



A five-year study of law enforcement officers
killed and assaulted in the line of duty

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California
Law
Enforcement
Officers
Killed and
Assaulted
in the Line of Duty

1995–1999 Report



contents



California Law Enforcement Officers
Killed and Assaulted in the Line
of Duty, 1995–1999 Report

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California Commission on Peace
Officer Standards and Training

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Preface

The findings in this report are based on a careful and thorough evaluation by officer safety experts of each incident that resulted in the death of a California peace officer from 1995 through 1999. These findings further substantiate much of what is already known about law enforcement officer safety.

The POST California Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty Program (LEOKA) establishes an information base from which training, policies, and procedures can be developed or enhanced to curtail the injury or death of California peace officers. This report reaffirms that protecting people and property, apprehending criminals, and keeping the public peace are inherently dangerous.

Some peace officer deaths result from tragic accidents or sudden, unforeseeable attacks. However, other deaths are attributed to unsafe tactics, lack of caution, failure to observe and recognize danger signs, or failure to utilize standard safety equipment or procedures. Not all tragedies can be prevented; however, training can improve a peace officer's effectiveness and enhance personal safety.

This LEOKA study examines the circumstances surrounding the 33 felonious killings and 33 accidental deaths of California peace officers from 1995 through 1999. It is a follow-up to three previous reports published by POST, which together provide an in-depth analysis of 20 years of LEOKA studies.

POST thanks the representatives from contributing agencies and the members of the LEOKA Advisory Committee for their assistance in producing this report. Without their contributions this program would not be possible. Above all, our sincerest condolences are offered to the families, friends and departments of those officers killed in the line of duty.

POST is committed to the ongoing research and study of this very important subject area: **OFFICER SAFETY.**

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Introduction

From law enforcement's inception, peace officers have fallen victim to accidents, assault and murder. As such, a need was identified to gather and analyze data on the incidents, to identify practical significant points for peace officer safety training, and to make recommendations for improvement. In 1986, responding to a legislative mandate, POST published the following reports:

- *California Peace Officers Killed in the Line of Duty (1980–1986)*
- *The Law Enforcement Officer Safety Guidelines*

Because these reports were very popular with administrators and trainers, the POST Commission directed staff to continue these studies through its California Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty (LEOKA) Program. This study, *California Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted in the Line of Duty, 1995–1999 Report*, is the fourth publication of its kind.

This report is intended to be used as a tool to modify or reinforce any policy, procedure, or training program which will promote officer safety. The safety of California law enforcement officers is a matter of the highest priority. For this reason, POST will continue to research and study the tragic situations involving peace officers assaulted and killed in the line of duty.

Methodology

To evaluate the LEOKA data, POST established a working advisory committee consisting of subject matter experts in the area of officer safety and tactics.

Types of Surveys

POST staff and the advisory committee developed two survey instruments to gather the aggregate data:

1. Felonious killings
2. Accidental deaths

Agencies that lost peace officers due to on-duty deaths were contacted, and each case was researched.

POST also requested and received assistance from the California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistical Center (DOJ/ CJSC) in gathering peace officer assault statistics. The DOJ/ CJSC is responsible for gathering assault data from local law enforcement agencies, then forwarding the data to the Federal Department of Justice Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program.

In 1987 DOJ/ CJSC began providing all of the reported data to POST, and that data has been included in the POST reports ever since.

Impact on Training

The California LEOKA studies, starting in 1980 and continuing to the present, have provided a foundation of information and insight to direct changes in training and to develop new training that meets today's law enforcement needs. Analysis of these events have enabled trainers and policy makers to address contemporary problems and trends. They also provide validation of existing training and policies. The recommendations of the LEOKA Committee guide the Basic Course Consortium in achieving the best training possible.

Changes in Training Since LEOKA Studies Began

Major changes in curriculum content and training philosophy have occurred since the first study was produced in 1986. Overall training and testing in officer safety and survival tactics have been refined to ensure students are receiving the best training available. Student workbooks have been developed to guide and direct consistency of training statewide. Scenario testing is now designed to always be a winning situation when the student acts/ reacts appropriately.

Basic Course Changes

The following curriculum has been updated or developed to cover issues, problems, or trends identified from these studies:

Training Curriculum

- Physical fitness (lifetime fitness)
- Weapons retention
- Disarming a suspect
- Tactical procedures
- Tactical awareness
- Tactical communications
- Unarmed defense
- Use of force
- Levels of force
- Vehicle operations
- Vehicle stops
- Arrest and control
- Domestic violence
- Gang awareness
- Use of safety equipment

Officer safety and survival is stressed throughout all aspects of training and testing. Notable concepts of officer survival include:

- Will to Live
- Will to Survive
- Fear Management
- Repetitive Training and Practice

Eighteen scenario tests contained in 13 staged events covering officer safety and/or officer survival training are now required to complete the POST Regular Basic Course. Additionally, driving and firearms training and testing are now dynamic in nature.

Continuing Professional Training

The same transfer of knowledge and concepts included in the Regular Basic Course also applies to other courses certified by POST. In 1986, the Continuing Professional Training (CPT) requirement was raised to 24 hours every two years. In 1997, another POST study was conducted to assess the requirements and value of advanced training. Two major events happened as a result of that study: 1) managers and executives are now included in the CPT requirement, and 2) perishable skills became a major focus for POST and prompted a second study to address how best to maintain those skills. Pursuit driving, firearms, and arrest and control techniques are the primary focus of the perishable skills study.

Regional Skills Training Centers

Currently, POST is contracting for the development of 22 Regional Skill Training Centers statewide. Each skill center will have driving simulators, force options simulators, skid cars, and arrest & control mannequins (Freddies) for practicing control holds. The simulators not only test skills, they also test judgement. When this project is completed, POST will have spent approximately \$20 million to provide high tech equipment to train and test critical skills and judgement. Projected costs to provide the training is \$2–\$3 million a year.

**Interactive
CD Rom Training**

Interactive Video Disc Training was the forerunner to CD ROM training. The first program produced was *Driver Training*, which is still in use. As technology changed, POST moved into CD ROM training development. In this program, POST has reimbursed, or offered to reimburse, every local law enforcement agency in the POST program for the purchase of an appropriate computer to run the POST-developed CD ROM courses. Two of the courses currently available on CD ROM, *Domestic Violence* and *Hazardous Materials*, have been rated as a high need for officer safety.

**California POST
Television Network
(CPTN)**

Since 1988, POST has broadcast a prerecorded video program, *Training Videos and Case Law Updates*, consisting of two hours of specialized law enforcement training videos and current case law. Training video segments are obtained from local law enforcement agencies, as well as out-of-state law enforcement agencies. To date, more than 200 agency-developed training videos dealing with officer safety/officer survival issues have been broadcast by POST.

Since 1992, POST has broadcast a live, monthly telecourse (two hours) to all California law enforcement. More than 30 of these telecourses have dealt with officer safety/officer survival issues. These presentations are interactive (by telephone) with the subscribers during the time of the broadcast. These telecourses count toward the Continuing Professional Training (CPT) requirement and cover a broad range of law enforcement related subject matter.

LEOKA studies have provided impetus for the development of video training programs, including re-enactments of actual incidents. This research has also led to development of statewide in-service training on controlling violent subjects.





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Executive Summary

Every year, nearly 7,000 California peace officers are assaulted in the line of duty. Of these, some will fall victim to murder. Tragically, it can be expected that the assaults and deaths will continue for as long as there is a need for law enforcement. This report examines the deaths of California law enforcement officers during the five-year period from January 1, 1995 to December 31, 1999. Particular attention is paid to the cases involving 66 peace officers whose deaths were a result of accidents and felonious assaults. The focus of gathering and analyzing this data is to identify points of practical significance for peace officer safety training and to make recommendations for improvement.

Felonious Death Incident Information

Approximately seven California peace officers per year were victims of on-duty, or duty-related, murders.

In this study, a number of conditions, including geographic location, time of year, day and week, and type of attack have been evaluated for all 33 peace officers killed in 32 felonious incidents during this five-year period. These incidents include:

Incident Variables

Types of Incidents	Victim Peace Officers
Domestic violence	7
Suspicious persons/circumstances	5
Arrest situations	4
Crimes in progress	4
Ambush	4
Vehicle pullovers	3
Pedestrian contacts	2
Building entry	1
Off-duty incidents	3
Total Incidents	33

**Officer
Demographics**

As the overall numbers suggest, domestic dispute calls remain the most dangerous law enforcement contact.

More than two-thirds, or 24 of the 33 victim peace officers, which includes three vehicle pullover murders, were attacked on approach, were set up and deliberately attacked, or were attacked when they were distracted momentarily. In 24 of the incidents, the primary reason for the attack was to facilitate escape. In eight cases, the perpetrators premeditated and planned the assaults. One half, or 15 of the 29 on-duty officers, were attacked within two minutes of the victim peace officer making contact with the murderer.

There appears to be no safety in numbers. Nearly two-thirds, or 19 of the 29 on-duty victim peace officers, made contact with the suspect(s) while assistance (partners or backup peace officers) were present. However, communication may be more important than numbers. Communication issues, either internal or external, were a factor in 14 of the incidents involved in this study.

The victim officer profiles were male, generally an officer or deputy rank; their ages ranged from 26 to 65 years, height ranged from 5’6” to 6’3”, and weight ranged from 145 to 263 lbs. Their law enforcement experience ranged from less than a year to 40 years (most had from one to ten years), and they were primarily assigned to patrol or traffic.

The cause of death for all 33 officers was gunshot wounds. There were four incidents involving physical altercations. Physical conditioning, size, weight, and age may have been factors. There were no witnesses at the scenes.

Demographics, *per se*, were not the critical factor in deaths. Instead, overconfidence, carelessness or complacency, poor search techniques, disregarding danger signs, poor positioning, poor use of cover, relaxing too soon, “rushing-in” without a plan, and carrying law enforcement credentials off-duty without a weapon, contributed to the majority of the felonious peace officer murder cases.

**Suspect
Demographics**

The murder suspects were all male; ages ranged from 17 to 48 years; height, 5'3"–6'1"; weight, 115–220 lbs. Nine of the 32 suspects were killed; one was killed by a victim peace officer, five were killed by other officers, and three committed suicide.

Twenty-seven of the 32 suspects had criminal histories (12 were on parole and six had arrest warrants). The arrest records ranged from one to 22 arrests. Of the 32 suspects, 17 were known to have gang affiliation. Six of the 32 suspects had prior documented violent contact with law enforcement personnel. Nine of the 32 suspects were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the incidents.

**Tactical
Considerations**

Agencies reported that in ten of the cases, the victim peace officer deaths were preventable. In nearly two-thirds of the cases, the victim peace officers knew there was at least a potential hazard. In nine cases, the victim peace officers knew there was a high likelihood that a weapon was involved before making contact with the primary suspect. In seven of the cases, the victim peace officer knew the suspect; and in six of those cases, the officers knew the suspect had a potential for violence. Three of these officers had prior contact with the suspect.

Poor positioning was a primary factor in 18 victim peace officer deaths. In eight of the cases, cover was either available but not utilized or initially used and then abandoned. Two officers died after deviating from a predetermined approach plan.

The distance between the suspect and victim peace officer at the time they were attacked varies. Eighteen officers (59%) were killed at a distance of ten or less feet; three officers were killed between 11 and 20 feet; and 12 officers were killed at greater distances of 21 to over 100 feet. Eight of the incidents were planned attacks.

**Equipment
and Weapons**

All 33 victim peace officers were murdered with firearms. Of the 32 murder suspects, all but two were in possession of firearms when they came in contact with the victim peace officers. In two incidents, the suspects acquired the victim peace officers' handguns and killed them. Twenty officers were killed with handguns; 11 officers were killed with rifles or assault rifles; and two officers were killed with shotguns. The use of rifles, assault rifles, and shotguns in this study represents a 10.5% increase over the last five-year study.

Four of the on-duty victim peace officers were not wearing body armor; two were shot in the back, one in the chest, and the other in the abdomen. The four officers received handgun wounds in locations where body armor may have prevented fatal wounds. Four other peace officers were wearing body armor that was penetrated by ammunition fired from high-powered rifles and/or assault weapons. There were no reported incidents of victim peace officer body armor being defeated by ammunition it was designed to stop.

The study confirms that body armor is the single most effective piece of passive safety equipment a peace officer can utilize.

Of the 33 victim peace officers, 31 were armed. One officer was armed with an M-16 rifle, and another was armed with an MP-5 sub-machine gun. The other officers were armed with handguns. Two off-duty victim peace officers were not armed at the time of the incident.

One third (ten) of the officers were able to draw and fire their weapons in response to the assaults. Of those, one victim peace officer killed the suspect in the shoot-out.

Other peace officer personal protection gear did not appear to constitute a significant factor to peace officer deaths.

Comparative Data

Felonious Death Incidents

Data on comparable California incidents has been collected for the periods from 1980 to the present. Data from the current study indicates changing trends from the previous study. In the previous study, no peace officers lost their lives because primary duty weapons were taken away. In this study, two officers were killed with their own handguns. Another trend is an increase in the use of rifles, assault rifles, and shotguns. This study represents a 10.5% increase in the use of these weapons by suspects since the last five-year study. It is also interesting to note that in 55% of the cases in the latest study, the distance at which the victim peace officer was attacked was ten feet or less. In the prior study, 68% of the officers were attacked at that distance.

The most recent study shows that four on-duty officers were killed while not wearing body armor, compared to the last study where five victim peace officers were not wearing vests. The percentage of officers not wearing body armor has continued to decrease since 1980.

The number of preventable officer deaths dropped from 25 in the prior study to ten in this study.

In the latest study, two officers were killed with their own weapons, while the prior study indicates that no officers were killed with their own weapons. This suggests that more attention to training in arrest control and weapon retention is needed.

The primary implications for training involve increased focus on situation assessment and approach. Poor tactics, overconfidence, complacency, and “rushing in” without a plan contributed to the majority of the felonious peace officer murder cases. Additional training, with emphasis on overcoming the contributory elements of these issues, should lower the number of peace officer murders.

Of the 32 incidents where 33 officers were murdered, nine agencies made changes in policy, procedures, training or equipment. The other agencies reported that the facts gathered in the incidents tended to validate current policies and procedures.

Training Implications

Policy Implications

Assaults

The number of reported assaults, 6,857 in 1999, precludes incident analysis at a level of detail provided in the on-duty death data; however, meaningful conclusions can be drawn. Most striking is a trend in the reduction of the overall assault rate. The number of reported peace officer assaults decreased 3.3% from 1995 through 1999. When considered as “per capita” numbers (incidents as they relate to growth in population), these reductions become even more significant.

The study highlights critical limitations in collection and analysis of California assault data. Some limitations involve the survey instrument and the wide variation in techniques and interpretations used when completing it. Other limitations result from the necessary mechanical tabulations of data that cause groupings that may or may not be significant. The most serious limitations relate to the participation population. Because the process is voluntary, it is estimated that only 70–80% of California law enforcement agencies participate. The data is complete to the extent that agencies respond to the survey. Regardless of the limitations, the large numbers do provide a solid basis for identifying trends in perpetrator assault activities and prescribing potential peace officer response.

Comparative Data

Assaults

Contrasting this assault data with data for assaults resulting in victim officer death highlights several significant variables between lethal and nonlethal suspect encounters.

As with deadly encounters, responses to disturbances (domestic violence is included in this category) remain the most dangerous of contacts. In all assault weapon categories — firearms, knives, other deadly weapons, and the use of the hands, fists, and feet — the numbers of assault incidents involving disturbances far outpaced other crime categories. Other high frequency assault categories include victim officer investigation of suspicious persons and circumstances, and traffic stops and pursuits.

Incident Type

**Equipment
and Weapons**

Seventy-nine percent of nonlethal assaults involved the suspect's use of hands, fists, and feet. In contrast, all of the California lethal encounters resulted from use of firearms. Less than 5% of nonlethal assaults involved firearms. This figure has dropped by over 2% since the last study.

Outside of the primary high frequency categories (disturbance calls, traffic stops, and investigation of suspicious persons) in which all types of weapons were utilized, suspect weapon selection appears to relate to crime category. Suspects selected firearms for use in ambush situations significantly more frequently than any other weapon. In contrast, suspects utilized hands, fists, and feet significantly more often than any other weapon in custody situations involving either arrest or transportation of prisoners. Neither finding appears surprising. Firearms do not require personal contact, and ambushes rely on suspects being undetected. In custody situations, officers may have already removed weapons or at least searched for them. Hands, fists, and feet may be the only suspect weapon available.

**Training
Implications**

In examining lethal encounters, the study found a need for an increased focus on situation assessment and approach. Poor tactics, overconfidence, complacency, and "rushing in" without a plan contributed to the majority of the felonious peace officer murder cases. The data from the nonlethal encounters does not contradict this. Incident prevention training that addresses potential officer deaths may also assist in prevention of nonlethal incidents.

A secondary training issue may involve officer training specifically in arrest and custody situations. The frequency and nature of potential assault in these situations may be underestimated.

**Policy
Implications**

Policy implications relate primarily to the data collection process. For assault data to be meaningful, each law enforcement agency needs to participate. In addition, each agency needs to ensure the accuracy of material submitted. In terms of the data validity, it was found that lack of participation was preferable to the submission of incorrect or incomplete information.

