

Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation



OFFICER SAFETY NEWSLETTER



Welcome

Fall 2022 - October is officially Code Enforcement Officer Appreciation Month! Throughout the month we will highlight different aspects of the profession. Use **#CEOAM22** this October to highlight photos of Code Enforcement helping their communities! Our Board and Regional Representatives continue to participate and booth at conferences. We look forward to seeing you all at the upcoming AACE and CACEO conferences in a few weeks. The Foundation has now donated over \$15,000 in body armor to 24 individuals across the country!

Our Mission Statement:

"The Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation exists to promote best practices for the safety of Code Enforcement Officers throughout the United States; to provide a resource for officers; report incidents; provide up-to-date training and to encourage a high standard of professionalism within our chosen profession."

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October is Code Enforcement Appreciation Month



As designated by the American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE), October is Code Enforcement Officer Appreciation Month. We hope that all of your communities and colleagues celebrate and appreciate what you do every day of the year to improve neighborhoods and keep people safe. Let us also remember the 33 known Code Officials we have lost over the years either to murder or health related issues. We appreciate you!





Nominations end October 14th

In an effort to highlight and honor people and organizations across the country that have made changes to improve safety, the Foundation developed three new annual awards to be given in November.

Agencies can nominate themselves for the first ever CEOSF Jill Robinson Award if they feel that their agency has taken steps to improve inspector safety through training, equipment, and policies. The agency must be a public sector government agency that employs code inspectors (i.e. Building, Fire, Code Enforcement, Health, Housing, etc.). To learn more and nominate, please visit: <https://www.codeofficersafety.org/awards>

The Professional Organization and Regional Representative of the Year will be selected by the Board of Directors.

CEOSF at the Colorado Quarterly Training

Thank you to the Colorado Association of Code Enforcement Officers (CACEO) for allowing CEOSF to speak and share resources at the quarterly training! CEOSF Regional Representative Layne Chamberlain spoke to the group and provided some swag and handouts. We enjoy working with our partners!



CEOSF at the ICC Annual Conference

by Scott Kirshner, M.Ed., COSCI, INCI, SAS-AP®

It was an honor to present on “Safety and Violence Mitigation Strategies” at the ICC Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. As the creator of the Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) training and author of Officer Survival for Code Enforcement Officers, ICC invited me to share my expertise on the topic of safety. This training was groundbreaking because it was the first time the topic of violence mitigation was presented at an ICC conference.

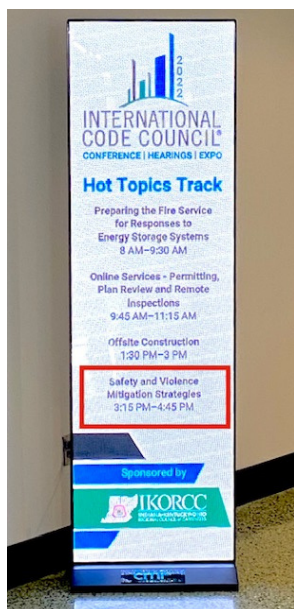
Having the privilege of representing the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation at the conference was significant for two very important reasons:

1. It acknowledges that staff safety is a recognized concern for all code professionals. The days of telling staff to “just walk away” is coming to an end. It is becoming recognized, accepted, and encouraged that code professionals regardless of their job title, department name, and jurisdiction need access to quality safety training from qualified instructors.

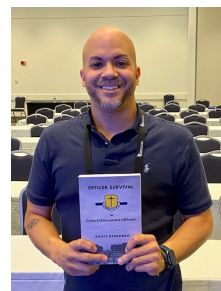
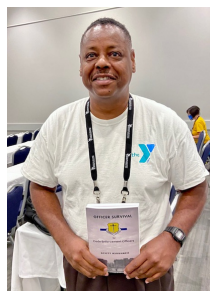
2. It affirms the mission of the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation. The Foundation continues to exhibit leadership and advocacy on staff safety. And though the Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) training program the Foundation has set the standard on code official safety training.

During the conference I had the pleasure of speaking with many ICC and agency leaders about staff safety and the need for quality training. The feedback was resoundingly clear that staff safety is a priority. This is exactly why the Code Official Safety Specialist training program was originally created.

The ICC Annual Conference was a major step for advocating and improving staff safety for all code professionals. And this is just the beginning...



Challenge coins, books, and swag



#14: Earl Bowman

by **Scott Kirshner, M.Ed., COSCI, INCI, SAS-AP®**

During my presentation on “Safety and Violence Mitigation Strategies” at the ICC Annual Conference, I began with a story from 2005 about a probation officer I worked with who was shot and paralyzed in the line of duty. At the time I was an officer survival instructor with the department. I started with this story because it was relevant to the topic of my presentation. Even though the shooting was 17 years ago I remember it like it was yesterday. I remember the phone calls, initial reports of the incident, and sitting at the hospital for hours with about 150 other officers waiting for updates that were slow to come. Seventeen years later as I was telling the story it is still visceral.

