



# Code Enforcement Officer Safety Newsletter

Volume 1 | 2020 Fall | [www.CodeOfficerSafety.org](http://www.CodeOfficerSafety.org)

## *Welcome*

Code Enforcement Officer Safety launched in June 2020 with a mission to centralize the reporting of incidents against Code Enforcement Officers nationwide. With active and accurate reporting, data will grow, and then lead to much needed changes in this profession to protect officers. The website also shares information about statistics, grants, training, recommendations, and so much more. The website is not for profit and just a resource.

The data we collect is dependent on you! If you were threatened, assaulted, or know of a colleague who was involved in an incident; report it on our website in under a minute. Legislative bodies rely on statistics and data to make changes. Until now, no one entity was collecting information specifically on Code Enforcement Officers. Report incidents at [www.CodeOfficerSafety.org](http://www.CodeOfficerSafety.org)

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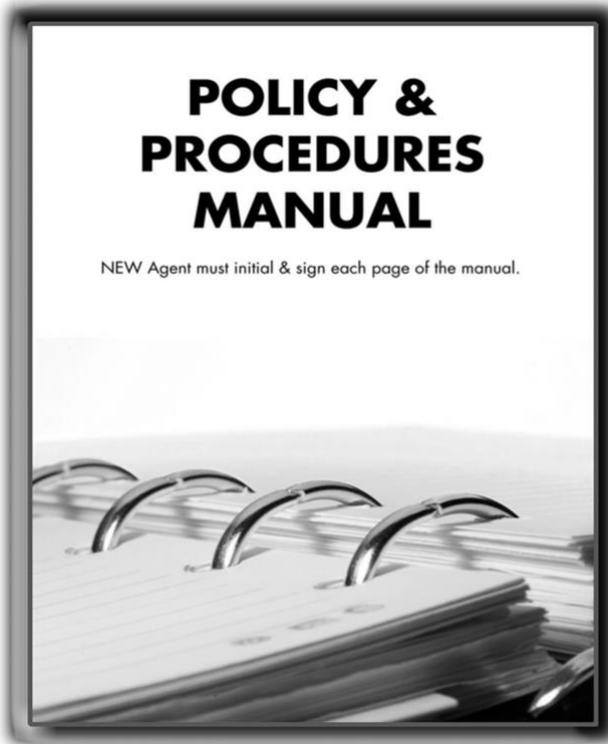
The Tragic Strategy

## Policies & Procedures

By: Justin Edson, CCEA

A policy and procedure manual, or standard operating procedure (SOP) manual, is one of the most critical requirements for a Code Enforcement unit. Besides any human resources or agency policy book, Code Enforcement needs their own manual to address what they do.

Code Enforcement Officer Safety has examples that can be requested on the website. These policies help establish standards within the unit so that all officers are on the same page. The manual also benefits the agency because it holds employees accountable for their actions. When an agency contemplates issuing OC spray to their Code Officers, having a detailed policy manual will help gain their support because it describes how the OC spray must be utilized.



“...both the employees and the agency welcomed it for the same reasons.”

I have created a policy manual across three agencies that I have worked for. In each case, both the employees and the agency welcomed it for the same reasons. By establishing a SOP manual first, it opens the dialogue with decision makers about much needed safety equipment.

To continue on the example about being issued OC spray, a policy manual can help sell this idea. If human resources and your supervisor see a policy in place on how the OC spray would be used, what training is received, and how you would report an incident; it makes an agency more comfortable issuing the equipment.

If your agency does not currently have a SOP manual for your unit, start the discussion. Ask Code Officer Safety for a template and start modifying it to your agency's needs.



# Why Body Armor Is Important

By: Tim Sun

When I started working as a Code Enforcement Officer well over a decade ago, my summer uniform was a pair of shorts, city issued polo shirt, and a pair of sneakers. We were issued a city radio that was on the Public Works channel which was monitored by the police department. Back then, a bullet proof vest was the last thing on my mind, as property owners were generally compliant with our requests for compliance for simple nuisance violations (unkept lawn, outdoor storage and inoperable vehicles). The only time I can remember having a violent encounter was with a homeless individual during a clean-up of a City sidewalk where the individual had stored his belongings. At the time, I had only heard of 2 Code Enforcement Officers being murdered while on duty. Cynthia Volpe from Bakersfield and Rodney Morales from Colorado.

