

Safety Shorts

General Safety, Highway, & Law Enforcement

May 2024

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Volume 12, Number 5

May Is Correct Your Posture Month

Correct Your Posture Month encourages us to consciously think about the way we align our bodies during the different activities we perform every day. Poor posture affects our long-term health. Over time, poor posture causes bone and joint issues that places our quality of life at risk. From pain and discomfort to other health issues caused by medication use, slouching can be the ground zero issue that if remedied early can save a lot of agony later.

Like many small concerns that snowball later in life, poor posture can lead to debilitating headaches, injury, circulatory issues, etc. Good posture comes with practice. <https://nationaldaycalendar.com/correct-your-posture-month-may/>.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS

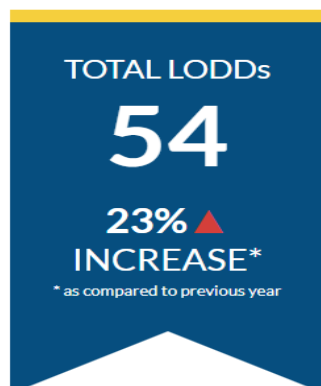
By Todd Duncan, Law Enforcement and Safety Specialist

Below 100

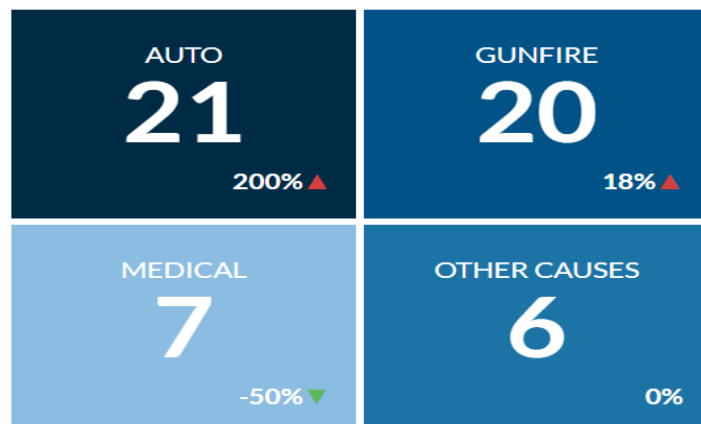
In conjunction with National Police Week in May, this month's installment of the law enforcement Safety Short focuses on the [Below 100 initiative](#). Sometimes it's helpful to go back to the basics, especially when it comes to officer safety. The tragic loss of Ceresco, Nebraska, Police Officer Ross Bartlett and the murders of four North Carolina officers in the last couple of weeks are a sobering reminder of the dangers law enforcement officers face every day.

According to the Officer Down Memorial Page (ODMP), there have been 54 total line of duty deaths (LODD) so far in 2024, a 23% increase from the same time last year. Leading causes of LODDs this year are auto (21), gunfire (20), medical (7), and other causes (6).

LODDs at a Glance



Leading Causes of Death



Background

The Below 100 initiative was born out of an idea that came up while a group of law enforcement officers were sitting around a dinner table at a conference in 2010. One of those present, Major Travis Yates of the Tulsa Police Department made a statement that got everyone's attention: "If we would just slow down, wear our seatbelts, and clear intersections, we could get our line of duty deaths to Below 100 a year." From that dinner table discussion, the Below 100 has evolved into a nationwide effort to reduce line of duty deaths to below 100, which has not occurred since 1943. Major Yates' statement would later shape the Below 100 mission statement to "Reduce line-of-duty deaths to fewer than 100 per year."

Key Tenants

There are five key tenants to the Below 100 initiative that have a major impact on increasing officer safety:

1. Wear your belt.
2. Wear your vest.
3. Watch your speed.
4. WIN- What's Important Now?
5. Remember: Complacency Kills!

With auto collisions and gunfire as the two main causes of LODDs year after year, it's easy to see why the Below 100 founders chose these five tenants. These are the areas where we can make the biggest difference in saving lives. Furthermore, these tenants are straightforward, simple to train, and cost little to nothing to implement.

Leadership Buy-In

For initiatives like Below 100 to be taken seriously, safety needs to be a core principle of an agency's culture, and culture starts at the top. Actions speak louder than words. Nothing sends a stronger message to line personnel than seeing the sheriff or sergeant wearing their body armor every day, practicing excellent officer safety, and setting a good example when driving.