Accidental Deaths

Accidents comprise half of the on-duty California peace officer deaths. Unexpected and unintentional events, including vehicle and aircraft accidents, natural disasters, health-related conditions, or similar events caused by human error, mechanical failure, mistake, or misfortune resulted in the accidental deaths of 126 on-duty California peace officers during the years 1980 through 1999. During the 1995–99 report period, 33 peace officers were accidentally killed in the line of duty.

During this report period, 24 officers (73%) died as a result of traffic-related accidents. A helicopter accident claimed two officers; one officer was killed during a water rescue; two died after suffering heart attacks; one officer was sucked under a moving train; two officers were accidentally shot during separate incidents; and one officer died after her vehicle was struck by a loose truck tire.

Traffic Collisions

Of deaths resulting from traffic collisions, seven can be attributed to unsafe officer speed. Other vehicles struck another seven victim peace officers while on foot. Drunk drivers were a factor in five of the traffic-related officer deaths. Other factors include erratic driving by citizens, officers not wearing seatbelt restraints, officer fatigue, and a road washout from beneath a patrol car.

Of the 25 traffic-related deaths, four (16%) were killed in traffic collisions while riding a patrol motorcycle. This number represents a 30% reduction over the previous five-year study.

Impact Speeds

Research from the National Transportation and Safety Board indicates that the human body cannot withstand a speed change (relative to sudden impact/collision) in excess of 35 mph. Internal organs begin to tear apart when the human body is traveling at this speed. The human body has even less tolerance to side impacts as the internal organs are forced laterally. Survivable side-impact speeds are normally less than 28 mph.

**Training
Implications**

**Policy
Implications****Comparative Data****Accidental Deaths**

Overall, peace officer death rates due to accidents are higher than in the period 1990–94. Three factors appear to have played a part in the increase: unsafe officer vehicle speed, the lack of seatbelt restraint systems use, and drunk drivers.

Seatbelt and restraint system use was a factor in six of the 13 car traffic fatalities. This is a significant increase in officers not wearing seatbelts compared to the previous five-year study. In several of these cases, it was indicated that had the victim peace officer been wearing a seatbelt, the death may have been preventable. The use of safety belts and vehicle restraint systems continues to be the single most important safety factor while traveling in patrol cars.

Two peace officer deaths resulted from accidental shootings. One was the result of a SWAT team operation where a member's location and identity were issues. The second incident involved a non-uniformed peace officer where identification was a primary issue.

Changes in training, operational procedures, transport maintenance, and equipment are credited with reducing loss of peace officer life due to accidents. Even so, the relatively high number of accidents due to officer behavior, poor driving response, and unsafe speed indicate a need to continue the evaluation of training and procedures. In addition, the mandatory wearing of seatbelt restraint systems while operating agency vehicles should be considered.

Officer Safety Guidelines

In addition to the general recommendations noted above, this report provides a number of specific suggestions and recommendations. The goal of Chapter 2, Officer Safety Guidelines, is to present general training and policy recommendations for California peace officers. Review of this chapter is recommended for law enforcement managers responsible for developing policy standards and training.



CHAPTER 1

Felonious Killing Study

1995–99 Statistics

This LEOKA report begins with the tabulated statistical data and information collected from the study of the murders of 33 California peace officers during the years 1995 through 1999.

Section 1.1

Incident Information

The primary purpose of this section is to examine the incident variables regarding the 33 felonious peace officer murders in California during this five-year period.

The following table shows the year-to-year breakdown of peace officer murders.

Peace Officers Killed by Year 1995–99

Year	Peace Officers Killed in the Line of Duty
1995	11
1996	4
1997	7
1998	7
1999	4
Total	33

1.1.1

Locations and Conditions

The following map and tables represent the locations and conditions at the time of the fatal incidents.

**Felonious Deaths
by Region
1995–99**

This map shows California divided into four regions for the purpose of illustrating the distribution of felonious killings by area. The regions are designated as follows:



Northern Region: 3 Deaths

1995	2
1996	0
1997	1
1998	0
1999	0

SF Bay Area Region: 7 Deaths

1995	4
1996	0
1997	0
1998	2
1999	1

Central Region: 3 Deaths

1995	0
1996	0
1997	1
1998	1
1999	1

Southern Region: 20 Deaths

1995	5
1996	4
1997	5
1998	4
1999	2

**Incidents
by Community**

This table displays the general geographic locations of the felonious murders of California peace officers.

Type of Community	Victim Officers
Urban	15
Suburban	12
Rural	6
Total	33

**Incidents
by Location**

This table contains the types of locations reported.

Type of Location	Victim Officers
Residential	19
Commercial	9
Highway/freeway	3
Rural dirt road	1
Public property*	1
Total	33

* Location was public college campus.

Lighting Conditions

This table identifies the lighting conditions that played a factor and the number of deaths associated with those conditions.

Lighting Conditions	Victim Officers
Little or no light affected the peace officer's ability to see the suspect's firearm	7
Darkness provided concealment for the suspect as the officer approached	5

▲ *Conclusion:* Lighting conditions were identified as a factor in 12 of the 33 felonious deaths. One incident resulted in two deaths.

Weather Conditions

◀ *Conclusion:* Only one of the 33 felonious death surveys indicated that weather conditions may have been a factor. In this case, rain gear may have limited access to the officer’s weapon.

Time of Year

This table shows that the seasonal distribution of the 33 felonious murder incidents are spread throughout the year.

Season	(Months)	Victim Officers
Winter	(Dec/Jan/Feb)	8
Spring	(Mar/Apr/May)	12
Summer	(Jun/Jul/Aug)	10
Fall	(Sep/Oct/Nov)	3
Total		33

Incidents by Day of Week

This table shows the number of peace officers murdered and the number of incidents by day of week.

Day of Week	No. of Incidents	Victim Officers
Monday	0	0
Tuesday	4	4
Wednesday	5	5
Thursday	4	4
Friday	8	8
Saturday	5	5
Sunday	6*	7
Total	32	33

* Two officers were killed in one incident.

▲ *Conclusion:* The study concludes that no reasonable assumption can be made that any one day is safer than another.

**Incidents
by Time of Day**

This table shows the number of victim officers murdered according to time of day over a 24-hour period, divided into two-hour increments. This model is based on the same design and times used in the annual U.S. Department of Justice *Uniform Crime Report on Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted*.

24-hr Time	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total By Time
0001-0200 am	-	1	1	1	1	4
0201-0400	-	-	2*	-	-	2
0401-0600	1	-	-	-	-	1
0601-0800	-	-	-	-	-	0
0801-1000	2	-	-	-	-	2
1001-1200	1	-	1	1	-	3
1201-1400 pm	1	-	-	1	1	3
1401-1600	-	-	-	-	-	0
1601-1800	1	2	1	1	-	5
1801-2000	-	-	-	-	-	0
2001-2200	3	1	2	1	1	8
2201-2400	2	-	-	2	1	5
Total by Year	11	4	7	7	4	33

■ Indicates hours of darkness.

* Two officers killed in one incident.

▲ *Conclusion:* Peace officer murders occur throughout all hours of the day; however it is important to note that 20 of the 33 officers were killed during the hours of darkness, or near darkness.

1.1.2

Activities at Time of Incident

The following tables depict the type of contact, who initiated the incident, the activity, and length of time at the scene.

This table shows the number of incidents and victim peace officers by the type of law enforcement contact.

Incidents by Type of Contact

Type of Contact	No. of Incidents	Victim Officers
Domestic violence	6	7
Suspicious persons/ circumstances	5	5
Arrest situations	4	4
Crimes in progress	4	4
Ambush	4	4
Vehicle pullovers	3	3
Pedestrian contacts	2	2
Building entry	1	1
Off-duty incidents	3	3
Total	32	33

Initiation of Incidents

This table identifies who initiated the original contact.

Initiated by	Victim Officers
Victim peace officer	14
Dispatch	11
Other peace officer	4
Suspect	2
Private citizen	1
Entry team operation	1
Total	33

**Activity
at Time of Attack**

This table lists the officer’s primary activity at the moment of the attack.

Activity	Victim Officers
Face-to-face contact with suspect	8
Approaching a structure	7
Approaching a vehicle	2
Approaching a suspect	3
Searching a structure	1
Searching a vehicle	1
Searching a suspect	2
Entering a structure	2
Driving a vehicle	2
Stopping a vehicle	1
Sitting in a stationary vehicle	2
Recovering evidence from highway	1
Foot pursuit	1
Total	33

**Length of Time
at Incident**

This table shows how much time was spent at the scene for 27 of the victim peace officers before they were feloniously attacked. (It does not include three incidents where the officer was working alone and there were no witnesses to establish the length of time.)

Time at Scene Before Attack	Victim Officers
00:00 – 01:00 (in min.)	13
01:01 – 02:00	2
02:01 – 04:00	5
04:01 – 06:00	2
06:01 – 09:00	1
09:01 – 10:00	2
10:01 – 21:00	2
Total	27

▲ *Conclusion:* The first minute after arrival is the most deadly to peace officers. The use of contact and cover principles, in conjunction with officer safety tactics, are critical to officer survival.

Hours into Shift

◀ *Conclusion:* There were no discernible patterns, factors or trends based on when the felonious incident occurred during a shift.

Continuous Days Worked

◀ *Conclusion:* There were no discernible patterns, factors or trends based on the number of continuous days worked.

1.1.3

Persons Present

The following information shows the additional persons present at the time of the incident in addition to the victim peace officers.

This table identifies the number of additional peace officers present during the 29 incidents where 30 peace officers were murdered. It does not include three off-duty incidents where three more officers were murdered.

Additional Peace Officers Present

Additional Officers Present	No. of Incidents*
0	10
1	10
2	2
3	4
4 or more	3
Total	29

* Does not include three off-duty incidents.

Additional Suspects Present

This table identifies the number of additional suspects present during the 32 incidents where 33 peace officers were murdered. It includes three off-duty incidents where three officers were murdered.

Additional Suspects Present	No. of Incidents*
0	25
1	6
2	1
Total	32

* Includes three off-duty incidents.

Witnesses Present

▲ *Conclusion:* The number of witnesses present during the 32 incidents ranged from none to as high as 30. The study shows that the presence of witnesses may not prevent a suspect from murdering a peace officer.

1.1.4 Agency Changes as Result of Incident

Specific changes implemented by the affected agencies are identified below. Nine agencies reported implementing changes in policy, procedures, training, or equipment, as a result of the 33 peace officers killed in the line of duty.

The table on the following page identifies these changes.

**Reported
Changes in Policy,
Procedures, Training or
Equipment**

Implemented Changes

- Formed a tactical response team, placed long guns in patrol vehicles, and improved the radio repeater system.
- Increased training on disarming techniques.
- Reinforced tactical approach training.
- Agency (college) now contracts for law enforcement services.
- Requires dispatch to notify officer if there have been previous hazardous calls at a location (specifically, domestic disturbance calls).
- Reinforced training on keeping suspect under control.
- Placed MP-5 sub-machine guns on motorcycles.
- Requires sergeants to respond to all “check welfare” calls relating to alcohol, drugs, or mental illness.
- Requires notification to dispatch on all operations.

▶ **IMPORTANT:** Of the 32 incidents studied where 33 peace officers were murdered, 23 incidents resulted in no changes being implemented by the affected agencies. In fact, these agencies reported that the data gathered tended to validate current policies and procedures.



Section 1.2

Primary Factors

1.2.1

VPO: Physical Profile

Victim Peace Officer Information

There were 33 victim peace officers (VPO) killed feloniously from 24 different agencies during this study period, 1995–99. The following is a summary of the primary factors that were identified during the research process.

Factors Contributing to Peace Officer Deaths

- Poor tactics
- Overconfidence
- Complacency
- Rushing in without a plan
- Unprovoked, sudden and deliberate attack

▲ *Conclusion:* These five issues of concern were significant factors in the majority of the felonious peace officer murder cases.

Victim Peace Officer Demographics

The following tables represent victim peace officer demographics at the time of the incidents.

This table is a summary of the physical characteristics of the 33 victim peace officers in this study.

Physical Profile of Victim Peace Officers

Age	26 – 65 yrs
Height	5' 6" – 6' 3"
Weight	145 – 263 lbs
Sex	Male

▲ *Conclusion:* Age may have been a factor in the death of two officers. Both victim officers were over the age of 60. One was involved in an all-out struggle; the other was knocked unconscious. Both were killed with their own guns.

**VPO:
Ethnicity**

This table provides a breakdown of the ethnicity of the 33 victim peace officers.

Ethnicity	Victim Officers
Caucasian	23
Hispanic	7
African-American	1
Asian	1
Armenian	1
Total	33

**Law Enforcement
Experience**

Law enforcement experience is defined as time served in a sworn capacity, including time spent with another agency. The law enforcement experience of the 33 victim peace officers ranged from six weeks to 40 years. This table provides a breakdown of law enforcement experience.

Years of Experience	Victim Officers
Less than 1 year	2
1 – 4 years	10
5 – 10 years	14
11 – 20 years	4
21 – 40 years	3
Total	33

Rank

This table shows the breakdown of the victim peace officers by rank.

Rank	Victim Officers
Officer / Deputy	30
Detective / Investigator	1
Lieutenant	1
Chief of Police	1
Total	33

Assignment

In the following table, three of the victim peace officers in this study were killed while involved in off-duty law enforcement actions. Out of the 30 officers murdered while on duty, 23 were assigned to patrol/traffic. One of the victim officers assigned to traffic was working motorcycle patrol.

Assignment	Victim Officers
Patrol / Traffic	23
Off-duty	3
SWAT	1
Gang enforcement	3
Investigator	1
Watch Commander	1
Chief of Police	1
Total	33

**Type of Unit
(One-/Two-Person
Patrols)**

As shown below, of the 23 peace officers murdered while assigned to patrol/traffic, 16 were one-person units. However, six incidents occurred while other officers were present. One-person patrol has consistently been shown to be the most dangerous assignment for officers.

Type of Unit	Victim Officers
One-person patrol	16
Two-person patrol	7
Total	23

**VPO:
Physical Condition**

This table shows that four incidents involved physical altercations. The physical condition, size, weight and age of the victim peace officers were examined; however, there were no witnesses at the scene. The age and physical characteristics of both officer and suspect for each incident are also identified.

Altercation*	Age		Height		Weight	
	Officer	Suspect	Officer	Suspect	Officer	Suspect
Incident 1	65	29	5'7"	6'0"	190	200
Incident 2	60	47	5'8"	6'0"	170	170
Incident 3	31	24	5'7"	5'11"	190	205
Incident 4	25	25	5'11"	5'10"	179	140

▲ *Conclusion:* The physical condition of the peace officer as a contributing factor to his death is inconclusive.

**VPO:
Cause of Death**

The cause of death for all 33 victim peace officers was gunshot wounds from handguns, rifles (including assault rifles), and shotguns. This table provides a breakdown of the weapons used.

Type of Weapon	Victim Officers
Handgun	20
Rifle (including assault rifles)	11
Shotgun	2
Total	33

1.2.2 Officer Safety Responses

Officer safety behaviors and attitude were reported in 13 of the 33 victim peace officers murders. The lists in the following two tables represent **multiple responses** from reporting agencies.

Officer Safety Errors

Officer Safety Errors

- Overconfidence
- Careless or complacent attitude
- Poor search techniques
- Ignoring danger signs
- Poor positioning
- Poor use of cover
- Relaxing too soon
- Carried law enforcement credentials but no weapon while off-duty

Survival Issues: Prevention

In five incidents, the study could not determine if the deaths were preventable; in ten incidents the study indicated the deaths were preventable; and in 18 incidents the study determined the deaths were not preventable.

Prevention Factors

- Better use of cover
- Better positioning
- Maintain control and get assistance
- Get assistance in high risk situations
- When off-duty; if possible take no action, be a witness, be armed.
- Use of body armor
- Recognize danger signs
- Wait for backup

Potential for Violence

Nineteen of the victim peace officers were aware of a potential hazard when they initiated or responded to the incident. Nine of the victim peace officers had knowledge of the possibility weapons were present prior to the initial contact with the suspect.

Suspect Known to VPO

In seven of the cases, the victim peace officer knew the suspect, and in six of the seven cases the victim peace officer knew the suspect had a potential for violence. Three of the victim peace officers had previous contact with the suspect. It is unknown if these contacts were of a violent nature.

Physical Altercation

This table shows four incidents where a physical altercation and struggle took place.

Physical Altercation Factors
<p>Types of Incidents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suspicious person stop ▪ Arrest situation ▪ Vehicle pullover ▪ Domestic violence <p>Three of the four incidents appeared to have involved all-out struggles. In one incident, the victim peace officer was initially knocked down and dazed. The suspect then took the officer's weapon and shot him.</p>

Officer Safety Practices

Data gathered from the reporting agencies indicated that none of the victim peace officers were rated below standard for officer safety practices. Three agencies indicated unknown.

1.2.3 Training Issues

One of the reasons POST produces this report is to provide statistical information and analysis that will assist agencies in making critical officer safety training decisions.

- ▶ Training is the single most important factor in preventing the injury and death of peace officers in the line of duty.

