



THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

Newsletter article April, 2021

As the first quarter of 2021 faded into the history books, so did 90 of our brothers and sisters in blue. 90 is unconscionable. This is a 114% increase over 2020, the worst year on record. 2020 claimed the title from 1930 by an additional 16 deaths.

When looking at statistics and trends, of course we have to remember anomalies, like COVID for our increase in 2020 or 9/11 for a spike in 2001 for a couple of examples. When reviewing trends to determine if there is an increase in line of duty death that we can use to predict future incidents and reduce the factors that lead to them, these isolated kind of events can be misleading on face value; however they also cannot be completely discarded. COVID, for instance can be battled and factors reduced. We can lose weight, avoid sugars, wash our hands and all the other advice the CDC has given that I am sure we are all tired of hearing at this point. 9/11? Well evidence that our job has inherent risk, and if you're in it for the reasons 99.999% of us are, then you're accepting those risks and running into the towers. You're running into Columbine Highschool, you're running into Sandy Hook, and you running into that Boulder King Soopers. The willingness of nearly 100% of a million law enforcement officers across the country to do so, is what makes the attacks on police so hurtful. The masses who accuse us of being racist and filled with hate, have no idea what is in our hearts and just what we are willing to do for any human being - no further descriptor needed.

In reviewing this quarter, we removed COVID deaths. We assume most officers are aware of the threat and are doing what is needed to mitigate it without hearing about it from The Blue Family Tree. Just to be clear, COVID is an important factor for you to focus on. After removing it from both first quarter statistics, that 114% increase dropped to a 14% increase. In the first quarter of last year COVID was responsible for just 7 deaths as it was just crossing the pond at that time. In 2021 it claimed 50 officers in the first quarter. To have a real clear picture of where we are doing better or worse, we felt removing COVID might help.

In the first quarter of 2021 we are essentially the same as 2020 in many of the big categories. Gunfire: up one, vehicular assault: up two, vehicle crashes: down two, and heart attacks: down one. The numbers are so slight that standing alone they offer little guidance. Struck by incidents have made a huge spike in the first quarter from

one in 2020 to six in the last three months, and while crashes are down two, We did notice what we thought was a disturbing trend. The benefit of statistics is sometimes being proven wrong, but also finding an alarming fact.

It appeared to us in review that there was an increase of single vehicle crashes where officers responding to something emergent, or just patrolling at 3:30 in the morning, left the road and collided with a pole. Turns out we were kind of wrong, unfortunately. The following is single vehicle crash fatalities. Please note, it is not officer at fault fatalities. We are surely at fault for many of the multi vehicle crashes, and there may be some bizarre extenuating circumstances that are not clear in the statistic that alleviate a driver of fault in some single vehicle crashes. So please, just take the information for what it is.

single vehicle crash picture

	total crashes	single vehicle	percentage		total MC crashes	single vehicle	percentage
2020	19	7	36%		4	3	75%
2019	23	13	56%		1	0	0
2018	26	13	50%		3	0	0%
2017	28	15	53%		5	0	0%
2016	19	10	52%		8	0	0%
five year total	115	58	50%		21	3	14%

In the first quarter of 2021 three of the five crashes were single vehicle. While three months is not long enough to identify a trend, this 60% figure is what initially brought our attention to the issue.

The final category that appeared to be abnormal was assaults. 4-0 gives the beginning of 2021 a 400% increase over its predecessor. Startling but not overly surprising given today's climate around law enforcement. Criminals are certainly feeling empowered. We have all seen it. They know we cannot take them to jail for many offenses, and that the courts are so overwhelmed many cases are seeing speedy violations and being dismissed. Criminals have a voice now like never before and the respect for authority in general has deteriorated tremendously. As a result violent assaults on peace officers, and jail staff will increase, and we should be aware of it.

What officers choose to do with anything we provide with regards to the factors that are leading to line of duty death is entirely up to you. We are not here to tell you to slow down, or go to the station and take a ten minute nap. Likewise we are not here to critique your interview stance or how you handle your jail booking procedures. We're only here to remind you of what you already know, and keep the important things fresh in your mind. It's too easy for clutter to get stacked on top of what's important, and then we aren't paying attention to it anymore. We keep moving the important documents on your mind's desk to the top of the stacks. We keep them in your face so you don't forget. As stated before there are always exceptions where a single vehicle crash was inevitable, but not in the numbers we see in the graph above. We know you want to climb the towers, and run into King Soopers and save lives, but be sure that on the way to saving lives, and in those lonely early morning hours of mind-numbing patrol, you're remembering what's important to your own life. Keep those documents dusted off and fresh.