As I continued the presentation I have a slide with the names of 22 code professionals who have been killed in the line of duty by violence. Number 14 on the list is Earl Bowman, 44, who was murdered on July 3, 2002. In attendance at the conference was James Straws, a Building Commissioner in Indiana. James raises his hand during the presentation and says, “I was friends with number 14, Earl Bowman” and proceeds to talk about Earl. It is a very rare occurrence that a course attendee personally knows a code professional who was killed in the line of duty. James provided insight about Earl. It was extremely touching and powerful. As I listened to James talk about Earl I could see in his eyes and hear in his voice that the story is still visceral 20 years. It speaks to the impact Earl had on others. It is a stark reminder that Earl Bowman is so much more than “number 14” on a list. He was a human that was loved, a friend, a co-worker, and so much more.

This interaction during class and learning about Earl is what fuels my passion and drive to teach on the topic of officer survival. Behind every name on the list of 22 code professionals is a story of a human whose life was taken too soon. None of those code professionals woke up in the morning with the knowledge that it would be their last day. But for their loved ones, family, and friends they must endure and go on with their lives. They must find out how to navigate the future despite such insurmountable loss and grief. Every name on the list, all 22 of them, deserves to be honored and remembered. My goal as an officer survival instructor is that the list ends at 22 names. No more names.

During class I awarded James a scholarship to the Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) training program donated by the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation. James was also provided an autographed copy of my book “Officer Survival for Code Enforcement Officers” as well as challenge coins from the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation and Dedicated Threat Solutions. But the truth is that James telling us about Earl was priceless.

Thank you James for telling Earl’s story. Never stop talking about Earl. We must continue to tell the stories of each name of the list. We have an obligation to keep their memory alive.

Rest easy Earl. We remember you!



James Straws and Shanay Gregory were both awarded COSS scholarships by CEOSF.

1st Amendment Auditors - Patriots or Provocateurs? (Pt. 3)

by Kirk Palmer, Master Code Officer (GA), COSCI, COSS

In our last two issues, I have discussed what a 1st Amendment Audit is, and who the 1st Amendment Auditors are, plus their motivations for doing what they do. In this edition, I will discuss the most common case law referenced by 1st Amendment Auditors during an encounter...

Inevitably, in 90 % of all 1st Amendment Audits, the auditors reference *Smith v. City of Cumming*, 212 F.3d 1332, 1333 (11th Cir. 2000), when confronted by government agents. Now, for a little background on this case, as it stems from the county seat of my current jurisdiction. In 1997, James and Barbara Smith filed a 42 U.S.C. 1983 lawsuit against the City of Cumming and its Police Chief, Earl Singletary, (later amending the complaint and naming Police Chief Ralph “Buck” Jones as a defendant) alleging Cumming Police had “harassed the Smiths”, including a claim that Mr. Smith had been prevented from videotaping police actions, in violation of Smith’s First Amendment rights.

The court agreed with the Smiths, in that: “[They] had a First Amendment right to photograph and/or videotape police conduct subject to reasonable time, manner and place restrictions.” Adding “the First Amendment protects the right to gather information about what public officials do on public property, and specifically, a right to record matters of public interest.” 1st Amendment Auditors love citing this case because the court affirmed that they have a right to “gather information about what public officials do on public property”; however, many times they fail to consider the other half of the opinion: **“reasonable time, manner and place restrictions.”** In other words: they cannot interfere with, or obstruct police officials, when said officials are performing official duties. An example would be running into an active crime scene that has been cordoned off, to videotape what’s going on. The court did not find that the Cumming Police Department’s actions violated the Smiths First Amendment rights, and the Smiths received no compensatory or punitive damages as a result.

Takeaways from *Smith vs. City of Cumming* – the “Strict Scrutiny Standard” which mandates that [Government] restrictions must be:

- Imposed without reference to the content of the speech;
- Narrowly tailored to serve a significant government interest; and
- Leave open ample alternative channels for communication of the information.



In layman’s terms: under a strict scrutiny analysis, a law, or any action by a government official, that restricts freedom of speech must achieve a compelling government interest and be narrowly tailored to that interest or be the least speech-restrictive means available to the government.

The following guidelines will help you to keep an encounter with 1st Amendment Auditors brief and friendly, rather than turning into a major lawsuit:

- Maintain a professional demeanor (check your ego at the door!);
- Know the law;
- Do not use profanity even if it’s used towards you;
- Remind the 1st Amendment Auditors they are free to record from any public place; however, they cannot record or come into any areas that are posted as “restricted” or “for employees only.”

Until next time, stay alert and don’t get hurt.

About the Author

Kirk Palmer, COSCI is a Master Code Officer (GA) with 26 years of public safety experience. He is currently the Code Compliance Supervisor for Forsyth County, Georgia. In addition, he is an Officer Safety Instructor for the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement Officials (GACE) specializing in Extremist Groups and a CEOSF Officer Safety Certified Instructor (COSCI).

