



Traumas of Law Enforcement



Impacts of Line-Of-Duty Deaths

Presented By: Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc.

Day Two
(AM)

Goals & Objectives

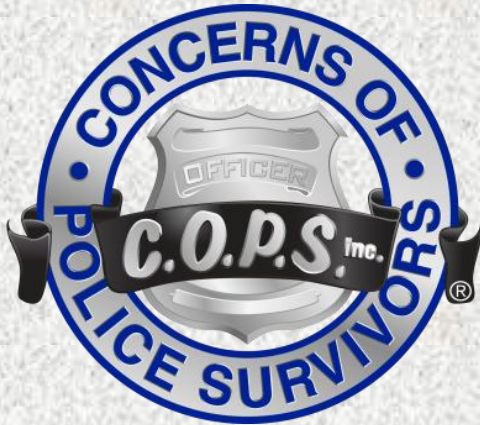
Goal #1 - Provide participants with an understanding of survivor needs and recommendations for providing support.

Goal #2 - Provide participants with needed tools and resources to develop and carry out General Orders for line-of-duty death (LODD).

C.O.P.S. Organization

Rebuilding Shattered Lives

Est: 1984



C.O.P.S. serves spouses, parents, siblings, children, fiancés/fiancées, significant others, in-laws, extended family, and co-workers.



C.O.P.S. National Conference on Law Enforcement Wellness & Trauma

November , 206-8 2026 / San Diego, CA



- Top-rated keynote speakers
- Impactful & engaging presenters
- Life-changing sessions
- Networking opportunities
- Law Enforcement Appreciation Night Reception Dinner
- Lunch included on days 1 & 2

Conference Fees

\$350 per person

\$175 spouse/sig. other
(if attending with paid participant)



C.O.P.S. Presenter Personal Story

Officer Rich May

East Palo Alto Police Department

EOW January 7, 2006



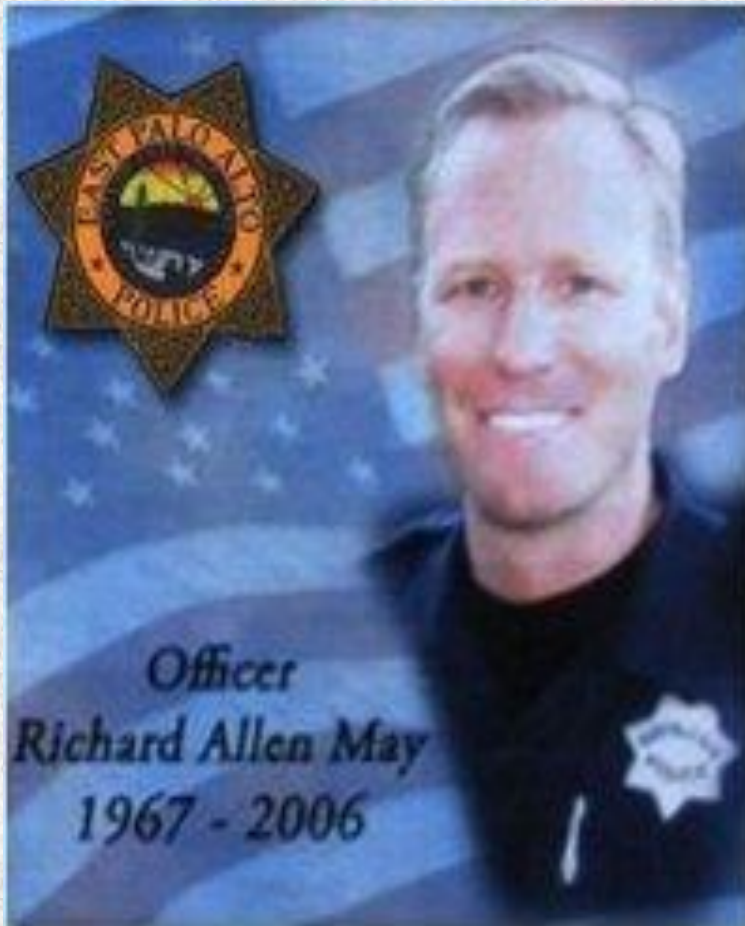
Tami McMillan
NorCal C.O.P.S.
Treasurer



Officer Rich May

East Palo Alto Police Department

EOW January 7, 2006



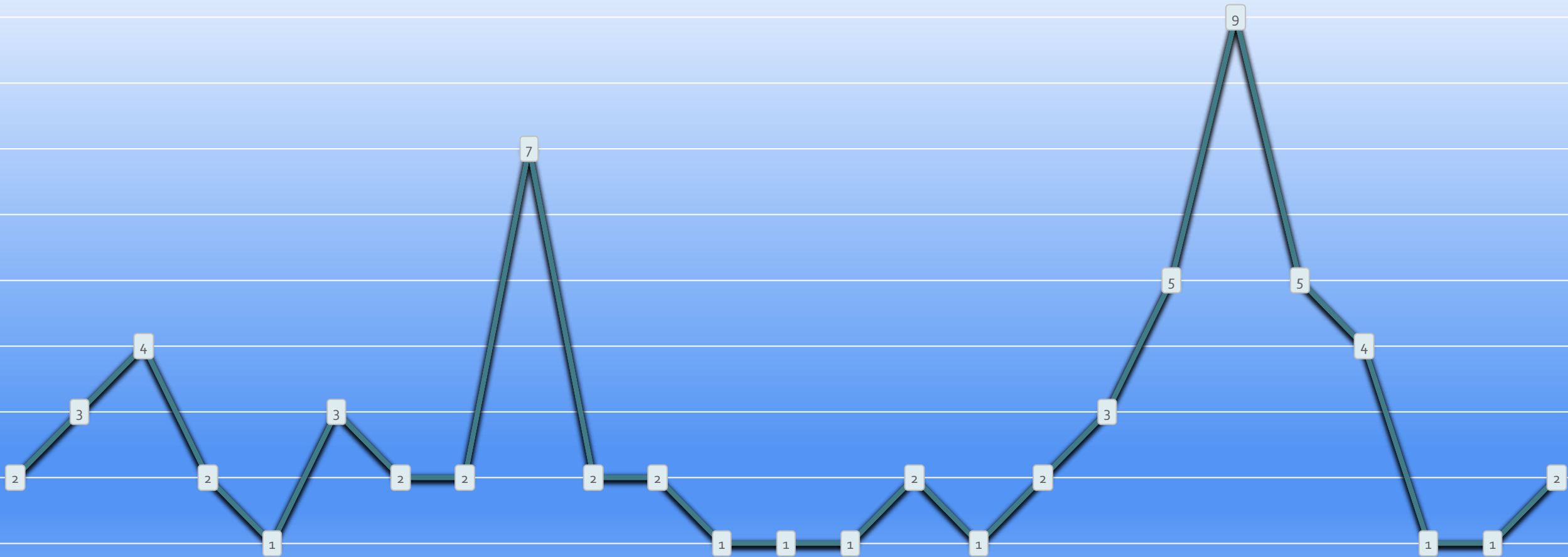
**Left: Sergeant Jose Luaorozco -
East Palo Alto Police Department**

**Right: Deputy Marco Marquez -
San Mateo County Sheriff's Office**



Line of Duty Deaths

Washington, 2001-2025 (25 years)



