics currently used. In addition to the guidelines developed from the study data, the Advisory Committee offered additional recommendations for training. The Committee's recommendations are included, following the guidelines.

The guidelines are presented in Section A. Recommendations of the Advisory Committee are presented in Section B. Both sections deserve close attention.

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INTRODUCTION

The guidelines are intended for the optional use of law enforcement agencies and are based upon the specific findings of the study of peace officers killed in the line of duty between 1980 and 1986. Administrators and trainers concerned with the implementation of the guidelines are encouraged to thoroughly review the detailed findings described in the study report, "California Peace Officers Killed in the Line of Duty." Supportive information for each guideline will be found in the study report.

Guidelines are principally oriented to training. It is envisioned that agencies implementing these guidelines for training will rely upon a combined approach of agency based instruction, training bulletins and POST-certified courses.

There are of course, a multitude of officer-safety practices, techniques and habits that are generally accepted by law enforcement and taught in the POST Basic Course and various in-service training courses. The guidelines in this document are not intended to represent a complete summary of safety issues, but rather represent only what reasonably may be concluded based upon the examination of those peace officer killings identified in this study. Additionally, the guidelines are focused on issues representing multiple occurrences -- that is, the same factor was present in several incidents where officers were killed. Single factors identified in other incidents reported in the study will also be of value and interest to administrators, trainers and individual officers.

SECTION A. GUIDELINES FOR OPTIONAL STANDARD PROCEDURES

- o Guideline #1: Each agency should reinforce, through directives, internal training or POST-certified training courses, the need for officers to follow accepted safety procedures and tactics when responding to hazardous situations.

The procedures and tactics should:

- * provide planned responses to hazardous situations, including conditions for delayed responses;
- * define and standardize the actions of primary and backup officers;
- * minimize risks; and
- * be tailored to the needs of the agency, reflect current knowledge and protect the officers and the community.

Comment:

Fifty-five percent of the officers killed and 69% of the officers assaulted had prior knowledge that the situation to which they were responding was potentially hazardous.

Thirty-nine percent of the officers killed and 50% of the officers assaulted received information, prior to arriving at the scene, that weapons were involved.

- o Guideline #2: Each agency, when providing direction on the response to hazardous calls, should know the field situations that pose extraordinary hazards to officers.

The study identified the following hazardous situations:

- * dealing with intoxicated or mentally ill persons;
- * disturbance cases;
- * robbery-in-progress incidents; and
- * serving arrest and search warrants (particularly narcotic-related warrants).

- o Guideline #3: Each officer should understand the extraordinary hazards posed by persons who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol or are mentally ill, and should receive training in techniques to deal safely with such individuals.

Comment:

Forty-six percent of the suspects who killed officers were under the influence of intoxicating liquor, drugs, or were mentally ill.

- o Guideline #4: Each officer should understand the increased dangers involved in disturbance cases and robbery-in-progress calls, and should receive special training in the response to these high-hazard incidents.

Comment:

Disturbance cases of all types constituted the most common incident in which officers were killed or assaulted. Twenty percent (8) of the 40 officers who were killed and 27% of the officers assaulted were involved in an incident classified as a disturbance. Three of the eight officers were involved in a domestic disturbance.

Crime-in-progress was the third most common incident in which officers were assaulted or killed. Robberies were the most hazardous of the crime-in-progress incidents. Fifty-one percent of the crime-in-progress assaults and all of the officer deaths (4) occurred during robberies.

- o Guideline #5: Officers assigned to a team for the purpose of serving an arrest or search warrant should receive special training in this high-risk activity.

Comment:

Eight of the forty (20%) officers killed were serving arrest and search warrants. Four of these officers were serving narcotics-related warrants.

- o Guideline #6: Each officer should understand the increased danger when dealing at close range with suspicious persons, and should receive training that reinforces safe methods of handling suspects at this range.

