



THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

Newsletter article May, 2018

As of today, we are on course with last year where line of duty death is concerned. The changes are in the ways we have lost officers from last year to this year. According to the Officer Down Memorial Page, we have seen an increase of 56% in gunfire deaths from this time last year; astonishing if you think back to last year and how overwhelming our gunfire deaths seemed to be. So we took a look back at the last ten years and looked at the gunfire trend. Turns out that just like how high school seems like it was just yesterday, law enforcement gunfire deaths also have a way to warp time in our minds.

2017 was actually three deaths below our ten year average of 49. 2016 is the year we all remember so well. 2016 is when it felt like open season on police. we lost a record 64 brothers and sisters to gunfire that year to include the shooting of five Dallas area officers and three Baton Rouge area officers during a startling trend by minority rights activists. The senseless targeting of police for being police became even more pronounced, and we all became a little more paranoid. Many of us stopped eating in restaurants, and got back in the habit of watching our mirrors as we drove home. The reality of the dangers we face came a little too close to our own homes and families that year.

I suppose it's good that 2016 feels like last week. That means we still remember and we are still remain vigilant. It's normal for our numbers to drop in the years following difficult years like 2016. It's when we get comfortable again that our numbers increase. in 2007 we lost 67 to gunfire. Four years later in 2011 we lost 68. It was five more years before we lost more than 50 again in 2016 with 64.

We know time heals all wounds. Sadly, we need the scars, or we touch the burner again. Most importantly, this tells us something critical to our survival. It shows us that our vigilance works. Even when we are being random targeted, we can reduce our chances of being murdered by gunfire through our own awareness while at work. Every officer could save their own life during the years following the bad ones, simply by the way they carry themselves. You may not even know that you're alive today because you stopped eating out and sitting in the window by the street. You stopped doing reports in your car. You approached traffic stops with a little more caution and the suspects in the car could tell you were a force to be reckoned with, so they hedge their bets and decided not to play the odds.

We need to see the scars every day when we suit up. We cannot allow time to heal us completely. Our threat remains the same year in and year out. It's how we appear to our threat that increases our risk. Find a way to remember. Make a mark on your vest for each officer who dies by gunfire. Leave the tape on the inside of your locker door for everyone you shroud for. Say a prayer and reflect on those who passed every time you click your duty belt on. Whatever your way is, never forget. It is to honor them. It is also to not become them.