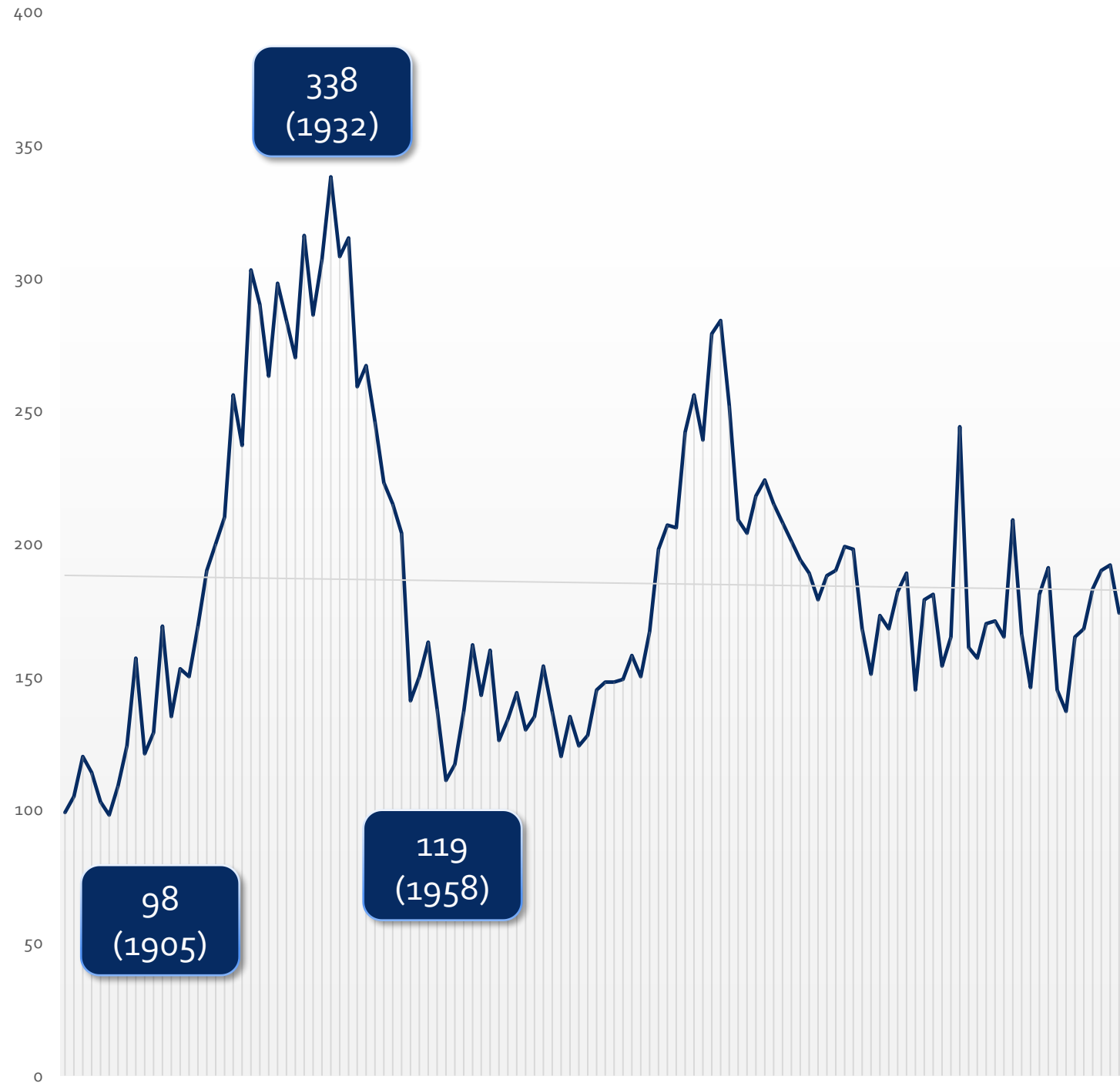
Line of Duty Deaths

Idaho, 2001-2025 (25 years)



