

Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation



# OFFICER SAFETY NEWSLETTER



## Welcome

**Summer 2023** - The Foundation has a new global mission! The Board of Directors adopted a new logo and mission statement this quarter and gained a partner in Canada. We attended several conferences and hosted both in-person and virtual classes. CEOSF welcomed its first Executive Director and a few new Regional Representatives. We continue to grow and expand our reach to promote safety in the profession!

The Board of Directors met in June for their Annual Business Meeting. The Foundation is excited to share that the Board developed a 5-year Strategic Plan and reelected its officers. We appreciate all of the volunteer time the Board and Regional Representatives put into serving our mission!

**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**



**WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE?**

- New Executive Director - 2
- New Global Mission - 3
- New Region Reps & Body Armor - 4
- CEOSF Across the Globe - 5
- Training Recap - 6
- Safety: An Officer's Right & Obligation - 7
- Homeless Camp Hazards - 9
- Situational Awareness - 10
- Edged Weapon Attacks - 13
- Summertime Safety - 18
- YOURself-care - 20
- Training Opportunities - 21
- In Memory - 25

## First Executive Director Named for CEOSF

The Board of Directors has appointed **Aleksandra M. Menasakanian, COSS** as the first Executive Director effective April 24th. The Foundation was launched on November 17, 2020, and has seen tremendous growth in its reach and influence over these short 2.5 years. As a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity, it is critical to provide a high level of service to the profession while also advocating for the safety of code professionals across the globe. The demand and responsibilities have grown beyond the capacity of the volunteer Board of Directors, therefore this position was established. The Executive Director position will be responsible for the daily operations of the Foundation, marketing, fundraising, and relationship building.

**CEOSF President Justin Edson stated**, "On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am thrilled to announce the appointment of Aleksandra to the role of Executive Director for the Foundation. After reviewing her qualifications and conducting an interview with the Board, the entire Board is confident that Aleks will help expand the Foundation's impact on the profession. She will be a strong leader in the organization and be responsible for carrying out the mission and strategic goals of the Board. We are excited to start this next chapter and focus on building our relationships with City Management organizations and elected officials to shift the national discussion."



**When asked why she desired to join CEOSF, Aleks said**, "Working alongside Code Enforcement for the last 7 years has opened my eyes to the other side of the profession that so few like to talk about. That is where I would like to come into this Foundation, by helping Code Enforcement Officers and their families, share their real-life stories, hoping that it can change the course of safety in the profession. Being behind that mission alone, would be an absolute honor."

Aleksandra M. Menasakanian has spent the last 10 years working for local government in California. She has worked in Community Services and Neighborhood Services in a variety of positions over her public service tenure. Most recently she has been the Neighborhood Services Coordinator that has overseen CDBG grants, housing resources, community outreach for Code Enforcement, and also organized numerous city events. Aleks has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications and Associates of Science Degree in Communications and Public Relations. She has experience managing grants, budgets, request for proposals, presenting to City Council and Commissions, organizing events, and marketing for Neighborhood Services and Code Enforcement.

As Aleks settles into her new role, she will begin working with the Foundations team of amazing Regional Representatives, Committees, partners, and sponsors to enhance our relationships. The Board is confident Aleks energy and passion is directly in-line with the mission of the Foundation. **She is also a Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS)**. Please join us in welcoming Aleks to our team and we look forward to the growth ahead representing our noble profession!

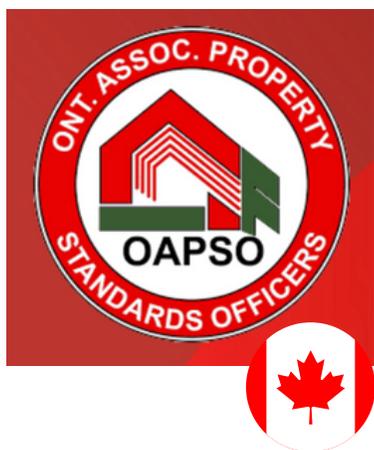
## New Global Mission - First International Partnership

The Foundation recently adopted a global mission to promote officer safety on the international level. Ontario Association of Property Standards Officers (OAPSO), Canada shares our passion for promoting safety and professionalism in the industry. Code Enforcement Officers, Property Standards Officers, and other titles all regulate local laws and ordinances to help their communities. It is in this role that there are exposures to safety hazards from individuals who are upset, have mental illness, or a criminal background. Together with OAPSO, we look forward to promoting officer safety in Ontario, Canada with OAPSO! shares our passion for promoting safety and professionalism in the industry. Code Enforcement Officers, Property Standards Officers, and other titles all regulate local laws and ordinances to help their communities. It is in this role that there are exposures to safety hazards from individuals who are upset, have mental illness, or a criminal background. Together with OAPSO, we look forward to promoting officer safety in Ontario, Canada with OAPSO!

The Foundation has officially adopted a **new updated logo** to represent our global mission! The Board of Directors unanimously approved the global logo that is representative of our growing reach.



CEOSF's new Global Mission Statement reads, **"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."**



The Ontario Association of Property Standards Officers is the leading professional association for the field of Property Standards. The purpose of the Association is to provide training to municipal personnel engaged in the administration or the enforcement of legislation governing the maintenance, occupancy, repair and improvement of property and the environment. The Association has representation from municipalities and Government agencies from across Ontario. This representation provides our members with a diverse range of experience to draw upon. Visit them at: [www.oapso.ca](http://www.oapso.ca)

**OAPSO President Allison Henshall stated**, "OAPSO is excited to announce our new partnership with the Foundation to enhance the safety and well-being of our members. This partnership reinforces our commitment to ensuring that officer safety needs are paramount, and by collaborating with an international partner such as the Foundation, we can better equip our members with the necessary tools and resources to work safely and securely. We are confident that this partnership will bring significant benefits to our members, and we look forward to working closely with the Foundation to achieve our shared goals."

# Welcome Our New Regional Representatives

## BRIAN HADLEY, COSS, MCP, MCEP



Brian was appointed as the Region 1 Representative by the Board of Directors in April 2023. Brian is a Building Official in California and has over 30 years of experience in Building and Code Enforcement. He holds certification as an ICC Master Code Professional and AACE Master Code Enforcement Professional. Brian is a Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) and recipient of the CEOSF Presidential Award.

