

Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation



OFFICER SAFETY NEWSLETTER



Welcome

SPRING 2026 - The Foundation is thrilled to see new partnerships, volunteers, and opportunities to promote officer safety! The year is filling up with conferences and training opportunities across the country. A shout out to the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement (GACE) for their valiant efforts to pass House Bill 483 to protect Code Officials. Do not forget to become a CEOSF Professional Member for only \$25/year to get discounts and perks!

Our Mission Statement:

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

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Sponsors



GEORGIA IN-PERSON COSS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE CODE ENFORCEMENT
OFFICER SAFETY FOUNDATION

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GEORGIA ASSOCIATION
OF CODE ENFORCEMENT (GACE)



**JUNE 11 - 12 (THURS/FRI)
8AM - 5PM**

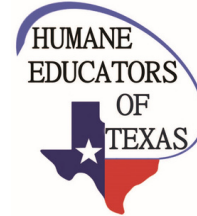
**ALBANY, GEORGIA
EARN ICC & NACA CEU'S FOR 15 HOURS
LUNCH INCLUDED**

ONLINE ~~\$299~~ - NOW ONLY \$175

REGISTER ON EVENTBRITE - [CLICK HERE](#)

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.



Virginia Association of Zoning Officials



MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF CODE ENFORCEMENT



Upper State Code Enforcement Association of SC



BECOME A MEMBER!

Support a 501(C)(3) & the Profession



Show your support of a mission-driven nonprofit by becoming a donor member! Our extremely low cost membership allows you to access certain discounts and benefits while supporting our charitable work. Consider joining us a member and showcase your commitment to risk management and officer safety in our profession!



ANGEL DONOR

CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS SAFETY FOUNDATION
1000 MONROVIE COUNTY

ANGEL DONOR LEVEL - \$8.09/MO

In honor of fallen Officer Jill Robinson (8/9/18), contribute only \$8.09 per month. Upon hitting the one year mark, receive an honorary plaque/award and our complete swag pack.



INAUGURAL MEMBER LEVEL - \$35/YEAR

Unique opportunity to be an inaugural member of the Foundation. Receive our complete swag pack (challenge coins, stickers, pens) and 10% discount on all online trainings in the first year. Then receive 15% discount from the second year and onward.



PROFESSIONAL MEMBER LEVEL - \$25/YEAR

Our standard membership for any government or aspiring government employee in Code Enforcement, Building Safety, Fire Prevention, By-Law, Housing/Health, and Animal Control. Receive a 10% discount on all online trainings.

DONATE ONLINE: [JOIN TODAY!](#)

Upcoming Events



Oregon Code Enforcement Association Conference - Basic Officer Safety **April 9th (Thurs) - Seven Feathers Casino & Resort**

COSCI Darrell Revier and Region Rep Jonathon Jones will be hosting a Basic Officer Class at the OCEA Conference.



CACEO Region 5 - DHS Threat Evaluation & Response Overview **April 15th (Wed)**

COSCI Dean Phaneuf is teaching this 3-hour FREE class in Azusa, CA. RSVP to Rey Lozano at rlozano@montereypark.ca.gov



Arkansas Code Officials Conference **May 18th - Mount Magazine State Park Lodge**

Regional Representative Landon Nash will be hosting our CEOSF booth at the conference.



GACE - Code Official Safety Specialist **June 11-12 - Albany, GA**

In-person two day training to earn your COSS. Discounted rate and lunch will be included. Register: [CLICK HERE](#)



CACEO - Code Official Safety Specialist **August 12-13 - Northglenn, CO**

In-person two day training to earn your COSS at a discounted rate. Register: [CLICK HERE](#)



CACEO - Advanced Operational Awareness (COSS-AOA) **August 14th - Northglenn, CO**

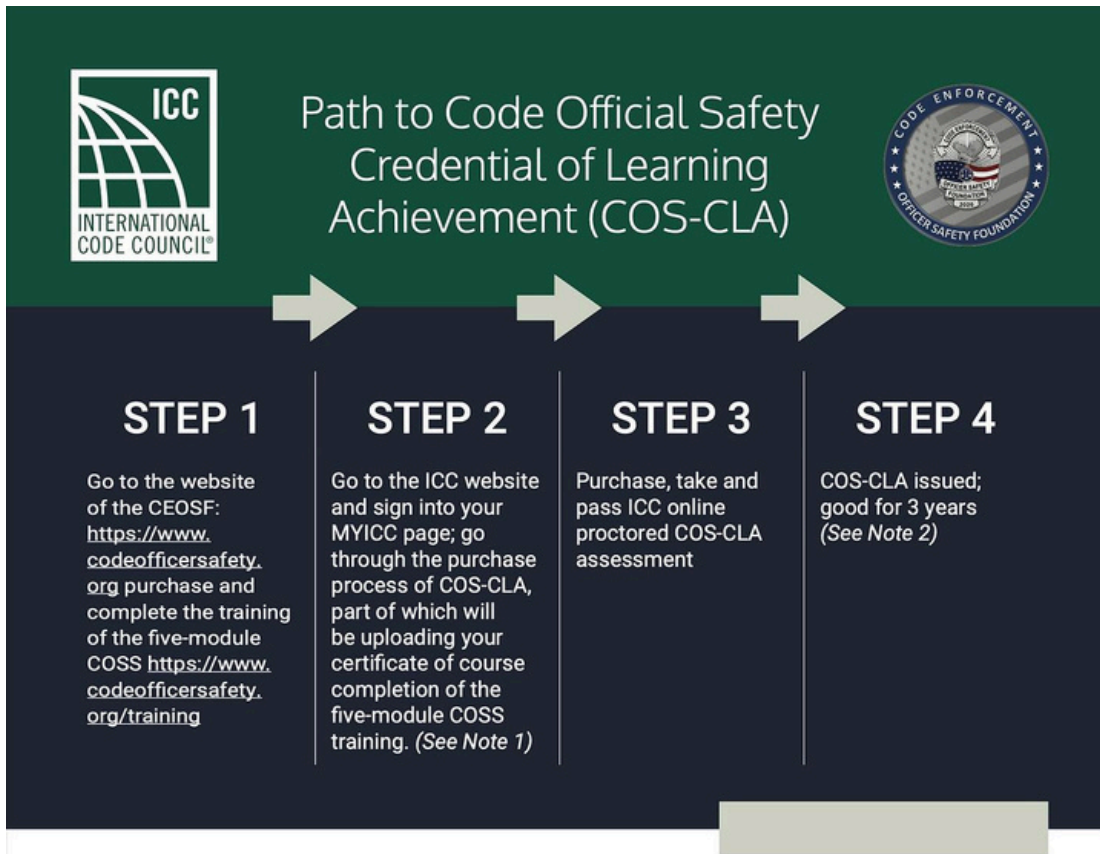
In-person one day training to earn your COSS-AOA at a discounted rate. Anyone who has earned their COSS can register. Register: [CLICK HERE](#)



North Carolina NCAHCO Annual Conference - Basic Officer Safety **October 5th - Kitty Hawk, NC**

COSCI Eric Hendrix will be teaching a Basic Officer Safety class at the annual conference.

