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# **FBI** **Law Enforcement** **Bulletin**

**Employee  
Wellness**



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Robert S. Mueller III  
Director

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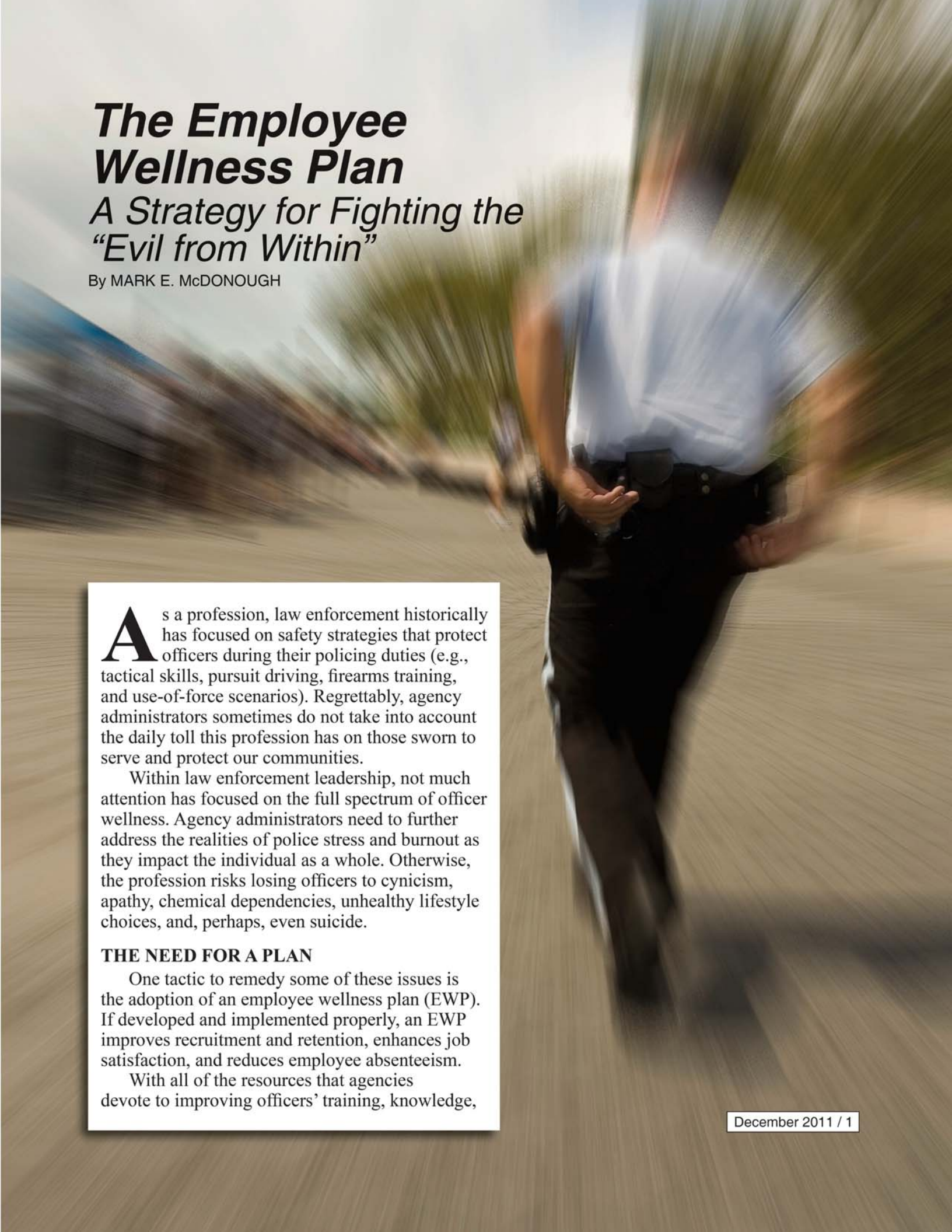
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# ***The Employee Wellness Plan***

## ***A Strategy for Fighting the “Evil from Within”***

By MARK E. McDONOUGH

**A**s a profession, law enforcement historically has focused on safety strategies that protect officers during their policing duties (e.g., tactical skills, pursuit driving, firearms training, and use-of-force scenarios). Regrettably, agency administrators sometimes do not take into account the daily toll this profession has on those sworn to serve and protect our communities.

Within law enforcement leadership, not much attention has focused on the full spectrum of officer wellness. Agency administrators need to further address the realities of police stress and burnout as they impact the individual as a whole. Otherwise, the profession risks losing officers to cynicism, apathy, chemical dependencies, unhealthy lifestyle choices, and, perhaps, even suicide.

### **THE NEED FOR A PLAN**

One tactic to remedy some of these issues is the adoption of an employee wellness plan (EWP). If developed and implemented properly, an EWP improves recruitment and retention, enhances job satisfaction, and reduces employee absenteeism.

With all of the resources that agencies devote to improving officers' training, knowledge,





Sergeant McDonough serves with the Bowling Green, Ohio, Police Department.

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”**

experiences, and technology, why should departments not strive to enhance the welfare of their employees—and greatest assets? Today’s law enforcement leaders must provide their personnel with the means to enable them to live full, active, productive, and healthy lives. An EWP functions as one such tool.

Modern police leaders must balance their duties of providing for individual officers’ wellness and helping them meet the goals and expectations of the agency. These interests do not have to conflict. When police leaders enhance the vitality of their officers, they improve the organization as a whole. A plan that augments the long-term wellness of agency members allows for increased job satisfaction, productivity, and overall health of the organization.

An EWP provides employees the tools they need to address their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being. An EWP should encompass an officer’s entire career: recruitment, retention, and retirement. The plan must adhere to the current culture of the agency and address the local needs and resources available. Through course work, support networks, and practical recommendations from fellow officers, employees learn numerous wellness techniques to apply to their daily lives. This combination of theoretical and tactical information will help employees improve their personal well-being and maximize their productivity. Further, it will boost the entire agency’s morale.

## BACKGROUND

Behavioral science experts who research officer wellness note four specific

dimensions—mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual—that comprise the whole person. One researcher explains the whole person as “where the health of the human entity is comprised of the integration, balance, and harmony of one’s mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual components.”<sup>1</sup> Just as the human body requires nourishment from nutritious foods, adequate exercise, and rest, the inner self needs nourishment so it, too, will remain healthy. When individuals neglect any one of these whole-person components, their health and well-being suffer.

As leading experts research how this topic relates to police officers, their findings are gaining notoriety throughout the law enforcement community. Spirituality in law enforcement relates to “a sense of meaning and purpose larger than the instrumental duties of law enforcement, which affects the most critical aspects of practice, performance, vitality, and longevity in the profession. It energizes the ethics of practice, resulting in exemplary (efficient and effective) performance.”<sup>2</sup>

Spirituality, as described here, does not imply religious beliefs, but, rather, interrelates with the other dimensions listed above. Incorporating spirituality into the workplace comprises an essential component of an EWP. Law enforcement leaders must recognize that every employee

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has a human spirit not necessarily associated with religion or religiosity. Spirituality impacts how individuals relate to and interact with others on a daily basis, which significantly influences an employee's happiness and well-being.

Many aspects of police work leave officers vulnerable to stressors that affect their personal and professional lives. These toxic stressors, which many experts on workplace spirituality refer to as "evils," include all of the negative influences that employees face on a daily basis. This connotation of evil, like spirituality, does not imply a religious element, but describes the negative influences that can cause employees to make poor decisions in their personal and professional lives. This often leads to increases in citizen complaints, failed marriages, substance abuse, excessive use of sick leave, and officer suicide.

## **BENEFITS**

An effective law enforcement agency seeks to improve the quality of life for its citizens and to provide the necessary services that the community identifies as important. To meet mission requirements, police leadership must provide the necessary tools for employees to effectively and efficiently complete their jobs. Full attention to officers' wellness

comprises a crucial component of this duty.

To combat the stressors of the law enforcement profession, an effective EWP provides officers with the tools to protect their personal well-being even with repeated exposure to violence and trauma. An EWP teaches officers to embrace a holistic approach to wellness, both on and off duty.

