

OFFICER SAFETY NEWSLETTER

Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation



Welcome

We have some exciting news! Over the last few months, an energetic group of Code Enforcement professionals came together to combine our national efforts. Through a shared passion of promoting officer safety nationally, a 501c3 non-profit was established. Code Enforcement Officer Safety is now officially the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation. A Board of Directors was established and already getting to work to set strategic goals and objectives on a national level. Meet your Board of Directors on page 2.

As we finalize our next steps, we will soon be able to accept donations as a non-profit. Besides partnering with associations, we look forward to listing our donors on our homepage. Our goal is to use donations to continue to purchase body armor for those in need and look to establish scholarships for children of fallen Code Enforcement Officers.

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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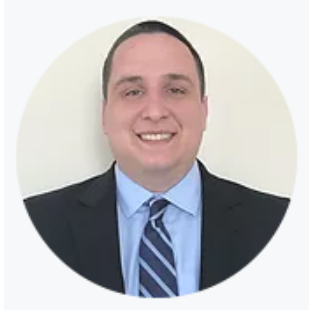
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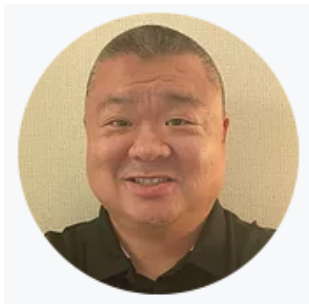
Meet the Board of Directors



Justin Edson

President

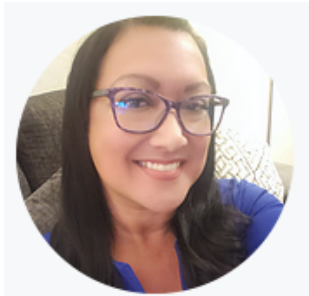
Justin Edson created the first ever national Code Enforcement officer safety reporting database. Justin has 14 years of experience in Code Enforcement and Law Enforcement. Justin is currently a Code Enforcement Manager in California and previously served as a Supervisor and Lead Officer. He is certified as an ICC/AACE Code Enforcement Administrator, ICC/AACE Code Enforcement Officer, CACEO Certified Code Enforcement Officer, ICC Zoning Inspector, ICC Property Maintenance & Housing Inspector, and a CA POST Field Training Officer.



Timothy Sun

Vice-President

Tim Sun started a Code Enforcement Officer safety fund in 2019 to raise money for body armor. Tim has over 15 years in the Code Enforcement profession and an additional 8 years as a Police Officer in California. Tim is a Senior Code Enforcement Officer and an Officer Safety Instructor in California that has taught numerous classes on self defense, deescalation, and verbal judo. He has also taught at the regional module academies through CACEO on officer safety. He is a California Certified Code Enforcement Officer and a CA POST RCB expandable baton instructor.



Carrie Rios

Secretary/Treasurer

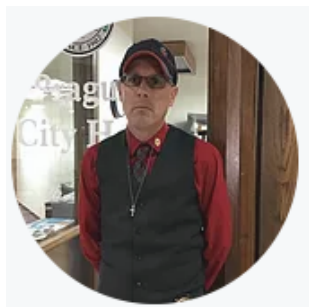
Carrie Rios is a Code Enforcement Supervisor with over 17 years of experience in California. Ms. Rios also serves on the Executive Committee for the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers (CACEO). She has experience managing a non-profit foundation and served as the Director of the Urban Conservation Corps in California. Ms. Rios has experience serving on regional task forces and is a statewide instructor. She is a Certified Code Enforcement Officer in California.



Kirk L. Palmer

Board Member

Kirk L. Palmer is a Code Enforcement Officer with 26-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.



Travis D. Guess

Board Member

Travis D. Guess is a Code Enforcement Officer, Building Official, Fire Code Official, Zoning Officer, and Deputy Emergency Manager for the City of Prague, OK. He has over 17 years of experience and has taught the ICC Legal Aspects of Code Administration. He is a statewide instructor for Oklahoma and also teaches the ICC Property Maintenance class. Travis D. Guess is currently the third Vice President of the Oklahoma Code Enforcement Association and serves on the Certification & Testing Committee for the American Association of Code Enforcement. Travis is a ICC/AACE Certified Code Enforcement Officer, ICC Residential Building Inspector, ICC/AACE Zoning Inspector, as well as a Certified Unlimited Building Inspector with the State of Oklahoma.

