



NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS MEMORIAL FUND

RESEARCH BULLETIN

JULY 2009

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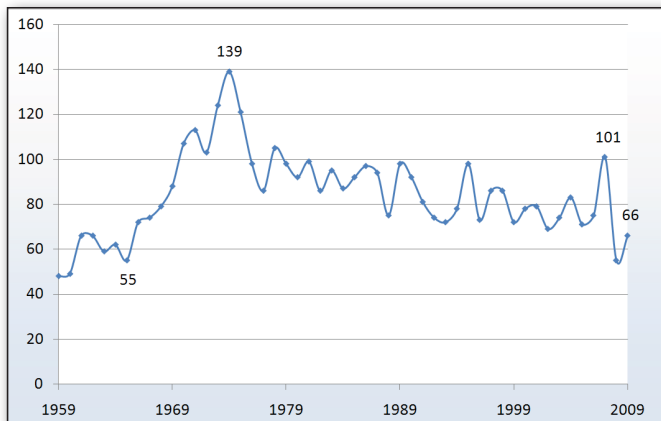
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Law enforcement officer deaths: Mid-Year 2009

After 48-Year Low, Officer Deaths Rise 20% in First Half of 2009

After falling to their lowest level in nearly five decades in 2008, line-of-duty deaths among U.S. law enforcement officers rose 20 percent during the first six months of 2009. Still, officer fatalities remain low when compared with mid-year totals in recent history.

Trends in law enforcement officer deaths: Mid-Year 1959-2009



Preliminary data from the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) indicate 66 officers died in the line of duty between January 1 and June 30, 2009, compared with 55 deaths during the first six months of 2008. 2009 was the second lowest mid-year total since 1965, when there were also 55 fatalities and was well below

the average mid-year fatality count over the last 10 years (76).

All major categories of officer deaths increased between 2008 and 2009. Officers killed by gunfire rose slightly, from 20 in the first half of 2008 to 22 in 2009. This year's preliminary total includes nine officers who were shot and killed in three separate multiple-fatality incidents (see sidebars).

The number of officers killed in traffic-related incidents increased 17 percent during the first six months of 2009, from 30 to 35. For the 12th year in a row, traffic-related incidents remain the leading cause of law enforcement officer deaths.

Eight officers succumbed to job-related physical ailments during the first half of 2009, double the number during the first six months of 2008.

Twenty-four states experienced at least one officer fatality during the first six months of 2009. Three federal law enforcement officers have also died this year. All 66 officers killed by mid-year 2009 were men. By contrast, nearly 10 percent of the officers killed in all of 2008 were women, the highest percentage in history.

Mid-year statistics were released by the NLEOMF in conjunction with Concerns of Police Survivors. The data are preliminary and do not represent a final or complete list of individual officers who will be added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial for 2009.

A Closer Look

Multiple-Death Incidents, Mid-Year 2009



Multiple death fatalities among law enforcement ranks are not the norm; but during a five-week period of 2009, nine officers were gunned down in three separate incidents.

Oakland, CA – March 21

The tragedy began when Sergeant Mark Dunakin and Officer John Hege pulled over a vehicle and the driver opened fire. Sergeant Dunakin was killed and Officer Hege mortally wounded (he would die three days later). Two hours later, SWAT team members tracked the suspect to an apartment building a short distance from the original shooting. As officers entered a bedroom, the gunman opened fire through a closet, fatally striking Sergeant Ervin Romans and Sergeant Dan Sakai. Another SWAT officer shot and killed the suspect, a wanted parolee.