ICC Credential of Learning Achievement



Note 1: If you do not already have an ICC account, you will need to create one at this link <https://www.iccsafe.org/register>

Note 2: After 3 years from issuance of the CLA, a minimum 3-hour training on the subject of code official safety offered by ICC or CEOSF will be required to renew the COS-CLA

The International Code Council (ICC) partnered and sponsored CEOSF in May of 2021. Since then, the two organizations have collaborated to promote safety of code officials across the globe. In November, we officially launched the Credential of Learning Achievement (CLA) through ICC. This reinforces the support ICC has for officer safety and the Foundation.

Current and future graduates of the COSS training can log into their MyICC account under credentials and take the 1-hour exam for \$65. **You will need to upload your official COSS certificate prior to taking the exam.** Once you pass, you will receive an ICC credential certificate and digital badge to show with pride! Upon completing the training you are permitted to use the COSS acronym on your business cards, emails, etc.

Learn more at:
<https://www.iccsafe.org/professional-development/cla/>



Welcome Our New Regional Representatives



ALEJANDRO MEDINA (Region 5)

Alejandro was appointed as the Representative for Region 5 by the Board of Directors in February 2026. He is a Senior Code Enforcement Officer in Kentucky with 4 years of experience. Alejandro is a Fire Inspector 1 and OSHA 10 certified.



VICTOR MARTINEZ (Region 11)

Victor was appointed as the Representative to Region 11 by the Board of Directors in March 2026. He is a Code Enforcement Manager in Arizona with 23 years of experience. Victor is an ICC/AACE Certified Code Enforcement Officer and Administrator. He has also served the Board of Directors for the American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE) and the Arizona Code Enforcement Association.



CHRIS TEAGUE (Region 11)

Chris was appointed as the Representative to Region 11 by the Board of Directors in March 2026. He is a Code Enforcement Officer in Colorado with 14 years of experience. Chris is a Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS).

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Our Regional Representatives are volunteers that serve in a government role and volunteer their free time to promoting officer safety and the Foundation's resources. There is no time commitment, we just ask for your participation in one of our committees and at monthly Zoom meetings. Additionally, Reps are able to represent the Foundation at national conferences with all expenses paid. This is a great way to network and support a mission-driven 501c3 nonprofit!

Charitable Donations

87 Body Armor Vests Total = \$63,902+

Thanks to all of our Angel Donor's who make a generous donation of \$8.09 a month and every agency that signs employees up for the Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) training! These proceeds assist us in buying more armor!



97 Training Scholarships Total = \$25,824





REQUEST A VEST PROGRAM

Apply Online!

New Partnerships



The Importance of Partnership:

A partnership in a relationship is a deeply connected, team-based connection where two organizations actively support each other's individual and shared goals, prioritizing mutual growth, respect, and shared decision-making over mere feelings, creating stability and a "we" focus rather than just an "I" or "you". It's about building something together, handling challenges as a united front, and ensuring both partners feel heard, valued, and empowered.

Creating partnerships with professional associations was one of the first actions by the Foundation's Board of Directors in 2020. Since then, these partnerships include dozens of state associations and ICC chapters. When professional organizations work together to support the profession, magic happens! It is not rooted in competition or status, it is a love for the profession that resonates down to their members. We also provide 4 free COSS scholarships per year to each partner association!

The Foundation's Board of Directors is thrilled to announce the recent partnership with the **North Carolina Association of Housing Code Officials**. We commend their Board of Directors who understood and valued this partnership as we work together to serve our peers. We look forward to supporting each other and promoting officer safety in the profession!

Recent Activities



2026 EduCode - Las Vegas, NV

Regional Representatives Meredith Rhodes (not photographed), Matthew Meanea, and Brian Hadley represented CEOSF all week at our booth. We want to thank Alan and EduCode for the continued support and for the opportunity to meet all the attendees!



SB 296 Update & Risk Management - Orange, CA

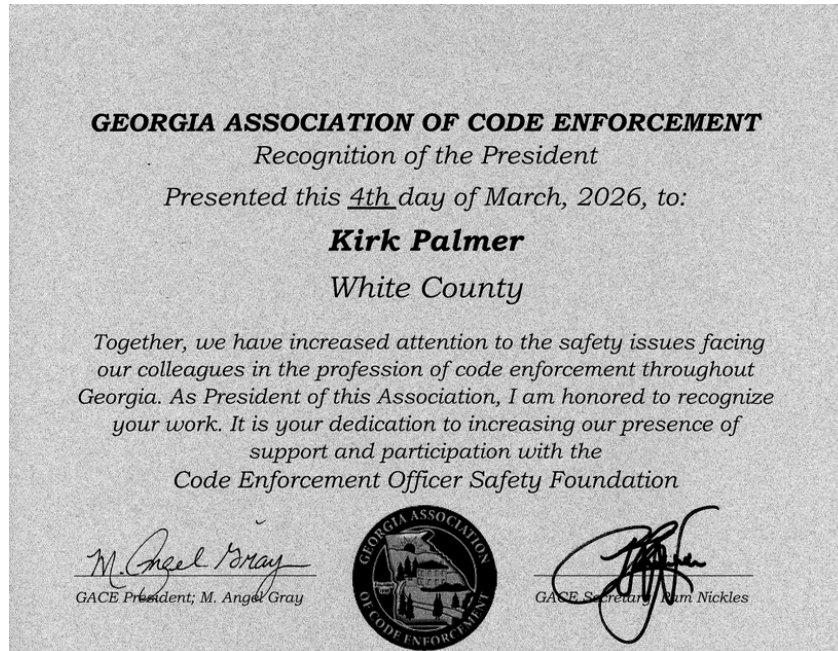
Founding CEOSF President, Justin Edson, spoke to 70 Code Enforcement and Fire Officials across Southern California at Santiago Canyon College about Senate Bill 296, Risk Management, and Understanding the Threat. Thank you to CACEO Region 7 for putting this together!