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***A plan that augments the long-term wellness of agency members allows for increased job satisfaction, productivity, and overall health of the organization.***

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In an effort to maximize employee performance, a strong wellness program should embrace the input of local government officials, union members, and police administrators. Collaborating with police chaplains, medical facilities, psychological counseling services, and substance abuse rehabilitation programs increases the chances for successful implementation. As police leaders begin to embrace

this philosophy of the whole person, the individual employee and community reap great benefits.

- Employees will receive training in the whole person concept and realize that the agency's leadership holds a vested interest in their personal and professional lives.
- Personnel will understand better the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions that influence their lives, helping them to make healthier lifestyle choices.
- Officers may improve their physical health, which reduces their use of sick leave and risk of disease.
- Personnel will improve how they react to the daily stressors in the workplace, resulting in fewer citizen complaints and internal affairs investigations.
- Employees may work more efficiently and productively.
- The agency will accomplish its mission more effectively.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

An effective EWP must address all four dimensions of the whole person. Additionally, the program should not be limited to any one phase of an officers' training. Rather, an EWP should span officers' entire careers from recruitment through retirement.



## Spirituality in Law Enforcement

- Upon request, FBI Academy instructors will provide initial training in these topics. Administrators can encourage chiefs of police, sheriffs, police command staffs, supervisors, and their employees from around the region to attend. Training requests should be directed to the FBI Behavioral Science Unit (BSU), FBI Academy, Quantico, VA.
- Agencies should develop instructors, both internally and externally, to take advantage of available local resources (e.g., law enforcement professionals, counselors, and medical workers) to provide assistance and direction for the annual EWP training courses.
- Law enforcement administrators should invite and encourage the local faith community and counseling services to provide information and assistance to employees and families, and they should establish avenues to access these programs.
- Agencies can invite and encourage family members of personnel to participate in employee wellness activities when appropriate.

## Recruitment

Law enforcement administrators should create a wellness guide that prepares recruits for the violence and other traumatic events that they might witness on a daily basis. This material should address the whole person wellness philosophy, as well as the dangers of workplace stressors and their relationship to the law enforcement community. It should explain, in detail, the long-term, daily exposure to these toxins in police work and how they can lead to burnout and other adverse effects. Additionally, the guide should offer

strategies to counter the negative influences pervading police ranks and promote healthy lifestyle choices, such as proper fitness and nutrition.

To create this material, agencies can seek assistance from police chaplaincy programs, human resource departments, civil service/merit commissions, counseling services, local universities' psychological services departments, and other local agencies. The guide also should instruct officers how to access these services if needed. The wellness guide should be available

to prospective recruits during the application phase, along with all other related testing materials, and current employees should be able to access the guide as well.

## Field Training

Upon graduating from the police academy and entering a field training program, new officers should continue to receive instruction on EWP practices. This will supplement the information they learn from the wellness guide they receive during recruitment and ensure that they apply this training to their daily duties.

Field training instructors should provide officers with strategies to protect their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Essential topics for each category include the:

- importance of exercise, proper nutrition, and adequate rest for optimum physical health;
- risks of mental anguish, including anxiety and depression, among law enforcement officers, as well as access to local counseling services and peer support groups;
- physiology of normal emotional reactions to stressful situations and appropriate coping mechanisms; and
- toxic stressors inherent in the law enforcement profession and how to use



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spirituality to combat them and improve the whole person.

### **Active Duty Officers**

An exhaustive EWP will continue to educate officers on these topics throughout their careers. As police accumulate years of experience in this stressful profession, wellness strategies become even more crucial to ensure personnel remain healthy—inside and out.

To protect officers' well-being throughout their careers, administrators should implement a Personnel Early Warning System (PEWS). This system provides personnel of all ranks a channel through which to voice concerns for their colleagues. When management receives notice that an employee may demonstrate symptoms of stress and burnout, they can assess the situation and provide assistance if necessary. Programs, such as PEWS, lessen the risk that officers who suffer from work-related stress will resort to destructive behaviors that harm themselves and the entire department.

Additionally, to reinforce wellness strategies, employees should receive annual EWP in-service training to receive the most up-to-date information on these topics. To ensure the program remains relevant and engaging, administrators should encourage employees to offer suggestions for additions or

deletions to the course content. Resources from pertinent outside agencies would augment further the training curriculum. Possible EWP training topics include suicide prevention; physical fitness and nutrition; substance abuse and its symptoms; maintenance of one's personal and professional relationships; support following toxic encounters, such as child homicides; available counseling services or other wellness resources; and any additional areas of EWP training deemed appropriate.

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***A physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually healthy workforce offers the best opportunity for mission completion.***

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### **Preretirement and Beyond**

Agency administrators must consider how to incorporate the EWP into the standard preretirement process for all employees. The detrimental impact of decades of law enforcement work will not disappear as soon as officers leave the department. If agencies fail to consider the future health and well-being of employees as they near the end

of their careers, officers may continue to struggle with these symptoms as they adjust to retirement.

First, agencies should extend all EWP benefits, such as access to chaplains and counseling services, to retired employees. Former officers may benefit from these resources just as greatly, if not more so, than those who serve currently.

Also, administrators should create an Employee Wellness Program Network (EWPN) to help retiring officers remain connected to the department and their colleagues. Membership should represent both retired and active employees, and the network should act as a support mechanism for each group. The EWPN would bridge the gap between the retired and current members of the organization, keeping retired employees connected to the personnel and services of the agency. This continued relationship ensures that retirees do not become isolated from the support and resources that all officers—former and current—need to maintain their health and wellness.

### **CONCLUSION**

Although the scope of an employee wellness plan is quite significant, the benefits can pay long-term dividends for employees, families, the organization, and the community. Employee vitality is essential to



meet the agency's mission; as such, spirituality, vitality, and wellness are paramount for an effective organization. A physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually healthy workforce offers the best opportunity for mission completion. When police leadership promotes healthy lifestyle decisions—and provides officers the necessary tools to make them—they help ensure the vitality of the employees and organization now and for years to come.

Most often, police leadership attends to the needs of officers as related to their physical survival. However, physical health alone does not protect officers from the ill effects of the law enforcement profession. Incorporating the remaining three components of health (mental, emotional, and spiritual) into an agency wellness plan provides the best strategy to keep a department's most valuable asset—its employees—from developing habits that sabotage their ability to survive a career in law enforcement and beyond. ♦

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Brian Luke Seward, "Reflections on Human Spirituality for the Worksite," *American Journal for Health Promotion*, no. 3 (January/February 1995): 165-168.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel L. Feemster, "Spirituality: The DNA of Law Enforcement Practice," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, November 2007, 8-17.

## Leadership Tunnel Vision

In the sweltering heat of a July summer, a general leading 70,000 men stands alone with the weight of a newly formed nation's future upon his shoulders. This brilliant military mind ponders the terrain before him. His desire, his vision, is to decisively end a war that has claimed over 600,000 lives. This general observes, in the distance, enemy troops who occupy the high ground with a phalanx of cannons, muskets, and men at the ready. Suddenly, one of his most trusted and experienced subordinates breaks the solitary moment and advises a strategy contradicting the firm plans of the general, who angrily responds, "If the enemy is there, we must attack him."<sup>1</sup> The general of this determined army, thus, ignores the sage recommendation of his confidant and commits his already limited resources to one of the worst wartime defeats in American history. Rather than obtaining his desired vision, General Robert E. Lee secured the eventual defeat of the Confederate South at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Lee was guilty of leadership tunnel vision (LTV), what leaders often fall victim to when a vision is so important, overwhelming, or compelling that they neither can hear, see, nor comprehend anything beyond that goal. This phenomenon is similar to being in a shooting situation. You cannot hear or see anything other than the threat before you. The difference between these two phenomena is that one is involuntary; the other, voluntary.

We, as leaders, may receive warnings from colleagues who share the same vision, yet we only commit precious resources and manpower to an ultimate defeat of that goal. After a 3-day battle, Lee lost almost half of his men and, ultimately, the war, which lasted another 21 months after the Battle of Gettysburg ended. The most notable fact about Lee's LTV was that his



men believed in the same vision. Moreover, a lone voice, General James Longstreet, provided an alternative to help achieve a shared goal, an alternative that most military historians agree would have forced the North to sue for peace. Lee, with LTV, would not hear of it.