Upcoming Events CEOSF Will Be At



Unknown Risk: Tactical Considerations for the Front Door & Beyond

by Scott Kirshner, M.Ed., COSCI, INCI, SAS-AP®

“The front door is a threshold that separates the outside from inside and the known from the unknown. No one knows the evil intentions that may await on the other side of a simple and familiar door.”

In the course of your life you have walked through countless front doors to enter homes and businesses. Oftentimes little thought is given regarding this process because you are entering a welcoming environment. When entering the home of a good friend you are often there to socialize and enjoy the bonds of friendship. As you enter your favorite restaurant you receive a dopamine rush as you think about your favorite dish that is soon to be consumed. There is typically a positive experience associated with the location. Of course this is not always the case as no one enjoys going to the Department of Motor Vehicle or a doctor's office for an unpleasant procedure. Yet, even in these situations one does not anticipate danger lurking.




As a code professional you have walked through many front doors without incident. But familiarity breeds complacency and routine is an insidious trainer that leads to safety vulnerabilities. The grip of complacency provides a comforting, but dangerous, false sense of security. Your internal dialogue rationalizes all the faulty assumptions used to reinforce your assumed safety while blinding you to the possibility of actual danger. Such denial is a thin facade that never serves you well. This truth becomes undeniably self-evident the second you are confronted by violence. It is at that moment you experience the reality and consequences of: *There can be life or death in the time-sensitive space between stimulus and response.*

Managing Risk

How you view safety directly impacts your approach to contacts. If safety is not a priority it is easy to be complacent because you have convinced yourself that the job is safe. Ignoring risk is often used as a protective mechanism to feel safer. For example, you are making contact at a residence with a front yard that has an excessive overgrowth of weeds. You have dealt with this type of issue numerous times during your career and nothing bad has happened when contact was made with the homeowner. Now, as you casually walk to the front door your internal dialogue says this is no big deal and it's just weeds that need to be trimmed. You knock on the door and the homeowner answers. You politely explain the issue about the weeds in the front yard to the homeowner and explain the process to become compliant. As you are talking the homeowner steps outside and shuts the front door. He positions himself between you and the door which is recessed. As you are talking the owner is looking at his yard and then turns back to you and becomes explosively irate and begins to scream at you. Unfortunately you are now positioned between the locked front door and the homeowner who is very angry with you. The homeowner is blocking your avenue of escape.

Whether you are a code enforcement officer, neighborhood preservation specialist, building official, fire inspector, or a myriad of other enforcement related job titles you are also a risk manager. Effectively managing your risk exposure minimizes the potential for confrontation and violence. A door is just a door. But you never know the risk located on the other side of the door. Therefore, you must use safety strategies on every contact. Embrace your role as a “risk manager” because if you fail to manage your risk then someone else will! The previous example occurs when your “Risk Thermometer” is turned off.

You entered a situation that you have dealt with numerous times in the past without incident and assumed this contact would also go without incident. The reality is that every encounter has the potential for danger. How you view risk directly impacts your safety. Job titles, department names, and the jurisdiction you work offers no protective value against a dedicated threat who is determined to cause harm.

	<p>If you conclude that a contact is high-risk you should either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ not make the contact [document reason] ⇒ immediately leave if you are on scene ⇒ go with a partner who is safety-oriented ⇒ utilize police as backup
	<p>Unless you have prior information determining that the contact is high-risk, treat each contact as unknown-risk. Use the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Mindset: <i>Every Day; Every Inspection</i> ⇒ Situational Awareness ⇒ SPAR Safety Model [See previous newsletter]
	<p>Assuming that a contact is low-risk can result in a failure to use proper safety procedures. This can lead to the complacency trap.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Routine has led to Complacency ⇒ Safety is not a priority ⇒ When a safety incident occurs, it will often be referred to as a “routine” contact

Code enforcement professionals should view contacts as “unknown risk” encounters. It is important to acknowledge this reality otherwise complacency and faulty assumptions will creep into your thought process. Before you know it you are making excuses and rationalizing why this is just another contact pertaining to overgrown weeds, junk in the front yard, hoarding, stagnant pool water, etc. This is why I created and advocate the mantra: Every Day; Every Inspection. It is a way to mentally acknowledge the potential for danger and reinforce a safety mindset.

November 2008, Colorado – [Code Enforcement Officer Rodney Morales](#) was shot in the chest and killed shortly after entering an apartment building. The media referred to this incident as a “routine” contact. The murderer of CEO Morales was 22 years old and was sentenced to life without parole.

August 2018, Utah – [Code Enforcement Officer Jill Robinson](#) was shot and killed shortly after exiting her work vehicle to meet with a property owner regarding nuisance violations. The murderer of CEO Robinson was sentenced to life without parole.