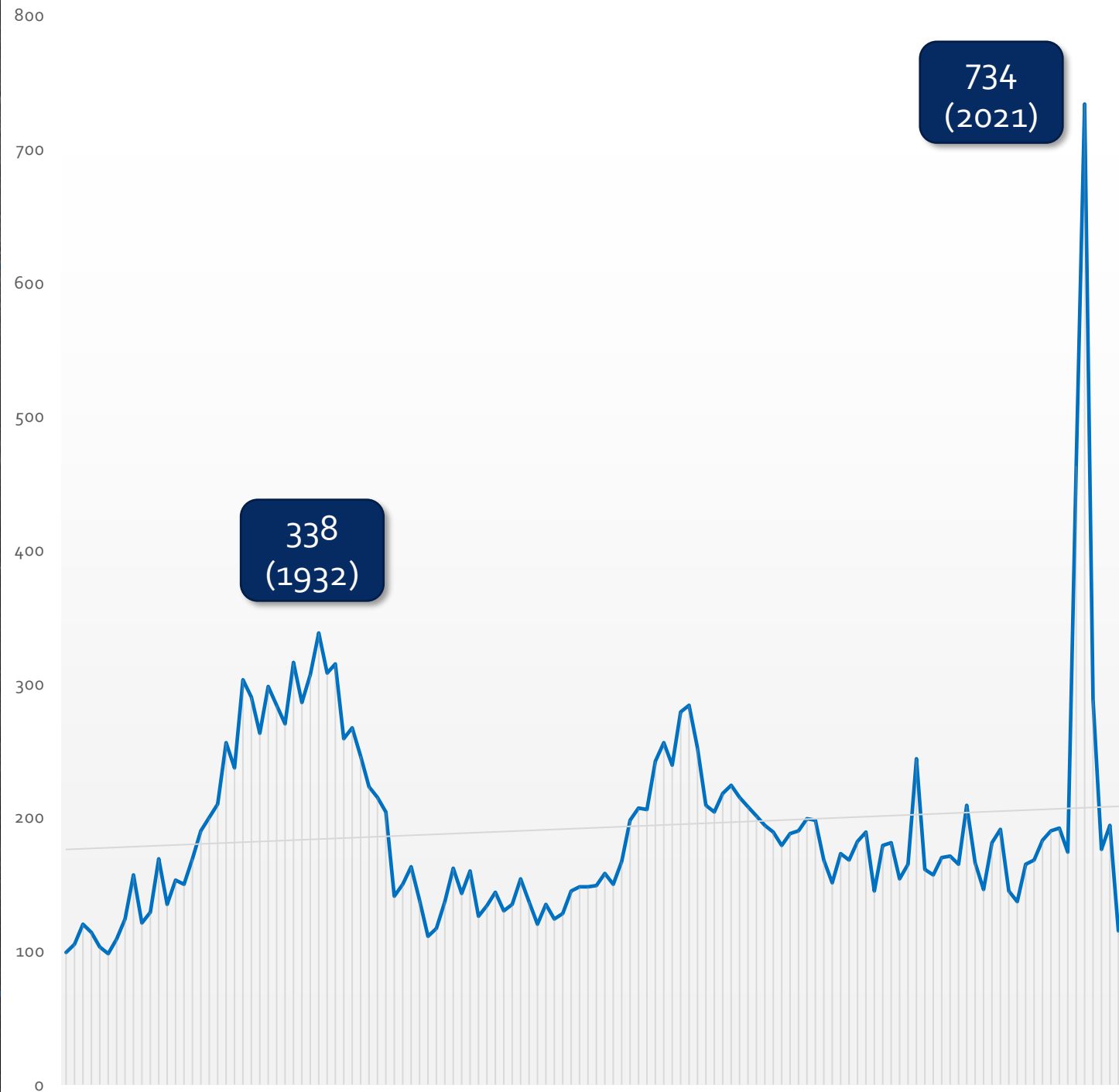
LODDs 1900-2019

- **Highest year**
338 (1932)
- **Lowest year**
98 (1905)
- **Average**
185



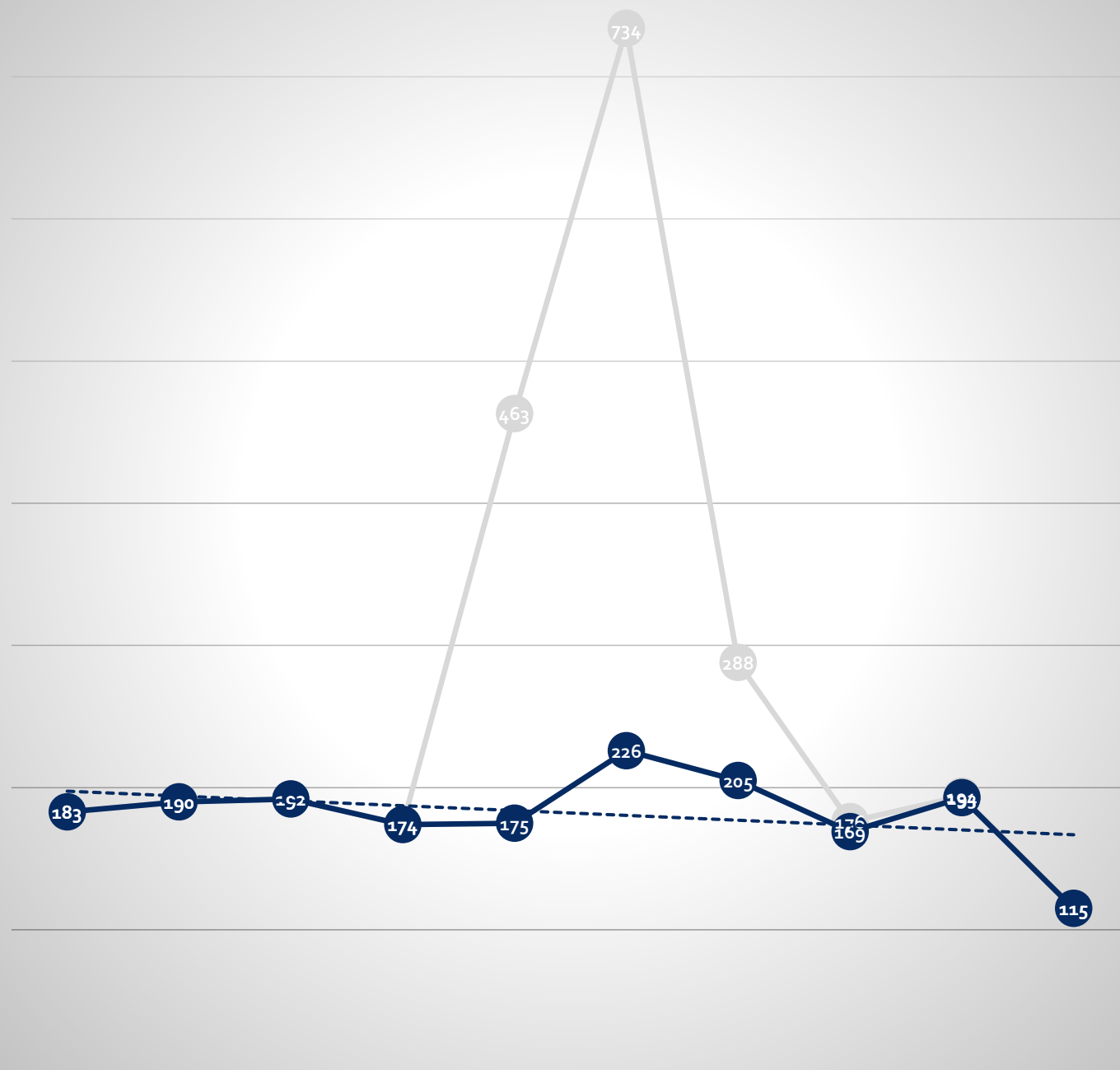
LODDs 1900-2025

- **Highest years**
 - 734 (2021) – COVID 508
 - 463 (2020) – COVID 288
 - 338 (1932)
- **Lowest year**
 - 98 (1905)
- **Average**
 - 192



LODDs less COVID 2016-2025

- **Highest years**
 - 734 (2021) – COVID 508
 - 463 (2020) – COVID 288
- **Lowest year**
 - 115 (2025)
- **Average**
 - 268 – Including COVID
 - 182 – Excluding COVID

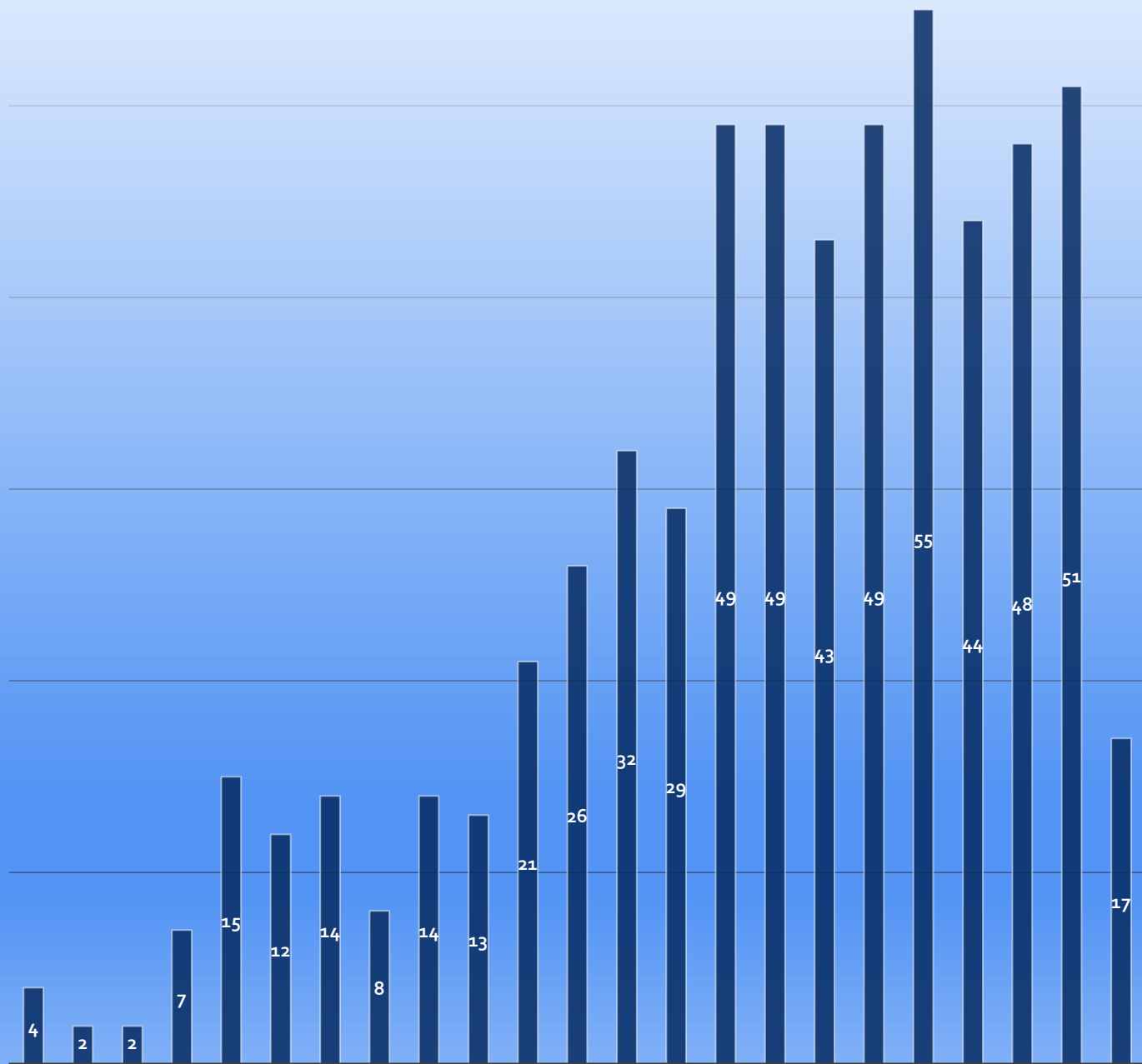


LODDs by 9/11 Related Illness, 2003-2025

Peak year: 55 (2021)

