# Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation



# OFFICER SAFETY NEWSLETTER



# Welcome

**FALL 2025** - We are approaching our 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Foundation this November! We want to thank all of our volunteers, sponsors, and partners who have offered their time and support of our mission. This newsletter also kicks off our 6<sup>th</sup> year offering this free resource to the profession. We hope that all of you will enjoy the holidays with your loved ones and finish off the year with positivity and joy! Thank you for your continued support!

### **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."

# **Sponsors**









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ANNIVERSARY

17TH NOVEMBER

**CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SAFETY FOUNDATION** 



# 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.

























































# **OCTOBER**

# **National Code Compliance Month**



**WHEREAS,** Code Enforcement Officers provide for safety and welfare of the citizens throughout the United States through the enforcement of local codes or ordinances facing various issues of building, zoning, housing, animal control, environmental, health and life safety; and

**WHEREAS,** Code Enforcement Officers often have a challenging and demanding role and often do not receive recognition for the job that they do in improving living and working conditions for residents and businesses of local communities; and

**WHEREAS**, the role of many Code Enforcement Officers has expanded in recent years with the increased number of foreclosed and abandoned homes in communities impacted economically; and

**WHEREAS,** Code Enforcement Officers are dedicated, and high qualified professionals who share the goals of preventing neighborhood deterioration, enhancing and ensuring safety, and preserving property values through knowledge and application of housing, zoning, and nuisance codes and ordinances; and

**WHEREAS,** Code Enforcement Officers often have a highly-visible role in the communities they serve and regularly interact with a variety of state officials, county officials, first responders, legislative boards, commissions, agencies, and bodies; and

**WHEREAS**, Code Enforcement Officers are called upon to provide quality customer service and excellence to the residents and businesses of the communities in which they serve; and

**WHEREAS**, the American Association of Code Enforcement wants to recognize and honor Code Enforcement Officers and Professionals all across the United States and bring awareness to the Importance of Code Enforcement to the communities of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the American Association of Code Enforcement was established in 1988 for the purpose of providing ongoing training and support for Code Enforcement professionals working in the United States; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED** the month of October 2025 as National Code Compliance Month and call upon municipalities and communities to join in recognizing and expressing their appreciation for the dedication and service by the individuals who serve as our Code Enforcement Officers.

# **SWAG PACK**

# Support a 501(C)(3) & Receive Swag



### \$10 donation - Sticker Pack

- Holographic embossed CEOSF logo
- Glow in the Dark "Duties as Assigned" hazmat
- · Vice City themed nuisances
- The Mobile Office aka the truck
- · CEOSF condition yellow logo

### \$20 donation - Angel Coin + Sticker Pack

- Entire sticker pack
- CEOSF original Angel challenge coin

### \$25 donation - 2 Challenge Coins + Sticker Pack Entire sticker pack

- CEOSF original Angel challenge coin
- CEOSF eagle challenge coin

We are a registered 501c3 and all donations are tax deductible. Remember to treat yo self and swag professionally! Shipping is on us, just provide your address.







DONATE ONLINE: <a href="https://www.codeofficersafety.org/support-us">https://www.codeofficersafety.org/support-us</a>

# **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.

# LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT Code Official Safety

### Learn more at:

https://www.iccsafe.org/professional-development/cla/

# **Welcome Our New Regional Representatives**



### **JONATHON JONES (Region 2)**

Jonathon Jones was appointed as the Representative for Region 2 by the Board of Directors in July 2025. Jonathon is currently a Fire Marshal in Oregon overseeing division operations, fire code enforcement, fire investigation, plan review, and life safety in development and construction. He has over 34 years of progressive Fire Service experience across Oregon and Nevada. He is a Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS).



### **JOSEPH ILIFF (Region 4)**

Joseph Iliff was appointed as the Representative for Region 4 by the Board of Directors in July 2025. Joe previously served as a Regional Representative a year prior. He has experience as a City Planner, Building Inspector, and Code Enforcement Officer across four states. Joe is a certified Building Official, Code Enforcement Administrator, and Floodplain Manager. He is a Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) and Advanced Operational Awareness (COSS-AOA)



### **LANDON NASH (Region 4)**

Landon Nash was appointed as the Representative for Region 4 by the Board of Directors in July 2025. Landon has served in Code Enforcement and law enforcement since 2013. He is currently a Code Compliance Investigator in Missouri. Landon is a certified ICC/AACE Code Enforcement Officer. He is a Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) and Advanced Operational Awareness (COSS-AOA).



### **RICO B. CODY (Region 8)**

Rico was appointed as the Representative for Region 8 by the Board of Directors in July 2025. He is a Code Enforcement Manager in Georgia and has 20+ years experience in public safety, code enforcement, and the fire service. Rico has certification in Advanced Operational Awareness, High Risk Case Management, Red Card, and NPDES. He has earned both his COSS-AOA and COSS.

# **Charitable Donations**

# 82 Body Armor Vests Total = \$61,476+

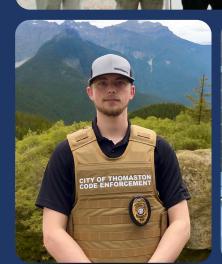
Thanks to all of our Angel Donor's who make a generous donation of \$8.09 a month and every agency that signs employees up for the Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) training! These proceeds assist us in buying more armor!