Pickett's Charge, alone, resulted in the loss of 90 percent of Lee's infantry. Immediately afterward, Lee dismounted his horse, ran onto the battlefield to meet his walking wounded, and exclaimed, "It is all my fault."<sup>2</sup> The graveyard of history is littered with the disastrous failures of generals, politicians, and captains of industry whose previous successes became erased by their refusal to listen and to heed current situations.

Many firearms instructors train officers to deal with involuntary tunnel vision by breaking contact with a target after eliminating the threat and scanning to their left and right to reengage their senses for other threats. As leaders, we must use a derivative of this method when attempting to conduct institutional change or strategic planning.

The Harvard Business Review published a salient article entitled "How to Make High-Stakes Decisions."<sup>3</sup> This article featured a review of the book *Think Again: Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions and How to Keep It From Happening to You*, which offers some key considerations in high-stakes decision making.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Do:*

- Own the decision, but bring in others to better understand the various issues involved.
- Recognize when you may be partial, and ask a trusted peer to check your bias.
- Regularly revisit decisions you have made to ensure they remain valid.

#### *Do Not:*

- Assume the issue is exactly like one you have handled in the past. Rather, look for similarities and differences.
- Rely exclusively on your instinct. Instead, think through any initial reactions you have.
- Ignore new information, especially if it challenges your current viewpoint.

If you are a leader in the process of making a high-stakes decision, adhering to these key points may reduce the same LTV that sealed Lee's strategic demise. If knowledgeable persons suggest alternatives to achieving your vision, do not dismiss them as the proverbial "naysayers." Instead, view them as possible means of changing course toward a common goal, thus avoiding the waste of limited resources and possible defeat. Break contact with your vision from time to time to listen to the sage advice of colleagues on your left and right. Ask the tough questions: "Is this working?" or "Any better ideas?" Lee probably wished he had. ♦

#### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/People/Robert\\_E\\_Lee/FREREL/3/6\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/People/Robert_E_Lee/FREREL/3/6*.html) (accessed October 3, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.historyplace.com/civilwar/battle.htm> (accessed October 3, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Amy Gallow, "How to Make a High-Stakes Decision," *Harvard Business Review*, <http://blogs.hbr.org/hmu/2011/05/how-to-make-a-high-stakes-deci.html> (accessed October 3, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Campbell, Jo Whitehead, and Sydney Finkelstein, *Think Again: Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions and How to Keep It from Happening to You* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2008).

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*Special Agent J.E. Granderson, an instructor in Faculty Affairs and Development at the FBI Academy, prepared this Leadership Spotlight.*

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# Perspective

## Peel's Legacy

By M.A. Lewis



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**R**obert Peel, known as the father of modern community policing, graduated first in his class at Oxford in 1808 with degrees in mathematics, physics, and classic literature. Peel delivered a widely acclaimed speech in January 1810 and began a career of social, economic, and legal reform that lasted 40 years. He served as Britain's chief home secretary from 1812 to 1818 and built a reputation for having a firm but compassionate personality. Peel helped establish a native Irish police force to calm conflicts that arose in Ireland after its 1801 unification with England.

British evangelicals long had protested Britain's legal and penal system; its law enforcement strategy involved tactics that some citizens found intimidating. Law-abiding individuals who wanted

*Mr. Lewis worked as a patrol officer and supervisor for 6 years in Oregon and currently is a consultant on police department policies.*





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to prevent crime formed disorganized groups with members serving as watchmen. Much to their liking, Peel was sympathetic to these evangelicals.

Peel achieved sweeping penal reform and went on to establish the Metropolitan Police Act (MPA) of 1829, which was instrumental in creating Britain's Metropolitan Police Force. In addition to the MPA, Peel wrote what became known as the Nine Peelian Principles of Law Enforcement. These principles essentially held that the police are the people, the people are the police, and crime prevention is possible without heavy intrusion into citizens' lives.

Specific concepts, such as issuing badge numbers to ensure officer accountability and referring to qualitative encounters with citizens, instead of counting the number of arrests, were concepts that came out of Peel's community policing model. British officers instructed in the nine principles were deployed into urban areas and were referred to by the locals as Peelers or Bobbies, a name still used today.

### **Present Day**

Police departments in America hold that community policing aims to promote partnerships between communities and local police and to encourage cooperation between residents to address and solve problems in the community. Many American police departments champion the same tenets that originated with Peel.

Over the years, law enforcement organizations have had to evolve. Sophisticated organized crime, gang violence, civil unrest, mass demonstrations, and terrorism represent just a few of the challenges faced by law enforcement today. Peel certainly

could not have envisioned these challenges when he conceived his nine principles.

Hence, the question arises as to whether the Peelian principles that are the hallmark of modern community policing remain relevant today. What challenges does a current day Peeler face? March 2011 afforded an opportunity to find out the answer to this question and more. On a cold and overcast day, the author arrived in London to interview a sergeant of the Westminster Metropolitan Police at Belgrave Station.

Prior to his passing through the gates of the Hendon Police College, the sergeant, a London police officer for over 25 years, worked abroad as a chemist. Today, his world is a 3-mile stretch of London that encompasses the area between Albert Hall and Knights Bridge and has a unique mix of residential homes and tourist attractions.

Sitting in a busy conference room, the sergeant mused on Peel's influence. He maintained that "The Peelian principles remain the basic threshold of the police service." He explained, "over the years... commissioners have put different reflections on the Peelian principles, but they all have revolved around the concepts of community service, keeping the community safe, serving the people, taking pride in what we do, and maintaining professionalism in our actions."<sup>1</sup>

According to the sergeant, while Peel's principles generally guide officers, the culture of the department has changed. "It used to be that the more senior officers were beat cops. They were the elder statesmen; those officers with 15 or 20 years experience were the ones making the rounds. They maintained contact, particularly, with the elderly

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**Many American police departments champion the same tenets that originated with Peel.**

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and checked in on them to reinforce the message that they were a presence in the community. The newer officers were the radio chasers,” he explained. He added that within the last 5 years, that approach has been augmented.

### Problem Solving Teams

The sergeant stated that several years ago, groups of officers formed into units called Safer Neighborhoods teams. These teams of officers each are given a section, or ward, of Westminster for which they are responsible.

The sergeant explained, “there might be a call about a public house (pub) with drunks causing a disturbance or a group of people fighting. All available officers in the area will respond and take appropriate action. A day or so later, the Safer Neighborhoods team will arrive to do its part.” As it turns out, its part is intelligence. After such a disturbance, the team will contact the landlord of the establishment to gather information on the operators of the property to determine if underage drinkers are being served or if licensing legislation is being abused. The team’s goal is to gather as much information as possible to establish a larger picture of the neighborhood and its residents.

Every 3 to 4 months the teams convene ward panels, groups comprised of officers who work together with the citizens who live and work in their ward. At these meetings, local community members voice their concerns, perceptions, and needs. During ward panel meetings, a problem solving team gives a presentation on what the officers in the ward have done since the last meeting. Together, officers and citizens discuss and determine what the ward priorities will be over the next

3 to 4 months. This popular concept relates to the Peelian principle that the police are the people and the people are the police.

In recent months, the ward panel has identified residential burglaries, pickpocketing, and thefts from motor vehicles as the foremost priorities in the ward. This is community policing in its purest and most effective form. It is important to note that panel meetings are not just officers giving statistics about crime but a dedicated group of community stakeholders, property owners, and venue proprietors providing meaningful input into how their community in partnership with local law enforcement combats crime. The basis for the success of this community policing approach is that the locals feel as though they are taken seriously, and that means cooperation.

According to the sergeant, “the team could be discussing a bike theft, parents dropping kids off at school too early, noise pollution, or garbage overflowing—small little problems that will get a proactive approach. When you come home and the community hallway latch on the door is busted, we want to hear about it. The public is very concerned with local issues. The decision-making process of the ward panels directly reflects our efforts in the area.”

The ward panels are especially popular in Westminster because the vast majority of people in the neighborhood during the day are tourists and commuters. Through the Safer Neighborhoods team program, the Westminster police force can gain an accurate picture of who lives in the area and the types of people coming and going.