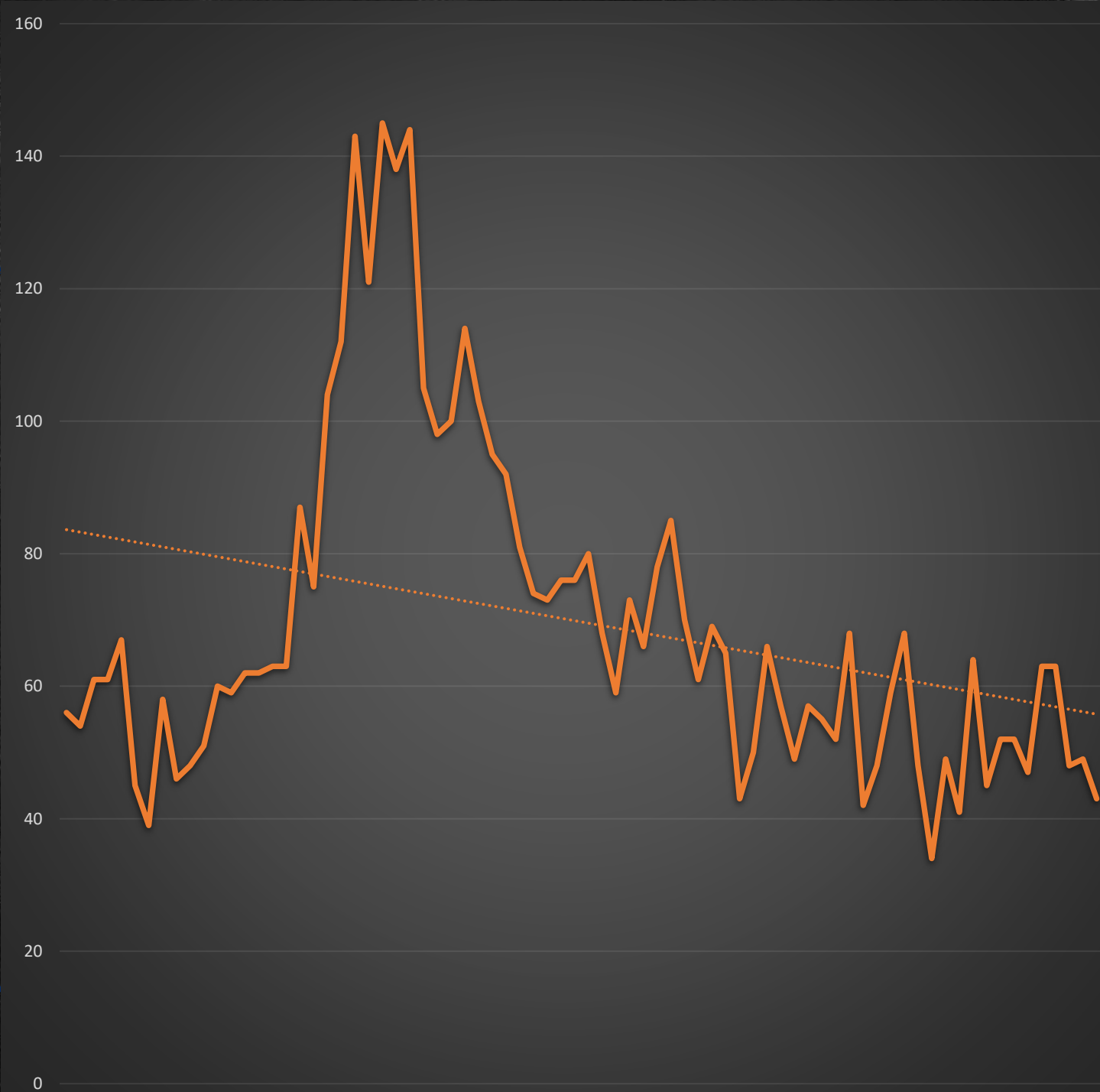
Total: 604

Officers Killed in
9/11/01 Attack: 72



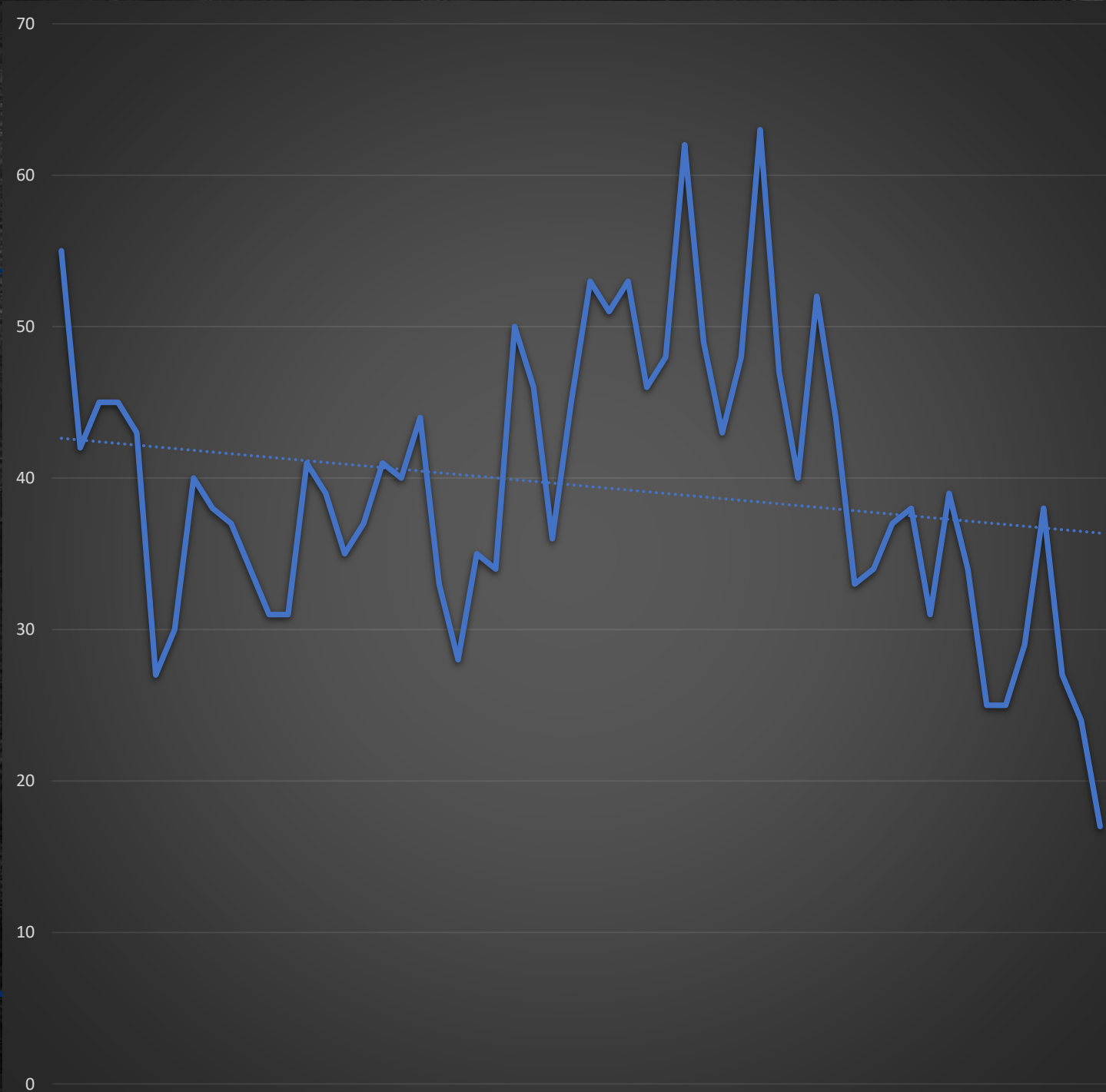
LODDs by Gunfire, 1950-2025

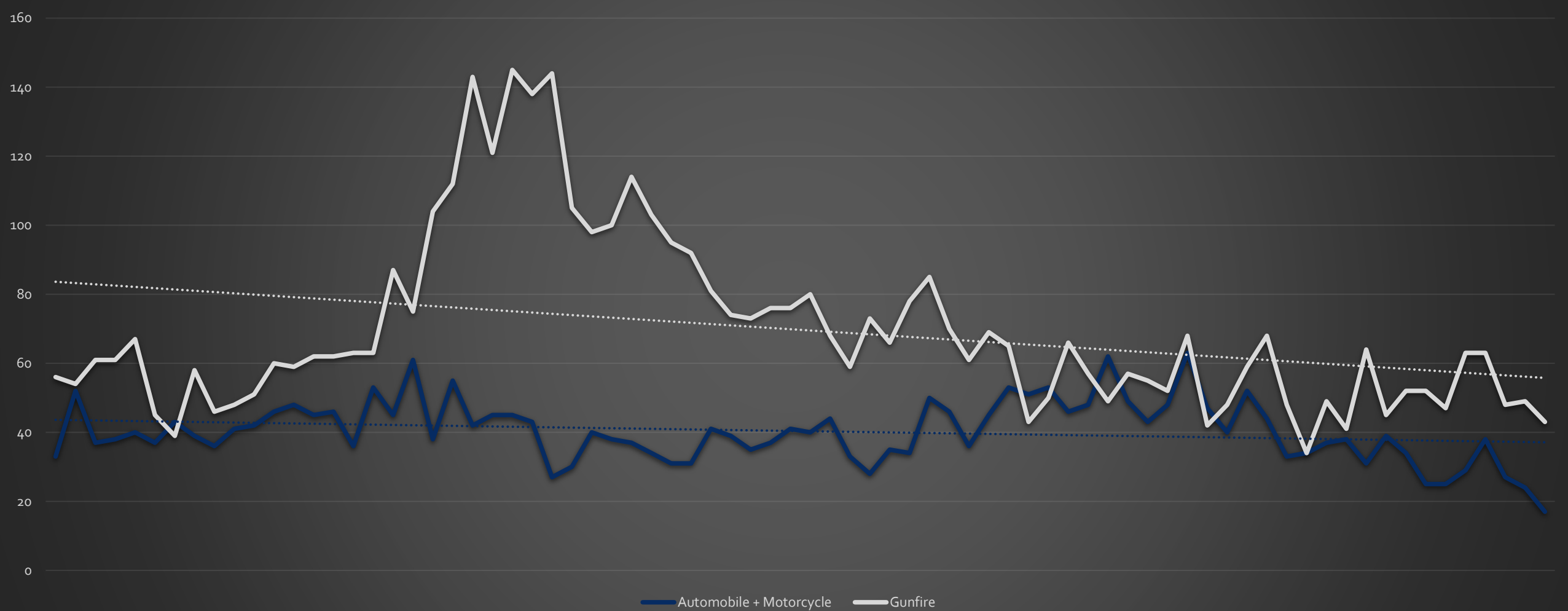
- Highest year: 145 (1975)
- Lowest year: 34 (2013)
- Average: 70
- All-time high: 205 (1930)



LODDs by Auto & Motorcycle, 1950-2025

- Highest year: 63 (2007)
- Lowest year: 17 (2025)
- Average: 40
- Includes Vehicle Pursuits
- Does not include Vehicular Assaults





LODDs by Type

Gunfire and Vehicle Crashes, 1950-2025

LODDs by Cause

2016-2025 (10 years)

1. COVID
2. Gunfire
3. 9/11 Related Illness
4. Auto/Motorcycle Crash
5. Heart Attack
6. Vehicular Assault
7. Struck by Vehicle

1976-2025 (50 years)

1. Gunfire
2. Auto/Motorcycle Crash
3. COVID
4. Heart Attack
5. Vehicular Assault
6. 9/11 Related Illness
7. Struck by Vehicle



OFFICER DOWN

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
M E M O R I A L P A G E



Below 100 Campaign



*Together,
We Can Get
Below 100*

The 5 Tenets

Wear Your Belt

Wear Your Vest

Watch Your Speed

WIN - What's Important Now?

Remember: Complacency Kills!



Vests Save: More than 3,100 police officers saved in the past three decades.

General Orders

General Orders on line-of-duty death and injury are needed to prevent agencies from reacting chaotically and causing severe emotional secondary injuries.



No General Order? Ask the question:
How would I want my family treated?

A Department's Response

Three Essential Elements that affects survivors' level of distress.

1. The way survivors' are notified.
2. The emotional support provided by the department.
3. The resource the department provides regarding benefits.

Survey Findings: Survivors



- ❑ Fewer number of years in the marriage, the more devastating the loss.
- ❑ Showed symptoms of grief for 5 years.
- ❑ No difference in the sense of loss whether felonious or accidental.

The Myths of Law Enforcement

“You’ll always be part of the law enforcement family.”

“We take care of our own.”

“Police families are prepared to lose their officer in the line of duty.”

“If something happens to (Fallen Officer’s Name), you’ll be a rich widow(er).”

Statements to Avoid

“Time heals all wounds.”

“You must go on with your life.”

“You can always find someone worse off than yourself.”

“I know how you feel.”

“Be brave. Don’t cry.”

Statements to Avoid With a Child

“You must be strong for your brother, sister and/or parent.”

“You must get control or a hold of yourself; don’t cry.”

“You’re the man or adult of the house now.”