Does Your State Partner With Us?

CodeOfficerSafety.org has begun to reach out to numerous state Code Enforcement and Building Associations to build a partnership. The goal is to encourage associations to share this website and information with their members. CodeOfficerSafety.org represent all professions that enforce the codes. This includes Building Inspectors, Fire Inspectors, Health Inspectors, and Housing Inspectors. Our website is not about making a buck. It is not for profit and designed to help share scattered information in one place.

Since launching the website in June 2020, our known fallen Officers has almost doubled because of colleagues in different states sharing information. The number of incidents that are reported to us is also growing from different states. We are barely 6 months into our mission of promoting the safety of Officers who enforce codes.

We take reporting seriously! Every reported death is individually researched to verify its credibility. Most submissions include links to news articles which help us tremendously. We do not provide information on who reported the incidents, just the state and incident details.

CodeOfficerSafety.org is proud to announce the first state association that has agreed to partner with us! After participating in one of their board meetings to answer questions, the Board of Directors for the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers unanimously agreed to share our link on their website and look at future donations once our 501c3 non-profit status is finalized.



We have reached out to the boards of state associations across the country in the last few weeks. We provided information on our mission and asked for their partnership. The topic is slated to be on several board meeting agendas. We urge you, our colleagues across the country, to bring this up to your board in hopes to grow our partnerships. The benefit of this is growing the awareness of this website. The more people who know, the more people who will report incidents and learn from the resources.

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 donations to purchase seven (7) body armor vests for Code Enforcement Officers across the country whose agencies would not provide them. You can also find this link on our website www.CodeOfficerSafety.org



REPORT INCIDENTS



REPORT DEATH'S



FIND RESOURCES



REVIEW STATS

www.CodeOfficerSafety.org

Code Enforcement & COVID-19

2020 - What a challenging year! As Code Enforcement Officers, you know the challenges we have faced this year and that we still face going into 2021. We lost a colleague to COVID-19 on June 1st - Residential Code Enforcement Officer Hugo Rojas from Milwaukee, WI. In July we saw the news headline in July regarding a nail salon owner that hit a Code Enforcement Officer with her car after being cited (Fresno, CA). Additionally, we have received another four reported COVID-19 enforcement related incidents to www.CodeOfficerSafety.org.

Since July, Code Enforcement Officers across the country have reported incidents related to angry business owners, regulating masks, threats via email, and the risk of being infected doing their job. In your state and jurisdiction, who enforces essential businesses and masks? Is it the Health Department, sheriff, police, Fire, or Code Enforcement? Often we see Code Enforcement Officers being utilized in new situations where agencies do not want to send a Police Officer. If you are tasked with any COVID-19 enforcement, are you given adequate personal protective equipment (PPE)? Do you have a good mask, gloves, hand sanitizer, and self defense tools?

Out of the incidents mentioned earlier, one involved a Code Enforcement Officer being hit by a car, another punched in the face, another threatened via email, and another involved a mental ill individual while on COVID duty in a downtown district. City leaders, risk managers, human resources, and supervisors need to sincerely consider the risks of asking Code Enforcement Officers to enforce restrictions that have most of the country in a debate. Emotions are high and people's livelihoods are being affected. A recap is shared on page 7.



When COVID-19 first hit the headlines, the American Association of Code Enforcement Officers and other associations issued statements encouraging no interior inspections and being safe doing your job. While many government agencies allowed people to work from home, typically Code Enforcement Officers still reported for work in some capacity to help with regulations and life safety. Self certification of compliance via photographs, face time, and other electronic means were utilized in lieu of in-person inspections.

Remember, no regulation is worth your life! If you are tasked with enforcing your states regulations, be willing to back out if tensions rise with a business owner. Ask for help from the police or teammates so that you are not alone. Yes, we have a job to do, but being considerate of those you are taking action against will help keep aggressive behavior at bay. We all want to go home at the end of the shift to our families. Even if you only do education and outreach, it can still present hostile interactions. Pick up on signs that your interaction is going south and back away. You can always come back or send a letter.