The program was not established overnight. The Safer Neighborhoods program started by

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putting officers into the community with the sole purpose of contacting as many people as possible and explaining the program. Officers knocked on doors for 6 weeks and spoke to numerous ward citizens. Officers left calling cards for residents who were not home, providing information about the problem solving team's mission.

The sergeant explained that officers support the program because it gives them a personal connection to the community and its citizens. The officers also like it because they can put a face on local law enforcement and let people know they really care about the place where they work. The elderly residents who do not get a lot of visitors or go out much are especially receptive because it keeps them in the loop as to what goes on where they live.

The Safer Neighborhoods teams also disseminate information. If there is a disturbance or fight at a local pub or a screaming match between two people, the team will take the time to investigate the particulars and distribute flyers to explain what all the noise was about so that people do not start rumors or get the story wrong. According to the sergeant, community policing and information sharing is a two-way street, and officers would not have it any other way.

### Modern Era, Modern Threats

In 2005, four suicide bombers executed a coordinated attack on the city's transportation network, killing 52 and injuring 784. In 2011, an underground train was stopped, and passengers were evacuated due to a suspicious device. With countless visitors every year, London faces the same public safety challenges that any major Western city faces. If terrorism is in the news, the ward

panels want to know what is being done to combat it; however, the panels are more concerned with local issues. If an elderly woman is robbed at 9:00 or 10:00 at night while leaving a restaurant, the panels are more interested in that than in terrorism. This lends credence to the Peelian principles that focus on community policing.

### Conclusion

The Nine Peelian Principles of Law Enforcement, still in effect today, hold that the police are the people and the people are the police. Robert Peel's principles revolve around the concepts of community service, community safety, service of the people, pride, and professionalism. American police departments hold that the goal of community policing is to promote partnerships between communities and local police and to encourage cooperation between local residents to address and solve problems in the community. Examples of American community policing can be seen in Neighborhood Watch programs and Citizen Academies throughout the country. Today, police departments, both in the United States and abroad, still champion the same tenets that originated with Peel. ♦

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**Police departments in America hold that community policing aims to promote partnerships between communities and local police....**

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Gary Herrett, sergeant, interview by author, Westminster Metropolitan Police, Belgravia Station, U.K., 2011.

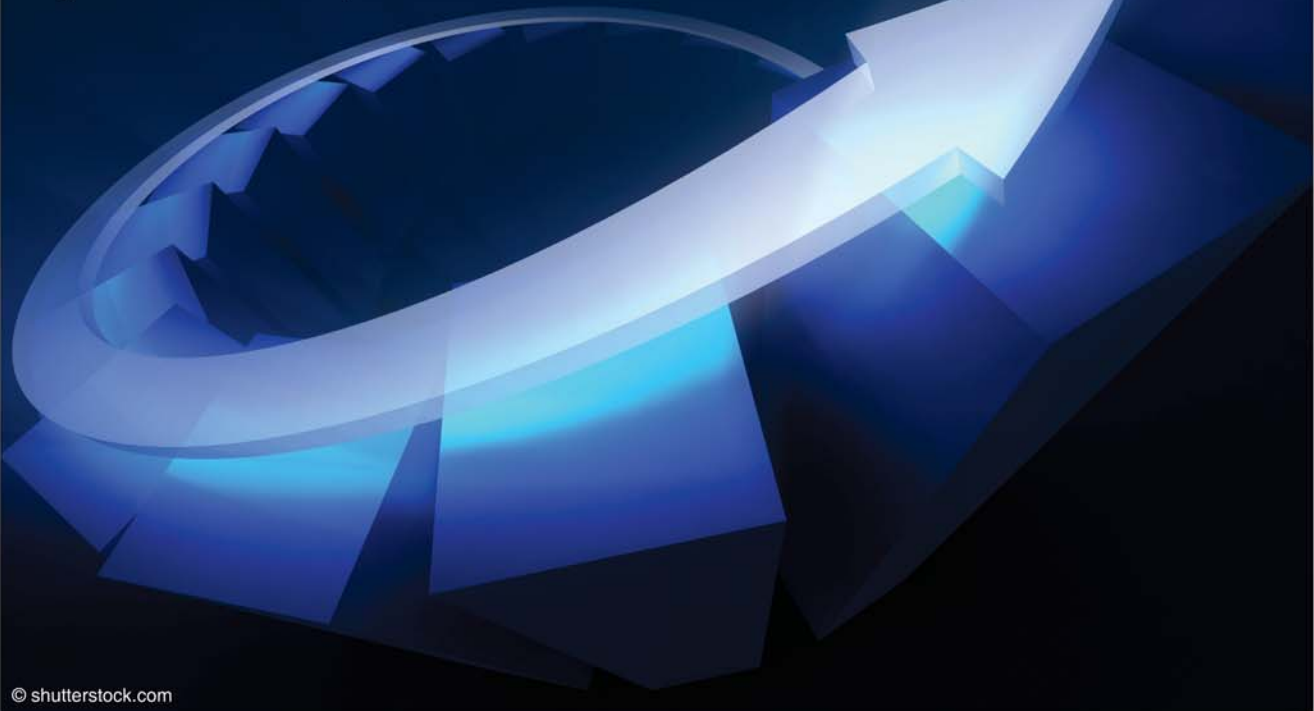
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*The author thanks Deputy Inspector Paul Switzer, Sergeant Gary Herrett, and Inspector Nick Cornish, Westminster Metropolitan Police, Belgravia Station, United Kingdom, who provided input into this article.*

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# Analyzing Organizational Performance From the Bottom Up

By W. MICHAEL PHIBBS, M.H.R.



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**O**fficers drive the overall effectiveness of public safety organizations and represent their agencies' most valuable assets. Employees' level of engagement forms the foundation for this success. Collectively, personnel make the difference in life-and-death situations by expending energy and effort to protect citizens' safety every day.

From an agency's standpoint, high-performance levels impact both its short- and

long-term budget by reducing administrative and operational costs. For the community, effective officer performance helps lower crime levels and increase citizens' trust in the police to improve quality of life. Law enforcement organizations face the challenge of identifying factors that impact engagement and performance, proactively anticipating and rectifying problems that can affect individual and, ultimately, organizational effectiveness.

## Study and Findings

In 2010, the author and two other researchers developed an in-depth study to gather specialized data from various public safety agencies. Three organizations from the Richmond, Virginia, area—the Richmond City Police Department, the Richmond City Fire Department, and the Henrico County Division of Fire—participated in the original study. Initially, 49 questions examined the individual agencies and developed a



benchmark for further research in public safety.

The researchers discussed with each organization's leadership the rationale for the study and provided an opportunity for them to add questions they considered relevant to their respective agencies. The leaders saw a significant gap between desired and actual levels of engagement and performance. They noticed deficiencies in both experienced officers and new hires—particularly those with less than 5 years in the organization.

This project took a unique bottom-up view—from the employees' perspective—of the engagement and performance of police and fire professionals, rather than a top-down inquiry of the structural systems operating within the agencies. The study compared how officer responses impacted the department at the organizational, divisional, and operational unit levels. It also examined how differing demographics significantly impacted engagement and performance throughout an officer's career.

The researchers intended to identify not only the point of decline in engagement but its subsequent rate. Further, they looked at factors, such as equipment, training, potential for challenging assignments, and advancement opportunities, that can influence an employee's

perception. Especially important was uncovering how an organization's response to ideas and needs impacts its officers' attitude toward engagement and performance. After examining the level of engagement of the individual, the researchers studied the significance of responses at the smallest operational units, the level at which an agency begins to develop and become impacted by its uniqueness.

The survey involved 621 participants, a 38 percent rate of return. While each organization had a unique culture, common trends created a universal baseline. Based on the study, the researchers developed the Pyramid of Performance Factors (PPF) to show how agency systems and employee perspectives are prioritized, thus creating the

foundation for engagement and performance. The PPF can identify how even small differences in attitude can impact an employee's performance, combine to influence smaller operational units, and, eventually, impact the effectiveness and efficiency of the entire organization. The author provides an overview of the study results and an analysis of how employees' responses impact their level of engagement and, ultimately, organizational effectiveness.