# 81 Training Scholarships Total = \$21,440











# REQUEST A VEST PROGRAM

# **Annual International Officer Safety Awards**



### **Jill Robinson Award**

This award started in September 2022 and is awarded to an agency that has taken steps to provide safety training, equipment, and policies to promote the safety of their employees. They must be a government agency that regulates codes such as Code Enforcement, Building, Fire, Health, Housing, Zoning, etc. This is awarded to one agency every year in November and agencies self-nominate during the application period. **APPLY BY OCTOBER 15**<sup>TH</sup> - https://www.codeofficersafety.org/award-app

### **Professional Organization of the Year**

This award started in September 2022 and is awarded to a professional organization (i.e. state association, ICC chapter, etc.) that has partnered with the Foundation, provided access to a free booth at a conference, provided opportunities to instruct, shares the Foundation's social media posts, and maintains the Foundation information on their website. Partners are all eligible and the Board of Directors makes the selection each November.

### **Regional Representative of the Year**

This award started in September 2022 and is awarded to a CEOSF Regional Representative that has gone above and beyond with building partnerships, sponsorships, and attending events. As volunteers, this award honors a representative every November for their outstanding contributions to our mission as a nonprofit. Selection is made by the Board of Directors.

# **CEOSF Across the Country**



[COSCI Eric Hendrix, far right]

### **NCEES Conference - August**

We want to thank the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) for having us instruct on officer safety. Certified Instructor (COSCI) Eric Hendrix taught a class on basic officer safety. We were humbled by the outpouring support and interest in future officer safety collaborations with agencies in attendance. "I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the excellent presentation shared with me and eight other members of my staff at the NCEES law enforcement forum"

### **OML Conference - September**

CEOSF was at the annual Oklahoma Municipal League (OML) conference to represent officer safety in the profession. President Travis Guess spoke to numerous City Managers and received **commitments** from 7 City Managers to provide armor, radios, and badges to their Code Enforcement personnel.

Feedback was phenomenal! Many leaders were unaware of the risks related to Code Enforcement and valued receiving information from CEOSF at the conference. A training scholarship to the Code Official Safety Specialist program was raffled off.









### **IABO Conference - September**

We want to thank James Straws for representing the Foundation at this years 2025 Indiana Code Education Conference! CEOSF is a conference sponsor and Education Live Auction sponsor this year. Thank you James and our partners at the Indiana Association of Building Officials (IABO) for sharing our information!

# **BE CAREFUL**

Be safe, stay alert, and get home!

# **In Memory**

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

October 14th – **WILLIS "ANDY" WINGERT III**, California (5th anniversary - Medical)

November 8th – **KYLE EVANS GHIRARDI**, California (2nd anniversary - Medical)

November 13th – **RODNEY MORALES**, Colorado (17th anniversary - Murder)

November 25th – **VALERIE NIETO CISNERO**S, Texas (4th anniversary - COVID-19)

November 27th – **MICHAEL TRIPU**S, Pennsylvania (7th anniversary - Murder)

December 24th – **DON JUENEMANN**, Minnesota (28th anniversary - Murder)





# West Valley City - Building Dedication in Memory of Code Officer Jill Robinson









WEST VALLEY CITY — West Valley City has officially renamed its Community Preservation Building in honor of Code Enforcement Officer Jill Robinson, whose life and service left a lasting impact on the community she served. CEOSF Vice President Tim Sun attended the ceremony on behalf of the Foundation. Code Enforcement Officers from across the state came to honor Jill.

"She is remembered for her constant acts of kindness and for taking care of those around her," her daughter said. "I wish she could be here with us now, especially with her grandkids, but I know she's our guardian angel."

"Behind every badge and every uniform is a person with family, friends and future," Mayor Lang said.

"The building will serve as a reminder of who she was, what she stood for," Chief Young said. "Every time someone walks through these doors, they will step into a space that carries the warmth, dedication, and the spirit of Jill."

Jill was tragically shot and killed on August 9, 2018 while she conducted a follow up inspection. She had served the City for over 10 years. We will always remember Jill. [July 2025]

# Analysis of Code Official Safety Incidents & Homicides

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

# "Every piece of data is a story waiting to be told." - Anonymous

Experiencing a dangerous incident will have an immediate impact on prioritizing your safety needs. Within seconds of encountering an imminent threat your attention, concentration, focus, and priorities will shift from conducting a "routine inspection" to survival. The speed at which violence is directed at you is extremely fast. Your ability to effectively respond in a timely manner that is legal, moral, and ethical must never be minimized or you may end up becoming a crime statistic. I often say crimes statistics tend not have much meaning if you cannot relate to the statistic. As a method to distance themselves from the possibility of being victimized people often view crime statistics as events that happen to "others" which is often reinforced by their ability to rationalize why such an event could not possibility happen to them. Yet, once you become a crime victim, especially a violent crime, then statistics take on a whole new meaning. When you become the statistic, it is backed by an experience that is often unforgettable. And for some the encounter is life altering. Every piece of data is a story waiting to be told and it encourages us to recognize the narratives embedded within the data. Every statistic has a story that provides insight into human behavior, trends, or patterns. It inspires us to investigate and uncover the meaning behind such encounters, turning raw data into insightful and valuable lessons that can inform our decisions and actions. As a code official this is especially relevant pertaining to your safety.

