



# TRAINING MODULE: DRIVING BEHAVIOR

**PURPOSE:** To provide an overview of the increase in police related motor vehicle accidents and their impact on a law enforcement agency.

**TIME:** 20 Minutes

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- Become familiar with police related motor vehicle accidents and their impact on law enforcement agencies
- Identify the contributing factors to police related motor vehicle accidents
- Become familiar with supervisor and agency responsibilities as it relates to safe motor vehicle operation
- Learn about recent developments in motor vehicle safety

## **PARTICIPANTS MATERIALS:**

- Participant Manual

## **TRAINER MATERIALS:**

- Training Manual
- PowerPoint Presentation

# Driving Behavior



***Zero Officers Killed or Injured***

## Driving Behavior

- 450 Accidental Deaths since 2001
  - 66.6% due to motor vehicle accidents
    - 254 Motor Vehicle Accidents
    - 46 Motorcycle
  - Additional 75 officers struck and killed by passing motorists

Accidental deaths have been increasing over the years

Starting in 1998 they have annually outnumbered felonious line of duty deaths, with the exception of 2001 (September 11th.)

There has been a 25% increase from 2006-2007 (66-81)

Since 2001, there have been 450 accidental deaths, 66.6% due to motor vehicle and motorcycle accidents

- 254 MVA
- 46 Motorcycle

An additional 75 officers were struck and killed by passing motorists while outside of their vehicles.

## Driving Behavior

- Increase in motor vehicle accidents annually since 2004



- 81,707 total accidents from 2004-2006
  - 27,235 per year
- 37,655 total injuries reported
- 3.4 times more accidents than Fire/EMS per year

According to the National Safety Council, there has been a steady increase in police related motor vehicle accidents annually since 2004

81,707 total accidents from 2004-2006

27,235 per year

37,655 total injuries reported

3.4 times more accidents than Fire/EMS per year

Motor vehicle accidents are a driving cost in worker's compensation losses and departmental liability claims.

Independent studies have shown that the predominant type of liability claim against agencies is for injuries to other parties and damage to others' property as a result of police vehicle accidents. A popular misconception is that the majority of accidents occur when the officer is either engaged in a pursuit or emergency response. However, most on duty accidents occur during regular patrol activity at vehicle speeds less than 40 mph. Costs from non-emergency response accidents are 4 times higher than pursuit and emergency response combined.

Poor driving habits not only result in accidents but are also instrumental in developing public ill will. There are a multitude of hidden costs resulting from improper driving to include remedial training, damaged vehicles, loss of personnel hours, and law suits.

There is an obvious financial incentive to agencies to reduce the number of motor vehicle accidents and the injuries they cause.

# Driving Behavior

## ■ Characteristic of Officers Involved

- Average age is mid 30's
- Approximately 10 years of law enforcement experience
- Works hard but takes risks
- Possesses sense of invincibility
- Develops "performance comfort" from years of carrying out duties
- Lacks motor vehicle in-service or refresher training
- Pursues misdemeanor property crime suspects under high risk situations more than less-experienced peers.

Research has shown that the officers involved in accidents are experienced people taking short cuts, not brand new recruits.

Characteristics of Officers' Involved:

- Average age of officer mid-30's with approximately 10 years of law enforcement experience
- Works hard but takes risks
- Possesses sense of invincibility "it won't happen to me"
- Develops performance comfort from years of carrying out duties without incidents/accidents
- Lacks motor vehicle in-service or refresher training
- Pursues misdemeanor property crime suspects under high-risk conditions more often than less-experienced counterparts.

# Driving Behavior

## ■ Causative Factors

- Attitude
- Driving Concentration
- Psychological Factors
- Physical Condition
- Night Driving

### **Causative Factors:**

**Attitude:** “We drive as we are.” Faulty driving attitudes commonly adopted by officers:

- Overconfidence in driving skills, refusal to recognize the chance of becoming involved in an accident
- False sense of security because of a non-accident record
- Faith in experience getting out of tight situations
- Misconceptions about the performance capability of the vehicle

**Driving Concentration:** Officers are commonly distracted by the police radio, stressful events, need to be observant off of the road.

**Psychological Factors:** Mental preoccupation resulting from encounters at work or home.

**Physical Condition:** Results of fatigue on driving performance – slows reflexes, causes the mind to wander, and eyes shut while blinking for longer periods of time (eye lids get heavy.)

**Night Driving:** The fatal accident rate among the general public is 2.5 times higher at night than during the day. This can be attributed to the following factors:

- Smaller fields of vision
- Night Myopia
- Lower acuity levels
- Loss in depth perception
- Drop in accuracy of seeing
- Increased fatigue

# Driving Behavior

## ■ Agency/Supervisor Responsibility

- Formal review of all accidents
- Identify causative factors
- Cultural message that avoidable accidents are not accepted as normal incidents of police work
- Document poor driving performance
- Training

### **Agency/Supervisor Responsibilities:**

- Formal review of all accidents
- Identify causative factors
- Organizational message that avoidable accidents are not acceptable as normal incidents of police work.
- Document poor driving performance: Behavior is most likely exhibited in the past. Supervisors must observe, document and correct deficiencies and discipline policy violations and be held accountable if they do not.
- Training procedures: Refresher and In-service training in emergency vehicle operations

# Driving Behavior

- Agency/Supervisor Responsibility
  - Equipment checks
    - Routine inspections
  - Policies for Safe Motor Vehicle Operation
    - Mandatory seat belt use
    - Clear definition of emergency response
    - Mandatory vehicle inspections

- **Equipment checks:**

Supervisors should ensure that officers are routinely inspecting their vehicle before each tour of duty. It is recommended that officers check the following:

- New Damage
- Emergency Equipment and Lights
- All Fluid Levels
- Brakes
- Tire Inflation (low tire pressure weakens the sidewalls and increases the possibility of a “blow out.”)
- Clean windows to increase visibility
- Replenish department/safety equipment as needed (flares, cones, first aid kit)

- **Policies for safe motor vehicle operation**

- Mandatory seat belt use

*Countless studies have show that the chance of survival in a vehicle accident is greatly increased when seat belts are worn. The severity of injuries is also drastically reduced by seat belt use.*

- Clearly defining emergency and pursuit response in the context of risk versus gain.
- Mandatory Vehicle inspections

# Driving Behavior

## Recent Developments in Motor Vehicle Safety

- Product Integration
  - Laptops
  - Shotgun racks
- Software upgrades that create audio responses
- Purpose designed seats to accommodate gun belts
- Additional safety measures to accommodate crash test standards with police equipment



## Developments in Motor Vehicle Safety

50% of all injuries occur in vehicles due to:

- Accidents
- Poor ergonomics
- Limited space
- Inserting and removing prisoners

## Recent Developments in Motor Vehicle Safety

Product Integration to reduce the likelihood of loose items becoming hazardous in an accident

- Laptops
- Shotgun racks
- Software upgrades that create audio responses so that eyes can stay on the road when using Mobile Data Terminals in vehicles
- Purpose designed seats to accommodate gun belts

- Additional safety measures to accommodate crash test standards with police equipment

**REFERENCE MATERIALS:**

**FBI LEOKA Data, 1996-2006**

**Accidentally Dead: Accidental Line-of-Duty Deaths of Law Enforcement Officers.** FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, Vol. 71 (#7), pgs. 8-13. Pinizzotto, Anthony J.; Davis, Edward F.; and, Miller, Charles E., (Jul 2002)

**IACP Training Key #259 Safe Driving**