### **Employee Expectations and Reality**

The foundation of the PPF pertains to employees' expectations before hire. Individuals enter law enforcement service for various reasons. For example, they may strive to serve the community. Perhaps, they want

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***The researchers intended to identify not only the point of decline in engagement but its subsequent rate.***

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*Sergeant Phibbs serves with the Richmond, Virginia, Police Department and is a consultant with a private firm.*

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## Pyramid of Performance Factors



to join the subculture. However, once hired, expectations meet reality, and the aura surrounding officers' association with a particular agency cannot by itself sustain their career-long commitment.

Employees' fit within an agency's operational structure influences its success. When individuals' desires and expectations are met, these personnel more likely will perform at a high level. Employees probably will expend energy, effort, and enthusiasm when they believe in an agency's mission, vision, and priorities. For instance, law enforcement organizations may focus on crime fighting, as opposed to prevention, strategies,

and each agency will follow a specific style (e.g., sector or zone) of policing.

The researchers looked for answers to the following questions: Does knowledge of the profession prior to hire affect success in an individual's career? What impact does an understanding before employment of a specific organization and its culture have on employee success? When examining the officers' pre-employment familiarity of the profession, of those participating, 27 percent had extensive knowledge before employment, 57 percent reported some familiarity, and 15 percent expressed no knowledge.

Out of necessity, police organizations are highly structured. These agencies' internal culture creates the environment in which employees work and helps determine overall engagement. Not surprisingly, the researchers identified officers' autonomy as one factor directly impacting their performance. Further, personnel with advance understanding of their department's culture have a professional edge over officers who later discover that their agency does not match their expectations. Organizations that proactively provide realistic descriptions about their structure and culture to potential employees have a fiscal advantage over other departments by reducing the financial impact associated with turnover resulting from unsuccessful hires or low performance.

To fill vacancies with well-qualified people, agencies often rely on regional or national recruiting efforts. Many individuals looking for a job expect that all police organizations operate the same way and that it does not matter which one they join. Some people simply want to enter the profession and transfer later to a department better suited to their needs. Therefore, agencies must recruit strategically and offer a specific brand of policing to potential officers.



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According to the survey, 61 percent of employees expressed some knowledge of their organization and its culture, 30 percent had no such familiarity, and 8 percent claimed extensive knowledge. Thus, 30 percent of individuals accepting employment by a department do not fully understand it and have, at best, a limited understanding of its culture. Further inquiry related the importance of prior organizational knowledge to the success of individual officers and their willingness to stay with an agency until retirement.

Clearly, the level of prior cultural and organizational knowledge affects the individuals' energy, effort, and enthusiasm to perform. The high numbers of responses indicating no prior knowledge of the organization before hire displays a weakness that agencies can correct by implementing a strategic long-term initiative to develop their reputation and specific brand, thus increasing the likelihood of effective hiring. Successful branding on pre-hires will result in some individuals becoming more determined to apply to a specific organization and others deciding the agency does not fit their needs. A lack of foresight in investing in a well-thought-out strategy of organizational recruitment can negatively impact new employees and, thereafter, organizational effectiveness.

### **Communication and Organizational Health**

Effective internal communication helps bond personnel to the organization and acts as a link between efficient operation and employees' willingness to perform. Open internal communication pathways prove essential in maintaining organizational health and moving personnel toward common goals. The subject of communication is in the middle of the

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***Employees' fit within an agency's operational structure influences its success.***

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PPF. This placement reflects its connection to both individual engagement and organizational structures and highlights the importance of maintaining free-flowing communication, both up and down.

Top-down communication helps guide the organization by emphasizing overall expectations and gives focused direction to officers at the unit level. Bottom-up communication alerts the agency to critical problems and aids in forecasting

and preparing for the changing environments of the future. If these communication pathways fail, individuals and units tend to lose focus of both short- and long-term goals and, perhaps, develop their own goals not parallel with those of the department.

Police personnel become frustrated when they cannot communicate upward with those who can implement change. Subsequently, their frustration may turn to anger, and anger can result in disengagement. The authors examined if officers viewed their agency's communication pathways as effective and also considered how two-way communication between supervisors and personnel impacted employee performance. The study focused on seven forms of internal communication to gauge from the officers' perspective effectiveness in transferring information upward to individuals who best could act on it. These methods included participation in a committee, suggestion cards, e-mails, chain of command, labor organizations, open-door policy, and other means.

The officers' responses indicated that all internal communication pathways needed improvement. The highest-rated means, the submission of ideas through the chain of command, only received a “somewhat



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effective” rating. As to the use of suggestion cards to facilitate direct communication from the individual to the command level, a troubling “not effective” rating was recorded. An organization’s printed promise of a reply should assure personnel who spend the time to write and take ownership of a suggestion that they will receive a response. A failure to reply suggests that the organization does not care.

### **Top-Down Interaction and Performance**

Accurate feedback to personnel is critical not only for increasing short-term effectiveness but also for facilitating their long-term development. Reliable information on officers’ performance helps them determine their strengths and weaknesses, which increases engagement during their career. Specifically, agencies must recognize the value of positive reinforcement as a morale builder and performance enhancer. When discussing with employees their shortcomings, supervisors should do so only for the purpose of encouraging improvement. Supervisors can work with officers, focusing on their long-term goals, to tailor evaluations that meet the organization’s needs while also helping officers fulfill their individual development goals.

The study evaluated how officers perceived communication with their supervisor. In response to the statement, “Your supervisor accurately communicates to you on your performance,” 20.7 percent of officers answered “extraordinarily so”; 42.7 percent responded “significantly”; 29.2 percent stated “somewhat”; and 7.4 percent indicated “not at all.”

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Effective communication can clarify goals and expectations and, in turn, enhance officer effectiveness. When supervisors accurately judge performance and have effective communication skills, they can help improve individual performance and extinguish underperformance. From the team perspective, more members performing at high levels translates into greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Police organizations tend to avoid and, therefore, fail to resolve ongoing performance problems. However, candid, effective two-way communication raises the potential that outstanding performance will be the norm, not the exception. The authors identified effective communication at both the organizational and individual levels as a significant area for study because of its importance to organizational effectiveness.

The nature of public safety requires supervisors to maintain a certain level of command and control to ensure professionalism and accountability. From the direct supervisor’s level, the study noted contradictory results in the effectiveness of internal communication. Supervisors not only must understand the concepts and techniques of effective evaluations but practice these skills in role-play situations to become comfortable in having potentially difficult conversations with personnel regarding performance concerns. A goal is for officers to see feedback as positive, not threatening, and to participate more easily in uncomfortable conversations. Also, discussion must include two-way participation from both the supervisor and the employee. Performance must be viewed from different perspectives, from formal after-action reports to impromptu conversations, with the same



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goal of identifying what can be learned. For professionals in law enforcement, feedback received today may change behavior and save the life of a citizen or teammate tomorrow.

Also, many supervisors feel that their performance should not be graded from their subordinates' perspective. However, having subordinates share their views openly in this way creates opportunities to make improvements and increase effectiveness. When supervisors receive feedback on their performance, it allows them to see where they are doing well and where they can improve.

Common wisdom suggests that smaller operations would score higher on bottom-up communication because of the cohesiveness usually found in smaller units and the less restrictive communication styles of these supervisors. Also, field supervisors in larger units, such as patrol operations, seemingly would use a tighter command-and-control leadership style and would not receive performance feedback as willingly. Surprisingly, the authors found the opposite to be the case. The detectives and officers assigned to smaller, more specialized units were less likely to talk with supervisors about performance than personnel assigned to general field operations. Overall, supervisors in

all organizations should learn how to solicit and make use of feedback to improve their effectiveness.

### **Employee Engagement and Organizational Responsiveness**

A significant portion of the study focused on examining how organizations respond to the needs and ideas of officers and the resulting impact on employees' level of performance

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***...the level of prior cultural and organizational knowledge affected the individuals' energy, effort, and enthusiasm to perform.***

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and engagement. A collateral issue examined how the officers felt the agency's responsiveness affected their career expectations. Additionally, the authors assessed how individual perceptions of organizational responsiveness combine to impact the smaller units.

Many organizations send their senior-ranking officers to study new management and leadership theories, hoping

to increase performance and engagement from the top down. The goal in learning these forward-thinking techniques is to promote continuous motivation, focus on new officers' performance, and push back the time when the engagement and performance of seasoned officers diminish. Underperformance impacts the fiscal operating budgets of the organizations and, when recognized by the community, subtly impacts the level of trust among citizens.