Sgt. Mark Dunakin



Officer John Hege



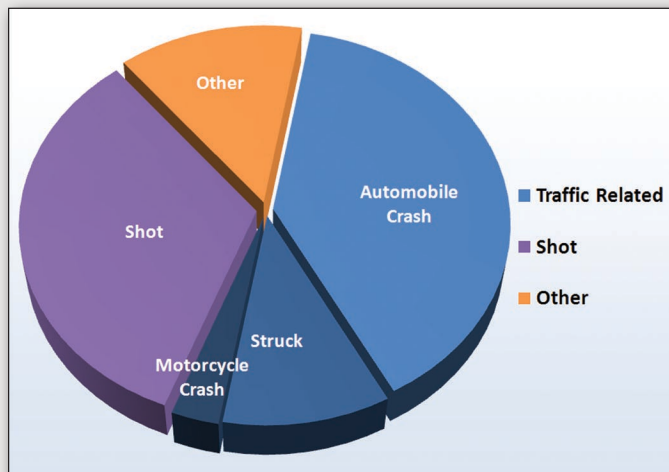
Sgt. Ervin Romans



Sgt. Daniel Sakai



Causes of law enforcement officer deaths: Mid-Year 2009



If current trends continue, 2009 will be the 12th year in a row in which more officers are killed in traffic-related incidents than die from any other cause. Traffic-related incidents include automobile, motorcycle and bicycle crashes, plus officers struck while outside their vehicles.

For the second straight year, traffic incidents make up a clear majority of officer deaths. 2008 marked the first time in U.S. history that more than 50 percent of officer fatalities in a single year involved traffic-related incidents—just over 53 percent. Mid-year 2009, the percentage has remained at just above 53 percent, with automobile accidents accounting for nearly 40 percent of fatalities.

Comparing the first six months of 2008 with the same period of 2009, all major categories of officer fatalities increased. Traffic-related incidents rose by nearly 17 percent, from 30 to 35. This year's mid-year total included 26 officers killed in automobile crashes, 2 in motorcycle accidents, and 7 struck and killed while outside their vehicles.

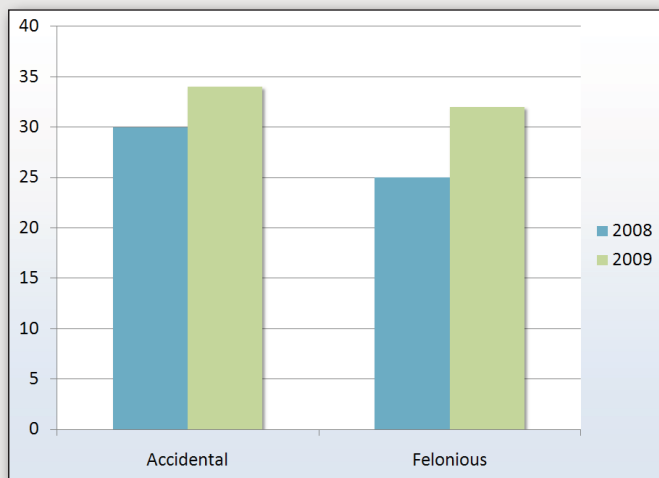
Officers killed in firearms-related incidents increased, from 20 to 22.

Deaths from other causes nearly doubled, from 5 to 9, with all but one death involving a job-related physical incident.

Changes in causes of officer fatalities: Mid-Year 2008 vs. 2009



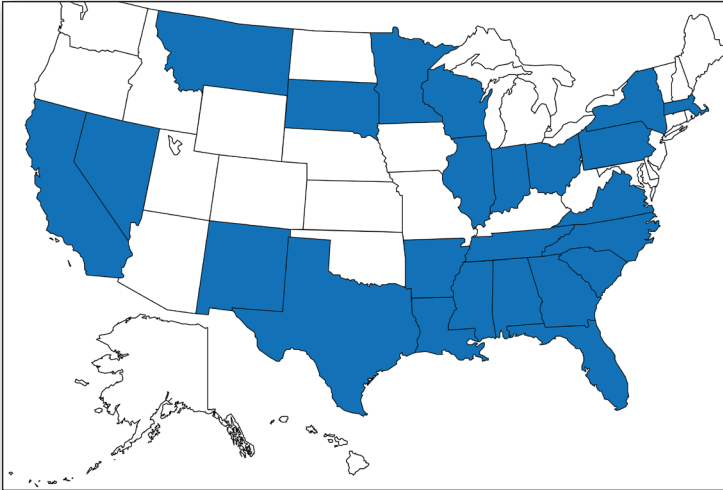
Felonious vs. accidental officer deaths: Mid-Year 2008 vs. 2009



Because many traffic-related incidents are accidents, the majority of officer deaths in recent years have been classified as accidental as opposed to intentional, or felonious. During the first half of 2009, officer fatalities were nearly evenly split between accidental (34) and felonious (32) incidents.