It wasn't until 2017 that I started to see an alarming trend by both City and County municipalities where unprotected and unarmed Code Enforcement Officers were being tasked with traditional police duties such as Drug Enforcement (illegal grows and unpermitted dispensaries), Illegal Gambling (backroom casinos guised as internet cafes) and Homeless Enforcement. Having been employed by a City who expected me to perform those duties, I can tell you first-hand that I was placed in very dangerous situations where my safety and well-being were constantly at risk. The level of danger goes up exponentially when one is tasked with traditional law enforcement duties. Although many municipal codes are adopted as Misdemeanor violations of the law which carries jail time, City and County leaders, as well as some Code Enforcement Officers fail to make the connection that our enforcement actions have serious consequences for the violator. Not only is our safety at risk while on-duty when we face the violator, but our enforcement actions also leave us vulnerable to attack even after hours. Unlike Police Officers, Code Enforcement Officers are not armed and we cannot protect ourselves or our families the same way armed police officers can. As many know, drug grows and dispensaries have ties to the most dangerous criminals and even the cartels. Seven people were recently murdered at an illegal grow in Riverside County, CA.

*Continue on pg. 4*

## Officer Safety Fund

The Code Enforcement Officer Safety Fund was started by Tim Sun in memory of Jill Robinson. Jill was tragically murdered at an inspection in 2018. Since starting this GoFundMe, the fund has used the donated funds to purchase seven (7) body armor vests for Code Enforcement Officers across the country whose agencies would not provide them.

Visit our website or go to GoFundMe to help donate to the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Fund!

[CodeOfficerSafety.org](http://CodeOfficerSafety.org)



REPORT INCIDENTS



REPORT DEATH'S



FIND RESOURCES



REVIEW STATISTICS



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On September 23, 2020, Riverside County Code Enforcement reportedly served 38 marijuana cultivation search warrants. Those Code Enforcement Officers are now identifiable by dangerous criminals and have little to no protection whatsoever.

In 2018, 2 Code Enforcement Officers were specifically targeted and murdered while on duty. Jill Robinson was shot and set on fire by a property owner during an inspection on August 9, 2018 for nuisance violations. Michael Tripus was shot by a property owner inside of his office at City Hall 3 months later. 2 years later, Charles Case was murdered by a property owner on August 20, 2020 after re-posting a sign on a property. Officer Case was shot no less than 3 times, and once in the back as he was running away from the property owner. None of these officers were issued bullet proof vests nor were they issued any type of effective protective equipment to give them a chance to survive such violent attacks. The eldest surviving daughter of Jill Robinson has told me numerous times that had her mother been issued a firearm, that she would be alive today, as she had formal training from a police academy.

Never in my career have I ever seen 3 Code Enforcement Officers specifically targeted and murdered while in the performance of their duties within a short 2-year span. The public is no longer taking enforcement action lightly. They're starting to kill Code Enforcement Officers on a regular basis. The violence against Code Enforcement Officers start from threats (in-person or mail), then progresses to assaults, such as the attempted homicide of a Colton Code Enforcement Officer on March 12, 2014, to now frequent murders.



# OCTOBER

## CODE ENFORCEMENT

### OFFICER

### MONTH



The time has come for jurisdictions across the nation to issue bullet proof vests as standard equipment like they do safety boots. The Code Enforcement Officer Safety Fund that I started in GoFundMe recently purchased a NIJ certified concealable Level3A vest for an officer for only \$409 through BodyArmorDirect. The Patrick Leahy DOJ 50% Reimbursement Grant would make the net cost approximately \$205, which is comparable to the cost of a pair of safety boots.

Lastly, according to the California Occupational Safety Act of 1973, every employer has a legal obligation to provide and maintain a safe and healthful workplace for employees. As of 1991, a written, effective Injury and Illness Prevention Program is required and should include the evaluation and prevention of workplace violence. Failure to do so will result in enforcement action from OSHA. Please see the resources page for a model program.

Now that you're aware of the dangers of the Code Enforcement profession, I urge you to please take the appropriate measures to obtain this absolutely crucial piece of protective equipment for your Code Enforcement Officers.

[Link to model program:](#)

[https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh\\_publications/iipsecurity.html](https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/iipsecurity.html)





## Complacency, Are You At Risk?

By: Kirk Palmer

Complacency is a dirty word in the work environment. Complacency, as defined by Merriam-Webster, means – “self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies.” The key word in that definition is “unawareness.” In the 1970’s Colonel Jeff Cooper, a prolific self-defense writer, came out with a color coded situational awareness chart. The chart as it exists today has five colors to indicate levels of awareness: White, Yellow, Orange, Red and Black. Colonel Cooper stressed that every person should be in condition Yellow at all times. Condition Yellow is the optimal situational awareness level because it allows you to be alert, yet relaxed, focused but not paranoid.