## WAYNE RASMUSSEN, COSS



Wayne was appointed as the Region 3 Representative by the Board of Directors in April 2023. He is a Code Enforcement & Building Inspector in South Dakota. Wayne served 22 years with the United States Army. He is a Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS).

# Body Armor Donated this Quarter - 11 Vests



New York - 7 Vests



Washington



Washington



Georgia



Utah

## CEOSF Across the Globe



**Oklahoma City, OK** - The Foundation was out in Oklahoma on March 30th to meet all the great professionals of the Oklahoma Code Enforcement Association. President Justin Edson, Vice President Tim Sun, and Board Member Travis Guess were present to represent at the booth and speak to the entire conference during opening remarks. We are grateful for the amazing support from OCEA! Congratulations to our very own Board Member Travis Guess for becoming OCEA President!

We heard many stories and met amazing people over the several days of the conference. Thank you Oklahoma!

**Ontario, Canada** - In light of the Foundations new partnership, CEOSF was invited to the Ontario Association of Property Standards Officers (OAPSO) conference in May! Vice President Tim Sun and Regional Representative Jodi Welch were in attendance to represent the Foundation at the booth. We look forward to our strong relationship with OAPSO at the booth. We look forward to our strong relationship with OAPSO! We provided 4 COSS scholarships.



## Free Regional Training Hosted in California



**Buena Park, CA** - The Foundation hosted a FREE in-person 8-hour training on Bombing Prevention Awareness in coordination with the Office of Bombing Prevention/FEMA. CEOSF Officer Safety Certified Instructor **Dean Phaneuf** taught the class to a large group from all over Southern California. A special thank you to the City of Buena Park for hosting our training!

Congratulations Code Enforcement Supervisor Mario Camacho for receiving the international **Certificate of Recognition** from the Board of Directors for his support of officer safety and hosting us.

*[L-R: Vice President Tim Sun, Supervisor Mario Camacho, President Justin Edson, & Executive Director Aleksandra Menasakanian]*



We had a great turnout of Code Enforcement Officers from three different counties! COSCI Christopher Mandala, Region 1 Representative Brian Hadley, and Legal Director Valerie Escalante-Troesh were also in attendance.

Congratulations to everyone for passing the exam and receiving your OBP/CISA certificates! This is another example of CEOSF giving back to the profession.

## Safety: An Officer's Right & Obligation

by Brian Morris, MBA, CCEO, COSS

Officer and Inspector safety is a topic that is near and dear to my heart, and as the leader of a dynamic team in the City of South Fulton, GA, it is my duty to help protect those team members to the best of my ability. We are a tight-knit unit and a family, and our goal each day is to do our jobs in an excellent way and make it back home the same way we left. In order to ensure this happens each day, having proper tools, equipment, and training should be staples for every code enforcement organization before sending inspectors out to perform their critical and often dangerous duties. Thanks to organizations such as the Code Enforcement Officer Safety Foundation (CEOSF), code safety has become highlighted more and more, bringing awareness of the dangers inspectors face on a daily basis, and helping ensure they have what they need to secure their safety.

As I thought about the content of this article, what came to mind were the many documented incidents where Code Enforcement Officers were threatened, injured, or killed in the line of duty. These are tragic and senseless acts of violence against men and women simply doing their jobs; our collective hearts go out to their families as we mourn their loss and honor and respect their sacrifices. The thoughts that immediately followed were the many additional incidents of violence threatened or enacted against officers in the field that go unrecorded and unreported. Just from my own personal experience, I can attest that I have been threatened on dozens of occasions, from threats of attacks with knives, guns, dogs, and even a bomb! While some threats were more serious and credible than others, all deserve to be taken seriously and addressed accordingly. The first step is providing officers the necessary training and tools to protect themselves from harm, as is their right and obligation to do.

As covered in the Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS) course, as well as Scott Kirshner's excellent book, "Officer Survival for Code Enforcement Officers," the common response from the upper management of most jurisdictions regarding code officer safety, is to deescalate, call for police back-up, or simply "walk away." After all, we are not law enforcement officers, and we can always come back another day to enforce the infractions. On the surface, this appears to be sound advice, and I agree, avoidance and de-escalation should always be the first course of action.



However, as has been well-documented by CEOSF, there are many instances where this has not been an option for the officers, and some lost their lives in the line of duty as a result. This loss of life or injury was not due to their failure to deescalate or walk away, but because the aggressor was intent on doing harm to the that officer. When this is the case, an officer has the right and obligation to defend themselves by any means available. Having the proper training for these possible scenarios is essential in ensuring officers are as safe as they can be when in the field and even the office.

## ARTICLE

---

**As I have navigated through my career as an officer, supervisor, manager, administrator and currently director, I have always advocated for safety tools for myself and my team.** I have lobbied for the issuance of body cameras, body armor, police radios, asp batons, OC spray, crisis intervention training, CPR, active shooter, and self-defense training. I was often met with reluctance and concerns from risk management or legal officials about liability concerns, and I was usually rebuffed in my efforts to provide these essential tools. I would often hear, “what if an officer abuses their authority and misuses a defensive weapon for improper purposes?” or “this just opens up the city to potential lawsuits.”

Well, as every good code officer knows, documentation and case building are key in presenting an excellent argument, whether in court proceedings, or advocating for safety tools. In that regard, I documented every single verbal or physical threat made by a human being or animal, including an officer on my team that was shot in the arm while doing a “routine” inspection. Thankfully he survived the unprovoked, ambush style attack and continues to work in the code enforcement field! I then worked with other jurisdictions to create SOP's for the use of these various tools and reached out to certified trainers that would correctly instruct officers regarding use of force tactics, as well as de-escalation and verbal judo methods.



**By proactively and consistently advocating for the need for our officers' safety, it caused the leadership to view the risk vs reward equation in a different light.** Instead of focusing on the risk and legal liability to the municipality for an officer misusing the tools, the focus was geared toward the risk of an officer being harmed from not having the proper tools and training. We must honestly ask ourselves, what do we say to the families of those who are harmed in the line of duty and were not afforded proper protection? It is my firm opinion that once we know there is a significant risk of danger, then we have a moral and legal responsibility to act to mitigate that risk.