POST Academy

All 33 victim peace officers graduated from a POST training academy. The time between graduation and the fatal incident varied dramatically from as little as nine weeks to 38 years.

Firearms Qualifications

The following data describes the firearm qualification profiles of the victim peace officers as reported by the participating agencies.

Primary Firearm Qualification
The majority of the victim peace officers had qualified within one to four months of the fatal incident. The most recent qualification was within eight days, and the longest period was 70 months.
Backup Firearm Qualification
Eight agencies reported the victim peace officers had qualified with their backup gun. The time between qualification and the fatal incident ranged from one to 28 months.
Shotgun Qualification
Twenty agencies reported shotgun qualification training. Qualification times ranged from one to 30 months, with the majority being within one year.
Night Range Qualification
The majority of the victim peace officers qualified within two to six months prior to the incident; however, the range fell within one to 48 months. As reported, 18 of the victim peace officers may not have received any qualification training.

Defensive Tactics

The data gathered under the heading “defensive tactics” includes training in weapon retention techniques, baton, arrest and control techniques, and tactical role playing. As was the case in gathering firearms training information, the report reflects only reported information. Several agencies indicated the information was unknown.

Defensive Tactics / Weapons Retention
Seventeen agencies reported in-service training in defensive tactics/ weapons retention. The time span between training and the fatal incident ranged from one to 42 months. The majority of the victim peace officers had received training within one year of the incident.
Baton
Eighteen agencies reported baton training. The time span between training and the fatal incident ranged from one to 42 months. The majority of the victim peace officers had received training within one year of the incident.
Arrest and Control
Seventeen agencies reported arrest and control training. The time span between training and the fatal incident ranged from one to 48 months. All but two victim peace officers had received training within two years of the incident.
Role Playing
Thirteen agencies reported role play training. All but two victim peace officers had received training within two years of the incident.



Section 1.3

Suspect Information

In this study, 39 suspects were involved in 32 incidents which resulted in the murder of 33 California peace officers during 1995–1999. Of these 39 suspects, the 32 who did the actual killing (one suspect killed two officers) were male. All but two carried, or had in their possession, firearms. One of the suspects was killed by a victim peace officer; five were killed by other officers, and three committed suicide.

1.3.1

Suspect Demographics

The following tables represent suspect demographics at the time of the incidents.

There is no such thing as an “average suspect”. To provide averages in this document would be, or could be, misleading. This table shows the range of characteristics of the suspects who did the actual killing of the victim peace officers.

Physical Profile of Suspects	
Age	17 – 48 yrs
Height	5'3" – 6'1"
Weight	115 – 220 lbs
Sex	Male

Suspect: Physical Profile

Suspect: Ethnicity

This table shows the ethnic backgrounds of the 32 suspects.

Ethnicity	Suspects
Hispanic	12
African-American	8
Caucasian	7
Asian	2
Native American	1
Samoan	1
Interracial	1
Total	32

Criminal History

Twenty-seven of the 32 suspects had criminal histories. Their arrest records ranged from one to 22 arrests. Of the 32 suspects, 17 were known to have gang affiliation. Six of the 32 suspects had documented previous violent contact with law enforcement personnel. Eleven incident reports stated that previous violent contact with law enforcement was unknown.

Types of Arrest and Parole Status

Arrest records for 26 of the 27 suspects who had criminal histories included multiple arrests. The following table gives examples of those arrest records. Many of the suspects had been arrested several times for the same type of crime. Twelve of the 27 suspects with criminal records were on parole, and six of the 27 suspects had outstanding arrest warrants at the time of the incident. These examples do not give the total number of times a suspect was arrested for a specific crime but only that he had been arrested for that type of crime. The 26 suspects accounted for **more than 160** prior arrests.

Criminal History of Prior Arrests	Suspects
Theft / property crimes	15
Crimes of violence	13
Narcotics	11
Sex crimes	3
Firearms violation	8

1.3.2 The Attacks

The following charts give information regarding the attacks on the victim peace officers.

Type of Attack

This table represents the types of attacks that occurred in the 32 incidents where 33 California peace officers were murdered.

Type of Attack	No. of Incidents
Planned	8
Spontaneous	17
Unknown	7

Reason for Attack

As shown below, in 24 of the peace officer murders, the primary reason for the attack was to facilitate escape or resist arrest.

Reason for Attack	Victim Officers
Facilitate escape / resist arrest	24
Revenge / hatred toward law enforcement	3
Unknown	6

Under the Influence

As shown below, nine of the 32 suspects were found to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol at the time of the incident. Thirteen incidents reported the suspect's use of drugs or alcohol as unknown.

Substance	Suspects
Alcohol	5
Depressants	2
Stimulants	2



Section 1.4

Equipment Issues: Firearms

This section covers the types of firearms used by both the victim peace officers and the suspects, the number of gunshot wounds sustained by both, and weapon concealment as a significant factor contributing to the cause of death.

1.4.1

Types of Firearms Used

The following firearms information illustrates the types of firearms carried by the victim peace officers and suspects at the time of the incidents.

Assault-Type Weapons

Assault-Type Weapon Usage

Twelve of the 33 peace officers murdered were killed with rifles, shotgun, or assault-type weapons such as the AK47. **These figures represent 37.5% of the weapons used to murder 33 peace officers. This is a 10.5% increase from the previous five-year study.**

VPO: Firearms

Of the 33 murdered peace officers, 31 were armed. One officer was armed with an M-16 rifle; one was armed with an MP-5 sub-machine gun. The other victim peace officers were armed with handguns. Two off-duty victim peace officers were not armed at the time of the incident. The table below identifies the handguns worn by the victim peace officers.

29 Victim Officers Armed with Handguns

- Two officers were armed with revolvers: one .38 caliber and one .357 caliber
- The remaining 27 officers were armed with semiautomatic handguns, ranging from 9 mm to .45 caliber, with the majority being 9mm.

Ability to Fire

Only ten of the 31 armed victim peace officers were able to fire their weapons during the conflict. One officer using an M-16 rifle fired one round. Another officer using an MP-5 submachine gun fired two rounds.

The other eight victim peace officers used their primary weapons (handguns) as shown below.

Rounds Fired by Eight Victim Officers	
■ One officer fired:	1 shot
■ One officer fired:	2 shots
■ One officer fired:	5 shots
■ One officer fired:	7 shots
■ One officer fired:	9 shots
■ One officer fired:	10 shots
■ One officer fired:	13 shots
■ One officer fired:	an unknown number of shots

▶ Twenty-three victim peace officers did not return fire.

Suspect: Firearms

All 32 suspects used a firearm to murder 33 victim peace officers. This table shows the types of guns used by the suspects.

Firearms / Caliber		Victim Officers
Rifle	.30	3*
	.308	1
	.223	1
Assault rifle (includes AK47-type rifles)		6
Shotgun	12 gauge	1
	20 gauge	1
Revolver	.38	3**
	.44	1
Semiautomatic	9mm	5
	.380	4
	.40	1
	.45	4***
	.25	2
Total		33

* Two officers were killed with one .30 caliber rifle.

** One .38 caliber revolver was the victim officer's weapon.

*** One .45 caliber semiautomatic weapon was the victim officer's weapon.

▲ *Conclusion:* This study shows that the majority of suspects still continue to use handguns to murder peace officers.

1.4.2 Gunshot Wounds

The following tables identify where on the body the victim peace officers and suspects sustained gun shot wounds, and the number of times they were shot.

This table shows the location and frequency of the gunshot wounds to the victim peace officers. As shown, some of the officers were hit multiple times in the same body area.

VPO: Location of Wounds

Location	Frequency
Head	16
Neck	4
Chest	14
Hands / arms	8
Back	8
Legs / feet	7
Abdomen	6
Side	4
Not specified	42

VPO: Number of Times Shot

This table gives a breakdown of the number of times each of the 33 victim officers were shot. One victim officer was shot 30 times with an assault rifle, and another victim peace officer was shot 14 times with an assault rifle.

No. of Times Shot	Victim Officers
1	16
2	7
3	3
4	2
5	2
8	1
14	1
30	1
Total	33

Suspect: Location of Wounds

Suspect: Number of Times Shot

◀ *Conclusion:* There were a total of 12 suspects shot. Specific details as to the locations of the gunshot wounds sustained by the suspects were not accurately reported in the surveys received.

This table shows the number of times the 12 reported suspects were shot as a result of their involvement in the incident. Several suspects were shot multiple times.

No. of Times Shot	Suspects
1	5
2	1
3	1
4	1
6	1
7	1
16	1
39	1
Total	12

1.4.3 Status of Suspects

Of the 32 suspects involved in the murder of 33 California peace officers, 23 were arrested and 9 were killed.

All nine suspects died by firearm weapons as shown below.

Suspect: Cause of Death

Nine Suspects Killed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One suspect was killed by victim peace officer. ▪ Five suspects were killed by other officers. ▪ Three suspects committed suicide.

1.4.4 Concealment

Although the firearms used against the victim peace officers were not concealed in 17 of the 32 incidents, concealment was shown to be a significant factor contributing to the cause of death in nine of the incidents.

The following two tables contain information regarding the concealment of the 32 suspects' firearms.

Suspect: Location of Firearms

Firearm Concealment	Frequency
Not concealed	17
Concealed	9
Unknown	4
Two unarmed suspects used victim officer's weapon.	2
Total	32

Location of Concealed Firearm	No. of Incidents
Waistband	4
Car	2
Unknown	3



Section 1.5 Other Equipment Issues

- ▶ **FACT:** Firearms continue to pose the greatest threat to officer safety. Body armor is the single most effective piece of passive safety equipment that a peace officer can utilize. Body armor should be mandated for all uniformed officers.

Two issues are the focus of this section:

- Is safety equipment available?
- Is safety equipment properly used?

In compiling data for this report, agency representatives were asked about the availability of equipment, the effective use of equipment, and an explanation of how the equipment, or the lack thereof, was a factor in the murder of their peace officer. Agencies did not report information on most equipment issues unless there was a direct factor.

The following types of equipment and topics are discussed, even if no data was reported.

- Body armor
- Patrol equipment
- Special tactical equipment

1.5.1

Body Armor

This section of the report gives detailed information about the use of, and continued need for, body armor.

Of the 30 peace officers that were murdered while on duty, four were not wearing body armor. Three of those were wearing standard uniforms and one was a detective in plain clothes.

Use of Body Armor

Body Armor Information

- Three victim peace officers were off duty and were not wearing body armor.
- Four victim peace officers were on duty and were not wearing body armor. Two were shot in the back, one in the chest, and one in the abdomen. All shots were from handguns and were in locations where body armor may have prevented a fatal wound. Only one victim peace officer did not have access to body armor. The other three chose not to wear the armor.
- In four incidents, body armor was defeated by high powered rifles/assault weapons.

▲ *Conclusion:* There were no reported instances where body armor was defeated by the ammunition it was designed to stop. Victim peace officers were struck in areas not protected by their armor, or by high-velocity rounds which the armor was not designed to stop.

▶ Nine percent of the victim officers had access to body armor and chose not to wear it. In the previous 5-year study, this figure was 16%. In the 1987-89 study, the figure was 21%. The current figure represents a significant decline in the number of victim peace officers who chose not to wear body armor.

1.5.2 Patrol Equipment

This section covers law enforcement patrol equipment that is typically carried by peace officers while on duty (excluding firearms). The types of patrols reported during this study include:

- Twenty-eight of the victim peace officers were in standard uniform and performing patrol functions at the time of the incident.
- Three victim peace officers were off-duty.
- One victim peace officer was participating in a SWAT building entry arrest situation.
- One victim peace officer was a detective and was investigating a domestic violence case.

Patrol equipment is normally found on a gun belt and includes impact weapons, chemical agents, holsters, handcuffs, flashlights, speed loaders, hand-held radios, and other identified objects.

Patrol Equipment Reports

Impact Weapons

There were no reported cases within this study where a victim peace officer used an impact weapon. There were three cases involving physical confrontations where impact weapons may have been a factor.

Chemical Agent

There were no reported cases where chemical agents were used or were identified as a factor in this study. There were three cases involving physical confrontations where chemical agents may have been a factor.

Holster

There was one case where, during a physical struggle, the suspect was able to overpower the victim peace officer and take the sidearm from the holster. The officer had a 4-inch revolver in a break-front holster. It is unknown if the holster was a factor.

continued

Patrol Equipment Reports
continued

Handcuffs
There were no instances where the use of handcuffs was identified as a factor in the death of a peace officer.
Flashlight
Twenty-three of the 32 incidents happened during the hours of darkness. However, flashlights were not indicated as a factor in the death of the victim peace officers. Concealment in darkness was a primary factor in several of the incidents.
Speed Loaders and Ammunition
There were no reported instances where speed loaders, or ammunition were listed as factors in the death of the victim peace officers.
Hand-held Radio
Hand-held radios were not listed as a factor in any of the 33 victim peace officer deaths.

1.5.3 Special Tactical Equipment

This category includes equipment commonly thought of as special operations or entry team equipment, including ballistic helmets, special entry team body armor, ballistic shields, mirror devices, canines, and other special chemical agent deployment devices. Although no special tactical equipment issues were discovered in this study, it is important to note that many experts now recommend that canines wear protective armor.





Section 1.6

Tactical Issues

The following section covers the many tactical issues and information gathered related to the 30 victim peace officers who were murdered while on duty.

1.6.1

Overview

The focus of this section is to review the known tactical decisions made by victim peace officers and to identify the most significant training issues. Incidents where victim peace officers were killed during patrol operations, planned tactical operations (SWAT building entry and/or arrest warrant) and follow-up investigations for wanted persons were evaluated, as well as whether the victim peace officers were working alone or with assistance.

Of the 30 victim peace officers that were murdered while on duty, 23 of them were on patrol. Sixteen were working in a one-officer patrol unit (one was a motorcycle officer).

Of the 16 one-officer units, seven did not request assistance, and three requested assistance but did not wait. Two victims had no chance to request assistance. Two victims had paired up to handle a domestic violence call, and three other victims were working in concert with other officers in handling the incidents.

Areas of Study

This table shows a variety of tactical subject areas that were examined.

Tactical Subject Areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tactical planning ▪ Communications issues ▪ Threat indicators and warning signs ▪ Use of assistance ▪ Positioning ▪ Cover ▪ Verbal / physical tactics ▪ Mental conditioning / will to survive ▪ Use of force ▪ Search techniques ▪ Weapon retention ▪ Tactical issues summary

Tactical Planning

There were 29 on-duty incidents where 30 victim peace officers were murdered. This table shows five incidents where tactical planning was identified as a factor. As indicated, two of the victim peace officers did not follow the plan, and three other victim peace officers were in a poor position without cover.

Tactical Planning	29 On-Duty Incidents		
	Yes	No	N/A*
Was a plan formulated?	8	9	12
Was the plan followed?	3	5	21
Was the plan a factor?	5	–	24

* For these victim officers, the data was unknown or unavailable.

Other Tactical Issues

This table contains reported factors that directly or indirectly contributed to the death of peace officers in this study.

Other Tactical Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The victim peace officer did not follow the plan. ■ Assistance was requested, but the victim peace officer did not wait for backup. ■ The tactical plan was unsafe. ■ The victim peace officer was drawn into a foot pursuit (away from a position of advantage). ■ Assistance was not requested when it reasonably should have been. ■ Victim peace officer was reluctant to use deadly force. ■ Working patrol partners did not appear to have a plan when responding to potentially hazardous situations. ■ While working as the backup officer, the victim peace officer left cover. ■ Victim peace officer rushed into a hazardous situation (several cases).

1.6.2 Warning Factors and Indicators

The tables on the following pages identify communication problems and known threats.

Communications

The following communication issues were listed as a factor in 14 of the incidents involved in this study.

Reported Communication Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Victim peace officer received inaccurate information.▪ Victim peace officer received conflicting information.▪ Victim peace officer received accurate information but did not act accordingly.▪ Victim peace officer needed more information than was available.▪ Officer-to-officer communication was inadequate in both planning and tactics.

Threats and Warnings

Threat indicators and/or warning signs are important factors to consider when studying the incidents where peace officers are feloniously killed. This table shows responses from 17 of the 29 incidents where on-duty peace officers were murdered. Several responses were often obtained from the same incident.

Threat Indicators and Warning Signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Overt acts*▪ Suspicious circumstances▪ Location of prior criminal activity▪ Suspect ignored verbal warnings▪ Anger▪ Body language▪ Fleeing▪ Involved in armed robbery▪ Armed suspect▪ Reported shooting by suspect▪ Suspicious demeanor▪ Nervousness

* The term "overt acts" is defined as sudden actions by suspects, including drawing a gun and shooting at the victim peace officer, physically resisting all requests by peace officers, and failing to yield to a red light and siren.

Location Factors

Surveys from ten incidents indicated that the locations of the incidents provided threat indicators and/or warning signs.

Threat Indicators and Warning Sign Locations	No. of Incidents
Ambush potential	3
High crime area	4
Area had previous violent history	2
Remote area	1

1.6.3 Assistance: Cover Officer or Backup

Definition: For the purpose of this study, “assistance” (also referred to as “cover officer” or “backup”) is defined as any situation where more than one officer is present and working to enforce the law.