COSS LIVE - Milwaukee, WI

COSCI & COSS developer, Scott Kirshner, facilitated the Code Official Safety Specialist training to approximately 130 Neighborhood Services employees in March. This agency lost an inspector in 2017 to murder. We also presented CEOSF Presidential Awards to their management for setting this training up and having the entire department participate.

Recent Activities



GACE Spring Conference

COSCI, Founding Board Member, and current Secretary/Treasurer, Kirk Palmer, taught to a class of 90 at the Spring Conference for the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement (GACE). Kirk is taking the reigns of leading their Officer Safety curriculum. GACE President Angel Gray presented Kirk with Recognition of the President award for all of Kirk’s efforts. This included building the strong relationship between CEOSF and GACE. Keith Colquitt also invested countless hours to help train and promote officer safety in Georgia with Kirk. Thank you for the continued support! Congratulations Kirk Palmer for earning this well deserved award!



Georgia House Bill 483 Passes House & Senate

Congratulations GACE for the passing of House Bill 483 to further protect Code Enforcement Officers in Georgia! CEOSF commends the GACE Board of Directors and President Angel Gray!



CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SAFETY FOUNDATION

PRESS RELEASE

For further information, please contact:
info@codeofficersafety.org

MARCH 30, 2026
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COSS CLA ADDED TO THE MCEP REQUIREMENTS

United States - The American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE), has officially added the CEOSF Code Official Safety Specialist - ICC Credential of Learning Achievement to the requirements for professionals to achieve the Master Code Enforcement Professional designation. This is a historic step for officer safety in our profession and a commitment to continued risk management. The Foundation commends the American Association of Code Enforcement for their support, partnership, and focus on safety. Since the Foundation was founded in 2020, there have been major strides in the profession related to officer safety. This includes the International Code Council (ICC) Credential of Learning Achievement - Code Official Safety, which is awarded to a professional after successfully completing the Code Official Safety Specialist training program and passing the ICC CLA examination. Now, this credential is a requirement to earn the coveted Master Code Enforcement Professional (MCEP) designation.

"On behalf of the Foundation's Board of Directors, I am humbled by the continued support and growth of officer safety across our profession. This is another positive example of organizations working together to promote safety and honor those we have lost. Now, to earn your AACE MCEP, you will need to take crucial officer safety training from CEOSF and successfully pass the ICC Credential of Learning Achievement examination - demonstrating the partnership of all three organizations," remarked CEOSF President Travis Guess.



To learn more and start your path to obtain the MCEP designation, please visit: <https://www.aace1.org/page/MCEP>. Join dozens of professionals nationwide who have successfully earned their Master Code Enforcement Professional designation.

###

BE CAREFUL

Be safe, stay alert, and get home!

In Memory

From April through June we remember and honor those who have died serving their communities.

April 6th – Gail Braden, Kansas
(82nd anniversary - Murder)

April 13th – Charles Askew, Texas
(72nd anniversary - Murder)

April 17th – Mickey Wright, Tennessee
(25th anniversary - Murder)

April 29th – Jacqueline Summer Beard, Alabama
(4th anniversary - Murder)

April 30th – Andrea “Dre” Garcia, California
(4th anniversary - Medical)

June 1st – Hugo Rojas, Wisconsin
(6th anniversary - COVID-19)

June 1st – Jean J.J. Tellier, Quebec
(64th anniversary - Murder)

June 13th – Michael “Pee Wee” Walker, Texas
(21st anniversary - Murder)

June 21st – Jean Hillery, California
(26th anniversary - Murder)

June 21st – Tom Quadros, California
(26th anniversary - Murder)

June 21st – Bill Shaline, California
(26th anniversary - Murder)



“Good Samaritans to the Rescue - The Colton, CA Incident”

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

“It was a female officer, and you should never attack a woman...”

---Neighbor (who came to the officer's aid) ---

As a police officer, I had civilians step in and help me on two significant occasions when backup officers were unavailable or enroute to my location, and I'm thankful they did. However, a code official (or police officer) cannot always rely on helpful civilians to assist when the situation becomes hostile. In the incident I'm about to present, a very fortunate female code enforcement officer had two Good Samaritans come to her aid, and probably saved her life.

Just after noon on March 12, 2014, a female Colton, California, Code Compliance Officer found herself face-to-face with an enraged resident while conducting a residential inspection for code violations. The location was the 1200 block of N. Holly Street in Colton, California, and the residence at that address had a history of code violations as it passed from one resident to another. One unidentified neighbor said, “It had been a nuisance for a long time...” On this particular day, the Code Officer was investigating violations related to conditions in the home's yard.



The encounter apparently began peacefully enough, but during the conversation between the officer and the resident, things became heated. In an unprovoked attack, the resident, identified as Henry Guarneros, age 66, began to assault the female code officer. During the attack, the officer was able to radio for assistance before being knocked to the ground. Once the officer fell to the ground, the suspect began to “pummel” her with his fists.

A neighbor, who was playing with his dog in his front yard, heard a “terrifying scream” and looked over and saw the suspect on top of the officer. The neighbor and his father, who was working on a vehicle, immediately ran to help. The neighbor stated, “I just grabbed him from underneath the armpits, trying to yank him off. My dad was working on his hands, trying to get it off her hair. That's when he let her go, and that's when she got in her truck and drove down the street. She looked really terrified.” “(Guarneros) started coming at us, and that's when I told my dad, ‘Let's get out of here,’” adding, “I didn't want to be any more involved in this than I needed to be.”