In my twenty-six years of attending Officer Survival training the word “complacent” or “complacency” never fails to come up. Why? Because complacency is probably the single most contributing factor to officer injuries, accidents and death. Have you fallen into the complacency trap?

Let’s look at a common job task: answering a call for service at a residence. When performing this task do you: park in front of the residence or worse yet in the driveway? Haphazardly walk to the front door? Stand directly in front of the door when knocking? Or, do you park a few feet down from the residence making sure your vehicle isn’t blocked in? Do you observe the residence and yard for a few moments looking for hiding places and/or ambush areas before proceeding? Is there evidence of dogs? Is there an obvious escape route you can take if things go south? Is there anything (trees, etc.?) you could use for cover if a firearm comes into play? When approaching the door are you cognizant of not standing directly in front of it? What about equipment? Is your radio/cell phone battery charged? Do you have on your body armor if issued? Do you know the exact address you’re at? What about off duty? Many code enforcement officers have reported being stalked. Do you use the same routine daily? Stop at the same restaurants? Convenience Stores? Take the same route to and from work daily? Textbook complacency.

Ultimately, your safety is up to YOU! Unfortunately, complacency affects all of us at some point in our careers, sometimes sooner than later, but it does manage to influence our routines and performance eventually and we must be aware of it. If we allow complacency to invade our officer safety procedures, we open the door to vulnerability and possible attack. We must always strive to overcome the temptation of becoming complacent and the possible pitfalls it presents. If you want to go home to your family at the end of your shift, then you must dispense with the tendency to fall into the complacency trap.

Challenge yourself daily to avoid complacency and the bad habits it breeds...

**“Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.”**

**Sun Tzu**

# Officer Survival Training: Minimum Standards

By: Scott Kirshner, M.Ed.

All jobs regardless of occupation require certain skillsets to be proficient in the completion of job related tasks. Some skills are routinely used while others are rarely employed. When it comes to officer survival skills, a code enforcement officer may not use these skills often but when survival skills are needed they need to be used immediately, decisively, and effectively. I'm referring to the worst-case scenario of violence where a threat is attempting to seriously injure or kill you. At least thirteen code enforcement professionals have been killed in the line of duty. Each officer was killed with a handgun or shotgun. Against such a lethal threat verbal de-escalation skills and walking away will not be an option. Officer survival training provides a foundation for surviving such violent encounters.

Code enforcement professionals, regardless of job title, must receive initial and ongoing officer survival training. Too often officers receive no safety training. Others attend separate training classes on verbal de-escalation, situational awareness, pepper spray, or a short primer on defensive tactics which is not part of a formalized safety program. Officers who attend these classes walk away with disparate officer safety skills lacking context on the application of such skills during a violent encounter. Officers are then left to figure out when to use what safety skill and under what circumstances is it justified. Making matters worse is that some of the safety instruction received is not congruent with each other. During a violent encounter, the code enforcement officer is experiencing psychological and physiological reactions to stress while simultaneously trying to mentally figure out what action to take as a defensive measure. This is a recipe for disaster that can easily lead to officer injury or death! What's missing is a formal training plan that aggregates the training classes into a cohesive officer safety training program.

## Minimum Training Standards

Code enforcement departments must provide staff written policies and procedures that are specific to use of force, officer safety training requirements, and safety equipment.

At a **minimum** officer survival training must consist of:

- Officer Safety Policies
- Defensive Tactics Academy (40 hours)
- Defensive Tactics Annual Refresher (8 hours)

Departments will say, "we don't have funds for training, safety equipment, instructors, training space, etc." If that is the case then answer this question: *What is the cost of a dead Code Enforcement Officer?*

**“You won’t rise to the  
occasion – you’ll  
default to your level of  
training.”**

**Barrett Tillman**



# The Tragic Strategy of Addressing Safety After a Murder

By: Justin Edson, CCEA

If you did not catch the headlines a month ago, the Code Enforcement profession lost a colleague on August 20<sup>th</sup> to murder. Charles “Chip” Case, 41, was a Code Enforcement Officer for Augusta, Georgia. From preliminary information released publicly, it appears that Chip went to the property owned by Smitty Melton to condemn the structure. There were reports that Code Enforcement had prior cases at this property that also involved Police.