There were 32 incidents where 33 California peace officers were killed by felonious assault. Three victim peace officers were off-duty. One incident involved the death of 2 peace officers.

This section will examine the assistance issues for the 29 incidents resulting in the death of 30 victim peace officers as identified below.

Status of Assistance

Status of Assistance	No. of Incidents	Victim Officers
With assistance	19	20
Without assistance	10	10
Totals	29	30

Assistance Present

This table contains several factors identified as reasons why assistance was not effective.

Factors	No. of Incidents
Ambush — spontaneous attack	9 *
Left cover	3
Tactical mistake	3
High risk vehicle stop/rushed vehicle	1
Running gunfight in vehicles	1
Poor positioning	1
Foot pursuit/conflicting information	1
Total Incidents	19

* Two officers were killed in one incident

No Assistance Present

There were 11 incidents where victim peace officers were working alone. This table outlines factors identified in these incidents.

Assistance Factors	No. of Incidents
Suspicious circumstances — spontaneous attack	3
Suspicious circumstances — called for assistance but did not wait	1
Vehicle stop — spontaneous attack	1
Vehicle stop — waved off assistance	1
Domestic violence — spontaneous attack	1
Fleeing suspect — foot pursuit	1
Fleeing suspect on bicycle	1
Possible armed robbery (one officer already inside structure)	1
Ambush — no chance	1

- ▶ What would have been the likelihood of attack if another officer had been present?

In the incidents studied, the victim peace officers were working alone. We can only speculate what the outcome might have been if another officer had been present. The LEOKA committee does believe, however, that several of the victim peace officers might not have perished if backup had been on the scene.

- ▲ *Conclusion:* The statistics indicate that having assistance does not, in itself, necessarily reduce the possibility of being seriously injured or killed when dealing with violent subjects.

Final Comment
*Assistance: Cover
Officer or Backup*

It is important to note that this report does not study the thousands of successful situations where peace officer partners have survived deadly assaults because they were working together effectively. **The fact is, when peace officers do work together effectively, the odds of surviving a sudden and deadly assault increase dramatically.**

Reference: Please refer to “Chapter 3: Peace Officer Assault Data” for additional information.

1.6.4

Combat Factors

The following information covers factors involved in the incidents leading up to and ending in deadly combat.

As shown below, positioning was identified as a significant factor in 18 of the 33 peace officers murdered during this study period.

Positioning

Positioning Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moved from cover to see better. ■ Left cover while one suspect was still in hiding. ■ Selected a position where the officer could not move quickly. ■ Searching one suspect while two other suspects were not contained. ■ Let suspect get too close. ■ Seated in stopped vehicle. ■ Moved into line of fire. ■ Placed himself in front of suspect and lost visual contact. ■ Walked by open window. ■ Rushed into situation without cover.

Use of Cover

Cover was listed as a factor in eight incidents where eight of the 33 peace officers were murdered. In the other 24 incidents, the attacks were spontaneous or the situations were such that the victim officers had no chance to seek cover. This table describes these factors.

Cover Factors	No. of Incidents
Left cover	3
Exposed upper body from cover	1
Did not use available cover	2
Limited cover available	1
No cover available	1

Distance Between Suspect and Officer

The distance between the victim officer and the suspect varied from point blank to 183 feet as shown below. Eight officers were killed from a distance of 50 to 183 feet. Seven of those officers were killed with high powered rifles or assault rifles.

Distance from Officer	Victim Officers
0 – 4 feet	8
5 – 10	10
11 – 20	3
21 – 99	7
100 feet or more	5
Total	33

► It is significant to note that in 55% of the cases (18 officers), the distance between the victim peace officer and the suspect was ten feet or less. In the previous five-year study, 68% of the incidents occurred within this distance.

Verbal Tactics

Verbal tactics were used but were not effective in the five cases where its use was documented.

Physical Tactics

An all-out physical struggle occurred in three of the incidents. In one incident, the suspect gained control of the victim officer’s gun and murdered him with it.

Will to Survive

The “will to survive,” for the purposes of this report, is defined as the human response to do whatever it takes to survive a deadly situation. This includes trained responses that can trigger conditioned reactions, such as drawing and firing a service weapon, or the use of fighting skills, under adverse situations.

Will to Survive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Three victim peace officers were off duty, and two were not armed. The officer that was armed shot it out with two armed suspects, wounding both before he was killed. ■ Nine other victim peace officers were able to draw and fire their weapons during the confrontations. One victim peace officer was able to kill the suspect during the gun battle. ■ Four victim peace officers were involved in physical confrontations; three of them appeared to have been involved in an all-out struggle prior to being killed. The fourth victim peace officer was hit without warning by the suspect, who then took the officer’s gun and killed him. ■ One victim peace officer, after being mortally wounded, was still able to radio in an 11-99 code (officer needs immediate assistance). ■ In the remaining incidents, the victim peace officers did not appear to have any time to react or respond to a sudden and deliberate attack.

Use of Force

At least 14 of the victim peace officers used a form of force. Some agency responses indicated unknown. This table contains three areas of force that are applicable for this report.

Use of Force Categories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Verbal tactics ■ Physical tactics ■ Deadly force

Deadly Force

As previously stated, ten victim peace officers were able to draw and fire their weapons during the fatal confrontation.

1.6.5 Search Techniques

Search Categories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Visual Search ■ Person Search ■ Building Search ■ Vehicle Search ■ Area Search

Visual Search

Darkness or lack of visibility may have been a factor in 11 incidents where 12 victim peace officers were killed. This table identifies those factors that contributed to these incidents.

Darkness: Visual Search Issues	No. of Incidents
Suspicious person(s) — did not see weapon	3
Vehicle stop — did not see weapon	2
Foot pursuit — did not see weapon	2
Home robbery — did not see second suspect	1
Two victim peace officers approached on foot — did not see hidden suspect	1
Did not see suspect sneak up on parked patrol vehicle	1
Could not see inside restaurant window	1

Person Search

There was one incident where a person search was a factor in the death of a victim peace officer.

Person Search Incident
While performing a pat down search on one suspect, a second suspect who was not contained shot the victim peace officer.

Vehicle Search

There was one incident where a vehicle search was a factor in the death of a victim peace officer.

Vehicle Search Incident

While the victim peace officer was performing a vehicle inventory of the trunk, the suspect removed a handgun from the passenger compartment and shot the victim officer.

Building Search

There were two incidents where victim peace officers were killed in a building search.

Building Search Factors

- Victim officer walked into a dark room where suspect was hiding.
- Victim officer, along with other SWAT officers, entered a room where suspect opened fire on them.

Weapon Retention

There were two incidents where the victim peace officers were overpowered, their handguns were taken from them and used to kill them. Four other victim peace officers' weapons were taken from them after they were killed.

Killed With Their Own Weapon

- Victim peace officer appeared to have been involved in an all out struggle. Suspect wrestled the officer's gun away and shot him.
- Suspect suddenly attacked the victim peace officer, knocking him down and rendering him semiconscious. The suspect then took the victim officer's sidearm, killing him with it.

1.6.6

Tactical Problem Areas

Summary: Tactical Issues

With few exceptions, the tactical problem areas identified in this report generally fit into one of the four categories listed below.

Most Common Tactical Issues

- The victim peace officers were performing their normal duties when a suspect suddenly and unexpectedly attacked; the victim peace officers were not prepared for the attack.
- Partner peace officers were working independently and without a plan when the deadly incident occurred.
- The victim peace officer approached a situation without calling or waiting for assistance.
- An informal or formal plan of action was in place, but the victim peace officer did not follow the plan.

Tactical Questions

With all the information that has been presented specific to tactical issues, there are still many questions that remain, as described below.

Unanswered Tactical Questions

- Why didn't the victim peace officer stay with the plan?
- Why didn't the victim peace officer call for assistance?
- Why didn't the victim peace officer wait for assistance?
- Why didn't the victim peace officer approach the situation with more caution?
- Why didn't the victim peace officer remain with cover?
- Why didn't the victim peace officer move to cover?

1.6.7 Final Comment: Tactical Issues

Peace officers are human and sometimes make mistakes and pay the ultimate price. There are also times when a peace officer is doing his/her job, doing it correctly, and still pays the ultimate price.

▲ *Conclusion:* Foundational training and periodic refresher training, in the “basics” of perishable skills, are the best preparation for survival from sudden and deadly assaults.



CHAPTER 2 Officer Safety Guidelines

These officer safety guidelines have been compiled from the information and analysis presented in Chapter 1 of this report. These guidelines contain general training and policy recommendations for California peace officers. Below is a complete list of the guidelines.

List of Officer Safety Guidelines

Guideline Number	Safety Recommendations
General Guidelines	
1	Master the basics
2	Be aware of the hands
3	Be aware of and use cover
4	Be aware of distance and positioning
5	Use communication systems
6	Practice drawing and shooting with weak hand
7	Wear your body armor
8	Be aware that suspects have guns
Patrol Guidelines	
9	Maintain a position of advantage
10	Consider varying vehicle approach
11	Evaluate options when preparing to approach
12	Get assistance when making an arrest
13	Be aware of dangers when investigating suspicious persons or circumstances
14	Be aware of dangers in foot pursuits
15	Be prepared for an emotional response
16	Use tactical approach when handling <u>all</u> calls

continued

List of Officer Safety Guidelines
continued

Guideline Number	Safety Recommendations
High Risk Calls/Special Operations Guidelines	
17	Treat all crimes in progress as <u>extremely</u> dangerous
18	Train... train... train...
19	Be mentally prepared
20	Treat all special operations as very dangerous
Ambush and Off-Duty Guidelines	
21	Will to survive must be paramount
22	Apply good judgement
23	Realize what you <u>don't</u> have when off duty
24	Consider options in appearance when off duty
25	Carrying off-duty firearms should be considered

▶ POST is committed to keeping the officer safety guidelines updated and to the development and production of the best possible officer safety telecourses.

Section 2.1

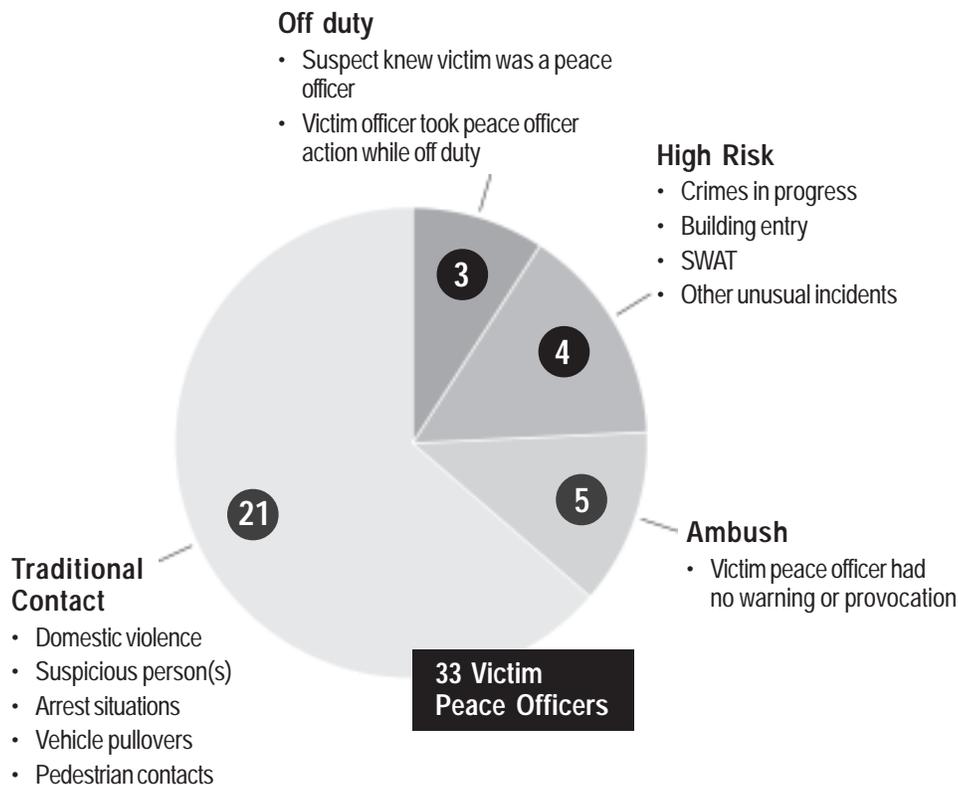
General Guidelines

The guidelines discussed in this section are universal and transcend all law enforcement activities. These guidelines are consistent with the officer safety guidelines contained in POST Regular Basic Course curriculum and in previous LEOKA studies. Supported by more than 20 years of reporting, these findings have shown that certain training issues remain critical.

The chart on the next page shows that the 33 victim peace officers were involved in four specific types of activities when the murders occurred. The results of examining these activities formed the basis for the following safety guideline findings and recommendations.

Finding: One of the most dangerous issues facing peace officers today is the attitude that develops with routine daily tasks. Most of the peace officer murders (21 of the 30 victim officers murdered on duty), occurred during traditional stops, routine calls and investigations.

Types of VPO Activities Examined



Guideline No. 1

Master the Basics

Recommendation: The key to surviving sudden and deadly attacks is approaching *every* contact, no matter how repetitious, with officer safety *and* tactics in mind. The basics include:

- Awareness of cover
- Watching and controlling suspect’s hands
- Safe vehicle positioning
- Clear and accurate radio communications
- Keying into and responding to danger signs
- Calling for backup
- Working together as a team when additional assistance is present

Guideline No. 2

Be Aware of the Hands

Finding: In *all* of the 1995–99 California peace officer murders, including off-duty deaths, the victim peace officers were killed with firearms.

Recommendation: Awareness and control of the hands continues to be a universal safety point.

Guideline No. 3

Be Aware of and Use Cover

Finding: In this study, as well as in past studies, cover was either available but not utilized or abandoned by the victim peace officers in seven of the incidents.

Recommendation: Be aware of cover. Use, be ready to use, and/or move to cover when necessary. The use of available cover continues to be a basic tactical consideration during every situation.

Guideline No. 4

Be Aware of Distance and Positioning

Finding: Positioning was a *primary* factor in the death of 18 of the 33 peace officers murdered during this study. Distance and positioning factors include:

- Being too close to the suspect
- Calling for assistance, yet making contact before assistance arrives
- Abandoning a safe location
- Having a poor view of suspect(s)
- Stopping the patrol vehicle either too close to, or in front of suspect(s)

Recommendation: Be aware of the dangers that occur with poor positioning:

- Identify, plan, *then move* to positions that are advantageous when making law enforcement contacts
- Avoid abandoning a safe location or rushing into a potentially dangerous area
- Wait for assistance

Guideline No. 5**Use Communication Systems**

Finding: It is unknown if radio communications played any part in the 33 incidents involved in this study. However, radio communications is still a critical safety issue each peace officer deals with on a daily basis.

Recommendation: It is important to use and understand the limitations of the agency communications systems and to always transmit appropriate and accurate safety and tactical information. Regardless of assignment, dispatch should be notified of all contacts, including the nature and location of the contact.

Guideline No. 6**Practice Drawing and Shooting with Weak Hand**

Finding: It is unknown if using the weak hand was an issue in any of these incidents. The fact remains that the ability to draw and shoot with the weak hand can save an officer's life.

Recommendation: All officers need to know how to draw, accurately fire, and reload their primary firearm with the weak hand. Weak-hand drawing and shooting is *required* as part of the firearms curriculum of the POST Regular Basic Course, and should be included in regular range qualifications for all peace officers. Also, the carrying of a second weapon that is *accessible to the weak hand* should be a tactical consideration.

Guideline No. 7**Wear Protective Body Armor**

Finding: Of the 33 officers feloniously killed during this study, seven were *not* wearing body armor. Three of those peace officers were off-duty. This means that four of the officers killed were on duty and not wearing body armor when they reasonably should have been. In four cases, body armor was defeated by high powered rifles/assault type weapons.

Recommendation: Each officer should recognize the need to utilize proper safety equipment when performing all patrol activities and when responding to any potential high risk incident. Although body armor *greatly enhances* an officer's ability to survive in a lethal confrontation, it should never replace proper tactics when handling high risk incidents. All agencies should consider mandating the wearing of body armor for all on-duty law enforcement activities.

► **FACT:** Body armor is the single most effective piece of passive safety equipment that a peace officer can utilize.

Guideline No. 8

**Be Aware that
Suspects Have Guns**

Finding: All 33 peace officers feloniously killed during this study were killed by firearms. Eleven of those 33 were killed by high powered rifles/assault type weapons. That is a significant increase in the use of assault type weapons.