It is important to remember that the numbers and data which comprise statistics are a snapshot in time. As new information and data become available the meaning of the statistics tells a different story. Code enforcement is a unique profession in that it comprises a variety of different job titles that work for a variety of different departments who have a variety of roles and responsibilities. This makes collecting and analyzing data very challenging as there is no official central repository collecting information that focuses specifically on all jobs related to code officials. The inherent diversity of the profession makes it difficult to gather information that is universally applicable to all code officials. Generally, the one commonality shared by code officials is a component of "enforcement" activities which can lead to conflict when working in the community where you have the authority to impact a person's ability to live in their home, can shut down a business, stop a street vendor from unlawful selling, remove pets from a home, issue parking citations, etc. Additionally, code officials routinely interact with individuals who are homeless, suffer from mental health disorders, or who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Oftentimes the community does not understand the role of code officials. Depending on the situation, the code official is the person perceived as responsible for being a burden in terms of time, money, or both. Time to clean a yard full of weeds, debris, and junk vehicles. Time to make the home of a hoarder livable again. Money to hire someone to bring a business or residence up to code. Money to pay fines and fees that have accumulated. These situations can result in conflict that leads to violence. Ouestions to consider:

- 1. Is your department providing you with necessary and effective safety training?
- 2. Is your department issuing safety equipment that can keep you safer?
- 3. Do you feel your department is concerned about your safety?
- 4. Are you confident that your department will support you if you are involved in a safety incident?
- 5. Are you willing to take time and spend your own money on safety training that can make you safer?

In this article I explore areas pertaining to code official safety. First, I will provide statistics of safety incidents that have been reported to the <u>Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation</u> which is comprised of over 200 incidents. Second, evaluate what we know about code officials killed in the line of duty by violence. Finally, provide safety tips and actionable information that code officials and departments can implement to keep staff safer.

### Caveats:

- 1. As there is no central repository that officially collects data on code officials injured and killed in the line of duty there will remain an incomplete picture of the true scope of what is occurring pertaining to safety.
- 2. The information from the 200+ incidents reported to the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation does not always provide detailed and specific information. Totals may not add up to 100% or include information on all incidents due to the type of incident or lack of reported information. Reported incidents are provided anonymously so there is no way to obtain further information or clarification.
- 3. Information pertaining to code officials killed in the line of duty is based on my research from open source data.

### Safety Incidents Reported to the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation (CEOSF)

Based on the 206 incidents reported to the CEOSF the following information is determined.

### Time of Incident

Day: 95%

Night: 5%

### **Gender**

Male: 89%

Female: 6%

Not Reported: 5%

### **Contact Person**

Note: Contact person may fit into more than one category but is only counted once.