Survivor Panel

Survivors share their personal stories

Day Two

Police Officer
**Joselito
Barber**

Seattle Police
Department

EOW: 8/13/2006



Police Officer
**Jay Robert
Hughes**

Kalispel Tribal
Police Department

EOW 1/6/2021



Police Officer
**R. Jake
Gutierrez**

Tacoma Police
Department

EOW: 11/30/2016





Traumas of Law Enforcement

C.O.P.S. Website Resource Walk - Through

Homepage: concernsofpolicesurvivors.org

- For Law Enforcement
 - Digital Materials
- For Survivors
 - Survivor Benefits
 - Find Your Chapter





Agency & Co-Worker Support

Day Two
(PM)



C.O.P.S. Website Resource Walk-Through

-
- For Law Enforcement
 - Digital Materials
 - For Survivors
 - Survivor Benefits
- [C.O.P.S. Website](#)

Taking Care of Our Own

General Orders

- ❑ LOD Injury Notification
- ❑ Proper Death Notification
- ❑ Assistance at the Hospital
- ❑ Funeral Planning
- ❑ Police Liaisons
- ❑ Survivor Death Benefits
- ❑ Follow-Up and Staying Connected



LODD Considerations

- ❑ Access to law enforcement trained Mental Health Providers - for officers and their family
- ❑ Access to mental health for surviving family
- ❑ Updating Personnel Records
 - Information on Current Spouse or Sig. Other/Beneficiary
 - Records on Parents
- ❑ Preparing a Will or Living Trust

The Importance of Paperwork

- ❑ Funeral preferences
- ❑ Who to notify/contact information
- ❑ Benefits/PSOB Designation
- ❑ Ownership of specific items

ALL SKELETONS EVENTUALLY COME OUT!



Let your legacy live on.



Complete your paperwork!!



Death Notification

Best practices for agencies to use when making a death notification.

Basic Principles of Death Notification

IN TIME,

IN PERSON,

IN PAIRS,
IN PAIRS

IN PLAIN LANGUAGE,

..and with compassion

IN TIME...






- ❑ Provide notification as soon as possible.
- ❑ Determine next of kin and their correct location.
- ❑ Determine who needs notified.
- ❑ Gather information quickly.
- ❑ If possible, obtain details of death circumstances.
- ❑ Supervisors **MUST** have immediate access to emergency notification paperwork.
- ❑ Time works against you!



In Time: Social Media



Develop a social media policy for your department.







Prohibit officers from using social media during critical incidents.

Call family to let them know you are OK.



Advise family members to refrain from using social media.

No posting until affected agency has released information.



IN PERSON...

- ❑ Make death notification in person.
 - ❑ Notification **does not** have to be made by Command Staff.
- ❑ Honesty is the best method.



IN PAIRS...

- ❑ Immediately identify a 2 person notification team.
 - ❑ Do not delay making the notification if the team is unavailable.
 - ❑ Waiting for the highest ranking officer may not be the best option.
- ❑ Male/Female team can be advantageous
- ❑ Law enforcement officer in uniform
- ❑ Chaplain or counselor
- ❑ Co-worker/friend? What do you think?



IN PLAIN LANGUAGE...

- ❑ Identify yourself, present credentials, and ask to come in
- ❑ DO NOT make notification on the doorstep
- ❑ Relay message directly and in plain language, do not use “police speak”
- ❑ Call the officer by name - rather than “the body”
- ❑ If asked, answer questions about cause of death, location of the officer, etc.

With Compassion...

Remember The THREE F's:
Fight - Flight - Freeze



With Compassion...

- ❑ Never give a false sense of hope
- ❑ Don't be afraid to show your own emotions
- ❑ Do not impose your own religious beliefs
- ❑ Take time - Never notify and leave
- ❑ Never leave the individual alone after notifying
- ❑ Always leave contact information

With Compassion...

- ❑ Inform survivor of any chance in viewing their officer.
- ❑ Allow the survivor(s) to decide, support their decision
- ❑ Denying access to view the officer is NOT an act of kindness
- ❑ Never take officer's personal items with you
- ❑ Assist in notifying others
- ❑ Assist in decisions while instilling control

Notifying Children

- ❑ Assess the situation:
Who is home? Age of Children? How many?
- ❑ After notifying parents, support them & offer to assist with notifying child(ren)
 - ❑ There is no good way to do this
 - ❑ Keep it simple, truthful, and age appropriate

Death Notification for Other Jurisdictions

- ❑ Provide contact information for the officer's agency.
- ❑ Offer to initiate a phone call to the officer's agency for the surviving family member.
- ❑ Consider arranging travel.



Death Notification in the Work Place

- ❑ Follow the basic notification procedures:
 - In Time, In Person, In Pairs, In Plain Language and with compassion.
- ❑ Ensure privacy, ask for private room
- ❑ Offer to notify the supervisor, let the survivor determine what details to provide.
- ❑ Provide necessary transportation.



God Clichés to Avoid

“It was God’s will.”

“God must have needed him/her more than you.”

“God doesn’t ever give anyone more than they can handle.”

“God has a plan... we shouldn’t question it.”

Most Acceptable Bereavement Statement



"I am so very sorry this has happened."

If you are a small agency,



ASK FOR HELP!



Hospital & Family Assistance

Explores the importance of proper procedures while assisting the family at the hospital.

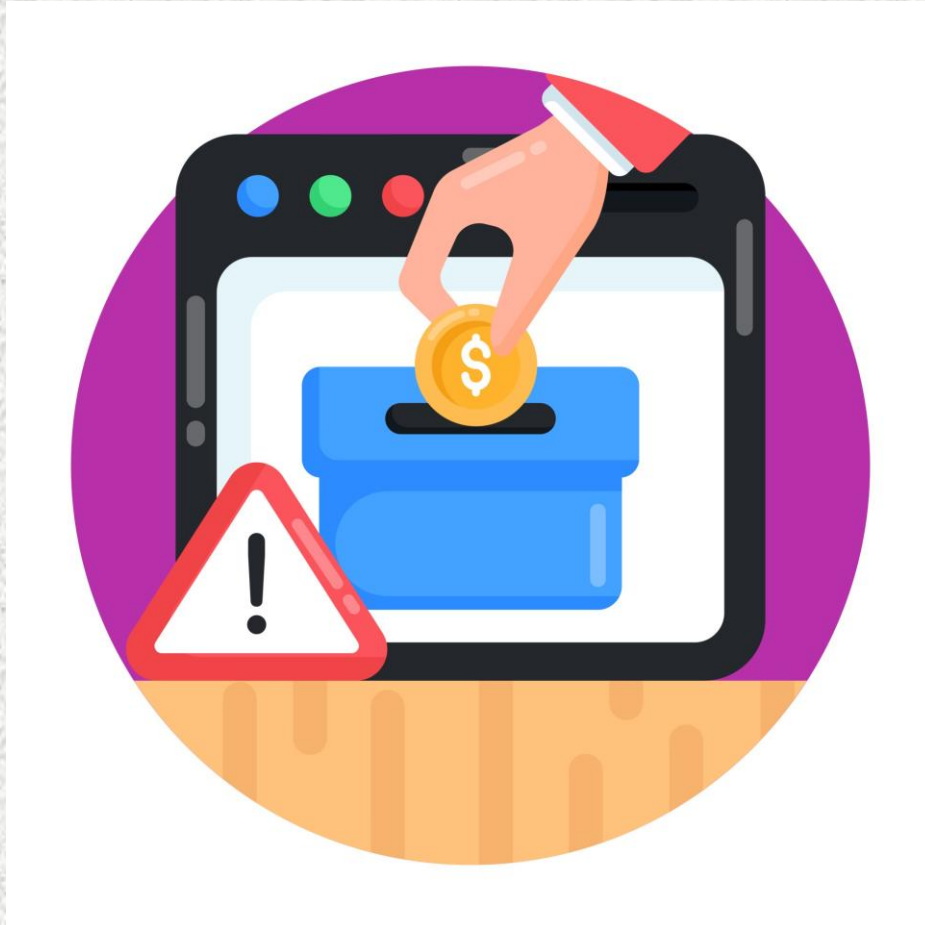
Hospital & Family Assistance

- ❑ Be proactive:
 - ❑ Have a notification template prepared for critical incidents.
 - ❑ Know your trauma center.
- ❑ If the officer is coherent & able, encourage them to make a quick phone call to their significant other.
- ❑ Do not transmit death information over the police radio.
- ❑ Provide support and transportation to the hospital for the officer's family.