Thankfully, with persistent efforts, some good fortune, and forward-thinking partners in city leadership, our team was successful in obtaining vests, cameras, batons, radios, and various safety and self-defense trainings. In addition, we also make it mandatory for every team member, including office staff, to take the COSS class and obtain their certification. At the end of the day, it helps that all team members are vigilant in recognizing potential threats and are on one accord. We all know that code enforcement can be unpredictable, and situations can turn volatile and confrontational at the drop of a hat. Having safety equipment and proper training is paramount in keeping our team members safe so they can properly perform their critical roles as officers and inspectors. It is both their right and obligation to always protect their safety.

---

### **About the Author**

*Brian Morris is a Code Enforcement Director in Georgia with over 10 years of experience in Code Enforcement and Erosion Management. He is also a CEOSF Regional Representative and Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS). Brian is a Certified Code Enforcement Officer and has a reputation for building strong relationships with the community his serves.*

## Homeless Camp Hazards - Part 2

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

*“If you feel safe, you're unsafe.” — Tamerlan Kuzgov*

In the last installment, we discussed who the homeless population was. We also talked about the hierarchy in large homeless camps and the fact that the larger an encampment gets, the more territorial and aggressive its occupants usually become. In this installment, I will discuss human vectors that can endanger a code official when he or she enters a homeless encampment; some can be quite scary.

### Human Vectors:

- Blood-borne pathogens – i.e. HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, malaria, syphilis and MRSA;
- Biohazards – i.e. Feces (both human and animal), vomit, other bodily fluids, used syringes;
- Airborne pathogens – i.e. tuberculosis, influenza, chicken pox and COVID 19;
- Meth Labs and other illegal drug procurement operations;
- Booby-traps.

Anyone who's been in law enforcement, code enforcement, or EMS services for an appreciable amount of time knows that commonsense hygiene practices and PPE (personal protective equipment) can mitigate the threats associated with blood-borne pathogens, biohazards, and airborne pathogens. You must protect your skin, eyes, ears, nose, and throat. It goes without saying that if a meth lab or other illegal drug procurement operation is suspected, leave the area and notify law enforcement. Meth labs and drug operations must be cleaned up by specialists. That leaves booby-traps, which are more common than one might think. Booby traps are man-made contraptions that take the form of:

- Trip Wires;
- Poor man's burglar alarm (wire or fishing line strung thru tin-cans with rocks or BBs in them);
- Punji pits;
- Nails driven through plywood, particle or OSB board;
- Fish hook traps (wire strung with fish hooks at eye level);
- Razor booby-traps.



Situational awareness and keen observation skills are a must when entering homeless encampments. Just because you "look" doesn't mean you "see". Code officials are likely to encounter booby-traps at points of access, such as trails, roadbeds, and encampment perimeters. Code officials must be aware of telltale signs of booby-traps, such as wire stretched across a path; a pile of leaves where no other leaves are on the ground; freshly dug dirt; indentations in the ground; unnatural materials such as pipe, boards, newspapers, and cardboard; and any item that invites a person to pick it up and examine it. In one instance, a public safety official stepped on a razor trap in which the razor had been dipped in feces. Needless to say, the infection that followed almost cost him his foot. This article presents some scary information. I'm not trying to scare you; rather, I'm trying to make you think about what dangers could lie within the next homeless camp you encounter. Your best defense is situational awareness. I, too, have encountered a booby-trap while investigating a homeless encampment. Fortunately, I was able to spot it before triggering it. In the next installment, I will examine some natural vectors the code official must be aware of when entering homeless camps. Until then, stay alert and don't get hurt.

### About the Author

Kirk Palmer, COSCI is a Master Code Officer (GA) with 28 years of public safety experience. He is currently the Senior Code Official for White County, Georgia. In addition, he is an Officer Safety Instructor for the Georgia Association of Code Enforcement Officials (GACE), specializing in Extremist Groups and Gangs.

---

# Situational Awareness in Officer Safety

## Part One: The Hands

by Christopher Mandala, COSCI, COSS

In this series we will break down the art & science of officer safety into three parts. Each of these parts were selected and prioritized in a manner designed to facilitate the process of transforming these officer-safety concepts into instinctive behaviors. These individual lessons are structured as building blocks and I recommend they be implemented one at a time, building upon the prior. They should be practiced both on-duty and off-duty, in order to make it second nature. When adopting new skills, I often practice on family members and friends.

Before we delve into the training, let's briefly discuss the term Situational Awareness. Situational Awareness is quite complex in its meaning and can often be quite challenging to define. The American Psychological Association offers an excellent definition for our needs, defining Situational Awareness as:

*Conscious knowledge of the immediate environment and the events that are occurring in it. Situation awareness involves perception of the elements in the environment, comprehension of what they mean and how they relate to one another, and projection of their future states. In ergonomics, for example, it refers to the operator's awareness of the current status and the anticipated future status of a system. Situation awareness is influenced by a number of factors, including stress; it may be impaired by cognitive tunneling or social tunneling.*

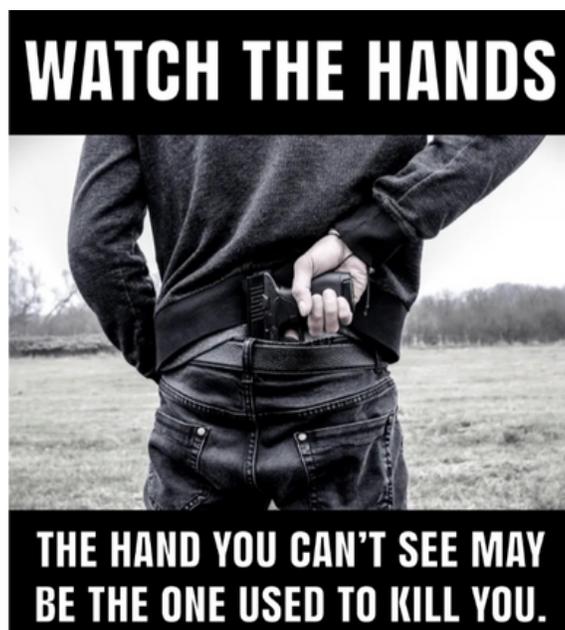
I really like this definition because it also refers to two other very important concepts: Cognitive Tunneling & Social Tunneling. Cognitive tunneling is commonly known as tunnel vision, where our attention is acutely focused on a very specific task or feature, not seeing other critical information outside of our focus. While social tunneling is a concept that was seldom formally taught in law enforcement circles and it is something we also want to avoid. It is defined as a psychological state associated with a demanding task or environment characterized by a tendency to ignore social cues.