We must stress the importance of reporting incidents. Thank you to the officers across the country that have started reporting incidents of all types to our website. Your information is kept private except state, type, and brief description of incident. This helps build the statistics other Code Enforcement Officers look at and what associations use to help push for new legislation. Help our profession by taking one minute to submit an incident report. Be safe out there and know there are thousands of Code Enforcement Officers here to support you!

Understanding The Sovereign Citizen Threat (Pt. 1)

by Kirk Palmer, Master Code Officer (GA)

In 2014 START (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism) conducted a survey of 364 Law Enforcement Officials from across the United States. The results of this survey revealed that the Sovereign Citizen was the top perceived threat to Law Enforcement according to 86% of respondents. By way of comparison: Islamic Terrorists were considered a significant threat to 67% of respondents. While Islamic Terrorist take the spotlight, Sovereign Citizens hide in the background, seemingly unnoticed, until they strike out of the blue. According to the Department of Homeland Security, It is estimated that there are 300,000 persons in the United States that proclaim to be a Sovereign Citizen. Of those 300,000, 100,000 are classified as “hardcore” Sovereigns – the most dangerous. The movement is present in every state in the union and is rapidly growing.

In the next few editions of this newsletter, I will be presenting information synopsis from my five (5) hour block of training on Sovereign Citizens. This training is required curriculum for all Georgia Code Officers seeking certification.

At some point in time, just by the nature of the job, you will have to deal with a Sovereign Citizen in the field. Your behavior and actions will dictate if it's a peaceful, non-eventful encounter or a major incident. Since 1995 there have been at least eleven (11) major incidents between Law Enforcement and Sovereign Citizens. That number grows exponentially when so-called “minor” incidences are tallied. In the first edition of this series, I will examine the origins and the “Strawman” theory of the Sovereign Citizen movement. According to the ADL (Anti-Defamation League): “the Sovereign Citizen movement is a loosely organized collection of groups/individuals, who have adopted a right-wing anarchist ideology originating in the theories of a 1960/70's era group called ‘Posse Comitatus.’ Its followers believe that virtually all existing government in the United States is illegitimate, and they seek to restore a ‘idealized, minimalist’ government that never actually existed.” “Posse” members only recognized “common law” and recognized no government higher than the county level (“localism”).

Modern era Sovereign Citizens argue that the ratification of the 14th Amendment in 1868 turned the United States from a country into an “illegal corporation.” Prior to the 14th Amendment, according to modern era Sovereign Citizen doctrine, persons were not citizens of the United States; rather, they were citizens of the “Republic of _____.” Only persons residing in Washington DC or federal territories were US citizens. Sovereign Citizens further believe that the ratification of the 14th Amendment created two (2) types of citizens: “14th Amendment Citizens” who are subject to US law and tax codes; and “Sovereign Citizens” who are subject only to “Common Law”.

The “Strawman” Theory

The Sovereign Citizen “Strawman Theory” is the idea that U.S. citizens have two identities. One identity is a separate legal entity known as a “Strawman”, created by a birth certificate and the issuance of a Social Security number. The second identity is you as a flesh and blood person. The theory claims that when you reject your strawman identity, your physical person is no longer liable for the strawman's debts and other legal obligations such as taxes. When a Sovereign Citizens writes his or her “Strawman” name, it will usually be in all CAPITAL letters or written slightly different than their common signature. (I.E. John of the Doe Clan).

Trust me, it gets even weirder... In the next installment, we will examine the “Leaderless Resistance” concept as embraced by the Sovereign Citizen movement... Until then.... BE SAFE! ***“If you know the enemy and know yourself you need not fear the results of a hundred battles.” Sun Tzu***

About the Author

Kirk Palmer is a Master Code Officer (GA) with 26 years of law enforcement experience. He has certification as a POST Advanced Level Officer and POST Field Training Officer. He specializes in extremist groups and gangs and is an instructor for the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement.

Officer Safety Principles & Practices

by Scott Kirshner, M.Ed.

Code Enforcement Officers need a set of safety principles that provide foundational practices to keep officers safe in the performance of their job duties. Adhering to these principles will greatly increase your safety and mitigate the possibility of violence. The first principle is:

There is no inspection you do that is worth risking your life!

This is the overriding principle that you must never violate for any reason.