Hospital & Family Assistance

- ❑ Don't leave the officer's family unattended.
- ❑ Doctors should update family on medical issues; not the agency.
- ❑ Ensure the family is prepared for what they are about to see.
 - They have the right to be with their officer; allow time before, during & after
- ❑ Arrange bills to be sent to agency

Hospital & Family Assistance



- ☐ Beware of fundraising scams
- ☐ Establish a legitimate donation site/location
 - ☐ e.g. Go Fund Me or other reputable companies



Liaison Officer

Procedures and recommendations for assigning liaison officers.

Selection of Liaison Officer(s)

- ❑ Team Concept

 - Consider assigning multiple Liaison Officers.

 - Different Liaison Officer for Spouses/Sig. Others and other Family?

- ❑ Being a Liaison Officer is a FULL TIME commitment that will definitely impact work.

- ❑ Close friend of the officer or not?

Preparation for the Family Liaison

- ❑ Keep an ongoing record of activities
 - Follow up on all requests.
- ❑ Do not assume you know what the families and survivors want.
- ❑ Conduct daily conference calls or meetings.

Communicating with Families

- ❑ Strong emotional responses by the next of kin can be expected
- ❑ LISTEN!
- ❑ People who are grieving can be difficult
- ❑ Break the information into small pieces
- ❑ Assist the family in establishing achievable goals
- ❑ Be prepared to answer basic questions about benefits
- ❑ C.O.P.S. Chapters or National C.O.P.S. can assist you with this
- ❑ Do NOT make any promises regarding benefits, even if the death circumstances seem to obviously be in the line of duty



Co-Worker Support

Efforts an agency must take to provide support within the agency.

Support for Co-Workers

- ❑ On Scene
- ❑ Survivor Guilt
- ❑ Impact of Trauma
- ❑ Needs to be continuous from day one



Support for Co-Workers

- ❑ Mandatory Debriefings for affected co-workers
- ❑ Make debriefings available for co-workers' families
- ❑ Peer support teams, professional **law enforcement** counseling at department expense, follow-up support
- ❑ Losing a co-worker is a life-altering experience
- ❑ Consider C.O.P.S. Co-Workers Retreat

Self Destructive Behaviors

Be alert to self destructive behaviors, especially alcohol and drug abuse.



Encourage the griever to seek professional help if there is a total absence of feelings and/or acknowledgment of the significance of the person who died.



Funeral Planning

Efforts an agency must take to provide support during funerals.

Funeral Participation in Rituals

Allows survivors an opportunity:

- ❑ To help themselves mourn
- ❑ To be helped by others
- ❑ To accept the death as a reality
- ❑ To develop a feeling of comfort
- ❑ To increase a sense of control



Funeral Participation for Children

- ❑ Helps with understanding
- ❑ Gain a sense of belonging
- ❑ Contribution to the memory of the deceased
- ❑ Sense of value and self-worth
- ❑ Consider recording the funeral



Funeral Protocol: Line-of-Duty Deaths

- ❑ Recognize rights and rituals of family's nationality, cultural beliefs, and religious preferences
- ❑ The protocol should spell out the actions of department personnel at the memorial & grave site services

Examples of protocol:

- Mourning bands on badges
- Flags at half-staff



Funeral Options: Line-of-Duty Deaths

- ❑ Honor (Casket) Guards
- ❑ Last Radio Call
- ❑ Riderless Horse
- ❑ Patrol Car Draped
- ❑ Procession

Remember, funerals are for the living.



Funeral Protocol

What type of honors do we afford fallen officers?



FAMILY WISHES RULE!!!

Funeral Protocol: LODD vs Non-LODD

- ❑ Consider developing a policy on deaths that are not LODD.
 - Cancer, off duty accident, etc.
- ❑ Depending on the death, make the appropriate response.



Family Follow-Up

C.O.P.S. believes this is an agency responsibility.

- ❑ Recognition of Fallen Officer
- ❑ Keep family informed
- ❑ Interact with the family
 - Invite the family to social events
 - Check in with the survivor(s) frequently



Don't make *idle promises* to family or to children.



Plan to follow through with any plans you make!!



Trial Support

The importance of providing departmental support during a trial.

Department Support for the Family Awaiting Trial

- ❑ The Liaison Officer may continue their role
- ❑ Keep family updated about upcoming proceedings
- ❑ Make the best effort to relay information to the family prior to coverage in the news/social media

Work with Prosecutor to Prepare Family for Trial

- ❑ Provide reports, including autopsy, if family wants them – offer to go through the reports with them.
- ❑ Preview trial photos, if applicable.
 - Arrange from least graphic to most graphic, preview each verbally, and then let them see the pictures if so desired.
- ❑ Don't be overly protective of them.



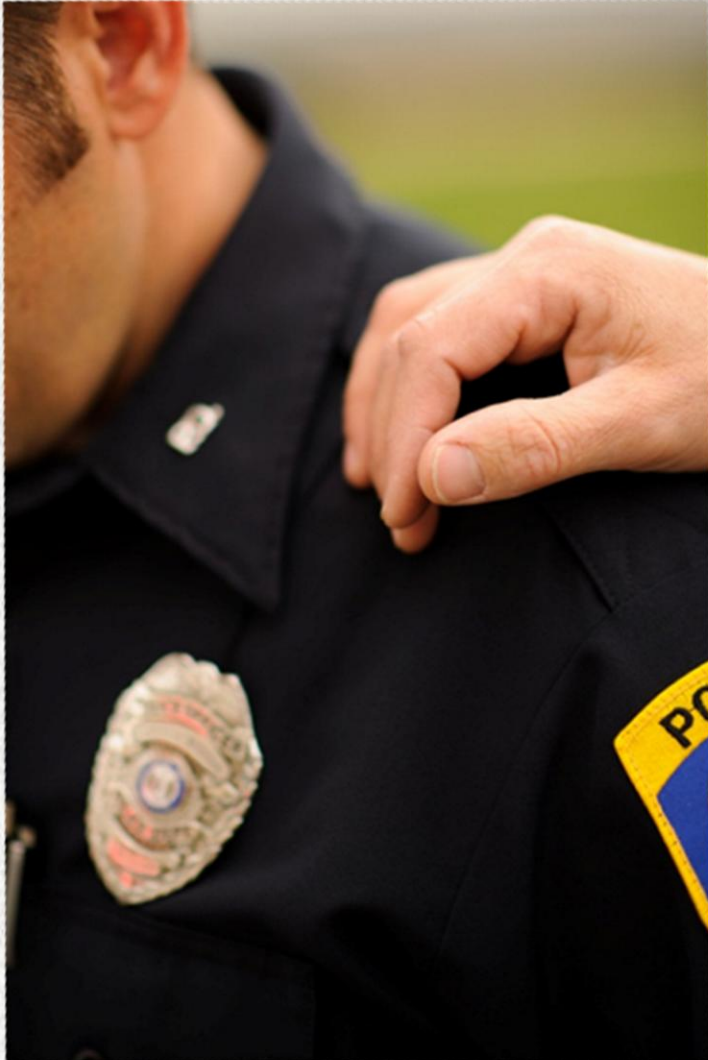
Plea Bargains

- ❑ The family should be kept informed should the DA want to offer and/or accept a plea.
- ❑ The Spouse may be willing to accept plea & other family members may not, or vice versa.
- ❑ The PA will have the ultimate decision & will consult with the primary survivor

Department Support for the Family During Trial

- Encourage family to attend the trial
- Assign a support person to the family for the trial
 - ***Example:***
Victim assistance or C.O.P.S. Representative
- Let victim assistance professionals do their job

Department Support for Co-Workers During Trial



Officers attending as support or
testifying

- ❑ EAP/peer support team made available prior to and during trial
- ❑ Time off as needed
- ❑ Debriefing following trial



Survivor Benefits

COPS can assist in the filing of benefits or in the follow-up inquiry about benefit claims as well as advocacy.