A simple three-part formula leaders can use when promoting positive change within an organization's culture is to focus on policy, training, and oversight. Does your agency have clear policies, i.e. "personnel shall drive with due regard for the safety of others when operating vehicles in routine and emergency situations"? Are all personnel adequately trained on the policies, including the "why," i.e. we care about you, it's the law, public safety, legal liability, etc. Are supervisors regularly reminded of the expectation that they oversee the day-to-day performance of their employees, i.e. occasionally showing up on calls, reviewing reports, holding shift meetings, actively monitoring pursuits, etc., and addressing policy or safety violations in a timely, constructive manner?

Accountability

Is accountability modeled by leadership, promoted at all levels, and rewarded when it is demonstrated? Do leaders and line personnel have the courage to hold each other accountable when policies and safety rules are violated? These can be tough conversations. Using the A.I.R. method when approaching someone about performance or conduct issues, including safety concerns, can be an effective way to keep these conversations constructive.

A	Action	I noticed while reviewing video from last night's pursuit that you violated the red light and drove through the intersection of Hwy. 6 and Main Street at 60 mph without slowing down, nearly colliding with an uninvolved motorist.
I	Impact	This violated the law and agency policy, and most importantly, put yourself and the public at risk of serious injury or death.
R	Request	In the future, I need you to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons at all times and slow down when violating stop signs or red lights at intersections as needed to avoid collisions with other vehicles.

Conclusion

As NIRMA's Loss Prevention Manager Chad Engle always says, "Risk management is a verb, not a noun." Hopefully this Safety Short will encourage you to start (or continue) conversations with your staff about the Below 100 initiative and agency policies that support the five key tenants. It could be as simple as:

1. Policy- Reviewing your policies related to critical tasks such as vehicle operations, body armor, and officer safety to ensure they are clear, concise, and reflect current laws and generally accepted best practices.
2. Training- Conducting training with staff on critical policies related to operation of motor vehicles in routine and emergency situations, traffic stops, officer safety, etc. Effective training can take many forms including traditional classroom instruction, brief team discussions led by a sergeant at the beginning of a shift, and one-on-one coaching.
3. Oversight- Ensuring that command staff are engaged in day-to-day operations and aware of what's going on at all levels of the organization. Reminding supervisors of their responsibilities for developing their employees, monitoring performance, addressing performance issues, etc. Equally important is providing supervisors with the training, tools, and support needed to succeed in their role. They play a critical role in ensuring agency policies are followed consistently.

One final note on driving: Members are encouraged to take advantage of the National Safety Council's defensive/distracted driving course provided by NIRMA's Loss Prevention team at no cost. Distracted driving is a major risk factor for members, particularly law enforcement officers, and the consequences can be devastating as seen in the case of the [2007 high-speed, distracted-driving crash involving an Illinois state trooper that killed sisters Kelli and Jessica Uhl](#). For more information on scheduling defensive/distracted driving training at your agency, contact the NIRMA Loss Prevention Team at (402) 742-9220.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

By K C Pawling, Road Safety and Loss Prevention Specialist

Just Slow Down, Relax and Have Fun

Last month in my safety short article, I talked about the challenges we may have to overcome while we are having or trying to have safety meetings. Challenges may include getting the support needed from senior leadership, keeping all generations of the workforce engaged, and even finding the time for safety meetings.

We are always going to have some safety meeting challenges. We are also going to make mistakes. Safety meeting mistakes are going to happen in any safety program, but hopefully we are learning from them. The National Safety Council's magazine Safety+Health shared a few mistakes that safety professionals have made, so that we are able to learn from other's mistakes. Here are some of those mistakes, and some of my own:

- **Do not assume others see facts the way you do.** You may need to present the information you want to communicate in a different manner. Some people identify with statistics while others would rather have the information presented in a funny, entertaining manner. Use a combination of presentation styles but keep it simple, do not overcomplicate the messages.
- **Make sure the training is relevant to your work.** This one may sound simple, but sometimes we get so focused on the topic, or we are just trying to check boxes of having safety meetings, that we lose sight of relevance. We do not want to present slips trips and falls in the office setting to the road department, you are surely going to lose the audience. Convert the information to road department relevant scenarios.
- **Training is too long.** This is a tough one, as some topics just must be longer to cover all the material needed for the training. But try to keep them abbreviated. Keep the topics shorter, if possible, counter this with having safety meetings more often.
- **Too many topics.** This one kind of goes together with the earlier mistake. You may need to have more frequent safety meetings rather than overwhelming the employees with topics.
- **Be more organic while delivering the information.** Just reading from a PowerPoint or other material is not going to be effective. Slow down, use examples, expose yourself and share your experiences. People will respond to your experiences.
- **Do not just preach.** You may be able to incorporate some hands-on activities or demonstrations.
- **Slow down.** You may need to slow down and allow discussion of the topic. Give employees a chance to share their experiences or concerns. It is about them and their safety.