Homeowner: 55%

Vehicle Owner: 9%

Random Citizen: 7%

Homeless Person: 7%

Business Owner: 5%

Renter: 4%

Family Member: 4%

Sovereign Citizen: 4%

Animal Owner: 2%

Stalker: 3%

Street Vendor: 3%

### **Incident Location**

Residence: 61%

Community: 11%

Code Official's Work Location: 8%

Parking Enforcement: 5%

Business: 4%

Work Vehicle: 3%

Park: 2%

Homeless Camp: 2%

Phone Contact: 2%

Email Communication: 1%

Animal Shelter: 0.5%

Beach: 0.5%

### **Top 10 States for Incidents**

California: 29%

Georgia: 17%

Oklahoma: 14%

Colorado: 11%

Florida: 10%

Pennsylvania: 6%

Texas: 6%lowa: 3%

Maryland: 2%

Missouri: 2%

### **Weapon: Based on 51 Incidents**

Handgun: 45%

Rifle: 12%

Knife: 10%

• Vehicle: 10%

Shotgun: 9%Machete: 4%

Axe: 2%

Glass Bottle: 2%

Metal Pipe: 2%

Officer's Radio: 2%

Rock: 2%

### **Police Intervention & Arrests**

Police Involvement: 125 Incidents

Arrests: 42

### **Use of Force and Injuries to Code Officials**

Injury to Code Official: 20

Use of Force by Code Official: 10

### Type of Incident

Verbal Threat: 30%

Death Threat: 21%

Stalking: 12%

Brandishing Weapon: 11%

Assault: 10%

Attempted Homicide: 8%

Threatening Animal: 6%

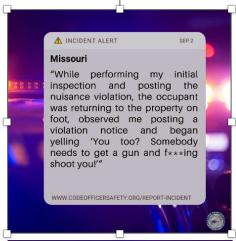
Held Against Will: 1%

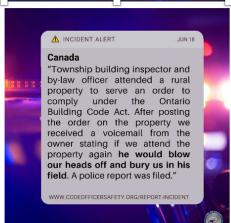
Vandalism: 1%

### Aggregate Totals for Firearms & Edged Weapons

Firearms: 66%

■ Edged Weapons::16%

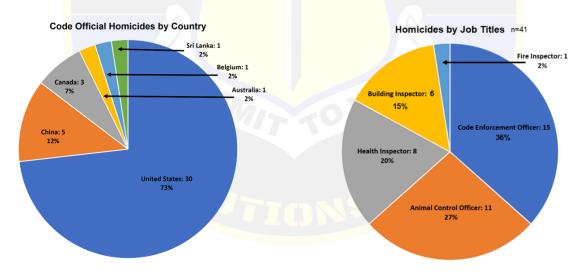


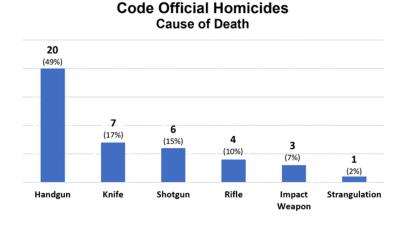


Based upon the reported information we know that the vast majority of incidents occurred during the day (95%) with male code officials (89%) who were typically working alone. Most incidents occurred at a residence (61%) with the code official interacting with the homeowner (55%). In 4% of cases a family member got involved in the incident. In 4% of cases a sovereign citizen was encountered. Verbal threats (30%) and death threats (21%) where the most common encountered threats. Stalking occurred in 12% of incidents and often occurred at the code officials home. Attempted homicide occurred in 8% of reported incidents. Based on 51 incidents where a weapon was involved, a handgun (45%) was the most commonly involved weapon. Firearms accounted for a total of 66% of encountered weapons which include handguns (45%), rifles (12%), and shotguns (9%). Edged weapons accounted for 16% of weapons used to include knives (10%), machete (4%), & axe (2%). Firearms and edged weapons account for 82% of weapons used. Vehicles were used as a weapon in 10% of incidents. The majority of incidents occurred in California (29%) followed by Georgia (17%), Oklahoma (14%), Colorado (11%), and Florida (10%) as the top five states for incidents. Police were called for assistance in 125 incidents which resulted in 42 arrests. In a few incidents the threat was involuntarily committed due to suspected mental health issues. A total of 20 code officials were injured during incidents and 10 code officials used force to protect themselves during an incident.

### Code Officials Killed in the Line of Duty by Violence

A total of **41 code officials have been killed in the line of duty by violence** from 1894-2024.





Of the code officials murdered 30 (93%) were male and 3 (7%) were female. The average age of the code official was 47 years old with the youngest being 24 and the oldest 64 years old. Based on available information 14 code officials were killed in an ambush attack. Firearms and edged weapons accounted for 91% of homicides with handguns (49%) being responsible for the majority. Code officials have been murdered in 17 states with the top three being California, Texas, and Pennsylvania. Homicides have occurred globally to include Canada, China, Australia, Belgium, and Sri Lanka. In China, 5 Urban Management Officers, known as Chengguan, were stabbed to death using an edged weapon. In Canada, 3 code officials were murdered as follows: 1 beaten to death with a club, 1 shot with a shotgun, 1 strangled and beaten to death. In Australia, Belgium, and Sri Lanka there were 3 homicides all carried out with a firearm to include handguns and a rifle.

### Code Official Safety Protocols Based on Incident Data

### **Identify Location and Person-Based Risk Factors**

- Residential inspections posed the highest risk factor
- Inspecting properties with prior code violations or lengthy enforcement histories
- Properties and businesses with accumulating fines or imminent shutdown notices
- Contacts at flagged addresses with previous threats or weapons involvement
- Encountering sovereign citizens who may have a propensity for aggressiveness and violence
- Interacting with individuals showing signs of mental health issues
- Encountering individuals who are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol
- Dealing with people who have expressed anti-government sentiments

### **Code Enforcement Officer Safety**

### Before Leaving the Office

- ✓ Inform supervisor/administrative staff of inspection locations and times
  - → Always let someone know where you will be and when to expect you back to ensure quick response if you fail to check in
- ☑ Carry charged phone/radio with GPS enabled
  - → Communication tools with tracking features allow emergency response teams to find you if you are in distress
- ☑ Check issued safety gear (vest, body camera, flashlight, OC spray, baton, Taser, firearm)
  - → Confirm that protective equipment is in working order before leaving as defects discovered in the field can leave you vulnerable to injury
- Review case notes for past threats/violent history
  - → Knowing the history of a location or individual helps you anticipate potential dangers and plan accordingly

### **On Arrival**

- ✓ Park for quick exit
  - → Position your vehicle to allow rapid departure if the situation escalates. Avoid being boxed in by fences, garages, or other vehicles
- ☑ Scan area: exits, cover & concealment, barriers, people, animals, etc.
  - → Identify escape routes, obstacles, and individuals who may pose a threat before you engage
- ☑ Keep safe distance from doors, windows, and individuals
  - → Stand off-center when approaching entryways and maintain personal space to reduce ambush risk

### **During Contact**

- ☑ Identify yourself calmly and professionally
  - → Clear communication reduces misunderstandings and hostility
- Use non-threatening body language and tone
  - → Avoid aggressive stances, loud tones, or sudden movements that may escalate tension
- ☑ Maintain a reactionary gap (don't allow crowding)
  - → Maintain space to give yourself time to respond if someone becomes aggressive
- ☑ Watch for pre-attack indicators (clenched fists, pacing, target glance, aggressive language)
  - → Recognizing early warning signs allows you to disengage before violence occurs
- ☑ If escalating: disengage, call for backup
  - → Your priority is safety, not winning an argument

### **After Contact**

- ☑ Report threats, weapons, or unusual behavior immediately
  - → Timely reporting allows supervisors and police to take preventive actions and flag dangerous addresses
- ☑ Vary your route home/work to prevent stalking
  - → Changing your patterns makes it harder for someone to target you after hours
- ☑ Debrief with supervisor or peer if incident was stressful
  - → Talking through incidents helps reduce stress and builds collective knowledge about threats