July 2021, Texas – [Fort Worth SWAT](#) arrested a man who fired at code enforcement, police, and professional lawn mowers after a standoff that lasted hours. Upon arrival to serve the homeowner with a violation, police knocked several times on the door but no one answered. The city hired a mowing company who began caring for the lawn when the homeowner opened fire and began shooting.

October 2021, Texas – An [Austin SWAT](#) officer shot and killed a man who shot at code enforcement personnel. Police and code enforcement officers arrived at the home to serve a nuisance abatement search warrant for overgrown grass. The property owner had previously received notices for violations.



Image from body worn camera of an Austin SWAT officer neutralizing the shooter

Approach to the Front Door

Safety is a process that begins well before you initiate contact with the subject of your focus and concludes when you are safely away from the contact. While not covered in this article safety preparations begin prior to you leaving the office. The context of our starting point is you arrived on location, parked in a tactically sound manner, and have just exited your vehicle.

After exiting your vehicle remember it is not a race to the front door. Do not become so focused on the contact or task that brought you to the location that you fail to use proper safety procedures. Stop or slow down so you can gather relevant information. Use your senses of vision, hearing, and smell to identify threats or hazards. Utilize situational awareness to gather relevant information to make safety decisions. Your objectives include identifying:

- a minimum of two escape routes should an exigent exit on foot be necessary
- the location of cover/concealment
- people - include a visual scan of their hands to see if they possess a weapon
- animals – are they contained or unrestrained
- layout and condition of the yard and home to include potential hazards
- signage - security company signs, no trespassing, beware of dog, no soliciting, etc.
- security cameras
- location of the front door
- position of the door entryway, i.e., recessed, elevated, stairs, gate, porch, railing, etc.
- if the door has windows
- if there is a screen door or security door
- if there is a door camera such as Ring, Blink, Nest, etc. and if the door has a peephole
- does the door have an excessive amount of locks
- are their windows beside the door
- are windows clear, tinted, covered, open, closed, broken, have security bars, etc.

If you currently do not use a systematic approach you will have to talk yourself through the process. Your internal dialogue might be: Where are escape routes? Where is cover/concealment located? Is anyone in the area and if so look at their hands? Continue to mentally process through the list and observe the environment to obtain relevant information. Keep practicing until this process is automatic. Once your proficiency increases you will notice that it does not take much time to complete. You will also notice a significant improvement in your situational awareness skills.



Read the Environment:

- Recessed door
- Signage – “Security Notice”
- Homeowner blocking entry
- Annoyed facial expression
- Body language (arms crossed)
- Positioning next to “ Security Sign”
- Hands not visible
 - Does he have a weapon in his hand?

Your ability to observe and read this situation provides information you need to make a safe decision on how to proceed.

The goal is to gather meaningful information to make sound safety decisions. This is what I refer to as “applied situational awareness.” Identifying potential danger is not enough as you must understand the relevance of your observations and then have the ability to make decisions to improve your safety. For example, you know the area you work and have a general sense of what is normal. Imagine going to a home in a neighborhood and observe the following:

- Two “No Trespassing” signs prominently posted in the front yard
- Two “Beware of Dog” signs
- A “No Soliciting” sign
- A commercial security sign stating “Home is protected by ACME Security System”
- Excessive security camera’s on the outside of the home
- Three security locks on the front door
- A robust security door
- A doorbell camera
- A welcome mat that says “Go Away”
- Two front bedroom windows with security bars and dark tinted windows

In your experience this as an excessive amount of security and not very welcoming. Now, what do you do with this information? Do you proceed with the contact? Do you leave and if so what is the rationale for leaving? It is worthwhile to question why this particular home has such an excessive amount of security compared to your experience with other homes you have contacted. Potential reasons may include:

- The homeowner was a victim of violence in the past and feels unsafe
- The home may have been burglarized on multiple occasions
- The homeowner may be caring for a parent with dementia or a special needs child who tries to leave the house placing them in jeopardy
- The homeowner is engaging in illegal activity selling counterfeit merchandise
- The homeowner sexually exploits minors and sells photos/videos on the dark web
- The house is used for human trafficking
- The house is a cartel stash house for drugs, weapons, and money
- The house is used to extort money from kidnapped victims

Each of the above listed events has occurred. The question is: If you are the code official looking to make contact with this homeowner what are you going to do? The answer is very simple. There is no contact worth jeopardizing your life. Do not knock on that door. Leave the location, document why you left, and develop a plan on how to proceed. In this instance it would make sense to consult with the local police department. Explain to the police why you were at the residence, what you saw that is concerning based on your experience, and that you did not feel safe making contact. The police can then conduct a records check. It is possible that the police records check does not reveal any information indicative of criminal activity. This does not mean that the home is a safe environment. If a decision is made to proceed with contacting the homeowner have a police officer go with you for safety reasons. You may find that the reason for all the security is legitimate or you might stumble across a human trafficking ring.

Photo Documentation

If photographs are needed for documentation or evidence, attempt to obtain the photos prior to any contact with the resident. Many people do not like having photos of their property taken and this can lead to potential conflict that escalates. Take photos as fast as you can to obtain the needed images. While taking photos do not become so focused that you lose situational awareness. Your safety is more important than a photograph!

