

## **OFFICER SAFETY (Law Enforcement)**

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Staff will learn current officer injury and death trends
- Staff will review high-risk policies that affect officer safety

The New Mexico Association of Counties conducted a comprehensive analysis of losses in New Mexico sheriff departments. The information is specific to New Mexico; however, these loss trends are indicative of law enforcement operations throughout the nation.

From 2003 to 2005 New Mexico officers experienced 563 injuries, equating to over \$3.9 million in losses. These losses include the catastrophic death of officers and constitute a number of disabling injuries that left officers disabled or disfigured for life.

The intent of this presentation is to educate officers to the true causes of injuries and death to law enforcement officers. Officers with an understanding of the most common causes of injury and officer death are better prepared mentally and physical to perform their job in the safest possible manner.

The most common causes of these injuries were as follows:

- 117 injuries (20.8% of all injuries) occurred as the result of assault or resisting offenders. This assault rate is increasing at an alarming rate.
- 95 injuries (16.9% of all injuries) occurred in motor vehicle accidents. Many of these injuries occurred while running code and/or during pursuits, or when pedestrian deputies are hit by vehicles (vehicle/deputy scene placement).
- 90 injuries (16% of all injuries) occurred during training. Generally, these injuries occurred during defensive tactics and physical training “running”.
- 51 injuries (9% of all injuries) resulted from bloodborne pathogen exposures. These injuries resulted from needle sticks during searches or when contacting individuals with Hep B & C, or TB.
- 36 injuries (6% of all injuries) resulted from slips, trips & falls. Ice & snow were a common environmental condition.
- 31 injuries (5% of all injuries) occurred during foot pursuit of offenders.

- 27 injuries (4.8% of all injuries) occurred while attempting to or during a lifting maneuver.
- 26 injuries (4.6% of all injuries) resulted by not using personal protective equipment (PPE). Serious injuries occurred at Meth labs and while handling evidence and “sharps” not secured properly.

## **OFFICER DEATHS**

Since 1847, 179 officers have been killed or died in the line of duty in New Mexico. 59 (33%) of the deaths were accidental, while 120 (67%) were intentional “Murdered.”

- 15 (8.4%)- Federal
- 40 (22%)- State of NM
- 67 (37.4%)- County
- 45 (25.1%)- Municipal
- 7 (3.9%)- Tribal
- 3 (1.6%)- Railroad
- 2 (1.1%)- Other State Sheriff’s

The most common causes of officer deaths include:

- 37 deaths (20.6%) resulted from motor vehicle accidents; 12 while running code.
- 32 deaths (17.8%) occurred during felony calls or investigations.
- 16 deaths (8.9%) resulted from ambush.
- 13 deaths (7.2%) occurred during prisoner transports “escape”.
- 13 deaths (7.2%) resulted during barricaded subject(s) incidents.
- 12 deaths (6.7%) resulted from aircraft accidents.
- 11 deaths (6.1%) occurred during traffic stops.
- 10 deaths (5.5%) occurred during misdemeanor calls or investigations.

## **POLICY**

*Discuss all relevant department officer safety policies, particular attention should focus on the high-risk activities identified in this presentation.*

## **CLOSING**

- *Encourage discussion about officer safety issues and past incidents that caused or could have caused a serious injury or death.*
- *Discuss the need to stay safe and comply with all department policies that affect their safety. Remind deputies that nothing they do is worth getting seriously hurt or killed.*
- *Encourage discussion about precautions officers can take to ensure their safety on the job.*