When improving our observation skills for officer safety, there are sometimes unintended, yet positive consequences. For example, we become more aware of the emotional state of others. This perception of someone's emotional state can provide critical officer safety data, alerting us to a body language and pre-incident indicators that may go violent. It can also provide valuable information into another's heightened emotional state, leading us to alter our approach and become empathic listeners, thus diffusing the encounter.

These concepts will be discussed in greater depth in this three-part series.

When I was a police officer, I performed a traffic stop on a female traffic violator while targeting a neighborhood experiencing a recent spike in methamphetamine sales. She did not immediately yield, but instead turned down one block, turned down another, then abruptly pulled into the driveway, exiting the driver's door. At this point I knew she picked the location of the traffic stop, not me, and this was not good. Therefore, I stopped short, approximately thirty feet behind her vehicle. While exiting her vehicle she started yelling for someone inside the residence while she advanced on my vehicle. What I observed was a USMC KA-BAR combat knife mounted on the inside of the driver door. I ordered her to stop while requesting a backup and she continued to rapidly advance on me while calling for someone from inside the residence to help her. I drew my firearm and she stopped her advance. When my backup arrived we took her into custody on weapons charges for a concealed handgun and the knife. While nobody exited the house to help her, sitting on the front porch railing was a block-party sized methamphetamine torch. During the booking interview and search I discovered she was a seventh degree black belt, her outlaw biker club's moniker for her was Black Widow, and she was the club's stenographer for her boyfriend (Bucket-head), the club's secretary. I also discovered her electronic organizer with all of the gang's orders for their illegal firearms.

This simple “traffic stop turned wild” is an example of a case where experience and training provided me with the requisite skills to avoid cognitive tunneling, social tunneling and ultimately saved me from being the victim of a violent assault. Her advances were clearly an attempt to get within striking range of me and had she, it would have most likely escalated to a violent encounter.



**While this lesson is about the hands, do not ignore or disregard your other officer safety training. This is only one component.**

In a case review of every code enforcement official murdered in the line of duty, the vast majority were committed by firearms. There were some knife attacks, violent physical assaults as well as the use of an accelerant. It is important to note the cases of murder where all targeted and very personal to the murderers, even going so far as to hunting down and killing an officer after the suspect was released from jail for their battery on the officer.

Every single murder of a code enforcement official was tied directly to the actions taken by the suspect's hands. The use of hands are directly responsible for the vast majority of homicides in the U.S. and abroad and it makes sense. Hands are used to manipulate firearms, knives, baseball bats and a number of other weapons. Even the operation of a vehicle used in a homicide generally requires the use of hands.

With this in mind, we must always watch the subject's hands, especially when we cannot see them. We must make it a goal to always keep their hands within our view. It is easier than it sounds. Practice this around the office and at home. Be cognizant of things that distract you away from watching someone's hands and learn to recognize when it occurs.

Be observant when someone takes either hand out of your view. Why is it out of your view? Are they attempting to conceal something? Are they fiddling with something? Are they grasping something while contemplating an attack? Is their hand in their pocket, purse, bag, or backpack? Are any of those places large enough to conceal a handgun? The answer to all of those is YES!

Can you see the general area where they are in reach of for items such as a butcher knife block on kitchen counter, desk drawers, a vehicle console, kitchen drawers, etc.?



(Pictured: Trailblazer Firearms LifeCard 22LR folding handgun)

We must also keep in mind how hands themselves are formidable weapons. From throwing punches to gouging out eyes, and everything in-between, hands can and do cause catastrophic and fatal injuries. With this in mind, it is important to always maintain some distance from our contacts. Studies have documented a suspect wielding a knife within twenty feet of a police officer could be on top of a police officer before the officer could draw, target, and fire. While this is true, we cannot perform our duties at a distance greater than twenty feet. The Boy Scouts (Now Scouts BSA) have a saying they use while instructing knife safety to scouts. They call it a blood circle. Hold an imaginary knife in your hand, extend your arm straight out and turn around in a full circle. Nobody should be within that range. Use that as a bare minimum. I strongly recommend practicing the three foot rule. It takes some practice to make that distance feel natural.

Additionally, learn the field interview stance. Stand at a 45 degree angle to the subject you're contacting, with your weak leg (non-dominant) forward and your strong leg behind you and have your knees slightly bent. Have your upper arms relaxed at your sides while your lower arms are perpendicular and available to react to any potential threats. Again, never lock out your knees. You want to be able to react, pivot, advance, or run. From this distance from the subject, it is much easier to naturally see their hands in your peripheral vision without you having to make an effort.



Now go home and practice your distancing, stance and observation skills. Turn hand-watching into a game. Count how many times someone could have used their hands because you lost your focus. Challenge yourself to always improve your observation skills. These are perishable skills and life doesn't always afford us second chances.

---

### **About the Author**

*Christopher Mandala is a Senior Code Enforcement Officer in California and a retired LAPD Sergeant. He has over 30 years of experience in Law Enforcement and Code Enforcement. Chris is a CEOSF Officer Safety Certified Instructor (COSCI) and Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS). He is a Certified Code Enforcement Officer.*

# Edged Weapon Attacks & the Context of 21-feet

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

**"Beware the silent lethality of a knife."**

Sgt. Dennis Tueller of the Salt Lake City Police Department wrote an article titled "How Close is Too Close" which was published in the March 1983 edition of S.W.A.T. magazine. Tueller, a firearms instructor, was asked a question during training by a new police officer regarding the use of deadly force. The officer wanted to know at what point is an officer justified in shooting someone who is aggressively coming toward the officer with a knife? The essence of the question was at what distance is the officer justified in shooting. This led Tueller to conduct an experiment to see how quickly a threat can cover 7 yards which became known as the Tueller Drill. In his article Tueller states:

*"We have done some testing along those lines recently and have found that an average healthy adult male can cover the traditional seven yard distance in a time of... about one and one-half seconds. It would be safe to say then that an armed attacker at 21 feet is well within your Danger Zone."*

Thus was the beginning of what is often, but incorrectly, referred to as the "21-foot Rule" which continues to be the subject of much debate. I want to be very clear that the so called "21-foot Rule" is NOT a rule and was never intended to become a rule. The 21-foot Principle postulates that a threat with a knife who is running toward a police officer can cover a distance of 21 feet (7 yards) in about 1.5 seconds which is the time it takes an "average" officer to draw his firearm and fire two accurate rounds center mass. An unintended consequence was that the distance of 21-feet unofficially became codified as doctrine. Except that it is not!