Safety Principles and Practices

- Never intentionally place yourself or remain in a dangerous situation
- If you find yourself in a dangerous or violent encounter, attempt to leave as soon as possible without placing yourself in further jeopardy. Remember: Leaving is not always an option because the aggressor begins to attack, the aggressor is blocking your exit, or other circumstances are preventing you from leaving such as an injury.
- Avoiding confrontations and de-escalation are better options than using force
 - But use force when it is reasonable and necessary based on the action of the threat(s) you encounter. Use of force must be legal and within your departments policy.
- You can always come back to a potentially dangerous situation with back up such as police officers.

Four Steps to Safety

1. Slow Down or Stop When Necessary

- Do not rush into a situation
- Many tasks you perform tend to be routine. Do not let this lead to complacency on your part!
- Do not lose sight that the citizen you are contacting may not be happy about your presence. Never assume that anyone will be compliant or non- violent.
- Use your senses such as vision, hearing, and smell. These senses provide you valuable information about your environment.
- Remember: Nothing is routine

2. Perceive

- Scan the environment for threats to your safety
- Observe the environment before proceeding
 - Who is around?
 - What are people doing?
 - Do you observe any suspicious activity?
 - Are there signs of illegal activity?
 - Do you notice potential safety issues?
 - Are you being observed?
 - Identify emergency exit routes.

3. Analyze

- What is happening?
- What are your options?
 - What is your plan?

Always have a plan and a contingency plan when confronted by violence.



Officer Safety Principles & Practices (Cont'd)

4. React

- React appropriately based upon the situation.

Options include:

- Observe from a safe distance
- Leave prior to making contact
- Make contact and conduct your inspection
- Utilize verbal de-escalation skills
- Disengage once contact is made
- Call 9-1-1 for police response

Following these safety practices will keep you safer. They are designed to help you make more informed decisions so you can prevent or mitigate violent encounters. As I often stress:

Hope is not a survival strategy.

Luck is not a survival tactic.

Routine, predictability, and complacency are your enemy. You must fight these on a daily basis. Your life may literally depend on your ability to be proactive. Stay safe.

About the Author

*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 or to learn more visit: www.dedicatedthreatsolutions.com*

In Memory

From January to March we remember and honor those who have died serving their communities.

March 5th – **VINCENT SCANLON**
(35th anniversary)

March 22nd – **GREG “ZIGGY” ZYSKIEWICZ**
(4th anniversary)



Incident Recap - Dangers of Our Job

by Darrell Revier, CCEO

November 28, 2020 was not unlike any other typical Saturday night on Covid-19 compliance. I was wearing my usual uniform that clearly identifies me as a Code Enforcement Officer. I had my flashlight, pepper spray and PD radio. The only other protective equipment I am authorized to carry is 28 years of experience and training, good situational awareness and a fairly well developed cerebrum a.k.a. my brain.

While walking through the downtown area, as I have done each Friday and Saturday night since June, I came across a man sitting on the sidewalk up against a light pole. This was not uncommon as our downtown is very popular and vibrant even during the Covid-19 pandemic and chilly fall nights. However, the fact that the person was sitting on the sidewalk instead of on one of the public benches, wearing only a t-shirt and jeans-it was only 45 degrees outside-was unusual. Cue red flag indicator number one that something was not quite right with this individual.

As I walked past him, I noticed a lit cigarette lighter in his hand but no cigarette. Cue red flag indicator number two. I did not pay much attention to this and said, "Hi sir, how are you doing tonight?", as I continued walking. He jumped to his feet and began walking towards me with obvious purpose while screaming obscenities. His exact words are not important, but suffice to say he went from a man quietly sitting to a man raging and advancing towards me without any warning. No more red flag indicators were necessary to realize I was in danger.

He continued to advance towards me making statements that he was tired of being harassed by the FBI and being followed by the government. He clearly was intent on closing the distance between us as I radioed my location to our PD dispatch and requested assistance. I didn't think I could outrun him (I am built like an offensive lineman and he was built like a wide receiver) so I gave him orders to stop while I scanned for a physical barrier to put between us. He ignored my orders to stop and kept advancing. I switched tactics to try and keep the situation from escalating further by talking to him in a calm voice as I retreated but he kept advancing still shouting and now threatening me with physical violence. As I fumbled to remove my pepper spray from its carrier, police officers arrived on scene and took control of the situation. The man's behavior continued and they took him into custody. He was transported to a psychiatric facility for evaluation.