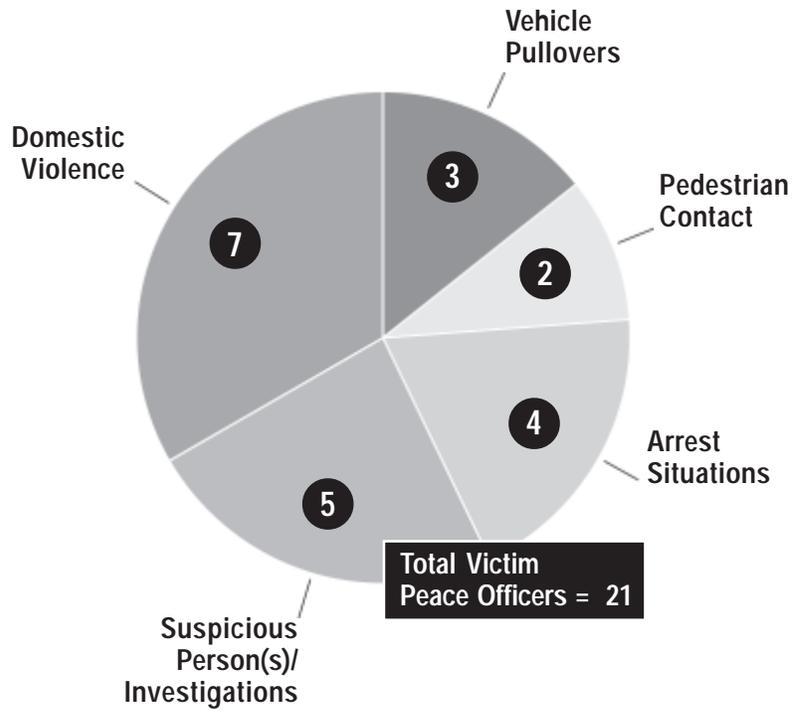
Recommendation: Be aware the suspect may be armed or have access to a firearm. The key is finding a *balance* between taking action while jeopardizing safety, and losing effectiveness by being too cautious. The fact is, peace officers can still perform regular tasks effectively and efficiently without compromising officer safety.



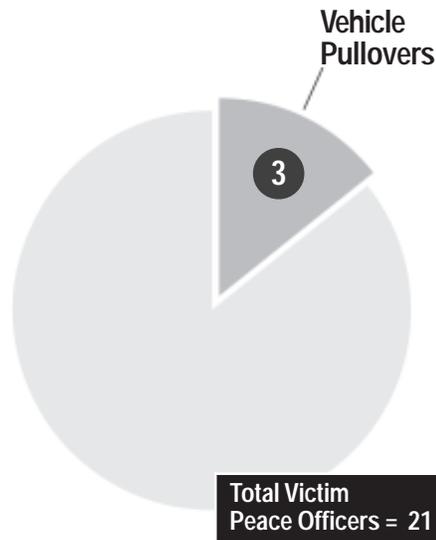
Section 2.2 Patrol Guidelines

Patrol and other field activities include the everyday contacts that California peace officers are involved in on a regular basis. Although considered routine, these “traditional contacts” cost the lives of 21 of the 33 peace officers murdered during this study. The following chart shows the five types of contacts examined:

Types of Contacts Examined



Vehicle Pullovers



Guideline No. 9

Maintain a Position of Advantage

Finding: Three California peace officers were murdered in vehicle pullover incidents during this study period. In these incidents, two officers were killed with handguns, and one was killed with a sawed-off rifle. In all vehicle pullover cases, the peace officer was not able to gain or maintain a position of advantage.

Recommendation: As mentioned in Guideline No. 4, peace officers need to identify, plan, then move to a position that is advantageous — they should not abandon the location until it is safe.

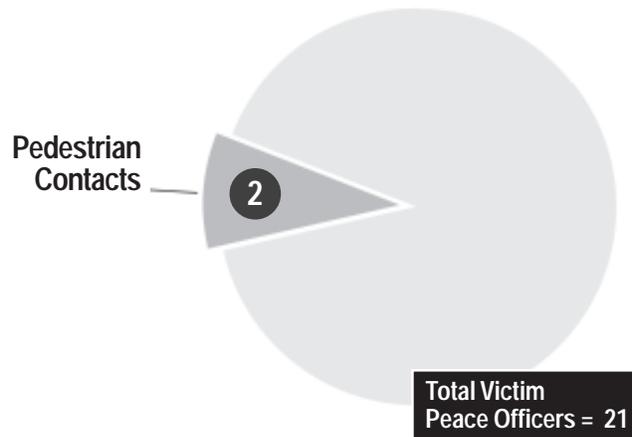
Guideline No. 10

Consider Varying Vehicle Approach

Finding: In two of the three vehicle pullover incidents, the victim peace officers were shot as they approached the vehicles; one was shot on the driver’s side and one on the passenger side. The third victim officer was shot as a result of not controlling the actions of the driver after the initial stop.

Recommendation: Peace officers need to continuously maintain control of all vehicle occupants. They should consider the circumstances of the stop and evaluate the option of approaching the vehicle, or directing occupants out of the vehicle to a safe position for contact. Varying the approach to the passenger side of the vehicle can be advantageous for officer safety purposes in many situations.

Pedestrian Contacts



Guideline No. 11

**Evaluate Options
When Preparing to
Approach**

Finding: Two peace officers were murdered in incidents involving pedestrians. One was shot after he and his partner contacted two known gang members walking in a residential area; the other victim officer was shot after contacting three pedestrians in an isolated industrial area.

Recommendation: Approaching a suspect from a position of advantage on pedestrian contacts continues to be a primary safety factor. Officers should carefully evaluate the options of either approaching or directing the pedestrian to the safest position for contact.

Arrest Situations



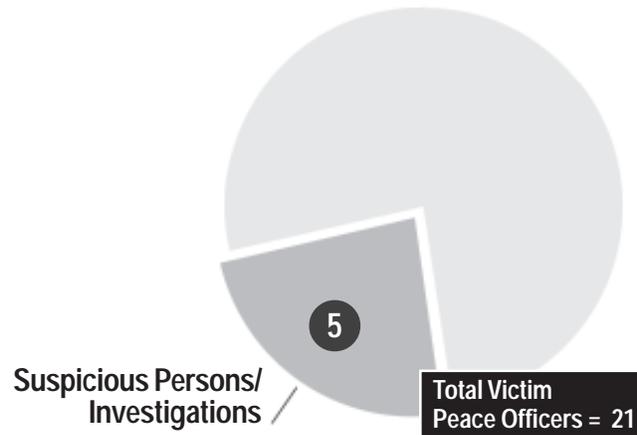
Guideline No. 12

Get Assistance When Making an Arrest

Finding: Four peace officers were murdered while attempting to arrest and take suspects into custody. One peace officer was disarmed and killed with the officer’s own weapon.

Recommendation: Regardless of the violation, peace officers should have assistance, and a plan, once the decision is made to make an arrest. Weapons retention training should continue to be ongoing for peace officers.

Suspicious Persons and Investigations



Guideline No. 13

Be Aware of Dangers When Investigating Suspicious Persons or Circumstances

Finding: Five peace officers were murdered while investigating suspicious persons/circumstances: 1) one officer was executed after the suspect drew a handgun and forced him to the ground; 2) one officer interrupted a suicide and was shot during a struggle; 3) one officer was checking the welfare of a disturbed person; 4) one officer was blocking the path of a fleeing suspect on a bicycle; and 5) one officer was shot during a foot pursuit. Three of the five officers were working alone.

Recommendation: Every peace officer needs to recognize the importance of utilizing proven officer safety tactics when investigating suspicious persons/circumstances. If peace officers are working alone, they should also consider waiting for backup if it is not yet an emergency situation.

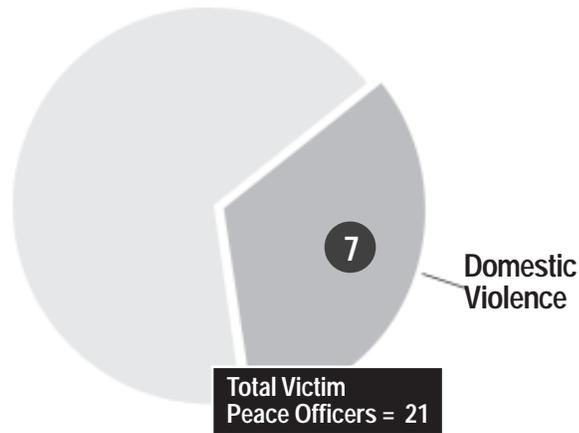
Guideline No. 14

Be Aware of Dangers in Foot Pursuits

Finding: Two officers were killed during a foot pursuit in this study: one in a suspicious person investigation, and one in a domestic violence situation.

Recommendation: Officers should consider the totality of the circumstance before initiating a foot pursuit. If possible, establish a perimeter and wait for assistance before attempting to look for and/or apprehend a suspect who has fled.

Domestic Violence



Guideline No. 15

Be Prepared for an Emotional Response

Finding: Seven peace officers were murdered handling domestic violence situations. Two were murdered at one incident as they approached the location. One was murdered with his own weapon after being knocked to the ground.

Recommendation: Officers need to recognize and be ready to deal with the emotions and extreme volatility, including the inherent dangers that may accompany domestic violence and disturbance type calls, even when the suspect is not perceived as a threat. Experience tells us that in these situations, even the calmest appearing person can erupt emotionally.

Guideline No. 16

Use Tactical Approach When Handling All Calls

Finding: In all but one of the seven domestic violence cases in this study, the suspects were armed or had access to firearms before the victim officers made the initial contact.

Recommendation: Officers must recognize the increased dangers when handling domestic violence and disturbance cases. Basic tactics need to be practiced and reinforced. Officers need to respond, approach, and handle these types of calls as they would any crime-in-progress call.

► Domestic violence/disturbance calls continue to be the No. 1 cause of peace officer felonious deaths.



Section 2.3

High Risk Calls/ Special Operations Guidelines

Responding to known, potentially dangerous calls requires special considerations. This section outlines some of those considerations.

2.3.1 Crimes in Progress Guidelines

These guidelines focus on tactics, training, mental preparation, and teamwork.

Guideline No. 17

Treat All Crimes in Progress as Extremely Dangerous

Finding: Four peace officers were murdered while handling crimes in progress. In three incidents, the victim peace officers had prior knowledge that firearms were involved. Three of the four peace officers were killed with high powered weapons.

Recommendation: Crimes in progress calls are inherently dangerous. Officer safety tactics should be maximized and extreme caution exercised when handling crimes where firearms are involved or suspected.

Guideline No. 18

Train... Train... Train...

Finding: There are fewer peace officer deaths when responding to known high risk situations because of training improvements and the application of proven tactics and techniques. However, criminals are reacting to law enforcement tactics with their own countermeasures. In the last five years, law enforcement has seen an increased use of high powered/assault type weapons by criminals. Other countermeasures include: 1) monitoring law enforcement radio traffic, 2) using portable communications (radios, cellular phones, etc.), and 3) using multiple suspects participating in differing roles (surveillance, transportation, etc.).

Recommendation: Although fewer officers have been killed or seriously injured when responding to and handling crimes in progress, continual evaluation of law enforcement tactics and frequent training are critical in overcoming complacency while minimizing the number of peace officers killed or injured.

Guideline No. 19

Be Mentally Prepared

2.3.2

Guideline No. 20

Treat All Special Operations as Very Dangerous

Finding: One victim peace officer was killed while responding to a possible armed robbery at a restaurant.

Recommendation: Be aware of complacency or overconfidence. Mental preparedness significantly helps peace officers avoid unnecessary dangers. The importance in using proper tactics and techniques in handling crimes in progress cannot be understated. Continued training, mental awareness, teamwork, proper planning, effective communication, and preparing for the “worst case scenario” can reduce the inherent risks involved with crimes in progress.

Building Search/Entry Guidelines

Finding: One peace officer was feloniously killed during this study period while participating in a SWAT, high-risk arrest warrant, building entry.

Recommendation: Even with extensive training, proper equipment, and proven tactics, an entry team must remain flexible and responsive to the changing risk environment. Team and individual safety must always be the highest consideration. Another consideration is that once in a while, even though the team and each member of the team do everything right, the suspect(s) can still kill a peace officer.



Section 2.4 Ambush and Off-Duty Incident Guidelines

This section covers guidelines for ambush and off-duty situations.

2.4.1 Ambush Guidelines

Unexpected attacks on peace officers by ambush has increased the last few years.

Guideline No. 21

Will to Survive Must Be Paramount

Finding: There were four peace officers murdered in ambush situations.

Recommendation: Regardless of the situation, the key to surviving sudden and deadly attacks is the officer's will to survive. The will to survive must *always* be paramount.

2.4.2 Off-Duty Guidelines

These guidelines focus on tactical limitations, judgement, and the carrying of off-duty weapons. Peace officers need to weigh the potential for injury or death to family, friends, and others when facing an off-duty law enforcement contact. Every peace officer has an obligation to discuss off-duty involvement with loved ones.

Guideline No. 22

Use Good Judgment

Finding: Three peace officers were murdered in off-duty incidents. Of the three peace officers murdered, two cases involved peace officers who made the decision to take action. In one incident, a family member was present when the victim peace officer chose to initiate a police action against suspects. The third victim peace officer was cooperative but was killed simply because he was a peace officer.

Recommendation: Good judgment is critical to the successful and safe outcome of an off-duty law enforcement incident. Unless there is no other option, the best plan may be to: 1) consider the limitations of the tactical situation, 2) decide to be a cooperative victim and/or an effective witness, and 3) notify the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Guideline No. 23

Realize What You Don't Have When Off Duty

Finding: Two of the three officers murdered did not have a firearm with them. Peace officers who have been forced to take action or who have chosen to become involved in an off-duty law enforcement incident rarely have all, or even part of, their normal law enforcement equipment including: 1) “patrol” equipment (body armor/vest, primary handgun, extra ammunition, handcuffs, flashlight, chemical agent and impact weapons), 2) communications capabilities to call in the incident or request assistance, and 3) the ability to properly identify oneself to suspects, citizens, and other law enforcement officers.

Recommendation: Before deciding to take law enforcement action, off-duty peace officers need to consider their tactical limitations.

Guideline No. 24

Consider Options in Appearance When Off Duty

Finding: One victim peace officer was murdered when it was discovered he was a peace officer. He carried identification but did not have a firearm in his possession.

Recommendation: Peace officers must constantly evaluate their *behavior, clothing, and general appearance* when off-duty. Off-duty peace officers should consider avoiding the following: 1) clothing that depicts police employment, 2) police equipment not concealed or secured, 3) personalized license plates and frames indicating police activity or status, 4) police decals on personal vehicles, 5) business cards on a personal vehicle’s dashboard, and 6) wallets that contain badges and identification cards (although police identification should be carried, it is best to have those items separate from things that might be surrendered to suspects).

Guideline No. 25

**Consider Carrying
Off-duty Firearms**

Finding: Off-duty police officers are encountering more violent criminal activities that jeopardize the safety and welfare of others. More off-duty peace officers are present at crime scenes. More peace officers are being victimized by criminals while off-duty. Although a peace officer may be alone, or with loved ones or friends, they must carefully evaluate the decision to **not** carry a concealed and secured off-duty firearm. It would be devastating if an officer needed his/her firearm for personal protection, or to protect loved ones or others from serious bodily injury or death, and it was not available.

Recommendation: The decision to carry an off-duty firearm is difficult for some law enforcement personnel. Although the right to carry a concealed firearm off-duty is authorized for most peace officers by state law, and usually governed by agency policy, it is still a decision that must be seriously reviewed in relation to law, agency policy, and personal choice.



CHAPTER 3

Peace Officer Assaults

1995–99 Statistics

This chapter contains tabulated assault data from the California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, as well as information on ways to gather and provide more accurate assault data. This chapter also contains a list of the identified limitations with the assault data that has been gathered.

Section 3.1

California Department of Justice Program

The following section of this study was prepared by the California Department of Justice.

3.1.1

Criminal Justice Statistics Center (CJSC)

The California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center (DOJ/CJSC), has the recordkeeping responsibility for reporting California duty-related deaths and other peace officer assault statistics to the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program in Washington, D.C. This data is collected on Form 1-705, Law Enforcement Officers Killed or Assaulted (LEOKA). Participating California law enforcement agencies submit the completed LEOKA forms to DOJ/CJSC monthly. The results are tabulated and sent to UCR in Washington, D.C., in compliance with California Penal Code Section 13010.

3.1.2 The LEOKA Program

The LEOKA program, which has been automated since 1990, has the following objectives:

LEOKA Objectives

List of Objectives

1. Establish a centralized database containing the number of officers killed or assaulted, to include information about the circumstances surrounding the attack or accident.
2. Ensure the reporting requirements of PC 13010 are met.
3. Provide data on peace officers killed in DOJ/CJSC's annual publication, *A Homicide in California*.
4. Provide data for the annual FBI publication, *Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted*.
5. Prepare reports for special requests, such as the publication of this POST study.

LEOKA Forms

The LEOKA forms are submitted to DOJ/CJSC monthly by participating local law enforcement agencies, as part of the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system. The forms include the following information:

Reported Information

- Type of activity
- Type of weapon
- Type of assignment
- Police assaults cleared
- With personal injury/without personal injury
- Time of assault
- Officers killed by felonious act, accident or negligence

**LEOKA Statistical
Limitations**

The following limitations should be considered when analyzing, interpreting and using LEOKA data:

Types of Limiting Factors

- Participants in the program do not always complete the form in a consistent manner. There are several potential places on the form to document officer assaults. One assault may be counted more than once depending on how the form is completed.
- When more than one type of weapon is used to commit a single assault, the form is set up to document only one weapon.
- There is inconsistency in the reporting process of peace officer assaults. Some agencies may report any situation where an officer is “slightly” assaulted (*e.g.*, shoved or pushed). Other agencies will not document assaults unless the victim peace officer is seriously hurt (hospitalized).
- Officers feloniously killed are not included in the tabulated LEOKA assault data. The reported deaths are captured in another field.
- The data included in LEOKA is complete to the extent that the participating law enforcement agencies fulfilled their individual reporting obligations.
- The data is accurate and reliable to the extent that the statistics are machine edited for validity and consistency of logic.
- The LEOKA data on assaults is provided to the California Department of Justice on a voluntary basis.