### **Department Safety SOP**

### **Policy & Oversight**

- ☑ Written safety policy with zero tolerance for threats
  - → A clear written policy communicates that staff safety is a top priority
  - → Department specific policies and procedures related to use of force, safety equipment, training requirements, incident reporting, line of duty death notifications, peer support, and critical incident stress management
  - → Legal protection and support for officers acting in self-defense
  - → Mandatory reporting of all threats and aggressive behavior
  - → Follow-up investigation and case closure procedures

### **Staffing and Operations**

- ☑ Two-person inspections required for high-risk cases
  - → Having a partner reduces vulnerability and provides immediate assistance in emergencies
- ☑ Police standby for hostile sites, sovereign citizens, or weapon history
  - → Police presence acts as a deterrent and ensures immediate intervention if needed
- ✓ Threat assessment protocols for case assignments
  - → Classifying cases by risk ensures proper resources and precautions are applied

### **Training**

- ✓ Annual mandatory safety training
  - → Keeps staff skills current and reinforces safe responses under stress
- ☑ Joint training with law enforcement and crisis response teams
  - → Improves coordination in real-world incidents and clarifies each role
- ☑ Specialized training for handling mental illness & homelessness
  - → Builds skills to manage encounters that often escalate without proper understanding

### **Safety Equipment**

- ☑ Body Armor
  - → Body armor must be seriously considered since firearms and edged weapons account for 82% of weapons used in non-lethal incidents and 91% of lethal incidents to code officials
  - → Consult the following resources pertaining to information on body armor:
    - National Institute of Justice, Standard Body Armor, Ballistic Resistance of Body Armor,
       NIJ Standard 0101.07
    - Stab Resistance of Personal Body Armor, NIJ Standard-0115.00
    - Compliant Products List: Ballistic Resistant Body Armor
  - → Safety equipment can include OC spray, expandable batons, conducted energy device (i.e., Taser), and firearms.

### **Technology and Information Management**

- ✓ Issue body-worn cameras
  - → Provides a record and accountability in the event of violence or complaints
- ☑ Issue radios with GPS and panic button capability
  - → Enables rapid emergency location and response if a code official is attacked
- ☑ GPS fleet tracking and address flagging for high-risk sites
  - → Supervisors can monitor code official locations if a code official does not return
- ☑ Electronic case management system to log threats and officer safety alerts
  - → Maintains institutional memory so that safety knowledge is not lost when staff turnover occurs
  - → Electronic threat assessment database with address flagging
  - → Integration or access to police databases for prior incident history
  - → Mobile access to case files and threat assessments
  - → Automated alerts for properties with weapons or violence history

### **Risk-Based Deployment**

- ☑ Management acknowledges safety risks and implements proactive safety strategies
  - → Mandatory two-person teams for addresses or locations with threat history
  - → Police escort protocol for sovereign citizen encounters
  - → Coordinated response with social services for homeless encampment enforcement

### Support and Culture

- ☑ Management actively reinforces safety as a priority
  - → Leadership commitment builds staff confidence in safety measures
  - → Monthly safety meetings with field staff and management
  - → Annual safety program review and updates
  - → Budget planning for safety equipment and training needs
- ✓ Peer support & post-incident counseling to include critical incident stress debriefing protocols
  - → Provides mental health support and helps prevent burnout or PTSD
- ☑ Safety recognized in performance evaluations
  - → Encourages staff to prioritize safety without feeling pressured to cut corners
- ☑ Encourage code officials to call for police backup without fear of criticism
  - → Removes stigma from requesting help, which can prevent tragedies

### **Community and Partnerships**

- ☑ MOUs with local law enforcement for rapid response
  - → Formal agreements ensure clear expectations for assistance

- → Regular police-code enforcement coordination meetings
- ☑ Outreach campaigns to educate the public on code enforcement roles
  - → Reduces hostility by clarifying that code officials protect community health and safety
  - → Community meeting explaining code enforcement roles and processes
  - → Collaboration with neighborhood associations
  - → Media relations strategy for high-profile enforcement actions
- ☑ Coordination with mental health/crisis teams
  - → Provides expert support for incidents involving people in crisis

It is difficult to determine the true scope of safety incidents that impact code officials due to the lack of an official central repository that requires reporting, the lack of departments that track safety incidents, and the lack of information sharing by those departments who do track such information. I suspect the amount of safety incidents that code officials routinely encounter is exponentially worse than what is presented in this article. Of the thousands of code officials who have attended my training courses the vast majority have either personally been involved in a safety incident or directly know of a co-worker who was involved in an incident.

Training is a vital component to your safety. Following are two options you can immediately register for to provide a solid foundation that can make you safer.

- 1. Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) 15 hours, 5 modules, 5 participant workbooks
- 2. <u>Advanced Operational Awareness (AOA)</u> 8 hours, 14 modules, 291 page participant workbook





Remember, you don't get to delegate your safety to anyone else.

Stay safe.

### **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.

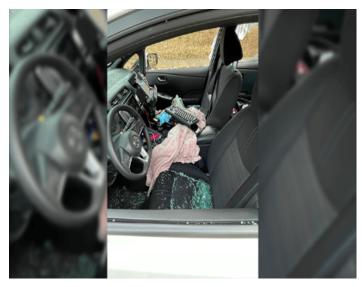
# "The Axe-wielding Maniac Incident..."