Code enforcement officer slain

Austin American-Statesman, 14 Jun 2005

An East Texas code enforcement officer was shot to death Monday as he conducted a routine check of a property that failed to meet code.

Michael "Pee Wee" Walker, 44, was killed as he followed upon a December complaint about trash in a residence's yard, Assistant City Manager Mike Dunn said. The deadline for cleaning up the property was Friday.

As Walker took pictures of the property, he was confronted by the property owner and his son, Commerce Police Chief Kerry Crews said. The son got a pistol from the house and shot Walker, police said in a release.

Witnesses told police that at least six shots were fired.

The suspect was arrested, but police withheld his name pending arraignment.

"The Ward family was cited numerous times for failing to comply with the City of Commerce's housing and zoning codes. Michael Walker, a City of Commerce Code Enforcement Officer, went to the Ward home to record a continuing violation for unsheltered storage on June 13, 2005. Wearing his City of Commerce work shirt and driving a marked truck, Walker approached the residence unarmed and carrying only his digital camera. When Walker arrived, Ward was washing his car in the driveway.

After Walker walked the perimeter of the property taking pictures, Walker and Ward began to argue. Ward's father came outside and attempted to calm the men down. Ward then sprayed Walker with water from the hose that he was using to wash his car. Walker then used his cell phone to call his office to request officer assistance. When Ward's father noticed that Ward was no longer outside, he advised Walker that it might be "best if he left the property." Ward's father then ran to look for Ward, believing that Ward kept a gun in his room. Ward's father did not warn Walker about this. Walker remained near the property waiting in the back of his truck for officer assistance to arrive.

Before Ward's father could intervene, Ward ran out of the house toward Walker and fired a .45 caliber pistol at him. Despite Walker's attempts to escape, Ward shot Walker several times. After Walker fell, Ward shot him again at close range. Walker sustained nine gunshot wounds in total and died."

<https://cases.justia.com/federal/appellate-courts/ca5/14-70015/14-70015-2015-01-22.pdf?ts=1422018042>

Adam Ward, 33, was executed in the state of Texas by lethal injection on March 22, 2016, for the homicide of Code Enforcement Officer Michael Walker.

The "Front Door"

Once you exit your vehicle have the mindset that you are being video recorded and observed by the person you intend to contact. This is an effective strategy that reminds you to use proper safety tactics, use situational awareness, and helps to avoid complacency. Prior to ringing a doorbell or knocking on the door assume that someone is home and that they know you are on the property.

Considerations at the Front Door

If you arrive at the front door and it is partially or fully open do NOT enter. There is the possibility that it is a trap to get you to enter, a set up for an ambush attack, or there is a crime in progress. It could also be something as simple as a child didn't shut the door or the homeowner was carrying in groceries and had her hands full so the door did not get shut. Because you do not know the reason that the door is open remember to slow down, observe, listen and make a decision on how to proceed based upon your assessment. Remember: Always choose safety! Any time you determine that a situation is not safe or you are unable to determine if it is safe then your immediate priority is leave. Never hesitate to call the police to conduct a welfare check.

If the front door is closed listen for 15-20 seconds prior to knocking on the door or ringing the doorbell to hear anything inside the residence such as arguing or fighting.



The last thing you want to do is get in the middle of a domestic dispute as these can be very volatile and dangerous encounters. If there is loud arguing or fighting immediately leave and notify the police to conduct a welfare check.




If after listening for 15-20 seconds you determine that proceeding is appropriate then either knock on the door or ring the doorbell. Then immediately back away from the door and position yourself in the safest location which is dependent on the layout of the home. Do NOT stand directly in front of the door if possible and instead attempt to position yourself to the side of the door but preferable not in front of a window.

Law enforcement officers have been shot at, injured, and killed in the line of duty by standing directly in front of a door where the homeowner shot through the door. In some cases the homeowner had a video doorbell camera and knew exactly where the officer was standing when the homeowner shot through the door killing the officer. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that you as a code official can be mistaken as a police officer, federal agent, or even a criminal trying to break into the home where the resident shoots through the door. This is also why you want to avoid standing in front of a window. If violence erupts you are prepared because you already identified escape routes, cover and concealment, etc. after you exited your vehicle.

You never know who is on the other side of the door or what is going on in that person's life that may cause him to act out. The homeowner may have an arrest warrant, recently lost his job, suffers from mental illness that is not being treated, is abusing drugs/alcohol, is going through a divorce/child custody, a friend committed suicide, was diagnosed with a terminal illness, etc. This is what is meant by approaching all contacts with the mindset it is always an "unknown risk" because there are more unknowns than knowns about the person you contact. Even if the person you are contacting poses no threat and is compliant there may be other individuals at the residence who will not be compliant. There is also the possibility that someone will arrive at the house such as a friend or relative of the homeowner who is not compliant.