Discussing with officers the issues of engagement and performance illuminates these subjects from the employees' perspective. Perception of organizational responsiveness translates to reality at the individual level. Officers emphasized their eagerness and motivation to do their jobs to the fullest. Apparently, a lack of engagement results not from an indifferent attitude but, rather, frustration due to the lack of responsiveness to the employees' ideas and concerns. They expressed the perception that their organizations were not listening to, acknowledging, or acting upon ideas. When individuals perceive they cannot get information up the chain of command to the policy makers responsible for change, the progression of frustration to anger and then disengagement begins with the employees, expands to the unit



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level, and, possibly, infects the entire organization.

The study directly addressed these claims of loss of performance and engagement. Organizations were asked if they were responsive to employees' needs and ideas, while the authors requested individual officers to relate how their agency's responsiveness affected their level of engagement and performance. The authors combined the individual results to assess the situation at the unit, division, and, finally, organizational level. According to 11.8 percent of officers, their organization mostly responds to their ideas, and they have increased their performance and willingness to suggest new ideas; 2.3 percent said that their agency mostly responds to their ideas, they are satisfied with meeting performance standards, and they do not want to suggest ideas; 51.1 percent related that their organization does not always respond to their ideas but that they will continue to suggest new ones and maintain a high level of performance; 27.4 percent shared that their department does not always respond to their ideas but that they will continue to perform acceptably and suggest some new ideas; and 7.3 percent said that their organization does not always respond to their ideas, they will meet minimum levels

of performance, and they will not suggest new ideas.

As the results indicate, most employees are engaged at work but feel their organizations are unresponsive to their needs and ideas. Over time, individual engagement will decline. Agencies face the challenge of staving off this decline as long as possible and ensuring that it never reaches the point of no recovery. Using the study as a long-term strategic tool, departments can tailor short-term tactical action

***Effective internal communication helps bond personnel to the organization and acts as a link between efficient operation and employees' willingness to perform.***

to help move their personnel toward the category of "I am fully engaged/my organization is fully responsive." Doing this requires organizational commitment to a long-term strategic action plan of slowly increasing employee engagement while building confidence in and responsiveness to employees' needs and ideas.

In the short term, immediate tactical plans can address the issues and concerns of both the organization and its employees, thereby increasing the perception of agency responsiveness. Failure to act will only increase frustration and drive down performance. Knowing that problems exist and choosing to make a concerted effort to understand and resolve the issues can transform an organization from ordinary to extraordinary, not just as a goal but as an accepted cultural norm.

#### **Initiatives and Improved Employee Performance**

Organizations can use the PPF as a tool to help identify where long-term strategic and short-term tactical improvement can increase overall employee performance and engagement. The most striking aspect of the overall study was the number of officers fully engaged despite their agencies' unresponsiveness to them; this seems to underscore the commitment and sense of duty of those who undertake a career in policing. Although addressing employee frustration is not complicated, leaders need to stay committed in the short and long term to learning, understanding, and remedying the causes of this problem. Agencies can enjoy the long-term benefits of high employee



morale, community engagement, and fiscal return on the investment in employees if leaders take a bottom-up view of the department and observe issues from the perspective of front-line personnel.

All organizations strive to have fully engaged employees whose high performance becomes engrained as an accepted norm in the agency's culture. Increasing agency effectiveness does not happen overnight, but, over time, systematic changes will begin to re-shape the culture. The process starts with leaders instituting action-oriented initiatives with milestones to measure both short- and long-term targeted goals. As organizations make structural changes at the higher levels, they begin to transform their culture at the individual level. The author offers some examples of systematic and cultural changes.

- Implement organizational policies that offer short-term initiatives to address agency responsiveness to issues and develop strategic long-term policies to increase the fit between agencies and potential employees.
- Nurture internal communication pathways to ensure that appropriate change managers become aware of issues.

- Offer educational and training curriculum where supervisors learn skills to cultivate trust and two-way communication with team members.
- Develop programs where leaders can see from the perspective of front-line personnel the organization from the bottom up and assess where performance issues occur.

### Conclusion

Perception is reality in the eyes of front-line personnel in policing. As the author and fellow researchers' study shows, agencies need to begin conversations examining individual performance and organizational effectiveness from a bottom-up perspective. To best transition into a high-performance culture, employees and leadership should work together to assess their organizations and address their unique problems that undercut performance. For leaders in any police organization, the goal of creating a high-performance culture is worthy of the challenge. ♦

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*The author thanks Jackson Baynard, fire lieutenant with the Henrico County, Virginia, Division of Fire, and Dr. Michael Wriston, organizational psychologist, for their participation in conducting the study.*

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## Wanted: Photographs



**T**he *Bulletin* staff always is looking for dynamic, law enforcement-related images for possible publication in the magazine. We are interested in those that visually depict the many aspects of the law enforcement profession and illustrate the various tasks law enforcement personnel perform.

We can use digital photographs or color prints. It is our policy to credit photographers when their work appears in the magazine. Contributors sending prints should send duplicate copies, not originals, as we do not accept responsibility for damaged or lost prints. Send materials to:

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# Police Practice

## ***Educating Young Drivers About Alcohol***

By Patrick Gallagher, M.P.A.

**O**fficers respond to a vehicle crash involving apparent injuries. The scene is chaotic. Rescue and fire personnel do what they can for those who cling to life, while the police deal with those who have caused this mayhem—if they have survived. As the day progresses, family members are notified, their lives forever changed. Death, hardship, and retribution will be linked to this event forever.

Such vehicle crashes occur too often in the United States. This reality has become the basis for a program geared toward educating high school students of the dangers associated with drinking and driving. Coined “Every 15 Minutes,” the program takes students and their families through a 2-day experience of a fatal vehicle crash and its aftermath.<sup>1</sup>

### **Beginning**

The Virginia Beach, Virginia, Police Department’s Crime Prevention Unit has sponsored the

program, originally developed in Spokane, Washington, since 1999 and has found it particularly effective.

Numerous city departments, such as the Virginia Beach Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services, Virginia Beach Sheriff’s Office, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, and Virginia Beach Office of the Commonwealth’s Attorney, have participated in the 2-day program. Several private organizations also have been notable partners.

### **Structure**

The program is comprehensive and requires months of preparation. During the most recent presentation, 20 preselected students were chosen from a local high school to participate.

The students take part in role playing exercises. While the participants watch, a fellow student is placed in a body bag, and another is driven away in handcuffs. Crash scenes are re-created as student-observers view the removal of a classmate’s body,

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arrest of the offender, emergency room efforts to save lives, death identification and notification, reading of obituaries, and a mock DUI criminal trial.

Activities later in the evening include interaction with police officers, medical personnel, and members of the community who speak to the students about their personal experiences with alcohol-related incidents. The authorities talk about responding to crash scenes, contacting parents for death notifications, and going home at night haunted by the tragic events that occur every day. Among the speakers are individuals who have experienced the loss of loved ones in alcohol-related incidents. At the conclusion of the evening events, the students stay overnight at a hotel for a retreat; their absence from home serves to further simulate that they have become victims and are gone.

The second day's activities include an assembly attended by juniors and seniors, where a music video of the previous day's events is presented. The video footage, including interviews with student participants and their parents, features the scene of one student removed as a crash fatality and another due to incarceration. Special guest speakers address the assembly and relay their own accounts of the harsh realities of drinking and driving. The lesson that drinking alcohol and driving an automobile is not an inconsequential decision is reinforced.

### **Preparation**

The program coordinator (PC) eases the process of planning the event by developing a timeline to meet specific goals. The VBPD has found that planning 11 months in advance can minimize most problems.

The VBPD program typically begins in May of the school year preceding a presentation. During that time, the PC picks two high schools from a rotating list to participate. The PC works with school coordinators and administrators to select dates in March and April, spaced at least 6 weeks apart for the presentations. After dates have been secured, stakeholders are notified through an e-mail distribution list. The PC then finds 30 police volunteers to help with the project.

In late October or early November, an information night is held at the selected schools. During this mandatory meeting for students and parents, the PC and school coordinators present an overview of the program. One student and parent from a previous presentation attend to give a testimonial of their involvement. A video of a former presentation also is shown during the meeting, followed by a question-and-answer session.