Section 3.2

Assault Data

The number of reported peace officer assaults decreased 3.3% over the period 1995 to 1999, according to the Criminal Justice Statistics Center on Law Enforcement Officers Killed or Assaulted (LEOKA).

3.2.1

Reported Assaults on California Peace Officers

During 1995–99, there were a total of 34,243 reported assaults on California peace officers. Over this five-year study, the average number reported was 6,849 assaults per year.

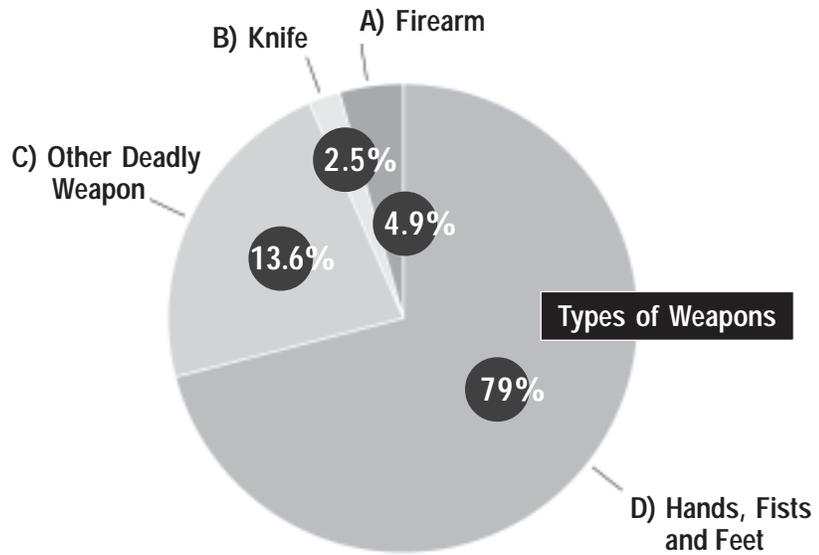
**Reported
Assaults by Year
1995–99**

Year	Reported Peace Officer Assaults
1995	7,088
1996	6,601
1997	6,874
1998	6,823
1999	6,857
Total	34,243

3.2.2 Assault Types

This chart shows the percentage of assaults by the type of force or weapon used to assault the victim peace officers.

Types of Weapon Assaults by Percentage



3.2.3 Analysis by Type

The following series of tables and graphs represent the four assault types, reported to the DOJ/CJSC. Each of the four types shows significant statistics by type of incident and assaults per year.

Reference: For a more detailed discussion, please refer to the comments included earlier in this chapter.

Reported Assaults

**A) By Firearm
1995–99**

Firearm assaults represent almost 5% of the total number of reported assaults from 1995–99.

Firearm Assaults by Incident Type	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total by Type
Disturbances	125	116	125	97	99	562
Burglaries	8	2	5	6	8	29
Robberies	30	21	22	13	19	105
Other Arrests	22	29	8	8	41	108
Civil Disorders	3	1	2	1	0	7
Prisoners	5	2	4	4	2	17
Suspicious Persons/ Circumstances	72	61	59	39	61	292
Ambush	29	13	15	19	24	100
Mentally Ill	20	8	17	5	4	54
Traffic Stops/Pursuits	69	32	42	45	52	240
All Other	31	42	45	27	31	176
Total by Year	414	327	344	264	341	1,690

Table A.1

Incidents by Type

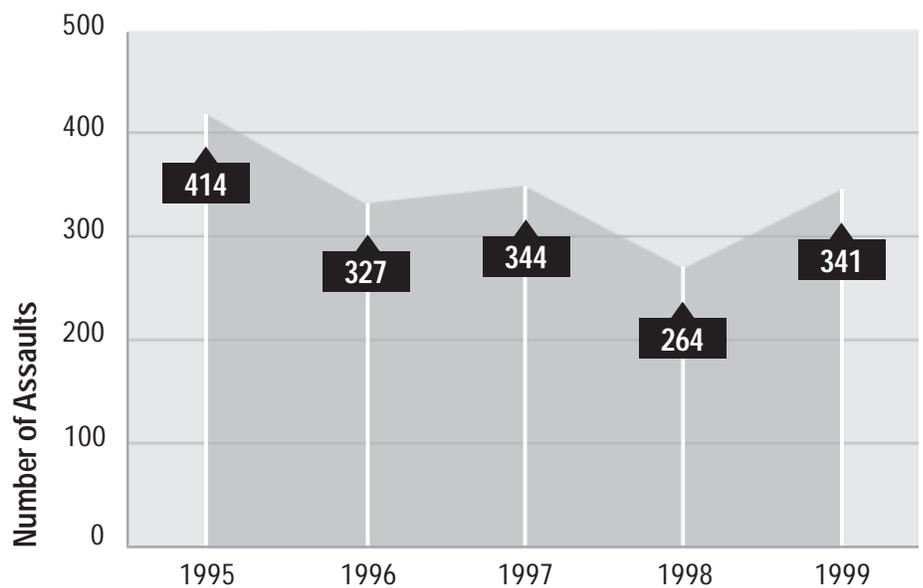


Table A.2

Incidents by Year

Reported Assaults

**B) By Knife
1995-99**

The most frequent knife-related assaults resulted from responses to disturbance calls, which account for 45% of the knife-related assaults.

Knife Assaults by Incident Type	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total by Type
Disturbances	113	76	70	49	68	376
Burglaries	4	1	3	2	2	12
Robberies	2	10	1	4	5	22
Other Arrests	20	17	21	5	6	69
Civil Disorders	10	1	1	1	3	16
Prisoners	3	2	2	12	1	20
Suspicious Persons/ Circumstances	35	25	18	27	23	128
Ambush	0	0	2	1	0	3
Mentally Ill	20	8	12	12	12	64
Traffic Stops/Pursuits	15	5	7	10	10	47
All Other	17	14	23	12	14	80
Total by Year	239	159	160	135	144	837

Table B.1 ▶

Incidents by Type

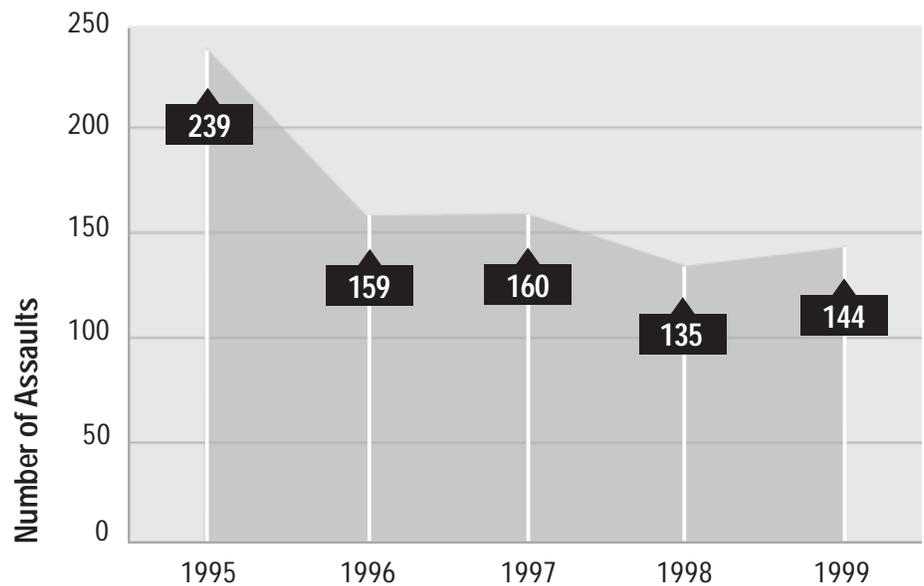


Table B.2 ▶

Incidents by Year

Reported Assaults

**C) By Other
Deadly Weapon
1995–99**

Reported assaults by other deadly weapons indicate that responses to disturbance calls account for 25.9% of the assaults and that traffic stops account for 24.9% of the assaults. These are the most frequent incident types.

Other Deadly Weapon Assaults by Incident Type	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total by Type
Disturbances	288	253	241	216	211	1,209
Burglaries	19	34	27	16	22	118
Robberies	18	17	16	19	8	78
Other Arrests	114	123	69	63	64	433
Civil Disorders	12	10	23	9	30	84
Prisoners	46	65	47	58	107	323
Suspicious Persons/ Circumstances	160	137	123	79	104	603
Ambush	9	6	8	7	14	44
Mentally Ill	15	17	17	11	10	70
Traffic Stops/Pursuits	233	193	249	242	242	1,159
All Other	94	119	115	104	110	542
Total by Year	1,008	974	935	824	922	4,663

Table C.1
Incidents by Type

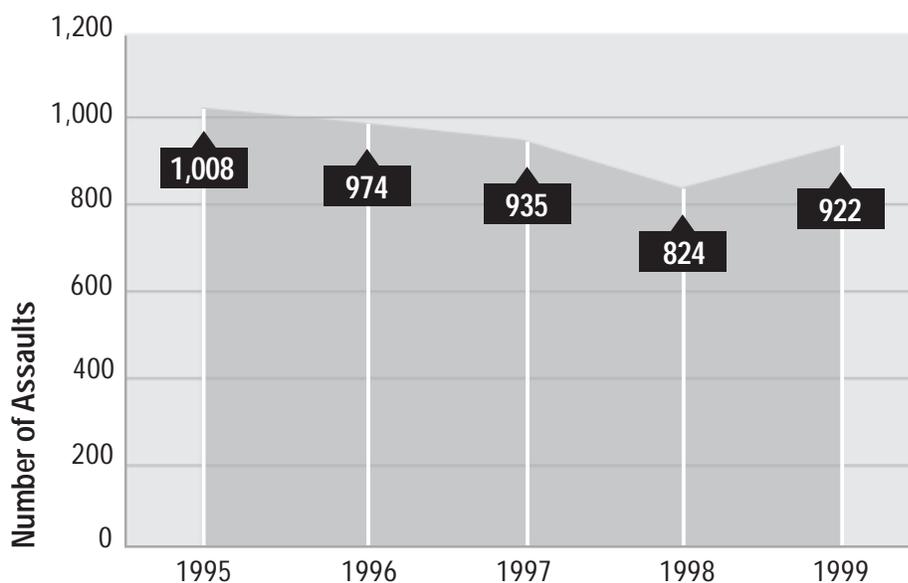


Table C.2
Incidents by Year

Reported Assaults

**D) By Hands,
Fists and Feet
1995–99**

More than three-quarters of the nonlethal assaults in California involved suspect use of hands, fists and/or feet. In contrast, all of the deadly encounters resulted from the use of firearms.

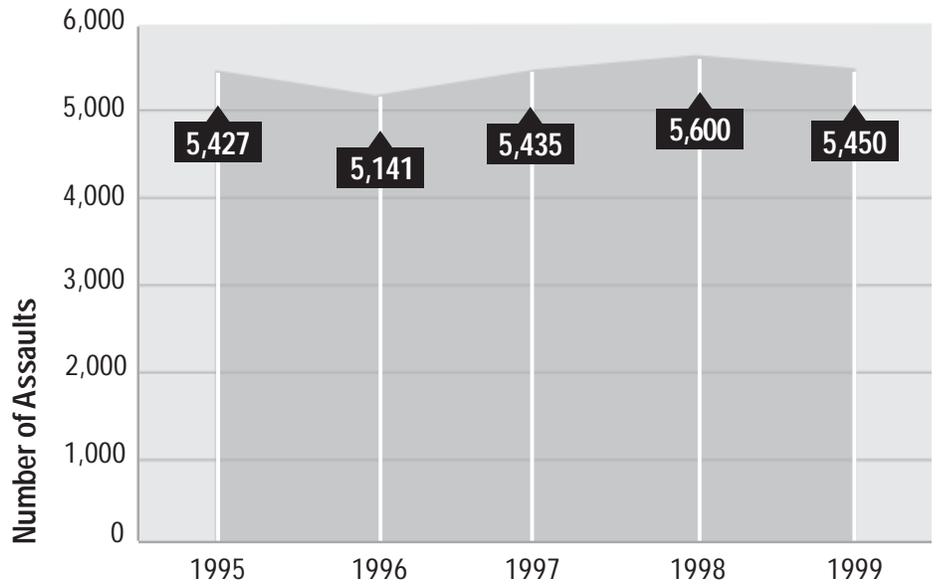
In custody situations (arrests and dealing with prisoners), suspects used hands, fists, and feet significantly more often than any other weapon. This finding is not surprising, since the peace officer may have already removed other weapons or searched for them. Often, hands, fists and feet may be the only suspect weapon available.

Hands, Fists and Feet Assaults by Incident Type	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total by Type
Disturbances	1,960	1,820	2,003	2,054	1,875	9,712
Burglaries	50	70	79	69	85	353
Robberies	44	34	39	24	22	163
Other arrests	729	644	685	532	545	3,135
Civil disorders	65	60	51	46	65	287
Prisoners	755	646	601	874	869	3,745
Suspicious Persons/ Circumstances	824	889	817	860	834	4,224
Ambush	5	3	2	6	21	37
Mentally Ill	86	65	114	78	107	450
Traffic Stops/Pursuits	443	418	498	487	505	2,351
All Other	466	492	546	570	522	2,596
Total by Year	5,427	5,141	5,435	5,600	5,450	27,053

Table D.1 ▶

Incidents by Type

Table D.2 ▶
Incidents by Year

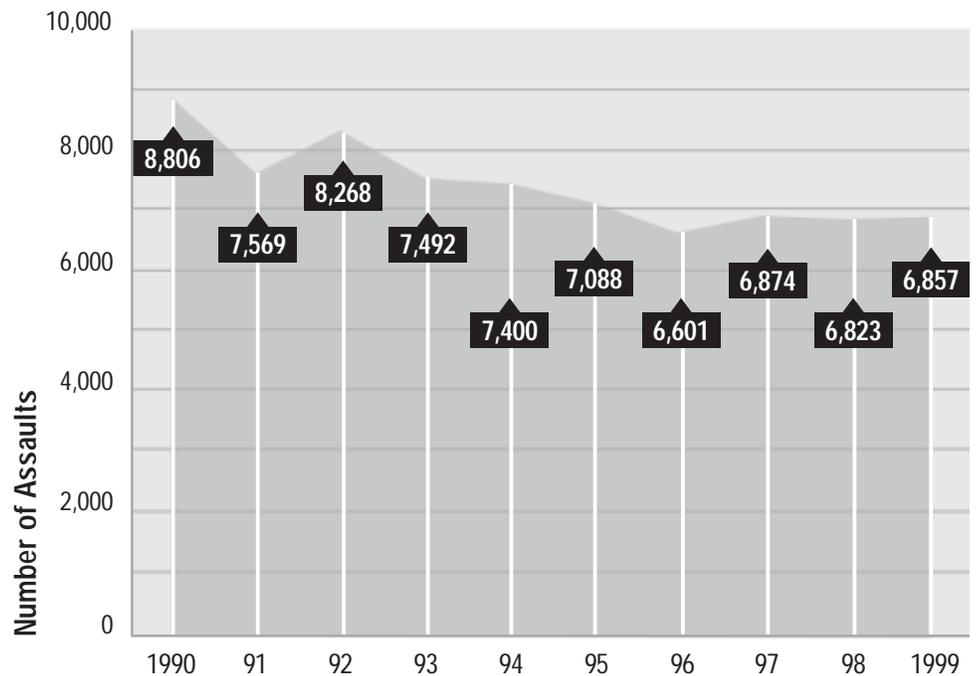


Section 3.3

Assault Data: Final Comments

The graph below represents an overview of the number of assaults reported for the years 1990–1999, which, in addition to the data collected for this study, includes data reported during the previous five-year study.

Ten-Year Chart
1995–99



3.3.1

Assault Data Recommendations

Adherence to the following recommendations will help both POST and DOJ/CJSC provide California law enforcement with the best and most accurate information.

LEOKA Program Support

Recommendation No. 1

Each agency should participate in the LEOKA assault data reporting program.

Recommendation No. 2

It is imperative that participating agencies submit accurate assault data.

3.3.2 Agency Participation

The agencies that have been careful to complete and submit accurate assault data are to be commended. Agencies that are not participating in the program are encouraged to contact:

How To Contact DOJ / CJSC

California Department of Justice
Criminal Justice Statistics Center
P.O. Box 903427
Sacramento, CA 94203-4270
(916) 227-0540 or
(916) 227-3535



CHAPTER 4

Accidental Deaths

1995–99 Statistics

Section 4.1

Incident Information

From 1995–99, 66 California peace officers died in the line of duty. Of these 66 deaths, 33 (50%) have been ruled accidental. This section examines the incident variables in the study of the 33 accidental deaths.