When the Door is Answered

When the front door is answered by the homeowner continue to use your senses to collect relevant information that impacts your safety. The amount of information you are able to visually obtain is dependent on how wide the door is open.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Observe the hands for weapons, face for expressions, and body language ⇒ Scan past the individual at the door and look into the house noting if anyone else is home, layout, lighting conditions, weapons, and other hazards ⇒ Animals – what type (dog, cat, exotic) and how many <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If entering the home consider requesting that animals be secured ○ If the interior is dark ask for lights to be turned on prior to entering ○ If you observe a weapon, consider not entering
	<p>Listen for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Barking dogs and other animals ⇒ Talking to indicate others are in the home ⇒ Any sound that is not normal and indicates a potential safety risk ⇒ Loud music or television - request volume be lowered prior to entry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the homeowner refuses to lower the volume, then consider not entering
	<p>Smell for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Natural gas [DO NOT USE ELECTRONICS – PHONE, RADIO] ⇒ Chemicals which may indicate a methamphetamine lab ⇒ Odors that indicate a potential health risk

Entering through the Doorway

If the decision is made to enter into the home it is important to control the front door as you enter. This will help prevent someone from slamming the door into you or locking the door once you are in the home. As you enter use your foot that is closest to the door as a door stop in case someone tries to slam the door into you. Use your hand that is closest to the door to gently push it open all the way to the door stop. This lets you know if a person is hiding behind the door. Once you pass the threshold of the door immediately look behind the door for a weapon such as a rifle, baseball bat, or large stick. Then examine the type of locks on the door. Do not enter if you are alone and the front door has a double cylinder deadbolt that requires a key to unlock the door from the inside. If the deadbolt were to be locked you would not be able to escape through the front door. This applies to a security door as well.

Inside the Residence



- ⇒ Have an emergency exit strategy
- ⇒ Observe body language of homeowner and others in the residence
- ⇒ Look for locks on bedroom doors that can only be opened and locked from outside the bedroom. If this is observed do NOT enter the bedroom and initiate an immediate exit strategy
- ⇒ Observe for weapons and other hazards
- ⇒ Animals – If necessary, have animals secured
- ⇒ If the interior is dark ask that lights be turned on. [Carry a bright LED flashlight]



- Listen for:
- ⇒ Barking dogs and other animals in a bedroom or backyard
 - ⇒ Talking to indicate others are in the home
 - ⇒ Any sound that is not normal and indicates a potential safety risk
 - ⇒ Request loud music/television be turned off or the volume lowered
 - If the homeowner refuses to lower the volume, then leave



- Smell for:
- ⇒ Natural gas [DO NOT USE ELECTRONICS – PHONE, RADIO]
 - ⇒ Chemicals which may indicate a methamphetamine lab
 - ⇒ Odors that indicate a potential health risk

Once inside the residence you are at a disadvantage as:

- the homeowner is more familiar with the layout
- the homeowner knows where weapons are located
- you are in a confined space that limits your mobility
- you might see something that the homeowner did not want you to see which places you in jeopardy
- you become so focused on your task that you lose situational awareness

Inside the home have the homeowner walk in front of you to necessary locations. This allows you to:

- maintain visual contact
- observe body language
- observe pre-incident indicators of violence
- observe for a concealed weapon which is typically located in the waist area
- create distance if you feel your safety is in jeopardy

Use caution when walking past open doors. As you approach the open door visually scan inside the room and position yourself as far from the door opening as possible. If you are walking down a hallway you typically won't have much space between the hallway wall and the open door. If the home has multiple levels and you walk past stairs look up or down the stairs depending on your location to observe for possible threats, weapons, and the layout. If you enter a backyard remember to stop or slow down. Take a few seconds to observe the yard to include layout and hazards. If there is a pool be cognizant of your position and the location of the homeowner so you do not get pushed into the pool. Remember to always have a safety strategy for a rapid exit/escape even if it means throwing a chair through a window to create an opening.

Conclusion

This article covers rudimentary topics that can improve your safety when approaching and entering a front door. Implement the information when making contacts. Your mindset, situational awareness, and safety will benefit. It's easy to dismiss or minimize the importance of using proper safety procedures especially when you have knocked on hundreds of doors without incident. Do not allow routine to lead to complacency as it only takes one critical incident to change everything. It's all good until it isn't. A door is just a door until opened by an evil person who dispenses violence on you. At that point the door becomes a gateway to hell.

For in-depth training on safety, join hundreds of your peers who have already completed the **Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) ON-DEMAND training**.