There is no question that this guy intended to do me harm and he didn't care who I was even though I was in full uniform. I have considerable training and experience in dealing with irate individuals through de-escalation and communication tactics. However, I have very little formal training in dealing with the mentally ill. Sadly, this is the norm for many CEOs in many jurisdictions throughout the state. Yet we are expected to deal with situations, such as homeless encampment abatement, where interactions with mentally unstable individuals are almost guaranteed. I was lucky but you cannot count on luck. Clearly, it is time for a change.

If it were not for the police officers arriving on scene when they did this incident may have turned out very differently and I take full responsibility for my deficiencies. However, given my lack of training in identification and dealing safely and effectively with mentally unstable persons would it have mattered if I had recognized the indicators, been more proficient with my pepper spray and had been a bit more "on guard"? Who knows, but I know this: This same scenario could play out at the next homeless encampment, at the next business or even at the next private residence that you visit. Try to keep the following in mind, especially if your department offers little or no officer safety training:

Incident Recap - Dangers of Our Job (Cont'd)

AVOID COMPLACENCY - ALWAYS BE ON GUARD
RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO RED FLAG INDICATORS
TRAIN REGULARLY WITH YOUR PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT
DO NOT RELY ON BACK-UP SHOWING UP TO BAIL YOU OUT

The last take away from this incident is the realization that there is nothing "routine" about Code Enforcement work. You never truly know who you are dealing with or what demons they may be dealing with. There always has been and always will be an element of danger in Code Enforcement, even if it is not acknowledged by some of our municipal leaders. That element of danger has increased exponentially in recent years as CEOs are tasked with the enforcement of duties traditionally addressed by sworn law enforcement without appropriate and regular officer safety training and proper protective equipment. Anyone who doubts this should remember the names:

Scanlon (1985), Volpe (1992), Juenemann (1997), Hillery (2000), Quadros (2000), Shaline (2000), Wright (2001), Walker (2005), Morales (2008), Fleetwood (2013), Zyszkiewicz (2017), Robinson (2018), Tripus (2018) and Case (2020).

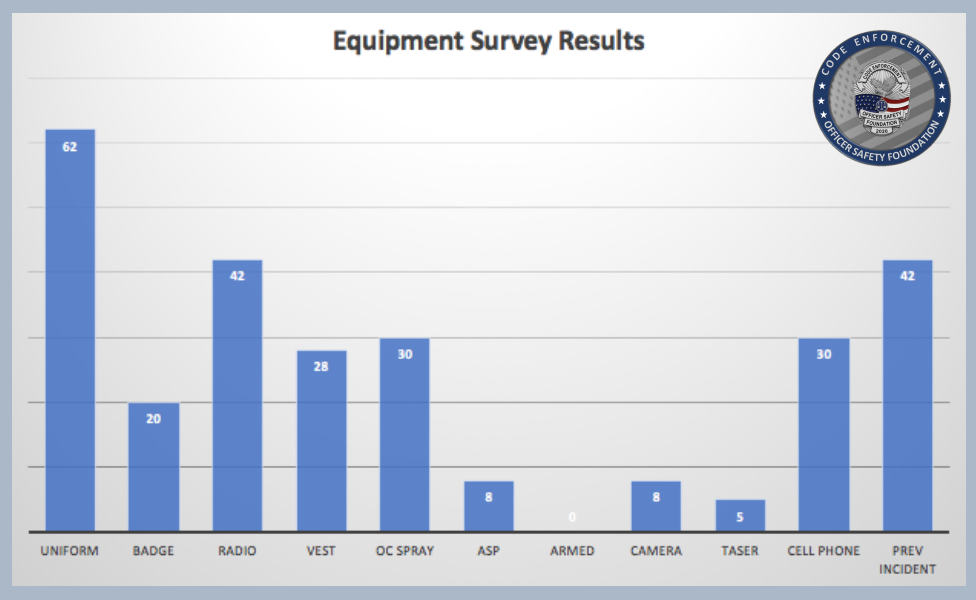
If you are not getting regular training, ASK FOR IT! If your jurisdiction does not supply it or send you to it, SEEK IT OUT ON YOUR OWN! The time, effort and money you put into seeking training on your own cannot compare to the benefit you will receive. The benefit can come in different forms including ensuring you return home safely to your loved ones at the end of every shift.