The importance of Tueller's article was an increased understanding of the dangerousness of a knife attack and how fast a threat can close distance. The need to use situational awareness, create distance, use cover, concealment, and barriers were stressed in firearms training courses for both law enforcement and private citizens. The problem is there is a disconnect between what one knows about the dangers of edged weapons attack compared to the application of appropriate safety practices during an encounter. There are many examples in training and real-world encounters where the subject of an edged weapon attack:

1. Fails to take edged weapon's seriously
2. Does not use distance to their advantage
3. Fails to use cover/concealment or barriers when available
4. Attempts to back up when a threat is advancing forward in a full sprint
5. Cannot accurately or timely shoot the threat

An aggressive charging threat with an edged weapon is a high-stress, high-consequence encounter that can result in lethal injuries. There is little margin for error once an attack is initiated. One cannot afford to be complacent when time is limited and the distance is close.

As a code official you may be questioning how an article written by a police officer and printed in S.W.A.T. magazine 40 years ago has anything to do with your job. Those who have completed the Code Official Safety Specialist training which consists of 5-modules and 15 hours of training understand that violence does not care about your job title, name of your department, or the jurisdiction you serve. Understanding the principles of edged weapon attacks can keep you safer whether you carry a firearm or not. It is acknowledged that the vast majority of code officials do not carry a firearm and this article is not advocating that code officials be armed with a firearm. The main objective is to understand that 21 feet (or 30', 35', 40', etc.) is not a guarantee of safety and there are many variables that impact one's ability to effectively respond to a violent encounter.

### **Edged Weapons: Very Common and Extremely Dangerous**

Knives are so common in society that they are often viewed as a tool rather than a weapon. For example, many people carry a folding pocket knife which is primarily used to open boxes or letters rather than as a weapon. As a code official it is highly probable you will enter a residence, business, or job site containing tools that can be used to stab, cut, or chop such as a screwdriver, scissors, box cutter, saw, chisel, or axe. A pen or pencil can be used as a weapon of opportunity to stab. Familiarity breeds complacency and it becomes easy to lose sight of an edged weapons lethality. A cut to a major artery, such as the brachial or femoral artery, can lead to exsanguination in 3-5 minutes. A stab wound to the chest that punctures the heart or aorta is commonly fatal.



A female is being held hostage by a perpetrator using scissors. A good Samaritan intervenes using a shovel as a weapon of opportunity to save the victim.

## Time-Distance-Environment

Understanding the factors of Time-Distance-Environment and how to use each to your advantage can significantly increase the safety of code officials. In general:

- The closer you are to a threat the less time you have to respond
- The farther away you are from a threat the more time you have to respond
- The environment determines assets and liabilities that either improve or impair your safety

Being proactive with safety by identifying the location of exits, escape routes, cover/concealment, layout, etc. prior to an incident preloads relevant information that allows for faster and more informed decisions should an incident develop. Implementing decisions sooner allows you to be more effective with your use of time. Because time is a factor in all violent encounters your ability to make informed decisions sooner can be the deciding factor on the outcome.

### Distance and Time

The distance between you and a threat is directly correlated to the amount of time you have to respond to an attack. This is especially important when an edged weapon is involved. An edged weapon is generally considered a contact weapon meaning that the threat must be in close physical proximity for the weapon to cause injury. Such attacks are often very fast, aggressive, and extremely violent. As Tueller noted it is possible for a threat to cover 21' in approximately 1.5 seconds. As a code official how confident are you in your ability to effectively respond to an attack at a distance that is commonly encountered?

In law enforcement the "Reactionary Gap" is defined as "the minimum amount of space needed to ensure that you can properly react to whatever threat may be presented by a suspect being questioned or detained." Police are often taught to have a reactionary gap of 6-8' when interacting with a suspect who is unarmed or not visibly armed. Realistically, that is not a safe distance if the suspect has a concealed weapon or attacks with a weapon of opportunity. Also consider that police officers, in comparison to most code officials, receive significantly more training, have immediate access to a variety of safety tools (i.e. OC spray, expandable baton, Taser, and firearm), and have a direct line of communication to dispatch to summon backup. This stresses the importance for code officials to be very intentional about safety. The [SPAR Safety Model](#) as described in the July 2022 CEOSF Officer Safety Newsletter is a starting point to improve safety.

Code officials are routinely in close proximity to citizens. Rarely are they afforded the ability to interact at a distance that is truly safe, which means that a certain level of risk is present with every contact. This highlights the importance of continually improving safety skills to be situationally aware, avoid complacency, read body language, understand proxemics, implement de-escalation strategies, and make decisions that improve safety.

When in close proximity to a contact who aggressively attacks with a knife there is minimal time to respond assuming that your attention is focused on the threat when the attack is initiated. If you are distracted when the attack is initiated you may not have time to respond. Since action is faster than reaction you will be behind in the OODA Loop. Understand that your attention is diverted when you are writing a note, taking a photograph, examining a suspected violation, reading a text message, etc. which provides an opportunity for a contact to attack.