On August 20<sup>th</sup>, Chip went to the front door to post a “condemned” sign. As he returned to his truck, the suspect approached the driver side and shot Chip multiple times. The suspect then fled as bystanders called 911. Chip passed away at the scene before an ambulance could arrive.

“Tamekila Walton, a neighbor, said Thursday that she heard four shotgun blasts and ran with others to find Case, who was still alive but died before an ambulance arrived. There were bullet holes in his truck and casings on the ground, she said.” (Augusta Chronicle, 2020).

A 9-hour manhunt ensued that involved U.S. Marshals, ATF, and local law enforcement. They caught Smitty Melton without incident and he is pending trial. Chip served three tours in Afghanistan and leaves behind a wife of 19 years and four children.

Since the murder, elected officials have agreed to issue body armor to Code Enforcement Officers. But why decide this only after an employee is murdered and not proactively before?

This is why agencies need to assess the risk and implement proactive changes before tragedy hits. When Code Enforcement Officer Jill Robinson was murdered 2 years ago, she too was not equipped with body armor or self-defense tools. Since her murder, no changes have been made at her agency for Code Enforcement Officers.

Body armor is relatively inexpensive and there is a federal grant that can cover up to 50% of the cost. Code Enforcement Officers have been murdered doing their job and going onto properties. This is why we encourage the use of body armor, police radios, and doing a property history check prior to arriving. It is important to park a few houses away and leave as soon as you finish your task. Defensive tools such as tasers and firearms could have helped in several cases with the proper training and certification. There are Code Enforcement Officers and Fire Marshals across several states that are armed such as Texas, Georgia, California, West Virginia, and Michigan.

In memory of the Code Enforcement Officers who went into their community to help serve them and never returned home. Chip has a GoFundMe that is active and raising funds for his wife and children.

## In Memory

From October to December we remember and honor those who have died serving their communities.

**November 13<sup>th</sup> – RODNEY MORALES**

(12<sup>th</sup> anniversary)

**November 27<sup>th</sup> – MICHAEL TRIPUS**

(2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary)

**December 24<sup>th</sup> – DON JUENEMANN**

(23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary)



# Our Contributors

## **Justin Edson, CCEA**

Justin Edson founded CodeOfficerSafety.org and is currently a Code Enforcement & Building Manager who has over 14 years in law enforcement. He is a Certified Code Enforcement Administrator and POST Field Training Officer. Justin has experience with enforcement of bars, massage parlors, marijuana grows, dispensaries, homeless camps, parking enforcement, park ranger duties, and general nuisance cases. As a manager, he understands the importance of communication and teamwork with elected officials and other departments to improve officer safety.

## **Scott Kirshner, M.Ed.**

Scott Kirshner, M.Ed. has been a Parole Administrator, Supervisory Probation Officer, and a Corrections Officer. He has extensive experience as an officer survival trainer and has been a lead defensive tactics instructor, firearms instructor, and use of force instructor. He is the author of **Officer Survival for Code Enforcement Officers** which is available on Amazon.com. Mr. Kirshner is the owner and Lead Instructor of Dedicated Threat Solutions, LLC. The author can be reached at: [info@dedicatedthreatsolutions.com](mailto:info@dedicatedthreatsolutions.com) or to learn more visit: [www.dedicatedthreatsolutions.com](http://www.dedicatedthreatsolutions.com)

## **Tim Sun, CCEO**

Tim Sun is currently a Certified Code Enforcement Officer with well over a decade of experience in both code and traditional law enforcement. In addition to traditional code enforcement, he has extensive experience with marijuana grows, dispensaries, gambling establishments and homeless enforcement. Tim is also a seated board member with the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers (CACEO) where he is the Chairman of the Officer Safety Committee and an academy instructor. Tim is passionate about officer safety and takes great pride in having created the first-ever CACEO hands-on officer safety self-defense class and also started the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Fund (GoFundMe) where he provides bullet proof vests for officers in need.

## **Kirk Palmer**

Kirk L. Palmer is a Code Enforcement Officer with twenty-six years of law enforcement experience. Officer Palmer specializes in officer safety, extremist groups and gangs. Officer Palmer holds a Master's Level Certificate from the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement Officials, as well as an Advanced Law Enforcement Certification from the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council. He is a certified Field Training Officer through the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council as well. Officer Palmer takes officer safety very seriously and enjoys teaching for the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement Officials.