Six weeks from the event, another meeting is held with the PC, school coordinators, and student participants to discuss the 2-day itinerary and committee assignments, including table display, advertising and marketing, showcase, and announcements. Discussions of rules and expectations during the 2-day event, as well as completion of mock student obituaries and parental death notifications, also occur.

The PC and points of contact from all agency partners meet 5 weeks ahead of the event to discuss the 2-day itinerary and the expectations of each agency for those days. One week later, the PC confirms arrangements with the hotel and restaurants serving the participants and orders event-specific t-shirts from a local graphic design shop. Virginia Beach City Public Schools students designed the shirts for the original presentation in 1999.

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**...the program takes students and their families through a 2-day experience of a fatal vehicle crash and its aftermath.**

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The PC and school coordinators determine crash participants 3 weeks before the event. The PC supplies crash participant information to investigators so that they can complete crash reports. The PC also prepares the warrants for the magistrate's office.

Interviews of the crash participants and parents are conducted by members of the Virginia Beach Fire Department's multimedia unit, which also schedules video shoots at the school with the help of the school resource officer. Meetings occur between members of the multimedia unit, school technology representatives, and the PC during this stage. Make-up coordinators, the school's drama teacher, and the PC also meet to discuss make-up issues. The make-up coordinator places any necessary orders.

Two weeks from the event, the master spreadsheet, all obituaries, and parental notification information are finalized. The program for the assembly also is completed. During the final week, the PC, school coordinators, and participating students have one last meeting to ensure all parties understand their expectations.

## Conclusion

The Virginia Beach Police Department strives to partner with the community in a cooperative effort to enhance the quality of life for all citizens. The implementation of programs, like Every 15 Minutes, is a key element in the efforts to meet its mission. ♦

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The author bases the name of the program on 1996 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) statistics indicating that 17,126 alcohol-related crashes occurred that year.

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*Captain Gallagher, a veteran of the U.S. Army Military Police Corps, serves with the Virginia Beach, Virginia, Police Department.*

*The author would like to thank Master Police Officer Jim McElligott of the Virginia Beach, Virginia, Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit for his efforts since 1999 as program coordinator of Every 15 Minutes.*

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## Wanted: Notable Speeches

**T**he *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* seeks for its Notable Speech department transcripts of presentations made by criminal justice professionals. Anyone who has delivered a speech recently and would like to share the information with a wider audience may submit a transcript of the presentation to the *Bulletin* for consideration.

As with article submissions, the *Bulletin* staff will edit the speech for length and clarity, but, realizing that the information was presented orally, maintain as much of the original flavor as possible. Presenters should submit their transcripts typed and double-spaced on 8 1/2- by 11-inch white paper with all pages numbered, along with an electronic version of the transcript, or e-mail them. Send the material to: Editor, *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, FBI Academy, Quantico, VA 22135, or to [leb@fbiacademy.edu](mailto:leb@fbiacademy.edu).





### *San Leandro Public Safety Memorial, California*

The San Leandro Public Safety Memorial in California depicts police officers, firefighters, and their respective equipment. The back face of the memorial is etched black granite illustrating historic photographs. Brass front plates portray the scales of justice and other symbolic artifacts present in police and fire service. An eternal flame between the front and black plates, comprised of LED lighting, provides continuous illumination. The center of the brass front plate is emblazoned with insignias and mottos of the police and fire departments. An inscription on the plate reads, "We serve the public for the good of the community; to uplift the fallen, to protect the defenseless, to comfort those in need, and to ensure the safety of all. We are the police and firefighters of San Leandro. The tools of our trade are much more than the metal and plastic and rubber from which they are made. These tools become an extension of the hearts and hands of the professionals who use them. Touch them and you touch us."



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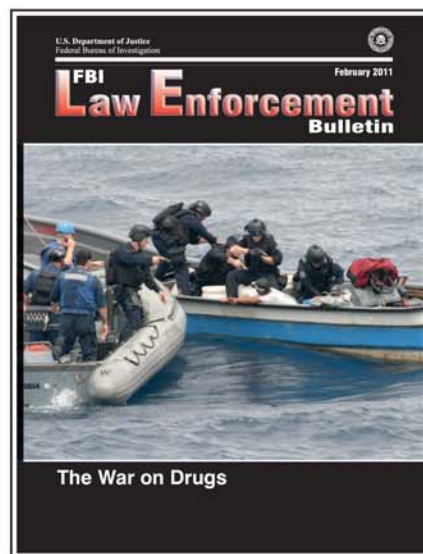
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## LEADERSHIP