In closing, I am going to say this. Do not assume people are going to do better because they know better. We are human and we are always going to take the easier softer way of doing things, which does not necessarily mean the safer way. Try not to be confrontational, function as an advocate more than an enforcer, but keep in mind that you may need to hold someone accountable for reoccurring incidents. Give your group a reason that they should be working safer. Family is usually a reason everyone can understand why they should be working more safely. Do not forget to have a little fun too!

Keep in mind that our loss prevention staff here at NIRMA are here to help with your safety meetings. If I can help in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

kcpawling@nirma.info or 402-310-4417.

GENERAL SAFETY

By Chad Engle, Loss Prevention Manager and Safety Specialist

May is National What Month?

May is a great month. It is the unofficial start of summer, it's my birthday month, my wife's birthday month, national motorcycle safety awareness month, national bicycle safety awareness month, and national mental health awareness month. That may seem like a lot to tackle in one article, but I'm going to do my best.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) urges everyone to share the road and be alert. The NHTSA also reminds motorcyclists to make themselves visible, to use DOT-compliant helmets and to always ride sober. In addition to proper helmets, arms and legs should be completely covered when riding, ideally with leather or heavy denim. Boots or shoes should be high enough to cover your ankles, and gloves should be worn to provide a better grip and protect your hands in the event of a crash. Brightly colored and reflective clothing will help make riders more visible to other vehicle drivers. For more information on how to operate motorcycles safely, please visit www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/motorcycle-safety.

NHTSA has a few things to say about bicycle operation safety, as well. They encourage safer choices while on the road to reduce deaths and injuries. Like motorcycle riders, bicyclists are urged to wear a properly fitting helmet. There are two main types of crashes for bicyclists: falls and collisions with cars. To decrease your risk of a crash you should do the following:

- Ride a bike that fits you
- Wear reflective/hi-vis gear and use lights at night (white for front/red for rear)
- Plan your route. . . choose the safest route with the least amount of auto traffic
- Drive with the flow of traffic and obey the rules of the road
- Ride predictably and work on improving your bike handling skills

For more details on bicycle safety visit: www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/bicycle-safety.

As automobile drivers we need to keep in mind there are other lawful users of our roadways and that we need to be considerate and careful. We have all heard the saying "share the road." This applies to automobile drivers as they interact with both motorcycles and bicycles. Yield just as you would to other automobiles. Give them both sufficient room when you pass. Nebraska's Bicycle Guide points out that Nebraska has a "3-foot rule" when passing cyclists. The guide can be found here: <https://dot.nebraska.gov/media/k4afs1kb/bicycle-guide.pdf>.

Remember to "Look Twice – Save a Life." This means you should look twice at your surroundings while driving to keep an eye out for motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians, and even other cars. Doing this can save someone's life, perhaps your own.

All this talk of traffic safety is a great segue into training. All three NIRMA Safety Specialists are certified to present the National Safety Council's Defensive Driving Courses. The course we normally recommend is Defensive Driving Course 4-hour (DDC 4). We would love the opportunity to come out to your county or agency to present a session on defensive driving. The course covers interactions with motorcycles and bicycles, too. Driving is the most dangerous task we perform regularly; this is reflected in the number of claims we see due to member county and agency car crashes. DDC 4 is presented at no cost to our members. Please give me a call at 1.800.642.6671 or email me at chad@nirma.info if you would like to set up a session of DDC 4.

National Mental Health Awareness Month was started in 1949 by Mental Health America to bring attention to the importance of mental wellbeing. Mental Health America provides the following statistics: Nearly 1 in 5 American adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year and 46 percent of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their life, and half of those people will develop conditions by the age of 14. As you can see, it is common for people to suffer from mental health issues.

The National Safety Council has developed a training program to help employers better understand the impact mental health conditions have on a person, their family, and their safety while on and off the job.

There are also many resources available at Mental Health America that you may access via this link <https://mhanational.org/>.

Have a safe summer!!