Register at: https://www.codeofficersafety.org/training_

About the Author

Scott Kirshner, M.Ed., COSCI, INCI, SAS-AP® 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. Mr. Kirshner is the owner and Lead Instructor of Dedicated Threat Solutions, LLC. He can be reached at: info@dedicatedthreatsolutions.com

The Intelligence Cycle for Code Enforcement Officers

by Dean Phaneuf, COSCI, CCEA, COSS, SAS-AP

Nope. The intelligence cycle is not the same thing as a smart looking bike. It's a term used to describe the process of gathering, analyzing, and sharing actionable information. The notion of "intelligence" has often been the subject of jest, joking that "military intelligence" or "criminal intelligence" are oxymorons, or mutually exclusive terms. Business intelligence, also known as competitive intelligence, is a maturing industry, supporting strategic decision-making for industry executives. How then, is intelligence relevant to the code official? The process of code enforcement, and the skill subset of officer safety may both be more effective when intentionally driven by an intelligence cycle.

Gathering information can occur in many ways. A primary source is contributed or submitted information. This is based upon what's referred to as our organization's "intelligence requirements," or pieces of information that are required for us to be effective in achieving our mission. Examples might include written, emailed, or web form complaints, photographs, videos, and case updates. Other types of information are sought out from "open sources," which may include the Internet, public records, and title services. These sources are available to anyone with the knowledge that they exist, and the ability to extract the information desired. Of particular interest may be proprietary or restricted information. Dependent upon jurisdiction, this may include government and commercial databases, criminal offender record information (CORI), motor vehicle and driver records, and the like.

Analyzing information serves to determine its reliability, relevance, and application. Without at least minimal analysis, much (if not most) information tends to be a distraction, rather than actionable. Think for a moment of your email inbox on Monday morning. What's one of your first actions? Analysis...who is the sender, what is the subject line, are referenced addresses within your jurisdiction? When was the email sent, and can you determine the "ask" - why they're even contacting you? Deeper dives into analysis may include verifying or authenticating the information received, by querying official agency records, open-source searches (think Google), examining maps, or inquiring of colleagues. Each piece of information may have special importance to your investigation. Your inability to verify one or more elements may be a safety red flag, reduce your priority of response, lead to other important questions, or drive follow-up contacts and inquiries.

Even if you're a one-person shop, sharing information is an important part of your role as a code official, inspector, or investigator. We're all charged with gaining compliance with requirements. To accomplish that duty, the information we've gathered and analyzed must be disseminated (shared) in a meaningful way...and must meet the requirements of the party that it's being provided to. Our intelligence product may drive an inspection assignment for a colleague, a plan review for building or zoning officials, legal notice to a property owner, legal action for a prosecutor, scope of work for a contractor, or budget justification for an administrator...just to name a few. One of the keys to effective communication (and action) is knowing your audience...or customer, if you will. Providing unvetted or irrelevant information to any of your "customers" may cost you your credibility, create liability, or minimally, reduce the speed and quality of any resulting transaction.



It's essential to provide accurate, relevant info tailored to each unique end user, to provide understanding, gain cooperation, build your reputation, and to obtain good results. This leads into another caveat...just like in the clandestine services, it's important to protect "sources and methods" to the extent allowed by law. Consult with your agency legal advisor, but many jurisdictions have specific statutes that allow the withholding of informant identifying information. A complainant is just that, an informant. While no one should guarantee absolute anonymity, it's generally understood that disclosing informant identities tends to have a chilling effect on the willingness of individuals to disclose information in the public interest. A best practice, dependent upon your jurisdiction, may be to advise that a complainant's identity will not be released, except by court order. Become familiar with the requirements of public records or "sunshine" statutes governing your jurisdiction. Also be aware that should your investigation literally become a "federal case," different rules may apply. As constitutional rights may become a litigated issue, it's not unheard of for municipalities to find themselves as defendants in federal court.



Just as "intelligence" is critical to successful case work, it is also critical to officer safety while performing your duties as a code official. Information regarding threats, must be treated in a consistent, logical, and productive manner to maximize the safety of ourselves and our colleagues. Take some time to develop best practices for your agency, and work with partner agencies to create a framework that accommodates everyone's requirements.

Think of the information that you gather, analyze, and share as a product, and the different users of this information as your customers. Add value to your product in how you process, protect, and report the information that you receive. It's the intelligent thing to do...and the hallmark of a professional.

Consciously implementing the intelligence cycle is a natural extension of situational awareness. Once information is received – or perceived – it must be thoughtfully analyzed, shared, and appropriately acted upon to effectively enhance officer safety.



About the Author

Dean Phaneuf, COSCI has over 42 years experience in law enforcement and currently serves as a Code Enforcement Manager in California. Dean was a Police Sergeant, Bomb Squad Commander, SWAT Member, and a Detective. He also served as a Special Deputy U.S. Marshal assigned to a FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. He is an AACE Certified Code Enforcement Administrator, CACEO Certified Code Enforcement Officer, and has numerous trainings related to explosives, including the FBI Hazardous Devices School.