**Accidental Deaths
by Year
1995–99**

Year	Accidental Deaths	No. of Incidents
1995	6	6
1996	9	9
1997	6	6
1998	9	8
1999	3	3
Total	33	32

4.1.1 Accidental Deaths Defined

Accidental deaths are defined as unexpected and unintentional events, including vehicle and aircraft accidents, natural disasters, health-related conditions, or similar events caused by human error, mechanical failure, mistake or misfortune, that result in the non-felonious death of an on-duty California peace officer.

4.1.2 Location and Conditions

The following map and tables represent the locations and conditions at the time of the accidental deaths.

**Accidental Deaths
by Region
1995–99**

The map below shows California divided into four regions for the purpose of illustrating the distribution of accidental deaths by area. The regions are designated as follows:



Northern Region: 4 Deaths

1995	1
1996	1
1997	1
1998	1
1999	0

SF Bay Area Region: 3 Deaths

1995	1
1996	0
1997	0
1998	1
1999	1

Central Region: 5 Deaths

1995	0
1996	2
1997	1
1998	1
1999	1

Southern Region: 21 Deaths

1995	4
1996	6
1997	4
1998	6
1999	1

**Incidents
by Time of Year**

This table shows the seasonal distribution of the 33 accidental deaths. Two officers were killed in one incident during winter.

Season	(Months)	Victim Officers
Winter	(Dec/Jan/Feb)	10
Spring	(Mar/Apr/May)	6
Summer	(Jun/Jul/Aug)	5
Fall	(Sep/Oct/Nov)	12
Total		33

**Incidents
by Day of Week**

This table shows how many victim peace officers died accidentally by day of week and indicates the incident numbers.

Day	No. of Incidents	Victim Officers
Monday	3	3
Tuesday	5	6
Wednesday	6	6
Thursday	6	6
Friday	5	5
Saturday	3	3
Sunday	4	4
Total	32	33

**Incidents
by Time of Day**

This table lists the times of accidental incidents in six-hour blocks of time.

24-hr Time	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total by Time
0001-0600 am	1	2	2	4	0	9
0601-1200	2	1	1	1	2	7
1201-1800 pm	2	2	1	3	1	9
1801-2400	1	4	2	1	0	8
Total by Year	6	9	6	9	3	33



Section 4.2

Victim Peace Officer Profiles

This section presents profile information for the 33 peace officers accidentally killed in the line of duty during this study period. Five of the officers were female.

This table shows a profile range of the victim peace officers by physical characteristics.

Characteristics	Minimum	Maximum	Median
Age	26 yrs	53 yrs	35 yrs
Law enforcement experience	8 mo.	24 yrs	10.7 yrs
Height	5' 3"	6' 4"	5' 10"
Weight	115 lbs	290 lbs	181 lbs

▲ *Conclusion:* There were no predominate physical characteristics to allow for drawing any conclusions.

This table shows the breakdown of the victim peace officers by rank.

Rank	Victim Officers
Officer / Deputy	30
Detective / Investigator	3
Total	33

VPO:
Physical Profile

Rank

**Patrol
Assignment**

This table shows the breakdown of the victim peace officers by patrol assignment.

Assignment	Victim Officers
Patrol / Traffic	24
Investigator	3
Helicopter	2
Prisoner Transport	1
Boat Patrol	1
SWAT	1
Bicycle Patrol	1
Total	33

**Department
Assignment**

This table shows the breakdown of victim peace officers by type of department assignment.

Assignment	Victim Officers
Police Department	14
Sheriff's Department	7
Department of Justice	1
CHP	11
Total	33



Section 4.3

Types of Accidental Deaths

This section covers types of accidental deaths but primarily focuses on vehicle-related collisions.

Types of Accidents by Number 1995–99

Type of Accident	Victim Officers
Patrol vehicle collisions	13
Pedestrian officer struck by traffic	7
Motocycle patrol collisions	4
Aerial collisions	2
Accidental shooting	2
Heart attack	2
Rescue drowning	1
Pedestrian officer struck by train	1
Patrol vehicle struck by object	1
Total	33

4.3.1 Traffic-Related Collisions

As shown in past studies, traffic-related collisions continue to be the most common cause of accidental peace officer deaths in California, accounting for 25 (76%) of the 33 accidental deaths reported.

The most frequent traffic collisions were the result of loss of control and citizen drivers under the influence. Of the 25 related deaths, seven of the peace officers were pedestrians.

Vehicle-Related Collisions

This table shows the 24 vehicle-related incidents resulting in the deaths of 25 officers.

Type of Collision (PV = Patrol Vehicle)	Victim Officers
1. High speed:	
a. PV broadsided in intersection (citizen driver was DUI, traveling at high speed; VPO was passenger)	1
b. PV broadsided in intersection where signals were out (citizen driver was DUI, traveling at high speed)	1
c. PV struck civilian vehicle as it was exiting parking lot (citizen driver was DUI; VPO was not wearing seatbelt)	1
d. PV lost control on freeway, struck civilian vehicle and center divider (VPO was not wearing seatbelt)	1
e. PV lost control on freeway, rolled and hit fixed objects (VPO was not wearing seatbelt)	1
f. PV lost control around curve; drove off cliff	1
g. PV lost control around curve; hit canal embankment (VPO was not wearing seatbelt)	1
2. Head-on:	
a. In two incidents, citizen drivers were passing illegally	2
3. Pedestrian officer struck by traffic:	
a. Pedestrian VPO struck by driver who lost control of vehicle (in two incidents, citizen drivers were DUI)	4
b. Pedestrian VPO struck by stopped vehicle that was struck by second vehicle (both citizen drivers were DUI)	2
c. VPO struck by civilian vehicle while directing traffic (citizen driver was DUI)	1
4. Bad weather / road conditions:	
a. Drove off washed-out road (both officers drowned in river)	2
5. Motorcycle patrol:	
a. Loss of control around curve	1
b. VPO hit civilian vehicle pulling into path of motorcycle (in one incident, citizen driver was unlicensed)	3
6. Other:	
a. VPO drifted off road and struck bridge abutment	1
b. Transport van hit stalled big-rig truck (VPO was passenger)	1
c. Loose big-rig tire crashed through patrol vehicle windshield	1
Total	25

Person at Fault

This table identifies who was primarily at fault, in the 24 incidents, as determined by the traffic accident investigators.

Person at Fault	No. of Incidents
Victim Peace Officer	6
Civilian	14
Other or unknown	4

4.3.2 Single Vehicle Accidents

In six of the vehicle-related collisions, the victim peace officer’s vehicle was the only party involved. One collision killed two officers by drowning when the vehicle ran off the roadway into a river.

4.3.3 Primary Factors Contributing to Vehicle Accidents

The primary factors identified for the 25 traffic-related accidental deaths are listed in the following table. In seven of the 24 collisions, drivers under the influence were a factor. (*Note:* There may be more than one factor per incident.)

Causes or Contributing Factors of Accidents

Primary Factors	No. of Incidents
Vehicle(s) traveling at high speed	7
Pedestrian VPO struck by traffic	7
Citizen driver was DUI	7
Citizen driver turned or pulled in front of oncoming patrol vehicle (includes motorcycle patrol vehicle)	6
Citizen driver drove into path of patrol vehicle (head-on)	2
Bad weather or road conditions	1
Patrol vehicle struck by object	1
Unknown (VPO drifted off road; transport van struck stalled big-rig)	2

4.3.4 Seatbelt Use (Restraint System)

▲ *Conclusion:* Seatbelt and restraint system use was a factor in four of the 14 fatalities involving patrol vehicle collisions. This is a significant increase compared to the previous five-year study. In several cases in this study, it was indicated that had the victim peace officer been wearing a seatbelt, the death may have been preventable.

▶ KEY ISSUE: Seatbelt use saves lives.

4.3.5 Motorcycle Patrol Collisions

There has been a significant decrease in the number of peace officers killed in accidents while riding agency motorcycles. Of the 25 traffic-related accidental deaths, four (16%) occurred in traffic collisions while riding a patrol motorcycle, a 30% reduction from the previous five-year study.

Prevention Assessment

Motorcycle Collision Determination

Preventable: One accident was considered preventable where speed may have been a factor.

Non-Preventable: Three accidents were considered non-preventable due to the actions of citizen drivers. In two incidents, a citizen made a left turn in front of the victim peace officer's path. In one incident, a citizen pulled out of a driveway in front of the victim peace officer.

4.3.6 Aerial Collisions

There were two fatal helicopter accidents during this period. In one incident, two victim peace officers were passengers; in the second incident, the victim officer was piloting. There were no accidents involving fixed-wing aircraft.

▲ *Conclusion:* Law enforcement aerial operations generally experience far fewer accidents than that of commercial aviation operations. ***It has been more than 13 years since a California peace officer lost his/her life in a fixed-wing aircraft accident while on-duty.*** Changes in operational procedures, including pilot safety training and aircraft maintenance, are believed to be responsible for this positive statistic.

4.3.7

Other Types of Accidental Deaths

This section focuses on accidental deaths other than vehicle collisions.

Types of Incidents

Accidental Shooting

Two peace officers were shot and killed during two separate incidents. One incident involved a SWAT team operation where a member's location and identity were a issue. The second incident involved a non-uniformed peace officer where identification was a primary issue.

Heart Attack

Two victim peace officers died from heart attacks. One died during a bicycle training exercise, and the second died after a foot pursuit/ resisting arrest incident.

Rescue Drowning

One victim peace officer drowned while assisting in the rescue of several distressed swimmers.

Pedestrian Officer Struck by Train

One victim peace officer was conducting an investigation near a set of railroad tracks. A fast-moving train caused a vacuum which sucked the officer into it's path.

4.3.8

Summary: Accidental Deaths

Accidental deaths of California peace officers have unfortunately increased since the last five-year study, to an average of 6.6 incidents per year. A high number of auto vs. pedestrian officer collisions (seven), along with a failure to use seatbelts, and unsafe speed, appear to be significant causes. In addition, six citizen DUI's contributed to an unusually high number of deaths.

20-Year Chart

This table displays the number of accidental deaths in five-year increments over a 20-year period.

Five-Year Report Periods	No. of Accidental Deaths	Average
1980 – 1984	29	5.8
1985 – 1989	45	9.0
1990 – 1994	23	4.6
1995 – 1999	33	6.6

4.3.9 Final Comment: Accidental Deaths

The death of a peace officer is always a serious and terrible tragedy. The focus on reducing the number of peace officers accidentally killed in the line of duty is a priority that must continue.



CHAPTER 5

Incident Summaries

1995–99 Statistics

This chapter contains the incident summaries for all situations where California peace officers were killed in the line of duty from 1995 through 1999. The summaries are segregated into two sections:

- Felonious Incident Summaries
- Accidental Death Incident Summaries

The incidents are further segregated into subsections based on the type of incident the victim peace officer (VPO) was involved in when he/she died. Each summary includes:

- When the incident occurred (time of day)
- Age of the victim peace officer(s)
- Years of law enforcement experience
- Description of the incident

Section 5.1

Felonious Incident Summaries

This section provides a brief summary of each felonious killing of the victim peace officers during this study period. The report includes:

- Domestic Violence
- Suspicious Persons/Circumstances
- Arrest Situations
- Crimes in Progress
- Ambush
- Vehicle Pullovers
- Pedestrian Contacts
- Building Entry
- Off-duty Incidents

5.1.1 Domestic Violence

1. 0852 hrs Age: 44 Experience: 11 yrs

VPO responded with three other officers to a domestic violence/shots fired call at a rural residence. VPO was a passenger in the second patrol vehicle. VPO stepped out of the vehicle with a rifle to cover advancing officers. VPO's field of vision was blocked which forced him to take a position at the outside edge of the car door. Suspect fired six rounds from a .30-.30 caliber rifle. One round struck VPO in the head. Suspect was arrested.

2. 1730 hrs Age: 26 Experience: 2 yrs

VPO responded with three other officers to a domestic violence call. Officers removed the wife from the house and VPO reentered the residence while the husband was still inside. Shots were fired and VPO was struck multiple times. Suspect then emerged from the house carrying two handguns and engaged in a shoot-out with the other officers. Suspect was wounded in the shoot-out and arrested at the scene.

3. 0253 hrs Age: 41 Experience: 4 yrs
 Age: 33 Experience: 12 yrs

Two victim peace officers: VPO's responded in separate units to a domestic violence call. They parked down the street and approached on foot together. The suspect had positioned himself in nearby bushes prior to their arrival. Suspect shot and killed both VPO's with a high-powered rifle from an extended distance. Suspect was arrested a short time later.

4. 1805 hrs Age: 26 Experience: 6 wks

VPO responded to assist other officers at a domestic violence call. As VPO approached the residence, suspect pointed a shotgun out the window and fired one round, striking VPO in the neck. Suspect was arrested at the scene.

5. 2150 hrs Age: 38 Experience: 6 yrs

VPO and partner responded to a domestic violence call. They received conflicting information whether suspect had a gun. They observed the suspect run from the house into a field. After going into the field to look for the suspect, VPO observed the suspect

and started chasing him. The suspect pulled out a handgun, they exchanged gunfire and both were killed.

6. 1351 hrs Age: 65 Experience: 40 yrs

VPO responded to domestic violence call (mother and adult son) outside a residence. VPO knew both parties. VPO was physically attacked and knocked down by the son who then took VPO’s weapon, shot and killed his mother, then shot and killed VPO. Suspect was arrested a short time later.

5.1.2 Suspicious Persons/Circumstances

1. 2330 hrs Age: 58 Experience: 24 yrs

VPO contacted a suspect and female companion after receiving a call of a suspicious vehicle in a parking lot. Suspect produced a shotgun and forced VPO to get on the ground. Suspect then executed VPO. Suspect was arrested the next day.

2. 0408 hrs Age: 31 yrs Experience: 6 yrs

VPO was writing a report in his patrol vehicle at a church parking lot during the early morning hours. Suspect, armed with a revolver, drove into the lot intending to commit suicide. VPO contacted the suspect, and a struggle ensued over the suspect’s weapon. One round was discharged, striking the suspect’s hand. A second round was discharged, striking the VPO in the head. Suspect shot himself in the head with his own weapon, but the wound was not fatal. Suspect then used the VPO’s weapon to commit suicide.

3. 1400 hrs Age: 29 Experience: 6 yrs

VPO responded to a “check the welfare” call of a person who was possibly ill or under the influence. Getting no response at the front door, VPO called for backup and two more officers arrived. VPO entered a small fenced area and contacted the suspect through a small kitchen window. The suspect ordered the officers off his property. After a verbal exchange, the suspect produced a handgun and began firing at the VPO. VPO returned fire, causing minor injury to the suspect. VPO was struck in the upper right arm and back while trying to get out of the confined area. VPO was not wearing body armor. Suspect was arrested at the scene.

Suspicious Persons/Circumstances *(continued)*

4. 0115 hrs Age: 32 Experience: 7 yrs

VPO, working a single-person unit, observed a suspicious subject on a bicycle in the early morning hours in a residential area. The subject attempted to flee on the bicycle. VPO followed and cut in front of the subject to block him with the patrol car. The subject, now behind the patrol car, fired a handgun through the rear window, striking the VPO's right hand. As VPO tried to exit the car, the subject approached the driver's door and fired several shots at the VPO, killing him. The suspect fled and was arrested a short time later near the scene.

5. 2351 hrs Age: 29 Experience: 7 yrs

VPO and several other officers responded to a loud party on New Year's Eve involving gang members. Outside the residence they approached a subject who made a furtive movement toward his waistband and ran from them toward a nearby house. VPO and other officers chased the suspect. VPO caught up to him going up some stairs and grabbed him. The suspect turned and shot the VPO with a handgun striking him in the head. Other officers returned fire, killing the suspect.

5.1.3 Arrest Situations

1. 2150 hrs Age: 48 Experience: 7 yrs

VPO and partner responded to a rural area to look for two suspects who had been involved in disturbance/shooting at a local store. Both suspects were known to the officers. They spotted the suspects walking on a dirt road armed with rifles. As the officers approached in the patrol vehicle, one suspect fled on foot, and the other suspect, still in the roadway, started firing at the officers. The officers returned fire, fatally wounding the suspect who was firing at them. VPO left the cover of the patrol vehicle and approached the downed suspect. The other suspect, who they thought had fled, shot the VPO from a concealed location adjacent to the roadway. Suspect turned himself in at a later date.

2. 1110 hrs Age: 60 Experience: 22 yrs

VPO responded to assist another officer at an auto burglary in progress. VPO located and attempted to detain the suspect who had fled from the initial officer. A struggle ensued and the suspect took

the VPO's weapon and shot him in the chest. VPO was not wearing body armor. Suspect was arrested at the scene.

3. 1631 hrs Age: 27 Experience: 2 yrs

VPO and partner were flagged down by a convenience store clerk to report that a person had taken beer from the store. The officers spotted the suspect walking and carrying a six-pack of beer under each arm. As the officers approached in their vehicle, the suspect shifted the beer to under one arm, pulled out a gun and started firing. VPO was hit six times before he could get out of the vehicle. Bullets passed through the unprotected side of his vest. The other officer returned fire, killing the suspect.