### Environment

The environment consists of variables that can be an asset or hindrance to your safety. Assets may include cover, concealment, barriers, etc. Safety can be hindered by a wet floor that is slippery, an exit door that is blocked or locked, an area with low visibility, snow or mud on the ground, etc. Environmental factors include: location - inside or outside, daytime or nighttime, lighting conditions – well lit, low light, no light, weather conditions, availability of cover/concealment, barriers, location of exits, weapons of opportunity you can use to protect yourself, etc. Examples of environmental factors that impact a code official's safety during an edged weapon attack may include:

- A Code Enforcement Officer is inspecting a residence of a hoarder. During the inspection the homeowner becomes irate, grabs a knife, and begins to attack. The CEO's ability to rapidly escape the house is severely limited because of decreased mobility due to clutter.
- A Parking Enforcement Officer is writing a citation for an illegally parked vehicle when a man about 25 yards away begins screaming obscenities, pulls out a pocket knife, and starts sprinting toward the officer. The Parking Enforcement Officer uses parked vehicles as a barrier between himself and the angry knife wielding vehicle owner.
- An Animal Control Officer is at a house where there have been numerous complaints of aggressive dogs escaping from the backyard and terrorizing the neighborhood. The homeowner claims the backyard is secure and invites the ACO to verify. Once in the backyard the homeowner places a padlock on the gate, grabs an old axe and says to the ACO, "Let's see how secure the backyard is. Try to escape." The gate is locked, the backyard is an uneven dirt lot that is muddy and contains multiple locked gates trapping the ACO in a small confined area.
- A Health Inspector is conducting an inspection at a restaurant. While inspecting the kitchen an employee is mopping the floor. For no apparent reason a cook grabs a meat cleaver and yells at the Health Inspector to leave the restaurant. As the Health Inspector immediately runs to the nearest exit to escape he slips and falls on the wet floor.
- A Fire Inspector is inspecting the fire safety system at a business that is being renovated. The inspector identifies that the control panel is wired incorrectly creating a fire hazard. The electrician is adamant that the control panel is fine and wired correctly. Tensions heat up and the electrician grabs a screwdriver and threatens to rewire the Fire Inspector's brain. The Fire Inspector is in a very small dimly lit room with an angry electrician blocking the only exit.






In addition to **Time** and **Distance**, the **Environment** can include factors that assist or hinder a response.

Environmental Considerations:

Image 1: Snow on the ground can negatively impact stability.

Image 2: A confined area can negatively impact mobility.

Image 3: A sunny environment can negatively impact one's vision.

Image 4: Inside a residence can result in limited mobility in an unfamiliar environment.

Notice the close proximity in each encounter and that each attacker is using the same grip to hold the knife.

As a code official start think about the tasks you perform on a typical day and consider the following:

- Are you preloading safety information as you arrive at the location? (SPAR Safety Model)
  - This can include escape routes, exits, cover/concealment, barriers, number of people, places where a threat could hide and attack, presence of weapons, presence of alcohol/drugs to include paraphernalia, aggressive animals, security cameras, weather conditions, lighting conditions, ground conditions to include wet or uneven, unusual smells, etc.
- At what distance are you commonly interacting with citizens?
- How much time would you have to respond if attacked?

## Conclusion

Violent encounters often happen very fast and at a very close distance. The reality is that a threat (armed or unarmed) can cover a distance of 21 feet in approximately 1.5 seconds. Assuming you are at a longer distance of 30', 35', or 40' from an attacking threat still does not buy you a lot of extra time to respond especially if a weapon is involved. Since many code officials work at a close distance with contacts your response time is going to be very limited. Therefore you must remain vigilant and aware. You must choose to make safety a priority.

Tueller's article was really about understanding the concept of distance pertaining to a reactionary gap to improve officer safety rather than creating a definitive measurement of 21-feet as an absolute measure of safety. To imply that 21-feet is definitive is to ignore the totality of circumstances and the context of each incident. You safety is dependent on many factors.

## About the Author

*Scott Kirshner, M.Ed., COSCI, INCI, SAS-AP® has been a Parole Administrator, Supervisory Probation Officer, and a Corrections Officer. He has extensive experience as an officer survival trainer and has been a lead defensive tactics instructor, firearms instructor, and use of force instructor. He is the author of Officer Survival for Code Enforcement Officers. Mr. Kirshner is the owner and Lead Instructor of Dedicated Threat Solutions, LLC. He can be reached at: [info@dedicatedthreatsolutions.com](mailto:info@dedicatedthreatsolutions.com)*

# Summertime Safety

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

With kids out of school and vacations underway, summertime is a good time for relaxation. However, your safety protocol should never take a break. Maintaining a mindful approach to work, along with adding some helpful warm-weather habits, will help ensure a safe season.

If a ballistic vest is in your wardrobe, don't give it the summer off. Humidity and heat may tempt you to forego the discomfort of body armor, but the "long hot summer" describes flares of hostility as surely as it does the blazing sun. Continue the healthy habit of wearing and bearing personal protective gear. Augment it with the self-care habits of frequent, intentional hydration; using sun block; taking work breaks; and maintaining sensible scheduling.

Good self-care habits begin with carrying an adequate supply of drinking water in your work vehicle, and partaking of it throughout your shift. Consider adding electrolyte supplements or sports drinks for those days that really open your pores. If you find yourself away from your vehicle for extended periods, wear a hydration pack as a high volume, hands-free water source.

If you're not already in the habit of using sun block, now's the time to start. Sun protection doesn't just come in a tube or spray can, either. Consider investing in UV protective clothing. A brimmed hat may be helpful for keeping some of the sun off your face (and neck!), but may also reduce cooling of your scalp. Play with it, and see what works best for you and your work dress code. And speaking of dress codes, if your employer allows, consider lighter color clothing during the hotter months, as they tend to absorb less sunlight. Wearing sunglasses reduces eye fatigue and can improve your situational awareness. That said, don't forget to remove your sunglasses when contacting the public—first impressions set the tone for your contact. The visual barrier of sunglasses may reduce trust and cooperation, and increase hostility. Get into the habit of having a safe place to stash your solar specs during contacts, so they don't become a distraction or create defensive lag time by tying up your hands. Many uniform-"ish" shirts have sunglass loops that you can thread an earpiece through...or the glasses can stay in the car.



Taking breaks, while a healthy habit, is not without its own set of risks and countermeasures. Sitting in an air-conditioned vehicle may place you at risk for approach and contact by a hostile party. Engine noise, AC fan, and your favorite playlist all reduce your ability to hear approaching threats. Shady parking spaces reduce your visibility to others as well as your view of a potential threat. Taking a break in a restaurant is certainly tempting, but also not without risks. Hostile contacts, and even attacks, have occurred while guard is down during a meal.

