Whom It May Concern:

The Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation (CEOSF) is a national charitable non-profit 501(c)(3) committed to promote the best practices for the safety of Code Officials 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. CEOSF is recognized by the International Code Council (ICC), American Association of Code Enforcement, National Animal Care & Control Association, and many state associations.

In just the last four years, four Code Officials were brutally murdered doing their job.

1. Code enforcement officer Jill Robinson, 52, was shot and killed by a 64 year old perpetrator who then proceeded to pour gasoline on her body and light her on fire. This occurred during a scheduled inspection.
2. Code professional Michael Tripus, 65, was shot and killed inside city hall by a 72 year old perpetrator in an unprovoked attack.
3. Code enforcement officer Charles Case, 41, posted a "condemned" sign on a residential property. As Case was walking back to his vehicle he was chased by the homeowner in an ambush attack where he was shot multiple times with a shotgun. The perpetrator had a criminal history.
4. Dennis Catanyag, 46, was brutally stabbed to death after completing an inspection at a restaurant in which the restaurant passed the inspection. A worker at the restaurant grabbed a butcher knife and went to Catanyag's vehicle located in the parking lot where he entered the passenger side door repeatedly stabbing and killing Catanyag in an unprovoked attack. The perpetrator then stabbed a citizen who survived the attack. This horrific murder occurred in the State of California.

These are four examples but there are more. Based on known incidents we know that 91% of Code Enforcement Officers'were killed with a firearm and 86% of the time the CEO was killed while working in the community. The Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation (CodeOfficerSafety.org) is focused on collecting data related to the safety of Code Enforcement Officers across the country.

Since the 1980's, the code enforcement profession has significantly grown in scope and in numbers. Many states have created statewide associations to represent the profession and develop training curriculum. The safety of Code Enforcement Officers is constantly overlooked by jurisdictions.

Yet, the danger has only been increasing and the safety of code professionals is a significant concern. Whether it is a financial issue, policy concern, or general lack of support the time for change is long overdue. The primary focus must be for local governments to protect employees in the role they ask them to fill. Code Enforcement Officers commonly enforce municipal codes, building codes, health & safety codes, housing, and zoning oftentimes with inadequate or no safety training or equipment. In many cases, they are also tasked with homeless camps, marijuana grows, dispensaries, condemned buildings, and COVID-19 requirements. Violence knows no jurisdictional boundary.

Risk Management

On October 7, 2021, California Governor Newsom approved SB 296 to add 829.7 to the Penal Code. This requires jurisdictions to assess and implement officer safety standards for their Code Enforcement staff. There have been numerous articles over the years highlighting the dangers for this profession. This new Penal Code now requires that there is a minimum standard for officer safety. From the Bill, "require each local jurisdiction that employs code enforcement officers to develop safety standards appropriate for the code enforcement officers employed in their jurisdiction."

In 2018, the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority wrote an article titled, "Code Enforcement Officer Safety: A Paramount Concern." This compelling article was written by a Risk Manager who noted, "Threats, attacks, and even deaths have occurred while code enforcement officers were performing their duties." The author referenced a 2001 survey conducted by the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers where 63% of respondents admitted to being assaulted or threatened on the job. The article stated, "According to the California Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1973, every employer has a legal obligation to provide and maintain a safe and healthful workplace for employees." Just like any professional role in government, with the right policies and training, employees can be equipped to protect themselves.