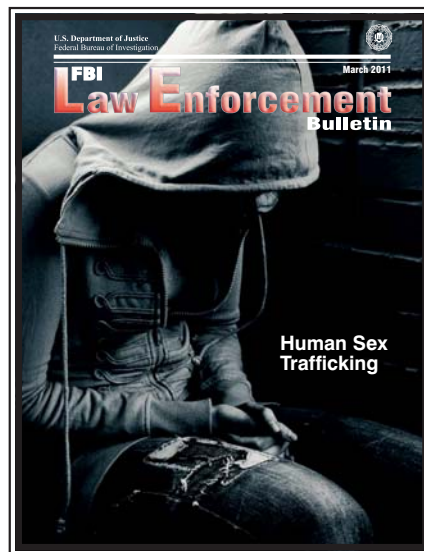
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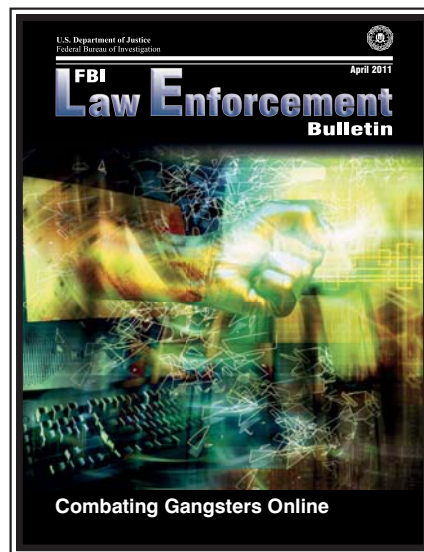
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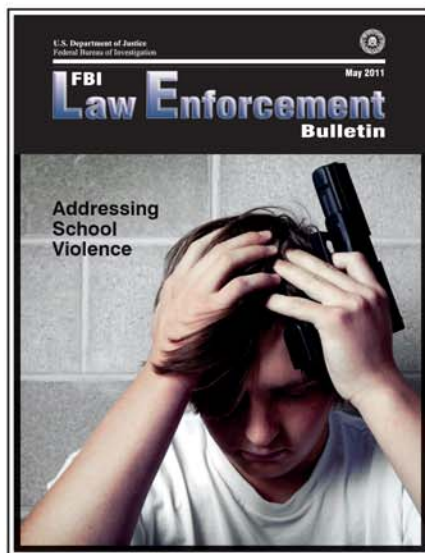
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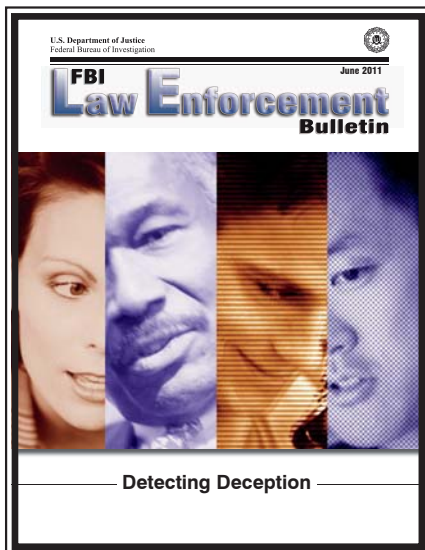
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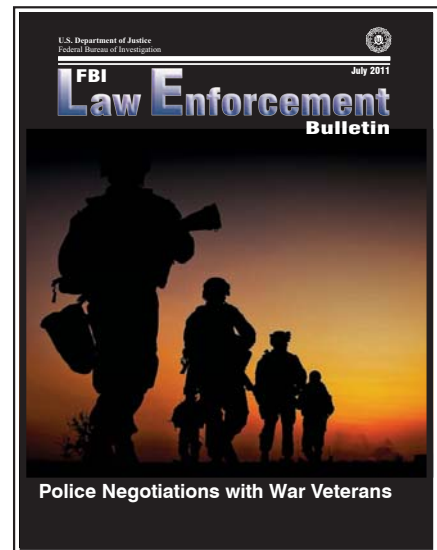
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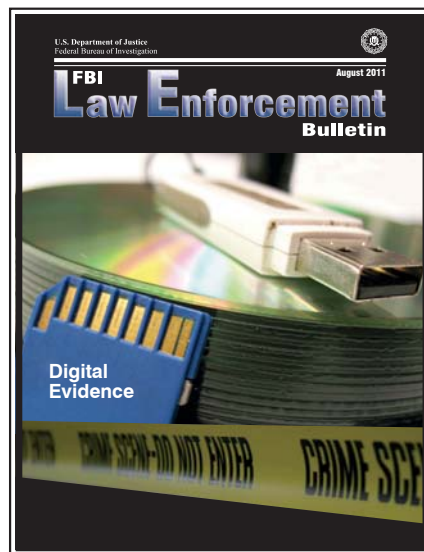
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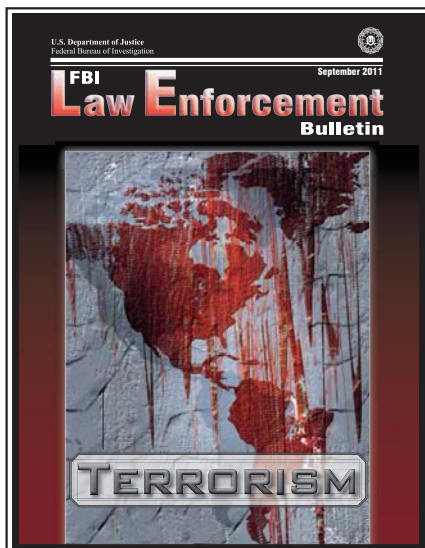
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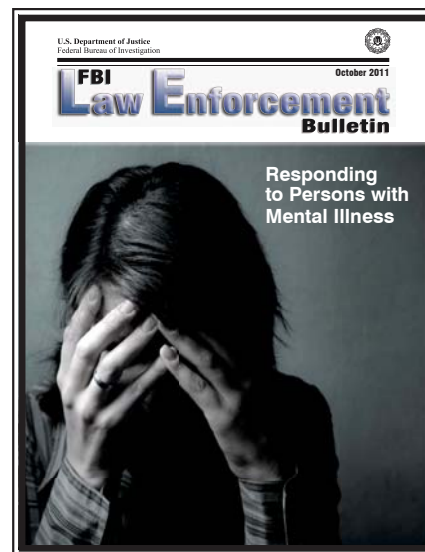
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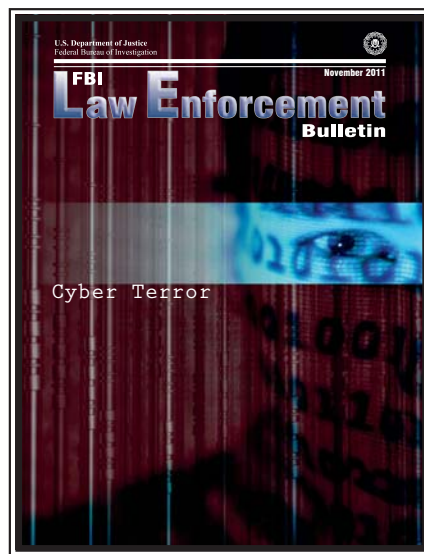
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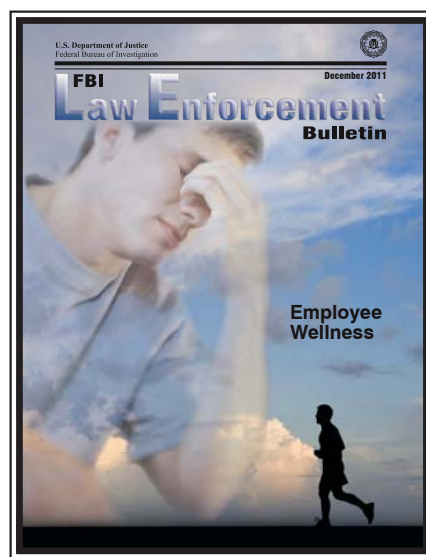
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## Bulletin Notes

Law enforcement officers are challenged daily in the performance of their duties; they face each challenge freely and unselfishly while answering the call to duty. In certain instances, their actions warrant special attention from their respective departments. The *Bulletin* also wants to recognize those situations that transcend the normal rigors of the law enforcement profession.



Deputy Irons



Deputy Alexander

The Clark County, Ohio, Sheriff's Office received numerous 911 emergency calls reporting a house fire. Deputies Jolene Irons and Larry Alexander were only minutes from the address and responded to investigate. Upon arrival, the deputies saw thick black smoke coming from the rear of the house and discovered a large amount of fire venting through several windows. When they approached the house to search for occupants, they observed through the smoke an elderly woman, unconscious and slumped in a chair. Despite the extreme danger to themselves, Deputies Irons and

Alexander entered the flaming structure to retrieve the occupant, who was not breathing and was completely covered in soot. The deputies brought the woman outside and, after several moments of attempting to revive her, enabled her to resume breathing. Her care was continued by emergency medical personnel, and the deputies were checked for smoke inhalation at the scene.



Sergeant Rogutski

Sergeant Leonard Rogutski of the Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, Police Department responded to a 911 call at a local creek where a young man attempted to traverse a nearby weir and capsized his kayak. The strong current and undertow was pulling the man back toward a waterfall where one person died 3 weeks earlier. Upon arriving at the scene, Sergeant Rogutski deployed a rescue rope to the trapped boater and pulled the man to the shore where he was treated by emergency medical personnel.

Nominations for the *Bulletin Notes* should be based on either the rescue of one or more citizens or arrest(s) made at unusual risk to an officer's safety. Submissions should include a short write-up (maximum of 250 words), a separate photograph of each nominee, and a letter from the department's ranking officer endorsing the nomination. Submissions can be mailed to the Editor, *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, FBI Academy, Quantico, VA 22135 or e-mailed to [leb@fbiacademy.edu](mailto:leb@fbiacademy.edu).



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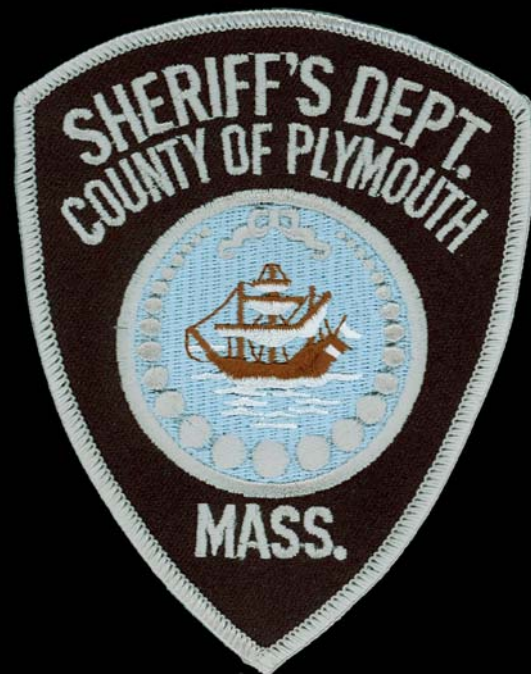
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## Patch Call



The village of Ossining (meaning “stone on stone”), New York, was incorporated in 1813 as Sing Sing. Though the village changed its name in 1901 to avoid confusion with the famous local prison, its police department patch depicts on the upper left the facility’s historic walls. Also shown are the dual arches of a roadway and former aqueduct and a canoe moving down the Hudson River.



The County of Plymouth, Massachusetts, was established on June 2, 1685, by the General Court of Plymouth Colony. The patch of its sheriff’s department shows the Mayflower at rest after landing its passengers on Plymouth Rock in 1620. Around the ship is a chaplet of 27 pearls, each representing the municipalities that form the county government.