



Officer Safety Column: National Data Collection: A Call to Action



A major problem facing law enforcement today in relation to preventing violence against the police is limited sharing of high-quality data about the incidents. The IACP's Center for Officer Safety and Wellness argues that to optimally prevent injuries and line of duty deaths before they occur, analysis needs to take place regarding each previous incident to identify trends and generate lessons learned. After an extensive review of the currently available data regarding line of duty deaths and serious injuries, the Center has determined a number of key findings:

- The best quality data currently available exist in police reports of the incidents.
- The majority of data that are nationally available other than police reports does not provide the level of context that is needed to adequately analyze and learn from incidents.
- To best analyze each incident, there needs to be quality narrative analysis of the reports created at all levels of the investigation; time, date, age, and so forth tell only a small part of the story.
- Existing data in police reports are not adequately shared, and agencies vary greatly in their willingness to release information.
- Better collaboration is needed for agencies to best benefit from the data collected from these incidents.
- The variation in software used by collection agencies makes combining data sets complex.
- The limitation of data sharing leads to agencies not being able to adequately learn from incidents, and those that do make this effort are not sharing their experiences nationally.

Recommendations from the IACP

Improve information sharing efforts. To do this, there needs to be an effort to encourage law enforcement to share information and put agreements in place to ensure data sharing by all agencies across local, state, tribal, and federal jurisdictions.

Cultivate relationships with research entities. From the IACP to local universities, such collaborations will benefit not only individual agencies but also the field at large.

Encourage a culture of learning. Through training and information exchange across law enforcement and research institutions, lessons learned can be shared beyond the walls of a given agency.

Report assaults. Assaults on officers are underreported, and, to better understand the current climate and get a clearer picture, agencies must report all assaults to FBI LEOKA.

Aid in the creation of a national database. The creation of a comprehensive database that brings together all line of duty deaths and serious injuries will facilitate analysis and the ability to better understand the incidents and identify trends.

What the IACP Is Doing to Help

Analyzes data. IACP staff use information from the field to identify trends and acts as a clearinghouse. Agencies provide data on injuries and line of duty deaths to the IACP through mutual agreements.

Creates a data source engine. Data across multiple sources need to be combined so events can be fully analyzed. The IACP can facilitate the creation of a data source engine.

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Ensures security of information. Unnecessary restrictions on data decrease the value of analysis efforts. The IACP staff will ensure the security of all data.

Disseminates lessons learned. Injuries from critical incidents should be seen as opportunities to learn and prevent them from occurring in the future. The IACP plays an integral role in ensuring this information reaches the field.



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Data Providers Examined

- BJA Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program (PSOB)
- CDC National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics: Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries Program (CFOI)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation: Law Enforcement Officers Killed & Assaulted (LEOKA)
- National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial Fund (NLEOMF)
- IACP/DuPont Kevlar Survivors' Club
- National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)
- BJS: Police Public Contact Survey (PPCS)
- BJS: Arrest-Related Deaths (ARD)
- ATF: e-Trace
- DOT: National Highway Transportation Safety Agency: Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS)

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