When police arrived, they found Guarneros in the street next to his residence. As police approached, he was lying in the street as if to surrender. However, when police attempted to restrain him with handcuffs, Guarneros resisted. After a brief struggle, police were able to subdue him and place him in handcuffs. Police described Guarneros as 6'2" and 250 pounds, and very strong. The female code officer was described as "petite." Another witness, who saw the commotion from her front porch, stated: "I feel bad for the code enforcement girl because she was small—she was a small, young girl." Paramedics transported the code officer to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton. The code enforcement officer's name was not released; however, a detective investigating the case mentioned that **"there was quite a lot of blood on the back of her head,"** adding "she is alert, in stable condition, and is being treated for her injuries."



Guarneros was transported to the West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga and charged with several offenses, including attempted murder. His bail was later set at \$1 million. There was no information on whether Guarneros was known to police before this incident; however, a detective mentioned that "there had been several citations issued for different code violations, and he (Guarneros) had a 30-day window to get them cleared up."

The code officer was apparently there to see if any progress had been made on violations. A next-door neighbor told reporters, "The lady used to live there by herself, and she was kind of a packrat," adding, "It caught on fire last year, and they told her to keep the yard clean, and it was clean for a while, but then code enforcement came back." The neighbor wasn't sure when Guarneros showed up, but he "had been there a while."

If this incident sounds familiar, it should; it closely resembles the Cynthia Volpe incident from 1992, which also occurred in California. A code enforcement officer conducts a follow-up inspection and is brutally beaten by a much larger assailant. While researching this incident, several questions came to mind, such as:

- What, if any, officer safety training did this officer receive? A witness described her as being "young." Was she a new hire, or had she succumbed to complacency?
- Why did she allow the suspect to get so close to her if he was becoming agitated or belligerent, especially given the massive size differential?
- The code officer clearly had a two-way radio, as she called for help while being assaulted. However, it appears she did not have any defensive tools available, or the suspect was too quick for her to use one. Why? Once she fell to the ground, the suspect began to "pummel" her, and without the intervention of Good Samaritans, she could have been killed.

- It is unknown if Guarneros had negative interactions with police in the past; however, we can postulate that he was at least known in the code compliance circles due to the “multiple” citations issued and presumed multiple contacts. Did he not display aggressive or indignant behavior in past interactions, or was this purely a situation where he just snapped? Surely, there must have been some kind of clue.
- Would this have occurred if the code officer had been a male? In certain cultures, males are not going to be subservient to females even if they’re in a position of authority.
- Finally, why was this officer sent alone to the location, given its history?

So, what are the lessons to be learned from this incident?

- Field training must incorporate practical, real-world officer safety training. Ideally, it should consist of both classroom instruction and practical, hands-on experience. This training must include extensive verbal de-escalation techniques.
- In situations where there are repeated violations at the same location, two officers should go out while performing follow-up inspections, especially if there has been hostility or argumentative behavior in past interactions with the resident(s).
- Officers, in addition to practical officer safety instruction, should be issued some type of defensive tool (OC, Baton, Taser) along with a two-way radio and cut/stab-resistant body armor.
- Officer Safety instruction should be an ongoing thing, such as “roll call” training or an annual training requirement. I highly recommend CEOSF’s COSS and COSS-AOA courses.
- Finally, and it’s been repeated many times: expect the unexpected.

In closing, allow me to present a quote that my dear friend and fellow GACE instructor, Keith Colquitt, uses in his “In-Field Safety Tactics” class: “If what you know is not the same as what you do, your training is incomplete. In other words, training is not complete until knowledge is effectively applied in action and behavior.

The author could not determine the outcome of the charges against Guarneros or any penalties imposed by the courts at the time this article was written.

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

Information for this article was obtained from the following media sources: San Bernardino Sun, The Press Enterprise, and the City of Colton Police Department community relations.

About the Author

Kirk Palmer, COSCI, is a Master Code Officer (GA) with 31 years of experience in public safety. Throughout his career, Officer Palmer has held various positions, including deputy sheriff, police officer, city marshal, field training officer, code enforcement officer, and supervisor/manager. He currently serves as the Senior Code Official for White County, Georgia. Additionally, he is an officer safety instructor for the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement Officials (GACE), specializing in training related to extremist groups, gangs, and in-field safety tactics.

Enhancing Situational Awareness: Quadrants of Attention

by Scott Kirshner, M.Ed., COSCI, INCI

Expert performers in high-stakes encounters do not simply "move faster"—they move sooner by fractions of a second. This edge comes from attending to the right (task-relevant) information, making accurate predictions, and linking perception to action.

Code officials play a vital role in maintaining community standards, public health, and safety. Their daily responsibilities include inspecting properties for violations of zoning, building, health, nuisance, and environmental codes; investigating complaints; issuing notices or citations; and ensuring compliance through follow-up actions. These tasks often require entering private property, interacting with residents or business owners who may be frustrated or hostile, and navigating unpredictable environments such as overgrown lots, unsafe structures, homeless encampments with multiple people, or cluttered interiors.

Code officials routinely face notable hazards to include verbal aggression, physical threats, exposure to environmental dangers (i.e., structural instability, biohazards, or animals), and unexpected escalations during inspections or abatement efforts. Situational awareness—the ability to perceive, understand, and anticipate elements in one's environment—is essential for mitigating these risks, ensuring personal safety, and performing duties effectively. For example:

- March 17, 2026: Two City of Houston Code Enforcement Officers went to a home due to code violations. The 62 year-old homeowner answered the door with a shotgun and told the city employees they were trespassing. As the code enforcement officers ran off, the homeowner fired at them and is now facing a charge of aggravated assault. <https://abc13.com/amp/post/man-accused-shooting-2-city-houston-code-enforcement-officers/18741135/>
- October 2025: A Miami-Dade Code Enforcement Officer was involved in a road rage incident with two men. The officer was punched multiple times on the face and pinned against his vehicle with the truck door. The incident was caught on his body worn camera. <https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/bodycam-captures-attack-on-miami-dade-code-enforcement-officer/3774191/?amp=1>



The foundation of situational awareness is attention. Effective situational awareness requires code officials to control where their attention goes, which is a trainable performance skill. The Quadrants of Attention model is a simple, teachable framework to build self-awareness of where attention is directed and to practice deliberate shifting. The model draws from established attentional psychology concepts—most notably Robert Nideffer's model of attentional focus which can help code officials develop self-awareness of their attention and deliberately practice top-down attentional control.