About the Author

Darrell Revier is a Certified Code Enforcement Officer in the Bay Area of California. He has 28 years of experience as a Park Ranger, Animal Control Sergeant, and as a Code Enforcement Supervisor. Darrell was just elected to a second term as President of the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers. He is also an Officer Safety instructor for the Association.

CEOS Website Survey Results

Entries: 68
States: 19



Remembering Vincent Scanlon 35 Years Later

by Justin Edson, CCEA

It was March 5, 1985 and Code Enforcement Officer Vincent Scanlon, 32, went to a property where he had an active zoning case on to meet the owner. This is where he would be tragically and senselessly murdered.

The property owner, Arthur Peschke, had some history with code enforcement prior to 1985. He previously had a case regarding trash and debris, which ended up being resolved. By 1985 he built a tackle shop attached to his house along a main road. In January of 1985, he met with zoning officials about his bait store and was instructed to comply with the zoning laws. Peschke did not comply and ended up adding a large propane tank to sell propane to the public.

Officer Scanlon then issued him a citation for the zoning violation. On March 5th, Peschke invited Officer Scanlon over to his bait store to review a site plan, appearing to make a move toward compliance. **There were no signs of a threat nor was there a history of threats over his violations.**

Scanlon went to the bait shop with his entire case file in hand. As he stood with Peschke and his 5 years old grandson in the bait shop, Peschke pulled out a .38 revolver and shot Officer Scanlon and then again point blank in the head. The police responded due to the sounds of gun shots. At the trial, the grandson testified as a witness. Peschke only ended up serving about 4 years out of a 17-year sentence for second degree murder as part of a plea deal and good behavior. The code case files were never found.

A month after the murder, according to the Orlando Sentential, a 7-member board met to discuss safety of their Code Enforcement Officers. All that was discussed was the possibility of issuing uniforms and providing training on recognizing hostile behavior. Neither of these would have saved Officer Scanlon.

When you analyze this murder and compare it to the others that have occurred since then, sadly not much has changed. Code Enforcement Officers go to people's properties for zoning, nuisance, and construction violations. In many cases, there was no aggressive history prior to the murder. Whether it was mental illness or the violator just snapping, Code Enforcement Officers are murdered for doing their job. Could body armor help? Yes. Could defensive tools help? Yes. Could ongoing officer safety training help? Yes. But these will not prevent every single tragedy. However, these items can give you a much better chance.

The 2013 mass shooting of Zoning Officer David Fleetwood in Pennsylvania by an angered violator, who was court ordered to leave his property, was similar to Vincent's murder. The violator was angry and went to a Township meeting where he murdered Fleetwood and two other residents before being tackled. He was angry about the enforcement action taken against him and snapped by killing the Zoning Officer.

In Code Enforcement, whether you are a seasoned Officer or an administrator, you get used to the day to day. We deal with hundreds to thousands of cases a year and they can range from overgrown vegetation to zoning violations. **Complacency kills.** We must pick up on cues, look at case history, keep our heads on swivels, and not just assume it is another typical inspection. Just like Police Officers, Firefighters, Doctors, and Building Officials; we must continue our training and keep our minds alert in our profession.

About the Author

Justin Edson is a Certified Code Enforcement Administrator with nearly 15 years of experience in law enforcement. He is a Code Enforcement Manager in California and serves on the state associations Board of Directors. He is also a state Certified Code Enforcement Officer and POST Field Training Officer.

Contact Us



Newsletter

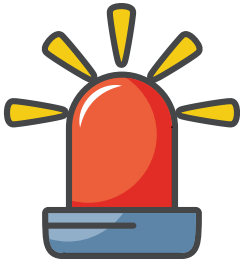
Please contact us if you have a question regarding our newsletter, would like to see a specific topic in the next one, or would like to be a contributor.

For general questions & newsletter requests: CEOSafety@gmail.com



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 email Tim Sun about your situation to see if we can donate a vest at Tim@codeofficersafety.org



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.

www.CodeOfficerSafety.org