



THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

Newsletter article August, 2020

As we approach the fall of what many are referring to as the worst year ever, I know police everywhere are feeling run down, unappreciated, and even numb. We're tired of being the target of so many. We really just want to move on and forget the last seven months. Why can't we just go back?

Well, in many aspects, we can. The dust is beginning to settle and we can see that our departments are still there. No one is suing us yet, and for the most part, our communities still support what we do every day. Admittedly, there are some changes that will have long lasting impacts on us and our profession. We will have to learn to do some things differently. We may even find ourselves a bit guarded from the community as a result; an outcome the community may wish had not happened.

The most important thing we can focus on with regards to our shift safety is this: Take a break. I would never advise anyone not to pay attention to the local and national news. You need to know what is happening and be informed. But I highly recommend a break from the social media rhetoric, the click bait, and the images of hate. Everybody at some point in their career needs a mental and emotional reset. That's why we are granted annual leave. Unfortunately right now, we all need it. Find ways within your department to get everyone a few days or even a week off. Go fishing, camping, skydiving, or whatever COVID will allow you to do. Do it with the people you love and remind them, and yourself, that everything is going to be ok. Be realistic with each other about the new risks, and added liabilities, but also focus on the strengths that have come from this for you and your family. An increased sense of focus and awareness at work, a new realization of the importance of good articulation and report writing, a renewed determination to do what is right because it's what is right.

We have lost 21 officers in six weeks. Our mental focus and decision making has clearly been compromised. We cannot afford to wrap ourselves in body armor and point a black and white car towards danger, if our minds are not prepared to go in with us. If this is you, take a mental health day. If you don't have annual leave, use sick leave, and if you don't have sick leave, talk to your supervisor. I promise you they do not want you on the street either if you are not ready and finding you some leave

hours is far cheaper than a death benefit. Take this warning seriously. I believe that our lack of mental preparedness is the number one contributing factor to line of duty death, and at a time when nearly all of us have a reduced preparedness we cannot cover the danger by surrounding ourselves with confident co-workers. The risk to us is high. Our communities are becoming more violent and feeling increasingly empowered to act out at police, at the same time that we are experiencing this reduction in mental preparedness, job satisfaction, and willingness to do the job. The combination of these things with even more factors like social media, and political powers implementing new police reform laws is a perfect storm for the creation of deadly scenarios for law enforcement. Now, more than ever, you need to be prepared. I hear Cabo is nice this time of year. When you come back, be ready to work.