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

"Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong, often at the worst possible time..."

---Murphy's Law---

The image of an axe-wielding maniac is usually reserved for a 1980s slasher movie; however, this scenario became a reality for a Columbus, Ohio, Code Enforcement Officer on Thursday, March 2, 2023. The officer was assigned to photograph a supposedly vacant building at 160 S. Ashburton Road in Columbus, Ohio, but she quickly realized that the building wasn't vacant... The photos she was there to take were intended for use in a court hearing that was scheduled for the following Monday. The hearing was being held in response to the City of Columbus filing a lawsuit against the property owners for their "failure to board up and secure a vacant property."



Upon arriving at 160 S. Ashburton Road, the officer parked her marked vehicle in the street, along the curb in front of the house. She did not notice anything unusual as she approached the house and started taking photographs. As the officer walked around the side of the house, she heard a noise coming from inside, prompting her to return to the front of the house. It was then that the suspect, Anthony Margiotti, burst out of the front door, "yelling and cursing at the officer."

Margiotti then aggressively approached the officer, grabbed her by the shirt collar and hair, and dragged her approximately 25 feet back to her parked vehicle. The suspect was wielding an axe during the assault. After Margiotti reached the car, he released the officer and began smashing all the vehicle's windows with the axe. While Margiotti unleashed his rage on the car, the officer managed to flee the scene and call for police assistance. Along with smashing the car windows, Margiotti also destroyed a laptop computer that belonged to the city. When the police arrived, they took Margiotti into custody, but he continued to be disruptive. While an officer was conducting a pat-down search, Margiotti began yelling and screaming again and "spat in the officer's face."

Ultimately, he was taken into custody and charged with:

- · Criminal damaging/endangering;
- Kidnapping;
- Harassment with a bodily substance (3 counts);
- Vandalism (2 counts);
- Abduction

During his first court appearance, Margiotti refused to speak with the public defender and shouted obscenities during the video conference. His bond was set at \$350,000 with the condition that he stay away from the victim and refrain from consuming alcohol, drugs, or possessing weapons. Margiotti was not a stranger to police before this incident, with charges dating back to at least 2019. In 2019, he was charged with disorderly conduct, criminal trespass, and "direct criminal contempt [of court]," which stemmed from Margiotti's cursing at and using racial epithets toward a judge and court officials in Franklin County Municipal Court. The contempt charges led to a 90-day jail sentence. In February 2021, Margiotti appeared in court again, facing charges of felony harassment with a bodily substance. In October 2022, he faced another charge of felony harassment with a bodily substance but failed to appear, resulting in a warrant for his arrest. During his previous incarceration, the court ordered Margiotti to undergo a competency exam, but he refused to cooperate with examiners. Since 2020, the Ashburton Road location has experienced multiple complaints of code violations, primarily due to overgrown grass and trash.



Cynthia Rickman, the Assistant Director for the Department of Building and Zoning Services, of which Code Enforcement falls under, said: "One of the things that we're always concerned about is the safety of our officers, and so, they do have radios, they have cell phones. And so, they do have equipment to, while they're in the field, that, in case of a situation, not this extreme, but for anything, a situation where someone may be upset about getting a violation, that they have things at their disposal to call for help."

There was no mention of body armor or defensive tools (such as OC spray, batons, or Tasers) being issued to code officers. This case is eerily similar to the Chip Case incident in Augusta, Georgia, which occurred in 2020. A supposedly abandoned/vacant house where the offender was still present unbeknownst to the officer. Fortunately, in this case, the officer survived with minor cuts and bruises. So, what are the lessons to be learned in this case?

- There are no "routine" calls or tasks. Every assignment carries its risks; avoid complacency.
- Never assume anything. In this case, the officer probably assumed the home was vacant because she had been informed of this by third parties and seemingly let her guard down.
- Margiotti had a history with the police, and the property had a history of code violations. Was this even considered? Was any research done on past incidents at the location? If so, why was the officer sent alone to the scene? If not, why?
- And, this is an old cliché expect the unexpected.

When you're in the field, never make assumptions or leave anything to chance. Always do your homework. Check the 911 call logs for any calls made to the location you are inspecting and the reasons behind those calls. As Scott Kirshner says in his book, Officer Survival for Code Enforcement Officers: "Hope is not a survival strategy; luck is not a survival tactic..." You are ultimately responsible for your safety during an inspection; be proactive.

As of the publication of this article, Margiotti remains incarcerated in the Franklin County (Ohio) Jail, awaiting the disposition of his charges...

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

Information for this article was obtained from the following media sources: WCMH NBC 4, WBKN Fox 27, WSYX ABC 6, and WBNS CBS 10.

### **About the Author**

Kirk Palmer, COSCI, is a Master Code Officer (GA) with 30 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.

# Let's Roll!

### by Dean Phaneuf, CCEA, COSCI

Our team gathered at the county government center flagpole on September 11. We shared a moment of silence in remembrance of the horrific attacks of 24 years ago. "9/11" reshaped many aspects of American life. Significantly, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was born out of the terrorist attacks of that day. Coincidentally, we as code enforcement professionals share significant roles with that agency, as we regulate standards of habitability for the homes of Americans, administer standards for land use, and work to enhance the security, of our communities from blight, deterioration, and the forces of nature.