Recent Incidents

July 29th (GA) - I work as Code Enforcement Manager. We have a business owner that installed a banner with a permit. However, when the permit expired, she refused to take it down. She received a Notice of Violation. She then accused my officer of being racist. We were instructed by the city to give a 30 day extension. We went to the location to issue the paperwork and have her sign it acknowledging the deadline. I went as a witness. Because we were not sure of her response, we were instructed to send a copy to her home. She did sign it. A few days later she called the office and demanded that I stop sending mail to her home. She said work was work and home was separate. I explained the process but she didn't care. She then installed an animated sign that was not allowed. We went to serve her with a violation and a copy of the sign ordinance. After discussing it, she refused to sign and said to cite her. When the citation was prepared we attempted to serve her inside the business as that was where she had went. She refused to come out and sign the paperwork. The citation was sent certified in the mail. About 7 days later, I received a certified letter to my home from the business owner. Essentially saying that work was work and home was different, how did this feel to get mail at your home? She signed it and it had her business information on the letter. I live in a different county and have only been on the job for about 8 weeks. When I got to work the next day, I found that my officer had received a letter to her home as well. Her home is not even in her name, only her husband. The business owner made a deliberate effort to track down our home addresses to send us this threat. I view it as a threat because she made it clear I know where you live. We notified the director and the city solicitor along with copies of the letters. At this time, the issue is still processing through the system.

July 27th (FL) - A City Code Compliance Officer operating a marked vehicle near city hall was waved on by another driver at a multiple-way stop intersection. As the Code Compliance Officer proceeded, the driver that had waved her to proceed passed the code compliance vehicle and swerved in front of her slamming on the brakes several times. The male driver in the other vehicle was later identified as a repeat violator in an upcoming case. A police report was filed. Staff was notified of the incident. Two days later, the male pulled alongside another code officer traveling on a different roadway in a marked city vehicle and proceeded to yell obscenities and give the middle finger.

July 25th (MD) - An irate business owner threatened a building inspector in the permit office, after being previously cited for performing construction without a permit or inspection. While he left the premises before the police arrived, he left saying "I'll see you on the streets."

July 7th (CO) - Code Officers along with County Sheriff's Deputies were conducting a follow-up compliance inspection at a residence. This residence is a habitual violator. One of the residents is a male in his 40s who is always aggressive and threatening to Code Officers. 3 County Deputies escorted Code Officers because of the males threatening behavior. The mother of the male resident who also lives at the residence had contact the Code Dept after receiving a Notice To Comply regarding unregistered vehicles violations. She informed our department the violation had been corrected and invited Code to confirmed the property was now in compliance. She was informed that Deputies would escort us during the visit. We arrived at the residence, there was myself and 2 other Code Officers along with three deputies. The male resident was there and immediately became agitated and threatening. I explained why we were there and that his mother had requested the visit. The male began to curse at us from behind the front glass storm door. His anger escalated. I observed that he had a pistol in his hand and yelled gun. The male also verbalized that he had a gun to us and threatened to shoot us. The deputied called for back up as all of us moved to a position of cover. More Deputies arrived and the incident turned into a barricaded subject. Tact Teams and Negotiators arrived and the suspect was talked out of the house and arrested. He was charged with 6 counts of felony menacing.

Report incidents: <https://www.codeofficersafety.org/report-incident>

Thank You Partners!

CEOSF wants to thank all of our partner associations and sponsors! We appreciate state associations supporting the Foundation and the topic of officer safety for their members. It is important to recognize these associations for their commitment to their membership and keeping them safe. It is exciting to gain the support of the International Code Council (ICC). The Board of Directors met with their executives and were thrilled to hear of ICC's passion for the safety of the professionals in the building safety industry.



In Memory

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

October 14th – **WILLIS "ANDY" WINGERT III**, California
(2nd anniversary - Medical)

November 13th – **RODNEY MORALES**, Colorado
(14th anniversary - Murder)

November 25th – **VALERIE NIETO CISNEROS**, Texas
(1st anniversary - COVID-19)

November 27th – **MICHAEL TRIPUS**, Pennsylvania
(4th anniversary - Murder)

December 24th – **DON JUENEMANN**, Minnesota
(25th anniversary - Murder)



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Newsletter

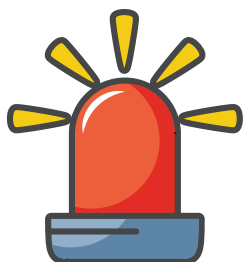
Please contact us if you have a question regarding our newsletter, would like to see a specific topic in the next one, or would like to be a contributor.

For general questions & newsletter requests: info@CodeOfficerSafety.org



Partnerships

If you would like to become a recognized partner as an association that supports us or as a donor, then please contact Justin Edson at justin@codeofficersafety.org



Body Armor Donation Requests

Are you a Code Enforcement Officer in need of body armor and either can't afford it or your agency does not provide one? Please fill out our Request A Vest form at www.codeofficersafety.org/requestavest



Remember to Report

The data we collect is dependent on you reporting incidents when they occur. The data is used by state associations and jurisdictions to make a case on officer safety legislation and equipment. Whether you were threatened, assaulted, stalked, or attacked by an animal; it is all important data. We keep your information and agency information private.

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