Key Attentional Concepts

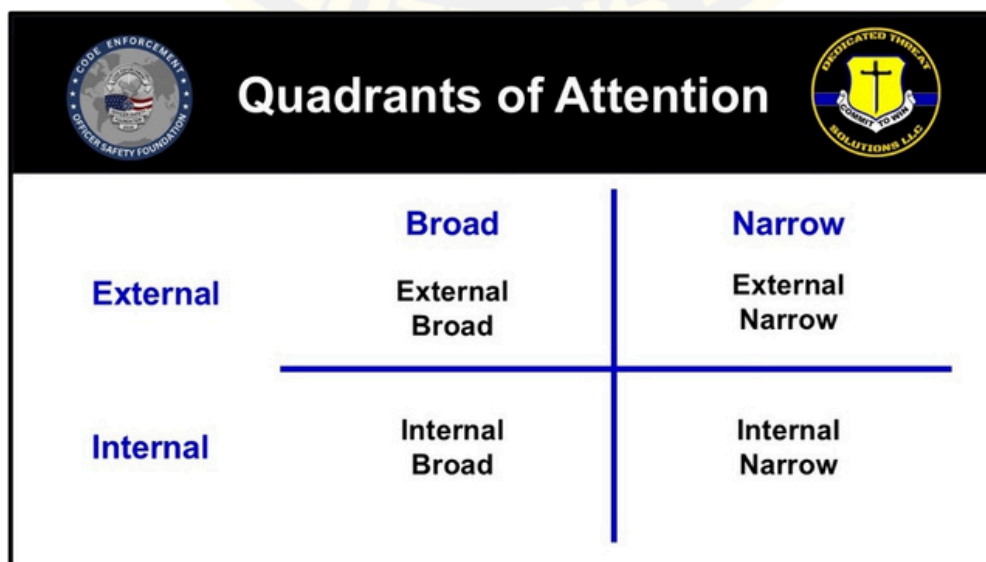
- **Bottom-up attentional capture** (hijack): Attention is grabbed involuntarily by shock, novelty, or surprise (i.e., business owner shoves a gun in your face, sudden scream). Noticing a critical threat cue is important but when taken by surprise it often leads to tunnel vision or missing higher-priority information.
- **Top-down attentional control** (redirection): Voluntary, executive functioning, frontal-lobe-driven shift back to task-relevant information. This is the skill to train repeatedly.

Training provides an opportunity to deliberately introduce controlled bottom-up captures such as shock, novelty, or surprise so code officials can practice top-down redirection under pressure.

Quadrants of Attention: The model divides attention into four quadrants based on two key dimensions:

- **Direction — External:** focus on the outside world/environment vs. **Internal** which focuses on thoughts, emotions, body sensations, or self.
- **Width — Broad:** wide, diffuse monitoring/gathering multiple cues vs. **Narrow** which is tight, concentrated focus on specific details.

The resulting four quadrants provide code officials with a practical tool to maintain optimal awareness, redirect focus when needed, and avoid common pitfalls like fixation (tunnel vision) or distraction. Attentional resources are limited so it is critical to focus on the right thing at the right time especially when your safety is in jeopardy.



External Broad Attention: *This quadrant involves outward, wide-ranging visual observation and monitoring of the overall environment such as scanning for threats, contact/cover principles, and "eyes and ears out".*

Code officials use their senses to gather relevant information especially pertaining to safety risks. This mode is beneficial during initial approach to a property as it enables scanning for multiple cues: people who are around, suspicious activity, signs of illegal activity, indications of drug or alcohol use, animals that may pose a safety risk, or individuals approaching from different directions. For instance, when arriving at a complaint site involving alleged illegal dumping, a code official in external broad mode observes the perimeter for discarded materials, potential violators or witnesses, signs of recent activity, escape routes, and any hazard that can harm the official. This prevents tunnel vision and supports proactive risk assessment. Training tip: Officers can use simple cues like "eyes and ears out" to stay engaged and process additional information, ensuring they detect broader threats or opportunities for de-escalation.

External Narrow Attention: *Attention narrows to specific external details critical to the task especially pertaining to safety risks. Focusing tightly on specific cues in the environment such as a threat's 90° elbow bend signaling weapon presentation.*

During an inspection of a residential property cited for overgrown vegetation and debris, a code official might focus tightly on the condition of a fence for signs of potential collapse risk or the resident's hands and body language for signs of agitation that may lead to escalation. This quadrant is valuable for identifying precise violations or immediate dangers such as pre-attack cues. However, prolonged fixation here can lead to missing wider threats. For example, overlooking a second person emerging from the backyard while fixated on documenting a code violation. Code officials must practice shifting out of this mode when the immediate detail is assessed, returning to broader scanning to maintain comprehensive awareness. Becoming hyper-focused or "missile locked" on a task can have safety consequences.

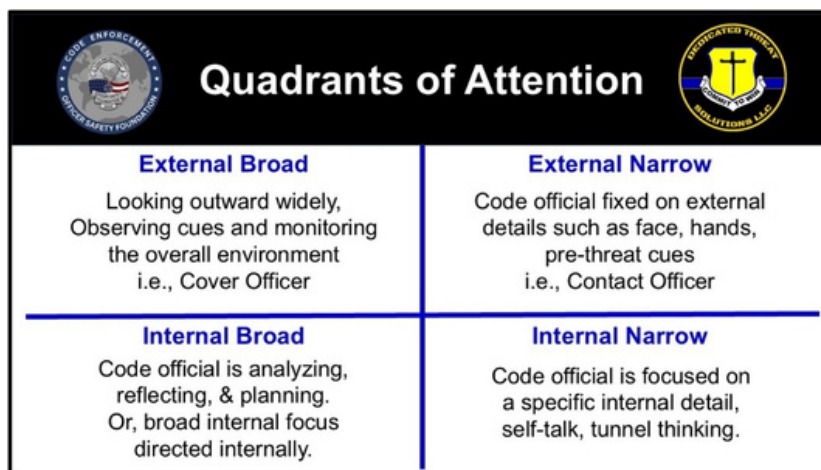
Internal Broad Attention: *This quadrant directs focus inward to reflection, planning, analysis, or emotional processing (i.e., "Oh my, this is happening" shock response; or conducting "what if... scenarios" while enroute to an inspection).*

It can be constructive, such as mentally reviewing the applicable code sections while driving to a site or planning the sequence of an inspection to ensure thoroughness and professionalism. However, it becomes problematic during a conflict while under stress—such as when a resident becomes confrontational and the code official experiences shock or becomes overwhelmed by the rapid escalation of events which leads to thoughts like "this is escalating" or "what is going on here" which can result in hesitation in decision-making. In these moments, internal broad focus reduces environmental monitoring especially of threat cues and can negatively impair performance. Code officials benefit from recognizing this shift and redirecting attention outward to regain control of the situation, perhaps by taking a controlled breath and refocusing on observable facts and cues that have immediate safety implications.