We were reminded of the "Cliff Notes" born from those losses – "If you see something, say something" – which directly informs the "reactive," or complaint-based approach that many agencies apply to code enforcement. Layered over the familiar "see something/say something" refrain we must consider the last words of Todd Beamer, a heroic figure from United Airlines Flight 93. Hijacked by terrorists believed to be targeting the U.S. Capitol or the White House, Flight 93 was crashed instead into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Beamer is widely credited with leading his fellow passengers in a charge against the hijackers, calling out, "Let's roll!" Individually and collectively, their bold actions served to protect the intended target, making the ultimate sacrifice in that brave and final act of community.

The standards administered by the code enforcement profession are often viewed as small and burdensome. From my perspective, they represent a postmortem on failures that have occurred within the built environment. Experts have examined and studied these failures and engineered small changes that can result in better outcomes. The codes speak truth as to how we can build better – promoting safety where we live. Protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the American people are the fundamental duties of our government – a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Regulation for mutual benefit is woven into the fabric of our nation – balancing freedoms, responsibilities, and shared values – throughout virtually every aspect of life. Due process of law accompanies regulation, communicating requirements, prohibitions, standards, timeframes, and consequences. Too often, what is lost in the messaging is the "why." Regulations must have a rational basis – a purpose related to a legitimate government interest. This test prevents arbitrary regulation, assures respect for fundamental rights, prevents discrimination against protected classes, and ensures fairness in economic regulations or occupational licensing.

Understanding requires an open mind – a desire or willingness to consider information. As code enforcers, we must be effective communicators. To be effective communicators, we must be credible and instill trust. We can enhance our own credibility in many ways, including personal appearance, speech, punctuality, follow-through on commitments, and display of subject matter expertise. We can promote trust by listening, providing helpful information, making effective referrals, and by being accountable – while also requiring accountability. Gaining trust creates the opportunity to motivate compliance with code requirements – a positive behavior change that benefits the individual and the greater community. It's a complicated world out there. Recognize threats – big and small – speak truth with kindness, and when it's time to act decisively, LET'S ROLL!

### **About the Author**

Dean Phaneuf, COSCI has over 44 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. Dean is a CEOSF Officer Safety Certified Instructor.

# Daily Training Bulletins - The Approach & Exit

### 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.





### **Overview**

In law enforcement, the front door is often referred to as the fatal tunnel. Numerous peace officers, animal control officers, and others have been shot through the front door or upon opening. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, a man came to the front door in Oklahoma with a rifle and drum mag when a Code Enforcement Officer knocked. On June 10, 2021 a man came to the door with a gun in Pennsylvania when Code Enforcement knocked. In July and October of 2021, two cities in Texas had subjects with guns or potential IED's confront Code Enforcement. Code Enforcement knocks on the same front doors that local law enforcement does and for similar reasons. An Animal Control Officer was shot and killed through the front door in California a few years ago. When you walk up to a property and front door, you do not know whats on the other side. Most Americans have firearms and unfortunately we constantly see mental health issues. Are they being evicted? Going through a divorce? Filed bankruptcy? Lost their job? Or lost a family member?

### **The Approach**

It is important for any government official to be identified, even before they verbally announce who they are. In rural areas where there are long driveways or roads, isolation, and sovereign citizens; being clearly identified and not mistaken as a trespassing thug is critical.

- Do your research prior incidents? Property history check with dispatch? Google search the property and look at the satellite and street view to know what property you are going to.
- Let staff know what inspections you are going to and take a radio. Notify dispatch if you can.
- Drive past the property and get eyes on it to see the environment dogs? people? Any other hazards you see as you pass by? It is easier to drive away and call for help.
- If the initial pass looks safe, park at least a property away and facing a roadway that is open (not facing a cul-de-sac).
- As you approach watch for open gates and listen. Do you hear dogs, yelling, a shotgun being racked?
- Knock on the front door and step back and to the side. Watch windows, listen, and know your escape.

- Use your gut to tell you if something is wrong. When they come to the door watch their hands and how willing they are to not hide behind the door.
- Do not go inside any home or business if something seems off, or they are in biohazard suits, or if there are numerous people where you are outnumbered.





# Man killed by Muskogee police after pointing gun at code enforcer, MPD says





### The Exit

Whether you were met with an armed subject at the door or decided to depart the inspection early due to some concerns, your exit strategy is important for your safety. The goal is to not turn your back on a threat. You can walk sideways to keep an eye on the threat as you head to your vehicle or cut around the corner and out of sight of the subject. Code Enforcement Officer Chip Case posted a red tag on a front door and was walking back to his truck when the suspect came up from behind and shot him several times with a shotgun. If the subject is not visibly armed, have your vehicle keys ready in your hand to quickly unlock and put into the ignition. Now if a subject comes to the door armed, immediately start walking backwards while keeping an eye on the weapon. Focus on your options for cover like darting around the corner of a garage or another house and know where your threat is. If you have a radio, immediately activate your emergency button and put your location out. In the worst case scenario where they start shooting - keep moving, zig zag, look for cover, and do not remain in the area.