Always sit with your back to a wall (not a window), and try to have visibility of the entrance—and ideally, a clear path to an exit. Keep in mind that kitchens and dining rooms provide easy access to weapons (which don't know the difference between offensive and defensive use, by the way). Ideally, breaks should be taken in non-public areas of public buildings. Getting out of the sun, enjoying a meal, or getting caught up on inspection notes are best done in a restricted access environment such as your office or a police or fire station. Stopping by home in your “company” vehicle is not an ideal way to fly under the radar, and a brief stop may result in increasing your risk profile around the clock. Instead, stock a cooler for your car with a few shelf-stable snacks in your go-bag as good countermeasures to workday hunger and flagging energy levels.



Finally, attempt to perform inspections during the cooler parts of the day when possible. Try to pace your inspections to provide opportunities to break in a cool and secure environment. Summer might be an ideal time to try out virtual inspection protocols from the comfort (and safety) of your office.

Managing your environment and maintaining healthy, defensive-minded habits and routines are no less important during summertime. Be aware, have a plan, and act intentionally. Remain committed to a safety mindset, and don't forget to schedule some extended time away to enjoy family and friends!

---

### About the Author

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

---

# YOURself-care

by Jeanette Loven, CCEO, CTO

When you hear “self-care” do you groan either out loud or inwardly? I do! I’m so tired of hearing about self-care I usually check out during the lecture. I hear all of the don’t do this, don’t do that. Do this, do that. I end up thinking I am doing all the don’ts and am not doing the do’s. I feel worse than when the lecture started. So, I turned to others for what they do for self-care. What a treasure trove I found. I posted the question on the most accurate source of information.... social media, of course. I posed the question to the Animal Control/Code Enforcement group of what each person does for their own self-care. I did not receive the standard answers of eat right, get enough sleep, don’t drink caffeine. Come on? We eat when and what we can. Sleep? I haven’t slept since I was three. That was...well I’ll leave that one there. Caffeine? How do are we supposed to get out of bed? The responses made me chuckle and realize I am not failing at self-care. I only need to master one or two that work for me. Here is a list of what others have said they learned to master.

**Brian S** - recommends using the Employee Assistance Program (EPA) if it is available and trying not to bring the yuck home. He has taken up the hobby of photography, as well as hiking. He said he can turn to social media for peer support. Brian, we are all here for you! Reach out anytime! My department has started a Peer Support Team, and I am looking into joining it. What a great resource this can be for each other.

**Daniel** - changes from Animal Control to Fish Control. Yes! Yes Daniel!

**Courtney** - runs with the dogs. My dog runs me, Courtney. However, I will say puppy therapy is some of my personal favorite self-care.

**Chris** - complains and curses a lot. Oh Chris, that is part of my resume I’m proficient at.

**Charles** - has taken up horseback riding and training. He has a goal of riding from Fort Worth, TX to Lubbock, TX. He found that after he was diagnosed with compassion fatigue/PTSD he needed to leave things at work, and he was going to okay. Charles, we all look forward to seeing your pictures from your trip. Thank you for your open honesty.

**Rosangela** - has a good cry. Rosangela, I have done that many times while in my hammock.

**Lindsey** - turns off everything thing, curls up with a book or starts cleaning. Lindsey, come on over to my house anytime.

**Julez** - drinks a glass of wine in the bathtub. She claims the bathtub isn’t full of wine. But I suspect there are days.

For me I do a lot of what you each are doing. I will add I get on the motorcycle and ride through the sweeping curves of any road. There is something about letting the wind blow the worries away.

---

## **About the Author**

*Jeanette Loven is a Lead Code Enforcement/Animal Control Officer and Field Training Officer in Colorado. She has experience as an Emergency Dispatcher for Police, Fire, Sheriff, and U.S. Forest Service. Jeanette is a Certified Training Officer and has been a CPR/First Aid instructor for over 22 years. She currently serves as Regional Representative for Region 11 for CEOSF.*

## Upcoming CEOSF Training

CEOSF PRESENTS A NEW WEBINAR  
**HIGH RISK CASE  
MANAGEMENT**

*Officer Safety Webinar*

**Thursday July 27, 2023  
12pm-3pm EST**

Learn about:

- Predictive Analytics
- Risk Mitigation
- Intel Gathering
- Tactical Considerations
- Case Planning
- Off-Duty Survival



*PRESENTED BY CHRISTOPHER MANDALA, COSCI, COSS, CCEO*

**REGISTER: [WWW.CODEOFFICERSAFETY.ORG](http://WWW.CODEOFFICERSAFETY.ORG)**



Whether you are a seasoned inspector or on your first day, managing cases and job sites are a daily task. Not every case or inspection is the same. Some cases involve repeat violators or contractors. In this course you will learn how to identify cases or projects that pose an exceptional risk to your safety. We will also discuss how to mitigate those risks in order to live to see another day. The instructor will draw examples and content from actual cases.

**About the Instructor:** Christopher Mandala is a CEOSF Officer Safety Certified Instructor (COSCI), Code Official Safety Specialist (COSS), and a Certified Code Enforcement Officer (CCEO). Chris is a retired LAPD Sergeant and currently serves as a Senior Code Enforcement Officer in California.

REGISTER on our homepage: [www.CodeOfficerSafety.org](http://www.CodeOfficerSafety.org)

## CEOSF Officer Safety Certified Instructors (COSCI)

The Foundation created the COSCI program to vet instructor credentials and ensure that a COSCI has the background, experience, and credentials to teach on subjects related to officer safety. They do not need to be about code enforcement, but any subject that is officer safety. Our Certification Committee reviews all applications, interviews the candidate, and makes a recommendation to the Board.



### **Timothy Sun, COSCI, COSS**

Tim is the Vice President of CEOSF and a Code Enforcement Manager in California with 20 years of Code Enforcement and law enforcement experience. He has taught at the CACEO academies on officer safety and been a Chair. Tim teaches several classes in-person ranging from basic officer safety, to self defense, to firearms, and more.



### **Kirk Palmer, COSCI, COSS**

Kirk is a CEOSF Board Member and a Code Enforcement Supervisor in Georgia with nearly 30 years of experience as a Peace Officer and in Code Enforcement. He has taught numerous classes in Georgia on officer safety, gangs, sovereign citizens, and first amendment auditors.



### **Scott Kirshner, COSCI, M.Ed., INCI**

Scott is our Lead Instructor and developed the COSS training curriculum. He has over 30 years of experience teaching about violence, officer safety, and situational awareness. He travels the country teaching different classes for agencies large and small. Scott is President of Dedicated Threat Solutions, LLC.