Of the 32 felonious incidents, 21 involved officers who were shot and killed. Another seven officers died in felonious automobile crashes, five of which involved drunk drivers. Three officers were intentionally struck and killed, and one officer died after a physical altercation with a suspect.

Geographic distribution of officer fatalities: Mid-Year 2009



Twenty-four states experienced at least one officer fatality during the first six months of 2009.

State	Number of Fatalities	State	Number of Fatalities
Florida	7	Mississippi	2
California	6	New Mexico	2
Pennsylvania	6	Massachusetts	1
Texas	6	Montana	1
North Carolina	5	Nevada	1
Alabama	3	South Carolina	1
New York	3	South Dakota	1
Ohio	3	Tennessee	1
Arkansas	2	Virginia	1
Georgia	2	Wisconsin	1
Illinois	2	Federal	3
Indiana	2		
Louisiana	2		
Minnesota	2		
		TOTAL	66

Causes of law enforcement officer fatalities: Mid-Year 2008 vs. 2009

	2008	2009
Traffic Related		
Automobile Crash	19	26
Struck (outside vehicle)	7	7
Motorcycle Crashes	4	2
Subtotal:	30	35
Shot	20	22
Other		
Physical-related Incident	4	8
Helicopter Crash	0	1
Stabbing	1	0
Subtotal:	5	9
TOTAL	55	66

Demographic profile of officers killed: Mid-Year 2009

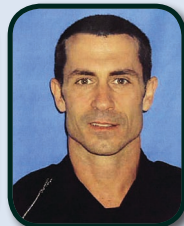
Race/Ethnicity	
Caucasian	51
African American	7
Hispanic	7
Asian	1
Gender	
Female	0
Male	66
Average Age	39
Average Years of Service	11



Officer Eric Kelly



Officer Stephen Mayhle



Officer Paul Sciuolo II

Pittsburgh, PA – April 4

Early that morning, Pittsburgh Police received a call of a domestic disturbance involving a mother and son in Stanton Heights. Officers Stephen Mayhle and Paul Sciuolo II were in the last hour of their shift when dispatched to the scene. Officer Eric Kelly had just finished his shift and on his way home when he heard the call and responded in his personal vehicle. Inside the home, the 22-year-old suspect donned a bullet-resistant vest and lay in wait. Officers Sciuolo and Mayhle

were shot in the head as they entered the home. Officer Kelly was shot as he pulled up to the scene. During the ensuing standoff, two other officers were injured as they valiantly removed the fallen officers.





Deputy Sheriff
Burton "Burt"
Lopez



Deputy Sheriff
Warren "Skip"
York

Okaloosa County, FL – April 25

Three weeks after the shooting in Pittsburgh, two Okaloosa County (FL) sheriff's deputies were murdered while trying to make an arrest. Deputies Warren "Skip" York and Burt Lopez had gone to a gun club in Crestview to arrest a man in connection with a domestic violence incident earlier in the day. As they approached the suspect, who was standing in the parking lot next to his truck, and attempted to handcuff him, the gunman raised a concealed weapon and began firing. During the gunfight, Deputy Lopez was mortally wounded. Deputy York was shot and killed as he attempted to prevent the suspect from fleeing in his truck. After a vehicular pursuit that ended in another gunfight, the suspect was eventually shot and killed by officers.



This **Research Bulletin** was produced by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, in conjunction with Concerns of Police Survivors. The 2009 figures are preliminary and are subject to change.

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