- Keep your eyes on the threat continue to de-escalate and retreat
- · Be aware of options for cover
- Have your radio ready or activated if an active threat
- Have your vehicle keys ready if you can make it to the vehicle.
- If the threat is dogs, do not just focus on getting to the car. Look for elevated places you can
  jump to that might be closer than your vehicle. Utilize your OC spray and contact dispatch for
  help.
- If the threat is within arms length and is a dedicated threat, consider your options to go hands on to fight for your life.

These incidents do not happen often, but it is better to be prepared than to assume you will always be safe.

### **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.

# A Bad Situation with Teaching Points

### by Eric Hendrix, COSS, COSCI

I want to take a moment to talk about a situation that happened in Muskogee, Oklahoma approximately two months ago. This situation involves a man that I've been able to get to know a little over some phone conversation.



# MUSKOGEE POLICE RELEASE BODYCAM OF DEADLY SHOOTING AFTER CODE OFFICER THREATENED

Muskogee Police released some body camera footage of a gunfire exchange with a man who investigators said threatened to kill a code enforcement officer.

Tuesday, August 5th 2025, 6:05 pm Bv: Cal Day



https://www.newson6.com/story/68928f9baf6c59fd562bb888/muskogee-police-release-bodycam-of-deadly-shooting-after-code-officer-threatened

Robert A. is a city employee for the City of Muskogee. He worked for 14 years as maintenance personnel for the city. Recently Robert was given the opportunity to become a Code Official which he happily accepted due to an increase in pay and title. When this incident occurred Robert hadn't even had the opportunity to attend the Basic Code Enforcement class and had no formal Officer Safety Training. Here's Robert's story:

At approximately 08:50 in the morning Robert was responding to a citizen complaint concerning high grass. The suspect property was located in a newer, nicer neighborhood with an HOA. Robert noted that all the lawns were well kept and nicely groomed except for this one. Robert had exited his vehicle and had walked to the back of the property where the grass was a few feet tall. Robert was photographing the violation and making his way back to the front of the property. Robert began approaching the door and noticed that it had a "Ring" type doorbell. He then heard what sounded like the deadbolt on the door releasing. The door opened and a man holding a pistol style AR type weapon with a drum magazine came out of the house screaming get the "f#\*k off my property or I'll f#\*king kill you."

He told Robert to turn around, Robert complied and started to walk away. Robert said at some point he started to turn his head and when he did he saw the man pointing the gun directly at him. The man told him if he turned around he would kill him. Robert made it back to his vehicle and had to back out (go in reverse) for about a block or two because the property was at the end of a street.Robert was equipped with a radio that was connected to police dispatch. He called for police assistance and gave a brief description of the incident. Robert said within minutes police units began to arrive. He was directed by an officer to go to a nearby gas station and wait, supervisors were in route and would meet with him there. As Robert waited at the gas station he saw the Bearcat vehicle and others go by on there way to the suspect property. Soon after he heard on his radio that shots had been fired and the suspect was down. Robert was already shaken up but at that moment he felt the scope of what had just happened.

When police arrived at the property the man was inside his house, after a few minutes the man exited and opened fire on police. The threat was quickly eliminated.

### **Teaching Points:**

- 1. Now I may get some push back on this and I will say no one knows exactly how they will react in certain situations but I highly recommend not turning your back on someone with a gun. In this situation I feel your best exit is to blade yourself and somewhat side step away. Do not walk backwards, the risk of tripping and falling is far too great. My feeling is that a dedicated threat is most likely going to shoot you whether you are turned around or not, and for most it's harder to look someone in the eye and shoot than looking at the back of their head. If you are able to maintain sight and still comply with exiting you are giving yourself a survival advantage. I also recommend you keep talking and letting the threat know that you are complying and you are leaving but try to keep your eyes on the threat. I am a police officer and my training and experience would have led to a much different response than I am even recommending. But most of you do not have the benefit of firearms and the training that police officers have.
- 2. Vehicle Positioning can save your life folks. In the Code Officer Safety Training this is covered. Always, always, always give yourself an escape route. Never nose into a dead end or cul-de-sac. I, as I'm sure is the case with many of you, have literally backed down driveways and dead ends so that the only maneuver I have to perform for quick exit is putting it in drive and getting out of there.

That day, Robert was only equipped with his radio that was connected to police dispatch. He hadn't received so much as Basic Code Enforcement Training. Since this incident the City of Muskogee has fitted their Code Officials for ballistic vests. They are currently looking into body cameras and looking into "less lethal weapon" options. By the way, Robert has recently completed Basic Code Enforcement Training and doing well!!!

It's sad it takes such a horrible incident to prompt local governments to take safety precautions and provide necessary equipment to protect employees but at least they are being taken. CEOSF is continually spreading the word and being heard by local governments all over the country and making things happen for the betterment of Code and Building Officials nationwide. I highly encourage everyone to seek as much training as possible in everything from basic safety to surviving attacks to self defense.

### **About the Author**

Eric Hendrix is a Police Officer/Code Enforcement Officer in Oklahoma with 8 years of experience. He has completed CLEET Basic Instructor Development, ABLE Oklahoma Train the Trainer, and numerous other law enforcement trainings. Eric is a certified ICC Property Maintenance Inspector and Basic Code Enforcement OCEA certification.

# **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 66% at \$250 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 30-50 per class and we can accommodate 100+ 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 <a href="https://www.codeofficersafety.org/requestavest">www.codeofficersafety.org/requestavest</a>



### 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