### **Darrell Revier, COSCI, COSS**

Darrell has over 20 years of experience in Code Enforcement and Animal Control. He is a Code Enforcement Officer in California and previously served as CACEO President for two terms. He has also been the Chair of the Officer Safety Committee. Darrell teaches at the CACEO academy and covers basic officer safety, animal safety, and biohazards.



### **Dean Phaneuf, COSCI, COSS**

Dean has over 42 years experience in law enforcement and currently serves as a Code Enforcement Manager in California. Dean was a Police Sergeant, Bomb Squad Commander, SWAT Member, and a Detective. He also served as a Special Deputy U.S. Marshal assigned to a FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force.



### **Christopher Mandala, COSCI, COSS**

Chris has 30 years experience in law enforcement and Code Enforcement in California. He was a Sergeant with LAPD and currently serves as a Code Enforcement Coordinator. Chris specializes in warrants, high risk inspections, and officer safety principles.



### **Cody Tweedy, COSCI**

Cody is a dedicated public servant with over 15 years of public safety experience. He has worked as a firefighter for multiple agencies holding the ranks of Firefighter, Lieutenant, Captain, and Battalion Chief. He also became an EMS Supervisor in Colorado. Cody is currently a Police Officer assigned to Traffic.



### **Justin Gardiner, COSCI, COSS**

Justin is a Senior Code Enforcement Officer in California and previously served as a Police Corporal and Field Training Officer. He serves on the CACEO Board of Directors and as Chair of the Officer Safety Committee. Justin specializes in first aid, stop the bleed, and active shooter training.

## 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!

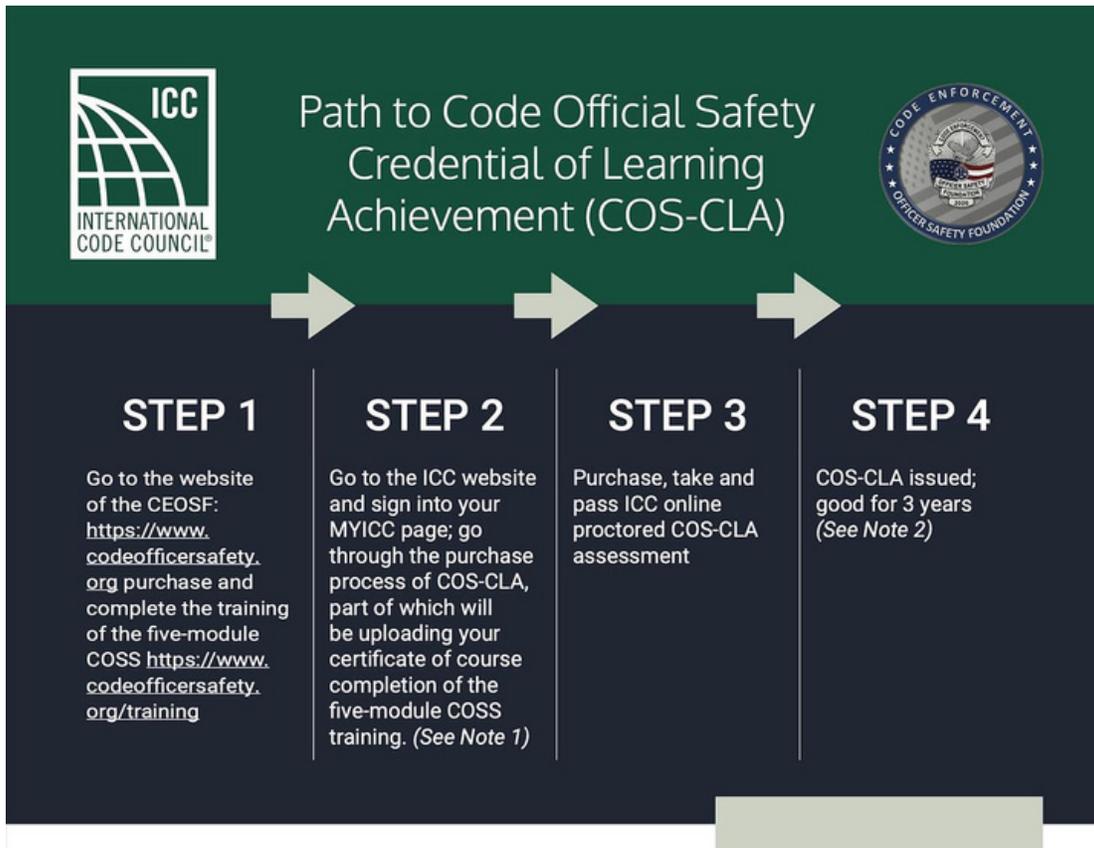


### IN-PERSON COSS TRAINING

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](mailto:info@codeofficersafety.org)

# 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/>



## BE CAREFUL

Sadly this quarter has been the deadliest for Code Officials over the decades, mainly the month of August. Be safe, stay alert, and get home!

### In Memory

From July through August we remember and honor those who have died serving their communities.

July 3rd – **EARL BOWMAN**, Indiana  
(21st anniversary - Murder)

July 22nd – **LISA MARIE MELANCON**, Washington  
(13th anniversary - Murder)

August 5th – **DAVID FLEETWOOD**, Pennsylvania  
(10th anniversary - Murder)

August 6th – **MEL OVERWATER**, Michigan  
(3rd anniversary - Medical)

August 9th – **JILL ROBINSON**, Utah  
(5th anniversary - Murder)

August 19th – **CYNTHIA VOLPE**, California  
(31st anniversary - Murder)

August 20th – **CHARLES "CHIP" CASE**, Georgia  
(3rd anniversary - Murder)

August 21st – **CATHY ANN COX**, Georgia  
(15th anniversary - Accident)

August 23rd – **JAMES MADDEN**, Illinois  
(91st anniversary - Murder)

August 27th – **DANNY SAENZ**, Texas  
(1st anniversary - Medical)

August 29th – **DEANGLIS GIBSON**, Florida  
(2nd anniversary - COVID-19)

August 31st – **JEFF ZIEGLER**, Ohio  
(3rd anniversary - Medical)



# 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.



---

# 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.CodeOfficerSafety.org)**