



TRAINING MODULE: SUPERVISING FOR SAFETY

PURPOSE: To provide an overview of the necessity of supervising for safety and provide a structure for an overall safety program.

TIME: 15 Minutes

OBJECTIVES:

- Learn about the importance of supervising for safety
- Become familiar with the nine safety and health principles to create a culture of safety
- Learn about management's responsibility to provide safety training and lead by example

PARTICIPANTS MATERIALS:

- Participant Manual

TRAINER MATERIALS:

- Training Manual
- PowerPoint Presentation

Supervising for Safety



Zero Officers Killed or Injured

Safety is imperative to the health and well being of police officers. There has been a long standing belief that in the line of duty deaths are unacceptable and law enforcement professionals have done everything they can to help reduce them. However it is the conviction of the SafeShield committee that this philosophy should also extend to officer injuries. Law enforcement leaders can not accept the proposition that accidents or injuries are a reality of the law enforcement profession. The only acceptable belief is ***zero officers killed or injured.***

Supervising for Safety

- SafeShield Survey
 - 698 Agencies responded
 - 2,800 Injuries reported
 - 24,000 lost work days

The survey made clear that the law enforcement community has a financial incentive to identify the causes of on-duty injuries and institute changes to eliminate them.

There is no known national database that tracks officer injuries. In order to understand how officers are getting hurt, there has to be in-depth analysis into injuries that have occurred and their underlying causes. In 2003, the SafeShield committee commissioned a survey to get a basic understanding of the number of reported injuries and a general sense of how injuries are viewed within a police department.

SafeShield Survey conducted in 2003:

- 698 agencies responded
- 2,800 injuries resulting in 24,000 lost days
- Made clear that the law enforcement community has a financial incentive to identify the causes of on-duty injuries and institute changes to eliminate them.

Supervising for Safety

- **Financial Impact of Injuries**
 - 3.5 times more money is spent on workman's compensation claims than liability claims
 - Cost associated with lost days, overtime, training and recruiting new hires
 - Disability costs
 - Increase in medical costs

Financial impact of Injuries:

- Worker's Compensation claims are a huge financial burden.
- In independent studies, from 2001-2005, 3.5 times more money was spent on worker's compensation claims than liability claims (3.6 million in MN vs. 1 million)
- Costs associated with lost days, overtime, training and recruiting new hires
- Disability – studies have shown the cost to an agency for an early retirement on disability is approximately 165% of the officers' salary.
- Since 2001, there have been steep increases in medical costs and there is no sign of change. This in turn affects worker's compensations claims and law enforcement agencies.

Supervising for Safety

■ **Nine Safety and Health Principles:**

- *Zero Tolerance for Officer Injury*
- Management is responsible
- All Operating Exposures can be controlled
- Safety is a condition of employment
- Train all employees to work safely

In order for a safety program to be successful, there has to be a cultural shift towards the opinion that injuries are preventable. There needs to be an emphasis on actively preventing injuries through equipment, training, or policy. Part of this is the implementation of:

Nine Safety and Health Principles:

Zero Tolerance for Officer Injury: Other professions do not accept on-duty injury as part of the normal job, must have an attitudinal shift to zero tolerance. If injuries occur, we must be committed to determine and eliminate the root cause to prevent future occurrences.

- Supervisors cannot be effective without fully accepting this principle.
- Does not punish officers who are injured in the line of duty

Management is Responsible: From Chief to first line supervisor, everyone is responsible for preventing injuries and illnesses. Safety and health are a line-management responsibility and can not be delegated.

- Establish safety goals
- Demand accountability for health and safety performance
- Provide necessary resources

All Operating Exposures can be Controlled: Although we have limited control over what officers will face in the line of duty, we can control outcomes through comprehensive planning, policy, training, and equipment. *If an injury is predictable, it is preventable.*

Safety is a Condition of Employment: All employees must be convinced that he/she has a responsibility for working safely. Employees must respect the health and safety program and accept safety as a condition of their employment.