Internal Narrow Attention: *Attention concentrates narrowly on internal states or mechanics. Narrow self-focus can include trigger finger placement for armed officials, breathing, or body mechanics.*

This quadrant supports self-regulation in high-pressure moments, like employing a physiological (cyclic) sigh to reduce arousal before addressing an uncooperative property owner.

While useful for maintaining composure, excessive time here disconnects the officer from external cues, potentially missing escalating behaviors or environmental changes.



The key skill is self-awareness by knowing the current quadrant, evaluating if it serves the immediate task, and deliberately redirecting when necessary. Consistent application of the quadrants model transforms awareness from an intuitive hope into a deliberate, reliable asset.

Self-Audits: Practical application of the quadrants of attention involves regular self-audits. After an interaction or inspection, code officials can ask:

- Where was my attention during that moment?
- Which quadrant dominated?
- Was it optimal for the situation?
- What key cues did I prioritize?

Audits build deliberate control and accelerate learning.

Key Principles

- **Constant movement:** Everyone from novice to expert shifts between quadrants fluidly all the time. The skill is knowing which quadrant you're in, recognizing when it's optimal (or not), and intentionally shifting to the best quadrant based on the context of the current task or situation. Novices often get stuck by fixating externally narrow such as becoming hyper-focused on the hands while missing broader threats.
- **Expert efficiency:** Experts excel with rapid top-down redirection to task-relevant information. The result is that they make accurate predictions and act sooner by fractions of a second.

Violence often occurs in a time-compressed, high-stress, rapidly evolving, chaotic, dynamic, and ambiguous encounter with the potential for severe injury. Therefore, it is critical to focus attentional resources on the right thing at the right time so you can improve decision-making to respond sooner to a threats action.

About the Author

Scott Kirshner, M.Ed., COSCI, INCI, has been a Parole Administrator, Supervisory Probation Officer, and a Corrections Officer. He has extensive experience as an officer survival trainer to include 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 President and Lead Instructor of Dedicated Threat Solutions, LLC.

Daily Training Bulletins - Fight or Flight?

by Justin Edson, CCEA, COSS-AOA

When I worked at a Police Department, I was responsible for selecting the daily training bulletins (DTB's) that all 150 sworn officers had to complete each month. More than 45 DTB's would be provided and I would review these topics and case law to determine which ones would be most relevant to the department each month. Over the next several quarterly newsletters I want to highlight a specific topic of officer safety that I hope is relevant to you on the job as a DTB.

SHOTS FIRED

Man accused of shooting at 2 City of Houston code enforcement officers



Friday, March 20, 2026



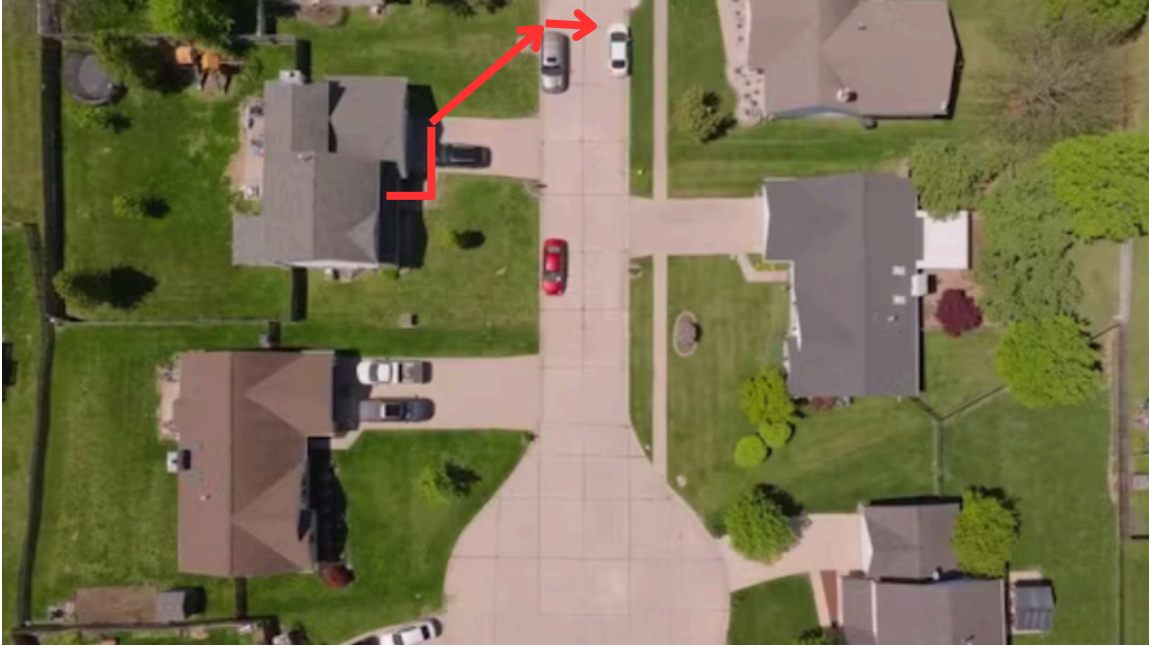
"Every Inspection"

Over the last several years, at least since CEOSF became known, there has been this push to "just walk away." The interpretation of this statement would assume that a Code Enforcement Officer could just walk away from any given situation. While the goal is to avoid risk and violence, many of us have realized that walking away is the first goal, but not the end all be all. When reviewing the majority of the murders across the United States of Code Enforcement Officers, you will find that they were ambushed with little to no signs of a threat. Could they "just walk away" from that? Or do you hear of cases where Code Enforcement Officers got into altercations when they could have simply walked away? If an officer escalates or creates an altercation, it is a personnel issue.