When A Death Occurs, Contact...

1. Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc. (C.O.P.S.)
2. Officer Down Memorial Page (ODMP)
3. Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program (PSOB)
4. National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial (NLEOMF)

C.O.P.S. Benefits Assistance

- Provides assistance to families with limited agency support
- Compilation of states' death benefits available



Benefit Prep Meeting

- ❑ Liaison officer facilitates a meeting with Benefits Coordinator
- ❑ Secure information on possible benefits
- ❑ Hold first meeting within days of the funeral with the Family
- ❑ Check on info on existing health care coverage & COBRA.



Benefits Timeline

Few days after funeral

1st Meeting – Family Meeting
Advise individual to secure documents

30 days

2nd Meeting – Family Check-in
Check on documents, provide support

45 days

3rd Meeting – Family Meeting
Documents need collected

2 Months

4th Meeting – Benefits Filed
File all documents

Public Safety Officers' Benefit: PSOB

\$461,656.00

U.S. Department of Justice, Public Safety
Officers Benefit as of October 1, 2025.

PSOB Act became law on September 29, 1976.
Benefit for death and permanent, catastrophic injuries.



The PSOB Act

The Public Safety Officers Benefit Act (PSOB)

Authorizes federal benefits for survivors of public safety officers whose deaths were the direct and proximate result of an injury sustained in the line of duty.

PSOSA Act

The Public Safety Officer Support Act
(PSOSA)

Recognizes **suicide**,
under certain circumstances,
as Line-of-Duty Death (LODD).

More details to come during Day 3

- *Prevention of Law Enforcement Suicide*

Public Safety Officers Benefit (PSOB)

Father Mychal Judge Act (2001)

- Covers chaplains
- Provision for COLA
- Changed priority of recipients

Hometown Heroes Act (12/15/2003)

- Heart Attacks/Strokes (vascular ruptures)
- Non-routine, stressful or strenuous physical activity or training.
- Heart Attack/Stroke occurs within 24 hours of the above activity.



HONORING OUR FALLEN HEROES ACT

HONOR ACT

On December 18, 2025, the President signed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2026 that included “Honoring Our Fallen Heroes” which amended PSOB. The amendment expands PSOB eligibility to recognize under certain circumstances public safety officer deaths or permanent and total disabilities from cancers resulting from exposures to certain carcinogens.

This presumption applies to deaths from listed cancers on or after January 1st, 2020, and injured officers with listed cancer diagnoses received on or after January 1st, 2020.



Key Provisions:

Families and injured officers applying for PSOB Benefits under the Honor Act will need to submit documentation showing:

- A line of duty action exposed the officer to carcinogens
- The officer served a min. of 5 years before cancer diagnosis
- The officer left service less than 15 years before cancer diagnosis
- The cancer caused the officer's death or permanent and total disability.



Key Provisions:

- A LEO works for 5 years, receives a cancer diagnosis after an exposure within those 5 years.
- Officer retired in 2017, and received a cancer diagnosis in 2021 – less than 15 years + after Jan. 1, 2020.
- Officer works as a LEO for 3 years and receives diagnosis – not applicable.
- Officer retires 20 years ago and receives diagnosis – not applicable.

Eligible Survivors

1. If no children, surviving spouse.
2. If there is a spouse and child(ren), 50% to spouse and 50% to be divided by the number of “eligible” children.
 - ❑ Natural, illegitimate, adopted, posthumous child or step-child
 - ❑ 18 years old or under
 - ❑ 19-22 years old if a full-time student
 - ❑ 19 and older, and incapable of self-support due to a physical or mental disability
3. If no spouse, and children only, all the child(ren) in equal shares.

Eligible Survivors

4. If no spouse or eligible children, to the beneficiary on the PSOB designation form or the fully executed life insurance policy on file at the agency.
5. If no beneficiary, to surviving parent(s) in equal shares.
6. If no living parents, payable to adult children in equal shares.
7. If no eligible survivors, the payment is not made.

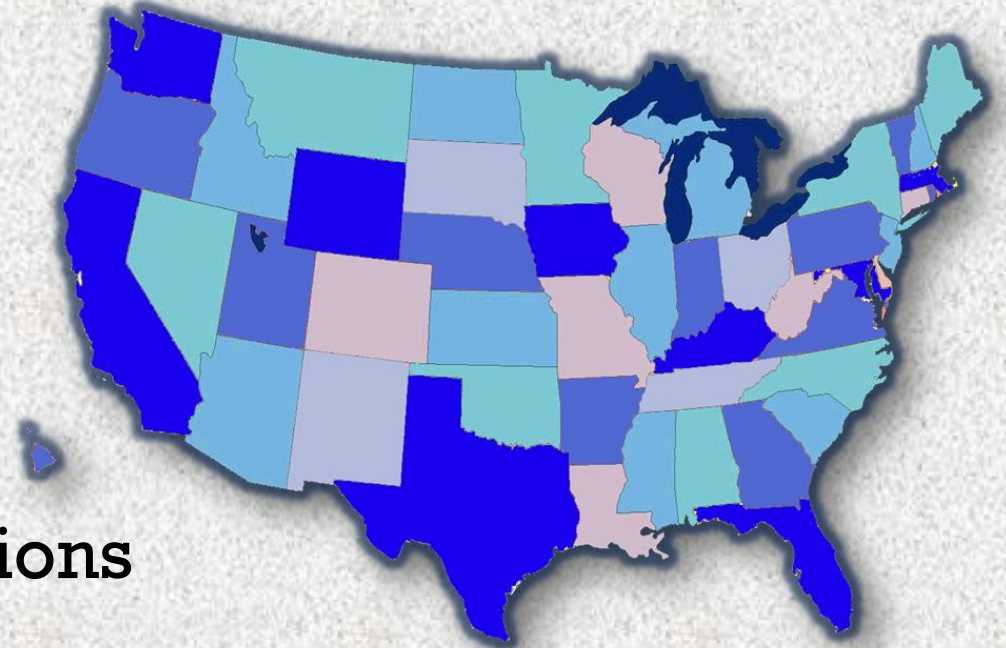
Possible Reasons for Denial of Benefits

- ❑ Intentional misconduct
- ❑ Voluntary intoxication
- ❑ Officer was performing in a grossly negligent manner
- ❑ A claimant contributed to the officer's death
- ❑ Military death

Other Potential Benefits

- ☐ Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Program
- ☐ U.S. Department of Labor Office of Workers' Compensation
- ☐ State & Local Death Benefits
- ☐ Social Security
- ☐ Veteran's Benefits
- ☐ Personal Life Insurances
- ☐ Assistance from additional Organizations

Example: FOP, 100 Club, NRA



Financial assistance is vitally important for families; however,
all the money in the world doesn't heal
the head and the heart...



C.O.P.S. makes that happen.