Train All Employees to Work Safely: Without effective training programs to teach, motivate and sustain safety knowledge, injuries can not be eliminated.

Supervising for Safety

- **Nine Safety and Health Principles:**
 - Supervise for Safety
 - All deficiencies must be corrected promptly
 - People are the most important element in an agency
 - Off-the-job safety is important

Supervise for Safety: Management must monitor performance in the workplace to assess the success of the safety and health program. Safety assessments must be performed continuously and be considered in all decision-making.

- Safety Audits and Inspections
- Review operations with employees to verify that safety procedures are understood and have not become outdated.

All Deficiencies Must Be Corrected Promptly: Without prompt action, the risk of injuries will increase and the credibility of the safety program will suffer

- Facility Modification
- Equipment Replacement
- Procedure Changes
- Training
- Constructive Discipline
- Follow-up Audits to verify effectiveness of remedies

People are the Most Important Element in an Agency: The success of the program depends on the officers following the procedures, participating actively in the training, and identifying and alerting management of potential hazards. Demonstrating concern for each employee fosters a mutual respect and the foundation is laid for a solid safety program.

Off-the-job Safety is Important: An off of the job injury is no less painful than one suffered on the job and still impacts the organization:

- Staffing
- Additional workloads on supervision
- Limited productivity upon return to work
- Increased payments for health insurance

Supervising for Safety

- Cultural Shift
 - Management Down
 - Supervisors are responsible and must be held accountable
 - Build safety performance into job descriptions and evaluate their performance
 - Follow up with employees
 - Reward safe behaviors
 - Stop recognizing irresponsible acts with rewards

Unfortunately, to many first line supervisors and officers across the country supervising for safety is an foreign concept in their agency.

There needs to be a Cultural Shift

Management Down-Safety Principles have to be adopted and embraced by management

Supervisors are responsible, and must hold officers and themselves accountable

- Have to respond to calls with officers, watch what they do and ensure proper enforcement of laws, policies, and safety. Make sure they are performing at an adequate level and take action if they are not.
- Example: Monitor performance, drop in performance could be a sign of a problem. 10 of the 40 officers used in the Line of Fire study of assaults had a decrease in their performance rating just prior to being assaulted.

Build safety performance into job descriptions and evaluate officers on their performance. Give safety equal status with other performance measures such as service and productivity. Safety performance must be a basis for evaluation and promotion.

Supervisors should follow up with employees on regular intervals to review their safety performance, participation in the safety program, and overall knowledge of safety procedures.

Reward safe behaviors

Stop recognizing irresponsible acts with awards.

Supervising for Safety

■ Training

■ Officer Training

- Orientation
- On the job training

■ Supervisor Training

Training

Officers-consistent training of safe practices and officer safety beyond patrol procedures and tactics

Orientation of New Employees – a safety mindset should be developed in each employee from their initial hire. Topics include:

- Safety Philosophy – explain reasons behind rules and procedures
- Site and Area Safety Rules
- Occupational Health Considerations
- Protective Equipment Needs
- Importance of Prompt Reporting Procedures
- Location of Emergency Equipment and How to Use It
- Emergency Procedures for Fires/Explosions, Including Evacuation

On the Job Training – Training should be well planned and conducted by a trusted employee who sets a good example.

- Review written procedure
- Demonstrate competency in the procedure

- Critique the performance as well as the procedure itself, identifying problem areas and soliciting input.

Supervisors-receive training on how to supervise for safety

Effective training requires both the understanding and acceptance of those receiving the training.

Requires that procedures and safety rules be established for all job functions.

Each activity must be covered by a procedure and safety performance standard for evaluation. Training for those activities must stress officer safety.

Lead by Example

Conduct yourself in a manner that exemplifies safety, model behavior. Recognize that actions or inactions could send wrong messages to officers ie: failure to recognize or correct behavior may send message to younger officers that it is ok.

Conclusion

Supervising for safety refers to the concept that police supervisors need to focus on monitoring factors that affect safety. Supervisors must not overlook procedural error or equipment violations because doing so could place officers in danger.