Around 2022, Scott Kirshner (developer of COSS), coined the phrase - every inspection. The point of this was to fight complacency and get officers to give themselves a wake-up call before each inspection. Think to yourself - every inspection I will be alert and aware of the situation I am in. This is important risk management for everything from slip and falls to dogs to violent people. You might have 10 inspections today, every day, for decades across your career. It is crucial to turn off the autopilot and treat each inspection as its own separate and unique encounter. Do your homework on the property, case history, police call outs, and physical signs on the property. Remember - every inspection is different! This is why the Code Official Safety Specialist training is so crucial!

Fight or Flight?

We are all professional adults. A professional Code Enforcement Officer doesn't go out looking for a fight. They provide exceptional customer service as a public servant, take pride in de-escalating situations, and focus on resolving issues versus penalties. However, as I mentioned earlier, all of that will not protect you from an ambush. Jill Robinson's family told me once that they honestly believe their mother would have been alive today if she had a fighting chance - body armor and a firearm. Instead, she and most of us are sent out with a polo shirt and a radio if you are lucky. The city I work for has a use of force policy and I hope yours does too. Just like the good Samaritan law, you must be able to articulate the circumstances and use reasonable force to defend yourself. If you can run (flight) then please **DO SO!** If you are cornered and trapped, fight like hell to save your life!



A few weeks ago, 2 Houston Code Enforcement Officers approached the front door of a property. The owner opened the front door armed with a shotgun, threatened them, and shot several rounds as they fled. Thankfully, I am not aware of any injuries and the suspect was later arrested.

In the example photo above, consider that the top left house was the suspect property. I would drive my vehicle to the end of the cul-de-sac and make a u-turn. I would park where the white car is across the street facing the main exit. In this scenario if a man opened the door with a shotgun, I would immediately retreat to a hard left so the black car provides some cover, then go at an angle to the rear of the silver van. If I had a police radio, I am putting out the location during this sprint. Quickly assess if the threat is pursuing when you get to the back of the van. If it is clear, hop in your white car and leave and make sure no vehicle follows you.

Alternate scenarios - chaotic flight or fight. In a chaotic situation where slugs are flying, use cover like cars and get distance - run for your life. If you need to hop fences, cut behind houses, or kick your car in reverse, then do it. Do not go toward the cul-de-sac. Now, as soon as the door opens you have a split-millisecond decision to fight or flight. **Keep in mind, to flee will require you to turn your back, build momentum, and quickly determine an exit path.** If you are close enough and the shotgun is within reach, I may go hands on to grab the barrel, strike the suspect in the face, to either gain control or disorient and give me a little more distance. This is where OC spray could also be useful, but most likely out of question due to the immediate threat and not having time to pull it out. Generally, the flight option as described above will most likely be the best option unless you are close enough to fight for your life. These are not recommendations, but ideas to consider.

Remember - EVERY INSPECTION! Be prepared, do not be complacent, and evaluate your approach and exit.

About the Author

Justin Edson is a Code Enforcement Manager in California and previously served as a Building, Neighborhood Services, and Public Safety Manager across several cities. He is an ICC Certified Code Enforcement Administrator, Certified Workplace Violence & Threat Specialist, and a POST Field Training Officer. Prior to his 10 years in Code Enforcement, he was with a Police Department for nearly 10 years. Justin was the Founding President of the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation. He is the author of "Effective Code Enforcement."

Lifelong Learning - A Path to Safety & Success

by Dean Phaneuf, CCEA, COSCI

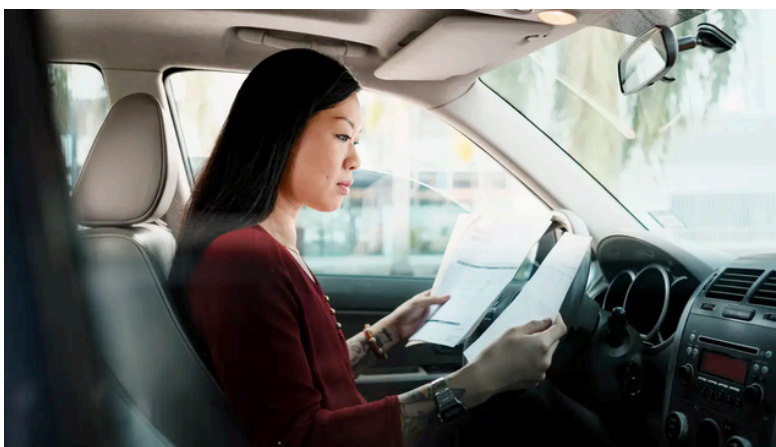


Lifelong learning is a term which is often perceived as applying to older folks (like me!). In reality, it applies to all of us – and represents a cradle-to-grave dynamic that serves us well in a variety of ways.

We all started life with varying influences of nature and nurture, incorporating both genetic and learned information into how we survive and thrive in the world. Ideally, a course was set for observing and imitating positive behaviors. Being exposed to healthy relationships, respect and consideration, basic hygiene, and facts about our environment set a foundation for more formal learning during the “school-aged” years. Core academic fundamentals – and exposure to occupational pathways – provided background for college or vocational pursuits. Advancement within our professional lives requires a continuing commitment to learning.

As code enforcement professionals, many of us have satisfied a basic training requirement established by state or local guidelines. Certification frameworks typically contain requirements for continuing professional training, often quantified as continuing education units, or “CEUs.” Within code enforcement, the International Code Council (ICC) is one of the power-players for certifications, along with the American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE), and other state and regional associations. Specialty associations, including animal regulation, fire codes, and others round out the landscape – with the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation (CEOSF) providing training and resources which span the entire industry, taking a deep dive into critical and potentially lifesaving knowledge.

At the end of the day, there are several key areas associated with surviving and thriving. Notably, physical survival – the awareness of threats and our timely, effective response is paramount. CEOSF has set the standard within our industry for providing basic, advanced, and ongoing training in these areas, establishing the Code Officer Safety Specialist (COSS) and Advanced Operational Awareness (AOA) credential programs, supported by a variety of other learning opportunities. Further validation of learning is made available through its partnership with ICC, awarding a Certificate of Learning Achievement, upon completion of requirements which include COSS coursework and successful examination through ICC's Pronto online portal. Other areas which are key to our wellbeing as humans include our social and emotional components. Having the opportunity to associate with people with similar experiences helps us to feel known and validated – and provides a sounding board for familiar questions that often begin with, "Am I the only one out there that...?" Learning opportunities with CEOSF and other organizations provide a forum for meaningful interaction with peers and mentors. Professional associations help us to survive and thrive within our work life context. Continuous learning, peer discussions, exposure to case studies, and obtaining professional certifications are important to our career health.