Comment:

Twenty-one of the killings (51%) occurred when the distance between the officer and the suspect was less than five feet.

- o Guideline #7: Each officer should be required to demonstrate proficiency in techniques to prevent the handgun from being taken by the suspect.

Comment:

Four of the six officers killed by their own weapon were shot after the handgun was forcibly taken during a struggle with the suspect.

- o Guideline #8: Each officer should understand the responsibilities of the first officer at the scene and the tactical objectives of delayed response in hazardous situations. Delayed response considerations should include:

- * waiting for a backup officer or special team; or
- * waiting for more appropriate equipment; or
- * implementing a high-hazard response plan.

Comment:

In 12 of 40 (30%) incidents in which an officer was killed by gunshots, no backup officer was present.

- o Guideline #9: Each officer should demonstrate knowledge of the different responsibilities of, and the teamwork required by, the "primary officer" and the "backup officer".

Comment:

The study demonstrates that superiority of numbers of officers is not always enough to forestall violence. In over 70% of the cases in which officers were assaulted or killed by a single suspect, one or more backup officers were present at the scene.

- o Guideline #10: Each officer should receive training in the use of available cover to reduce the potential for injury in a hazardous encounter.

Comment:

Only 35% of the officers killed used available natural or artificial cover. Eighty-nine percent of the officers who were assaulted with firearms but not killed used available cover during the assault.

- o Guideline #11: Each officer should understand the advantages and Limitations of body armor.

Comment:

Nineteen of the fifty-two officers who were wearing body armor when they were assaulted believed the body armor reduced the seriousness of their injuries.

Forty officers were shot in the torso area of the body. Of this number, 18 (45%) were wearing protective vests. Five (27%) of the 18 officers wearing vests died as a result of the gunshot wounds. Only one death involved penetration of the vest. Eight (36%) of the 22 officers not wearing vests who were shot in the torso area died as a result of the gunshot wounds.

- o Guideline #12: Firearms training should emphasize proficiency with all weapons normally available to the officer and conditions commonly encountered in the field. Judgment and proficiency should be demonstrated under conditions that include shooting under stress, in limited and artificial light, and from different positions and types of available cover.

Comment:

Fourteen (35%) of the 40 officers who were killed by gunshot fired their weapon at the suspect(s). Of the 14 officers who fired their weapons, eight (57%) were able to hit the suspect at least once; five missed the suspect, and one case was not available.

The remaining twenty-six officers who were killed (65%) did not fire their weapon.

Approximately two-thirds of the killings occurred outdoors. Twenty-seven percent of the officers who were killed and 57% of the officers who were assaulted were shot outdoors in artificial light or no light.

- o Guideline #13: Each officer should receive training, using realistic scenarios, in observation and search techniques. Training should emphasize close observation of suspects' hands and actions, and areas within vehicles where handguns can be concealed. Training should emphasize the possibility that a suspect may have more than one weapon.

Comment:

Fifty-five percent of the 120 suspects who assaulted/killed officers with a concealed firearm had the firearm concealed on their person, in their hand or in their vehicle.

Suspects had a secondary weapon immediately available in 36% of the killings and 26% of the assaults.

SECTION B. SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee reviewed the study data and participated in the development of the guidelines. In addition to the guidelines suggested by the data, the committee offered recommendations for training based on their observations and experience with hazardous situations. Those recommendations include:

- o Each serious assault should be reviewed as soon as it is practical to do so. The findings of the review should be distributed in informational bulletins and in-service and tactical training.
- o Agencies should articulate policy and train officers in the accepted interpersonal communications skills and demeanor with the public. Training should emphasize skills to reduce and avoid violence. Emphasis on communication skills and the appropriate response to exhibited behavior just prior to assaults should assist officers to handle critical incidents more effectively and reduce injuries.
- o Law enforcement training should emphasize the importance of a "will to survive". Training should encourage the officer to continue to fight to live, in spite of the tactical situation or the injuries received.