



THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

Newsletter article July, 2023

As we move to the second half of 2023 we here at The Blue Family Tree are excited about the appearance of saving police lives through programs like ours and many others who aim to reduce line of duty death through education. It would seem we haven't had this low of a LODD number half way into a year in quite some time. But, you know we hate taking numbers at face value, so we jumped in and did a little investigating.

We already know from previous research that there are some cycles to line of duty death. Numbers tend to dip and peak in 7-10 year cycles, and often times there are peaks in the year or two following a national incident, and then dips in the year after that. There can also be some factors far out of our control and specific to an era, such as 9/11 illness and COVID19. While these deaths are important to recognize and honor, they wreak havoc on properly understanding our LODD picture and how we are performing as a nation.

For this project we wanted to take a large enough sample to get past event driven years like George Floyd, Ferguson, Dallas.... The list goes on. So much so that it seems like we are always living in event driven years anymore which may actually be true; a topic for another day. We also wanted to have a sampling that didn't include those era specific issues beyond our control, but we needed to keep the time relevant to today's policing. These two needs for our research were in conflict with each other since 9/11 illness has been around as long as the vast majority of today's officers. So we took a sampling from 2010 to now and we removed 9/11 and COVID only for the purposes of viewing our success in saving police lives through education in areas we can control.

For the purpose of this article we will make some major assumptions, and use the "on pace" number for 2023. Remembering that from this point forward in this study, numbers do not include 9/11 or COVID, we have suffered 51 line of duty deaths in the first half of this year so our number for research purposes and comparison in this study will be 102 for 2023.

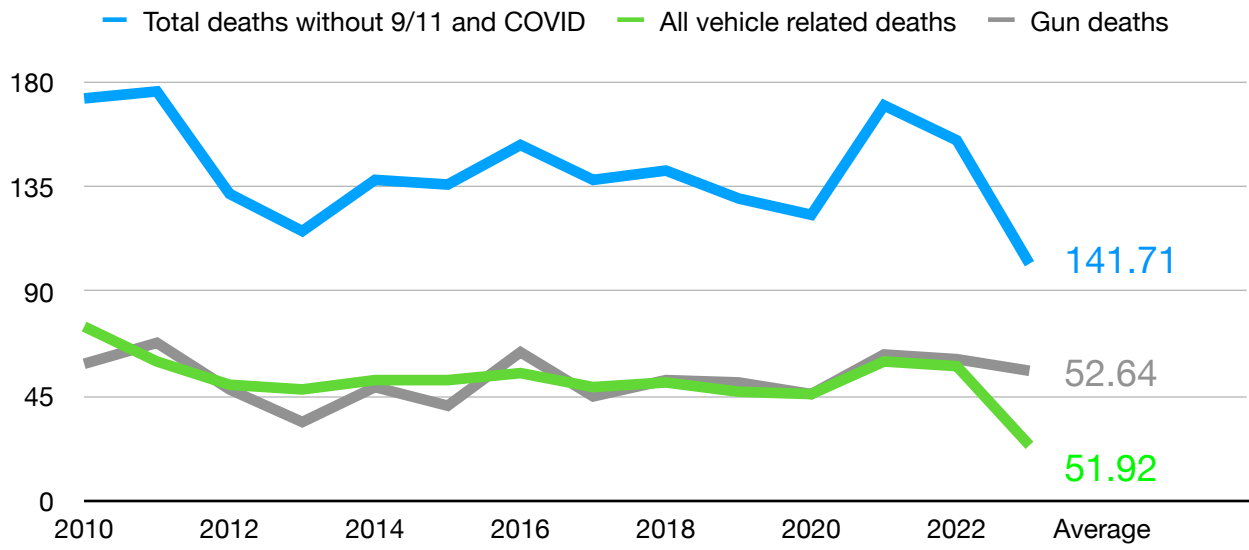
102 tanks the bottom of the list since 2010 which is exciting news. Second place is 2020 with 123. The average over the study period is 141. Gunfire never ceases to be our top contributor, a statistic that I still believe many officers have convinced themselves not to be true or have just chosen to ignore. We average 52 gun deaths a year, or 36% of all deaths. But there is a hidden competitor we would like to bring to light.

Since 2010 motor vehicle accidents have claimed an average of 26 lives a year. Vehicle assaults have taken 11, and although categorized individually, together Pursuits, Struck by incidents, and motorcycle crashes add up to another 14. In total when you consider all things motor vehicle, the invention of the combustion engine has cost us on average 51 lives a year since 2010, or a percentage of 36%, right next to gun violence.

We spend an extraordinary amount of time behind the wheel and playing in traffic. We drive aggressively, and much of the time driving is second to the radio, managing your response to offenders, and over all planning your response when you arrive where you're going. This is critical to your survival on scenes, and the motor vehicle is simply your tool to get you to where you need to go to work. Offenders also use motor vehicles, and much of the time we find our selves "working" from inside our patrol cars, or even without the protection of our cars and standing in a parking lot or road susceptible to the whims of a desperate person's need to escape our reach.

We have preached it before but it continues to bare importance to our lives. We spend a lot of time in our heads preparing for the fight. Thank God for that or our gun violence numbers would be even higher than they are. But we need to spend more time in our heads preparing for driving. I don't mean just watching traffic and making sure we stop for red lights. I am talking about all the things we are required to do while driving and during the course of our jobs. I am talking about when we are working outside of our vehicle in areas where vehicles still remain a major factor. I am talking about the intentional murdering of police officers by running them down, and I am talking about the horrific reality we know all too well of being struck by drivers simply not watching where they are going. We can have a role in all of these. Have escape paths if you're on foot. If you're still operating your own car, regardless of the circumstances, do not out perform your own skills or the abilities of your vehicle. Perhaps the greatest specific warning God can give you is a close call. Many officers who lived to tell of horrific tragedy, will admit that they had a close call moments before. maybe they got loose around a corner, or barely stopped in time to avoid something, but then they continued to push the limits because there was still a need to go to work. That hadn't changed simply because they skidded a little. And then, the really bad thing happened. If you see you're out performing you vehicle, it's time to slow down. Re-group and change the plan. Let Motorola get ahead of the suspect and use the resources at your disposal to safely bring your event to a conclusion. In sports, you get a stat for scoring but you also get a stat for the assist. We are a team out there and anyone of us can finish the job when we use our resources appropriately.

Below is a graph related to the research discussed in this article. It demonstrates the consistency with which motor vehicle related incidents take police lives regardless of all other cycles and events that tend to fluctuate our numbers throughout the years.



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