This month the American Association of Code Enforcement has furthered its partnership with CEOSF, at the same deepening both organizations' longstanding relationships with ICC. The AACE Master Code Enforcement Professional (MCEP) designation is our industry's most rigorous and comprehensive certification. Now, the MCEP requirements have been expanded to include the ICC Officer Safety Certificate of Learning Achievement (CLA). This new requirement solidifies the importance of officer safety in how we carry out our duties, while also formalizing a partnership between three key organizations within the code enforcement field. This trifecta illustrates the important convergence of technical, legal, managerial, and safety knowledge to successfully and competently lead our profession forward.

Springtime is a season of renewal and growth. Consider investing in your personal and professional development through lifelong learning – and perhaps a new certification or two! An investment that expands the mind, enhances safety, and provides new opportunities represents a significant spring forward!

Be safe and be well.

About the Author

Dean Phaneuf, COSCI has nearly 50 years' experience in public safety, including nearly a decade as a police bomb squad commander on an FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. He is an AACE Certified Code Enforcement Administrator and currently serves as a Code Enforcement Manager in Southern California. Dean is a CEOSF Officer Safety Certified Instructor, a Certified Master Instructor for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's NTER Office, and an Authorized Instructor for it's Office for Bombing Prevention.

ACO Vehicle Signage

by Catherine J. Crawmer, COSS-AOA, ACO



So many animal control officers are not supplied with municipal vehicles. In the case where an ACO is using his own vehicle he has the option of permanent or temporary identification for it.

There are a lot of advantages to having the ACO truck immediately identifiable. An officially marked vehicle is important in many situations involving law enforcement and certainly during traffic incidents.

Many new ACOs have opted for permanent signage. It seems like a good idea, at first, since it wouldn't be necessary to take it off between calls. Just one less thing to think about. That kind of reasoning seems practical but there are some other considerations. In many cases it is advisable to utilize removable signage. Window signs and magnetic identification can be easily removed between calls.

The municipal employees working at the town hall are familiar to residents who see them often for various reasons. There are many police officers working shifts and some are recognizable to the residence. The difference between most of these people and the ACO is that their personnel address is not generally known. In contrast, the animal control officer, may be the only one in town. He is likely to be using his own vehicle and using his own phone to speak to the public. He is also parking in his driveway or on the street in front of his own residence. The whole town is likely to know where he lives and have a lot more information on his family and his schedule than any other municipal employee in town.



While it is not possible to remain entirely anonymous as an ACO it may not be prudent to advertise the location of your personal residence. Angry people may target an ACO vehicle because of perceived injustice and who the ACO is may not matter much. I have had my very large business sign knocked down during the night, an action that took considerable effort. I know ACOs who have had vehicles damaged in parking lots and one who had his truck set fire while it was parked on the street in front of his house. Alvis Carrington, an ACO in NJ, was murdered in front of his residence, the perpetrator never caught.

The safety issues of permanent signage on personnel vehicles is reason enough to consider other options. Additionally, it is nice to have some off duty moments. People have no problem knocking on an ACOs resident door 24 hours a day. When signage is permanent an ACO will be approached in every possible location about animal control issues. Grocery stores, dress shops, school parking lots and gas stations will find people needing instant resolution on animal matters. It won't matter much if the ACO is miles away from his own jurisdiction. The sign on the vehicle says animal control and that is all that is necessary.

Because of the nature of the job there are unavoidable risks and inconveniences but do we really want to advertise for them?

About the Author

Catherine J. Crawmer is a legal expert, educator, animal trainer, business owner retired ACO with 33 years on the job. She is a Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) and has earned her COSS-AOA (Advanced Operational Awareness).

COSS Training Options

The international Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) training program started in June 2021. This was a training partnership with Dedicated Threat Solutions, LLC to develop the curriculum for this highly acclaimed training. CEOSF is an ICC Preferred Education Provider so the 15-hour class does receive CEU's. The goal of this training was to provide a basic foundation for YOUR safety as you work in government. This program is divided into 5 subjects and covers what to think about, what to be aware of, and tips to focus on your safety. Participants can also download 5 PDF workbooks that enhance the training. In November of 2022, the Code Council officially launched the Credential of Learning Achievement (CLA) on this training. Students must pass the training in order to take the ICC exam and receive the credential. The CLA costs \$65 and includes a 1-hour exam.

Currently the entire 15-hour course is discounted by 55% at \$299 per person. As a non-profit, CEOSF wanted to offer this important training at the lowest cost while still covering overhead.

ON-DEMAND / VIRTUAL

The COSS training was designed to be accessible to everyone across the globe with this on-demand option. Students enroll at any time online and work through the course within 60 days. You are able to pause as needed and download the PDF workbooks. This has been widely accepted due to this feature so students do not need to miss days of work to go to an off-site location. We have heard from numerous agencies nationwide that use this training for ALL new employees.

This training is great for Code Enforcement, Building Inspectors, Fire Inspectors, Health Inspectors, Vector, Animal Control, CSO's, Permit Techs, and all support roles. Even Directors have gone through this course!



IN-PERSON COSS TRAINING

Reach out to us to inquire about in-person large group trainings. This option is great for groups that are 50+ per class and we can accommodate 200 students. This option takes 2 full days of training and CEOSF flies our Lead Instructor Scott Kirshner out to your agency to teach the class.

This option is great for the personal feel where students get to interact with the instructor throughout the 2-day training. Email us: info@codeofficersafety.org

Contact Us



Newsletter

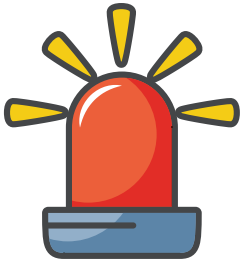
Please contact us if you have a question regarding our newsletter, would like to see a specific topic in the next one, or would like to be a contributor.

For general questions & newsletter requests: 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.

www.CodeOfficerSafety.org