"Agencies should conduct and document a job hazard analysis that includes a hazard assessment for personnel protective equipment to determine what types of equipment to issue employees such as emergency radios, protective ballistic vests, pepper-spray, tasers, and expandable batons. All of which may be necessary protective equipment that requires specialized training, written policies and procedures, and reporting and documentation when incidents arise."
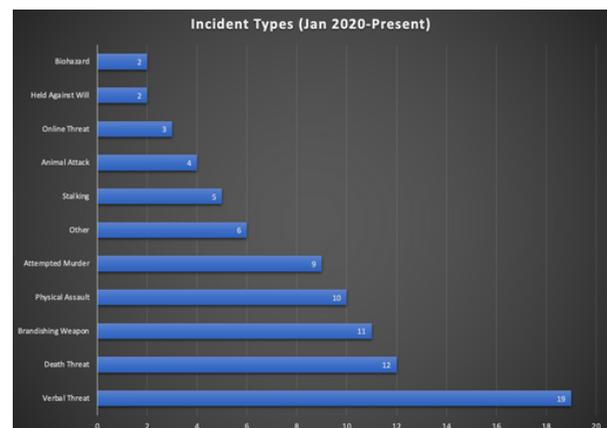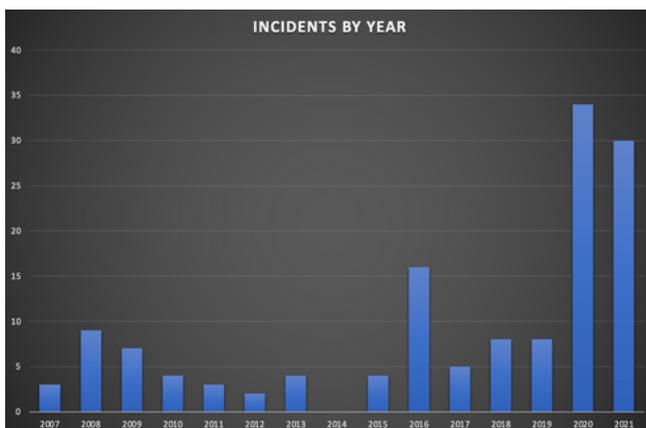
In 2014, the Local Government Insurance Trust wrote an article titled, "Code Enforcement Officers, Self-Defense, and the Use of Force: The Issues That Can No Longer Be Ignored." This article discussed the circumstances where Code Enforcement may put in a dangerous situation where use of force is the only option. The priority is to always deescalate and avoid confrontation, however, this is not always possible.

"But we all have to acknowledge that there may be extreme circumstances in which a code enforcement officer has no choice but to use force. After all, a code enforcement officer's job includes actions that generate hostility, confrontation, and even violence, such as serving violation notices, placing liens and levies on property, authorizing the removal of motor vehicles and/or the razing of homes."

"Taking proactive measures now, including reviewing job descriptions for code enforcement officers, establishing written policies and procedures, providing self-defense training, including training in the use of any device/weapon issued to or knowingly carried by code enforcement officers, will certainly help overcome legal challenges when they come. That should be an objective for all of us."

Statistics

The Code Enforcement Officer Safety website started this year in an effort to centralize the data and reporting of safety incidents throughout the United States. The numbers continue to rise as Code Enforcement Officers learn of this reporting database and as we discover new information. Since 1932, we have confirmed 23 incidents where a Code Official was murdered. In every case except one, the officer was murdered with a firearm. In every case, the Officer was not armed nor were they issued body armor. The most recent Code Enforcement Officer murder was in January 2021. The inspector completed a restaurant inspection and was stabbed to death by an employee. There is an average of 35 reported incidents per year and climbing.

Source: www.codeofficersafety.org/statistics

Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation
Risk Management Letter

www.codeofficersafety.org

Recommendation

The safety of Code Enforcement Officers must be the primary concern for each jurisdiction that employs them. In many cases, these Officers are willing to meet the agency's needs by taking on new roles and helping maintain order through the codes. There is a need for a minimum safety standard for Code Enforcement Officers. Below is a list of items we recommend your agency to consider for Code Enforcement Officers.

Minimum Standard

- National Officer Safety Training - CEOSF Code Official Safety Specialist Certification (15 hours)
- Standard Operating Procedures & Policies
- Body Armor (concealed or external)
- Police/Emergency Radio
- OC Spray (Pepper Spray)
- ASP Expandable Baton
- Tactical Flashlight

Highly Recommend

- Electronic Control Device (i.e. Taser)
- Firearm
- Note: These items can be implemented with proper required training and policies.

According to CalRecycle(State Agency), in 2006 AB 1688 amended Penal Code 830.17 to include illegal dumping enforcement officers. Code Enforcement Officers are often tasked with enforcing illegal dumping. Due to the dangers with this, this penal code section was amended to allow those who enforce illegal dumping to have arrest powers and carry a firearm with training. For example, "The City of Los Angeles has a number of Public Works employees serving in this capacity, which minimizes the need to request police assistance when involved with enforcement action." Other states have also sent Code Enforcement Officers to POST training to properly carry defensive tools and firearms.

The Code Enforcement Officer Safety website has many resources and information related to statistics, articles, grants, and training. Ultimately it is up to the local jurisdiction and their risk manager to analyze the needs of their employees. Through the information we provide, we hope to help guide decision makers to provide the right resources to their Code Enforcement Officers.