4. 1140 hrs Age: 30 Experience: 10 yrs

VPO and partner investigator responded to a commercial warehouse to look for an attempted murder suspect from a domestic violence incident. As they walked from a hallway into a large room, VPO entered first. The suspect shot VPO from an elevated catwalk positioned slightly behind the officer. Two other officers were wounded attempting to rescue the downed VPO. Suspect died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

5.1.4 Crimes in Progress

1. 1003 hrs Age: 43 Experience: 14 yrs

VPO, working motorcycle patrol, responded to a call for help from another officer who was being shot at by a suspect with a fully automatic assault rifle. VPO arrived at the scene, confronted the suspect, and was immediately fired upon. VPO was struck twelve times. Body armor was defeated by high velocity rounds. Suspect was arrested a short time later.

2. 2132 hrs Age: 27 Experience: 3 yrs

VPO and partner observed two suspects, one armed with an assault rifle, drive away from a scene where a man was shot to death a few moments earlier. A pursuit ensued for several miles, where the suspect driving lost control and spun out, coming to rest facing the officers' vehicle. The passenger suspect opened fire with the

continued

Crimes in Progress *(continued)*

assault rifle. VPO, who was driving, was fatally shot in the head. The shooting suspect was shot and killed by other officers during the shoot-out. The second suspect fled but was arrested later after another shoot-out with officers.

3. 2358 hrs Age: 33 Experience: 10 yrs

VPO, responding to a possible robbery in progress call at a restaurant, was shot by a suspect as the VPO prepared to enter the facility. Unknown to VPO, another officer who had previously entered the restaurant had been taken hostage. Three suspects were arrested a short time later.

4. 1328 hrs Age: 34 Experience: 3 yrs

VPO responded to an open door and suspicious circumstances call at a residence. At the location, a witness told VPO that they had observed a person with a gun. VPO called for backup, then approached the residence through a carport. As the VPO passed a window, the suspect shot him in the back with a high powered rifle. This had been a home invasion robbery. Suspect fled but was shot and killed a short time later by other officers.

5.1.5 Ambush

1. 1800 hrs Age: 32 Experience: 6 mo

VPO responded to a request for assistance at an arrest. The primary officer asked VPO to search the arrested person’s vehicle. While searching the vehicle, an occupant of a residence adjacent to the vehicle pointed a high-powered rifle at VPO and fired one round killing VPO. Suspect was arrested at the scene.

2. 0038 hrs Age: 26 yrs Experience: 4 yrs

VPO and partner were waiting in their patrol vehicle outside a loud wedding party attended by gang members. The suspect approached the patrol car from behind, shooting numerous rounds with a handgun into the back window. VPO was fatally struck in the head. Suspect was arrested two days later.

3. 0008 hrs Age: 41 Experience: 4 yrs

VPO and partner responded to a freeway location to pick up a shotgun thrown out of a car being pursued by another unit. VPO and another officer were hit by rifle fire from a suspect on an overpass above their position. The high-powered round went through VPO's armor vest and he died during surgery. Suspect was arrested later.

4. 0045 hrs Age: 34 Experience: 9 yrs

Suspect went into a convenience store, carrying an assault-type rifle, and bought a pack of cigarettes. As the suspect was leaving the store, VPO drove up in front of the store, unaware that the suspect was there. Suspect opened fire on the VPO, killing him before he had a chance to react. VPO's vest was pierced several times. Suspect was arrested a few hours later.

5.1.6 Vehicle Pullovers

1. 2330 hrs Age: 34 Experience: 4 yrs

VPO made a traffic stop on a speeding driver. As VPO approached the driver's door, the driver stepped out of the vehicle and shot VPO several times in the head and upper torso (through the vest) with a sawed-off rifle. The suspect was killed several days later in a shoot-out with other officers.

2. 2030 hrs Age: 25 Experience: 2 yrs

VPO made a traffic stop in a congested commercial area. VPO determined the suspect's driver's license was suspended, and called for a tow truck. Another unit arrived, but left when VPO indicated no assistance was required. During the vehicle inventory, the suspect became argumentative with VPO, drew a concealed handgun, and shot VPO several times. One round struck VPO's right (strong hand) elbow. VPO fell to the ground and was executed. Suspect fled the scene in VPO's patrol car, which he abandoned a short distance away. Suspect was eventually arrested in another state.

Vehicle Pullovers *(continued)*

3. 2020 hrs Age: 28 Experience: 4 yrs

VPO and partner stopped a suspicious vehicle. After the initial stop, the suspect sped away and the officers pursued. The suspect’s car stalled after a short distance and VPO approached again from the passenger side of the vehicle. The suspect fired through the side window striking VPO under the arm, an area not protected by his body armor. Suspect had a long criminal history and had spent most of his adult life in prison. Suspect fled on foot and was arrested a short time later.

5.1.7 Pedestrian Contacts

1. 2020 hrs Age: 31 Experience: 9 yrs

VPO and partner made a pedestrian stop on two known gang members. One suspect tossed a handgun into a nearby yard and both walked away. VPO left the cover of the vehicle to contact the suspects walking away. One suspect turned, drew a handgun, and fired twice, striking the VPO in the chest above his body armor. Both suspects were arrested later.

2. 0130 hrs Age: 37 Experience: 5 yrs

VPO, while patrolling in an industrial area, observed two men and a woman walking. VPO stopped them and began questioning one of the men. The man being interviewed grabbed the woman, using her as a shield, and shot VPO in the face. Suspect was arrested later in another state.

5.1.8 Building Entry

1. 1630 hrs Age: 33 Experience: 12 yrs

VPO, a SWAT officer, was shot during a SWAT operation to serve an arrest warrant on a juvenile wanted on five counts of attempted homicide. When the SWAT team went into the apartment, they came under fire. VPO was struck twice, one round entered his chest. Other officers returned fire, killing the suspect.

5.1.9 Off-Duty Incidents

1. **2030 hrs** **Age: 30** **Experience: 7 yrs**

VPO was off duty and shopping at a grocery store. While waiting in line at the checkout counter, two suspects entered the store and announced their intentions to rob the store. While trying to control the employees, one suspect began to pistol-whip an employee. At this point, VPO drew his off-duty weapon and ordered them to drop their weapons. The suspects opened fire on the VPO who returned fire, wounding both suspects. VPO was killed in the exchange of gunfire. Suspects were arrested later.

2. **12142 hrs** **Age: 31** **Experience: 7 yrs**

VPO and spouse returned home from dinner. The spouse went into the residence while VPO started to take trash cans from the side of the house to the street. The spouse warned VPO that a person was hiding at the side of the next door neighbor's house. Another suspect was at the front of the house. As VPO, armed with a small trash can, approached the suspect in front of the house, the second suspect stepped out and shot the VPO. Suspects were involved in residential robberies. Suspects were arrested at a later date.

3. **2059 hrs** **Age: 26** **Experience: 2 yrs**

VPO and fiancée (also a peace officer) were off duty and unarmed. They were patrons in a hair salon when two armed suspects entered to rob the business. All patrons were ordered to lie down and give up their possessions. The suspects saw VPO's identification and executed him with one round to the head. Suspects were on parole and were arrested later.



Section 5.2

Accidental Death Incident Summaries

This section provides a brief summary of each accidental death of peace officers during this study period. The report includes:

- Patrol Vehicle Collisions
- Pedestrian Officer Struck by Traffic
- Motorcycle Patrol Collisions
- Aerial Collisions
- Accidental Shootings
- Heart Attack
- Rescue Drowning
- Pedestrian Officer Struck by Train
- Patrol Vehicle Struck by Object

5.2.1

Patrol Vehicle Collisions

1 0740 hrs Age: 48 Experience: 27 yrs

VPO on duty in a state vehicle was traveling from his residence to a training course. VPO's vehicle was struck head-on by an oncoming car which had crossed over the double yellow lines. VPO was wearing his seatbelt. VPO and the other driver were killed instantly.

2. 0245 hrs Age: 31 Experience: 2 mo

VPO was a passenger in a marked patrol unit. While traveling through an intersection their vehicle was struck broadside by a DUI driver traveling more than 90 mph. VPO was killed instantly, as was the driver of the speeding vehicle. The driver officer was seriously injured.

3. 1940 hrs Age: 36 Experience: 4 yrs

VPO responding (code 3) to assist other officers at a domestic violence call, failed to negotiate a curve in the roadway, lost control and drove off a 400-foot cliff. VPO was killed instantly.

Patrol Vehicle Collisions *continued*

4. **0500 hrs** **Age: 25** **Experience: 3 yrs**

VPO was en route to a reported auto theft call traveling on the free-way at a high rate of speed. While attempting to change lanes, the patrol vehicle struck another vehicle heading in the same direction, causing the patrol vehicle to collide with the center divider. VPO's vehicle then struck a freeway sign pole and broke into three major pieces. VPO, who was not wearing a seatbelt, was killed instantly.

5. **1106 hrs** **Age: 30** **Experience: 3 yrs**

VPO, working a rural desert two-lane highway, was struck head-on by a vehicle heading in the opposite direction. The vehicle had crossed over the double yellow lines while attempting to pass slower traffic. VPO, the other driver, and his passenger were all killed.

6. **0102 hrs** **Age: 27** **Experience: 3 yrs**

VPO, near the end of his watch, was en route to refuel his patrol vehicle. This was the first day back after days off. VPO drifted off the road and struck a bridge abutment. No witnesses or known causes.

7. **2156 hrs** **Age: 26** **Experience: 2 yrs**

VPO, responding at a high rate of speed to assist other officers at a request for assistance call, struck another vehicle broadside as it was leaving a business parking lot. VPO was not wearing a seatbelt and died from massive injuries. The driver of the other vehicle had a blood alcohol level twice the legal limit.

8. **0310 hrs** **Age: 40** **Experience: 15 yrs**
 Age: 39 **Experience: 17 yrs**

Two victim peace officers: Both VPO's were in a single patrol vehicle, driving on an unlighted stretch of a two-lane highway during a major storm. While responding to a disabled motorist call, the patrol vehicle drove off the end of a washed-out section of the highway. The vehicle landed upside-down in the rushing river. Both VPO's drowned.

9. 0027 hrs Age: 27 Experience: 2 yrs

VPO was responding at a high rate of speed to a report of a DUI in the area. VPO lost control of the vehicle, which rolled over and struck numerous fixed objects. VPO, not wearing a seatbelt, died instantly. The passenger officer who was wearing a seatbelt, survived.

10. 1850 hrs Age: 28 Experience: 8 yrs

VPO, driving in an unmarked patrol unit, approached an intersection where the traffic controls had ceased to function. VPO treated the intersection as a four-way stop, stopped, and then entered the intersection to make a left turn. VPO's vehicle was hit broadside by a vehicle which failed to stop and was traveling at a high rate of speed. VPO was killed instantly. The other driver was under the influence of methamphetamine.

11. 1534 hrs Age: 48 Experience: 25 yrs

VPO, a passenger in the right front seat of a transport van, was killed when the van struck the rear of a stalled big-rig truck that was disabled on the freeway.

12. 0705 hrs Age: 31 Experience: 8 mo

VPO, with a teen ride-along, responded on a dirt road to a dispatched call in a cotton field. VPO failed to negotiate a sharp turn in the road, ran off the road and hit a canal embankment. VPO was not wearing a seatbelt and died instantly.

5.2.2 Pedestrian Officer Struck by Traffic

1. 1550 hrs Age: 29 Experience: 6 yrs

VPO had returned to the scene of a previous accident to get additional pertinent data. He returned in daylight because of the dangerous location on the rural highway. Another vehicle heading in the opposite direction ran off the road, lost control, and then struck the VPO.

Pedestrian Officer Struck by Traffic *continued*

2. 2145 hrs Age: 34 Experience: 8 yrs

VPO, a motorcycle officer, was assisting a disabled motorist in the center divider of the freeway. VPO was standing at the front of the disabled vehicle looking back at approaching traffic. The disabled vehicle was struck in the rear by a DUI driver, and the disabled vehicle was forced forward coming to rest on top of the VPO. VPO died a few days later from injuries.

3. 2332 hrs Age: 53 Experience: 22 yrs

VPO was directing traffic at an intersection where a music concert was letting out. VPO was standing in the roadway and was struck by a DUI driver. Suspect had numerous prior DUI convictions. VPO died a short time later as a result of his injuries.

4. 2324 hrs Age: 46 Experience: 24 yrs

VPO, working with a partner, stopped to check an abandoned vehicle on the freeway shoulder. VPO was at the left front of the abandoned vehicle running the VIN number when he was struck by a trailer being towed by another vehicle. The vehicle driver had apparently fallen asleep and drifted to the edge of the roadway.

5. 0053 hrs Age: 38 Experience: 8 yrs

VPO and partner were outside their vehicle checking a vehicle in a rural desert area. A DUI driver drifted onto the shoulder of the road striking the vehicle being inspected and propelling it toward the officers. VPO was able to push his partner partly out of the way as the car struck them. VPO died a week later from injuries. VPO's partner suffered multiple injuries.

6. 1654 hrs Age: 31 Experience: 3 yrs

VPO made a traffic stop on a highway shoulder and approached the vehicle on the right side. While VPO was talking with the violator, a DUI driver, approaching from the rear, drifted off the roadway, sideswiped the patrol vehicle, and then struck VPO standing by the right side passenger door of the stopped vehicle.

7. 0144 hrs Age: 30 Experience: 1 yr

VPO was directing traffic in the roadway around a collision scene while a tow truck was preparing to move a vehicle. A DUI driver, approaching from the rear, struck VPO and the tow truck. No emergency warning lights were on and no flares had been deployed.

5.2.3 Motorcycle Patrol Collisions

1. 2225 hrs Age: 31 Experience: 8 yrs

VPO was riding his departmental motorcycle home at the end of his work shift. He missed a turn and ran over a berm at the end of the roadway. VPO was ejected to the ground and died from multiple injuries.

2. 1752 hrs Age: 31 Experience: 9 yrs

VPO was on motorcycle patrol when another motorist made an illegal left turn directly in his path. VPO was unable to avoid the collision.

3. 1023 hrs Age: 35 Experience: 10 yrs

VPO working motorcycle patrol was attempting to overtake a violator. An elderly driver made a left turn out of a shopping center directly into the path of the VPO.

4. 0906 hrs Age: 34 Experience: 12 yrs

VPO was working motorcycle patrol on a two-lane road in a business/industrial area when an unlicensed driver pulled out of a driveway directly into the path of the VPO.

5.2.4 Aerial Collisions

1. 1944 hrs Age: 42 Experience: 20 yrs

VPO was assigned as an observer on an agency helicopter patrol unit. The helicopter crashed while investigating suspicious activity in a canyon. The pilot survived but VPO was struck by a rotor blade.

Aerial Collisions *continued*

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2. 1530 hrs Age: 38 Experience: 10 yrs

VPO was assigned as a patrol helicopter pilot. The agency helicopter experienced mechanical problems and crashed as VPO attempted an emergency landing. The crash also killed a civilian mechanic.

5.2.5 **Accidental Shootings**

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1. 1530 hrs Age: 30 Experience: 8 yrs

A suspect entered the police department lobby and pointed a handgun at the clerk. She called for help and officers responded, firing and striking the suspect who fell into a seated position in a chair. Other officers responded from outside and came through the front door. At the same time, a plain clothes VPO entered the lobby from an adjacent hallway with his gun drawn. The other officers did not recognize VPO who had recently cut his hair and shaved his beard after an undercover assignment. VPO was shot by other officers.

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2. 0600 hrs Age: 30 Experience: 6 yrs

A SWAT team was serving a high-risk search warrant at a two-story condominium. VPO deployed a light-sound diversionary device onto the second floor landing from the bottom of the stairway. After deploying the device, the team proceeded upstairs and VPO entered the bedroom by himself without the knowledge of the team leader. The team leader entered the bedroom and observed a silhouette (VPO) holding a weapon. Verbal commands were given, the silhouette advanced and the team leader fired, striking the VPO.

5.2.6 **Heart Attack**

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1. 1000 hrs Age: 39 Experience: 15 yrs

During a routine bicycle training exercise, VPO collapsed and died from a heart attack.

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2. 1330 hrs Age: 48 Experience: 22 yrs

VPO was involved in a foot pursuit and resisting arrest incident. After effecting the arrest, he collapsed and died from a heart attack.

5.2.7 Rescue Drowning

1. 1400 hrs Age: 47 Experience: 11 yrs

VPO, assigned to a uniformed boat patrol unit, was responding with a partner to a report of three distressed swimmers who were in rough water. VPO and lifeguards successfully completed the rescue of the swimmers. For unknown reasons, VPO disappeared in the water and drowned.

5.2.8 Pedestrian Officer Struck by Train

1. 0828 hrs Age: 48 Experience: 16 yrs

VPO, a plain clothes detective, was searching an area adjacent to railroad tracks for evidence from a previous crime. A fast moving train approached from behind the VPO and he was sucked into the vacuum of the train and killed instantly.

5.2.9 Patrol Vehicle Struck by Object

1. 1700 hrs Age: 37 Experience: 7 yrs

VPO was en route to do a felony follow-up. A tractor-trailer combination driving in the opposite direction lost it's right rear dual wheels. One of the tires bounced over the center divider where it impacted the roof and windshield of the VPO's vehicle, killing the VPO instantly.

